THE SHAPING OF THINGS NOW:
MISSION AND INNOVATION
IN FOUR EMERGING CHURCHES
IN MELBOURNE

by

Darren John Cronshaw
BA DipEd MLitt BTh(hons) TheolM DMin

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology
of the Melbourne College of Divinity

March, 2009
The Shaping of Things Now: Mission and Innovation in Four Emerging Churches in Melbourne

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Keywords: Australia, Christian mission, Christianity – 21st century, congregational studies, emerging church, innovation, leadership, missional church, mission of the church, mission to the West, organisational change, practical theology.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the positive realisations of postmodern times is that we do not exist and learn in isolation but in community. I would like to enthusiastically thank the following people and organisations for their contribution to this research:

Dr Ross Langmead for his encouraging and wide-ranging support and insightful critique throughout the process as my supervisor, and the inspiration of his commitment to mission and practical scholarship in Australia;

Rev Dr Jeff Pugh for his insights and helpful supervision through second semester 2007, and the example of his commitment to healthy congregational leadership;

The churches which formed the series of case studies and their pastors – Wayne and Paula Nebauer, Nathan Crouch, Chris Spratt and Adrian Turner at Connection, Toli and Emma Morgan and Matthew Jones at Eastern Hills, Rev Anthea and Adam Smits and Rev Doug Faircloth at Urban Life and Stuart Davey, Rev Jude Waldron and Rev Olivia Maclean at Solace – for permission to participate in their congregations and their warm welcome and feedback;

Christina Aitken, Darryn Altclass, Troy Arnott, Rev Martin Boutros, Dr Mark Brett, Rev Phillip Brown, Rev Paul Cameron, Rev Dr John Capper, Rev Dr Rowland Croucher, Marcus Curnow, Rev Chris Danes, Annette Dobson, Dr Mary Fisher, Rev Michael Frost, Andrew Hamilton, Tim Hein, Dr Les Henson, Alan Hirsch, Rev Dr Simon Holt, Rev Dr Philip Hughes, Rev Dr Colin Hunter, Patrick Innes, Rev Merrill Kitchen, Chris Logan, Brent Lyons-Lee, Rev Alan Marr, Rev Dr Andrew Menzies, Paul Minty, Rev Simon Moyle, Rev Dr Alan Niven, Rev Dr Ruwan Palapathwala, Rev Dr Darrell Paproth, Dr Ruth Powell, Rev Michael
Raiter, Rev Dr Frank Rees, Kate and Richard Rees, Steve Said, Mark Sayers, Rev
Martin Spadaro, Deborah Storie, Rev Dr Steve Taylor, Rev Paul Teusner, Steve
Turner, Rev Steve Venour, Rev Anne Wilkinson-Hayes and Rev Dr Kim Zovak
for perceptive comments and thought-provoking conversations at different stages
of my research;

Australian Association of Mission Studies, Australian Centre for Christianity and
Culture, Australian College of Ministries, Bible College of Victoria, Churches of
Christ Theological College, ESA Country Ministries, Australian Evangelical
Alliance ‘Talking Theology’ discussion group, Forge Mission Training Network,
Melbourne College of Divinity, Baptist Union of Victoria New Missional
Communities, OAC Ministries, Tabor College, Victorian Association of
Theological Field Education and Whitley College for opportunities to present
preliminary findings from my research;

Connection Community, Bimbadeen Tribe and Eastern Hills, the church
communities I was privileged to call home while I was studying, for embodying
fresh and organic approaches to ‘being church’;

Kim and Maria Hammond, Dave Ridgway, Warwick Vincent, John Jensen, Debra
and Alan Hirsch, Dave Minett, Phil McCredden, Brad Buchanan, Naomi
Swindon, Barb Totterdell, Neal Taylor, Sherry and Geoff Maddock, Kim and
Dave Zovak, Peter Roennfeldt and Anthea Smits as colleagues and dear friends at
Forge Victoria at different times from 2005 to 2009.

It has been a privilege learning from and with these friends and colleagues in
mission. The value of any contributions of this thesis is due in large measure to
the passion for authentic community and mission of these creative thinkers. They
are not responsible for the limitations and drawbacks of what is written, but their
comments and suggestions have helped sharpen my thoughts.
I am also indebted to and appreciate:

The Melbourne College of Divinity for offering an Australian Postgraduate Award which provided financial assistance to make this research possible;

Whitley College for a Victorian Baptist Fellowship grant for studying Research Methods early in my candidature, and for a timely computer loan to complete the thesis;

The libraries and librarians of Bible College of Victoria, Joint Theological Library (now the Dalton McCaughey Library), Melbourne Business School, Ridley College, State Library of Victoria, Tabor College Victoria, University of Melbourne and Whitley College;

Rev Dr Steve Taylor for permission to use the survey form from his doctoral research;

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) for access to their 2006 data;

Forge Victoria for generous sabbatical study leave in the middle of 2007, and the Baptist Union of Victoria for study leave in November 2008;

Digby and Lyn Hannah for the use of their Philip Island holiday house for several writing retreats;

My wife, Jennifer, for supporting me and reminding me to stay focused through three-and-a-half years of study, and for her kindred spirit and companionship in exploring many of the challenges out of which this thesis has ‘emerged’;

And the children whom Jenni and I have the privilege of parenting: Benjamin, Jessie and Emily. We love each of you and hope that the churches you grow up in will help you fulfill God’s purposes in a changing world. It seems I have started a new thesis with each new child. I dedicate this my third and probably final theology thesis to my third and probably last child Emily.
## ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>AAMS</td>
<td>Australian Association of Mission Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian College of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD (Lat. anno Domino)</td>
<td>In the year of our Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired immune deficiency syndrome or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEST</td>
<td>Apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherding, teaching (Hirsch’s fivefold ministry abbreviation)</td>
</tr>
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<td>APEPT</td>
<td>Apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoring, teaching (fivefold ministry abbreviation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCV</td>
<td>Bible College of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEng</td>
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<td>BMin</td>
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<td>BUU</td>
<td>Baptist Union of Victoria</td>
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<td>CLBC</td>
<td>Christian Life Bible College</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCFC</td>
<td>Croydon Christian Fellowship Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCVT</td>
<td>Churches of Christ Conference of Victoria and Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Compact disc</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>CertIVAWT</td>
<td>Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training</td>
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<td>CFC</td>
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<td>CFI</td>
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<td>CofC</td>
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<td>CPR</td>
<td>Care, purity and relationship (prayer triplet)</td>
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<td>CRA</td>
<td>Christian Research Association</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Christian Revival Crusade (formerly Commonwealth Revival Crusade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRE</td>
<td>Christian Religious Education</td>
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<td>Denom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>Deoxy Nucleic Acid (the code of animal life)</td>
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<td>DTheol</td>
<td>Doctor of Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital video disc</td>
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<td>EMC</td>
<td>Emerging Missional Church</td>
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<td>EPC</td>
<td>Evangelical/ Pentecostal/ charismatic</td>
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<td>EFAC</td>
<td>Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion</td>
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<td>GiA</td>
<td>Global interAction</td>
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<td>GOCN</td>
<td>Gospel and Our Culture Network</td>
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<td>GradDipMin</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of Ministry</td>
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<td>GT</td>
<td>Get-together (Urban Life)</td>
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<td>HREC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
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<td>IMC</td>
<td>International Mission Council</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
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<td>JEM</td>
<td>Justice Empowerment Missions</td>
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<td>Life Ministry Centre</td>
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<td>Melbourne College of Divinity</td>
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<td>Missional change model</td>
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<td>Master of Divinity</td>
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<td>missional-DNA</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>Maroondah Secondary College</td>
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<td>MTV</td>
<td>Music television</td>
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<td>mid-week meeting (Connection)</td>
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<td>NEO</td>
<td>New expression of (Church)</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>NCLS</td>
<td>National Church Life Survey</td>
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<td>NCR</td>
<td>New Community Ringwood</td>
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<td>NCCC</td>
<td>Northern Community Church of Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMC</td>
<td>New Missional Community</td>
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<td>NOS</td>
<td>Nine O’Clock Service</td>
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<td>OAC Ministries</td>
<td>Outreach And Church Ministries (formerly Open Air Campaigners)</td>
</tr>
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<td>PaCT</td>
<td>Public and Contextual Theology (Strategic Research Centre, Charles Sturt University)</td>
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<td>PAM</td>
<td>Pictures, art or music (Solace 1st Thursday)</td>
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<td>Prophetic advisory team</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
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<td>PIF</td>
<td>Pay it forward</td>
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<td>RPG</td>
<td>Role-playing game</td>
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<td>SDA</td>
<td>Seventh-Day Adventist</td>
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<td>Solace leadership team</td>
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<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short message service</td>
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<td>SPACE or SPACEmakers</td>
<td>St Paul’s and Solace redevelopment group</td>
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<td>SRS Housing</td>
<td>Supported Residential Services Housing</td>
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<td>TEAR</td>
<td>Transformation Empowerment Advocacy Relief</td>
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<td>TFW</td>
<td><em>The Forgotten Ways</em> by Alan Hirsch</td>
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<td>TheolM</td>
<td>Master of Theology</td>
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<td>TPC</td>
<td>Third Place Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNOH</td>
<td>Urban Neighbours of Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN LIFE</td>
<td>You are (U R) beginning a new LIFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>Victoria Bitter (beer brand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBMN</td>
<td>Victorian Baptist Ministers’ Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

‘Emerging churches’ claim they express new forms of mission and innovation appropriate for post-Christendom. Using a case study approach with participant-observation, interviews and surveys, this study analyses four such churches in Melbourne: Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace. Drawing on Peter Senge’s organisational analysis, this study concludes that at their best they are ‘learning organisations’ that foster incarnational mission, inclusive community, empowering leadership and planned change. In some areas their reality does not match the kind of rhetoric found, for example, in Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, The Shaping of Things to Come. Significantly, the four emerging churches are not reaching as many unchurched people as their ideals suggest and some of their decision processes are haphazard. This gap between ideals and experience provides creative tension that invites ongoing evaluation and learning about the shaping of mission and leadership for 21st-century churches.
The theological manuals written by those responsible for the mission of the people of God in the world must be subject to review by the reality of the presence and work of the Spirit through those engaged in “frontline” mission and ministry.

Ray Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline*¹

This thesis investigates mission and innovation in four emerging churches in Melbourne – Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace. Emerging churches are Christian communities that are expressing new forms of mission and innovation appropriate for a post-Christendom context. An influential book for the emerging church movement, especially in Australia, is Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch’s *The Shaping of Things to Come*.² Frost and Hirsch argue for multiplying new missional structures, offer a theological paradigm for emerging churches and share stories from around the world of imaginative new expressions of church. There is a great deal to learn from observing what is actually happening in emerging churches that is inspired by this sort of literature and theoretical framework. This requires qualitative research and congregational studies that go deeper than popular literature which contends for new models without evaluating what new models produce.

Frost and Hirsch’s subtitle is *Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* and they discuss these themes generally from a global and perhaps futurist perspective. This thesis explores, more specifically, forms of innovation and mission

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in a small group of emerging churches in Melbourne that have started since 2000 – a local and particular present-day perspective. Using categories suggested by Neil Ormerod, Frost and Hirsch present an idealist or supra-cultural ecclesiology of the emerging church movement, albeit drawing on historical examples; whereas I use observational and empirical research to unpack a realist or historical ecclesiology, centred on particular emerging churches.\(^3\) The project deals, as John Milbank recommends for ecclesiology, ‘with the actual genesis of real historical churches, not simply with the imagination of an ecclesial ideal’.\(^4\) Frost and Hirsch do not dwell merely in the world of theory and ideals, but this project has an intentionally local focus to complement and evaluate their overarching theology for emerging churches. The emerging church literature contends that new models of church are required to reach people in contemporary Western society, but do the results match the rhetoric? What does success, or lack of success, mean? What innovation is happening and where is it taking churches in their mission? How is ‘the shaping of things’ now?

Data was collected through participant-observation in the four emerging churches, interviews with leaders and focus group discussion with participants. The research also draws on quantitative data from the 2006 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) and literature on mission to the Western world and the emerging church movement.\(^5\) The general approach is to develop greater understanding about innovation and mission in emerging churches through a linked set of in-depth, phenomenological case studies. The aim of this predominantly qualitative research is to investigate, understand, describe and compare how emerging church pastors and members understand and practise mission and innovation.

By deepening our understanding of the experience of innovation and mission in emerging churches, this practical theology project aims to help denominational leaders, theological educators, emerging church leaders and leaders in other churches to be more conscious of the factors which can positively influence mission and


\(^5\)See also Darren Cronshaw, ‘Emerging Missional Church Introductory Reading Guide’, *Zadok Papers* S143 (Summer 2005).
innovation. My hope is that if churches can be given critically evaluated frameworks and ideas, they will be better equipped to engage their world. How can congregations encourage mission and innovation? What are some of the motivational factors and frameworks which encourage people to engage in mission? What helps them to be creative and innovative? What can we learn from this selected group of emerging churches and what do they need to learn? By exploring these questions, this study will identify what has helped and hindered four emerging churches, point towards resulting recommendations, identify further research needs and develop the basis for resources that churches might use to enhance their effectiveness.

Setting – Melbourne, Australia

Each of the four congregational case studies is located in Melbourne, the capital of Victoria in South-east Australia. The people of the Kulin nation inhabited the land for 40,000 years. The Kulin included the Wurundjeri-Willam clan of the area around the Yarra River Valley and what is now Melbourne’s inner-Western, inner-Northern and Eastern suburbs; encompassing the location of the four case studies.6 Settled by free settlers in 1835, Melbourne expanded with the 1850s Victorian gold rush, and was the temporary capital of Australia 1901-27.7 It is a city characterised by its love for the arts, good food, sporting events and cultural festivals, and has been described as one of the world’s most liveable cities.8 With a population of 3.8 million, Melbourne is the second most populous city in Australia.9 It has become diverse and multicultural with a third of Melbournians born overseas. It includes people from 233 countries, speaking over 180 languages and with 116 religious faiths. Yet 58% of residents still identify with a Christian denomination, although that is down from

7Geoffrey Blainey, Our Side of the Country (Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1984), 18, 39-48, 145.
66% in 1991. The churches are not keeping up with population growth in Melbourne, as in other parts of Australia and indeed the Western world.

Research is showing that Australians do have a sense of spirituality and even an attraction to Jesus, if not the church. This spiritual search contradicts recent secularisation theory, which suggested society was moving away from faith and the sacred. And there is a level of interest in Jesus and even an attraction to his subversive and unconventional ways. Yet churches are losing their influence, treated with suspicion and declining in attendance, especially among the young. In 1960, 41% of the Australian population attended church at least monthly, but by 1980 this figure had declined to 25% and by 2002 was 18.6%. Moreover, a disturbingly diminishing percentage of younger generations are involved in church, as the following figure from NCLS and census data shows.


12The ‘secularisation thesis’ was that as society became increasingly modernised religion would eventually disappear. Peter Berger, once one of its leading proponents, now admits it was his ‘one big mistake’. Peter L Berger, ‘Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty’, *The Christian Century* (August 26-September 2 1998), 782.


The graph shows that people under 50 are underrepresented in churches and those over 50 are overrepresented in churches. More specifically, in 2006 among Australians aged 15 years or over, nearly half (43%) of the population but only a quarter of church attenders (25%) were under the age of 40 years. And while 16% of the Australian population was between 20 and 29 years, only 9% of church attenders were in this age group. Yet while only 23% of the population was over 60, this group

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makes up 42% of churches. Even in Pentecostal and Baptist denominations with younger age profiles, there is still the ‘bracket creep’ trend of more older and fewer younger people.\textsuperscript{16} This is unfortunate at a time when young adults are attaching increasing importance to faith and spirituality. A 2005 survey found that 35% of Australians in their twenties said ‘religion was important in their lives’ compared with 21% in 1978.\textsuperscript{17} The burgeoning interest in spirituality is not equating to flourishing church attendance.

There are significant competing interests for Australians. Education, career, financial success, leisure and home ownership are all-consuming goals for many people. Many Australians believe ‘there must be something’ or ‘we must be here for a reason’, and that belief and the church have value, but they avoid getting involved in church or exploring what implications God has for the public sphere.\textsuperscript{18} Some time ago Manning Clark pictured the confrontation in Australia as being ‘between those who hold a religious view of the world, who believe in the mystery at the heart of things and those who believe in applying the principles of the book-keeper to the subject of human happiness and behaviour’.\textsuperscript{19} Consumerism and economic rationalism is driving much of society, and offers as much competition to Christianity as other world religions and alternative spiritualities. In this new spiritual marketplace of diverse religious and lifestyle options, Australian churches have a fresh challenge to communicate their message.


\textsuperscript{18}Hugh Mackay, \textit{Turning Point: Australians Choosing Their Future} (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1999), 219-232.

\textsuperscript{19}Manning Clark, \textit{A Discovery of Australia}, 1975 Boyer Lectures (Sydney: ABC, 1976), 29.
‘Emerging’ churches

There is a growing movement of churches around the world that claim they are reinventing themselves or starting afresh as new congregations which take seriously their missionary challenge. ‘Missional’, ‘new paradigm’, ‘fresh expression’, ‘new expressions of’, ‘emerging’ and ‘emerging missional’ are among the terms used to describe these new ways of being and doing church. Alternative worship, cell church, house church, café church, basic ecclesial communities, new monasticism, mosaic multicultural groups, liquid church, midweek gatherings, festival celebrations, art cooperatives, missional orders, Celtic churches and youth churches are among the experiments.20 There are as many labels as there are different emphases and influences on the broad movement, though the most common term to describe individual churches or the movement as a whole is ‘emerging church’.21

‘Emerging’ as an adjective for church has created much heated discussion. Some mainstream churches question why ‘emerging’ churches should be described differently from them, and some ‘emerging’ churches resent the implication that they are yet to fully emerge as a real church.22 Yet, like the terms ‘charismatic’ and ‘alternative worship’, it has become the most widely recognised term for the phenomenon.23

There are other related ways in which the term ‘emerging’ is used. The church worldwide is emerging with concern for global mission and global theologising.24

20 Graham Cray, Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context (London: Church House, 2004), 33-44.
The term has relations with emergence phenomena and new science which recognises that organisation and new life arise or emerge out of chaos.\textsuperscript{25} It is a term which has been used to describe the early church in the first century, when the church’s practices evolved.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed the emergence and reformation of the church is an ongoing process as the Reformers understood: \textit{Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda} ‘The church reformed and always reforming’. ‘Emerging’ describes something which is changing and evolving rather than fixed in one place. ‘Emerging church’ is an appropriate term to use for churches which are reforming for a new era.

Stuart Murray offers some provisional classification systems for emerging churches.\textsuperscript{27} Murray distinguishes emerging churches as experimental expressions of church as distinct from the more familiar forms of ‘inherited’ church, but asserts the importance of symbiotic partnership between the two. His first classification model relates to three possible sources of emergence and relationship to inherited churches. First, churches may emerge \textit{from} an inherited church through renewal and transformation, reinventing it with a more or less radically different focus, ethos, structure and/or style. Second, some churches emerge \textit{out of} inherited churches through church planting, community engagement or rethinking worship or mission, forming a new church that becomes more or less autonomous. Third, churches may emerge \textit{within} a cultural context without the influence of inherited church, making a new church that will need to build its own links with other churches.\textsuperscript{28}

Another classification system builds on the essential elements of church – worship, mission and community – and identifies where an emerging church initially focuses. While all three functions are essential, and while Frost and Hirsch argue for mission to be the central reference point,\textsuperscript{29} certain emerging churches may have a particular


\textsuperscript{28}Murray, \textit{Changing Mission}, 42-43.

founding focus to reconfigure their community, re-imagine worship, or reshape around mission.  

Emerging churches are usually defined in terms of creatively responding to the postmodern or post-Christendom era. For example:

**Communities that practise the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures.** (Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger)  

The identifiable network of Christian churches and individual Christians self-consciously dialoguing about and experimenting with the possibilities for reinventing the Church in order to survive in and engage with the emerging postmodern era. (Cory Labanow)  

New expressions of Christian community that have different shapes according to the culture in which they are planted. (Michael Moynagh)  

UK Anglicans prefer the terminology of ‘mission-shaped churches’ or ‘fresh expressions’. They retain cultural engagement in their definition but also make explicit the missional focus on the unchurched:

A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.  

Ross Langmead has adopted the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) terminology of ‘new missional communities’ (NMCs) which he defines, again combining cultural engagement with mission, as:

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31Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K Bolger, Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 44.  
New communities formed with a deeply missional stance, aware of their post-Christendom context and engaging creatively with their culture in living and speaking the gospel. (Ross Langmead)  

Not all fresh expressions and new missional communities may identify themselves as emerging churches, but they can be categorised under the same general movement. I define emerging churches broadly as Christian communities that are expressing new forms of mission and innovation appropriate for a post-Christendom context.

Forge Mission Training Network is Australia’s most influential emerging church training and networking organisation and some of its members insist on using ‘missional church’ or ‘emerging missional church’ (EMC). Hirsch, Forge’s founding director, says that some of the Northern hemisphere emerging church conversation is less about mission and more about a renewal movement of spirituality and worship in a postmodern setting. To include ‘missional’ in the centre of the term emphasises its importance; new and emerging forms of church best develop from being missional, not the other way around. More churches should contextualise their worship, according to many at Forge, but not at the expense of the church’s primary focus, which must be the mission of God. ‘Emerging missional church’ is a term which reminds churches that their emerging is for the sake of mission and that mission is at the centre. I use the terms emerging church and emerging missional church interchangeably to describe the global, inter-denominational movement of churches that are emerging (or re-emerging) for a post-Christendom context as new ways of being church, fuelled by mission and innovation.

Innovation in emerging churches flows from God’s inherent creativity. Matthew Fox argues that creativity is at the centre of God’s nature; the Hebrew word dabhar, usually translated ‘word’, describes the ‘creative energy’ of God that formed the world in all its diversity. Part of humanity’s purpose, as created in the image of

37Genesis 1-3; John 1:1-14; Matthew Fox, Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality (Santa Fe: Bear & Company, 1991), 35-41.
God, is to join God in co-creation and ‘not be reluctant to give birth’ to new things. The prophets describe God’s ongoing creativity as a potter who shapes people and nations. Part of God’s work is shaping things to come, and God invites the church to join this ongoing creative activity. God used innovative ways in communicating to people throughout history and through the Bible, and it is appropriate for the church to innovate in its communication so it can be understood in its context.

Innovation is also essential in our context of changing times. The emerging church literature argues that because society is rapidly changing its technology, social structure and worldview, churches also need to change and offer different models. John Drane appeals for a renewal of creativity in worship and evangelism to reach different sorts of people, rather than squeezing church into a predictable pre-packaged mold. Brian McLaren urges breaking free from past models and fostering a culture of change: ‘an evolving organism … capable of adjusting to the coming climatic and environmental upheavals’. Bill Easum passionately argues that the world is changing at such a pace that radical new approaches to leadership are needed that will spread discontent about the status quo and champion innovation. Emerging churches are a recognition of the need for fresh and diverse models for church.

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39Isaiah 29:16, 64:8; Jeremiah 18:6; also Romans 9:21.
41E.g., Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2001); Michael Moynagh, Changing World, Changing Church (London: Monarch, 2001); Alan Roxburgh and with Mike Regele, Crossing the Bridge: Church Leadership in a Time of Change (Costa Mesa: Percept Group, 2000); Leonard Sweet, SoulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999). See also my appeal for fresh models in Darren Cronshaw, ‘Colonies of Heaven: Celtic Models for Today’s Australian Church’, Zadok Papers 132 (Spring 2004).
43Brian D McLaren, The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 21
44Bill Easum, Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 31-33, 90-105
Limitations and personal perspectives

This research does not test assumptions or hypotheses quantitatively but gathers and interprets data about the experience of mission and innovation in the selected emerging churches. The emerging church literature suggests mission and innovation are important elements of emerging churches. I evaluate the literature and the basis of its missional theology. But the literature is not the focus of the thesis as much as the implications of missional theology for congregational life. For the sake of both my own ministry and the emerging church movement I want to explore and understand what is happening in emerging churches. Therefore, this research follows a qualitative research method in order to document the variety and quality of experiences of mission and innovation in emerging churches.

Qualitative methods are important in practical theology, although there are potential difficulties with this kind of research. First, I am working with a small sample of churches. Therefore the results will be specific to that group and not necessarily able to be extrapolated to general principles. There will be broader implications from the research but any suggestions or generalisations cannot be claimed to be conclusive. Second, the thesis is a historical snapshot of 2006. It naturally includes historical background and some references to 2007-2008 changes, but does not reflect all the ways the case studies have continued to change and develop. Third, the research may not yield data adequate to validate or falsify any theories or hypotheses. Fourth, I am associated with emerging churches as a participant, a member of BUV’s New Missional Communities group and an employee of Forge and BUV. So, as the researcher, I have certain biases about the data which need to be articulated. In analysing the data, I consciously ‘bracket out’ some presuppositions, in order to make allowances for the biases they may contribute to interpretation.

This thesis topic is relevant for emerging church leaders and others interested in understanding and learning about emerging churches. It involves analysis of the nature of church systems and their organisational dynamics, and how churches can relate to contemporary society and Australian culture. Above all, the selection of this thesis topic is motivated by a concern to engage critically, intelligently, pastorally
and formatively with people in my ministry context as a Baptist pastor and teacher of practical theology. My aim is to help emerging and other churches in Melbourne to engage creatively and self-reflectively in their mission. I have a commitment to the church, which is an important part of my faith, and I want to help foster fresh expressions of church life in the emerging church movement. Yet I am conscious the emerging church needs a depth of contextual and anthropological understanding and theological critique, towards which I hope this thesis will make a contribution. This exploration of emerging church dynamics aims to learn about mission and innovation in order to engage in them more thoughtfully and authentically, and to invite others into a similar process of learning and praxis.

At the outset I want to identify the insider’s experience which I bring to the research task. Working with Forge and participating in emerging churches has been a formative influence in my approach. I inevitably have opinions and judgments about emerging churches. Edmund Husserl said that the ideal researcher can ‘bracket out’ their own experience that is contaminated by culture, history and societal pressure. However, Husserl’s ideal was unrealistic and alienating from real life. In fact, I believe I can value my experience as part of who I am as a researcher. My talents, insights and biases help to focus me as a research instrument. Hans Gadamer argued that preoccupation with objective method or scientific technique is antithetical to the spirit of human science scholarship. Human research involves participation in human experience rather than standing apart from it.

As well my interest in the EMC as a movement, I have also developed friendships with some of the leaders of the emerging church case studies. Furthermore, I work with Forge, started by Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost. The thesis is an evaluation of the work of these friends and colleagues. Yet they have invited my involvement, and in most cases expected critique, hoping it would be constructive. I strive not to put

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friendship with leaders or investment with the EMC movement ahead of truth-telling. Part of my contribution to EMCs will be as a scholar who brings critical perspectives as well as appreciative comments.

My experience and background helps me to enter into and interpret the experience of others. Martin Heidegger argued that interpretation comes from participation or leaping into the ‘hermeneutical circle’ of meaning rather than standing outside the circle and analysing existence from an objective, external perspective.47 Research influenced by what Michael Crotty describes as the ‘new phenomenology’ aims at ‘putting oneself in the place of the other’ in order to see the world afresh.48 I follow this phenomenological approach and seek to understand the experience of emerging churches in Melbourne from the position of my background and experience. It is misleading to aim for and expect complete neutrality and objectivity. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to identify the particularity of my location and its influence on my opinions and judgments.

Over the last decade I have served in suburban, rural and city Baptist churches as youth, interim and solo pastor, and served as a missionary for a short term in Asia. I identify with Don Browning who said, ‘Most of us stand on the boundary: religious communities attract us; we may even participate in them; but we also wonder if they make sense’.49 I started this thesis just after finishing in April 2005 as a Baptist pastor in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, in part to make sense of my different experiences of church leadership and to explore alternative forms of church. I had learned churches are often so well established in their traditions that innovations are not always welcome or applauded. My experience left me with the questions: ‘Is it possible to reshape established churches with emerging missional frameworks and how can this be done successfully?’ and ‘Is it more fruitful to plant new churches which are mission-shaped from their beginning?’.

49Don Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 1.
Since starting the research, three formative developments for me have been going to Connection Community as a church, working with Forge and starting an emerging church. When our family moved in April 2005 for me to commence this research, we joined Connection Community, a reinvented Church of Christ congregation in Croydon, Melbourne. It forms one of the case studies in the thesis, and as the first congregation to visit served as a pilot study for my methodology. As the church our family belonged to, I had a particular interest in how I could learn from and contribute to Connection.

In July 2005, shortly after starting the research, Forge asked me to help liaise with theological colleges. Forge is a mission training network linking colleges, churches and emerging leaders to develop missionary identity and pioneering leadership skills. As Director of Theological Studies I oversee Forge’s accreditation, assessment and course content. This role gives me both an insider’s perspective into the emerging church movement and an outlet for applying my research findings.

In January 2007, inspired by this research and after reading Frost’s *Exiles*, our family and some friends initiated a neighbourhood expression of church: ‘Bimbadeen Tribe’. We started with an interest in mission to our neighbourhood and children’s school networks, and a desire to celebrate faith and friendship over meals. We settled into fortnightly ‘house-church’ and at other times participated in community service and training events. In September 2007 we linked in with Eastern Hills, another of the case studies. In May 2008 Tribe stopped meeting although mutually supportive relationships continued.

This thesis explores emerging churches from this ‘reflective-practitioner’ perspective. My interests and background have influenced the questions which guide me. When I approached churches for research, I did so as a Christian, an

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51 Darren Cronshaw, ‘Follow-up Research Journal’ (2007), 35-43. This and other research journals, and most primary documents cited in the thesis, are stored at MCD. Hereafter research journals are footnoted without reference to my name, but appear in the bibliography under Cronshaw and in a separate list.

ordained Baptist pastor, a Forge team member and an emerging church participant. To a large extent this gives me the perspective of an insider rather than outsider, the position of *emic* rather than *etic* criticism, without necessarily compromising capacity for critical reflection. I do not share the dilemmas of being an outsider which some other researchers of Christian communities have faced. My position as researcher is more like other Christian leaders who studied congregations with whom they had some relationship. The drawback is that I need to be careful about bias. But my religious and emerging church participation and associated personal knowledge and experience help shape my research.

**Methodology**

The research strategy is a linked set of case studies of emerging churches in Melbourne. This is a practical theology methodology. It explores the phenomenon and congregational dynamics of emerging churches inductively, starting from the life of four emerging congregations. Postmodernism favours learning from local expressions because it distrusts grand schemes which explain the whole of a narrative from a single perspective. Jean-François Lyotard describes this as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’, which he maintains is a defining aspect of the postmodern condition. Thus, true to postmodern form, I look to inventors of local expressions more than to the teaching of experts. Some of the relevant literature on cultural trends will be cited, but the focus is on considering appropriate expressions

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of mission and innovation for contemporary culture through the lens of the experience of particular emerging churches.\footnote{This approach partly follows Steve Taylor who started with the life and liturgy of one selected congregation, Cityside Baptist Church in New Zealand, and inductively explored its ‘alternative worship’ in order to understand the wider cultural context. He concluded Cityside’s liturgical innovation was a ‘making do’ in postmodern religious life. Taylor, ‘New Way of Being Church’, 16, 269-273. While Taylor concluded with cultural analysis, my focus is on strategic implications.}

**Research questions**

The qualitative research of the selected emerging churches focuses on mission and innovation. These two categories are important ideals for the emerging church movement and are the two key categories of *Shaping*. The question for this research is how much this philosophy is reflected in practice. In other words, does the reality match the rhetoric? The thesis examines the developing emerging church movement in Australia through the life and experience of four selected congregations. It proposes to investigate how and whether they are fostering fresh innovation and mission. The thesis will bring a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’\footnote{Liberation theologians use a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ to question ideologies and subconscious desires that maintain the status quo and promote unjust interests. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 7-9.} to the emerging church paradigm, analyse its basic assumptions and engage in rigorous research to investigate what innovation and mission is occurring.

So, in the form of questions, the thesis will explore: What mission and innovation are these emerging churches fostering? What similarities and differences occur in understanding innovation and mission between different congregations? How are innovation and mission cultivated in emerging churches? In terms of mission in particular, how does the theology of mission which emerging churches espouse help foster the mission of emerging church participants? What forms does mission take in the lives of individuals and through the life of the congregation? Furthermore, how do emerging churches deal with the management of change? What is their experience of diffusion of innovation? Do they intentionally build a culture of change which increases organisational innovativeness? Fundamentally I am asking: What can other churches learn from emerging churches, and what are emerging churches yet to learn?
With these questions as a guide, the research uses qualitative research methods to explore the selected emerging churches. Qualitative methods suit research into the phenomena and systems of emerging churches with the sort of questions I bring about innovation and mission. The research relates to emerging churches and their processes, little known phenomena, innovative systems and real organisational goals – issues of particular appropriateness for qualitative research. The church-level analyses rely on multiple sources of data: in-depth interview of pastors, focus group interviews of churchgoers, observations and document analysis. These are data-collection methods to develop and present a series of case studies, with the aim of helping those who are leading or teaching churches which seek to be missional and innovative.

**Congregational case studies**

I identified fifteen churches as a representative sample. The selection comprised churches which identified themselves as emerging churches rather than those which might have fitted an *a priori* definition of ‘emerging church’. The fifteen churches did not represent all emerging churches in Melbourne but displayed a variety of forms, structures and approaches. However, eight were unavailable or not readily accessible. Of the remaining seven, I focused on four and briefly visited the other three.

The four case studies are typical of congregations seeking to be relevant to their post-Christendom, postmodern context. Yet they offer a rich mixture of settings, people, programs and approaches that are relevant to each of the two cultural domains – mission and innovation. Connection Community is a reinvented Church of Christ congregation with unique bistro ‘Life Connection’ meetings and active community service. Eastern Hills Community Church is an emerging Baptist church plant of predominantly young adults with a social justice focus. Urban Life is a relocated and reinvented Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) congregation with a vision to be a regional missional church. Solace is an Anglican-based group with a focus on celebrating everyday spirituality.
Table 1: Characteristics and research data of the emerging churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church &amp; denomination</th>
<th>Suburb &amp; region</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Visit month</th>
<th>Interview data collected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Connection Community Church</td>
<td>Croydon (Outer-eastern)</td>
<td>Reinvented congregation</td>
<td>Bistro &amp; community</td>
<td>May 2006</td>
<td>13 interviews, 3 focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Church of Christ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Eastern Hills Community Church</td>
<td>Croydon (Outer-eastern)</td>
<td>New church plant</td>
<td>Community centre &amp; homes</td>
<td>June 2006</td>
<td>7 interviews, 3 focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Baptist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Urban Life Church</td>
<td>Ringwood (Outer-eastern)</td>
<td>Reinvented congregation</td>
<td>Café &amp; community</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>10 interviews, 2 focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Christian Revival Crusade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Solace (Anglican)</td>
<td>Balwyn &amp; Fairfield (Eastern &amp; Northern)</td>
<td>Congregation plant within mother church</td>
<td>Network &amp; everyday life</td>
<td>Sept 2006</td>
<td>6 interviews, 6 focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Eastern &amp; Northern)</td>
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4 churches, 4 different denominations
Mainly Eastern suburbs of Melbourne
2 reinvented, 2 plants (1 fresh, 1 within mother church)
Variety of meeting places with an outward focus
May-Sep 2006
36 interviews, 14 focus groups

The four congregations are also ‘reputational’ cases; Solace and Urban Life are almost the only congregations in Melbourne from their denominations who identify with the emerging church movement, and Connection and Eastern Hills are featured at their denominational conferences. Their denominational systems represent them as representative, even ‘ideal’, 60 instances of emerging churches.

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Others have pursued multi-site case studies of emerging churches, mostly in the United Kingdom and North America.\(^{62}\) This research sets itself in a similar direction.

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to these studies in analysing a number of emerging missional churches in order to
explore their congregational dynamics and extrapolate needed future directions.
However, it goes beyond most of these studies in analysing the experience of a wide
sample of participants – not just leaders – and exploring how they see mission and
innovation occurring. The most similar project to this thesis is Michael Frost’s recent
investigation of mission in seven emerging congregations around Australia based on
interviews with leaders and surveys of participants.63 Frost undertook a broader study
in terms of the number and spread of participants, but it was not as intensive as this
project, though it forms a useful comparison. Others have done ethnographic studies
of single churches,64 but I aim for a more comparative approach to identify major
patterns across four emerging churches.65

As I approached the selected congregations and began to collect and analyse data, it
was important to be explicit about a conceptual framework to identify and be
selective about important features and their relationships, and so identify what data to
collect and analyse.66 This conceptual structure, in the figure below, helped frame the
set of research questions for questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. It
illustrated the relationship between the site of four emerging churches, the research
categories of mission and innovation, pastors and members as participants, various
influences and what the research is pointing towards with recommendations and
ideas for further research and resources.

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63Michael Frost, ‘In a League of Their Own? An Examination and Assessment of the Claims and
64E.g., Gladys Ganiel, ‘Emerging from the Evangelical Subculture in Northern Ireland: An Analysis of
the Zero28 and Ikon Community’, International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church 6, 1
(March 2006), 38-48; Matthew Guest, ‘Negotiating Community: An Ethnographic Study of an
Evangelical Church’ (PhD thesis, Lancaster University), 2002; Labanow, ‘Researching a Local
Church’; Taylor, ‘New Way of Being Church’.
65Robert E Herriot and William A Firestone, ‘Multisite Qualitative Policy Research: Optimizing
Description and Generalizability’, Educational Researcher 12, 2 (February 1983), 14-19; Colin
Robson, Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers
66Robson, Real World Research, 150-152.
Figure 3: Conceptual structure of the research

Site …………

Four emerging churches

Focus …

Mission and Innovation

Participants …

Pastor(s) Members

Influences …

Support Motivation & models Context

Denomination Gospel & culture

Network(s) Post-Christendom

Training (e.g., Forge) Emerging church movement

Implications …

Recommendations

Future resources

Further research
**Data collection**

The study began with a critical review of the literature of emerging missional churches and mission and innovation in a ‘post-Christendom’ context. The review was structured around Frost and Hirsch’s *Shaping* but also drew on the writings of other missionary practitioners who discuss issues of gospel and culture and the mission of the church in the Western world, including Lesslie Newbigin, David Bosch, Darrell Guder, Alan Roxburgh, Brian McLaren and other emerging church writers. This helped build the contextual framework of chapter two and set the scene for the research.

The study was localised with participant-observation in the selected emerging churches. It was not feasible to try to understand emerging churches without observing their culture and activities, and so I spent at least a month at each site to gain in-depth understanding of their context. This gave time to attend meetings, collect documents, observe behaviour, become familiar with key people and typical activities and start to map the church’s culture.\(^67\) I presented myself as a visitor to worship and as a theology research student who was interested in learning about emerging churches. I immersed myself as a research instrument into the world of emerging churches in order to develop a thorough, detailed or ‘thick’ description of their experiences, especially of mission and innovation.\(^68\)

The pastors and some other key leaders from the churches had in-depth interviews; considered elite interviews because of their role and expertise. There were at least six and up to thirteen interviews of pastors and key leaders in each church, totalling thirty-six interviews, sometimes including second interviews of pastors. They gave historical background and analysis of their churches and leadership style.\(^69\)

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\(^69\)See Appendix three for the semi-structured interview guide; Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 108-114.
The process continued in each church with at least two, and up to six, focus-group interviews, totalling fourteen focus groups across the four churches. In each group three to eight participants, and an average of five, gathered to discuss their experience and views of church. A stratified purposeful sample representing a diversity of age, gender and church involvement including position-holders and newcomers were selected from personal contacts and pastors’ recommendations. A questionnaire survey was distributed to ascertain group composition, prime the thinking of participants and gather extra insights. A guideline of open-ended questions and topics was prepared to encourage people to share a diversity of experiences and stories about the kind of information I was after.

Letters explained the research and its purpose, methods, demands and outcomes to all potential participants. They were given at least ten days to decide whether to participate, and could withdraw at any time. Interviews and focus groups were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed by a confidential secretarial service. When individual responses other than pastors are quoted, I use first-name pseudonyms to disguise the identities of the participants.

These diverse methods of data gathering helped the trustworthiness of the data. They offered triangulation by comparing pastors, focus group participants, observations and official documents. Other information sources included my own experience as a pastor and theology teacher and quantitative data from the 2006 National Church Life Survey (NCLS). The NCLS timing, October 2006 in Melbourne, was opportune for the research. Unfortunately Solace and Eastern Hills chose not to do the survey but I have data for Connection, Urban Life and overall results.

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70See Appendix two. Adapted from Taylor, ‘New Way of Being Church’, 311-315.
71See Appendix four. Analysis of a congregation’s stories is the basis of the congregational studies approach of James Hopewell, Congregations: Stories and Structures (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); and central to the use of appreciative inquiry in congregational change espoused by Mark Lou Branson, Memories, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004).
72See Appendix one – explanatory statement.
73Burns, Research Methods, 390, 418-420.
A coding process identified key categories and their relationships to one another. NVivo7 qualitative research software was used to help sort, code and categorise the data. A line-by-line analysis of the data opened up the inquiry and helped identify provisional concepts emerging from the data. Each transcript was read at least twice and coded according to the concepts and categories to which they alluded. Phrases that stood out as essential or revealing were highlighted and sections that related to different themes were coded accordingly. The process helped help me to see and make sense of the meaning of the ‘lived experience’ descriptions.\textsuperscript{74} The categories were then related to one another conceptually and integrated and related to the core research domains of mission and innovation.\textsuperscript{75} The elements that participants referred to the most, and/or that I coded, became the main categories or themes for analysis. This is admittedly a partly subjective method, reflecting my interview questions and coding methods as well as participant’s perceptions. But it systematically helped to inductively identify four dominant themes in each case study for chapters three to six, and the main aspects of mission and of innovation across the case studies which became the headings and organising themes of chapters seven to ten.

After data collection and initial analysis, a panel of three experts critiqued and commented on my findings.\textsuperscript{76} To help the trustworthiness of the findings, the analysis was also checked with peers and research participants.\textsuperscript{77} It was important to me to involve community members not just in data collecting but also in asking questions and identifying key issues of my analysis. Rather than waiting until my research results were finalised and disseminated, I appreciated involving more people in the process of checking and developing my initial tentative findings.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{74}Van Manen, \textit{Researching Lived Experience}, 77-100.


\textsuperscript{76}Rev Dr Rowland Croucher, Director John Mark Ministries; Dr Les Henson, Tabor College Senior Lecturer in Mission Studies; and Dr Ross Langmead, Whitley College Professor of Missiology. Experts, Delphi method focus group, Ringwood (2 October 2007). Interviews and focus groups appear within the bibliography and in a list at its end. The digital audio recording and transcript of this and other focus groups and interviews are stored at MCD on CD.

\textsuperscript{77}Burns, \textit{Research Methods}, 479. This checking occurred through church follow-up visits, research seminars and asking colleagues and interested interviewees to read drafts of findings. There was also a pastors’ follow-up focus group: Stuart Davey, a Solace pastor; Anthea Smits, Urban Life’s Team Leader; and Adrian Turner, Connection’s Interim Team Leader (Ringwood, 27 November 2007).

Analytical tools

The data collected is evaluated biblically and theologically, particularly in the context of the missional literature reviewed in chapter two, but there are also sociological and organisational tools that aid the analysis. Congregational studies need to be able to draw on a range of academic disciplines and analytical tools to understand the group dynamics of the churches which are the object of study. Two tools suitable for this task are innovation-diffusion and the systems analysis of learning organisations.

Diffusion of innovation

One aspect of this research involves examining how innovation is introduced or diffused in emerging church systems. Barnett classically defines innovation as ‘any thought, behaviour, or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms’. Everett Rogers describes innovation as ‘an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption’. Emerging churches pride themselves on innovation. They strive to implement new ideas and practices and to be ‘qualitatively different from existing forms’ in their attempts to do church in new ways. Frost and Hirsch, in The Shaping of Things to Come, identify innovation as one of two key categories for the twenty-first century church. In understanding emerging churches, therefore, it is important to understand how innovation is implemented.

The diffusion of innovation is a conceptual framework in sociology for understanding innovation and change management. Rogers has collected together findings from diffusion research and explains, among other matters, the innovation-diffusion process, the motivation of dissonance, characteristics of adopters, opinion...

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82 Rogers, Diffusion, 12.
leadership, consultation and the pace of change. These categories are helpful for analysing innovation in the selected emerging churches.

Diffusion is about communicating a new idea and persuading people to adopt and implement it. Rogers defines diffusion as ‘the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system’. He outlines a five-stage innovation-decision process for new ideas:

1. Knowledge stage, when an individual or group is exposed to an innovation.
2. Persuasion stage, when they form a favourable or unfavourable attitude to it.
3. Decision stage, when they adopt or reject it.
4. Implementation stage, when they put the new idea, practice or object to use.
5. Confirmation stage, when they reinforce and sometimes adjust the decision.

When any innovation is proposed and implemented, people process through steps such as these. It is almost impossible to expect a group to move from initial awareness directly to adoption without being given further information and the opportunity to evaluate and even trial the new idea.

Innovation is sometimes inspired, adopted or adjusted when a group senses a dissonance between their ideals and reality. Leon Festinger pioneered the theory of cognitive dissonance, arguing that when there is internal disequilibrium a person is motivated to reduce the dissonance by changing their knowledge, attitudes or actions. Dissonance reduction can motivate an individual to seek information about an innovation to meet a need. Rogers explains:

A performance gap is the discrepancy between an organisation’s expectations and its actual performance. This difference between how an organization’s members perceive its performance, in comparison to what they feel it should be, can be a strong impetus to seek an innovation.

83Rogers, Diffusion.
84Rogers, Diffusion, 5.
85Rogers, Diffusion, 168-190; for application to missional change see Craig Van Gelder, The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 174-179.
87Rogers, Diffusion, 422.
If someone has not adopted an innovation and sees how it can help them, the realisation that their reality without the innovation is dissonant with what could be motivates them to adopt it.\(^{88}\)

Rogers describes innovativeness as the degree to which a person or group is relatively early in adopting new ideas. He identifies five types of innovativeness among adopters and their characteristics: (1) venturesome innovators, who are obsessed with being more venturesome than other members of society; (2) respectable early adopters, to whom others look for advice and information about an innovation; (3) deliberate early majority, bigger on deliberation and slower to follow; (4) skeptical late majority, who eventually adopt an innovation; and (5) traditional laggards who hold tradition as an overriding value and only slowly or never adopt innovations.\(^{89}\) In response to almost any new idea, most people can be categorised into one of these types.

**Figure 4: Adopter categories and innovativeness\(^{90}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adopter name</th>
<th>Innovators</th>
<th>Early Adopters</th>
<th>Early Majority</th>
<th>Late Majority</th>
<th>Laggards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of innovativeness/ resistance</td>
<td>High Innovativeness /low resistance</td>
<td>Low innovativeness /high resistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{88}\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 189-190.

\(^{89}\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 279-285.

\(^{90}\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 281.
It is helpful to understand that innovators initiate new ideas that early adopters buy into and then convince others to join. The early adopters become the opinion leaders who help trigger the critical mass leading other groups to adopt the innovation over time.\(^9^1\) The task of the leader as change agent, according to Roxburgh, is to work firstly with the innovators over eighteen months to become aware of the need for change and to implement ‘missional action experiments’, and then help them to convince the next responsive group of early adopters (or what Roxburgh renames responders).\(^9^2\) It is important to recognise that the diffusion of innovation takes time. As more participants become committed, normally over a period of years, the process will gain enough momentum to change the whole church.\(^9^3\)

Change agents have to consider the pace of change and the degree of consultation in decision-making. Some organisations have a stable equilibrium with minimal change. Others have disequilibrium when the rate of change is too rapid for the social system to adapt. Dynamic equilibrium involves an optimal rate of change commensurate with the system’s ability to cope with change.\(^9^4\) In terms of consultation, Rogers suggests innovation decisions can be generalised as optional, where individuals choose for themselves; collective, where decisions are made by consensus; or authority-based, where a few individuals with power make the decision for everyone. Optional and authority-based decisions can be made rapidly but may not generate as much ownership as collective decisions.\(^9^5\)

Another aspect of the diffusion of innovation is the order or degree of change.\(^9^6\) First order or technical change consists of gradual change within the values and

\(^9^1\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 283.

\(^9^2\)Alan J Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 79-108. Roxburgh’s ‘Missional Change Model’ (MCM) renames Rogers’ categories, adds a sixth for symmetry, and suggests a different percentage range including the more optimistic estimate of 10% innovators. These adjustments may be useful for churches he consults with, but reduce the potential of comparison with broader diffusion research. See also: Rogers, *Diffusion*, 36, 272; Van Gelder, *Ministry*, 179-182, 192.

\(^9^3\)Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 103-105.

\(^9^4\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 452-456.

\(^9^5\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 28-29, 403.

\(^9^6\)GOCN writers draw on leadership consultants Heifetz and Linsky’s description of technical and adaptive change: Ronald A Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through*
assumptions of the group. It brings an improvement or adjustment to an existing system. Second order or adaptive change is more fundamental and redefines core values and beliefs. It means revision or re-creation of the overall culture of a system. Changes that are more complex or difficult engender more pain and ‘background noise’, and so require better processes for communication and implementation. Craig Van Gelder graphs the levels of complexity and the associated resistance of different degrees of change.

**Figure 5: Types of planned change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of complexity/difficulty</th>
<th>First order (Technical)</th>
<th>Second order (Adaptive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Emerging churches often aspire to adaptive or second order change rather than technical or first order change. In fact, they may attract people who are innovators and early adopters who eagerly want to do things (radically) differently. Michael Kirton says that innovators love producing a proliferation of ideas and exploring unexpected and probably less acceptable solutions: ‘They are less concerned with “doing things better” than with “doing things differently”’. 98 But churches that want second order adaptive change need to carefully analyse and plan that level of innovation and its diffusion and be prepared for the resistance.

Diffusion of innovation is particularly relevant for existing organisations which are planning change, such as inherited churches or new churches emerging from or perhaps out of inherited church. It is less relevant to new church plants or those emerging within a new cultural context.99 The second analytical tool, systems-analysis and the learning organisation, has broader relevance to all the case studies, and especially the analysis of whether their reality matches the rhetoric and what to do about any performance gap.

**Learning organisations and systems-analysis**

Peter Senge uses systems diagrams as a tool to help people understand organisational systems and how organisations can best learn together. He advocates for learning organisations in *The Fifth Discipline*, suggesting organisations that excel will harness their people’s capacity to learn at every level. He says learning organisations practise five disciplines to release people to learn together. They help people exercise personal mastery to live in the service of one’s highest aspirations. They use mental models to unearth the internal pictures, assumptions and generalisations of the world that influence how we view the world and take action. They build shared vision of a lofty ideal that will galvanise an organisation to work towards a preferable future. They practise team learning through dialogue and recognising defensiveness and other blockages. And for the most important ‘fifth discipline’ they use systems


thinking; a conceptual framework and set of tools that recognises interrelationships between parts of a whole system.100

A ‘learning organisation’, therefore, is one that is committed to developing all of its people as learners to share vision, adapt to increasingly complex challenges and strive to adapt and change. Emerging churches, at their best, are learning organisations. This thesis considers how the four emerging church case studies exercise personal mastery, shared vision, team learning, mental models and systems thinking, and so to what extent they can be labelled as learning organisations.

Systems thinking, which learning organisations utilise, sees patterns and interrelationships where others see only forces, events and issues to react to. For example, it helps leaders see that current problems are not necessarily solved by dealing with current presenting issues. Systems thinking can help discern what limiting factors are hindering growth and resisting change. Leverage comes from understanding how the system works and its circles of causality. Senge offers diagnostic exercises of cycles of change, symptomatic cycles and leverage points to identify limiting conditions and to maximise creative tension that can foster change.101 System dynamics diagrams illustrate the interrelationships between vision, change, growth, limitations and decline.

For example, Senge’s systems diagram, below, illustrates limits to growth. It shows the growth ‘reinforcing feedback loop’ on the cycle on the left hand side where vision builds enthusiasm. This is a ‘virtuous cycle’ that produces effective results. (Churches can also develop ‘vicious cycles’ that produce downward momentum.) But this diagram also shows the ‘balancing feedback’ in the cycle on the right hand side where a limitation on vision is enforced by the discouragement of the reality not matching up to the vision. In such a case, the important leadership behaviour is to identify the ‘limiting factor’ that drives the balancing feedback process. In this case the limiting factor or key point of leverage is the capacity to maintain ‘creative tension’ and sustain commitment to the lofty ideals of the vision despite delays or

discouragement. Overcoming resistance to change thus comes not from communicating the vision louder but from helping people exercise the discipline of personal mastery and holding on to the vision despite discouragement.\textsuperscript{102}

\textbf{Figure 6: Limits to growth of organisational discouragement}\textsuperscript{103}

Systems diagrams help illustrate how churches are functioning at a systemic level, what is driving their success and what is holding them back. They are thus helpful for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of emerging churches.

These two tools for cultural analysis – diffusion of innovation and systems analysis – will help deepen the analysis of mission and innovation in emerging churches. It is critical in understanding organisations to draw on a range of disciplines and frameworks. Gareth Morgan suggests looking at organisations through a number of

\textsuperscript{102}Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 88, 229.

\textsuperscript{103}Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 229.
different metaphorical lenses. He assumes each lens will reveal different elements of an organisation’s life, and hide others. This thesis follows a similar approach of ‘polyocularity’, or using multiple lenses to view reality. The focus of the research is the experience of mission and innovation in four congregational case studies, viewed through the lenses of the emerging church literature and analytical tools including innovation-diffusion and learning organisational systems.

Outline

The thesis explores how four churches are emerging for a post-Christendom era with different ways of doing church which engage missionally with their communities and exercise innovation in their expression.

Chapter two outlines and evaluates *The Shaping of Things to Come* and other emerging church literature which provide the inspiration and strategic methodology particularly for the four case studies. The chapter examines influential theorists, from Newbigin and Bosch to Roxburgh and McLaren; dominant frameworks, including post-Christendom history, centred-set communities and organic organisational systems; and representative exegesis related to the incarnational ecclesiology, messianic spirituality and apostolic leadership that Frost and Hirsch advocate.

The unique analysis of the thesis arises from the qualitative research, the data and analysis of which fills most of the remainder of the thesis. In chapters three to six I describe the history, setting and distinctive cultural features of the four emerging churches. These chapters introduce each case study and offer a basic description and first level narrative analysis. The dominant features of each church, as participants described them, point towards some common themes which I explore in the remainder of the thesis.

The following four chapters delve into aspects of mission and innovation across the case studies, drawing on the analytical frameworks of this introductory chapter as

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well as the literary background of chapter two. Whereas chapters three to six introduce the case studies church by church, chapters seven to ten explore the research domains of mission and innovation at a deeper level of analysis and make comparisons across the case studies. These chapters explore what other churches can learn from emerging churches in these areas and what emerging churches are yet to learn.

Chapters seven and eight focus on features of mission. Chapter seven analyses the beliefs and practices of incarnational mission and the related areas of mission in everyday life and holistic mission. Chapter eight discusses mission and inclusive community, particularly exploring the experience of belonging and inclusion in the emerging churches. Thus these chapters examine the dominant categories the emerging churches adopt in order to engage missionally with their communities.

In chapters nine and ten I explore the second key category of the research – innovation. Chapter nine focuses particularly on the role of creative thinking and empowering leadership that is characteristic of the case studies. Chapter ten discusses innovation and change management. It outlines the cultures of change and the change management processes, or lack thereof, that the emerging churches adopt. Thus chapters nine and ten begin to analyse how emerging churches exercise innovation in their expression and what theological frameworks influence their approach to innovation, leadership and change.

Finally, the conclusion, chapter eleven, evaluates the findings and discusses further implications and recommendations. I also conclude how my theories and I have changed as a result of the study and identify further research and resource needs.
CHAPTER 2

SHAPING AND OTHER EMC LITERATURE

Whenever a Christian movement comes along that presents itself as reformist, it should never be summarily dismissed. Even if one ultimately decides that the movement embraces a number of worrying weaknesses, it may also have some important things to say that the rest of the Christian world needs to hear.

Don Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*¹

The founders of Forge, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, wrote what has become a popular and influential textbook for Australian emerging church life, *The Shaping of Things to Come*.² It argues for churches to experiment, be free to fail, cultivate a climate of radical change and develop church on the margins of society. Innovation and mission, as their subtitle suggests, are distinguishing characteristics of the emerging churches which Frost and Hirsch envision for the twenty-first century, and hence are the two key research domains for this thesis. The authors’ sense of hope is not in revitalising established churches, though they acknowledge a place for that. The vision which they espouse is to see new culturally diverse missional communities planted with ‘missional structures’ rather than what they see as Christendom’s attractional, dualistic and hierarchical approaches. They advocate for ‘incarnational ecclesiology’ which infiltrates community networks, ‘messianic spirituality’ which engages culture and everyday rhythms of life, and ‘apostolic leadership’ which pioneers new and innovative mission. This chapter is an extended review of *Shaping* and a selection of the broader emerging church literature.

¹Don Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 10.

Hirsch and Frost have each released a further volume which expand on *Shaping’s* themes and the challenges of mission to the Western world. In *The Forgotten Ways (TFW)*, Hirsch explores what he maintains are the basic elements of a missional movement. He identifies six inter-relating elements of ‘missional-DNA’ (mDNA) that shape missional churches: the lordship of Jesus, disciple-making, the missional-incarnational impulse, an apostolic environment, organic systems and *communitas*.3

In *Exiles*, Frost depicts a life-affirming faith for followers of Jesus who feel exiled from both secular Western culture and conservative church culture. Drawing on Walter Brueggemann’s identification of the parallels between contemporary Christians and the dislocation of Jewish exiles in Babylon,4 Frost unpacks inspiration for modern-day exiles who aspire to missional living in our post-Christian culture. *TFW* is a useful guidebook for church leaders to understand missional movements, while *Exiles* is more motivating for local mission through personal hospitality, advocacy and workplace witness.5

Hirsch and Frost are particularly worth understanding because of their influence on emerging churches in Australia. Hirsch has led the mission of a local church and a denomination, planted churches among subcultures, created Forge, started and closed a missional café project and consulted with missional groups around the world. Frost helped to start Forge, teaches evangelism at Morling College and is the missional architect of the church plant Small Boat Big Sea in Manly. Together in *Shaping*, separately in *TFW* and *Exiles*, and together again in the forthcoming *ReJesus*,6 they draw on their experience and cultural analysis, their reading of history and Scripture, their cynicism about institutionalism and their hopefulness about new experiments, to point towards new imaginative expressions of mission and church. They provoke

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6Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*. 

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questions about the priority of mission and have been formative for many Australian emerging missional churches (EMCs) including the case studies of this thesis. This chapter reviews the writers, frameworks and theology that Frost and Hirsch discuss in *Shaping*.

**Influential theorists**

Frost and Hirsch and other emerging church writers credit their missional thinking to scholarly missiologists Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch, and to the writers of the Gospel and Our Culture Network, for example, Alan Roxburgh. It is also worth noting the influence of the ‘Emergent’ network and Brian McLaren on emerging churches and comparing Emergent in North America with Forge in Australia.

**Newbigin and Bosch**

British missionary, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998), was an influential advocate for mission to the West. A missionary in India for nearly forty years, when he returned to England he analysed late-modern Western culture as a post-Christian pagan mission field: ‘the most challenging missionary frontier of our time’.⁷ Twenty years on, his conclusions are still worth hearing about the need for dialogue, ‘declericalised’ theology, local ecumenical efforts, looking at cultures with outside perspectives and communicating truth beyond modern scientific frameworks. Since Newbigin the world has moved on, but he foresaw how the world was changing and modelled a commitment to exploring gospel and culture issues. He stressed the importance of pastors being missionaries and stressed the role of the community of believers in demonstrating the potency of the gospel: ‘the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it’.⁸ He was a mission practitioner and scholar who inspired others to engage the challenges of mission to the West. The ‘missional’ focus of emerging churches and Frost and Hirsch’s writing are partly Newbigin’s heritage.

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Another influential missiologist was South African David Bosch (1929-1992) who wrote one of the most significant books on missiology published last century, *Transforming Mission.*⁹ It offers a critical discussion on contemporary mission issues including ecclesiology, inculturation, justice and evangelism, mission of the whole people of God and inter-religious dialogue. Most significant is Bosch’s analysis of mission history, which he described in six eras and paradigm shifts from the apostolic era through to today’s emerging postmodern and ecumenical paradigm:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the Patristic period
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm
6. The emerging ecumenical paradigm.

He follows the historical-theological periods of Hans Küng,¹⁰ who in turn followed Thomas Kuhn’s theory of ‘paradigm shifts’.¹¹ The historical simplicity and uncritical application of Kuhn’s paradigm thinking has been questioned, but thinking of paradigm change is helpful for understanding changing mission trends in the context of change in society.¹²

Bosch, furthermore, has influenced emerging churches to understand their missional basis as grounded in *missio Dei* – ‘the mission of God’ or ‘the missionary God’, as part of the most recent emerging ecumenical paradigm.¹³ Recognising Barthian influence and building on the 1952 Willingen International Missionary Council (IMC), he explains how the church derives from *missio Dei*:

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¹³Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 368-393.
Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God … Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world … a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission … There is a church because there is a mission, not vice versa.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Missio Dei} releases God’s people from bearing the ultimate responsibility for mission. As \textit{missio Dei}, mission is of and by God and so is ‘God-originated, Christ-centred and Spirit-empowered’.\textsuperscript{15} Mission is what God is doing in the world, with which God invites the church to cooperate. This is the basis of a ‘missional church’ understanding, namely that the whole church is sent on mission and that the mission is God’s.

**GOCN and Roxburgh**

The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) in North America was inspired by and is building on Newbigin and Bosch’s work on mission to the West. Their signature work is \textit{The Missional Church}, in which Darrell Guder and an ecumenical team of six missiologists envision a missional ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{16} In the West religion has been privatised and churches have been dislocated from their prior roles and often over-accommodated to modern ways of life. \textit{The Missional Church} suggests the answer to the crisis will not be found at the level of method and problem solving, but in clarifying the churches’ identity and task. Rather than being a voluntary association, a chaplain to society or vendor of religious goods and services, it presents the church as an alternative community which witnesses by living differently. It asserts missional leaders need a more functional and mission-focused identity than what they caricature as the normal priests of Christendom, teachers of Reformation truth or professional counsellors and managers. The theme throughout GOCN books, newsletters and conferences is the missionary identity of the church in

\textsuperscript{14}Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, 390.


the West and how this affects the church’s shape, message and engagement with culture.¹⁷

A strength of GOCN books for emerging churches in Australia is that they address mission to the West, of which Australia is a part. A weakness is that they focus on North America where the relationship between church and culture has been different from Australia. While the United States is grappling with the decline of civil religion, and Canada is experiencing rapid secularisation, Australian churches have not had as close and enduring a relationship with government and general culture.¹⁸ GOCN’s work needs translating from North America to Australia. Yet the anthropological tools for critiquing culture are still important in Australia, where we often ignore culture and fail to contextualise, or else adopt it uncritically and so overcontextualise.¹⁹ Emerging churches seek to place themselves missionally at the intersection of culture, gospel and church, and GOCN provides insights into discernment which are as critical in Australia as in North America.

GOCN draws together a wide variety of scholars and Christian workers, but a key contributor who has also been influential in emerging church networks is Alan Roxburgh. Roxburgh consulted with the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania and was influential in the development of Frost and Hirsch’s missional material. When he was a Baptist local church pastor, he observed values of community, environmental sensitivity, spirituality and empowerment which were offered by a ‘Big Carrot’ food co-op near his church. He was challenged to develop Christian community, ecology and spirituality to serve those yearnings in his


community.\textsuperscript{20} It was out of this experience of ministry, and recognising the distance of his church from its community, that he articulated a missional commitment to take church to people and serve community needs.

One of Roxburgh’s central themes is that congregations in the West need to live the gospel from the ‘margins’ rather than to expect public prominence.\textsuperscript{21} Rather than seeking credibility and identity as therapists, professionals or managers, Roxburgh says today’s missionary congregations need pastors who are poets who help them hear their story as God’s pilgrim people, prophets who imaginatively point to a vision of God’s purposes in the world and apostles who show congregations how to encounter culture with the gospel.\textsuperscript{22} He examines Victor Turner’s work on \textit{liminality}, based on anthropological study of African rites of passage.\textsuperscript{23} Roxburgh suggests that liminality offers a model of missional engagement in the West because of the church’s experience of marginalisation and transition.\textsuperscript{24}

Hirsch follows Roxburgh in exploring ecclesiological applications of Turner’s description of \textit{liminality} – the transition process accompanying a change of state or position – and also \textit{communitas} – the deep bonding which occurs when a group experiences liminality, as when it engages in a dangerous journey or mission. In some African tribes Turner studied, boys are initiated into manhood by being ‘kidnapped’ out of the female compound, circumcised and left to fend for themselves in the bush. Disorientated and out of their comfort zone, in \textit{liminality}, they have to

\textsuperscript{20}Alan J Roxburgh, \textit{Reaching a New Generation: Strategies for Tomorrow’s Church} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 19-30, 75-123.


\textsuperscript{22}Roxburgh, \textit{Missionary Congregation}, 57-66.


\textsuperscript{24}Roxburgh, \textit{Missionary Congregation}, 49-55.
learn to face the shared ordeal together. As a consequence, they develop intense feelings of comradeship and belonging, which Turner refers to with the Latin term *communitas*.\(^{25}\) Rather than seeking ‘community’ as an end in itself, Hirsch explores the ideal of having a church community’s imagination captured by seemingly impossible mission challenges, out of which *communitas* evolves.\(^{26}\) Roxburgh argues sociologically that the context of post-Christendom, the marginalisation of the church in society and the challenge of rapid discontinuous changes forces the church into *liminality*.\(^{27}\) In contrast, Hirsch argues theologically that *liminality* is where the church belongs as the pilgrim people of God.\(^{28}\)

**Emergent Village and McLaren**

The emerging church movement is collaborating and building momentum through informal networks. The ‘Emergent Village’ community or ‘conversation’ of missional leaders in North America is one of the most influential. Typical of emerging churches, much of their conversation occurs at conferences or online\(^{29}\) but also through a growing range of Emergent books.\(^{30}\) Emergent positions itself as a hopeful space for talking about new ways of expressing church in a post-Christendom, postmodern, post-denominational context.

Perhaps the world’s best-known Emergent figure, Brian McLaren offers strategies for reinventing churches for postmodernity.\(^{31}\) He wrote a narrative trilogy that set


\(^{27}\)Roxburgh, *Missionary Congregation*, 49-55.


\(^{29}\)http://www.emergentvillage.com/.


\(^{31}\)McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*. 
themes of the modern/postmodern transition into a philosophical dialogue.\textsuperscript{32} Neo, the postmodern-aware science teacher, helps his pastor-friend Dan understand the origins of modernity and the implications of the postmodern era on their spiritual journeys. For a new world, McLaren urges a new kind of Christian, new ways of doing church, new theological frameworks and new approaches to evangelism and training. In the words of Neo, McLaren’s call is to, ‘Invest your lives not in keeping the old ship afloat but in designing and building and sailing a new ship for new adventures in a new time in history’.\textsuperscript{33} McLaren articulates the dissatisfaction with traditional patterns of church and ways to express the gospel that is widespread, though not universal, in emerging church circles.\textsuperscript{34}

Don Carson’s critique of the emerging church and its approach to truth is particularly scathing of McLaren. Carson describes the emerging church as a protest movement, recognising that many emerging leaders are seeking to move on, because of changing times, from traditional evangelicalism, modernism and megachurch models. He appreciates the desire of emerging churches to engage popular culture and to reach those outside the church. Yet he suggests some writers are too quick to dismiss the contributions of modernity and confessional Christianity, too eager to uncritically accept postmodernism and too intellectually shallow to avoid false dichotomies.\textsuperscript{35} Although Carson’s critique is selective and does not recognise the diversity of emerging churches, his questions and challenges are worth considering. Emerging


\textsuperscript{33}McLaren, \textit{New Kind of Christian}, 38.


churches need a firm commitment to Scripture and truth claims as well as experience and cultural engagement.\textsuperscript{36}

Frost and Hirsch distinguish Forge’s missional focus from what they describe as the renewal focus of Emergent. They were quick to assert that Carson’s critique, as well as misrepresenting McLaren to some extent, is not fair to apply to Australian EMCs. Rather than reinterpreting the gospel and spirituality in light of postmodernity, Forge has focused on developing a missional ecclesiology. They have generally maintained a more theologically conservative constituency. While Emergent declines to establish a statement of faith, considering it unhelpful for postmodernity, Forge affirms the Lausanne Covenant, convinced that a clearly framed theological approach best supports their missiological agenda.\textsuperscript{37} Frost and Hirsch assert that while they are committed to a radical missiology, they still find their roots and inspiration in orthodox theology. As Forge leaders they do not want to distance themselves from Emergent\textit{ per se}, but are wary of the ‘post-foundationalism’ and ‘post-evangelical’ theology which some Emergent leaders espouse.\textsuperscript{38}

Yet Frost and Hirsch overlap in many areas with McLaren, and one of these is their emphasis on cultivating spiritual search and experience of God.\textsuperscript{39} They urge helping people to experience Jesus and not be ‘sidetracked’ by intellectual arguments and doctrinal disputes:


\textsuperscript{38}Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, ‘Don Carson and the Australian Missional Church Movement: A Forge Response to \textit{Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church}’, (Internal conversation paper, 2005), 2, 6-9; Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 13-34; see also Scot McKnight, ‘Five Streams of the Emerging Church’, \textit{Christianity Today} 51, 2 (February 2007), 34-39; Dave Tomlinson, \textit{The Post-Evangelical} (London: Triangle, 1995).

\textsuperscript{39}Frost and Hirsch, \textit{Shaping}, 95-107.
Our evangelism in the emerging global culture needs to offer a real *encounter* with Jesus, and not merely a doctrine of Jesus. To be sure, it must be an experience that is biblically accurate, but it must be experience nonetheless. We need to get over our addictions to *gnosis* and need to find a more biblical way of expressing our faith through active trust in him.40

A risk of deriding gnosis is the false dichotomy of emphasising experience over rational insight. Modern Enlightenment-based theology overemphasised reason, just as the medieval church overemphasised tradition. But this does not validate an overemphasis on experience of God to redress the imbalance. Sociologists of religion are recognising a post-Enlightenment preference in religion for experience and emotion over tradition or reason.41 Inviting postmoderns to seek experience of God may be a good place to start in evangelism, yet reason and tradition are equally necessary.

Another appeal Frost and Hirsch share with McLaren, and Dave Tomlinson’s ‘post-evangelical’ approach, is to allow grace and space for mystery, doubt and theological questioning.42 It is appropriate to stand for truth but also appropriate to allow space for others to question truth. Some church leavers attribute their exit to an experience of churches which dismissed their questions or insisted on absolutes in areas which seemed non-essential to them. New Zealand pastor and sociologist Alan Jamieson studied why people leave evangelical/ Pentecostal/ charismatic (EPC) churches. He relates their journeys to James Fowler’s stages of faith development and says we need leaver-sensitive churches and liminal groups, like some emerging churches, where ‘leavers’ can explore their questions and emotions safely.43 This is part of what motivates McLaren to focus on journeying with people, and exploring questions and dilemmas, rather than simply asserting doctrine.

Prominent frameworks

To understand emerging church frameworks this chapter considers Frost and Hirsch’s rhetoric about emerging churches. The previous sections examined the influence of Newbigin, Bosch, Roxburgh and McLaren and the broader GOCN and Emergent networks. The next sections examine Frost and Hirsch’s categories and frameworks for forming EMCs. They propose distinctive categories for reframing history, mission, community and organisational systems. They understand their historical context as post-Christendom. They espouse an approach to mission which is distinctively incarnational. For community belonging they draw on social set theory to advocate a centred-set approach. And for organisational life they espouse an organic system approach. These are frameworks which *Shaping* stresses and which reappear in some of the strategies of the emerging church case studies.

Post-Christendom history

Frost and Hirsch draw on Bosch and his reading of mission and church history, but divide history simply into three periods: apostolic and post-apostolic AD 32-313, Christendom 313 to current, and the emerging missional mode.\(^{44}\) This ignores a lot about church history that Bosch’s categories do better to explain, but Frost and Hirsch argue Christendom’s rise and decline is the most significant historical factor influencing the church’s role in mission.\(^ {45}\) Bosch refers to the significance of the coming of Christendom but does not describe it as a change of mission paradigm.\(^ {46}\) Frost and Hirsch imply nothing has transformed the church and its capacity for living out the mission of God more than *corpus Christianum* (viz. Christendom).

Considering Christendom and its influence on mission is helpful in understanding how and why mission was relegated to a specialty department of the church. For its first three centuries the church was marginalised and persecuted as a subversive

\(^{44}\) Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, 8-16.


group. But after 313, when Constantine legalised Christianity, and then even more so after 380 when Theodosius adopted Christianity as the Empire’s official religion, the church grew in favour and power as the moral and spiritual centerpiece of civilisation. Some perceive this as a victory of Christianity or at least a contextually appropriate understanding of the church and its relationship to the Empire. Newbigin acknowledges that although it led in absurd directions, it was an experiment that had to be made to express the message of the universal reign of God.\textsuperscript{47} However, Frost, Hirsch and other emerging church writers join other historians and theologians in claiming that Christendom exchanged a dynamic and grassroots movement for a hierarchical and elitist institution, and that it was not the only alternative.\textsuperscript{48}

Christendom brought a favored status and less persecution to the church but also a focus on maintenance, proclivity to state-sanctioned violence and a sidelining of mission.\textsuperscript{49} There were notable exceptions, such as the monastic movement, which Frost and Hirsch generally ignore. But overall as the church became less marginalised and more central to society, mission became more marginalised and became the role of professionals on the frontiers of the Empire. Furthermore, Frost and Hirsch suggest that with Christendom’s decline after the Enlightenment the church has been forced to the margins of public life but still largely maintains Christendom assumptions.\textsuperscript{50} It is critical to realise the ‘post-Christendom’ context the church finds itself in, which Stuart Murray defines as: ‘a culture in which central features of the Christian story are unknown and churches are alien institutions whose rhythms do not normally impinge on most members of society’.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{47}Lesslie Newbigin, \textit{The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches} (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 34.


\textsuperscript{50}Frost and Hirsch, \textit{Shaping}, 9.

\textsuperscript{51}Murray, \textit{Post-Christendom}, 1.
Frost and Hirsch use their analysis of the ‘post-Christendom’ context to pragmatically argue for new missional structures. Influenced by Newbigin, Bosch and GOCN, they argue the church cannot just expect people to come to the church; the church needs to go to people. They have articulated the need to see mission as the calling of all followers of Jesus and not just for professionals in far off places. They emphasise the importance of reaching subcultures with the gospel and not presuming that a local church will reach everyone in their parish. To borrow from the words of church consultant Loren Mead, they want to leave behind the ‘relics of Christendom’ that restrict mission to far-off places, ministry as the job of the professionals and congregations as having their ‘turf’.

They are joining the voices calling for mission which ‘starts at the church’s front door’, the ministry of the laity or the whole people of God and a spirituality which relates faith to the workplace and everyday life.

This is part of the challenge as the church moves into a new era beyond Christendom and re-clarifies its mission to include domestic missiology.

Post-Christendom is Frost and Hirsch’s preferred historical category for mission in the West because it critiques what they perceive is the dominant model for church in society, but there are alternative perspectives found in other emerging church literature. Some emerging church writers have focused on engaging postmodern culture, its approach to truth and its renewed focus on community and spiritual search. McLaren now majors instead on postcolonialism and the associated

57 E.g., Kimball, Emerging Church; McLaren, Church on the Other Side; Sweet, SoulTsunami.
struggles for global justice and mutuality in mission. Others are grappling with engaging and communicating in an electronic and increasingly digital culture. This includes those exploring ‘alternative worship’, on-line spiritual communities, and weblogs or ‘blogs’. But rather than talking merely about a post-Christendom, post-modern, post-book, post-secular or post-anything church, Frost and Hirsch focus on fostering a ‘missional’ church which gives priority to joining in with God’s mission.

Incarnational mission

If post-Christendom is Frost and Hirsch’s dominant framework for understanding history, ‘incarnational ecclesiology’ is their primary framework for missionary practice. They argue that as the fruit of God’s Incarnation, the people of God should be incarnational by entering into a culture, identifying with the people and experiencing life as an insider. By becoming part of the culture they can help people

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63 Alan Hirsch, Forge founding director, Interview by the author, Ringwood (10 May 2007).

to experience Jesus and grow in faith within the culture rather than extracting them from it. Their vision is of a ‘go to them’ rather than ‘come to us’, missional rather than extractional, and incarnational rather than attractional approach.

Rather than focusing on developing programs to attract people to church to meet God, the theory is that God’s people join community groups and make the most of neighbourhood and work relationships. Frost and Hirsch encourage utilising what Ray Oldenburg describes as ‘third places’: pubs, cafés, clubs and interest groups that people use – after the home and workplace – as informal public gathering places.65 The priority for any programs, according to Frost and Hirsch, is developing proximity spaces for Christians and ‘not-yet Christians’ to interact meaningfully, shared projects to engage together in useful community activities and commercial enterprises to establish relationships and address particular needs.66 Their incarnational ecclesiology starts with mission and community engagement and hopes that out of it church will emerge.

Emerging churches often say they are not building-focused, yet they accept the right buildings can be a helpful tool and an important symbol for incarnational mission. Meeting in a public space communicates incarnational intent, if in fact ‘the medium is the message’ as Marshall McLuhan suggested.67 Frost and Hirsch maintain that buildings impact how churches see themselves, paraphrasing McLuhan: ‘We shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us’.68 ‘Invading secular space’ is an incarnational tool to help unchurched people feel comfortable with the context of a gathering.69 Dedicated religious buildings can communicate a non-incarnational or extractional posture, inviting people to come away from the world in order to be with God and God’s people. On the other hand, finding contemplative space out of the

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busy world can empower people for mission in the world. This is a point Frost and Hirsch do not develop. Setting aside ‘religious space’ as sacred can remind worshippers of a sacred perspective on life to take out into the world and does not mean that ‘secular space’ is necessarily profane. Nevertheless, utilising secular space for sacred purposes embodies and demonstrates the non-dualistic ethos of EMCs.

Some writers question the usefulness of suggesting an incarnational versus attractional dichotomy, particularly when they feel their attractional evangelism methods come into question. Hirsch concedes that the missional-incarnational model of church will develop communities which are culturally attractive, but not rely on attraction as the primary missional approach. Moreover, he does not deny the potential fruitfulness of ‘evangelistic-attractional’ methods but says that they will likely only ever reach a certain segment of the population. He implies they have difficulty crossing the post-Christendom cultural distance which separates many people from contemporary church culture. But a critical question is whether incarnational rhetoric is any more empowering for mission to unchurched people than churches who adopt attractional approaches, or combine attractional and incarnational approaches. National Church Life Survey (NCLS) advocates incarnational and attractional indicators for evaluating missional effectiveness, and NCLS survey data is helpful in starting to evaluate how incarnational and/or attractional emerging churches actually are in comparison to other churches.

As well as the pragmatic debate about what works, there is a theological debate about the appropriateness of incarnational mission. Some have argued that the incarnation is a one-off event, that it cannot be used as a model for mission and that it is arrogant to suggest the church can compare with the incarnating mission of Jesus Christ.

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70 E.g., Chad Hall, ‘Missional: Possible Steps to Transform a Consumer Church into a Missional Church’, *Leadership Journal* (Winter 2007), 35.
Ross Langmead critiques this position with his overview of incarnational mission across Christian traditions. Moreover, he argues for the particular appropriateness for Australia of an incarnational approach to mission that shows practical concern. He affirms Frost and Hirsch for pointing to the need for ‘proximity spaces’ to engage people outside the church in natural and neutral territory. Incarnational mission is both faithful to Scripture and appropriate to Australian culture.

Frost and Hirsch are hardly the first to advocate incarnational mission for the West, nor are they the only influential voices for emerging churches. Melbourne-based leaders in the ‘radical discipleship’ movement such as Athol Gill, John Smith and Ashley Barker exercised innovative incarnational mission in Melbourne and beyond. Roxburgh’s incarnational community-engaging ethos, influential in emerging church circles, has already been referred to above. Australian pastor James Thwaites urges churches to move beyond their focus on congregations, meetings and programs and empower people to impact all of creation including relationships and the workplace. UK writer Pete Ward contends church life belongs immersed in the liquid nature of culture and relationships rather than relying on a gathered ‘solid church’ with buildings and weekly meetings. These late-twentieth century spokespeople carry on the tradition of church renewal movements, from monastic mission through the Protestant Reformation to the evangelical renewal of Puritans.

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and Pietists. Although not the only advocates of incarnational mission, emerging church writers are prompting creative reflection on how to take the gospel to people outside the church rather than relying predominantly on people coming to them.

**Centred-set communities**

Another prominent framework, related to incarnational mission, is Frost and Hirsch’s preference for centred-set communities. They draw on social set theory to describe how people gather together in different ways – in bounded, centred or fuzzy sets. The theory is that people in bounded sets have clearly delineated boundaries. People are considered ‘in’ or ‘out’ depending on their beliefs and behaviour, or listing on a membership roll, but not necessarily a commitment to a strong ideological centre. People in centred sets are defined not as in or out but as closer or further away from the centre. So Christians are classified according to whether they make Jesus the centre of their lives and are journeying towards him.

Frost and Hirsch illustrate the difference by talking about wells and fences. Some farmers build fences around their properties to keep their livestock in and neighbouring livestock out. This is a bounded set. But remote farmers do not waste time with fences. They sink a bore and create a well, assuming cattle will want to stay close to the supply of clean water. This is a centred set. Churches which see themselves as centred sets are not preoccupied with artificial boundaries like adopting certain cultural habits, but recognise that Christ is so precious that people will want to centre their lives around him. Centred-set evangelism respectfully encourages everyone to grow in faith and Christlikeness. It assumes people long to know the reason for their existence and seeks to tantalise not-yet Christians into a

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A third option is fuzzy sets. Fuzzy set churches accept anyone, either generally interested or radically committed to Christ, and seek to strengthen their faith. With little emphasis on the need for agreement, the danger of fuzzy sets is relativism and nihilism. By contrast, secularism is the danger of bounded sets with their minimal reference to a strong centre, and idolatry is the danger of centred sets if members grow infatuated with their community or leader.

It is important to discern where the boundaries should exist with centred set theology. Some advocates of a centred set approach to church consider there is some kind of bounded set or at least a permeable boundary within the centred set for an inner core or at least leadership group. So a centred community invites people with diverse beliefs and lifestyles to join, but it is still important to have a bounded leadership or inner-core. Different writers seek to explain the place of boundaries within centred-set thinking, but often fail to understand the distinction of fuzziness and so react against centred-sets, thinking they imply fuzziness. Frost and Hirsch emphasise that a centred set may be soft at the edges but is hard at the centre with a commitment to biblical faith including the authority of Scripture, Resurrection and Trinity. With these core beliefs passionately held, a wide variety of people can gather at the edges. Roxburgh pictures a missional community moving in the direction of the reign of God with a centred set congregation and a bounded set inner core who commit together to practices of the reign of God to help others towards Christlikeness and missional engagement.

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84 Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 118-133.
85 Hirsch, Interview; Olivia Maclean, Solace pastor, Interview #2 by the author, Northcote (17 May 2007).
87 In Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 201-212.
Organic organisational systems

Frost and Hirsch stress the importance of conceptualising a church as a living organism and movement rather than ‘a mechanistic structure’. They advocate understanding the missional church as a dynamic movement in a growing stage of an organisational life cycle rather than predominantly an institution. Rather than focusing on size or programming, missional leaders are encouraged to focus on developing models which are organic, reproducible and sustainable. In *Shaping*, Frost and Hirsch stress the strategic importance of understanding social movements and organic systems and acknowledge there is more work to be done in applying these principles to emerging churches.\(^{88}\) This reinforces that Peter Senge’s systems analysis is a helpful tool for this thesis.\(^{89}\)

Hirsch explores organic systems as one his elements of ‘missional-DNA’ in *The Forgotten Ways*.\(^ {90}\) Rather than an institutional approach to organisation where leaders direct with a command-and-control CEO-approach to leadership, he contends missional movements spread more organically. They have the potential to ‘have the feel of a movement, have structure as a network, and spread like viruses’.\(^ {91}\) When groups network as organic systems, says Hirsch, they can embrace change and flow with the rhythms of life:

Planting a new church, or remissionalizing an existing one, in this approach isn’t primarily about buildings, worship services, size of congregations, and pastoral care, but rather about gearing the whole community around natural discipling friendships, worship as lifestyle, and mission in the context of everyday life. As a living network “in Christ” it can meet anywhere, anytime and still be a viable expression of church. This is a much more organic way to plant a church or to revitalize it.\(^ {92}\)

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89 Senge, *Fifth Discipline*; see pp.31-33 above.
Hirsch’s assumption is that operational leadership and reliance on management, programs and strategic planning is appropriate when the future is more certain, but a more flexible and adaptive approach is appropriate in this time of rapid discontinuous change. He proposes a new paradigm or central story for church as an ‘organic Jesus movement’ instead of a ‘Christendom institution’.  

Hirsch is inspired particularly by Margaret Wheatley’s application of new scientific frameworks and chaos theory to organisational leadership in *Leadership and the New Science*. Its radical basis is that chaos can be creative and positive in any living system including organisations. Leaders may thus revitalise their organisations by following the laws of living systems and enhancing interdependence, networked relationships and grassroots dreaming and planning. This echoes Senge’s approach, outlined in chapter one, for leaders and organisational consultants to recognise the interrelated influence of the parts on a whole system. *Surfing the Edge of Chaos* outlines these basic guidelines, on which Hirsch expands:

1. Foster disequilibrium, because equilibrium is unresponsive to change
2. Surf the edge of chaos, where mutation and experimentation will be fruitful
3. Unleash self-organisation and cultivate emergence
4. Artfully disturb, don’t direct, a living system.

Hirsch discusses how these principles can apply to churches. He urges helping churches to see the adaptive challenges they face and feel the stress of chaos. Instead of a predetermined plan, he counsels cultivating an environment for imagination to emerge and setting people free to spontaneously create new expressions.

**Representative theology**

It is not my intention to deal with every facet of Frost and Hirsch’s approach, let
alone the spectrum of emerging church theories, but to give some insight into the influential theorists, dominant frameworks and now representative theology of *Shaping*. The remainder of the chapter will explore some of the strengths and weaknesses of Frost and Hirsch’s three ‘missional structures’: incarnational ecclesiology, messianic spirituality and apostolic leadership. They go beyond what is necessary in stressing Christology over ecclesiology and exegetically stretching Ephesians 4:11, but they point to some foundational missiological principles which have been formative for emerging churches, at least in theory.

**Missional but underdeveloped ecclesiology**

‘Missional ecclesiology’ is a theological basis for the missional focus of emerging churches. Instead of starting with church forms, missional ecclesiology starts with mission and shapes church around mission.\(^9^8\) Frost and Hirsch espouse going back a step further to form missiology around Christology. This is the basis of Forge’s missional teaching, to start with Christology, let that inform missiology, which in turn shapes ecclesiology.\(^9^9\) Basing ecclesiology purely on missiology, however, can neglect other purposes of the church, and basing ecclesiology and missiology purely on Christology can neglect the contribution of Trinitarian theology.

My understanding of the purpose of the church is to glorify God through worship to God, community with Christian others, spiritual formation in ourselves and mission to those outside the faith. Church renewal requires the integration of all four; no one element in isolation is sufficient.\(^1^0^0\) Robert Warren describes church with three interlocking circles of worship, mission and community, with spirituality holding the three together.\(^1^0^1\) Emerging churches maintain that the categories are often overlapping. For example, mission can happen through community when people are

\(^9^8\) The idea of shaping ecclesiology around the church’s mission was pioneered by Newbigin and developed later in GOCN writings. E.g., Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM, 1957); Guder et al., *Missional Church*.


\(^1^0^1\) Warren, *Being Human, Being Church*, 89.
invited to belong, through worship when they see God’s greatness or through spiritual formation when they are invited to experience the presence of God.

Church is not just about mission. In fact, to do mission effectively, and to nurture people who have been transformed by mission, any church needs to give attention to the other aspects of church. Emerging church practitioners sometimes say they are focusing on mission because it is the first thing which needs focusing on, or because churches have been so unbalanced in looking after themselves that they need recalibration. But an imbalance in one direction does not justify an unhealthy imbalance in the other direction. Sometimes emerging churches decide to start with a focus on worship or community and then foster further mission.\(^{102}\) I am not suggesting that a missional focus, or even priority, in itself is unhealthy, but that missional focus without an undergirding plan for nurture is unsustainable and therefore unhealthy. A purely mission focus fosters a deficient ecclesiology.

Although prioritising mission throughout, *Shaping* does refer to other aspects of church life as important. It is not uncommon in emerging circles to suggest that three Christians meeting in a café are church. Frost and Hirsch argue that church, or *ekklesia*, is a regular gathering of people which fosters relationships with God/Christ (Communion), one another (Community) and the world (Commission). As displayed in the first church gatherings (Acts 2:42-47), these three priorities interact and encapsulate six features: Communion includes worship and Bible teaching, Community includes formation and fellowship, and Commission includes serving the needy and sharing the gospel. A church does not have to meet in a dedicated building and have hired staff, but it does have to incorporate these elements into its life in some form.\(^{103}\) Church is ‘churching’ if it incorporates elements of these three C’s – whether a small group which meets in a café or a larger community in a dedicated building. And although they prioritise the missional aspect of church, at this point Frost and Hirsch contend that each of the features is equally important:

> Any emphasis on one at the expense of the others is folly. For a church to claim that it “specializes” in worship or teaching is to ignore the

\(^{102}\) M. Murray, *Changing Mission*, 44-120.

\(^{103}\) Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, 76-80.
whole counsel of the New Testament. Worship that is in some way divorced from mission is counterfeit worship. And likewise, a missioning community that is not informed, inspired, and renewed through godly worship is a pale shadow of what church should be.  

When missional groups, church or parachurch, separate worship from mission, or mission from worship, they impoverish and undermine the holistic nature of church.

**Figure 7: Church 101**

Frost expands further on the nature of church in *Exiles.* He seeks to move away from a static meaning of church dominated by Sunday activities. He maintains church does not need a building or liturgy. But to suggest from Matthew 18:20 ‘where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them’ that any few Christians together is church also cheapens the concept: ‘If the sum total of my communal experience of following Jesus is limited to occasional, irregular gatherings of people who have neither asked for a commitment from me nor offered any to me, surely something is missing.’ He recognises that communion,

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community and commission can be as present in parachurch organisations as churches and so explores what is foundational for missional community and ‘doing church’. He proposes four essential features: (1) Trinitarian theology, as a framework and spiritual glue for community; (2) covenantal expression, committing to a way of life together; (3) catholic orientation, conscious of their part in the broader church; and (4) missional intent, which gives a common goal and a locus to form around. These are good frameworks for emerging churches, or any kind of church. Missional intent, however, is the only one of the four elements which Frost and Hirsch explores in any depth, which risks implying an underdeveloped ecclesiology.

A sound Trinitarian understanding, for example, is a basis for healthy mission and community. There are two streams of how Trinitarian theology influences missiology and ecclesiology. Firstly, there is an understanding of the sending work of God: the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, and the Trinitarian godhead sending the church. Mission, said Newbigin, is logically best viewed ‘as the proclaiming of the kingdom of the Father, as sharing the life of the Son, and as bearing the witness of the Spirit.’ The other Trinitarian stream deals with the interrelatedness of three persons within the Godhead and how this social reality is reflected in the church. God in three persons models community life and invites people into the life and community of God, or more poetically the perichoresis; the movement or dance of God.

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108 Frost, Exiles, 145-156; cf. fresh articulations of the ancient confession of Church as ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic’ in: Cray, Mission-Shaped Church, 96-100; George Lings, ‘Unravelling the DNA of Church: How Can We Know That What Is Emerging Is “Church”?’ International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church 6, 1 (March 2006), 114.
112 John D Zizioulas, Being as Communion (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary, 1985).
The EMC literature is just starting to engage Trinitarian theology. Social Trinitarian theology, or perichoresis, is popularised in some emerging churches in Melbourne by Baxter Kruger and more broadly by Pete Ward. Gary Simpson outlines how missio Dei has permeated the missional church but the more recent social Trinitarianism has not reached, much less permeated, EMCs. Hirsch’s discussion of the Trinity in The Forgotten Ways is limited to the triune Creator-God and the theological consistency of learning from organic systems, which God created. He does not draw on Trinitarian reflection for his discussion of community and communitas or mission more broadly. Frost recognises the need for further Trinitarian reflection for missional churches and warns against hierarchicalism and downplaying the triunity of God, but he is yet to develop his ideas further. Frost and Hirsch welcome the Christ-centred ‘sending’ aspect of Trinitarian theology, but question whether a social doctrine of the Trinity is necessary for mission. They prefer to approach the Trinity through Christology and focus on the monotheism of the Shema and Jesus is Lord as discussed in the next section. Trinitarian theology is likely to be a matter of discussion among emerging churches over coming years. The EMC movement, as typified in Shaping, appropriately focuses on the mission of the church based on a fresh understanding of Jesus, but risks an underdeveloped ecclesiology if it ignores other purposes of the church or the Trinity.

**Messianic or everyday spirituality**

Another distinctive of missional churches which Frost and Hirsch advocate is non-dualistic and Jewish-inspired ‘messianic spirituality’. Their stated agenda is to

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115 Ward, *Liquid Church*.
critique dualistic approaches to life which limit faith to the ‘sacred’ sphere of private belief and which warn against too much ‘secular’ entanglement. In Hebraic thought, which inspires Frost and Hirsch, there is no ‘secular’ sphere because all of life can be embraced as sacred. They draw heavily on the analysis of Martin Buber, who argues that Hebraic thought enhances the ‘hallowing of the everyday’ and that common tasks can be made holy when done with intentionality toward God.\textsuperscript{122}

Messianic spirituality relates to the practical implication of Jewish monotheism that God is the one God over all of life.\textsuperscript{123} Israel’s confession that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4) has implications for the nature of God’s being. But more importantly it asserted that God is different from the gods of their polytheistic neighbours and expects Israel’s loyalty in every aspect of life. It is a practical monotheism. The first element of missional-DNA which Hirsch explores is the related confession, ‘Jesus is Lord’, which recognises the claims of Jesus over all of life.\textsuperscript{124} He contends for a broad view of what is sacred:

> Following the impulses of biblical monotheism rather than setting up some sacred spaces, our task is to make all aspects and dimensions of life sacred – family, work, play, conflict, etc. – and not to limit the presence of God to spooky religious zones.\textsuperscript{125}

He makes little allowance for the place of dedicated sacred space and its role in helping people recognise the sacred and take that perspective out into the world. Hirsch’s focus is to critique what he refers to as a dominant Christendom perspective which suggests God can be found more readily in the Sunday worship sanctuary than in everyday life.

Frost expands on a life-embracing approach to worship and mission which incorporates missional service as well as singing, and Monday to Saturday as well as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{122}Martin Buber, \textit{Mamre: Essays in Religion} (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1946), 78; Frost and Hirsch, \textit{Shaping}, 130.
  \item \textsuperscript{124}Hirsch, \textit{Forgotten Ways}, 83-100.
  \item \textsuperscript{125}Hirsch, \textit{Forgotten Ways}, 95.
\end{itemize}
Sunday. He critiques a predominantly Sunday-based and music-focused approach to worship and a ‘clericalism’ which does not affirm the sacredness of teaching, nursing and parenting. He applauds people working in architecture, retail and beer brewing who have integrated their work with mission and contributed to social justice and environmental care. In an earlier book, Frost urges having ‘eyes wide open’ to see God working in the mundane and ordinary events of life. He suggests that practising the presence of Christ is about keeping the soul’s gaze on God as Brother Lawrence taught, but also demonstrating hospitality, generosity, justice, environmental stewardship and mission. Arguably, there is an ‘ordinariness’ in Australian spirituality drawing on down-to-earth cultural values and indigenous perspectives in which God’s Spirit is not perceived as departed from the earth but present under our feet. Recognising that everyday life can be received as a gift and responded to as an act of worship comes naturally in Australia for many.

Frost and Hirsch, and the EMCs they inspire, are searching for a spirituality which sustains their missionary engagement. They describe action as a sacrament, believing missional activity, interpreted broadly, can be an avenue for encountering God and expressing faith. Newbigin argued for the ‘Cross Model’ of spirituality which expresses total identification with the world and radical separation from it, rather than the ‘Jonah Model’ of being sent into the city’s turmoil or the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress Model’ which escapes from the world for spiritual nourishment. Similarly, Frost and Hirsch maintain that a life of outer active service is the best context for inner reflective practices: ‘one worships more fully, prays more deeply, and studies more diligently when all are done in the context of a life of action’. Messianic spirituality, rooted in the life and teaching of Jesus, invites people to inner and outer

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126 Frost, Exiles, 97.
127 Michael Frost, Eyes Wide Open: Seeing God in the Ordinary (Sydney: Albatross, 1998), 100-188.
128 Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1982), 69; Frost, Exiles, 64-70.
131 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 143.
engagement. Hirsch believes that followers of Jesus extend in some way Jesus’ messianic ministry in acting redemptively as his messianic agents in the world.\textsuperscript{132}

Frost and Hirsch focus on messianic spirituality, but another theological motif for everyday spirituality and mission is the kingdom of God. Newbigin declared that the church is the ‘sign, instrument, and foretaste’ of God’s reign.\textsuperscript{133} Emergent writers explore how the kingdom of God broadens the implications of faith and salvation beyond a privatised and individualised approach to an understanding of mission in all of life. For example, paraphrasing Dan Kimball, a Kingdom-focused message is ‘Say sorry to God, and now live as his redeemed co-worker in what God is doing in the world, and when you die enjoy eternity with the one you are living your life for.’\textsuperscript{134} Making the world a beautiful place that will please God is the role of all of God’s people, as McLaren suggests in this affirmation of everyday vocations:

\begin{quote}
What if the real difference is made in the world not by us preachers but by those who endure our preaching, those who quietly live out the secret message of the kingdom of God in their daily, workaday lives in the laboratory, classroom, office, cockpit, parliament, kitchen, market, factory, and neighborhood?\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

God is a worker, to borrow from Robert Banks’ book by that title, and the people of God are apprentices under God working to foster the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{136} Helping all spheres become places where God’s dreams come true is the focus of the kingdom of God, and this is becoming a central motif for emergent theologising and some emerging churches.\textsuperscript{137}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[132]{Alan Hirsch, ‘Messianic Spirituality Terminology’, Email to the Author (9 February 2008).}
\footnotetext[133]{Newbigin, \textit{The Open Secret}, 110.}
\footnotetext[136]{Robert Banks, \textit{God the Worker: Journeys into the Mind, Heart and Imagination of God} (Sydney: Albatross, 1992); Frost, \textit{Exiles}, 177-200.}
\footnotetext[137]{Guder et al., \textit{Missional Church}, 77-109; McLaren, \textit{Secret Message}, 140-142, 203.}
\end{footnotes}
Apostolic but overextended APEST leadership

A final representative aspect of Frost and Hirsch’s theology is their teaching on ‘apostolic leadership’. They use ‘apostolic’ leadership in reference to the kind of pioneering task which apostolic leaders share with the early apostles. They call for a pioneering approach to leadership which cultivates imagination for new approaches and develops appropriate processes for change and innovation. They suggest mission should be an art form, and that without creativity church can become dull and predictable. They urge us to imagine ways of doing church which are different from what they claim are dominant Christendom models.

Frost and Hirsch have ‘adopted a genius’ in Albert Einstein who inspires them to think beyond normal boundaries and exercise imagination as a resource for mission. They refer to three quotes of Einstein esteeming the importance of imagination:

I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.

If you can’t imagine it, you can’t do it.

The kind of thinking that will solve the world’s problems will be of a different order to the kind of thinking that created them in the first place.

They thus appeal to churches to be prepared to take risks, imagine alternative ways of expressing church and experiment like mad. This is particularly important, they say, in this time of paradigm change. For inspiration they outline stories from around the world of creative new ways of ‘doing church’ and suggest some tools and techniques for cultivating fresh ideas.

Churches need help and strategies in thinking ‘outside the box’. Frost and Hirsch suggest starting by fostering holy dissatisfaction and embracing subversive

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138 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 163-223.
139 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 182-184.
140 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 185-189, 198.
questioning. Questions which can prompt fresh imagination and perspectives include, ‘is a church still a church if it doesn’t function like one anymore?’, ‘If you were to start over, would you do it same way?’ and ‘What difference would it make if your church had no building, Sunday meeting or staff?’. Such questions help people realise their entrenchment in Christendom models. Furthermore, Frost and Hirsch encourage aspiring missional leaders and change agents to learn from the margins, take more risks and foster a climate of change. The lateral creative thinking tools of Edward De Bono, such as the Six Thinking Hats, offer systematic approaches to broadening ways of thinking about issues and inviting use of both facts and hunches, pessimism and optimism, lateral and focused thinking.

Frost and Hirsch call for church leaders who are not just pastors who care for God’s people and teachers who teach the wisdom of God, but apostles who will pioneer new mission, prophets who will question the status quo and evangelists who take the message beyond the church. They are convinced that traditional ministry training models have neglected apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic functions and focused on training for pastoring and teaching. The acronym APEPT (or APEST) refers to the total ‘fivefold ministry pattern’ of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors (or Shepherds) and Teachers. In Ephesians 4, after an appeal to unity (vv.1-6) and a declaration that the ascended Christ has gifted his people (vv.7-10), Paul recognises the diversity of APEST leadership which God gives the church. APEST in turn empowers the church for service and establishes unity and maturity:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (vv.11-13).

141 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 191-196.
143 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 165-180, 219. Although Shaping refers to APEPT, I follow Hirsch’s recent usage of APEST with ‘S’ for shepherding rather than ‘P’ for pastoring which can be confused with the ‘P’ for prophetic, and more importantly shepherding describing the function whereas pastoring is often a generic reference to church leadership. See http://www.theforgottenways.org/.
This passage shows that those called to lead the church are to equip the whole people of God for ministry.\textsuperscript{144} Frost and Hirsch advocate for the ministry of all believers and prioritise the enabling nature of APEST ministerial leaders.

In their eagerness to elevate the importance of equipping all Christians, Frost and Hirsch suggest that not only are APEST leaders to equip God’s people for their ministry, but that the whole church is gifted with APEST functions. They base this on linking the ministry charismata of verse 7 (‘Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift’) with the description of officials in verse 11 (‘the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles [and so on]’).\textsuperscript{145} They argue that churches function best when the APEST functions are represented in leadership as a ‘leadership matrix’ and throughout the church as a broader ‘ministry matrix’. The different functions of APEST are helpful categories for the diversity of ministry a church needs. Furthermore, as \textit{Shaping} suggests, APEST is reflected in a general tendency for any organisation to include people with entrepreneurial, questioning, recruiting, humanising and systematising leadership styles.\textsuperscript{146} It is reasonable sociology in describing group composition. However, the focus of Ephesians 4:11-12 is not attributing one or more APEST gifts to all believers but celebrating a variety of APEST leaders who help the body of believers do their ministry. Such ministry may include APEST functions, but may instead encompass any other gifts Paul refers to elsewhere (1 Cor 12:4-30; Rom 12:6-8), or other gifts appropriate to a person’s vocation. Mission-shaped churches like to celebrate the mission of all believers in their everyday lives, and not just esteem the ministry of pastoral leaders, but this can be done without extending APEST to include everyone.

In summary, Frost and Hirsch draw on Newbigin, Bosch and the Gospel and Our Culture Network, and interact with Emergent, to focus on the post-Christendom mission field of the West. They argue that emerging churches need to have missional structures, incarnational ecclesiology, messianic spirituality and apostolic leadership. They call for a reshaped approach to community as a centred set and organisational

\textsuperscript{144}Stevens, \textit{Abolition of the Laity}, 22, 30, 51-52, 148-149. For a contrary revisionist view, see: John N Collins, \textit{Are All Christians Ministers?} (Sydney: E J Dwyer, 1992), 14-40.

\textsuperscript{145}Frost and Hirsch, \textit{Shaping}, 170-171.

\textsuperscript{146}Frost and Hirsch, \textit{Shaping}, 173-175.
systems that are organic. This chapter discussed these and other features, drawing also on broader emerging church and missiological literature, in order to prepare for the analysis and evaluation of the rest of the thesis. If Shaping presents a supra-cultural idealist perspective, to use Neil Ormerod’s ecclesiological categories, then what of the historical realist implications? What reality of church does Shaping and the ‘canon’ of idealist emerging church literature inspire? The next four chapters will introduce each case study and the key cultural features I observed. It is an overview of ‘the shaping of things now’ in these four emerging churches. I will further evaluate and develop the framework of this chapter through the lens of the four emerging church case studies.

147 Ormerod, ‘Recent Ecclesiology’, 58-60.
CHAPTER 3

CONNECTION, A DRAMATIC REINVENTION

Connecting with God and People
(Connection mission statement)

Connection Community is a reinvented Church of Christ in Croydon that was led by Wayne and Paula Nebauer.¹ One of Connection’s expressions of church is ‘601’, which in 2006 met at Maroondah Secondary College on Sunday evenings sometime after 6:00pm.

On May 28 Farris² reflects on One Flew Over the Cuckoo Nest as part of a baptism service.³ He combines movie clips with philosophical and pastoral commentary. ‘Dr’ McMurphy, for example, takes some of the patients on a fishing trip and accepts them, which Farris says is like Jesus who took his disciples fishing and helped them discover their identity and purpose. The message is at the beginning of the service – Connection changes the order to suit the occasion and to foster a culture of change. The topic is focused around a particular movie – as with other messages that month on Lord of the Rings, Shrek, Amilie and The Ten Commandments. Most Connection


²I refer to church participants with a first name pseudonym, except when quoting published documents or pastors. For pastors I use the full name for the first reference in each chapter and thereafter first name. First names may suggest a level of familiarity that is normally inappropriate for academic reporting. However, first names distinguish case study participants from literature sources, and participant-observation brought a ‘first name’ level of familiarity between researcher and participants that is not entirely inappropriate to reflect.

services utilise multimedia input including movie clips. The singing that follows is typical of contemporary-styled praise and worship – loud, enthusiastic, repetitive and following multiple musicians and digitally projected words. Connection swap different parts of the service around, but the worship singing and message are packaged in a similar format to contemporary ‘seeker-sensitive’ churches.

Chris Spratt, one of the pastors, introduces baptism by declaring it is a ‘cool’ thing to do as a public sign of cleansing and following Jesus. Lewis, the first young adult to be baptised, shares his testimony of radical change. For five years he was pursuing stardom, sex, drugs and rock and roll. Then he travelled twice to the Philippines in 2005 with others from Connection. He ‘let God in’ and felt called to mission. Connection has a tradition of one or two friends saying something at baptisms, and Lewis invites his friend Karl from outside the church. Karl shares: ‘We spent millions of hours talking about love and God and music, and he went to the Philippines and found God and ditched me in the midst of our rock stardom. It’s the best thing I’ve ever seen him do’. Another pastor, Nathan Crouch, questions Lewis about whether he believes in Jesus. He replies ‘Yes I do, your honour’. Nathan immerses him in the hired hot-tub and announces him ‘dunked’. The informal language is an attempt at relevance but its levity shows a rarefied culture where even the most sacred event of ‘death’ and resurrection is arguably trivialised. It points to a common theology of worship and sacrament, which may on the one hand be more accessible, but on the other hand downplays any sense of awe and mystery.

The other baptism candidate, Annette, describes in a video clip her journey in high school away from God, her struggles with depression and eating disorders and what baptism means to her. The snippets of her conversation give insight into her faith, and the video puts the testimony into a more creative format than a traditional five-minute narrative. Two friends express how proud they are of her and share verses of Scripture. After the baptisms, forty people come forward to lay hands on Annette and Lewis to pray. The service finishes with this united and prayerful scene.

Connection Church of Christ started in 2001 with a vision to ‘do church’ differently for a new century. In Stuart Murray’s terms, it emerged from an inherited church and
was predominantly reshaped around mission.\(^4\) It was birthed out of Croydon Church of Christ, which was 128 years old, founded in 1873, but tired and diminishing in numbers. The church sold its property, called Wayne and Paula as leaders and explored afresh how to do church. Since those early days, Connection has fostered a passion for community, a flare for creativity and a desire to see how Christ relates to everyday life. They have been on the move a number of times, outgrowing two Sunday night venues and starting a Sunday morning ‘Life Connection’ gathering in local bistros.

Key community ministries include involvement at Maroondah Secondary College, ‘Kids@Play’ playgroups, and the Dining Room – a weekly meal for anyone who needs it in St John’s Anglican Church hall, Croydon. Programs for children and youth, midweek Bible courses, home groups and CPR (‘Care, Purity and Relationship’) accountability groups help people grow in their faith. Creative arts are featured through drama, plays, multimedia at most gatherings and vibrant worship music on Sunday evenings. For the last three years an internship program has added staff and part-time helpers. Open Homes, a hospitality-based and inclusive network of small groups, is a new expression of church complementing Sunday gatherings.\(^5\)

Connection was founded around intentional relationships. The vision of its experiment in church life is ‘connecting with God and people’. Its prime directive is ‘to be a vibrant and creative faith community that passionately pursues God and loves people’. The seven key cultural values Connection seeks to intentionally cultivate are:

- pursuit of God
- outward focus
- building up people
- giving
- leadership development
- creative fun
- change.

\(^4\)Murray, Changing Mission, 42-44.

Connection also seeks to be characterised by being casual, friendly, creative, celebrative and team-oriented. The leaders aspire to cultivate a culture-driven church, working towards these values, rather than primarily aiming for growth in numbers.

A key narrative of Connection’s people and culture is their story of new hope and growth. The remnant of people at Croydon Church of Christ held together, largely because the young people liked each other and the parents wanted to persevere for their children. They were tired from administering a retirement home and conflicting with previous pastors. Yet there was a history of innovation in worship and leadership development. Rohan, for example, who led the youth group, used innovative multimedia communication and invested in the next generation of youth leaders. Wayne and Paula built on the heritage of perseverance and drew people together to dream about reinventing the church. Wayne describes it metaphorically as ‘a spark coming out of the ashes’. They tried new things and encouraged people to start community-focused ministries. The clear vision to develop an intentionally missional focus and creative approach to worship paid off as the church grew from thirty to a hundred people in Connection’s first eighteen months.

Four of the distinctive features of Connection which leaders and participants refer to and which have brought new hope and growth are its culture of innovation and change, its Sunday ‘shop windows’ to introduce people to church, seeing mission as community service and empowering people to live out their passions.

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7Nathan Crouch, Connection Director of Staff and Ministry Development, Interview by the author, Croydon (3 May 2006).
8Oscar, Life Connection leader, Interview by the author, Heidelberg (29 May 2006).
9Wayne Nebauer, Connection Team Leader, Interview by the author, Wonga Park (21 September 2006).
Innovation

Innovation has been a particular feature of Connection from its beginning. The young adults at the core of Croydon Church of Christ were eager to do new things and their parents were content their children were continuing in faith and enjoying church. Wayne and Paula were passionate about new expressions of church, particularly to help young adults connect with God.\textsuperscript{11} When they first met together on retreats to dream about where the new church would go, they practised ‘green-light thinking’ at retreats to release imaginative ideas. Paula said this process got people thinking outside the box: ‘It took people from thinking in a small box to thinking … God is the God of the impossible’.\textsuperscript{12} Dreaming about innovation helped form a shared vision and foster team learning, both important dimensions of any learning organisation.\textsuperscript{13}

On retreat they renamed the church ‘Connection’ and started articulating their core values, including developing a culture of change:

\begin{quote}
We want to create a culture where, at a personal and corporate level change is continuous and expected, where we keep striving to go to the next level, where we avoid stagnation, complacency and mediocrity, where we strive for excellence and relevance. Change is inevitable – let’s embrace it!\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

Some people say, ‘Let’s not just change for the sake of it’, but most Connection leaders believe there is virtue in change for its own sake. It communicates willingness to change and helps people get used to change at one level in preparation for greater degrees of change. Connection leaders say that Wayne hates the statement, ‘That is the way it has always been done’, and insists that is not a legitimate reason for something to be done or stay the way it is.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11}Paula Nebauer, Connection Team Leader, Interview by the author, Mooroolbark (15 September 2006).
\bibitem{12}P Nebauer, Interview.
\bibitem{13}Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 205-269.
\bibitem{14}Nebauer, ‘Connection Pack’, 5.
\bibitem{15}Connection, Focus group #1 by the author, Croydon (21 May 2006).
\end{thebibliography}
The early services of Connection set the pattern for later innovation. When Connection started no Sunday was alike. Leaders planned music, drama, games, input and ‘all sorts of crazy activities’. They moved the stage around or put the seats in different places, or once left the seats stacked up – so that people would not know what to expect. Moving around to different locations also helped foster a culture of change. When people draw a picture to represent Connection, some represent it with a bus and a trailer because they have set up and packed up wherever they went.

Apart from the intrinsic value of new ideas for mission and worship, innovativeness is attractive to a certain type of people and helps cultivate a fresh atmosphere in church life. Isaac, for example, explained why Connection’s desire for change attracted him:

[Change] is usually the enemy of churches, especially traditional churches … Connection is one that wants to change and sometimes even wants to change just for the sake of changing … It is like when you change your room around, it feels weird at first, but then you look at it a week later and you really like it and it’s refreshing … I would like to be part of a Church that was always changing just because they knew that by deliberately doing that they would be awakened, renewing themselves and not getting stuck into a system.

Another example of someone attracted to Connection by its innovation was ‘Iona’ and his family. They were new to Melbourne and for a year did not settle into a church. But Iona loved the laid-back feel of Connection when he first brought his family. He came to Daisy’s Bistro but was redirected to the local park where they were having a barbeque that morning instead of the normal Life Connection. Iona’s family had been Christians before. The missional challenge is for Connection’s innovations to also embrace people who do not have a faith background.

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16W Nebauer, Interview.
17Crouch, Interview. Connection’s wide variety and gypsie-like moves is similar to Willow Creek’s story, which was part of their inspiration. Lyne and Bill Hybels, Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).
18Connection, Focus Group #1.
19Iona, Connection leadership team member, Interview by the author, Ringwood (30 May 2006).
Shop windows

Wayne and Paula spent seven years in Beach Mission programs honing skills in creative programming and relevant communication. Wayne recalls one evening leading ‘Jesus loves me this is I know’ and in one of the front rows a man was singing loudly with a can of VB beer in his hand.\(^{20}\) This prompted Wayne’s desire to explore the kind of church which would be more relevant to the average Aussie. They read about Bill Hybels’ seeker services and caught a vision for non-traditional gatherings that would be friendly to unchurched people.\(^{21}\) They tried some creative expressions at their previous church Wattle Park Gospel Chapel, where Wayne was an associate pastor being groomed to be senior pastor. But in 2000 at a Hillsong Conference,\(^{22}\) Wayne decided the process of changing the existing church was too difficult and felt called to plant a new church. Paula said she felt a similar call, even though she had been at Wattle Park all her life where her father was senior pastor for thirty-six years.\(^{23}\) Perhaps their drive for innovation and change is partly a response to their conservative church background, as well as wanting to do mission which is accessible to Australians without church experience.

One of their concepts is that Sunday gatherings are ‘shop windows’ for church.\(^{24}\) Life Connection and 601 are designed to be accessible, relevant and contemporary in order to attract people into community. It is like window-shopping – when people see something is attractive they may come in closer and see more.\(^{25}\) The first regular public gathering was Sunday evening, which commenced on 20 May 2001 in Yarrunga Community Centre.\(^{26}\) It was a fun and vibrant gathering with games, quality music, drama, multimedia, teaching input, audience participation and

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\(^{20}\)Wayne Nebauer, Personal Conversation with Author, 5 October 2006. For the current Beach Mission equivalent see [http://www.trsufm.org/](http://www.trsufm.org/).

\(^{21}\)Hybels, *Rediscovering Church*.

\(^{22}\)Hillsong, the largest church in Australia, host an annual conference that attracts thirty thousand participants and volunteers. See [http://www2.hillsong.com/media/](http://www2.hillsong.com/media/).

\(^{23}\)P Nebauer, Interview; W Nebauer, Interview.


\(^{25}\)Nathan Crouch and Chris Spratt, Connection pastors, Interview by the author, Croydon (9 June 2006); P Nebauer, Interview.

\(^{26}\)W Nebauer, Interview.
‘anything else we can think of’. 601 has developed as an experiential and inspiring time of corporate worship with a contemporary feel.

As Connection grew and leaders decided to broaden a young adult focus, they explored more family-friendly times and expressions of church. After an aborted attempt to move to Saturday late-afternoons, a group brainstormed about an additional ‘shop window’ on Sunday mornings. Life Connection developed a more relational format with coffee, cake, conversation and usually no singing. The Life Connection team uses multimedia and thoughtful questions to prompt discussion about how God and life connect. Iona describes it as a powerful Socratic, or question-and-answer, style of teaching. Wayne has developed this teaching style into an artform to help people discover and learn things for themselves. Some participants say that sharing and conversation around tables at Life Connection goes deeper than the ‘karaoke and lecture’ format of most mainstream churches. The children’s ministry ‘Outrage’ runs concurrently and its priority, including an employed coordinator, shows that children are important to Connection.

The vision of Connection is to continue to grow as a multiple-congregation church in public buildings. Specifically, the plan is to expand 601 ‘until it fills the largest rental space in the local area’ and to expand the number of Life Connections and establish ‘multiple hotel, restaurant and café gatherings in the outer-east region of Melbourne’. Until July 2006, Sunday gatherings were always in a school hall in the evening and in a hotel bistro or family restaurant in the morning. In the hotels although not so much Sofia’s restaurant some participants enjoyed never quite being sure who might walk past or come and sit with them. Ronwyn commented on how meeting in public helped her:

This church has been very open to innovation and new approaches to doing/being church. This has mainly been evidenced for us in having Sunday morning gatherings out of the safety of a purpose built structure.

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27 Nebauer, ‘Connection Pack’.
28 Iona, Interview.
29 Connection, Focus Group #1; see also Cronshaw, Credible Witness, 139.
30 Kristen, Connection staff member, Interview by the author, Croydon (8 June 2006).
where we are vulnerable and exposed. It has certainly gotten me out of my familiar, cosy comfort zone on a Sunday morning.32

It is part of Connection culture to meet not on church property but in the informal public gathering places like pubs and cafés that Ray Oldenburg refers to as ‘third places’.33

Connection does not pretend ‘shop windows’ are the totality of church life. Connection leaders say Sunday gatherings are not enough to satisfy ‘doing life’ together, nor enough to feed people’s spiritual growth. Nathan warns:

If you think you can come on a Sunday and get all you need in your spiritual growth, this is not the place for you because that is unhealthy. Unless you immerse yourself with people during the week; unless you come to midweek things; and unless you learn how to live and go through Bible yourself – then, you are not going to grow very much.34

Hence 601 and Life Connection do not strive to provide sufficient nurture to mature Christians, but serve as an entry point into church life and avenues for discipleship which include small groups, the Mid-Week Meeting (MWM), mentoring, Bible courses and programs for children and youth.35

There are drawbacks to the Sunday ‘shop window’ gatherings. Some participants grieve the relative lack of worship and preaching on Sundays. Moreover, their missional edge has been blunted by some changes in location. Life Connection at Sofia’s was working better than some previous locations in terms of good relationships with management, but was not open to the public at the same time as Life Connection and some participants experienced the location as noisy, cold and smelly. Furthermore, having Outrage at a separate location from Life Connection is less-than-ideal, particularly for newcomers.36 601 and Life Connection met in 2007 at the Connection ministry centre; the office and church space rented from the

32Ronwyn, Connection leader, ‘Participant Survey Form’ (20 May 2006).
33Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 40, 74-75; Oldenburg, Great Good Place.
34Crouch, Interview.
36Indiana, ‘Visitor Observations’, Email to the author (14 August 2006).
Croydon Seventh-Day-Adventist Church. The new facility is more flexible, but it is the first time Connection has met regularly in a church building.

There is discrepancy, furthermore, about whether a ‘wide-open back door’ at Connection is a weakness. The pastoral team say that they do not want to try and keep anyone at Connection who ‘doesn’t get it’. Wayne observed that significantly growing churches in America recognise it is inevitable they will lose people and do not allow that possibility to distract them. Other leaders would like to investigate why people have left and be more proactive about keeping people engaged.

**Community service**

Connection started with a focus on creative gatherings but as its shop window gatherings grew it also got more involved in the local community. The church offered programs at Croydon Hills Primary School (2001-2004) and Maroondah Secondary College (from 2002). The Maroondah Principal was initially sceptical but Nathan led a team which helped with sport, woodwork, excursions, mentoring and assisting teachers, as well as ‘Young Life’ lunchtime programs, Friday breakfasts and camps. The school placed a limitation of ‘no preaching, no praying, no gospelling’ but the team actually found this gave focus to their service.

Connection has been involved weekly since the beginning of 2005 with Croydon Soup Kitchen, which changed in November 2005 to ‘The Dining Room’. Instead of handing out a quick meal on the street, volunteer helpers invite people into a room and sit down with them for a more substantial meal. They have a volunteer social worker and offer warm clothes and information about referral services. Eight Connection people regularly volunteer, not in order primarily to preach but to serve.

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37 E.g., Crouch, Interview; P Nebauer, Interview.
38 Wayne Nebauer, ‘USA Tour’ (October 2004).
39 E.g., Farris, Connection volunteer staff member, Interview by the author, Croydon (1 June 2006); Peta, Connection staff member, Interview by the author, Croydon (23 May 2006); see also Murray, *Church after Christendom*, 39-56.
41 Crouch and Spratt, Interview.
Isaac expressed his motivation: ‘We are trying to say, “We care about your life in a physical sense, in a mental sense and your health as well as your spiritual life”’.\(^\text{42}\)

Roxanne, who coordinates the ‘Kids@Play’ Connection playgroups, which also started in 2005, has a similar philosophy of service and relationship before proclamation:

> I believe that by truly loving them as Christ does and serving them you show them Christ’s love instead of just professing it. … Many are struggling with parenthood and life. How much more of a witness is it to give them a casserole, watch their child and give them an ear encouraging them and loving them. Surely this will show God’s love better than professing it and walking away. Our playgroup is focussed on relational ministry.\(^\text{43}\)

The school program, Dining Room and playgroups are motivated by an incarnational and holistic approach to mission.

The priority of community service is enhanced by a number of factors at Connection. Some participants say that meeting in non-church buildings reminds them of their community engagement.\(^\text{44}\) They have also made intentional decisions about staffing and programs which reflect their commitment to engage the broader community.\(^\text{45}\)

Iris’ mission work with Justice Empowerment Missions (JEM) has influenced a number of Connection people to be more open to mission among people on the margins of society and in poorer parts of the world.\(^\text{46}\) The Kingdom Team, Connection’s global mission group, have organised regular short-term mission trips overseas and formed ‘Caleb teams’ to help Connection missionaries raise support.\(^\text{47}\)

Overseas interests have heightened people’s awareness of poverty and mission needs; but it is a common phrase that ‘mission is not just overseas’. Charles asserts: ‘To be the church … that is mission. To act and speak as Christ showed us, to a dark,

\(^\text{42}\) Isaac, Connection volunteer staff member, Interview by the author, Ringwood (30 May 2006).
\(^\text{43}\) Roxanne, ‘Kids@Play’, Email to the author (October 26 2006).
\(^\text{44}\) Iona, Interview.
\(^\text{45}\) Crouch, Interview.
lost world. “Mission” could be next door, or on the other side of the world. “Mission” takes on 1001 different forms. 48

Perhaps the most significant influence for community mission has been Paula and Wayne’s neighbourhood example. They moved into Wonga Park in 2001 and prayed for and built relationships with people in their street. They gauged their planning of events according to whether they would feel comfortable inviting their new friends. 49 Over time five previously unchurched families from their neighbourhood enjoyed coming to Connection services, camps and mission activities, and a Christian family were reconnected into church. 50 This has not gone unnoticed by Connection participants, many of whom are inspired by Paula and Wayne’s example of connecting with neighbours. 51

In 2005 Connection explored plans for leasing and fitting out, with an option to buy, a building in Chirnside Park as a community and ministry centre. The vision and business plan was to include a café and other community-connecting businesses like a hairdresser and childcare. Different Connection partners were lining up to operate the various businesses. The nature and scale of the ‘Connection Centre’ was inspired by Wayne’s study-visit the year before to America. He saw some big seven-day-a-week church buildings and observed:

Significantly growing churches take huge faith steps. This usually involves finances and urging their people to give generously for the sake of greater kingdom impact (which in the US means building a big building and then people come!). “Let’s not tell God what He can’t do!” 52

Wayne and Paula feel it was unfortunate that the church did not ‘catch the vision’ sufficiently. There was in fact a groundswell of uneasiness and opposition from people who saw the proposal as financially questionable and/or a shift of ministry

49 P Nebauer, Interview.
50 Paula Nebauer, Personal conversation with author, 26 October 2006.
51 E.g., Connection, Focus Group #1; Peta, Interview; Chris Spratt, Connection Director of Spiritual Development, Interview by the author, Croydon (3 May 2006).
52 Nebauer, ‘USA’.
philosophy to move towards purchasing a big building. There was also some surprise about how far the planning had proceeded without consultation. The proposal showed Wayne and Paula’s creative thinking about building structures which facilitate community interaction, but the overwhelming hesitant response of the congregation showed their commitment to staying connected with the community through community-owned buildings and not being distracted by financial pressures.

**Empowering people**

A fourth distinctive feature of Connection is the way leaders empower people to pursue their passions in ministry. At the retreat where Wayne and Paula started dreaming with the people from the old Croydon Church of Christ, the green-light brainstorming was to empower people to contribute their ideas. Wayne explains:

> We tried to encourage initiative. We tried to encourage creativity. We tried to empower people and say, ‘Listen, if you got a dream, go for it. You know, we do not want to hold you back. We want you to release your dreams’.  

They articulated their core values and culture which included building up people and leadership development. Wayne and Paula formed small accountability groups (CPRs) to get to know key people who could make things happen, and the groups multiplied. They invested themselves in people with a view to helping them get in touch with their dreams and finding the resources to make them happen.

One of the structures Connection has designed to empower people is church ‘partnership’. Instead of members who are differentiated by voting rights, Connection invites people who want to deepen their association to be ‘partners’. It is a mutual arrangement of support and goals. Becoming a partner involves a partnership consultation, where potential partners discuss with leadership team

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54 W Nebauer, Interview.


56 P Nebauer, Interview.
members some goals of spiritual development and ministry, and the leaders undertake to help partners achieve their goals.\textsuperscript{57} It is a covenant rather than contractual approach to formalising membership, which cultivates mutual commitment and the personal mastery of learning organisations.\textsuperscript{58} The idea is that partnership goals are reviewed every twelve months. In principle partners appreciate the innovative system, although in practice only a few annual reviews have happened.\textsuperscript{59} It is one of the processes the leadership team would like to activate more.

Leadership structures are also designed to be empowering. Ministry teams are empowered with authority to lead in their area. Pushing the locus for decisions down the organisational hierarchy and empowering local decision-makers exercises localness, which is a characteristic of learning organisations.\textsuperscript{60} Team-based authority and decision-making means the team leader, in consultation with their team, sets the direction and makes decisions about their ministry. The leadership team may prioritise which mission projects to pursue and appoint appropriate people to lead ministry teams, but the teams then plan their own efforts. For example, the Kingdom Team decides where to allocate mission giving and the playgroup team determines their philosophy of ministry. Those involved in the ministry and making the biggest investment have the right to determine its direction, within the frameworks of Connection culture.\textsuperscript{61}

Heather experienced a balance of strong direction and empowering leadership when Wayne introduced ‘Open Homes’ in 2005. After 601 and Life Connection, Open Homes are a third expression of Connection with formats that groups can design for themselves, provided they are hospitality-based (community building) and inclusive (missional).\textsuperscript{62} Heather commented on the process which introduced Open Homes:

\begin{itemize}
\item Peta, Interview.
\item Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 287-301.
\item Connection, Focus Group #1.
\item Wayne Nebauer, ‘Open Homes’ (2005).
\end{itemize}
I think there are two parts to decision-making in Connection. One is autocratic that determines the flow of things, where we meet, that whole idea of having open homes. And then there is the other, which we have probably all experienced, a very much empowering attitude of what is your passion? How can we help you? And I think both are compatible and work really well and Wayne had ideas for the open homes and we tried them out just amongst ourselves, found some did not work, some could work. It was a melting pot of ideas and people have taken them and run with them.\textsuperscript{63}

Initial experiments included a chess night for men, a card-making night for women, a party-based Open Home for young adults and a neighbourhood wine and cheese night.\textsuperscript{64} So Open Home leaders, like other ministry leaders, can innovate and plan however they like, within the hospitable and inclusive ethos of Open Homes.

Another empowering program of Connection is its internship. Wayne designed the internship as a teaching program for people – particularly younger people who had more flexibility – to work with Connection and receive input.\textsuperscript{65} It is a part-time commitment with ministry responsibility and input for spiritual development.\textsuperscript{66} The internship has empowered many of Connection’s key leaders. The first interns in 2002 were Chris and Nathan who were amazed at the responsibility and freedom they were given and subsequently came on staff.\textsuperscript{67} Chris became Director of Spiritual Development and was appreciated for his mentoring and his approachability and relational style. Nathan became Director for Ministry and Staff Development and is an excellent team builder and a careful organiser. By 2006 twenty people had done an internship, which added other staff and part-time helpers for church programs and helped people to grow deeper in faith.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{63}Connection, Focus Group #1.
\textsuperscript{64}Spratt, Interview.
\textsuperscript{65}W Nebauer, Interview.
\textsuperscript{67}Spratt, Interview.
\textsuperscript{68}Intern numbers were two in 2002, three in 2003, five in 2004 (one of whom continued from 2003 into a second year), nine in 2005 and two in 2006. In 2007 there was a reduction in staff numbers because of financial constraints and no interest from prospective interns and so the internship did not operate. ‘Connection Journal’, 170.
The internship helped Farris develop the drama ministry at Connection which ran three productions in 2004 and 2005 – Cosi, Midsummer’s Night Dream and Medea. Farris’ vision is to use drama to explore how life and God work, and to include lots of people especially some from outside church. Midsummer Night’s Dream brought Yasmine along as an actress, and she herself joined the internship in 2006 and pursued her vision for creative ministry and helping people celebrate life.⁶⁹ As another example, the internship helped Ronwyn develop ‘Faith Community Nursing’, a holistic service of pastoral care and health advice.

Empowering people to pursue their passions is one of the strengths of Connection. When Roxanne came to Connection she wanted to run playgroups. Wayne told her that they prayed for people with passion to come to Connection and they would love to empower her. He asked for a proposal about the possible location, cost, leadership, program, support needs and relevance to the church’s purpose.⁷⁰ That is how Kids@Play started. Wayne similarly encouraged a young woman who had a vision for a girls’ drop-in centre, ‘girlzone’. He helped her dream the possibilities, explore how to involve other churches and consider the costs. The centre did not eventuate, but Wayne said it was worthwhile because of her enthusiasm as she started to dream.⁷¹

Looking forward to new leadership

One Sunday the Life Connection theme was ‘encouraging one another’.⁷² People gathered around tables, ordered their coffee and were welcomed by Adam, a Life Connection coordinator. Adam prompted conversation, starting with: ‘What of relationships at Connection have you most appreciated?’. People shared about stories over the last year and the value of hearing other people’s opinions. After coffee and cake, Adam asked: ‘What do you personally find incredible about the life of Jesus?’ The table groups discussed the question in a ‘table talk’ and then offered their

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⁶⁹Farris, Interview.
⁷⁰Roxanne, ‘Kids@Play’. Others at Connection often refer to Roxanne’s vision as an example of how Connection empowers people. E.g., Peta, Interview.
⁷¹W Nebauer, Interview.
thoughts to the whole group in an ‘open-mic’. They mentioned Jesus’ compassion, heart for those on the margins and apparent arrogance to claim he was the Son of God. Someone reflected it is amazing about Jesus that we see him in one another’s serving – clearing tables, teaching our children, helping make Connection a healthy community. Adam then reflected on Jesus’ life in the seven minute ‘heartland’, like a sermon spot, and introduced communion, which we shared while a video and song played in the background.

Connection is an innovative and empowering community with interesting approaches to worship and mission. Iona reflects on the potential of Connection’s openness to new things:

That is really scary shifting from having God in a box to letting Him out of the box. To let God out of the box is one of the scariest things I recommend. It takes individuals a few years to really be able to do that and it takes churches much longer and this is one of those churches that is very much prepared to take God out of the box.73

However, Connection’s commitment to innovation was not entirely healthy.

Connection was at a crossroads at the end of 2006 as it faced changes in location and leadership. Wayne and Paula finished as team leaders, following a tense period of disagreement with the leadership team over theology and ministry practice issues. The coming years will show how ‘emerging’ the church is when it faces traditional church challenges like moving on from conflict and leadership transition. Oscar claims that Connection is not an emerging church but an established church trying some good experiments.74 It was a mainstream Church of Christ which has been reinvented; informed by some seeker-sensitive worship principles but also by emerging frameworks. However they are labelled, it will be interesting to monitor how much the reality matches the rhetoric of what culture and goals they work towards as they transition to new leadership. In chapters 7-10, moreover, we will consider to what extent Connection’s experience matches their espoused ideals in the midst of looking forward to new leadership.

73Iona, Interview.
74Oscar, Interview.
Figure 8: Life Connection at Sofia’s Restaurant

Photo by Jenni Cronshaw. 2 July 2006. Used with permission.

Figure 9: Connection Young Life breakfast at MSC

Photo by Nathan Crouch. 25 July 2003. Used with permission.
CHAPTER 4

EASTERN HILLS, A PROLIFERATING PLANT

Creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God
(Eastern Hills mission statement)

Eastern Hills Community Church is a newly planted Baptist church in Croydon led by Toli and Emma Morgan and an eager group of young adults.¹ Sunday morning meetings started at Wyreena Community Centre. Wyreena is a creative community space which includes a coffee shop, art gallery and playground. People gather around 10am, help themselves to a coffee and find a seat around tables scattered around the room. I first visited Eastern Hills on 4th June 2006, and saw a congregation which combined informality and thoughtfulness in their worship.²

The experience of the service begins with Emma’s welcome. She announces lunch after the service in someone’s home – apparently a weekly event, a new website which is operational and a creative ‘open-mic’ night when everyone is invited to share something creative. The spaces they create for meeting together seek to reflect their values of sharing life and mission together as God’s sent people. Simon invites Ben for an interview in what is an Eastern Hills tradition of ‘Simon doesn’t know’. We learn that Ben has been in Australia for three years, is passionate about worship and Christian camping and has recently married Julie. Emma adds a question of her own, ‘How did you come to Eastern Hills?’ , to which Ben answers he met a couple in the church and was invited along. Emma’s extra question prompts some friendly

¹For a brief history outline see Appendix 10: Historical timeline of Eastern Hills.
banter between her and Simon, which adds to the feeling of informality and interaction in the service.

Emma introduces the offering by saying, ‘At Eastern Hills we believe in sharing our resources – our friendship, gifts and time’. As well as a significant proportion of the normal offering going beyond themselves, Krystal introduces a second offering for ‘new beginnings rent assistance’ for a Sudanese asylum seeker family. She says every time she reads Jesus’ mission statement in Luke about setting people free of burdens it ‘sends shivers up her spine’. She is obviously passionate about this group of people and the importance of the church supporting them.

The worship leader, Raelene, leads from the piano and songs are projected onto a screen for singing – some on an overhead projector, some on the new digital projector. Something she says before starting, though, illuminates her authenticity: ‘I just want to tell you where your worship leader is at this morning’ and explains how she could not find her keyboard cord and her guitar was still at her school, which is the reason she is at the piano and feeling hassled. Yet she invites us to pray and leads us in song. Her explanation was not voiced as an apology but honest sharing about how she feels rather than pretending to be ‘on a spiritual high’.

We sing ‘Lord have your way’ and are invited to voice concerns for our world. This is a creative framework for a pastoral prayer time. People mention Uganda and people coming out of slavery, indigenous communities, Iran, Iraq, East Timor, Jakarta, ‘my classroom’, Croydon Secondary School, mercy and wisdom for world leaders, people in prison especially a particular friend and people in local Supported Residential Services (SRS) housing. After praying for these concerns – mostly people on the margins and for troubled regions around the world – the worship leader also prays in a kind of ‘by the way God’ prayer for our families and those not with us today. This is a refreshing contrast to pastoral prayer times where a congregation typically focuses on itself and friends and family, and the worship leader’s ‘by the way’ prayer is for the broader world.

After this variety of worship forms, the children go out to ‘playground church’ for play, singing and activities, and Emma introduces the ‘learning time’ with a ten-
minute narrative of the Apostle Paul’s life and ministry, accompanied by a detailed PowerPoint presentation with photos and maps. They are starting a series on Saints, one of their annual liturgical rhythms. In response, Emma invites everyone to write their name and a symbol of our walk with God onto oval pieces of paper as a symbol we want Jesus to meet us ‘where we are at’. We put them out the front as an expression of placing ourselves ‘at the feet of Jesus’. Alternative ways of expressing worship are eagerly received at Eastern Hills, and facilitating creative expressions of worship is one of Emma’s strengths.

Emma introduces her husband Toli, another pastor, who affirms Emma’s contribution and the work she had put into her presentation. Their regular public affirmation of one another shows a strong leadership team and models healthy relationships. Toli’s message incorporates background information and thoughtful teaching on Paul’s perseverance and cultural engagement. The encouragement Toli gives the congregation includes not despairing in hard times, being patient with times of preparation and pro-actively engaging contemporary culture. For example, he suggests the best response to *The Da Vinci Code* is to ask why people are so attracted to it and what it says about people’s feelings about the church. In conclusion, he holds up one of Emma’s paintings and explains the inspiration he gets from it – that God is delighting in the creation God made. Eastern Hills’ leaders evidently enjoy celebrating artwork and diverse media in worship.

Eastern Hills started in 2003 with a nucleus of young adults who were commissioned by Templestowe Baptist to plant a creative, experimental community. Templestowe were not initially intentional about this but were permission-giving. The initiative came from the young adults and they remember the interim pastor, Alan Dunn, encouraging them to explore a new model: ‘The Church is dying, do whatever you

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3Emma Morgan, ‘Saint Paul Order of Service’ (4 June 2006).

4Other saints they looked at in the series were St Martin of Tours, Gladys Aylward, Keith and Melody Green, C S Lewis and St Ignatius Loyola. Emma Morgan, ‘Sunday Church – Inspiring Saints Series’, Worship team email (1 June 2006).

5Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) is a novel depicting an alternative reading of Jesus’ life, including his marriage and family line, and a supposed Roman Catholic cover up driven by its Patriarchal systems.
can’. Toli Morgan, Emma Woods, Matthew Jones, Claire and a group of people interested in exploring possibilities had been dreaming and planning together for a year, meeting each month to brainstorm and lay theological foundations. They read Rodney Clapp and Tom Sine’s writings on church as a countercultural community and Tom Wright’s teaching on Jesus. Claire remembers making a list with two columns: what they hate about church and why, and what the Gospels say about those kind of things. Not all Eastern Hills members were dissatisfied with existing churches, but it is a regular theme at Eastern Hills and other emerging churches. They did not set out to start an ‘emerging church’ but simply to ‘be church’ together, which they interpreted as focused on worship, community and mission. According to Stuart Murray’s classification, their focus reflects a church reconfiguring particularly around community, as well as rethinking worship and mission, and a church emerging out of the inherited church to some extent but mainly emerging within a particular context as a group of young adults living near Croydon.

The purpose they dreamed up was summarised in their mission statement ‘creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God’. The five key values they settled on are summarised with the acronym GLOSS:

- Gather together – Eastern Hills Community Church values coming together as a Christian community to celebrate God, to learn from his word and share in his love.
- Listen to God – We value listening to God and deepening our relationship with him.
- Open - We value deepening relationships in which we’re known and loved. We’re into eating and drinking together and inviting people into our lives.

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6Toli Morgan and Emma Morgan, Eastern Hills pastors, Interview #1 by the author, Mooroolbark (4 May 2006). After Eastern Hills started, Chris Danes the Templestowe youth pastor, invited the team back for a commissioning service. Sven, Eastern Hills participant, Interview by the author, Lilydale (2 August 2006).

7Toli and Emma married in the middle of this preparation time in April 2002. Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.

8Clapp, Peculiar People; Tom Sine, Mustard Seed Versus McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); N T Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God (London: SPCK, 1996).

9Claire, Eastern Hills leader, Interview by the author, Ringwood (14 August 2006).

10Eastern Hills, Leaders’ Focus Group, Croydon North (21 January 2008).

11Murray, Changing Mission, 43-44.

12Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
• Share our resources – We value sharing all that God has given us. We want to give generously of our gifts, abilities, resources, time and money for the building of community.

• Sent to bring life – We believe the Holy Spirit sends us to our homes, local community and wider world and empowers us to bring about love, truth, hope, healing, beauty and justice.¹³

The heartbeat of Eastern Hills is living as a community together and making an impact on the world.

The life of Eastern Hills pulses in a variety of directions. Through the stories the group celebrates and the activities they program, I observed the main features of Eastern Hills as creativity in worship, community and hospitality, engagement with the world and shared leadership.

Creativity in worship

Eastern Hills’ weekly worship gathering at Wyreena Arts Centre is creative and often interactive. It is advertised as ‘a refreshing time of coffee, celebration, sharing and learning about God’.¹⁴ People sit around tables and so have space to write or talk with one another in a café-style environment. The ‘coordinator’ hosts the service and is charged with helping people feel relaxed and inspired to worship and bringing them on a journey through the morning’s theme. A rostered person each week creates a ‘vibe’ which is a visual and environmental experience that relates to the theme. It is often an arrangement of photos, objects and thought-provoking quotations on a table, but sometimes includes music, window decorations, flowers and roof hangings.¹⁵ The result is that Sunday gatherings often look like art installations with a strong creative emphasis.¹⁶

¹⁴Eastern Hills [Website].
¹⁵Morgan, ‘Sunday Church’.
¹⁶Toli Morgan, ‘Church and Culture Workshop: A Conversation with Eastern Hills Community Church’ (Becoming Multicultural Conference, Whitley College School of Ministry, Melbourne, July 2006).
People add contributions into the midst. A regular ‘Simon doesn’t know’ spot introduces a person and their world and interests. Often there is a prayer of confession and intercession, common in liturgical worship but less common in contemporary churches, and they regularly practise communion. Songwriters in the church have written songs, including songs which reflect the church’s mission such as helping a high school student, Titus, and the community’s journey with Sudanese friends. It is a creative community, and some weeks include art, dance, short stories, yoga and dramatically acting out scenes like creation. Occasionally they have relocated worship and gathered on the beach, by the Yarra River or in the Dandenongs.

There is also a team of teachers, rather than one paid professional pastor, who give input on the morning’s theme. Matthew is responsible for teaching, but he coordinates a team of six regular teachers. Furthermore, their teaching is often preceded by a related story time from another person and so more people are involved. For example, in the Saints series the story time gave an overview of the saints’ life and then the sermon spot explored applications. In common with many emerging church or alternative-worship style churches, Eastern Hills maintains a strong commitment to honour traditions. They program teaching around a church calendar: Christmas, Old Testament, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Inspiring Saints and so on through each year. Participants, from new believers to people experienced in ministry, express their appreciation for the thoughtful input on Sunday mornings. The messages do not sound ‘dumbed-down’ but have solid background and teaching. This is a contrast to some emerging churches which present a simple, basic topic in order to be more accessible.

A memorable service for many members was the Creation service. Sunday morning teachers strive to match their teaching method with their desired content and response. The best method is not always a sermon. When they came to teach Genesis 1, they divided people into groups at tables and invited them to make something with art and craft material available. Then they darkened the room, Claire read Genesis 1,

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17Eastern Hills, Focus group #2 by the author, Mooroolbark (13 July 2006).
18Sven, Interview.
a light turned on for the first day of creation and then for subsequent days different people placed different items at the front – a brown sheet for land followed by the plants, fish, birds and creatures they had made. As a climax when Claire pronounced that humans were made in God’s image, Krystal concluded with a yoga ‘salute to the sun’ movement. The whole activity was slow and worshipful and invited participation. Toli then spoke about how God wanted people to enjoy the beauty of what God has created and given to people. Participants said they saw and experienced creation of the world as they had never seen it before.19

Community and hospitality

In spite of creative and interactive Sunday worship efforts, Eastern Hills has always been intentionally ‘more than Sunday’. The leadership team see part of the church’s role is to counter-culturally confront the individualism of Australian culture and build a sense of community and strong relationships.20 Relationships are fostered in the Sunday gathering through sitting in circles around tables, meeting before church over coffee and sharing a simple lunch together in someone’s home each Sunday. The gathering itself often has space for discussion, and even when it is not structured people seem to feel free to spice the service with extra conversation and questions.

Toli and Emma propose that the importance Eastern Hills places on community is both an important part of being church and an important aspect of mission. They maintain authentic community is an attractive quality in today’s culture, but also confronts Western individualism and isolation in society:

It is something that is really deliberate and quite foreign to our individualistic culture and in really struggling to make people vulnerable to commit to each other’s lives, to commit to being together regularly and being there for each other and celebrating and weeping with each other in really practical ways – that is a mission to our culture. … For us mission has really been creating a community and people really committing to

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19Ian and Imajin, Eastern Hills leaders, Interview by the author, Melbourne (20 July 2006); Matthew Jones, Eastern Hills teaching pastor, Interview #1 by the author, Mooroolbark (5 June 2006).

20Morgan, ‘Church and Culture’.
community. Yes. It is hard, it is hard work, but we feel that is the context in which mission is worked at.\textsuperscript{21}

Authentic community is a counter-cultural statement of God’s purposes for people and, at its best, functions prophetically and evangelistically. It potentially challenges the broader society and attracts people to a more interdependent way of life.

Eastern Hills leaders identify Rodney Clapp’s \textit{A Peculiar People} as an influential book for their vision to be a countercultural but engaged community. Clapp argues that the future of the church for our post-Christendom context is as a distinctive alternative and prophetic community. Emma says she loves the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition and its theology of church and social justice, as typified by Clapp.\textsuperscript{22} Individualism, technological innovations and consumerism in society have marginalised the perceived relevance of Christianity and its teaching about community. Clapp argues the solution is for the church to reclaim its radical identity as a peculiar people, and let its worship and friendships point to an alternative way of life:

What harried suburbanites and other moderns need is not one more program in which to exert their already overextended will, but a language that reorients vision on an object more compelling than that which managerial argot can reveal or contain. Genuine friendship will become a more viable practice not by virtue of plying more techniques but as we see and live, however fitfully, a reality that lures us beyond ourselves and our plans and efforts.\textsuperscript{23}

Evangelism in a post-Christendom context is not just declaring a message to someone but ‘\textit{initiation into the world-changing kingdom of God’}.\textsuperscript{24} It is about inviting people to join the body of Christ, not as a spiritual retreat or belief system but a way of life and community of friends participating in the life of Christ. This is the broader kingdom mentality that informs Eastern Hills and their mission statement of ‘creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God’.

\textsuperscript{21}Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1. 
\textsuperscript{22}Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1. 
\textsuperscript{23}Clapp, \textit{Peculiar People}, 211. 
\textsuperscript{24}Clapp, \textit{Peculiar People}, 167.
Matthew Jones believes the community of Eastern Hills is attractive and describes how different people have experienced belonging before believing. Justin, a church member who joined a Big Brother mentoring program, was asked to get alongside Titus. Titus was having trouble at school, and first he and then his mother Sophie and younger brother started attending Sunday services. The mother was pleased the sons had some good male role models and appreciated being accepted herself in the community. Eastern Hills decided to do something about Titus’ schooling difficulties, and hosted a fundraiser to send him to Mt Evelyn Christian School where he could receive special help. The leaders have not heard Sophie express a confession of belief, but she has embraced the community which has embraced her family.

One of a number of fundraising efforts they held was a party for a friend who was trying to get Australian citizenship. They raised $3000 and the party included many people who were not part of Eastern Hills or other Christian communities. One partygoer said, ‘So what you are telling me is that this is your church?’. An Eastern Hills member replied ‘Yeah, this is church’. The man looked staggered and asked again ‘So, what you are telling me is that you guys get together and you sort of have a party … and dance and do all this sort of stuff’. Toli said the man just could not believe it. ‘This isn’t church’ is a common response of people to emerging churches, but emerging church advocates would contend the statement reflects a misconception of what church is. They argue that partying and helping someone in the name of Jesus is part of what church is about, and this renewed perspective on church and what following Jesus entails inspires a lot of the activity of Eastern Hills.

Eastern Hills leaders say that ‘authentic community’ is a strength of Eastern Hills but they also acknowledge that they still have a long way to grow. Participants describe church relationships as vulnerable and supportive. It is starting to be an atmosphere ‘where the average Australian would feel accepted and comfortable in church’. Pastors seek to exercise their leadership in a mutual way. Leadership team meetings

25Jones, Interview #1.
26Morgan, ‘Church and Culture’.
are open to anyone who is interested from the community, and they are usually characterised by fun and creativity. Nevertheless, Emma expressed frustration with how preoccupation with and growth on Sunday mornings seems to be detracting from involvement in broader community activities and sharing life together. They are reviewing how the majority of people can still be involved in Sunday hospitality and meals now that the church has grown to more than fifty people. People express the desire to develop a structure for growth which will allow open and caring community to continue.

**Engaging the world**

A third distinctive of Eastern Hills is engagement with the world. As a student at Bible College of Victoria, Toli vividly remembers a 1996 chapel sermon by Steve Bradbury, National Director of TEAR Australia. To introduce himself, Bradbury thanked the team that led worship and then commented:

> I have just come back from visiting quite a few different slums in Asia where we have different community development projects going and what we do here in worship has to somehow be connected. It must be connected to what is going on there in those slums in Asia.

Bradbury was urging students to do worship and theology which connected with global needs. Toli says they have been responding to that challenge:

> It sort of summarises quite nicely the theological questions that we were wrestling with at that time … there was a bunch of friends who [were] really sort of wrestling with those sort of theological questions … how does the gospel touch culture? How do we do church in such a way that it is connected with the world in which we live, with the community in which we live? How do we do this stuff? How do we actually make this connection between our worship on a Sunday and what happens in our world?

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29 Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
30 E.g., Ian and Imajin, Interview.
31 TEAR is a movement of Christians responding to the needs of poor communities around the world through relief and development partnerships. See [http://www.tear.org.au/](http://www.tear.org.au/).
32 Morgan, ‘Church and Culture’.
33 Morgan, ‘Church and Culture’.
These questions about engaging world needs have inspired the formation and direction of Eastern Hills.

Part of engaging the world is engaging popular culture. Drawing on the inspiration of Paul the Apostle and his understanding of how the gospel touches culture, Toli urged the congregation to grapple with questions of our culture. He suggested going to public lectures, spending time in pubs and visiting galleries. He urges watching films as a way of engaging culture and not just plundering it for gospel illustrations. Bible study takes time and so does cultural analysis, and Toli argued both are as important as the other to allow the Word to become flesh and blood in our culture. His potentially controversial challenge was: ‘Don’t think that seeing a movie is less important than reading the Bible’. In discussing Toli’s challenge, Simon, a home group participant, expressed his desire to engage culture: ‘Having a love for my culture is key, and going to the pub and talking helps open conversational doors about God’. Eastern Hills encourages people to build bridges between their faith and their broader interests and relationships. To use Tillich’s terminology, they are making correlations between faith and experience, and also appreciating that they can learn from their experience of culture as well as the tradition of their faith.

Engaging the world also has a focus on local community involvement and ministry. The congregation has attended anti-war and channel-deepening protests, and cooked for a neighbouring church’s midweek meal for homeless people. Emma has run art classes in Deer Park prison and in nursing homes, put together a cookbook and started a fair-trade and organic shop. An SMS prayer ring, sending mobile phone SMS messages to the group who wants to pray, has included people who have never prayed before. The church has ‘adopted’ Croydon Secondary College and runs

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36 Home group discussion, 7 June 2006, in ‘Eastern Hills Journal’, 42. This followed discussion of Toli’s Sunday message and a reading of Rob Bell, Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 155-177.
37 Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959)
38 Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2.
Student Focus for Years 7-8 on Thursdays. It started a Monday night soup kitchen, casserole bank and emergency fund to help people in need. The church has organised and helps sponsor a Thursday night indoor soccer team, which included a few Sudanese teenagers, and a volleyball team for Sudanese and soup kitchen friends.  

Their engagement with the world has included a commitment to helping make it a better place more in line with the kingdom of God.

Eastern Hills has hosted events which engage people’s interests from the broader community or meet particular local needs. People have been inspired to organise one-off events including a working bee at Christian women’s refuge, a nursing home afternoon tea and concert, a series of make-a-movie nights, an ‘amazing race’ event, court parties, belly-dancing and Malaysian, tango and Latin dancing. Some of these events had better success than others, but these events have created fun occasions for the church and friends to get together and made rich shared memories. They try to honour different people’s interests, whether the people are in or outside the church.

One of the main expressions of mission is the interest of the community in the Sudanese community. The church started with a passion for justice being central to their identity. Through the Migrant Information Centre, Krystal was introduced to Maria and her seven children. Krystal has helped Maria with English, homework, food and rental assistance but also appreciated learning so much from Maria, particularly about hospitality, generosity and relationships. And Eastern Hills is a richer and more globally aware community as a result, as Maria has helped the church learn of the trauma many Sudanese refugees have been through in the Civil War and the huge challenges of paying off airfares, applying for refugee status and finding housing. Eastern Hills’ engagement with the world helps serve people in need but also helps church participants grow as people and as followers of Jesus.

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39 Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2; Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
40 Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
41 Krystal, ‘Church and Culture Workshop: A Conversation with Eastern Hills Community Church, and Their Journey with Sudanese Refugees’ (Becoming Multicultural Conference, Whitley College School of Ministry, Melbourne, July 2006).
42 Krystal, ‘Church and Culture’. Krystal and Claire were nominated for the 2006 Herald Sun Pride of Australia medal for being positive community role models. Dina Rosendorff, ‘Pride of Australia Medal 2006 - Role Model’, Sunday Herald Sun, 20 April 2006, 3.
The Sunday offering supports people in and beyond the congregation. It gives a small amount to Toli and Emma and to Matthew as pastors, but just as much goes to each of the other mission projects the church has adopted. They give to and have been inspired by Lindy Croucher’s work at UNOH (Urban Neighbours of Hope). They support SelahPhonic because three of the band members are part of the church. SelahPhonic is a Youth Dimension band which tells the gospel story in a series of songs and multimedia they call a ‘journey’. Eastern Hills have also contributed to literacy and AIDS education in Papua New Guinea and support two sponsor children. An extra ‘new beginnings’ monthly offering subsidises private rent for Sudanese refugee families while they wait for government housing. An emergency fund is accessible by anyone in the congregation up to $200 per person per year. And the community has hosted fundraising for a variety of needs – Australian citizenship costs, airfare repayment and housing needs for an asylum seeker family and school tuition for a boy who was being bullied in his old school. Giving beyond the church to those in need is reminiscent of Justin Martyr’s description of an offering for the poor in what is the oldest account outside of the Bible of congregational worship. Participants are proud that their financial giving as a church reflects their interest in serving the world beyond themselves. Their local and global efforts are not unique to Eastern Hills or other emerging churches, but their missional framework has steered them in these directions.

Prayer times typically range across local community and global concerns. The interest in issues and people beyond themselves, and their desire to intercede, is noteworthy. This is fuelled by people’s local community and global interests, and fostered by the structures of the services. For communion on one Sunday, for example, we were invited to ‘bring our whole world to the table’ and write out on newspapers our frustrations including those things which distress us. Using

newspapers in worship helps people keep the connection between faith and public life.

Some members have written songs that integrate a longing to glorify God with engaging the needs of the world. Toli’s cousin Sally Morgan wrote this peace-focused song:

Make Peace

Lead us to walk … with You in mind
Bring us to life every day
Dwell with your love in our dark and crumbled places
Make us know we’re not alone.

Make my heart warm through the big storms
Change my mind,
Bring glory to Your name
And teach me,
To make peace
With all the earth,
In Your name.47

Eastern Hills are continually exploring new ideas to engage the world. New ministries were starting while I visited in June 2006. A team were starting The Lounge in Croydon Secondary College on Wednesdays as a Youth Dimension ministry. Emma and Matthew were planning ‘Colour Life’ social activities for people in local supported residences. The first ‘open-mic’ night was run with twenty-five people, half of whom presented a song, reading or piece of artwork. A website was set up with downloadable sermons. Claire, the main organiser of the soup kitchen they had handed on, started a volleyball team for Sudanese and soup kitchen friends. A fundraiser was planned for a young adult preparing to help in a Thailand orphanage. Two couples were investigating buying a house together to get into the housing market and to work towards their vision of living-in-community and building houses for asylum seekers.48 A group went into the city for the Refugee Day March. An international cooking class was advertised, to celebrate different people’s

48 Inspired by Sine, Mustard Seed, 294-303.
contributions to the community and bring the worlds of churched and unchurched people together. And Emma was planning a Sudanese Youth Conference, possibly in collaboration with UNOH, with practical workshops on employment, transport, conflict resolution and trauma counselling. Eastern Hills enjoys the creativity of their Sunday gatherings but the majority of the life and energy of the church happens as they engage the world in other ways.

**Shared leadership**

A fourth distinctive observable at Eastern Hills is a shared approach to leadership and decision-making. The founding group dreamed together about how to do church differently and part of their dream was to share responsibility for church life and leadership rather than being pastor-centred. They have involved a broad range of people in leadership and open up their leaders’ meetings to anyone who wants to attend. They thus started with a strong sense of teamwork in their leadership and have sought to sustain this as they have grown.

One of the things Toli loves about pastoring Eastern Hills is working with the leadership team and seeing them grow in their leadership roles together. When they have faced pastoral and ethical dilemmas, Toli said he is particularly grateful for a team that shares leadership and where each contributes their wisdom and insights. The value they place on community extends to, and is perhaps founded in, the mutual support of the leadership team.

Some of the team have learned the importance of shared leadership and teamwork within their ministry area. Claire developed a team for the Croydon soup kitchen, and as people dropped off the team and she was left alone she learned the importance of teamwork and accountability:

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49Emma Morgan, ‘What’s on with Eastern Hills’, Church group email (24 June 2006); Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.

50Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.

51‘Follow-up Journal 2007’, 34.
[You] cannot do mission stuff on your own. That is what I have come to realise. It is really hard if you just try to get out there and do it on your own. It is good to have a group of people that want to do it along side you.\textsuperscript{52}

When Claire faced a threatening situation, some of her fellow-leaders arranged for her to ‘leave town’ and have a week away.\textsuperscript{53} The leaders speak of learning to rely on one another and appreciating not having to face ministry situations alone.

Shared leadership extends to the congregation, at least in their ideals. Leadership team meetings are open to anyone from the congregation and there are specific opportunities each year to contribute to the broader vision and direction of the church. For example, at the beginning of 2006 they fostered creative dreaming through a series of services when they dreamt about how they could help meet the needs of the world that year.\textsuperscript{54} Sometimes they have called ‘pow-wow’ meetings when there are big decisions to explore together, such as when they considered moving on from Wyreena Community Centre.\textsuperscript{55} They are realising that consulting a larger group and expecting everyone to contribute ideas is not as easy as in their early days as a small and eagerly committed missional team. They realise they need to develop appropriate processes for inviting more people to contribute and discern together if they are to live up to their value of shared leadership at congregational as well as leadership team levels.

\textbf{Looking forward to a new location}

Eastern Hills is marked by youthful enthusiasm balanced with a capacity for thoughtful theological reflection. Leaders say they are pursuing mission and innovation not because it is ‘emerging’ but out of convictions about what God wants church to be and do. The list of activities they have organised is diverse, but they have been content to leave some activities behind and start new ones following people’s interests and passions. Sven observes that five-year plans are not at the

\textsuperscript{52}Claire, Interview.
\textsuperscript{53}Claire, Interview.
\textsuperscript{54}Jones, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{55}‘Eastern Hills Journal’, 8, 13-24, 33.
forefront of what they are doing but they seem to be free to try new things without traditional restraints and explore different directions with freedom and spontaneity.\textsuperscript{56}

In the second half of 2006, as they looked for a new facility to cater for growth, they wanted to find somewhere which had a kitchen and dining space so they could have their weekly meal in the same place as the church service rather than moving on to a home. Ideally, they also hoped for flexible space to enable them to worship with different formats including small groups for discussion and contemplative ‘worship stations’ for quiet prayer and reflection. They moved to Yarrunga Community Centre in Croydon Hills. They hoped that the move would facilitate growth, deepen community within the congregation through shared barbeques and other events and widen community contact through participating in the monthly market, and hosting community films and whatever else they can arrange.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56}Sven, Interview.

\textsuperscript{57}The timing of the move in February 2007 marked their fourth anniversary as a church. Emma Morgan, ‘Finance and Location Update’, Leadership team email (17 October 2006).
Figure 10: Eastern Hills Service

![Image](image.png)


Figure 11: Eastern Hills Stations of the Cross

![Image](image.png)

Photo by Toli Morgan. Yarrunga Community Centre, Good Friday, 6 April 2007. Used with permission.
Figure 12: Eastern Hills artwork

CHAPTER 5

URBAN LIFE, A PENTECOSTAL RENOVATION

Living for the Wellbeing of our Community
(Urban Life mission statement)

Urban Life is a Pentecostal, Christian Revival Crusade congregation that is now, through a multi-faceted process of relocation and reinvention, based on the highway in the centre of Ringwood. Visible through floor-to-ceiling windows is the play equipment and coffee shop where parents can order coffee while watching their children play, like the popular ‘Ace Space’ children’s play centres. It is becoming a gathering space for the broader community through the week as well as for church on Sunday.

There is a sense of anticipation as people enter. Some order a pre-service coffee and sit down in lounge chairs or stand around talking. Others go and sit in one of two clumps of approximately thirty chairs arranged next to the coffee shop area and facing a corner of the building where a band is fine tuning their preparation. Children roam around in the playground, testing their parents’ patience by roaming into the instrument area, or starting to head upstairs for Urban Kids and crèche for 1-12 year olds. Anthea Smits plays the role of hostess seeking to make people comfortable as she welcomes everyone:

A warm welcome to you all. I’m Anthea, the senior leader here at Urban Life, an eighteen month old church plant. Make yourself at home. Feel free to move the furniture around – we don’t have any problem with that. Parents with kids, don’t worry about the noise. I have a two-year-old and he could outscream anyone.2

The service starts with several up-beat ‘praise and worship’ songs. A feature of this morning’s gathering is the child dedication of Ashley – the son of Urban Life leaders Ben and Andrea. This part of the service includes snapshots of the boy’s life projected onto the screen to the song ‘Sonny I love you’. It is a tasteful use of technology to enhance the worship moment. After the usual prayers, in this case from pastor and grandparents, there is space for a woman to share a ‘prophetic word’ for Ashley and his parents. The combination of coffee shop ambience, modern technology, hospitable welcome and a Pentecostal ‘word from the Lord’ suggests Urban Life is not a traditional church.

Announcements give insights into what is valued at Urban Life. ‘Happy Hour’ is promoted at the coffee shop bar after the service, including an invitation for visitors to have a free hot drink. There is a ‘Prime Timers Get Together’ lunch today for the over fifty year olds who belong to that group and those from the broader community who have joined it as a social outlet. There is a Saturday working bee in a fortnight’s time, fixing up odd jobs left over from the massive renovation project which redeveloped ‘The Urban’, as the café and community centre is known. There is a women’s conference coming up, at which Anthea is speaking and taking a group of women. On the same weekend a group of young adults is going to Shepparton for a camp. Doug Faircloth, another pastor, mentions that visitors to the service today would be welcome to join the group who will be involved in a Habitat for Humanity building project, 3 a kids’ program for Rumbalara indigenous football club and the Sunday service of South Shepparton Community Church. So rather than a teaching weekend, the young adults are going away to serve; and rather than being invited back to church the following Sunday, Doug made a point of inviting visitors to participate in a service activity.

3Habitat for Humanity is an international, ecumenical organisation that builds simple, decent and affordable houses for families in need. See http://www.habitat.org/.
Some of the distinctives of Urban Life are discernible in other parts of the service. The offering is taken up and referred to as an act of love for God and for one another. Children are noisy in the background and no-one seems to blink an eye. The prayer time includes mention of a political-religious issue in Vietnam and needs in the indigenous community which Doug has been engaging. A young adult active in the church, Noah, shares his life story of finding faith and sense of calling to serve among the indigenous community – a calling he has begun to explore with a short-term trip. Then Anthea gives a sermon about three women in the Bible who were touched by Jesus. Her sharing is enthusiastic and down-to-earth, asking the congregation to place themselves in the story and ask whether they have encountered Jesus in the midst of their challenges and embarrassing secrets. Instead of the usual Pentecostal tradition of altar call prayer at the front, prayer is made available for people in the back corner after the service. So some of the service format follows normal Pentecostal routines and some has changed, but the biggest changes in this congregation have occurred in its broader programs as part of its location and leadership changes.

Urban Life started in February 2005 as a newly replanted and relocated Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) congregation in Ringwood in Melbourne’s Eastern suburbs. It grew out of the forty-five year-old traditional Pentecostal ‘Christian Life Centre’ (CLC) which met on the outskirts of Ringwood. CLC had been a centre for charismatic renewal in Melbourne in the 1970s and 1980s. The dream which fuelled Urban Life started with a deep desire to build a new missional church shared by the previous Senior Pastor Doug Faircloth and a nucleus of young adults who were commissioned to explore the church’s purpose and relevance. They evaluated everything in terms of the twin priorities of mission and community and dreamed up their mission statement as ‘living for the wellbeing of our community’. Stuart Murray’s tentative classification model would describe them emerging from inherited church through a process of reconfiguring community and mission. The

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4The prostitute who anointed Jesus (Luke 7:36-50), the widow had her dead son restored to her (Luke 7:11-17), and the bleeding woman who was healed (Mark 5:25-34).


6Murray, Changing Mission, 42-44.
Urban Life welcome booklet says that church is more than a Sunday service but about:

- Doing Life together through healthy relationships.
- A place of love and support when life gets a little tough.
- Being active and effective Christians in our community.
- An expression of worship and love for God and thanks for all he has done.
- A commitment to build family and community together.
- The mission of Jesus Christ; to seek and serve the lost.
- And, having some fun along the way!

Urban Life reflects the vision to be at the centre of Ringwood’s (sub)urban life, and is also an acronym: U R Beginning A New Life.

This journey of new life has been an experiment which has seen a change in location, a change in leadership, and a refocusing on the twin priorities of mission and community. The case study of their transition will be discussed under these four categories.

**Relocation – ‘From the country club to the nightclub’**

The most obviously significant part of Urban Life’s innovation is its move from the previous church building in outer Ringwood into a newly redeveloped facility in the centre of Ringwood. Some of the young adults had felt the need to move from the old facilities into a more central and community-focused venue. When Anthea realised she would be the leader of the church one day, she was hesitant if she had to do it in the old building. Before she had to push the issue, Doug told her one day that he ‘felt released to sell the building’. As it turned out, they did not sell, but extended the lease to Tabor College and took out a five-year lease on the new facility. They describe the move as ‘from the country club to the nightclub’.

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8 Kylie, Urban Life leader, Interview by the author, Ringwood (25 July 2006); Urban Life, participants, Focus group #1 by the author, Ringwood (26 July 2006).

At Oban Road, CLC had 4.5 acres of rolling hills and an assortment of buildings – chapel, carpark, offices, manse and classrooms and lecture rooms which they were leasing to Tabor. Anthea describes it as a country club because of the nice setting, but also because it was remote and generally only members went there. The church moved from there, via a high school hall, into the much smaller leased facility in the middle of Ringwood. It used to be the ‘Growling Dog’ nightclub and needed a lot of work to be transformed into ‘Urban Life Café, Kids Play Area and Community Centre’. The renovation project itself was a transformative community experience for church partners. From February to August 2005 they designed, renovated, fitted out, painted and furnished the café, offices and community rooms.

The move fostered a new approach to church life. Partners say that instead of church being all about Sunday morning, the focus changed to church being throughout the week. Instead of a teaching centre it became more of a community fellowship centre. Instead of the interior of the building focusing on a platform and pulpit, the centre of the facility is the coffee machine. Instead of using a building which was used only for a few hours each week, and which had not been filled to its 600 person capacity for years, the church invested their assets for the community.

Worship services were redesigned to suit the new space and vision. Charismatic and prophetic expressions are now more low-key and ordered. Worship includes occasional reflective and interactive times as well as traditionally exuberant Pentecostal praise and worship. The worship team experimented with a full band, an unplugged approach to worship and everything in between, and they are generally excited to be visible from the street although they have fewer numbers of people involved. Some worship team members left the church altogether during the move and others have pulled out to focus their efforts in more missional directions.

10 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
12 Anthea Smits, Urban Life senior leader, Interview #1 by the author, Ringwood (19 June 2006).
14 Smits, Interview #1.
Church participants say that the move reminds them that church is not just for their needs but to incarnationally interact with the community: ‘Church is not just us tucked away in a nice, safe, little place’. The Urban offers what Frost and Hirsch describe as a ‘proximity place’ for bringing church people into relationship with those outside church circles. The absence of typical church images is interesting. ‘The Urban’ is not labelled as a church nor is it recognisable as a church from traditional icons. Instead of crosses or fishes on the building’s exterior, there is an ‘Urban Life’ sign with pictures of people. Traditional icons may conjure up emotions, feelings and experiences which are not particularly positive or life-affirming. Anthea comments that pictures of people are the best icons for church anyway. Thus the ‘country club’ has been filled by the growth of Tabor College and the Growling Dog nightclub has been transformed into Urban Life Café.

Leaders are quick to say the new building or café is not the essence of Urban Life’s reinvention but is an important central symbol. Anthea commented: ‘This [building] is not our destination but merely a reflection of the things God has been doing in us as a group of people’. They worship and serve out of a location which is central in the community and a space which is ‘warm, colourful, funky and welcoming’. It is something people are proud of – reinventing themselves and working together as a community to make it happen. They wanted to create a tool, not a monument, with a building that fosters their community and mission aims and does not send them broke at the same time. They have not made as much money as hoped, but have been pleasantly surprised by what the move has meant in terms of community building and mission.

Anthea overheard a conversation in the play area one weekday between a boy and his mother about the church in the café. He asked why there is a big open space and she

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15 Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
16 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 24-25.
17 Smits, Interview #1.
19 Dwight, ‘Fitting out the Urban’.
20 E.g., Steve and Rowena, Urban Life leaders, Interview by the author, Mt Evelyn (27 July 2006).
21 Lewis and Carolyn, Urban Life leaders, Interview by the author, Mooroolbark (18 August 2006).
replied, ‘Oh, that is where they have church’. The boy said, ‘Oh, mommy can we come to church?’ and she said ‘maybe you can have a chat to Dad’. Anthea was glad to hear that at least that boy will grow up with a picture of church which is not a closed, foreign building but a place where he can play with friends and his mum drink coffee. Part of Urban Life’s agenda is changing the face of church in their community.22

**Leadership transition – a radical handover**

A second and concurrent change from CLC to Urban Life was a leadership transition. Doug Faircloth handed over to Anthea Smits. Anthea had been working as an associate pastor with Doug beforehand, and Doug has stayed on after the transition as a coaching pastor. Doug enthusiastically affirms Anthea’s gifting and Anthea describes Doug as their ‘voice of wisdom’.23 In 2006 Anthea worked three days per week and Doug two days per week, supported by a full-time office administrator and full-time café manager.

Doug started as senior pastor in 1991 after five successful but difficult years as youth pastor. He inherited a financial bankruptcy crisis, which he led the church through. Then in 1995 he had what he describes as an ‘ideas bankruptcy crisis’. He came to realise that the church was not a meeting but a community, encompassing a responsibility for the wider community. Around this time, when Anthea was 25, Doug thought she was called to be the next leader and in 1997 appointed her to the eldership. He also appointed to the leadership team a group of young adults he perceived were prepared to move on from consumer approaches to church typical of their baby boomer parents.24

In 1998 the new leadership group of young adults explored questions about the shape of the church in twenty-first century Australia. Anthea was empowered to lead this

22Smits, Interview #1.


24Faircloth, Interview #2.
process. She thought they might plant another church, but she realised her passion was to help renew the existing church. A lot of their thoughts came from dissatisfaction with the status quo: ‘We loved God, we loved the church but have begun to feel a real discontentment particularly at its expression of consumerism and materialism and in even how we dealt with the presence of God’. The dissonance between their vision for a relevant Australian church and their experience motivated them towards innovation.

Before coming on staff at CLC, Anthea had worked with Walt Disney Corporation, finally as National Sales Manager. She brought her strong leadership style and creativity into her leadership role, but has become noticeably more consultative in her leadership. Others on the leadership team describe her as someone who leads by example and who empowers people to dream. Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz is an inspiration for her to move on from modern CEO-styled leadership and to instead humbly invite people on a journey and help them draw out their strengths.

Anthea is also a servant leader who enthusiastically tackles projects and tasks, whether putting together a project plan for refocusing the small group program in the church, feeding Saturday’s lunch to the working bee mob, helping out in crèche or serving coffee after Sunday’s service. She only works part-time because of family commitments, but expresses gratefulness for being surrounded by a great team.

Another of her strengths is her capacity to affirm her team and church partners. She often expresses how proud she is of the church for their generosity and hard work, and of her team for their cohesion and commitment.

25 Smits, ‘Story of Urban Life’.
26 Rogers, Diffusion, 422; Senge, Fifth Discipline, 149-153.
27 Church partners say leadership by example is characteristic of the whole team. Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
29 Smits, Interview #1.
Doug led the church through a tough decade, and is now enjoying following his succession plan through by coaching the new leadership team. He works alongside Anthea two days per week and in a consulting business three days per week. He has good contacts with local political leaders and strong networks with broader church leaders – around Melbourne and internationally. His advocacy for social justice often becomes part of the prayers and giving of the church. Other members of the leadership team describe Doug as a mentor, father figure and cheerleader. The leadership transition and their ongoing working relationship is a credit to both Doug and Anthea’s humility and grace.

So Urban Life was a big change from CLC at various levels. Anthea commented: ‘We changed leadership, we changed our name, we changed our venue, we changed everything and we would say that we have really planted a new church’. A twin focus of the new life of the new church was to evaluate everything through the lenses of community and mission.

**Community – ‘Doing life deeply together’**

A large part of Urban Life’s transition is a rediscovery of community and ‘doing life deeply together’. Anthea grew annoyed at ‘staring at the back of people’s heads’ on Sunday mornings and spending just ten minutes talking to one another. The church had a theology which expected miraculous interventions as commonplace occurrences, but she read John 13 and saw the ideal was that disciples would be known not by their miracles but by their love. Moreover, she realised that their old paradigm was that a sense of belonging depends on shared beliefs. Their new paradigm is for belonging to focus on connective relationships. They did not want to repeat past leadership and community blunders of CLC, but aspired to live out God’s vision for the church which they saw in Acts. When Anthea reads Acts 2:42-

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30 Steve and Rowena, Interview.
31 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
32 Anthea borrowed this phrase from Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 74; Anthea Smits, ‘Following the Holy Spirit in Mission: Change in a Suburban Pentecostal Church’ (Forge Dangerous Stories II conference, Melbourne, 11 March 2007).
33 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
47, she asks ‘Who wouldn’t want to be part of this community?’.

They see in Acts a picture of people who would bleed for one another: ‘They would do whatever it took to see the other person get on and do well’. Their reading of Acts inspired them to strive for a stronger sense of community.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) started by exploring small groups and sought to model community by spending more time over meals and in friendship than in business meetings. For format, they did not want mid week meetings where they would just sit around and ‘sing and preach to one another’ without knowing one another. They wanted to move away from what they called the craziness of telling each other how to live without being prepared to share life together. The team had grown up together, so they had a relational foundation, but they still felt constrained by old models.

Anthea describes an unorthodox breakthrough one night on the way to a small group. She and Adam arrived at the house, and as they walked up the driveway they heard what they describe as ‘a horrid sound – something like a cat screaming’. They were embarrassed for the neighbours when they realised it was the small group singing. Adam turned and said categorically, ‘I’m not going into that house. I hate the whole thing’. Anthea, understandably, felt she had to go. But that was a defining moment for them. They started asking ‘What would a mid-week [gathering] look like that we could not wait to get to?’ and ‘Into what sort of a space would we be comfortable inviting our friends?’.

These are not questions unique to emerging church leaders, but they were new questions for Doug, Anthea and their team as they sought to renew their community life and small groups.

They dreamed that they would want good food, a big table and lots of laughing to connect with one another. They were not convinced they needed Bible study and singing, and got that input at other times. And so they refocused their small groups as ‘Get-togethers’ or ‘GTs’ with only two rules – there has to be a shared meal and no

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35Smits, ‘Story of Urban Life’.
36Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
Bible study. They have since added prayer to the recipe for GTs, but with a missional and community-building intent. Anthea describes the intent and place of prayer in GTs as supporting one another:

‘How are you going mate?’ and ‘Yes, my kids are sick at home’ and ‘Can we pray for him?’ and that sort of stuff and so ... just trying to ... I suppose ‘Ozzify’ some of what we do in church and that sort of thing and it has been fun.

Five years ago if they had 40% of church participants involved in small groups they would have been happy. Now, since the introduction of GTs, they claim they have 80% involvement. They perceive that people are voting with their feet as well as responding to the invitation to be part of a group which ‘does life together’ regularly over a shared meal.

GTs have become a primary context for community care. Anthea’s favourite story to illustrate this relates to visiting a man in hospital after a heart attack. She started with, ‘I’m sorry I haven’t been to see you, how are you doing? I heard you had a heart attack’. He said, ‘Oh, you didn’t need to come and visit me, it was fantastic, the GT group just came in and brought communion in for me and I had so-and-so come in and they have been coming in regularly to have prayer with me’. GTs have developed a more holistic expression of pastoral care than can be exercised by a pastor alone.

Community and mission are the twin and inseparable priorities of the newly replanted Urban Life. A church cannot do one without the other, especially in a postmodern world where relationships are so valued. Aaron was a young person who walked in off the street one morning and came to Christian belief through belonging.

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37 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
38 Smits, ‘Story of Urban Life’.
39 (‘Urban Life Journal’, 195) The NCLS survey showed 37% regularly attend a small study or prayer group and 62% attend a club or social group (NCLS Research, ‘Church Life Profile: Urban Life, Ringwood’ (October 2006), 14; see pp.199-200 below). It is possible that some of the claimed 80% described their GT membership as a social group and some described it as a prayer group, but it is more likely that 80% is an enthusiastic overestimation.
40 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
to the Urban Life community.\textsuperscript{41} In some church cultures it is very important to believe and/or behave before you can belong, but Urban Life follows a centred-set approach and welcomes people to belong irrespective of their beliefs and behaviour.\textsuperscript{42} In the case of Aaron, this led to him finding faith for himself and his behaviour is changing as he learns about following Jesus. Community belonging has a missional edge. It is difficult to do effective mission without community, and missional purpose helps form healthy community.

**Mission – ‘Being found about our Father’s business’**

There are glimpses of missional activity in CLC’s history. Like many evangelical-charismatic-Pentecostal (EPC) churches, rhetoric was high for mission and evangelism. The reality, however, was that church programs which aimed at attracting and keeping people in church consumed a lot of energy.\textsuperscript{43} CLC ran conventions, a Bible college and charismatic meetings for people from all around Melbourne but had little local community contact. Mary reminisced: ‘Nobody knew we were even there. We were not touching the community at all and [yet] that was what our heart was from way back when we first came to the Lord’.\textsuperscript{44} Mary may have been right; they had a ‘missional heart’ but all of the interviews suggested that missional action was minimal or spasmodic.

When Doug reluctantly became senior leader in 1991, one of his most significant initiatives was to encourage more generous giving to missions. Through Doug’s decade of leadership CLC helped produce video resources to train pastors in Cuba, provide cataract surgery in Cambodia, train Christians in Vietnam and the Czech Republic, establish orphanages and Bible colleges in India, and plant churches in Lilydale and South Shepparton. Yet the church continued pursuing Sunday-focused church growth through felt needs and prayer for healing and miracles. A few

\textsuperscript{41}Smits, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{42}See pp.54-55 above.
\textsuperscript{43}Faircloth, Interview #2.
\textsuperscript{44}Owen and Mary, Urban Life small group leaders, Interview by the author, Ringwood (7 August 2006).
community mission projects were trialled – ‘Young Mums’, ‘The Bridge’ and a Christmas dinner – but the focus of church life was still Sunday worship.

Anthea grew disillusioned with Pentecostal manifestations which had no missional outworking. CLC had been a centre for charismatic renewal since the 1970s and through to the infamous ‘Toronto Blessing’ in the mid 1990s. But it bemused Anthea that ‘amazing miracles’ did not often lead to passion for witness and mission as she expected they naturally should:

We have got to get on about mission. We’ve got to get on about seeing other people experience God in the same way. But you know what? They just didn’t care and it really, really, really annoyed me … I heard someone talk about it like this, that we go to church with out little jerry can and we get our jerry can filled up and take it home and we put it in the garage with the thousands of other jerry cans that we’ve got, and they are all sitting there not being used. … It’s like we’ve got a big truck full of the most gorgeous, beautiful fruit and veg and the most fantastic food and we drive it into a third world place and we keep the doors locked. We would call that immoral and I think that what we have done sometimes with the presence of God or with the wonderfulness of God is sometimes immoral how we haven’t shared that.  

Hebrew prophets expressed similar disgust over overfed religious people who were unconcerned with mission and justice.

Anthea recalls that CLC had overseas mission interest but minimal local mission awareness. She herself had little concern for either avenue of mission. But in 2000 she had a profound transformation and became aware of community and global needs, including the dark side of society and domestic violence in Cambodia and Australia.

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46 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.


48 Smits, Interview #1.
Anthea and Doug and their team explored what mission meant for them, which led to the move. It was a time of new beginnings, the culmination of five years of reflection on mission. Moving into The Urban as a community centre helped focus their missional vision. Anthea says she knew they were in the right place when on the first Sunday they had to clean vomit off the front door stop. She taught that Jesus wants to build his church in the midst of difficult contexts: ‘I’m going to build my church in the midst of everything that’s ugly in this world’ (contextualising Matthew 16: 16-18).49

Anthea teaches that mission is ‘being found about our heavenly Father’s business’.50 That means ‘finding God’s heart for a situation and being that, in partnership with God’. The best picture of mission, therefore, is God’s own self (Acts 2:42) rather than an activity or department of the church. Mission describes God’s character.51

Anthea is clear to explain their holistic approach to mission involves proclamation and justice and mercy. Urban Life people often talk about their desire to see people come to faith through verbal witness. But they also have a clear commitment to service and demonstrating the gospel in action. Anthea is fond of quoting, ‘Christianity is often about populating heaven where it needs to be as focused on transforming earth’.52

Anthea’s dissatisfaction and Urban Life’s refocusing is part of a trend that Angelo Cettolin identified of a decrease in spectacular Pentecostal practices and an increased interest in community service and outreach among Australian Pentecostals. Cettolin’s survey sample is Assemblies of God senior pastors, but his research suggests it is a Pentecostal trend towards institutionalisation, curbing abuse of power and contextualising to modern Australian society. Urban Life wants to retain their radical Pentecostal edge but in order to be relevant to their community rather than

49Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
50Smits, Interview #1.
51Smits, Interview #1.
any motivation of personal gratification, which Cettolin argues is a need for broader Australian Pentecostalism and a direction they are moving.\(^\text{53}\)

CLC historically had a Melbourne-wide influence in charismatic renewal and a global reach in missions giving, but have prioritised local mission involvement over recent years. The leaders asked rhetorically, if the church closed down would the local community miss them? At one stage they broke the church into small groups to walk around Ringwood asking what type of people could be served and reached locally.\(^\text{54}\) Perhaps one of the main expressions of local mission is the soup kitchen. Kylie said she has worked in every department of the church, and led most of them, but feels most at home now in the Soup Kitchen: ‘This is what I’m made for. I feel that I’m doing what Jesus did’.\(^\text{55}\) Some people from the soup kitchen attend Sunday morning, and part of what inspires some church partners is a vision to develop a church where it is not safe to leave your bags lying around.\(^\text{56}\)

Urban Life is engaging the local community in a variety of ways. A daily mission opportunity for Urban Life is their café, kids’ play area and community centre. The space they provide is a witness to a relevant church which is prepared to serve, and sometimes leads to opportunities to talk about faith.\(^\text{57}\) Church volunteers serve in the café, and the pastors often serve coffee and mingle and meet people. Anthea said she has had more opportunities to share her faith in the eight months at The Urban than in the last eight years at Oban Road.\(^\text{58}\) A counsellor is linked to The Urban.\(^\text{59}\) The church also gets involved in Clean Up Australia Day, a Pay It Forward (PIF) program with the local council and a schools ministry at a local high school with mentoring, weekly breakfast and school camps. The craft group knits for the local


\(^\text{54}\) Kylie, Urban Life leader, ‘Mission and Innovation at Urban Life’, Email to the author (19 August 2006).

\(^\text{55}\) Kylie, Email.

\(^\text{56}\) Urban Life, Focus Group #1.

\(^\text{57}\) Smits, Interview #1.

\(^\text{58}\) Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.

Citizens’ Advice Bureau. After Hurricane Larry they gave to emergency relief through a needy Anglican church in Queensland. Each year they support the World Vision Forty Hour Famine, but in 2006 instead of fasting from food they spent their time cleaning the local methadone clinic. So as well as a variety of ongoing global projects in Cuba, Vietnam and Cambodia, they are increasingly involved in local community service.\^60

**Looking forward to hoped-for growth**

The late Leo Harris, founder of CRC, used an analogy of driving a car to emphasise the importance of churches looking forward to where they are going while glancing back in the rear vision mirror to see where they have been. He would stress the mirror was small, and the windscreen large; the most important thing was to focus on the road ahead, looking forward with a clear vision.\^61

Urban Life is a story of reinvention that has inspired other emerging churches. The church gained lessons other churches could learn from, and acknowledge they have much to learn in coming years about putting their ideals of mission and community into practice. Anthea commented that CRC as a movement has a missional heart but is on decline nationally, and so may be particularly open to emerging models of church.\^62

The church has put a lot of dreaming and resources into reinventing itself and wants to continue innovation. Eight months and $200,000 of renovation costs went into the new facility. In a few years time the whole corner block of shops the café belongs to is due for demolition and rebuilding. With Oban Road in North Ringwood as an

\^60 Kylie, Interview; Smits, ‘Urbanlife’, 6-8.


asset, a quality renovation completed, and a good relationship with council and Ringwood developers, Urban Life’s leaders feel ready to play a part in that Ringwood redevelopment. Further change and hard work in the future is inevitable. More important than any building, though, is that the church is committed to reflecting further on its call to mission and community. Their vision includes being a network of gatherings, of different shapes and sizes and in different places. Anthea expressed her commitment to help lead the church to ongoing innovation:

We have been through this incredible change … we have only done stage one but there is stage two, three, four, and do we have the energy? It would be so easy for us to only settle where we are and go, ‘Isn’t this great? Aren’t we trendy? Aren’t we sexy? Aren’t we cool?’ . But actually, there is probably some far more radical change that needs to continue to happen and the challenge of continuing to navigate that well and not settling and I suppose allowing the voice of God to continually to lead you.

After a family funeral, she reflected about the legacy of men and women of faith, including pioneers of the Pentecostal movement in Australia: ‘Their lives scream at us to be adventurous and creative in our generation ensuring we don’t just do what they did but instead we forge new ways, we navigate new horizons’. Urban Life carries the tradition of pioneering Pentecostalism but is forging a fresh renovation for the twenty-first century.

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63 Lewis and Carolyn, Interview.
64 Smits, Interview #1.
65 Smits, Interview #1.
Figure 13: Urban Life shopfront

Photo by author. 21 February 2008.

Figure 14: Urban Life café

Photo by author. 23 July 2006.
CHAPTER 6

SOLACE, AN INTERACTIVE NETWORK

To enable a people to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and re-making their everyday world

(Solace mission statement)

Solace was planted as an additional ‘alternative worship’ congregation by one of Melbourne’s largest Anglican churches, St Hilary’s in Kew.1 Solace now meets on Sunday mornings at St Paul’s Anglican Church, Fairfield. In the midst of a busy shopping precinct, between a restaurant and a bread shop, the ninety year-old church building, built in 1916, presents as a traditional Anglican church. Yet Solace and St Paul’s are dreaming about how to make best missional use of their space.

On 10 September 2006, I participated in the ‘Solace liturgy’ which invites six or seven people to lead different parts of the service. People mingle or sit around St Paul’s on lounges, chairs and steps. Stuart Davey, one of the pastors, greets us and explains we may go to different parts of the room. We can prayerfully read the papers on the wall – which that Sunday includes articles about the deaths of Australian celebrities Steve Irwin and Peter Brock. There is an option of contributing to one of many offering boxes – with symbols of our money, time, environmental care or encouragement of others. And/or we can respond by writing, painting or moulding play dough, pour a fair-trade coffee or engage in quiet conversations.

After this fluid experience, Stuart calls everyone together and asks, ‘Where have you seen God at work this week?’ Con had visited a church in Queensland and appreciated the welcome. Gavin had the opportunity to talk to his father before he died. Stuart had weeded his garden and reflected on what God was taking out of his life. Integrating faith with everyday life is a feature of Solace and the theme for this morning’s service. The worship continues with more questions interspersed with songs and a Michael Leunig poem. Annette presents teaching about ‘Transforming Grace’ and being enthralled by God rather than primarily seeking conformity, doctrine, church activities or special experiences.

Discussion follows about what holds people back from knowing God’s love or learning from God or others. Toni says whenever she sees someone die, her reaction is to think God is terrible. Miriam admits she responds in fear to Arab men, but she wants instead to be ready to express a warm greeting. One person says they respond to disappointment with God by avoiding prayer; another that they do more spiritual disciplines. Maybe a third of people who are present contribute to discussion, but most listen with interest. Well-constructed questions lead to thought-provoking discussion and people do not criticise responses or seek to immediately resolve dilemmas. It is also noticeable that people are reasserting their commitment to traditional evangelical practices like prayer, Bible reading and compassion to the needy, but want to do these things with right motives and not out of obligation. Stuart summarises the morning, closes in prayer and invites everyone to help tidying up.

Solace began in January 2000 as an experimental congregation of St Hilary’s Anglican Church Kew (SHACK). Olivia Moffat (now Maclean) was on staff at St Hilary’s, responsible for the 5 o’clock young adults congregation. She and others discerned a need for different approaches to worship and theological reflection, and

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2 Michael Leunig is a popular Melbourne-based artist who reflects in his poems and cartoons on the simplicity and mystery of everyday life: recreation and politics, love and friendship, faith and doubt. I reflected on his contribution to Australian spirituality in Cronshaw, *Credible Witness*, 32-37.


dreamed of Solace. So it emerged out of the inherited church through re-imagining worship.\(^5\) First meeting in the Carey Grammar School Chapel in Kew, they described themselves as a church for ‘the unchurched and the overchurched’;\(^6\) and were influenced by alternative worship forms and postmodern leadership ideas. Stuart Davey and Jude Waldron joined the pastoral team in 2004. In the second half of 2004 Solace became what Olivia referred to as a ‘type two’ congregation, still connected to SHACK. They did not want to be a ‘type three’ congregation which separated completely, but wanted greater independence from the centre than the normal ‘type one’ congregation which was expected to be similar to the mainstream mother church.\(^7\) Early in 2005 Solace’s relationship with St Hilary’s ended, which was a time of pain for both groups.\(^8\) Solace moved to St Paul’s in Fairfield and Balwyn Baptist, forging partnerships with both of those dwindling congregations.

The real focus of Solace, however, is not supposed to be any church events or pastors, but Solace participants living out the ways of Jesus. The most basic principle of Solace is ‘to enable a people to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and re-making their everyday world’.\(^9\) They have developed seven Ways to help them live that out. Each of the Ways is Jesus-centred and relevant to everyday life. They are based on Transforming Grace inspired by Dallas Willard and an approach to historical spiritual traditions outlined by Richard Foster and the Renovaré movement: the contemplative, holiness, charismatic, evangelical, social justice and sacramental traditions.\(^10\) Solace has added a seventh Way about relational wholeness:

- **The Way of the Everyday** is about acknowledging that God is both above all things and in all things.
- **The Way of Contemplation** is about living a life that doesn’t lead to burnout.

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\(^5\)Murray, *Changing Mission*, 43-44.
\(^6\)For ‘unchurched’ categories see: Murray, *Changing Mission*, 44.
\(^7\)Olivia developed these terms to explain Solace’s preferred position. Olivia Maclean, Solace pastor, Interview #1 by the author, Balwyn (11 October 2006).
\(^9\)Solace [Website].
- *The Way of Seeking the Spirit* is about joining with the Spirit in the work of God in the world.
- *The Way of Relating* is about relational wholeness.
- *The Way of Holiness* is about living a life that works.
- *The Way of Justice* is concerned with the welfare of people, the state of our society, and the environment.
- *The Way of Learning and Understanding* involves applying new knowledge to enable change and growth.\(^{11}\)

Solace acknowledges that some participants will never practise one or more Ways for a range of reasons, nor will people excel in all Ways. Yet Solace has goals for each Way and hopes that different people and different aspects of Solace will be developing all the Ways.\(^{12}\) Olivia hopes that the Ways will be an entry point for people into Christian faith and the Solace community.\(^{13}\)

As a network forming around a Jesus-centred spirituality and remaking the world, Solace is intentionally broadening its efforts beyond Sundays. The largest gathering is Sunday mornings at St Paul’s, but members also meet in small groups, informal gatherings or online. Solace leaders invite people to find the right balance of what to be involved in and make it clear they do not encourage people to attend all activities, because that would be contrary to equipping people in everyday life. The website gives examples of some of the diverse options for involvement:

One person may be a part of a small group and go to Taizé Fridays once a month, another may go to Tuesday Nights, another still may interact with the online community through the email group, and none of them necessarily meet or interact with the other two, although all [are] equally a part of Solace.\(^{14}\)

Some Solace members are opting out of ‘Sunday stuff’ for the sake of being church in the world, and finding spiritual nourishment in other-than-Sunday expressions.

\(^{11}\)Solace [Website].


\(^{13}\)Maclean, Interview #1.

\(^{14}\)‘Getting Involved’, in Solace [Website].
Solace is also a broader network beyond the Solace congregation(s). After leaving St Hilary’s, Solace established Solace EMC as an umbrella organisation for legal and staffing matters for themselves and to serve other emerging churches. Café Church, for instance, an emerging congregation which meets in cafés and was planted by Christian City Church pastor Steve Venour, has just come under Solace EMC’s administration. Solace EMC also organises Dreaming nights and consultations, and oversees mission project support such as Solace Enterprises, which raised $10,000 in

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2006 for Opportunity International. Solace EMC also relates to denominational bodies. The strongest denominational ties are with the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and the Baptist Union of Victoria, although Solace is open to relational ties with other denominations. Solace as a congregation, labelled Solace Community Trust, is represented in the box in the bottom corner. The congregation has a council which looks after staff and finances. They see the role of the staff as to facilitate routine and regular spirituality, intentional formation and administration. The Solace Leadership Team (SLT) works with the staff to monitor the health of the community and how they can best develop the seven Ways.

Solace produces ample documents, and a book, about their life together. They also welcomed me for interviews, focus groups and participating in the life of the community in September 2006. I observed four features of Solace which were distinctive about their identity and what they celebrate: interactivity, questioning, everyday spirituality and dreaming.

**Interactive worship**

Solace started with a group of people who wanted worship and teaching that was interactive rather than merely ‘a sing and a talk’. Informed by adult learning principles and multi-sensory worship, they planned gatherings which were ‘informal, participatory and authentic’. Symbols that represent Solace culture include candles, tables (not pews), play dough, painted mugs and relative absence of music. Olivia says worship becomes like a game of Hacky Sack – anyone can start or contribute to the conversation, people learn by doing and the game is not successful until everyone participates. As well as teaching input with lectures, they have an

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17. A quick biography’, in Solace [Website].
21. ‘The paradigm of the Solace Community’, in Solace [Website].
22. Olivia Maclean and Stuart Davey, ‘Solace Creative Worship Workshop’ (North Fitzroy, 8 September 2007).
open microphone and lots of encouragement to ask and explore questions. They practise communion traditionally, but also share meals together – interpreted eucharistically. Instead of meeting inside for worship every Sunday, once or twice per year they plant trees or clean up the billabong at Kew.\(^{23}\) There were questions about what people might say in the open microphone, whether lunch can replace Eucharist, or whether Greening Australia can replace a service. But participants say these interactive practices help them connect with God and one another in new ways.

Solace offers three main options for weekly worship.\(^{24}\) Sunday mornings at St Paul’s is normally a half-hour of prayer-experience for all ages and all stages of faith and an hour of learning for adults and children separately. Thursday nights at Balwyn Baptist has a monthly rhythm. The first Thursday is ‘PAM’ for sharing pictures, art or music about journeying with God. The second is a spiritual formation session based on Remaking.\(^{25}\) The third is ‘Word and Table’, a liturgy of readings, music, sung responses, prayers, silence and communion.\(^{26}\) The fourth offers activities based on Remaking following the theme of the second Thursday.\(^{27}\) Following up a ‘theory’ session with ‘practical’ application is consistent with Solace’s commitment to spend less time teaching new material and more time applying it.\(^{28}\) The 5pm Sunday service of the small congregation of St Paul’s Anglican Church, which Olivia serves as priest, is based around a lectio divina Gospel reading.\(^{29}\) Olivia describes St Paul’s as a mission-shaped church with a ‘mixed economy’ of traditional and emerging services.\(^{30}\) Interactive and diverse expressions of worship are important to Solace.

Deborah, an ex-member and now occasional visitor to Solace, recalled that a highlight for her of interactive worship and allowing voices of pain to be heard was the post-September 11, 2001, service. She was rostered to preach on Isaac and

\(^{23}\)Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’.

\(^{24}\)Solace [Website].

\(^{25}\)Solace Journal’, 21-26, 57-76; Solace, Remaking.

\(^{26}\)Inspired by ‘The Liturgy of the Eucharist’, (Melbourne: South Yarra Community Baptist Church, 2005).

\(^{27}\)Solace Journal’, 27-32; Maclean, Alternative Worship, 8.

\(^{28}\)Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’.


\(^{30}\)Maclean, Interview #2; see Croft, ‘Fresh Expressions’, 1-6.
Ishmael (Genesis 21) but decided instead to open up the morning and simply said: ‘Well, let’s have it open for everyone to say what they want to say, read what they want to say, pray what they want to pray’. A Solace principle is that you cannot disagree with people’s contributions, which led to a painful but special time that morning. A Rwandan said, ‘When all my people died, why didn’t we hold a special service for that’? Someone else who has been working in South Africa spoke of all the children who die every day and we take no notice. Two Americans asked, ‘Why had this happened to our country’? Deborah said they listened to one another’s grief, not always agreeing but not answering and arguing either. It is curious they invite diverse opinions but suppress explicit disagreement. Their non-confrontational discourse expresses what Penny Becker calls ‘community congregations’ which make space for members to express their individuality, and so stress the need for the congregation to adjust to the needs of its members.

Interactive worship was part of Solace’s founding charism, based initially on adult education needs, but they soon developed a complementary interest in intergenerational worship. They sought from the beginning to be family-friendly though not family-focused. Some parents laugh remembering services with candles on the floor and hot drinks left beside chairs. Most Solace gatherings, though, make space for children and many Solace participants who are not parents look out for and enjoy interacting with children.

Anna is the integration worker at Solace, a role which expresses Solace’s desire to integrate children, families and all ages in worship. She organises the Sunday children’s program and intergenerational services. She also facilitates Pancake Sundays to help parents discuss issues like how to pray with children, and take

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31 Solace, participants, Focus group #5 by the author, Fairfield (29 October 2006); Deborah Storie, ‘Solace Research’, Email to the author (28 August 2006).


33 Solace, Focus Group #5.

34 Solace, Focus Group #1.

35 E.g., Diane, Solace member, ‘Mission and Innovation at Solace’, Email to the author (21 August 2006).
parents and children away from St Paul’s for one Sunday per month so others can have a quieter contemplative service. Anna herself grew up in church and says she matured as she left behind her desire to be told what to believe and subsequently explored questions of faith for herself. She appreciated reading *Mister God, this is Anna*. Anna says that it is an amazing story of God meeting the little girl Anna where she is and realising that God is everywhere. When Solace asked her to consider working with children, she remembered the organic faith of Anna in the book and realised she was being invited to work with God to bring out what children know. Her vision is to find and celebrate what children experience of God.

Solace also has a healthy ministry to youth. They used to meet as a small group during ‘Sunday stuff’ at Solace and discussed issues of faith and life, but they have started now to join the Solace gathering. Barb Totterdell suggests that key values of the emerging church movement – serving the community, celebrating stories, allowing questions and engaging culture – are crucial for ministries to children and youth. Some young people go to other churches to enthusiastically sing and join in with a larger youth ministry but come to Solace to have space to think about their faith and participate in deep discussions.

**Theological questioning**

Solace has always attracted people who want to question assumptions about God and explore issues of doubt as well as faith. The 5 o’clock service of young adults which Olivia first worked with at St Hilary’s included a group who were dissatisfied with routine answers. They baulked at the perception that the solution to any problem was to ‘pray and read the Bible’. Solace started with permission to ask any question and acceptance of people who were at any stage of faith or non-faith. Part of Solace’s

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36Solace Journal’, 33-35.
37Fynn, *Mister God, This Is Anna* (London: Collins, 1974).
38Anna, Solace integration worker, Interview by the author, Fairfield (3 October 2006).
40Solace, Focus Group #5.
41Jude Waldron, Solace pastor, Interview #1 by the author, Balwyn (1 August 2006).
culture is that it is safe to believe what you do and say what you think. Leanne commented that she has never seen anyone shocked by someone else’s question, and that honest sharing is encouraged because Solace is ‘not the glossy brochure’ which pretends everything is perfect. Totterdell observed that Solace started with mainly burnt out Christians who were trying to make sense of their faith in the midst of doubt and struggles.

Solace has intentionally set out to deal with complex issues and different people’s stages of faith. Jamieson would appreciate Solace as a ‘leaver-sensitive’ church which recognises the complexity of faith maturation and allows space for expressing questions and emotions. Questions at Solace are as common as assertions, and often intentionally more common. A Thursday night lectio divina reading, for example, included twenty minutes of generating questions about the text of the night (Genesis 4, Cain and Abel). Not many of the questions were answered, and if answers had been discussed there would not have been as much time for questions and the thoughts they prompted.

Solace participants say that it is an important part of their culture that space is made for any stage of faith including no faith. Diane commented:

I don’t know if our church does it perfectly, but one thing our church does well is to allow people to come in and explore God and spirituality without commitment or criticism, and to leave when they are ready or to stay and ask questions. No question is silly!

Traditional boundaries of who is ‘in’ and ‘out’ are less important for Solace. For some members, this would simply be about love and inclusion. For others, it is based on an articulated approach to social set theory. People whose partners are not believers particularly appreciate this approach. Their spouses can come and feel a

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42 ‘The Paradigm of the Solace Community’, in Solace [Website].
43 Solace, Focus Group #5.
45 Jamieson, Churchless Faith, 153-163.
46 Thursday stuff at Balwyn, 28 September, in ‘Solace Journal’, 27-32.
47 Diane, Email.
48 Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’; see pp.54-55 above.
sense of belonging, indeed choose their own level of belonging, and not be judged or preached at. Nigel explained that he is not a Christian because he has not had a convincing experience of God being real, but he is committed to Solace because Christianity is important to his wife Leanne. He often contributes practically, is a regular participant and is being asked to help with teaching on contemplation and meditation. One woman said that it has been helpful for a young person wrestling with her inherited faith to be able to ask Nigel, ‘So why you not a Christian?’ and talk through issues of faith and nonbelief.

Solace’s theological questioning is part of a broader rethinking about the place of faith in contemporary society. Solace seeks to hold to the essence of the gospel but still be authentic to the experience of culture. It is an ‘ancient-future’ mix, ‘holding the hand’ of the traditional church and reinventing the way to engage with postmodern culture. Brian McLaren, who attempts to rearticulate an approach to faith and church which is relevant to our postmodern era, has been popular with a number of Solace people. Solace drafted a unique constitution which puts their mission and organisational systems in the context of meeting the needs of their era:

Solace assumes that all the talk about “post modernity” and a new era in the cities of the West is true. We are trying to shape our community to thrive in this new unfolding era. This means re-shaping life in the face of new realities that are increasingly familiar. Sometimes we embrace these changes and sometimes we offer alternatives.

Thus they state their support for blended families, critique both multinationals and their own consumerism, integrate technology with their spirituality and recognise that Christianity is seen as one among many spiritual options. Solace is questioning and broadening perspectives on where the gospel engages culture.

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49 Solace, Focus Group #5.
50 Solace, Focus Group #1.
52 Especially McLaren, New Kind of Christian.
53 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
54 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
Everyday spirituality and vocation

A third discernible feature of Solace is the celebration of everyday spirituality and vocation. Their guiding principle that ‘Solace exists to enable a people to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and remaking their everyday world’ has developed over time. Olivia said that the first year of Solace focused on developing an authentic Sunday gathering with many-to-many interactive worship, and the second year they started exploring what church and faith meant beyond Sundays, inspired by Richard Foster and Dallas Willard.\textsuperscript{55} They held some weeknight courses and collected their own resources, and at the beginning of 2006 published the \textit{Remaking} workbook.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Remaking} is a collection of stories, artwork and exercises from twenty writers and ten artists, structured around the seven ‘Ways of Jesus-centred spirituality’. The first of the seven Ways focus on this sacramental tradition of celebrating God in the ordinary events of everyday life and work:

\textit{The Way of the Everyday} is about acknowledging that God is both above all things and in all things – that there exists no separate categories of spiritual and unspiritual, and that God can be found, and has an integral interest, in all that happens in the world.\textsuperscript{57}

This denial of sacred-spiritual divisions is consistent with Frost and Hirsch’s non-dualistic messianic spirituality, though Solace prefers more accessible language of everyday spirituality.\textsuperscript{58} The other six Ways also explore everyday themes – for example, following the Spirit of God already working to bring about God’s good intention in the world around.\textsuperscript{59}

Theologically, an understanding of the mission of God and the incarnation is an inspiration for Solace as they live out ‘being sent’ like Jesus. As well as articulating

\textsuperscript{55}Maclean, Interview #1; see Foster, \textit{Streams}; Willard, \textit{Divine Conspiracy}.
\textsuperscript{56}Solace, \textit{Remaking}; see Cronshaw, ‘Spirituality Reading Guide’, 3-4, 9.
\textsuperscript{57}Solace, \textit{Remaking}, 22.
\textsuperscript{58}Frost and Hirsch, \textit{Shaping}, 111-162; Solace, Leaders’ Focus Group, Collingwood (3 April 2008); see pp.62-65 above.
\textsuperscript{59}Solace, \textit{Remaking}, 94.
the context of our cultural era, the Solace constitution articulates some of this theological foundation:

Just as Jesus lived among a people of a particular time and culture so do we seek to live amongst people of our time and culture. Furthermore Jesus engaged in every aspect of life and taught that the work and reign of God encompasses the entire world, all things are or can be sacred and made new.60

Stuart said they are influenced most significantly in this by James Thwaites who teaches that the church as the body of Christ is the work of God in the entire world and not just the institutional church.61 They applaud the work of God inside church programs but also, and perhaps more importantly for mission, ‘beyond the congregation’. Remaking explains that their approach is based on Christ’s body filling everything (Ephesians 1:23), and as the body, the church is called to remake the world, not to be focused on a building or list of programs, but people sent into their everyday world.62

Solace celebrates the ‘Way of the everyday’ in people who seek to remake their world in their work and relational lives. Jude celebrates a physics teacher who started an ethics class for students, a businessperson who cuts profits by 15% to check that overseas manufacturing is ethical and the Year 10 student who attends the Christian group at school even though it is not his peer group.63 There is a research scientist who devotes herself to malaria research, conscious it does not attract huge funding but is one of the largest killers of poor people. A young couple is investing in housing which gives preference to marginalised people.64 A couple of people host a night for letter-writing to politicians.65 The naming and celebrating of these things

60Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’. This was drafted by a graduate of Regent College, Vancouver, which is known for its spirituality of vocation and everyday life.
61Stuart Davey, Solace pastor, Interview by the author, Balwyn (7 September 2006); Thwaites, Church Beyond the Congregation; Thwaites, Renegotiating the Church Contract.
62Solace, Remaking, 18-19.
63Waldron, Interview #1.
64Olivia Maclean, ‘The Ways of Solace’ (Forge Spirituality, Discipleship & Sustainability conference, Tabor College, Melbourne, 8 July 2006); Solace, Remaking, 188-189.
65Cate Lewis, ‘Just Letters’, Email post <solacecommunity@yahoogroups.com.au> (23 November 2006).
reminds the community of their identity and how they are living out their purpose of remaking the world. Talking about how people are doing radical things to remake their world inspires others to consider how to express their faith and vocation.

Friends of Abigail spoke of the example of her passions. She is passionate about Australian native plants and regenerating native areas, and has organised the involvement of Solace in Friends of Glass Creek, Greening Australia tree planting and Clean Up Australia. She is encouraged that ‘restoring the world in God’s intent’ is seen as part of her mission. As a parent Abigail seeks to help her children, though not explicitly Christian, to orient their lives the way God would want them. Furthermore, she expresses a strong sense of call to her work, teaching English as a second language. She appreciates that Solace validates her broader vocation and says that part of the purpose of Solace is to support people and their work rather than expecting they have to go somewhere else, for example Pakistan, if they want to be involved in mission. Whether through hobbies, relationships or work, she has a Solace-inspired or at least Solace-affirmed understanding that bringing the life of the kingdom of God is valid mission whether or not you mention the name of Jesus.

The model of ministry and the structure of Solace are directed towards helping facilitate everyday spirituality. All staff are part-time, so they have a ‘foot in the world’ and can experience and model the challenges of balancing church and other work. They give priority to encouraging people to find and live out their vocations, not just operating church programs. Stuart sees his ministry as a pilgrim-guide, like a spiritual director who travels alongside to help people find their passions. Solace staff see it as their role to help people do the right things more than believe the right things. Olivia said they have a saying: ‘Jesus Christ bled for this earth, so go and bloody do something about it’. They take time to intentionally ask questions like ‘Where is God taking you?’, ‘What are you enjoying?’, ‘What are you passionate

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68 Solace, Focus Group #5.
69 Waldron, Interview #1.
70 Davey, Interview.
71 Maclean, ‘The Ways of Solace’. 
about?’, ‘What do you connect with in your community?’ and ‘What are you challenged about or celebrating with people around you?’ Solace wants to help people dream about how to remake their everyday world.

**Dreaming**

Solace started with dreaming about new ways of being church and remaking the world, and have developed a capacity for dreaming with some focused training and programs. In 2005, three Solace members, Ursula, Stuart and Olivia, did Catalyst-Innovations training, a program which helps Christians develop innovative business plans and integrate business involvement with faith. Olivia said Catalyst gave her skills in emergence and entrepreneurship, and confidence to keep going and not close Solace in the midst of the difficulties of leaving St Hilary’s. As a follow up, Catalyst helped run Dreaming nights at Solace.

Dreaming nights are a service sponsored by Solace EMC to help individuals and groups who are yearning to transform the places where they live and work. They foster questions, encourage plans to be balanced with healthy spirituality and concerns for justice, and can assist with the development of a business plan, applying for seed-funding or whatever else is needed to help make the dream a reality. Dreaming nights are gestating a number of embryonic ideas. Participants have ‘tossed around’ ideas for fundraising $10,000 for Opportunity International, and possible scenarios for Balwyn Baptist’s manse, such as letting it out free to young adults who commit to intentional local mission. Stuart has brought along for discussion his vision for an alternative/allied health centre with a Jesus-centred spirituality. Olivia says dreaming nights are broadly concerned with helping people realise their God-given dreams to remake the world for good – whether to start a business or pray for a neighbour.

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72Solace, Focus Group #1.
73Maclean, Interview #1.
74Davey, Interview; Stuart Davey, ‘Reflections on an Emerging Church Experiment’, Report to BUV New Missional Communities, Melbourne (May 2006), 1.
75Maclean, Interview #1.
One of the big dreams about neighbourhood which Solace is exploring is ‘SPACE’ or ‘SPACEEmakers’. This is a group of eight St Paul’s and Solace people, and an employed project manager, who are looking at how best to develop and use the space at St Paul’s. The name SPACE suggests the partnership between St Paul’s (SP) and Solace (ACE), and the hope for creating more community-friendly space. They use their regular meetings as an opportunity to discern what is happening in their community. These are the topics for discernment used by SPACEEmakers in their first hour of meeting together:

- Things to cheer
- Changes to be part of
- Crisis/conflict in which to be a peacemaker
- Celebrations to join in
- Crowds or coincidences to pay attention to
- Conversations that lead somewhere.

In their second hour of meeting they discuss the building redevelopment. They are investigating architectural options for remaking the space and opening up the church more to the street. They want to avoid being building-centred, but hope that the building they develop will better communicate their openness to the community.

By 2008 SPACE focused their vision inviting Fairfield to experience holistic spirituality and developing a centre for family wellness, learning, adventure and play. This addresses identified needs for non-traditional spiritual services, parents’ education and support, child minding and a child-friendly café and range of social groups. SPACE has started to pursue partnership with local traders and organisations, and applied for diocesan funding to help with the $1.4 million redevelopment.

**Looking forward to bridging the gap**

Solace does not need convincing about the importance of checking whether reality meets the rhetoric of emerging church thinking. In a congregational discussion,

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67 Davey, Interview.

Annette suggested that Solace is prone to see their shortcomings and the gap between their rhetoric and reality.\textsuperscript{78} Olivia admits that there is a big gap between their ideals and who they are.\textsuperscript{79} They have a saying: ‘mind the gap’, echoing the London Underground, or more philosophically the theory of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance says that when attitudes and behaviours are inconsistent and showing dissonance, something must change, and usually the attitude changes to match the behaviour.\textsuperscript{80} The leadership agenda is to help people cross the gap in the other direction – to help match what people say they believe with what their lives show about what they really believe, and to help people move on from who they are to become who they are in Christ. This is what Olivia seeks to make explicit, and teaches that this is yet another gap which Christ’s death overcomes.\textsuperscript{81} Totterdell suggests that the ideals, as expressed in identity or purpose statements, are things to work towards and the fact that Solace is ‘becoming’ these things should not discourage them from expressing them.\textsuperscript{82} They are conscious their reality does not always match their rhetoric, and they want to change not their rhetoric but their reality. They want to help people measure up to what they say they really believe and aspire to become in Christ.

To what extent they impact and remake their world in mission is worth evaluating, but the permission-giving and empowering culture of Solace is pointing people in healthy directions which are both missional and Jesus-centred. \textit{Remaking} typifies their ethos:

\begin{quote}
It shares some of our thoughts on the person of Jesus and what it means to be people who experience and are shaped by Transforming Grace. Ultimately, we see the living out of our spirituality as joining with God in bringing restoration to the world and remaking the world according to God’s good intention.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78}Sunday service, 10 September, in ‘Solace Journal’, 7, also 173.
\textsuperscript{79}Maclean, ‘The Ways of Solace’; Solace, ‘Leaders' Focus Group’.
\textsuperscript{80}Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’; originally Festinger, \textit{A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance}.
\textsuperscript{81}Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’.
\textsuperscript{82}Totterdell, ‘Edge of Chaos’, 3.
\textsuperscript{83}Solace, \textit{Remaking}.
Solace is also growing in healthy directions as a learning organisation. Peter Senge comments, ‘The organizations that will excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels of an organisation’.  

Solace does not limit its learning to focusing on its member’s church interests but encourages people to learn how to influence their broader community. Leaders at Solace are the only leaders of the four case studies who I know have read Senge’s books. They do not always use Senge’s terminology, but they are encouraging Solace members to cultivate personal mastery by getting in touch with their vocations. They are developing a shared vision of remaking the world. They are teaching systems thinking and applying it to church and broader community group leadership. And in general they are fostering a learning community characterised by interactive exploration of tough issues.

Solace has some distinctive theological reflections and approaches to church, particularly in the areas of spiritual formation and everyday theology. Members have had some struggles in delineating their approaches to mission and innovation, which will be explored in the following chapters, but they are in the process of articulating their ideals of remaking the world and encouraging one another along the way(s).

One of Solace’s quintain poems articulates some of their hope:

Church
People gathered
Expressing God’s grace
Finding hope in disappointment
Community.

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85 Especially Senge, *Fifth Discipline*; Senge et al., *Presence*.

Figure 16: St Paul’s, Fairfield (Solace North-Eastern hub)

![Image of St Paul’s, Fairfield](image1)

Photo by author. 3 October 2006.

Figure 17: Solace Festival ‘Dreaming’ discussion

![Image of Solace Festival ‘Dreaming’ discussion](image2)

Hepburn Springs Youth Hostel. Photo by Jason Clark. 25 August 2007. Used with permission.
Table 2: Characteristics and distinctives of the emerging church cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church &amp; denom.</th>
<th>Suburb, region</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Emergence source(^{87})</th>
<th>Founding focus(^{88})</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Pastor(s)/Leader</th>
<th>Year began</th>
<th>Key narrative</th>
<th>Distinctives</th>
<th>Looking forward to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection Community, Church of Christ</td>
<td>Croydon, Outer-Eastern</td>
<td>Reinvented congregation</td>
<td>From inherited church</td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Bistros &amp; community</td>
<td>Wayne &amp; Paula Nebauer</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Dramatic reinvention</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Shop windows Community service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Empowering people</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>New leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Hills Community Church, Baptist</td>
<td>Croydon, Outer-Eastern</td>
<td>New church plant</td>
<td>Within particular context</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community centre &amp; homes</td>
<td>Toli &amp; Emma Morgan</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Young proliferating church plant</td>
<td>Creativity in worship</td>
<td>Community &amp; hospitality</td>
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<td>Engaging the world</td>
<td>Changed location</td>
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<td>Shared leadership</td>
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<td>Hoped-for growth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dreaming</td>
<td>Bridging the gap</td>
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CHAPTER 7
INCARNATIONAL MISSION

In God we see a missionary: He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world with the purpose of redeeming the world and restoring relationship between God and humanity; in turn, Jesus sends us into the world to continue with this purpose. We are a “sent” people, a “missionary” people. This goes to the very purposes of the church in the world. The way we seek to live out this idea of “being sent” mirrors the life of Jesus. He was sent to live as one of us, in our midst, in everyday life, revealing God to us. This is often called the *incarnation* and this is a profound inspiration for us. Just as Jesus lived among a people of a particular time and culture so do we seek to live amongst people of our time and culture. Furthermore Jesus engaged in every aspect of life and taught that the work and reign of God encompasses the entire world, all things are or can be sacred and made new.

*Solace Constitution*¹

The four churches, characteristic of other groups which identify with the emerging church movement, are emerging for a new era with different ways of doing church which prioritise missional engagement and innovative expression. They may all be grouped in the emerging church movement, but they come from four different denominations, are spread across Melbourne’s Eastern and into the North-Eastern suburbs, include reinvented and freshly planted congregations, and are led by a mixture of women, men and shared leadership teams. All four have started or been significantly reinvented since 2000. As part of the people of God in their suburbs they are improvising and exploring new directions. They have learned lessons that other churches may learn from, but they are not perfect and still have things to grow in and learn themselves.

¹Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
This thesis is structured to analyse the case studies at two levels. The previous four chapters introduced the case studies church by church and described four distinctive cultural characteristics of each. This first level of narrative analysis is a useful beginning to understand what groups do and how they make sense of what they do; it is the basic task of ethnography and path to ‘thick description’. Jerome Bruner contends for the validity of narrative as a fundamental lens for perceiving reality:

A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness.

Chapters three to six have begun to show the lifelikeness of the four churches; chapters seven to ten offer a deeper level of analysis structured around the research domains of mission and innovation and making comparisons across the case studies.

This chapter begins to explore the focus of mission in the four churches. *The Shaping of Things to Come* and other emerging church literature contend for an incarnational approach to mission which infiltrates community networks. A missional-incarnational mode inspires the church in mission to ‘go to them’ rather than attracting people to ‘come to us’. It suggests that as the fruit of God’s incarnation, the people of God need to be *incarnational* by entering a culture, identifying with its people and helping them experience Jesus within their culture rather than extracting them from it. This chapter evaluates whether the reality matches the rhetoric and what shape mission actually takes. It analyses how emerging churches engage missionally with their communities and what theological frameworks influence their approach to mission.

The rhetoric of the emerging church case studies is that they focus on mission. Connection was born out of creative dreaming about how to connect life and faith for people in new ways. It designed worship gatherings as ‘shop windows’ to entice

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4 Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, 31-107; see pp.50-54 above.
people to investigate faith, and took church into the community with a soup kitchen and schools’ ministries. Eastern Hills started as a creative expression of church which sought to be a relevant faith community for a group of young adults. It prioritises engaging the world – locally and globally, in popular culture and people’s passions, and in confronting injustice and expressing compassion. Urban Life leaders say they reinvented everything around mission and community. They moved into the suburban centre of Ringwood and established a café in the premises of an old nightclub in order to connect with local people and address community needs. Solace started with a vision for authentic worship which would connect with unchurched people, and have gathered together numbers of ‘dechurched and overchurched’ people who have left the mainstream church system. Solace articulates its mission as ‘enabling people to remake their everyday world’, and has developed approaches to spiritual formation which it hopes will be an entry point into faith and church life for others. Leaders of the four communities prioritise and passionately articulate their approach to mission with an incarnational posture.

**Connection’s community relationships**

For Connection the basis for mission is found in the missionary nature of God. Leaders and participants talk about joining in with what God is doing. They are realising that God is a missionary God and that it is not that the church has a mission or mission department, but the missionary God has a church.\(^5\) Zachariah, a youth leader at Connection, commented, ‘Mission has to come before the church … we cannot be a church and then have a mission section’.\(^6\) Understanding the missionary nature of God releases people from bearing the ultimate responsibility for mission. Mission begins not with the church but with God and what God is doing in people and the community. This understanding of *missio Dei* is filtering into Connection’s approach to mission.

\(^5\)Echoing Guder et al., *Missional Church*, 3-5.

\(^6\)Zachariah, Connection staff member, Interview by the author, Croydon (22 May 2006); see Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390; Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, 18.
Connection has overseas mission interests. The church gives ten per cent of offerings into a ‘Kingdom Fund’ and establishes ‘Caleb teams’ to raise support for missionaries. With part of the proceeds from the sale of the Croydon Church of Christ buildings, Connection built a medical clinic in the Philippines and offers loans for short-term mission trips.⁷ It is debatable whether building something for people in a developing country is good community development practice, or whether indebting young people who cannot afford to pay their own way overseas is good stewardship. Connection may not have accessed good advice in their innovative overseas giving, but they did at least take an interest in global concerns. Furthermore, Connection views global involvement as important in itself and a stimulus for local mission. One of the pastors, Nathan Crouch, comments on how their global interest is complemented by reminders of local responsibility:

We have tried to keep that balance between acknowledging there are a lot of needs overseas and mission does happen there, but then trying to bring people’s focus back to and keep in tension that mission also happens at our front door or the local milk-bar.⁸

Mission, for Connection, is not limited by geographic boundaries but is global and local.

Participants in focus groups spoke of the culture and challenge of Connection to express mission wherever they find themselves. Ronwyn says she felt challenged to build neighbourhood relationships beyond just knowing faces. She feels released to see all of life as missional and her neighbourhood relationships as ministry, and not firstly as inviting people to church but practising hospitality in her street.⁹ Mission is not just overseas, nor just in church buildings or programs, but wherever people are involved in their neighbourhoods and interest groups.

Chris Spratt, one of Connection’s pastors, seeks to integrate sport with mission. He came from a non-Christian family and did not meet God in church, and says he understood that God was not confined to a building but is God of everything. With

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⁷Herzog, ‘Kingdom Team’; Peta, Interview.
⁸Crouch, Interview.
⁹Connection, Focus Group #1.
some Connection friends he started a weekly habit of playing soccer or cricket on a local oval, and invited other people who walked by or watched to join in:

The next thing you know there’s a bunch of other people there who are doing it with you and loving it and you’re connecting and so it’s not like you can be logged off from mission, mission is everything and everywhere so, yes, a very natural, spiritual experience.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus by visiting the ‘proximity space’ of the cricket nets and soccer oval and inviting bystanders to engage in weekly informal sport, members of Connection built relationships with people beyond their church.

Yet despite their self-admiration for spending time outside the church office, the occasional weekly forays into the local sports ground did not lead to any serious Christian engagement. The habit of informal sport did not continue, relationships were not taken to any deeper level such as sharing a meal and there were not any conversations reported about faith. If Connection’s staff took seriously Frost and Hirsch’s exhortation to live incarnationally and engage community rhythms, they might actually join a local sports club, submit to its discipline of weekly practice and competitive games, seek to develop longer-lasting relationships and bear a credible witness in that context.

Connection identifies as a missional church and espouses a spirituality of everyday life including sport, yet participants are no more likely than average churches to be involved in local sport or hobby groups. From the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), 19% of Connection members report involvement in recreation or hobby groups, which is the same as the Churches of Christ in Victoria on average or slightly less than the 20% average for Protestants nationally.\textsuperscript{11} Connection’s involvement in other community-based groups, such as school committees or Scouts, is also no better than average as shown in the table below. Other churches seem just as involved in community groups but may not talk about it as much. Connection at least

\textsuperscript{10}Connection, Focus Group #1.

\textsuperscript{11}The NCLS grouping of Anglican and [other] Protestant is referred to collectively as [overall] Protestants.
affirms the importance of local community engagement but is not necessarily any more engaged.

Table 3: Connection community activity involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection 2006</th>
<th>Denominational region, CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in community activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport, recreation or hobby groups</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or youth groups, e.g., P&amp;C, Scouts</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the main motivators for community witness at Connection is the example of pastors Wayne and Paula Nebauer. People comment that Wayne and Paula live mission in their neighbourhood, tell stories about faith-based questions and conversations with people outside church, and are often running open homes, wine and cheese nights or enjoying recreation with people in their street. Paula and Wayne moved into Wonga Park in 2001 committed to mission among their neighbours:

Our heart for mission when we began Connection really concentrated on our local community. … Wayne and I have tried to be the role models. There is no point in us telling people to go out and save the world when we needed to be doing it better than everyone. … We would say, “I was speaking to my neighbour the other day and this is our conversation”. That way our lives became an inspiring example.

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12NCLS Research, ‘Church Life Profile: Connection Church of Christ, Croydon’ (November 2006), 18; NCLS Research, ‘Regional Church Life Profile: Churches of Christ, Victoria’ (November 2006), 18. In this and other tables, Connection is compared with the 32 other Church of Christ (CofC) congregations in Victoria and 4514 Anglican and other Protestant churches across Australia that participated. NCLS data is also available for 164 CofC congregations across Australia but for the purposes of this study CofC national figures are not significantly different from CofC Victoria.

13Connection, Focus Group #1.

14Nebauer, Interview.
Paula’s reference to ‘saving the world’ and ‘doing it better than everyone’ sounds compulsive. Since leaving Connection Wayne and Paula are less interested in using relationships intentionally to bring people into church and prefer to let evangelism happen naturally in a more ‘liquid’ way. Nevertheless, their clear commitment to neighbourhood witness influenced others at Connection to relate and witness to their friends and neighbours.

As well as a neighbourhood focus, Connection leaders emphasise holistic mission through community ministries such as serving at Maroondah Secondary College (MSC). Connection went to MSC with an offer to serve, and after initial resistance, they were invited in but only to serve. They were explicitly told not to preach or pray, and their activities were closely monitored. They started with a team of twelve people who attended excursions, helped with woodwork and served where needed. Wayne said it helped them be accepted that they did not push an agenda and say, ‘Listen, this is what we can do for you’ but instead asked sincerely, ‘What would you like us to do for you?’ They have connected some young people in with their Sunday church activities but also feel like they ‘take church into the school’ through their volunteering, a ‘Young Life’ lunchtime program and serving Friday breakfasts.

Connection participants recognise that their expression of holistic service has significantly grown. NCLS data shows ways that churches serve their wider community with a core quality of practical and diverse service. This records whether attenders are involved in community service, social justice or welfare within and beyond church. For Connection, service was the second highest core quality out of nine, having shown the most growth of all qualities from a congregational assessed score of 2.7/10 in 2001 to 7.3/10 in 2006.

17W Nebauer, Interview.
Table 4: Connection practical and diverse service\textsuperscript{19}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal ways helping others:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lent money outside family</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cared for someone very sick</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped someone through crisis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited someone in hospital</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave possessions to needy person</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated money to charity</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted MP or councillor about an issue</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attenders who helped others in 3+ of above ways</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in church-based service activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved regularly in community service, social justice or welfare connected to this congregation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in community-based service activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service, care or welfare groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social action, justice or lobby groups</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared to NCLS averages, Connection scored higher in most ways of helping others; lending money, giving possessions, donating to charity, or contacting an MP or councillor. The exceptions were that they were less likely to care for someone very sick or visit someone in hospital, and only just as likely to help someone in crisis; expressions of care more at home in congregations with older people or traditional pastoral expectations. But Connection members are more likely to be involved in service activities; for example, 37\% of Connection reports involvement in church-based community service compared to other church averages of 26-29\%.

\textsuperscript{19}NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 16, 18; NCLS Research, ‘CofC Vic’, 16, 18.
It is important to consider evangelism as well as service in evaluating holistic mission. Connection ranked the NCLS core quality of willing and effective faith sharing with the low score of 4.9/10, down from 5.2/10 in 2001. As service increased dramatically over the five years, faith sharing decreased slightly.

Table 5: Connection faith sharing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inviting others to church:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited someone in the last 12 months</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing, but didn’t invite anyone</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably or definitely wouldn’t invite someone</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved regularly in outreach/ evangelistic activity</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for opportunities to share their faith</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most value outreach as an aspect of congregation’s life</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Connection prides itself on an accessible format in their ‘shop window’ gatherings, participants do not show a higher propensity to invite others to church. In fact on almost all indicators of faith sharing, Connection in 2006 scored a few percentage points lower than Churches of Christ and Protestant averages and were significantly lower than their 2001 figures when the reinvented congregation was enthusiastically starting. One would expect a higher culture of faith-sharing in a church which defines and prides itself as being a missional church.

20NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 5-6, 19.
Of all Connection’s programs, Life Connection has the most explicit evangelistic and apologetic objectives. It is designed to be accessible to newcomers and to conversationally connect life and faith. The relevant topics and good coffee make it easier for Connection partners to invite friends.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, delving into relevant topics with a question-and-answer structure is good training for participants. It helps the language of worship to be like everyday conversation and so provides practice in talking about faith in a context similar to weekday social activities.\textsuperscript{23} Life Connection models and epitomises the incarnational intent of Connection which seeks to ‘bridge the gap’ to people without experience of church but also, less consciously, attracts Christians who are interested in church which is relevant or different.

Connection has a relatively high capacity for attracting newcomers, particularly those returning to church. Only 20\% of the congregation attended Connection more than five years ago. 66\% have switched or transferred in from another church in the last five years as part of the ‘circulation of the saints’.\textsuperscript{24} 14\% are newcomers – 12\% ‘dechurched’ people returning after a long absence and 3\% ‘unchurched’ people who never regularly attended church.\textsuperscript{25} Connection’s capacity to attract dechurched returnees is particularly strong, 12\% compared to the national Protestant average of 6\%. However their capacity to attract unchurched people is only 3\%, slightly less than the 4\% Protestant average.\textsuperscript{26} The most significant growth is among people returning to church after a long absence. Connection design their gatherings to be accessible to people outside the church, but this is more effective in attracting dechurched people than in drawing in unchurched people.

\textsuperscript{22}Connection, Focus Group #1; Peta, Interview.
\textsuperscript{25}NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 9, 22. Percentages do not always add up exactly because of rounding.
\textsuperscript{26}See also Kaldor et al., \textit{Build My Church}, 50-58.
Table 6: Connection newcomers and attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total newcomers to church</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomers returning after long absence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomers who never attended</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total switchers/transfers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switchers from another denomination</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers from same denomination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total people attended more than 5 years</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors from other churches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors who do not regularly go to church</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Incarnational-missional thinking also influences the choice of meeting places to which people might be attracted. Connection designs its gatherings to attract unchurched people to church, and they are going a step in the direction of ‘invading secular space’ to bridge the gap to the broader community. Meeting in public places is potentially less threatening than church buildings and is attractive to participants who want to connect their faith and the world. Some people joined Connection because of its commitment to meeting in third places. The public visibility and accessibility of Connection gatherings gave Life Connection the feeling of a missional-incarnational edge. It fostered missional engagement too as, on occasion, people joined in as they were walking out of the pub. Frank, a Connection partner, befriended some of these drop-in visitors and then met regularly with them for drinks on Wednesday nights. He thus practised the spontaneity and frequency Frost says is key to missional proximity in third places. Yet Connection never really embraced the broader community of their adopted location in the way the

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27NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 9, 21-22; NCLS Research, ‘CofC Vic’, 9, 21-22
28Robinson and Smith, *Invading Secular Space.*
29E.g., Connection, Focus Group #1; Iona, Interview.
missional literature suggests is ideal and as some pub churches and café churches have done.31

One of the distinctives of Connection’s – and particularly Wayne’s – approach to evangelism is to cooperate with what God is doing and not be preoccupied with an agenda for conversion. Wayne says, ‘We do not do mission because we are out to save people. We just love them up close and personal and that is mission’.32 He is reacting against and distancing himself from inappropriately coercive methods of evangelism. Yet a biblical theology of evangelism arguably shows love by working with God to help people understand and receive salvation.

Sometimes evangelism is downplayed or limited by institutional expectations as part of Connection’s emphasis on community service. The Dining Room philosophy is to serve and not so much to verbally share about Christ. Isaac explains volunteers are free to share if asked, but are not encouraged to seek opportunities to talk about God.33 They make warm clothing available as well as meals to meet the physical needs of guests. They also have a range of information leaflets about local social services, but not Gospels or Christian literature.34 They say grace and are housed in a church hall, so are not embarrassed by their Christian identity, but in an effort to be holistic they emphasise service rather than proclamation.

In 2007 Life Connection renamed themselves ‘Sunday Experiments’ and one of their first projects was to host a Sunday meal for the Dining Room guests. Nathan explains the hospitality aims of the night:

The idea of the night is to create a safe place/a haven for our Dining Room Guests. Like Tuesday nights at Dining Room, we are wanting them to feel as though we are fussing over them and making an effort to make them feel special [and] go home with a smile on their faces.

31Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 9-11, 74-75; Murray, Changing Mission, 63-67.
32WNebauer, Interview.
33Isaac, Interview.
34Nathan Malpass, ‘The Dining Room Field Work Report’ (Bible College of Victoria, 26 October 2006), 5-6.
He also stressed the focus of the evening was on practical service:

We are not selling religion on Sunday night, we are not problem solving or counselling, we are simply creating a place where we can be representatives of Christ in a practical way. If conversations are raised about religion it is important that we don’t debate or engage in an argument but simply deflect and move on.35

The night gave a meal and company to people who came and Connection partners spoke highly of what they learned, and some had significant discussions about faith matters.36 But Nathan’s emphasis on ‘a smile on their faces’ and reticence to encourage verbal sharing is typical of the Dining Room’s culture. Connection’s ‘holistic’ emphasis is reductionistic when the gospel cannot be proclaimed as a matter of mission strategy.37

Roxanne explains that Connection’s ‘Kids@Play’ playgroups have a service and relational philosophy of ministry, although they express no hesitancy to talk about faith. They have made an intentional decision to have less Christian singing and ritual, consistent with the relational philosophy of ministry of Christian playgroups.38 But they make available Christian books, on parenting as well as prayer. And they seek to share the gospel verbally in conversation and demonstrate the gospel, for example with casseroles or thoughtful encouragement.39 There is no structural limitation on evangelism through playgroups but the leaders share faith through relationships rather than programming evangelism.

In 2005 Connection staff focused some of their discussion and reflection time on the relevance of faith to everyday life. North American itinerant theologians Ken Blue and Baxter Kruger visited as guest speakers for Connection’s evening ‘601’ service and influenced people to think of God being involved in all of life. They influenced

35Nathan Crouch, ‘First Sunday Dining Room Dinner’, Email to Connection Community (August 3 2007).
37For an overview of evangelical views of mission as social action and evangelism, not ignoring either, see Langmead, Word Made Flesh, 106-110.
39Roxanne, ‘Kids@Play’.
Yasmine to develop ‘Three Minutes in Your Brain’ video spots for Sunday gatherings which celebrate people’s passions and their connection with God. ‘Three Minutes’ became an audiovisual presentation or mini-documentary which focused on a person and their passions, asking three questions: ‘What is your passion?’ , ‘How do you explore your passion?’ and ‘What does this have to do with God?’ . Bernadette did ‘Speaking in French’, Peter shared about ‘Bonsai trees’ and others have explained their love for surfing, painting and making guitars. It seeks to validate the view that almost any passion is valid – as Bernadette suggests, whether to reduce poverty in Africa or make a beautiful garden – and to help connect that to God.

While it is worthy to help people experience a sense of spiritual closeness to God while gardening, there is arguably greater missiological significance in alleviating poverty in Africa. To put the two examples side-by-side as mission in all of life suggests a possible weakness of ‘everyday theology’ in diluting core elements of mission such as proclamation, service and justice. It is helpful to celebrate passions as potentially God-given, but also appropriate to discern what passions are God-given and most worthy of focus. Parker Palmer suggests discerning vocation from what God has made us to be, rather than some image of what we ought to be, and also consider how our passions meet the needs of the world. This approach to vocational discernment is suggested by Frederick Buechner’s definition of vocation, which Palmer quotes, as ‘the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet’. A theology of everyday life and vocation will, at its best, focus people’s passions in directions which will best influence the world around them.

A growing edge some Connection participants identify is the need to empower people for mission in their everyday lives and not just through church programs. Connection has a high commitment to leadership development, including an intern program which trained twenty people over the years 2002-2006. But empowerment is needed not just for staff and interns, and not just to release people into ministry

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41 Connection, Focus Group #1.
projects at Connection. The whole people of God need empowering to think about mission in their weekday lives. A young adult who works full-time, Bernadette, is conscious that the church puts a lot of energy into interns who are not in the workforce, while she has not received help to think about integrating her professional work with her faith. Peter is a cycling enthusiast, and regularly cycles with friends on Sunday mornings instead of attending church. He sees this as recreation and an expression of faith and worship. He needs encouragement and pastoral guidance in integrating his recreation with his faith, but he will not likely be an intern.

Oscar, a leader at Connection, is inspired by Wayne Schwab, to challenge churches to support members’ daily living as Christ’s agents on their mission fields rather than focusing on congregational life. Oscar would not advocate leaving congregational mission programs behind. But neither would he hesitate to encourage people to pursue community mission even if it means they will not be as available for worship or other church programs. The 2007 Future Directions Day identified empowering people for mission wherever they are ‘scattered’ through the week as a main hope for many of Connection’s partners.

**Eastern Hills’ reflection of Kingdom life**

Eastern Hills leaders and participants say they place a high priority on mission and engaging their world. They understand themselves as the people of God sent into their world to bring life: ‘We believe the Holy Spirit sends us to our homes, local

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43. *Connection Journal*, 104.


46. Oscar, Interview.

community and wider world and empowers us to bring about love, truth, hope, healing, beauty and justice.\textsuperscript{48}

As the initial group of young adults planned their Sunday gatherings, they sought to be incarnational for their suburb. They would have been comfortable with a mid-week café church approach, but thought that their neighbours would be more open to church on Sunday mornings.\textsuperscript{49} It is unclear how they discerned what their neighbours would be open to, apart from presuming a collective Christian memory or awareness that church is for Sunday mornings. Toli Morgan says they do not distinguish themselves against an attractional approach, but simply seek to embody the gospel, which expresses itself in incarnational and attractional ways.\textsuperscript{50} Toli wants to celebrate the incarnational mission of members, but also organise church worship and social events to be attractive to newcomers. They put a lot of effort into creative and nurturing times of worship, but still have an obviously generous amount of energy left for interest beyond their Sunday program.

Eastern Hills expresses incarnational mission in a variety of settings. They were involved in the Croydon soup kitchen until their volunteers ‘burned out’ and dwindled in numbers. Claire continued many of the relationships and recruited a volleyball team from her old clients and friends.\textsuperscript{51} Pastors Toli and Emma Morgan lead by example and have organised street parties and hosted a refugee and foster child. Globally, Eastern Hills raises money at least once a year for community development projects through Global interAction,\textsuperscript{52} supports two sponsor children, has regular global awareness and prayer spots and is exploring closer partnership with the literacy and AIDS project which Toli’s parents organise in PNG.\textsuperscript{53} These local and global efforts are not unique to Eastern Hills or other emerging churches, but their missional framework has steered them in these directions.

\textsuperscript{48}Eastern Hills [Website].
\textsuperscript{49}Jones, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{50}Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{51}Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2.
\textsuperscript{52}Global interAction or GiA is the international cross-cultural mission agency of Australian Baptist churches, http://www.globalinteraction.org.au/.
\textsuperscript{53}Toli Morgan, Personal Conversation with Author, 22 March 2007.
An incarnational program that started during my time as researcher was ‘The Lounge’, in Croydon Secondary College, led by Ian and Rani in partnership with Youth Dimension. They were not as dominantly service-oriented as Connection in offering to do whatever needed doing, but Youth Dimension does not just go to proselytise either. Their goals as an organisation are explicitly proclamation-oriented, but Ian explains there is a relational and holistic basis to what they do. Instead of just going in with a prepared talk, they take a coffee machine, serve the students coffee, informally mingle with them and perhaps kick a football around, then they can build relationships as a basis for deeper conversations if they arise. They do not hesitate to verbally share, but only with respect and through relationships.

Theologically, it is the church which talked most among the four case studies about getting a fresh picture of Jesus and then shaping mission and church. Before they started services, they met through 2002 as a study group and discussed, among other books, N T Wright’s works on Jesus. Krystal reflected on the ‘real Jesus’ they have been learning about:

It is a Jesus who … knows what is going on in the world and is not willing to just continue living in our little part of Melbourne but is willing to have a heart and compassion and love for all the world and [realise] that what happens over in a factory over in China, really affects us.

The picture of Jesus which has inspired Krystal is of a revolutionary who is involved with the poor, sick and marginalised. Echoing liberation theology, Eastern Hills participants reflect on an incarnate Christ, the human Jesus of Nazareth who showed compassion to people on the margins and who today agonises with victims of injustice.

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55 Especially Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God.
57 Bosch, Transforming Mission, 512-513.
The community’s reflections on Jesus’ life are leading them in post-bourgeois directions of ‘solidarity with victims’.\(^58\) One Sunday Heather introduced communion by inviting people to share around their tables what from the Gospels about the life of Jesus inspires us to live differently. These reflections led into communion and reflection on the symbolism of the bread and the juice, in a Baptist understanding, and not just to recall the death of Jesus but also his life. Heather was pointing to the relevance of the incarnation of Jesus, rather than reading the Gospels as centred mainly on the death of Christ – ‘passion histories with extensive introductions’ to use Kahler’s phrase.\(^59\) In the ensuing discussion around tables, one participant shared how he was inspired by the way Jesus relates to women. A newly formed justice group announced they were meeting to discuss the global injustice of the chocolate industry and to canvass fair-trade alternatives.\(^60\) The community of Eastern Hills is one that seeks to reflect the kingdom of God with lifestyle implications.

Eastern Hills take a broad interest in social justice issues locally and globally. As part of their mission of being ‘sent to bring life’, they promote ethical trade with coffee and tea sales, so that workers in developing communities receive a fair wage and do not suffer unsafe working conditions. They have also prepared a ‘Sunday best cookbook’, sales of which go to Australian Wildlife Conservancy.\(^61\) Their first social gathering was a rally to protest the deepening of Melbourne bay.\(^62\) Toli was impacted by Steve Bradbury’s preaching that what happens in church must relate to what people are suffering in the world.\(^63\) Their engagement with the world has included a commitment to help make it more like the kingdom of God.

As well as Eastern Hills’ incarnational mission efforts have expressed love and compassion to needy people and brought some people into the life of the community, particularly some single mother and refugee families. They have served these

\(^58\)Matthew L Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).


\(^60\)‘Follow-up Journal 2008’, 18.

\(^61\)Eastern Hills [Website].


\(^63\)See p.97 above.
families through friendship, fund-raising, inviting them to participate in church, helping them get access to education and housing services and welcoming their contributions to the broader community. Sven is proud of their expressions of compassion and recalls his prayer at the launch of the church:

I prayed a prayer for this church that God would, in his providence and goodness draw people along to this church that would particularly meet the needs of those particular people. And it seems to me that their prayer is being answered because God is drawing ones and twos along of particular kinds of people whose needs are being met with us, where perhaps they would not be met elsewhere.

As well as the intrinsic value of serving and reaching needy people, interestingly missional emphasis is also an element which makes Eastern Hills attractive to Christians who like to be part of the action and long for relevant expressions of church. Sometimes an incarnational focus on mission helps a church engage with people in need in their community, but sometimes the rhetoric itself functions as an attractive influence for other mission-minded Christians.

Eastern Hills has a particular commitment to engaging the world, including the popular culture which members encounter each week. The mission statement of Eastern Hills is ‘creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God’. This guides their values and helps them express an everyday and holistic approach to mission. Eastern Hills sees evangelism as about inviting people to join this world-changing paradigm. So as a church they seek by their words and actions to point to the Kingdom, and they invite others to join them in that project. Toli reflects that because Jesus brought the Kingdom as both a present and coming reality, we pray, ‘Your Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven’. Salvation thus is not just future-oriented but also concerned with present earthly implications. Toli and his fellow

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64 Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2.
65 Sven, Interview.
66 E.g., Ian and Imajin, Interview. Consider also that 73.5% of participants surveyed by Frost joined their EMC looking for a church more missionally engaged with their community. Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 76.
67 Following Clapp, Peculiar People, 167.
68 Toli Morgan, Personal Conversation with Author, 22 March 2007.
budding Jesus scholars at Eastern Hills draw on N T Wright, who explains that to understand Jesus the central organising motif is the subversive message of the kingdom of God. When Jesus declared the presence of the kingdom of God, he was not talking about inner peace of mind or a heaven after the current space-time continuum, but reframing the story and hope of Israel of Israel’s God becoming king and putting the world right.69

Eastern Hills is developing a culture of celebrating people’s mission in their everyday lives. Services regularly interact with the workplaces and vocations of participants. The ‘Simon doesn’t know’ session introduces people for the sake of community belonging and getting to know one another but also exploring how faith relates to people’s weekday lives.70 One of the quarterly ‘prayer journey’ services had prayer stations with CDs and music, food and kitchen utensils, children’s books and nappies, sports gear, gardening tools, medicine and magazines, books and newspapers. Emma invited the congregation to circulate around the stations and contemplate how God is involved in all of these aspects of our lives and not just so-called sacred places like church or nature. The stations included thoughtful quotes from Michael Frost, N T Wright, Selwyn Hughes and Scripture verses such as Romans 12:1, from The Message translation:

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

After twenty minutes Emma invited participants to write down the people they would spend time with and the places they may go in the coming week. These pieces of paper could be placed on a board and swapped for someone else’s so people could pray for one another’s ‘spaces and faces’ through the week.71 It was a helpful exercise to be mindful of where people are bringing life throughout the week.

69An early study group read Wright’s seminal volume on Jesus together: Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, see especially 198-226.
70Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2.
Eastern Hills has also developed a noticeable culture of affirmation, and one of the things affirmed is how people express their faith in the workplace. Krystal at Eastern Hills sought to affirm Heather for her workplace witness taking Jesus’ presence to people in a nursing home:

[In] all those nineteen years that you have been there, you have been bringing God to people, you have been bringing Jesus to people. Just because someone has not come to church, it does not mean anything. Because if we relied on people to come to church to know Jesus, no one would know Jesus. But they know Jesus through you.72

The strength and truth in Krystal’s comments is that Heather is Christ’s representative in her workplace; perhaps their weakness is that Krystal does not comment on the place of proclamation and verbal witness. It is appropriate to celebrate mission in all of life but also appropriate to evaluate its effectiveness and the extent to which mission is expressed.

As with Connection, there is a lot of self-congratulation without necessarily evaluating the effectiveness of this ‘incarnational’ version of witness. Unfortunately, Eastern Hills did not undertake the NCLS survey, which would have given some quantitative measures of some aspects of their mission. This may have reflected a hesitancy to submit to scrutiny or a discomfort with the focus of the questions in the survey, but Toli implied it was mostly because they did not make the effort to set a date and create space in a service for the survey.73 Eastern Hill is busy with a proliferating range of missional activities, some of which are fruitfully meeting needs and assimilating people into the church, yet it would be helpful to apply more stringent evaluative tools to their missional effectiveness.

**Urban Life’s local refocusing**

A big part of the reinvention of Christian Life Centre (CLC) as Urban Life revolved around engaging local mission needs. Inspired by guest teaching from Alan Hirsch, participants describe how they changed their perspective from waiting for people to

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72 Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2.
come to them and focused instead on taking ministry to their community. In Hirsch’s terms, they have begun to adopt a missional-incarnational approach rather than primarily evangelistic-attractional.\textsuperscript{74} Urban Life, similar to other emerging churches, express this is a reflection of the character of God. Their pastor Anthea Smits says mission has sadly often been reduced to a department of the church when it is more a description of the character of God. Urban Life defines mission as ‘being found about our Father’s business’. They desire to discern God’s heart for a situation and partner with God in ministering to people.\textsuperscript{75}

A local missional focus was a particularly significant cultural change for CLC. As a centre of charismatic renewal and with a denominational ‘flagship’ building, CLC had ‘learned’ that if you put on a good show and open the doors, people will come in crowds and be blessed. Money in the bank and people on seats were the success measures. The downside, according to pastor Doug Faircloth, was that the baby boomer Christians who attended tended to be cynical and emotionally isolated and did not feel the need to build relationships or character.\textsuperscript{76} Becoming Urban Life with all the related changes was an attempt to reinvent themselves with priority on community and mission.

As well as their newfound enthusiasm for local mission, Urban Life continues developing overseas interests. In addition to CLC projects already mentioned,\textsuperscript{77} more recently Doug has consulted with house church movements in Vietnam and Anthea and Adam have helped establish the 2H Project to organise cataract surgery and midwifery kits for Cambodia.\textsuperscript{78} But Urban Life does not see overseas involvement as the totality of their mission responsibility, and like Connection they find that cross-cultural exposure enhances consciousness of local mission needs.

CLC’s renaming as Urban Life and relocation to the centre of Ringwood symbolises their local incarnational missionary impulse. It was a dramatic change from the

\textsuperscript{74}Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 127-147.
\textsuperscript{75}Smits, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{76}Faircloth, Interview #2.
\textsuperscript{77}See p.118 above.
\textsuperscript{78}Smits, Interview #1; \url{http://www.the2hproject.com/}. 

rolling hills atmosphere of outer Ringwood into an old nightclub on the highway. Rather than moving into ‘religious’ space or hiring public space from another group, Urban Life has created a third place for their community. The Urban is a ‘proximity space’ where visitors include young mums, local businesspeople and members of various interest groups. A craft group, book club, mothers’ groups, exercise group and role-playing game group regularly meet there. It is also hired for functions and parties. Anthea observed, ‘The building is not our destination but I think it is the picture of what God has been doing with us as a group of people’. The medium of the café space embodies Urban Life’s incarnational message.

Some incarnational mission can happen through buildings, especially third places like The Urban, but the essence of it occurs through neighbourhood relationships. A number of participants are restructuring their lives to make space for relationships outside church circles. Kylie said that Hirsch influenced her to see that mission was about infiltrating culture and not necessarily bringing people into church. She resigned from the leadership team to make more time for relationships with other parents from her children’s school. Anthea wants people to follow her example and wants to be known for exemplifying mission and community in her own life. Doug works part-time for Urban Life and now part-time for a consulting business, so he can model integrating a life of mission with ‘normal’ work. It is the relationships of church people – whether leaders or not – with neighbours and friends which embodies incarnational mission.

Urban Life has partnered with Connection in community service ministries, cooperating at MSC and helping run the Tuesday soup kitchen until Connection started the Dining Room and Urban Life took responsibility for a Wednesday night soup kitchen. They often talk about their desire to see people come to faith through verbal witness, but are also committed to demonstrating the gospel in action. One of

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79 Adam Smits, Urban Life coffee shop manager, Interview by the author, Ringwood (14 August 2006).
80 Smits, ‘Story of Urban Life’.
81 Kylie, Interview.
82 Smits, Interview #1.
their core practices is ‘mercy and justice’ as evidence of true faith. They have a clearly articulated approach to mission as including community transformation without wanting to dilute their commitment to evangelism.

Steve explains how the mission of the early church encourages Urban Life in their holistic mission. He preached that the early chapters of Acts show that Peter preached the gospel in words (Acts 2:14-41) and healed the sick (Acts 3:1-10). The church also shared property in common and gave to those in need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). Steve said churches are called to be ‘salt of the earth’ and bring health to their communities. He discussed early Christians’ involvement with the poor, orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, slaves and travellers, and commented: ‘Wherever they saw pain, sickness, death, demon-possession, sin, broken relationships and injustice, they were to serve in any way they could, and in doing so, bring health … to live for the wellbeing of their community’. As Steve said, they lived out a ‘gospel of love and charity’ or a ‘social gospel’ in the best sense of the word, and not just to lure outsiders into church but as a natural expression of faith in Christ.

Urban Life’s young adults, as a group, are developing an eager holistic missional edge. In July 2006, twenty youth and young adults went to Shepparton for a camp. Instead of going away for a teaching camp, they went to serve. Half of the group helped build a Habitat for Humanity house. The other half did a spring clean of a three-bedroom house for parents with six or seven children and ran a kids’ program for Rumbalara Indigenous Football Club. Later in the year they did the World Vision Forty Hour Famine, and instead of fasting from food spent their time cleaning the local methadone clinic. Anthea describes how she sees proclamation and social justice balanced in these efforts and celebrates the vision of the young adults:

We probably have got a little bit of an agenda in that that ultimately we would like people to find Christ. But that is not the primary motivation … We are going with: ‘How can we help? … How can we partner with you? What are you doing? What are your primary concerns and motives?’.

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85_Urban Life Journal_, 14, 94-95.
so excited about our youth and our young adults. I think that they have really caught on to what we are on about.\textsuperscript{86}

This is a practical faith which is both attractive to others and is discipling the young adults for service rather than entertainment.

By comparison to Connection, Urban Life is more stable in numbers or has been declining until recently, and has not attracted as many newcomers.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Urban Life newcomers and attendance\textsuperscript{87}}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Percentage of people: & Connection & \textbf{Urban Life} & Denom. CRC Vic & Anglican/ Protestant \\
\hline
Total newcomers to church & 14 & 5 & 12 & 9 \\
Newcomers returning after long absence & 12 & 3 & 7 & 6 \\
Newcomers who never attended & 3 & 2 & 5 & 4 \\
\hline
Total switchers/ transfers & 66 & 17 & 31 & 28 \\
Switchers from another denomination & 57 & 14 & 25 & 15 \\
Transfers from same denomination & 9 & 3 & 6 & 13 \\
\hline
Total people attended more than 5 years & 20 & \textbf{66} & 55 & 60 \\
Visitors from other churches & 0 & \textbf{12} & 2 & 2 \\
Visitors who do not regularly go to church & 0 & \textbf{0} & 0 & 1 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

NCLS showed that on the survey morning the congregation included 66% who attended for more than five years, a higher proportion than average, showing a stable and loyal congregation, and 17% switchers/transfers, which is less than average. They had no visitors who do not regularly attend church but 12% visitors from other churches, significantly more than the average 2%. Anthea says they get a lot of

\textsuperscript{86}Smits, Interview #1.

\textsuperscript{87}NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 21-22. In this and subsequent tables, Urban Life can be compared with the 32 other Victorian CRC congregations that did the survey. It can also be compared with 4514 Anglican and other Protestant churches across Australia that participated, and with Connection’s previously cited results. NCLS data is also available 72 CRC congregations across Australia but these are not significantly different from CRC Vic.
‘tourists’ who come to see Urban Life’s innovations.\textsuperscript{88} That morning most of the visitors were from The Junction, another emerging church and CRC congregation, visiting to hear the guest speaker.\textsuperscript{89} The weakest measure is that of newcomers (5%), made up of 3% returnees and 2% unchurched, less than half the Protestant and CRC averages of 6-7% returnees and 4-5% unchurched attenders.\textsuperscript{90} Urban Life thus appears only half as successful as average in attracting people to church or even back to church.

Granted the limitations of the survey data and that some newcomers may have missed the NCLS morning, the data suggests Urban Life has not attracted people to church or even back to church with any greater success than average. These are not the only measures of missional success, particularly with their fresh focus on incarnational mission. But part of the rhetoric of emerging missional churches is that they are emerging with new ways to connect with and embrace unchurched people, and the reality does not yet match up to the rhetoric at Urban Life or Connection, at least on Sundays. Anthea, like some other emerging church leaders, expresses disquiet over the Sunday meeting focus of NCLS and maintains they are connecting with more people beyond Sundays than previously.\textsuperscript{91} But whether these connections are more widespread than other average churches or whether they are going any deeper in terms of communicating the gospel is unclear. There is an abundance of talk about mission and self-congratulation about their innovation but this does not correlate with more unchurched people participating in church on Sunday.

It is appropriate to again use NCLS figures to evaluate the extent of holistic mission at Urban Life. Like Connection, the NCLS core quality of practical and diverse service was high-scoring for Urban Life; it was the third highest of nine core qualities with a congregational-assessed score of 8.6/10.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{88}Smits, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{89}Pastors, Focus group.
\textsuperscript{90}NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 9, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{91}Pastors, Follow-up focus group, Ringwood (27 November 2007). For analysis of other EMCs and their missional engagement beyond Sundays see Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 80-89, 108-116.
\textsuperscript{92}NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 5-6, 18.
### Table 8: Urban Life practical and diverse service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lent money outside family</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cared for someone very sick</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped someone through crisis</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited someone in hospital</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave possessions to needy person</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated money to charity</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted MP or councillor about an issue</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attenders who helped others in 3+ of above ways</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in church-based service activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved regularly in community service, social justice or welfare connected to this congregation</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in community-based service activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service, care or welfare groups</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social action, justice or lobby groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport, recreation or hobby groups</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or youth groups, e.g., P&amp;C, Scouts</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another kind of group</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local mission involvement has been a growing edge for Urban Life. Anthea reports they have people lining up to get involved in the incarnational expressions of mission at Maroondah Secondary College and Croydon soup kitchen and the worship music team is suffering from lack of volunteers. Urban Life scored higher than average on most ways of informally helping others, except for trying to stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs. Compared to the average they are up to twice as likely to be involved in church-based service activities. They score similarly to Connection and other averages in involvement in sports, school and other groups, but have

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93NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 16, 18
94Smits, Interview #1.
significantly higher rates of involvement in community service and social action groups in the community.

However, as discussed with Connection and as particularly emphasised by Urban Life’s rhetoric, compassionate service is one part of holistic mission while evangelism is another. Yet Urban Life’s ranking of willing and effective faith sharing is lower than service, scoring eighth of nine core qualities at only 5/10.  

Table 9: Urban Life faith sharing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inviting others to church:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited someone in the last 12 months</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing, but didn’t invite anyone</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably or definitely wouldn’t invite someone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved regularly in outreach/ evangelistic activity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for opportunities to share their faith</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most value outreach as an aspect of congregation’s life</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently discuss faith at home</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared to CRC and Protestant churches, Urban Life participants are less likely to have invited or been willing to invite someone to church. They are less likely to look for opportunities to share their faith and to value outreach. These scores show the same tendency as Connection’s lower than average faith sharing. In contrast, Urban Life participants are more likely than average, and more likely than Connection, to be regularly involved in an outreach activity and more frequently discuss faith at home.

\[95\] NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 5-6, 19

discuss faith at home. Urban Life is the only church of the four case studies which offers a personal evangelism course – using the Willow Creek ‘Becoming a Contagious Christian’ material. So on some accounts they show higher regard for faith sharing, but in terms of inviting newcomers and looking for opportunities to share their faith they are below average. They have a strong focus on the compassionate service side of holistic mission but are relatively weak in faith sharing.

Urban Life run their café and community centre as a service to their community, and has been surprised at the opportunities for witness which have arisen. They do not paste Scripture verses on the wall or seek to raise faith conversations with all their customers and visitors. Maybe they could be more explicit with their environment and use artwork and pictures, and quotes from inspirational writers and Scripture, to help guests reflect on faith and spirituality. Anthea comments that she has had more opportunities to share her faith through the café than in years at CLC. Their incarnational lifestyle is naturally flowing into proclamation.

Urban Life seeks to release the missionary inside every follower of Jesus – convinced that they all have a mission and not just in church programs. The pastors exemplify a non-professional approach to mission in combining church ministry with other parts of their vocation, as a mother in Anthea’s case and consultant in Doug’s. Yet perhaps spirituality is still focused on mystical and charismatic expressions rather than integrated with everyday life as much as in other emerging churches. Urban Life does not make as much explicit reference to everyday spirituality as the other case studies, especially Solace.

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97 Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). Urban Life and other EMC participants may get other kinds of training to be more effective in their community witness, as measured, for example, in Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 89-90.

98 In contrast, Frost reported EMC participants he surveyed were narrowly focused on evangelism and did not exhibit as high a commitment to social action. However, this assessment was based on one survey question about ‘time I spend involved in organisations or groups dedicated to alleviating suffering’ and that 23.5% of respondents are involved more than monthly. NCLS questions are more numerous for measuring practical and diverse service. Frost’s questions are qualitatively better for measuring incarnational witness. Frost asked, in particular, about the closeness of relationship which people expect before talking about Jesus. Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 18-19, 68, 80, 87-88, 96-97.

99 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
Solace joining Jesus in the world

Solace’s approach to mission is incarnational, especially through the everyday lives of their members. Their focus is explicitly the ‘scattered church’, when the people of God are not ‘gathered’ for worship. Solace’s constitution identifies the biblical theme of the mission of God as a deep inspiration for them.\(^{100}\) In Latin this is missio Dei; not just ‘the mission of God’ but literally ‘the God who sends’ or ‘the missionary God’. They are grasping that the very essence of God is mission and that this guides God’s redemptive purposes. Just as God sent Jesus into the world, God sends the people of God to incarnate God’s presence and remake their world in line with God’s dream.

Solace encourages people to think about how to serve God through their workplace and neighbourhood. It is a network focused on living out the ways of Jesus wherever their members find themselves: ‘all the places you live, visit, work in, belong to and all the people around you’.\(^{101}\) In the words of James Thwaites, an inspirational contemporary mentor of Solace, they are ‘renegotiating the church contract’ and mobilising the people in the church who work ‘beyond the congregation’.\(^{102}\) In their work and hobbies, Solace members express incarnational mission through healthcare, environmental concern, education, friendships, civil service and advocacy. Jude celebrates the change of someone who used to see his mission as praying, reading the Bible and going to church. Now, with Solace’s encouragement, he has encouraged his employer, a bank, to set up a contribution scheme so that when people contribute to their home loans, the bank contributes to a homeless scheme.\(^{103}\) Solace is seeking to broaden people’s perception of church beyond Sunday and ‘church activities’ and to include the mission of enabling ‘a people to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and re-making their everyday world’.

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\(^{100}\) Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’; see p.39-40 above.

\(^{101}\) Solace, Remaking, 18.

\(^{102}\) Thwaites, Church Beyond the Congregation; Thwaites, Renegotiating the Church Contract.

\(^{103}\) Waldron, Interview #1.
The growing edge for Solace has been expressing mission as a whole church. They have gradually developed some global and local expressions of mission. Globally, Solace raised $10,000 for an Opportunity International Trust Bank, a goal they reached towards the end of 2006. They plan to raise more money for overseas projects and for projects in Melbourne. Locally, through 2005-2006, they developed the Opportunity Shop and started developing St Paul’s as a Community Centre.

When Solace moved to St Paul’s, members looked forward to more readily experimenting with mission in a neighbourhood. When Olivia Maclean first started Solace, they met in the Carey School chapel as more neutral space than their mother church. Yet Carey as a building proved difficult to access and they struggled to connect with their distant ‘BMW-driving’ Kew neighbours. At the time, they dreamed of being based in a shopping street. They now love meeting on Sunday mornings in the church building of St Paul’s in the main street of Fairfield. They have cafés and busy shops as neighbours and thousands of pedestrians and cars passing daily. SPACE, a partnership of Solace and St Paul’s Fairfield, have planned to redesign St Paul’s to be a more integral part of their busy shopping street. They want to open up into the street and have more ambiguous demarcation between themselves and the footpath, merging sacred and secular space.

They have gradually and amicably taken over responsibility for the Opportunity Shop which operated out of St Paul’s. It was run by the Brotherhood of St Laurence but is now operated and staffed by Solace members. In terms of holistic mission, the shop is an expression of service in itself. They also offer food and other help to people who come asking for it. A community lounge runs adjacent to the shop for people to ‘hang out’ in the space, have a cuppa and rest, talk or pray. Recently SPACE has realised, however, that the various demographic groups of Fairfield do not readily mix. Thus they have decided to focus their ministry on children and

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104 Solace, Focus Group #1; Waldron, Interview #1.
105 Solace, Focus Group #5.
106 Davey, Interview. For a reflection on Jesus informally engaging people in public places, which Solace wants to embody, see Solace, Remaking, 243.
families. They will close the opportunity shop and redevelop St Paul’s as a family wellness centre including a children’s learning and play area and café.\textsuperscript{108}

Recognising what God is doing in the world and joining in with that is important for Solace. The influence of this perspective can be seen in Stuart Davey’s work with SPACE. They begin their time by asking what good is already happening in their community; for example, things to cheer, celebrations to join and conversations which lead somewhere.\textsuperscript{109} Their meetings are discernment exercises to examine what good is happening in their community so they can join in. Whether or not they label God explicitly, they are looking to see what God is doing not just in the church but also in the world.\textsuperscript{110}

Diane talked about her broad understanding of mission and explained what Solace does in the local Fairfield community:

Mission is helping everyone around us to see God a little bit more. It happens all the time (we aren’t always aware of it) or it can be a very specific time. A lot of it is through genuine human contact with people, just showing them God in my life and theirs and the world. Our church tries to bring God to our local community by our participation and giving to the community: participation in local tree planting, giving to the brotherhood shop, celebrating with the local people, using the local shops, being part of the local festival.\textsuperscript{111}

Diane’s comments show diverse ways in which Solace is seeking to engage their local community holistically. They are adding to the environmental, economic and social capital of their area. It is particularly interesting how they seek any opportunity to enhance local festivities, or make a normal day in the street into more of a celebration for those shopping as Anna walks up the street dressed as a clown and juggling.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{108}St Paul’s, ‘Feasibility Study’, 4.
\textsuperscript{109}See p.140 above.
\textsuperscript{110}Davey, Interview; inspired by Thwaites, \textit{Church Beyond the Congregation}.
\textsuperscript{111}Diane, ‘Mission and Innovation at Solace’.
\textsuperscript{112}Anna, Interview.
Solace is active in environmental care as an aspect of holistic mission. Some EMC literature shows awareness of global mismanagement and the responsibility for Christians to be at the forefront of environmental sustainability.\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Remaking} includes descriptions of global environmental challenges and suggestions for local action and stewardship which can make a difference to a person’s environmental footprint.\textsuperscript{114} Solace has participated in Clean Up Australia days. Like Urban Life who similarly made Clean Up Australia part of their ‘church calendar’, Solace are proud that they are a community which can see worship in a broader sense than singing and listening in a church service. For Solace, it was a distinctive annual event which set them apart from their mother church, which was concerned with keeping ‘normal’ worship services going every Sunday. Solace saw cleaning up parks together and with the broader community as an appropriate act of worship in itself.

Jude Waldron, in her personal witness and pastoral work, seeks to cooperate with what God is doing. When it comes to talking to people about her journey with God, she explains:

\begin{quote}
I do not have to convert them in one conversation or have them say a particular prayer or anything like that. I am living my life the way that I am living it, and they can see the way that I am living it, and if they ask me about why I do a certain thing, for what my reason is behind it, I am more than happy to tell them about it.\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

At a church level, Jude asserts Solace is \textit{not} a recruitment agency, and that they have chosen not to report money and attendance to the extent that their original starting church wanted. Instead Solace wants to focus on being attentive to God’s agenda: ‘It is actually acknowledging that God is already doing the work out there. God is already building His Church. We are part of that, let us join in’.\textsuperscript{116} In that sense, God is the evangelist and as in other expressions of mission the people of God are apprentices and partners to God. Jude reflected, after she left Solace, that she would have liked to have established a better basis for holistic witness in the person of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{113}E.g., Frost, \textit{Exiles}, 203-250; Roxburgh, \textit{Reaching a New Generation}, 76-92.  \\
\textsuperscript{114}Solace, \textit{Remaking}, 137, 176-180.  \\
\textsuperscript{115}Waldron, Interview #1.  \\
\textsuperscript{116}Waldron, Interview #1.
\end{flushright}
Christ rather than the needs of the world. It is not just that the world has diverse needs but that Jesus demonstrated care for the whole person.\textsuperscript{117}

Jude also says that it is not part of their culture to invite others to Solace:

Not many people will go, ‘You know, Solace is really great, come to Solace’. There are times that people do say that and that is usually in the middle of the conversation with someone when someone says, ‘I am just so over God and I am so over church and ahh’, and they go, ‘Well, Solace has been good to me, it might help you’. But … we would never say … invite people to this event.\textsuperscript{118}

Some Solace participants are shy of traditional evangelism because it is part of the church culture they have left behind and part of what they are questioning. Solace has never run an Alpha program – even though that is a core activity of St Hilary’s, from where they started – and an evangelism-training program like ‘Becoming a Contagious Christian’ would be culturally strange to Solace. Solace, like the other emerging churches, expresses a commitment to holistic mission and they are growing in their expression of mercy and justice but are limited in their expression of evangelism.

Part of Olivia and Stuart’s hesitancy to engage NCLS was an unwillingness to measure Solace, at least according to what they perceived as the Sunday morning focused growth criteria of many of the NCLS questions. NCLS may have offered useful data to analyse Solace and compare it to other churches, but the Solace pastors were not convinced it used measures which would be helpful for them and their mission. It is still unfortunate, for this research and for Solace, that they did not engage NCLS. Although some of the questions are Sunday worship focused, ‘Sunday stuff’ at Solace is still an important rhythm of the week for many Solace members. Furthermore, a number of NCLS questions do seek to measure missional activity beyond Sunday. Unfortunately, they were concerned about the worship service questions and considered that if they put those questions to participants, in a survey

\textsuperscript{117}Jude Waldron, Solace pastor, Interview #2 by the author, Parkville (11 May 2007).

\textsuperscript{118}Waldron, Interview #1. Similarly, 70.5% of Frost’s surveyed EMC participants said they never or hardly ever ‘make an effort to invite unbelieving friends to church worship services’. Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 88-89.
form on Sunday morning, it would communicate that those things are what are most important. Furthermore, they were hesitant to ask their members about ‘faith-sharing’ when they would prefer to consider mission holistically as remaking their everyday world. They would rather measure, if possible, the influence of their members through the week than their attendance or their willingness to invite others to join them in Sundays.\textsuperscript{119}

Solace invites members to see church meetings as the training ground for the real work of ministry through the week. Some opt out of ‘Sunday stuff’ for the sake of community service or relationships. The pastors view their role as encouraging people’s dreams and passions – a ‘back office’ role to support what they want to emphasise is the real work of ministry. They celebrate everyday stories of vocation: nursing, tree planting, artistic expression, letter writing and friendships. Stuart has collected frameworks, stories, artwork and exercises in the Solace book \textit{Remaking}, which illustrates Solace’s seven Jesus-centred Ways and their commitment to local and everyday theologising. \textit{Remaking} celebrates God working not just inside church programs but also, and perhaps more importantly, beyond them. Its approach is based on Christ’s body, the church, filling everything (Ephesians 1:23), and as such ‘remaking’ the world.\textsuperscript{120}

‘Everyday spirituality’ is not merely a personal and individualised approach to faith. It reflects awareness that God is relevant to all of life and invites people to integrate their work, recreation and interests with their vocation. \textit{Remaking} has a strong foundation of everyday spirituality, but it bases this on allegiance to a God who is interested in all spheres, not just longing for a deity who will bless the spheres in which a particular person is interested. For example, it resists the narrow individualising of a consumer faith which is only good as long as it helps a person’s happiness. It points instead towards faith which builds hope in the midst of the bigger issues of our day: ‘To believe in a God who will protect you from car accidents and find you car parks sounds more like relying on fate rather than developing a

\textsuperscript{119}Pastors, Focus Group.
\textsuperscript{120}Solace, \textit{Remaking}, 18-19.
spirituality which supplies meaning and hope’. Everyday spirituality is an aspect of mission not because it promises God will accompany people as their assistant through life, but because it invites people to enter and experience the kingdom of God wherever they are involved. People at Solace understand that part of mission is bringing Kingdom values into everyday spheres. Solace is thus developing a mature and explicitly missional approach to everyday spirituality.

**Summary**

These four emerging churches in Melbourne are reflecting afresh on their approach to mission. They understand mission not as one of their church departments but as God’s mission in which they seek to participate. Commonly they see that mission needs to holistically include mercy and advocacy for justice and not just evangelism. They are beginning to reflect on the implications of the mission of the whole people of God; that it is the role of all of God’s people, not just professionals, and that it is carried out through the week and not just on Sundays. Adopting the language of everyday spirituality and a theology of vocation that helps people express mission in all of life is not unique to EMCs, but they are particularly open to these perspectives as part of re-imagining mission. Furthermore, they understand mission in local and global terms. Dispelling the geographic myth that mission is what happens overseas by professional missionaries, these churches articulate a fresh focus on mission to their local community.

Inspired by a framework of incarnational mission, members from the different churches are forming relationships with people in their streets, engaging in sport, taking an interest in their local communities and developing avenues of community service. Connection partners are forming relationships and serving local needs through schools’ ministry, playgroups and ‘The Dining Room’. Eastern Hills is seeking to share the life of the kingdom of God through advocacy for justice and helping needy individuals they meet. Urban Life has undertaken an adaptive cultural shift and focused on engaging their local community through their new café and

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121 Solace, Remaking, 16.
other expressions of service. Solace has focused on encouraging people to join God in remaking the world, including some congregation-wide efforts.

The missiological idea of going to people and incarnationally engaging the rhythms of a community, rather than relying on attracting people to come to church, is central to the identity of these emerging churches. They are generally dissatisfied with existing church structures and their lack of missional effectiveness. They want to infiltrate community networks and develop shared community spaces and projects. They have heard this focus from Frost and Hirsch and other EMC spokespeople and are seeking to put it into action.

Whether they are any more effective than other churches which are ‘attractional’ or ‘attractional and incarnational’, is worth investigating. A lot of self-congratulation seems to occur, without necessarily evaluating the effectiveness of this ‘incarnational’ version of witness. NCLS data gives some helpful indications, for example suggesting that they are more effective at attracting dechurched than unchurched people, and that on average while practical service is stronger faith-sharing is weaker. Nevertheless, the focus on incarnational mission has led to experiments in the way these emerging churches structure church life, the priority they give to engaging their community and their encouragement of the ministry of their people when they are ‘scattered’ through the week. They cannot pretend these efforts are unique to emerging churches but they are nevertheless a distinct focus.

Senge comments that learning disabilities are tragic in children, especially if undetected, and that they also threaten organisations.122 Despite various programs and initiatives, including the missional rhetoric of the emerging church literature, it seems that the Australian church, including its emerging streams, has still not learned how to reach and incorporate unchurched people. Michael Moynagh similarly admits for the UK context, ‘The Berlin wall between church and people with no church experience has yet to be breached’.123 One critical learning area for emerging churches is evangelism to unchurched people.

For each emerging church, exploration of incarnational mission has led to geographic moves and experiments in using ‘third places’ or at least shared public buildings. Connection left behind the old Croydon Church of Christ buildings and went through at least seven venues. Eastern Hills started in one community centre and have moved to a larger one. Urban Life moved from their old ‘country club’ acreage and large buildings to their renovated café and community centre in the centre of Ringwood. Solace started at Carey Grammar School Chapel and has since moved to St Paul’s in Fairfield, as well as using Balwyn Baptist and North Fitzroy Arts Centre for some of their activities. Their interesting choices of location, however, are just a symbol and tool for their mission of incarnating the presence of Christ in their communities.
Figure 18: Maria and Krystal sharing an Eastern Hills meal

Photo by Emma Morgan. 11 May 2007. Used with permission.

Figure 19: Urban Life serving Croydon Soup Kitchen

Photo by Karen Nichson, Used with permission.
CHAPTER 8
MISSION AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

I am firmly convinced that the first call of the gospel isn’t to proclamation and I am committed to evangelism. And I don’t believe that the first call of the gospel is to social action and I am very concerned for the poor. I believe the first call of the gospel is to incarnation. Only as we flesh out in community something of the right-side-up values of God's new order do we have any basis to speak or act.

Tom Sine, *Mustard Seed Versus McWorld*¹

This chapter explores the focus of community in the four Melbourne emerging churches and its relationship to mission. It explores what shape community takes and whether the churches’ practice matches what they and the emerging church literature espouse. It begins to analyse how emerging churches form community and what theological frameworks influence their approach to community. It considers what other churches can learn about community from emerging churches and what aspects of community and implications for mission emerging churches still need to learn.

Strong community is an intrinsic goal of many emerging churches and a part of their missional strategy. It is counter-cultural in our individualistic age yet attractive to a society that feels its lack. The case studies express a desire for authentic community as part of their experience of church, and they all say that community is part of their mission. They have thought deeply about how to be a supportive community and to embrace people from outside the church into community life – helping them belong before they believe. The rhetoric is that community is an active component of mission and something they prioritise for its own sake. In some cases they have

grappled with including people who are often marginalised in churches, but the breadth and depth of the community experience of the churches is worth evaluating.

Chapter seven considered some of the missional aspects of emerging missional churches; this chapter considers the community or church aspects of the four emerging missional churches. It begins to explore the question ‘where is the church in emerging missional church?’ A balanced ecclesiology incorporates worship, formation and community as well as mission. So in evaluating these expressions of church, it is helpful to consider, for example, their experience of community belonging and inclusion, and whether this experience is qualitatively different from other churches. It is also interesting to consider the felt need among some members for nurture to balance the missional emphasis.

**Connection Community’s blurred boundaries**

Connection leaders blur the boundaries of church and broader community by including community activities in their theology of church. They assume and encourage the view that church is not just about Sunday and religious activities but mission through the week in the community. Wayne Nebauer regularly announces, ‘This is not church’ in reference to a Sunday gathering but says church is meeting with friends and having a coffee.\(^2\) It is helpful to expand an understanding of church beyond Sunday, though it would also be helpful to be clear about a theological understanding of the church as including missional intent and covenantal commitment that is not necessarily present when friends share coffee.\(^3\)

Connection also seeks to blur church boundaries by helping people to experience authentic community and through that to activate or deepen their relationship with God. They celebrate how ‘belonging before believing’ is the experience of some of their newcomers. Craig and Carla visited Connection twice and then volunteered for the Dining Room because they loved the idea of a faith which has practical and compassionate outcomes. They are still on a journey towards faith, but part of that

\(^2\)Oscar, Interview.

journey is belonging and behaving in a way which is consistent with following Jesus even before they realise the full implications of belief. Unfortunately the theory of inclusion does not always work in practice. Roxanne’s husband Neal came to Life Connection and starting getting involved running the sound desk, thus experiencing the belonging of a role before believing. But part of the reason he drifted away was because someone asked him ‘What are you doing here if you are not a Christian?’.

Connection is still a human organisation with participants who do not perfectly match up to the reality of the church’s rhetoric.

Despite the rhetoric of community and belonging, Connection does not register a high score of belonging in National Church Life Survey (NCLS) measures. Belonging is eighth of nine core qualities at Connection with a score of 3.7/10, which has declined since 2001 when it scored 6.6/10. 39% of attenders have a strong and growing sense of belonging compared to 50-56% for denominational and overall Protestant averages. And their attendance at services and group activities is close to average but not significantly better. There is, yet again, a significant gap between espoused hopes and actual church effectiveness.

Another interesting measure is the relatively low sense of belonging to the Churches of Christ held by attenders. Only 14% said they had a strong sense of belonging to the denomination, much lower than other Churches of Christ at 29% and Protestants at 41%. The pastors relate to denominational leadership and access denominational resources but none are accredited Church of Christ ministers. Wayne and Paula relate strongly at a local inter-church level and have fostered links with other emerging churches through Forge but have not prioritised links with their denominational community. This is perhaps characteristic of a post-denominational

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4Follow-up Journal 2007’, 7; see also Cronshaw, Credible Witness, 122, 138.
6NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 5-7.
7Crouch and Spratt, Interview. Adrian Turner, who started as interim pastor in December 2006, was the first accredited pastor working at Connection.
ethos that is common in emerging churches. It reflects a tendency for post-Christian people to choose churches based on stylistic rather than denominational differences.  

Table 10: Connection belonging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging to the congregation:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong and growing</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakening</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a strong sense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of church service attendance:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a week</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually every week</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or three times a month</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than monthly/ hardly ever/ first time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular attendance at group activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small study or prayer groups</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs or social groups here</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong sense of belonging to the denomination</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To enhance belonging and inclusion, Connection seeks to develop centred-set discipleship for everyone. When Connection first started its mission statement was ‘Connecting with God, each other and our community’. This communicated priorities of worship of God, fellowship with people in the church and mission to people in the broader community. But leaders grew concerned about the implied division between people in and out of the church and so changed the statement to

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‘Connecting with God and people’. They speak of their role as helping people move towards Christ, regardless of whether they have a connection with the church.\textsuperscript{10} Nathan Crouch recalls ‘wells and fences’ as a formative story.\textsuperscript{11} Wayne, in particular, has sought to reframe evangelism and broaden his understanding of discipleship to include everyone – helping anyone he meets to grow closer to Jesus.

Wayne wants to blur the boundaries further and say that some people outside the church are ‘saved’ even though not realising it. The evidence he bases this on is that they are responding to what they know of Jesus and/or behaving in a Christlike way, thus showing God at work. He suggests that just as we cannot be sure who is a Christian and who is not, people themselves may not be aware they are saved.\textsuperscript{12} Although Wayne does not use the term, his understanding is that people in his street and counselling room are like ‘anonymous Christians’, as Karl Rahner refers to people of other religions who have already experienced and accepted the reality of God’s grace and truth derived from Christ.\textsuperscript{13} Wayne moved from bounded-set to centred-set thinking with Connection’s formation. He has continued to innovate theologically and develop a fuzzy-set theology over his last year at Connection, and since, with the development of his anti-institutional ‘Liquid Church’ vision of expressing church informally and spontaneously with friends and neighbours.\textsuperscript{14}

Questions of ethical and community boundaries become acute regarding a pastoral response to homosexuality. Connection leaders generally hold a conservative position that the appropriate expression of sexual love is heterosexual marriage. But they seek to cultivate a supportive community where people can feel safe to share

\textsuperscript{10}Spratt, Interview.

\textsuperscript{11}Crouch and Spratt, Interview; see p.54-55 above.


\textsuperscript{13}Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Volume V: Later Writings (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 118-134.

\textsuperscript{14}Nebauer, ‘My Journey’; Ward, Liquid Church.
struggles concerning sexuality. This is a complex issue and interviewing participants about sexuality and inclusion was beyond the scope of the thesis. It would be interesting to know how safe and included gay people feel. Emerging churches have to grapple with issues of gender and sexuality. Wayne did not hesitate to explore the theological and pastoral issues as he counselled a number of gay men and talked through the implications with his leadership team.

During 2006 Wayne grew more tolerant and advocated for greater understanding and acceptance. He has listened to the experience of young men who have admitted their homosexuality, struggled to remain celibate and battled with depression and guilt. Wayne advocates an ethic of love rather than what he says can too easily be a response of distance and condemnation:

Discerning the most loving response in any situation is not always easy. However, seeking to answer the question of the most loving response can sometimes produce very different courses of action than seeking the answer to the “right” thing to do. It is better to be loving than right.

Wayne came to his ethic of ‘the most loving response’ through his own experience and reflection, though it is close to situational ethics and the new morality.

Leaving aside the specific case of responding to homosexuality, however, it is worth examining the level of inclusiveness that participants experience. Intentional and welcoming inclusion is fifth of nine core NCLS qualities at Connection with a score of 4.1/10, which has had growth since 2001 when it scored 0.5/10. Connection may be growing in inclusiveness, but does not measure as more inclusive than other average churches. Attenders are less certain whether they would follow up someone drifting from church. There is less involvement in formal welcoming systems, although leaders may expect that to happen more organically. Slightly more

15 Spratt, Interview.
Connection attenders find it easy to make friends than average Church of Christ congregations, but slightly less than average Protestant congregations. So although the theory of inclusiveness is loudly and dramatically espoused, the reality is that people do not report that Connection is a more inclusive community than average.

Table 11: Connection inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very likely or likely</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in welcoming people:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are part of the formal welcoming system</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not part of the formal welcoming system</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal system, but seek to make new arrivals welcome</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No system/ no involvement</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree found it easy to make friends here:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All attenders</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those arrived in last five years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On another level, the community of a church congregation is meant to embrace people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. As Bosch taught, the new people of God transcend barriers which otherwise divide people into class, cultural and gender barriers and thus make possible what is otherwise a ‘sociological impossibility’. Whether EMCs display diversity is a question worthy of further research and checking with the NCLS data.

The only stronger result is that Connection has a higher proportion of young adults and people never married than the average church, and probably higher than the Australian population. Although they have fewer teenagers than average, the average age of attenders is 34 years, a decade younger than most averages. 41% of the congregation are in their 20s, two or three times higher than Church of Christ Victorian averages of 18% and the Protestant average of 12%. Similarly, Michael Frost reports that 70% participants of EMCs he surveyed were in the age bracket 21-35 years old (48 out of 68), vastly younger than the average Australian church attender.21 The involvement of young adults augurs well for the future of Connection, and emerging churches in general, particularly compared to the declining youth attendance in Australian churches overall.22

Apart from healthy young adult figures, the rhetoric of EMC inclusiveness and diversity is not matched by the reality at Connection. The NCLS has previously noted that middle-class nuclear families are over-represented in Australian churches. People who are educated, employed, married once with children and born in Australia are well represented in national church attendance figures. However, people in non-nuclear families, with less education, unemployed, younger aged and/or born overseas tend to be less well represented.23 The survey results of Connection show it is consistent with this trend. It does not represent the Australian population and, in fact, has less diversity than the average church figures. For example, 8% of Connection are born overseas compared to 32% of Churches of Christ in Victoria, 23% Protestants overall or 29% of the Melbourne population.24 Church of Christ overall figures would reflect a number of ethnic churches and Croydon would not have as many people born overseas as the Melbourne average, but Connection is still a very monocultural congregation.

21Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 74, 113.
22See pp.4-6 above.
Table 12: Connection demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>46 yrs 5 mths</td>
<td>34 yr 5 mths</td>
<td>45 yrs 7 mths</td>
<td>Approx. 48 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First marriage</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarried</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a defacto relationship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated or divorced</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary/ secondary</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert., dip. or assoc. dip</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uni. Degree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home duties</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth country if not Aus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English speaking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total overseas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another significant community weakness claimed by some Connection participants is lack of nurture. Paris reports not getting enough nurturing for her output and says she is ‘running on previous batteries’. Others appreciate Connection’s outward focus and the number of people involved in ministry, but similarly want encouragement to be

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enriched as well as to ‘do’. Interns receive a lot of nurture, and this is a priority of Connection as part of leadership development. But if people do not have time to commit to a two day per week internship, they feel there is limited opportunity for nurture. Nurture is important in itself as part of what church is about, but also strategic to empower people for mission. Isaac commented:

Through being nurtured you have something to give. … A good analogy [is] if you just eat food all the time and do not do anything you get fat. If you try and do something without having anything to give then you will find yourself dry; there is no real motivation.

This is typical of some Connection participants who appreciate Connection’s missional emphasis but also feel the need for nurture.

The debate about nurture is most poignant around Life Connection, which some participants criticise as lacking nurture and having lightweight teaching. Nathan said people have referred to it as milk and baby food, although he says Connection never intends it to be the complete nurture package for Christians since Sundays are shop windows rather than all that Connection offers. Part of the disappointment about lack of nurture may be a preoccupation by some with Bible-teaching sermons, which help people feel nurtured, and a reluctance to appreciate more interactive forms. Life Connection fosters meaningful interaction which is difficult for monological teaching to match. Some participants say that in a month of Life Connections they have come to know more about others and been provoked to think at deeper levels than they had experienced for years in other churches.

Nathan says if one aspect of the life of the church were overemphasised he would prefer to err on the side of mission. Connection implies that its driving motivation is to incarnationally communicate Christian faith to people. This is typical of EMC.

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28Isaac, Interview.
29Crouch, Interview. See p.76-79 above.
30Connection, Focus Group #1.
31Crouch, Interview.
rhetoric and consistent with the missional emphasis of books like *Shaping*. It also risks the same underdeveloped ecclesiology which focuses on mission at the expense of other purposes of the church including community fellowship and nurture. A more balanced approach focuses on being a healthy congregation growing in community and nurture as well as mission.\(^{32}\)

The claims of people in focus groups that Connection lacks nurture is reflected in the congregation’s lower-than-average NCLS measures of faith and worship.

### Table 13: Connection faith and worship\(^{33}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection Denominational region, CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth in faith through year:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much growth through this congregation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much growth through other churches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much growth through private activity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some growth</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No growth</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private devotional activity:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day/ most days</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least weekly</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaching at church is:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always very helpful</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually very helpful</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In church always experience:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe or mystery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of God’s presence</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in understanding of God</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge to action</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being strengthened spiritually</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{32}\)See p.58-61 above.

18% of people said they experienced much growth through Connection, 8-13% lower than average figures. The only stronger score was that 21% of people experienced much growth through private activity, 10-11% higher than average. Perhaps this reflects people who have heard the advice of Connection leaders and taken responsibility for their own spiritual nurture. Yet fewer than average Connection participants engage in regular devotional activity. Connection does not pretend to give priority to preaching, so it is not surprising fewer than average attendees find preaching helpful. However, it is significant that for a church which values creative gatherings, only 11% of Connection say they always experience inspiration in church, compared to broader averages of 20-24%. These and other poor scores partly reflect the pain the church experienced with the departure of their pastors. Additionally, some of the lower figures might be expected if Connection is focusing on missional action rather than spiritual formation, but they also scored lower on being challenged to action. Despite five years of focusing on mission and community, NCLS scores do not indicate a vibrant church of faith and worship.

**Eastern Hills’ ‘more than Sunday’ community**

Eastern Hills has always wanted to be a ‘more-than-Sunday’ community which shares mission and life throughout the week as well as gathering on Sunday. Sundays include small group discussions and weekly or at least fortnightly lunches together to enhance community life, but leaders strive to not have it stop there. They often play and create together too. Leading up to Christmas in 2007, for example, as well as an Advent series of sermons they organised a Christmas feast, gift-making day, food hamper collection and berry-picking afternoon on a local farm to celebrate the season.34 Their vision for community is to nurture one another and to be a hospitable community which invites others to join them. As discussed in chapter four, belonging came before (and helped facilitate) believing for Titus. The group has involved other people in sport, cooking classes, movie nights and worship services and helped them belong while they are yet to come to a place of belief. They are high on social interaction, sometimes as part of their church calendar but also informally and spontaneously.

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34 ‗Follow-up Journal 2007‘, 31-32.
The original small group articulated an early commitment for their church to be a way of life and more than just the event on Sunday. Toli says they are glad they took time to reflect on their desired values and theological foundations for what they wanted to do and regularly refer back to them. Two of the five core values in their ‘GLOSS’ acronym relate specifically to community. They aspire to be ‘Open – We value deepening relationships in which we’re known and loved. We’re into eating and drinking together and inviting people into our lives’. And secondly, they commit to share their resources; ‘We value sharing all that God has given us. We want to give generously of our gifts, abilities, resources, time and money for the building of community.’

Those who were involved in starting Eastern Hills refer to the adventure of their first year as being a bonding community experience. Toli Morgan refers to his tendency to prioritise community, but it was forming community with a missional end in mind:

   We really wanted to establish ourselves as a community. I was going to say first. It is so hard because it is not completely accurate to say that, but there was a sense in which we were like ‘Okay, so these are the people who are actually involved in our community right now and we are going to do church for those people not for a hypothetical bunch of people who are not part of our church’. We really want to spend some time forming this community and communicating our vision for church to this community and get established, I guess, in terms of working out our shape and theology.

Their shared mission has been church planting and the community development which arose from that. As a result they feel a strong camaraderie, especially among those who were involved from the beginning.

The vision for community extends to choice of housing. When the original small group first started dreaming they considered living together. As the church started, Toli’s parents bought a house in Croydon and rented it to Toli and Emma. Emma’s

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35 Claire, Interview.
36 Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
37 Claire, Interview.
parents bought a house nearby, where they lived with their other two daughters and Matthew Jones. These two houses have been hubs for hospitality and church meetings and are just around the corner from Wyreena Community Centre where the church met. The Sunday lunches were originally at Emma’s parents house every Sunday, until they needed to share that hospitality around more. Some of the young adults have shared houses or boarded with one another. A number of participants share a dream for some form of co-housing, buying a large parcel of land and building houses for themselves and some spare ones for refugees and others in need of rental accommodation.38

Eastern Hills have rethought a theology of church and particularly want to restore the importance of community in church. Community is essential to their understanding of church and to the potential of mission. It enriches the lives of Christians and attracts those without faith. Rodney Clapp’s description of church as ‘alternative community’ informs their vision to be a countercultural but engaged community.39 Toli critiques an overly individualistic view of salvation which implies people can be Christians apart from a church community. He does not want to echo old Catholic doctrine that there is no salvation apart from the Church, but he sees church and salvation as inextricably linked because Christ, and therefore salvation, is found in the church.40

Eastern Hills has a strong sense of connection with the historical church although it does not have strong formal denominational connections. Its members identify with the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) and have explored links with the BUV New Missional Communities group, but the church is not yet a formal member at either level. The founding group sought to plant an innovative church but do not avoid tradition for the sake of it. They follow the traditional church calendar to guide their preaching series and often use liturgical prayer in worship. Regular series in the calendar include Christmas, Old Testament, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and ‘Inspiring Saints’. Similar to Solace, Eastern Hills has a healthy appreciation of different

38Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2; Ian and Imajin, Interview.
39Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1; Sine, Mustard Seed, 294-303.
40Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
Eastern Hills values the yearning for a better world of the social-justice tradition, an Anabaptist theology of church as a distinctive alternative community and a Pentecostal-inspired understanding of the Holy Spirit’s help in prayer for healing and experiencing the presence of God.  

No-one at Eastern Hills spoke of lack of nurture. They do not tend to speak of focusing on mission first either. They just set out to ‘be church’ and explore whatever they discover that means. While acknowledging the general need for stronger missional focus, Mathew Jones argues it is unnecessary and potentially detrimental to community nurture to dismantle church structures, even for the sake of mission. Eastern Hills intentionally maintains some traditional approaches to Christian formation. For example, they plan series of biblical teaching for Sunday mornings. Matthew focuses on teaching and coordinating a team of teachers and small group leaders as his main pastoral role, and the teaching could not be considered lightweight. Sven, who has postgraduate theology qualifications, commented that he has been quite impressed and moved by much of the input. I thought that the thoughtfulness and depth of the teaching times during my visits was noteworthy, and participants acknowledge that they grow from it. Moreover, nurture is not limited to Sundays and small groups at Eastern Hills. Pastoral care and encouragement between members is just as important for people to feel nourished and – perhaps more important – to help them feel connected. But the combination of teaching which is thought-provoking and community life which fosters close relationships helps maintain the nurture of people at Eastern Hills.

**Urban Life ‘doing life deeply together’**

Urban Life reinvented itself around the twin goals of mission and community. Its leaders define mission as ‘being about our Father’s business’ and community as ‘doing life deeply together’. They see these as two interrelated elements and not as separate departments. None of their programs aim solely at developing community.

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41 Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
42 Jones, ‘Critique of Shaping’, 23
43 Sven, Interview.
'Get Togethers’ are designed to foster ‘doing life deeply together’ but also to create a space for a meal and conversation where newcomers would be comfortable. ‘Prime Timers’ is a social group for older people in the church but also an active outreach program to which the local Council refers lonely people. The young adults say they are not striving to be a cozy community but to bless the world around them, which has led to service camps, community involvement and, serendipitously, a more strongly bonded group. Mission and community work together.

The most memorable community experience for many at Urban Life came not from their Get Togethers (GTs) or any other programs, but from the shared experience of renovating the old nightclub through 2004 and the risky experience of exploring new missional endeavours. Participants speak proudly and fondly of the hours of planning, consulting, managing, painting and cleaning up which went into the café and community centre. Missional teams have formed around staffing the café, running community centre programs and volunteering in a weekly soup kitchen, and those involved speak of experiencing a depth of community life. The community which comes from engaging in mission together, as opposed to seeking community as an end in itself, is what Alan Hirsch refers to as *communitas*.

Despite the rhetoric of community and belonging, Urban Life according to NCLS results does not have a high culture of belonging. In fact, belonging is ninth of nine core qualities with a score of 4.2/10. 44% of attenders report a strong and growing sense of belonging, compared to 65% of average Victorian Christian Revival Crusade (CRC) churches or 56% of Protestants overall. Furthermore, their attendance at services and group activities is no better than denominational and Protestant averages. The one area of belonging where members score higher than average is that 62% regularly attend Urban Life clubs or social groups, compared to 44-48% averages. This probably reflects the focus on GTs, a key program for

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44 Smits, Interview #1.
45 Dwight, ‘Fitting out the Urban’.
46 Smits, Interview #1.
building community belonging. To balance this, however, fewer people said they are involved in small groups and so Urban Life’s group life looks average overall.

### Table 14: Urban Life belonging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th><strong>Urban Life</strong></th>
<th>Denom. CRC</th>
<th>Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging to the congregation:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong and growing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>30</td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakening</td>
<td>19</td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a strong sense</td>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of church service attendance:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than monthly/ hardly ever/ first time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or three times a month</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually every week</td>
<td>63</td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a week</td>
<td>17</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular attendance at group activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small study or prayer groups</td>
<td>49</td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs or social groups here</td>
<td>49</td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another measure of community health is the NCLS assessment of intentional and welcoming inclusion. Urban Life attenders show a close to average likelihood of following up someone drifting from church. They are close to average in their involvement in welcoming systems, although like Connection their welcoming is probably more organic than rostered. But they have a clearly lower agreement that it is easy to make friends at Urban Life, 74% compared to averages of 83-84%. Only 55% of those who have been at Urban Life for less than five years said it is easy to make friends, compared to 79-82% on average. A strength of Urban Life is their

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stable congregation and a high proportion of loyal members, but a related weakness is that newcomers find it more difficult than average to integrate into the community.

Table 15: Urban Life inclusion\textsuperscript{50}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certain</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very likely or likely</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in welcoming people:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are part of the formal welcoming system</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not part of the formal welcoming system</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal system, but seek to make new arrivals welcome</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No system/ no involvement</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree found it easy to make friends here:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All attenders</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those arrived in last five years</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Belonging led to belief for Aaron when he wandered in off the street. Urban Life and the community helped him come to faith and put his life back together.\textsuperscript{51} Urban Life pastors have also counselled people struggling with homosexuality. They have sought to cultivate an open and supportive community where people can feel safe to share struggles. Anthea is particularly affirming of the support their young adults have shown friends who are working through issues.\textsuperscript{52} They still generally uphold a conservative position that the appropriate expression of sexual love is a committed monogamous heterosexual marriage, but have sought to be gracious and inclusive of

\textsuperscript{50}NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 20.

\textsuperscript{51}Smits, Interview #1; see p.117-118 above.

\textsuperscript{52}Smits, Interview #1.
people with different understandings of relationships.

Urban Life has developed their openness to include diverse people they meet through the café. It has become a safe place for Urban Life staff and volunteers to interact with businesspeople and parents, workers and work-for-the-dole participants. As well as making connections with a diverse range of people, Urban Life has also wanted to nurture and train people at the core of their community. Cameron was inspired by Erwin McManus who said church for a long time has been like an orange, tough on the outside and soft and wishy-washy on the inside; whereas it needs to be more like a peach, easy to access but harder and more solid at the core. In 2007, the leadership team undertook a Forge internship as a group and discussed their missional values. In 2008 they invited twenty people to join their conversation around a fortnightly meal and to get teaching and encouragement to pursue missional lifestyles. They called this group or course ‘Exemplar’. The ‘graduation’ mark of Exemplar is that participants will grow to see themselves as active missionaries wherever God has planted them.53

Urban Life, like Connection and most other Australian congregations, is inclusive of educated, employed, middle-class Australian-born families but less inclusive or embracing of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. The demographics of the two case studies that did the NCLS do not represent the Australian population and, in fact, have less diversity than average church figures. The only stronger result for Urban Life, like Connection, is that it has a higher proportion of young adults than the average church. 26% are in their twenties and 28% are in their thirties, meaning 54% are aged 20-39 compared to 31% for CRCs on average and 24% for Protestants overall. Urban Life’s average age is 39 years, five years younger than average. This perhaps reflects Anthea’s younger leadership and the innovative approach to church. The challenge is that Urban Life only has 3% who are 15-19 year olds compared to 8 for CRC Victorian averages or 7% for Protestants. So they are not connecting with teenagers as successfully as young adults. The rhetoric of EMC inclusiveness and diversity is not matched by the reality in Urban Life and Connection. It would be helpful to do further research of the other

53Cameron Burgess, Urban Life Associate Pastor, ‘Urban Life’ (Lecture at Whitley College, Melbourne, 21 August 2008).
two cases and the EMC movement as a whole. Solace and Eastern Hills, perhaps more than Connection and Urban Life, have focused ministry interest towards people of other cultures and diverse backgrounds.

Table 16: Urban Life demographics\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>34 yrs 5 mths</td>
<td>39 yrs 8 mths</td>
<td>44 yrs 3 mths</td>
<td>Approx 48 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First marriage</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarried</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a de facto relationship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated or divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest educational qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary/ secondary</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert., dip. or assoc. dip.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home duties</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth country if not Aus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total overseas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 24; NCLS Research, ‘CofC Vic’, 24.
There is widespread appreciation among Urban Life participants for their newfound missional emphasis, although, again like Connection, there are misgivings about lack of nurture. In particular, some in Urban Life who value their Pentecostal heritage feel a lack of nurture from less charismatic expression. There were old-timers who left the church over the changes in how they expressed worship and charismatic gifts. Some of those who stayed, for example Pria, like reminding the church of the importance of Pentecostal congregational forms of prayer and worship:

We do not want to become so focused on the interaction with the community, on the things that we do outside or even the things that we do inside here, that we forget that fundamentally … one of the main reasons we come to church is to meet with God. It is not the only place we can meet with Him. But it is our community place where we meet with Him, where we join in the corporate worship, the corporate prayer, the corporate expressions of the gifts and that really is our bread and butter, nutritionally, as far as our spirits go. We have our own individual prayer and all that, but there is something very special and very powerful in joining together with other believers to meet before God. 55

Pria’s comments display a Pentecostal cultural tendency to focus on worship as vibrant and emotional singing in a central meeting.

Urban Life is transforming its structures but discerning what aspects of its Pentecostal tradition to maintain. It stopped having Pentecostal-styled prayer meetings to avoid the culture of ‘claiming’ things from God and power games between people. But the church is yet to discover other approaches for communal prayer. 56 Services still begin with vibrant extended singing but not for as long as it used to be, and there is no altar call prayer ministry at the end of services. People like Pria miss the extended singing and expression of spiritual gifts which helps them feel close to God. Leaders like Anthea want to focus Pentecostal expression on the mission the Holy Spirit is supposed to empower. For example, Anthea does not give priority to having times of ‘prophecy’ in church services but when she invites people for dinner she spends part of the day praying and asking God for something ‘prophetic’ which will open a faith conversation or speak into the friend’s life. 57

55 Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
56 Faircloth, Interview #2; Smits, Interview #1.
57 Pastors, Focus Group.
Urban Life experiences other tensions between Pentecostal and emerging traditions, one of the most contentious being about money. Anthea and many of the leaders have a different belief about the imperative of tithing from many Pentecostal pastors and others in Urban Life. They believe tithing is an Old Testament teaching, and that the fuller New Testament teaching is heartfelt generosity and all-of-life stewardship. Anthea herself says that tithing is a starting point for her and Adam’s personal giving, but she does not teach tithing as obligatory for others. When Anthea introduces the offering, she never mentions tithing and usually talks about being generous and sharing in the mission of the church. However, others still maintain its importance. Anthea and the church treasurer have chosen not to tackle the issue. They have not considered it worth the fight and there have been so many other changes the church has had to come to terms with.

Another tension may occur with other denominational leaders. Urban Life has undergone radical change for a CRC congregation. It can do what it decides to do because as a CRC member it is autonomous. Yet pastors value partnership with other CRC congregations, and in particular Pakenham CRC and Peninsula City Church, Frankston. These were partnerships Doug fostered and which together Anthea and Doug continue. Peninsula’s senior pastor recently preached at Urban Life, and his message urged the congregation to read the Bible to stay connected with God. He told a story of how maturity was shown in a new convert ceasing swearing, which emerging churches would not tend to see as an important measure of sanctification.

It was a typically enthusiastic and ordered sermon that fitted in the evangelical-holiness tradition. It outlined measures of fruitfulness as a Christian. He had a business background and so liked to have ‘measures’. The moralistic tone of the sermon seemed inconsistent with the culture Anthea and Doug are building. Moreover, at times it tended towards being an otherworldly and dualistic approach to faith as an individually focused ‘spiritual battle’. He said: ‘This fight is not about family, scandals, council fights, religious groups, what you see on the news but a

58 Also Stuart Murray, Beyond Tithing (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000).
59 Smits, Interview #1; Steve and Rowena, Interview.
60 Smits, Interview #1.
fight in our own humanity regarding doubt, loneliness, insecurity, self-worth. … Our fight is about mindsets and prejudices’. It is appropriate to remind people of the struggle against prejudice and the importance of self-worth, but there is something dualistic and individualistic about denigrating the engagement of social structures.

Despite a message that seemed incongruous with Urban Life’s new focus, at the conclusion of the sermon the congregation applauded.\textsuperscript{61} The applause may have shown Urban Life’s propensity to encourage visitors, or may have affirmed the positive points in the sermon rather than what I have criticised. Alternatively it may have shown that some people missed that sort of preaching which castigated them and told them what they should be doing more. The guest speaker gave other helpful encouragement, and he has been a source of support and friendship to CLC and Urban Life over the years. Yet the difference in culture was evident, and may grow wider. Conversation and learning from one another may still be possible, but there is a tension between denominational CRC and local Urban Life culture.

Urban Life has rethought its denominational heritage. It exists as an autonomous congregation but in relationship with other CRC congregations. Anthea and Doug are both CRC-accredited ministers, and two other leaders have local congregation minister licenses. Only 33\% of Urban Life attenders have a strong sense of belonging to their denomination. This is more than double Connection’s 14\% but not as strong as Protestant and CRC averages of 41-45\%. Urban Life is perhaps better networked with Forge and other emerging churches than with their own denomination.

\textbf{Table 17: Urban Life denominational belonging}\textsuperscript{62}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>\textbf{Urban Life}</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong sense of belonging to the denomination</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{62}NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 14, 25.
Urban Life participants scored themselves higher than Connection in NCLS measures of faith and worship, although they were still below denominational and Protestant averages of faith measures and similar or below in worship.

Table 18: Urban Life faith and worship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth in faith through year of attenders:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much growth through this congregation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much growth through other churches</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much growth through private activity</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some growth</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No growth</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private devotional activity:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day/ most days</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least weekly</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaching at church is:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always very helpful</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually very helpful</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In church attenders always experience:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe or mystery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of God’s presence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in understanding of God</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge to action</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being strengthened spiritually</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33% of Urban Life attenders said they experienced much growth through Urban Life, 5% lower than the state denominational average but 2% higher than the national Protestant average. Urban Life had a close to average number of people who experience much growth through other churches; 8% compared to the broader

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average of 7%. Like Connection, Urban Life had a higher number of people who experienced much growth through private activity, again perhaps reflecting the emphasis emerging leaders place on encouraging personal responsibility. Yet Urban Life people engaged in less than average private devotional activity. They experience less joy, spiritual strengthening, growth in understanding of God and sense of God’s presence. They measured close to average experience of inspiration and awe, and the one above average quality was challenge to action. Urban Life faith and worship scores are higher than Connection, but still below average, perhaps reflecting a lack of nurture felt by some focus group participants.

**Solace centred-set stretching**

Solace has the most clearly articulated approach to missional community of the four churches, seeing itself as a centred set community. Members have explored social set theory and centred set thinking as a framework which reminds them to be centred on Christ and inclusive of people wherever they are on a journey of faith. Olivia says social sets and fuzzy logic have reminded them to keep centred on Christ and to explore what that constitutes. It has warned them that their post-evangelical cynicism has limited their worship of the risen Christ. It also cautions them that idolatry, of Solace’s community or leader Olivia, has distracted them from being Jesus-centred. It has affirmed their interest in process and journey, but also reminded them of the importance of conversion and obedience in order to be well formed. They invite anyone to participate in their network, at whatever level people like. People can visit occasionally or sign up as a member. Some members do not regularly attend Sunday services but nurture their faith in other ways, because they value commitment to living out a Jesus-centred lifestyle more than commitment to attending church programs.

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64 For an overview of EMC treatment of social set theory see pp.54-55 above.
66 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
Some members are thinking about how they can include their wider networks in their field of church. Anna is tempted to broaden her understanding of church to embrace her other community where she finds support – her juggling club:

[Church is] God’s people in the world and doing things together, through the way of everyday things and through ways of relating. I can come close to say ‘God’s made all the people in my juggling club so that’s quite close to church, because it demonstrates God’s love and joy, and friends’. ‘Love and/or safety’ is our motto. 67

Stuart commented that Anna does not know the term ‘church planting’ but is taking church into her networks. 68 As mentioned above, Solace is hoping that Remaking will develop as a course which will be a way into faith and community life for some people. In another sense, it may broaden the network of Solace to include some people who want to develop Jesus-centred spiritual practices but may not be ready to identify with a church. Solace is moving in more centred-set directions.

Solace’s centred-set theology and sometimes fuzzy practice clashed early with their starting church’s more bounded-set theology. As part of a commitment to interactive and participatory worship, Solace invites everyone to participate to whatever extent they like. Open-microphone discussions were open and uncensored. People who were outside traditional boundaries were permitted to lead services. This was contentious, as Olivia wrote:

Probably one of the most contentious areas between myself and the other staff at St Hilary’s has been who comes to Solace and how much I let them participate. Why do I let someone in permanent de facto relationship help lead the singing? (In other services they would not be fulfilling the leadership code and hence ineligible.) Why do I let people who say they are not Christian speak into the microphone during our open discussions? The stated and unstated vibe is that these people are welcome to look on and explore but not participate nor consider themselves members since their beliefs and behaviours are not up to scratch. When is this valid? 69

67 Anna, Interview.
68 Stuart Davey, ‘Creation and Remaking’ (Tabor College class, St Paul’s Fairfield, 15 April 2008).
69 Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’.
Solace was not primarily concerned whether people who shared in an open-mic discussion believed the ‘right’ things or whether worship leaders are behaving in the ‘right’ way.

Solace’s approach to allowing anyone to participate may appear fuzzy, but Olivia reframes it primarily in centred-set terms. Olivia says they want to ‘make the well available’ for the sheep and if people say ‘I come here to drink’ then they are on a journey towards the centre. She wants to validate their journey. Whether or not they will ever get there, or whether God would count them as Christian, is not the issue. The danger is either pressing for a clear-cut decision – the bounded approach which is not really a temptation for Solace because that is what they are reacting against – or endorsing too much relativism and doubt, the fuzzy tendency which is Solace’s temptation because of its brokenness. The centred-set is the ideal but the fuzzy set is sometimes the reality, a reality which Olivia recognises as an aberration. Solace continues to stretch church boundaries and encourage interactive and diverse involvement in worship.

The most significant centred-set implication for Solace has been their pastoral response to homosexuality. Solace has not taken a strong ethical stand for or against homosexuality, but has stood for including homosexuals, or anyone, who wants to belong to the community. The pastors are aware of people in other churches who have struggled with sexuality and been in homosexual relationships but are not open about it. Solace, however, values authenticity and openness and so wants to welcome people to church as a safe and inviting place: ‘If you are living in a homosexual relationship with someone and you want to come to church, then we want to work with that, at the starting point’. They do not define their centre in terms of sexual preference or practice, just as they do not define it in terms of avoiding rampant consumerism or any other behaviour or belief.

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70 Maclean, Interview #2.
This inclusive stand was significant for Solace’s theology and practice and sadly led to leaving the original mother church. Two homosexual people declared they had a committed relationship. When they were still welcomed at Solace, the mother church raised questions and said it was a ‘different pastoral response’ to homosexuality from the one they would practise. They wanted Solace to be more confrontational and clearer on ethical boundaries. In May 2005, largely prompted by these differences, Solace became an independent network. Some people stayed with the mother church, some left altogether and those left at Solace grieved over the split and took time to recover from the disappointment. The pain was still evident two years later. Although painful, it was a defining episode for them to demonstrate their commitment to inclusiveness.

Solace members have varying ethical positions on homosexuality. At least some of the leaders believe in an ideal of monogamous heterosexuality as the ‘full gift of God’, language Olivia prefers to use rather than language of moral requirement, but they also recognise we live in a broken world. Toni, as a worshipper at Solace, has struggled with accepting the homosexual couple but learned graciousness and acknowledges they have different perspectives of God. She does not acknowledge it is a right perspective necessarily, but neither does she feel that the traditional evangelical church’s response of offering blunt answers and closing the doors to homosexual people is appropriate either. There is, however, a common valuing of including, learning from and listening to one another. Inspired by Brian McLaren, a participant said that just because people are in different positions it does not mean they cannot talk to one another and travel together. So Solace’s stand was to be an accepting community rather than asserting any particular ethical stance on sexual preference.

Some Solace participants speak most keenly of activities like tree planting and mug

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72 Perini, ‘Response to Solace Letter’.
73 Davey, Interview; Solace, Focus Group #1.
74 Maclean, Interview #2.
75 Solace, Focus Group #5.
76 McLaren, New Kind of Christian; Solace, Focus Group #1.
painting days as community building. These practices helped people connect with God and one another in new ways. Some participants say it is in the practical service and manual labour that they best see relationships and community formed. Nigel, who said he is not yet a Christian because he has not experienced God for himself, engages in the life of Solace because of his family relationships and appreciation for what Solace does and their openness to diversity. He said he particularly enjoyed the mug painting service because it was community building. Others particularly value the action of tree planting and joining with the broader community in ‘Cleaning up Australia’. Yet their mother church questioned whether cleaning up a park can be part or all of worship for a Sunday morning, just as they questioned whether lunch can be both social and replace Eucharist in worship.

Solace uses the phrase ‘holding the hand of the traditional church’ to describe a commitment to staying connected with church tradition. It undeniably gives priority to stretching theological and other boundaries. One basic principle is that, ‘Solace exists to participate in the first world missional re-invention of “church”’. The balancing principle, however, is that Solace wants to hold the hand of the established church. Olivia is a loyal Anglican and stressed that Solace did not leave its mother church but was pushed out, and wants to work with the existing church whenever it can. It acknowledges accepted doctrine and practice as foundational for its innovation and engagement with the world:

Solace builds upon the foundations of the traditional Church and as such we acknowledge all the great creeds and are an inheritor of the values and doctrines of the reformed protestant traditions as expressed in the contemporary Anglican Church.

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77 E.g., Solace, Focus Group #1.
78 Solace, Focus Group #1.
79 Solace, Focus Group #5.
80 Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’.
81 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
82 Maclean, Interview #1. For another Anglican priest who integrates EMC literature with, in his case, his high-church tradition see Scott Cowdell, God’s Next Big Thing: Discovering the Future Church (Melbourne: John Garratt, 2004).
83 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
Remaking is evidence of Solace’s desire to anchor itself to the broad traditions of the church – not just Anglican and evangelical but the rich streams of spirituality or seven ways of Jesus from meditative contemplation through to Pentecostal seeking the Spirit.84

The Anglican Diocese in Melbourne has sought to create new structures for emerging churches. Whereas a Christendom approach assumed that a local church had responsibility for the ‘cure of souls’ in its geographic area, emerging churches sometimes focus mission around interest groups and informal networks as much as local geography. When people are hungry for community and neighbourhood contact, it is appropriate for emerging churches to develop their mission with a local community focus.85 But for people who build relationships and form community around common interests, sport or recreation, then emerging churches seek to engage missionally and build community through these networks. New forms of social cohesion are required in this ‘creative age’.86 The Anglican Church in the United Kingdom, and particularly youth congregations, have led the way in giving permission and resources for network-based churches.87 The Anglican Church in Australia is following the UK example and creating new structures for non-parish-based congregations.88 However, when Olivia tried to apply for Solace to be an Anglican missional order she found it difficult if not impossible.89 So it incorporated as Solace EMC. Although an independent organisation, it still identifies with the Anglican community, and also the Baptist Union through whom Jude is ordained and Stuart is partly supported.90

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84Solace, Remaking.
85Simon Carey Holt, God Next Door: Spirituality & Mission in the Neighbourhood (Brunswick East: Acor, 2007). Neighbourhood churches are likely to become increasingly popular as petrol prices increase. Consider Pat Murphy, Plan C: Community Survival Strategies for Peak Oil and Climate Change (Gabriola Island: New Society, 2008), 249-270.
87Cray, Mission-Shaped Church, 4-19, 43-44, 62-67, 145-146; Graham Cray, Youth Congregations and the Emerging Church (Cambridge: Grove, 2002).
89Maclean, Interview #1.
90Solace, Focus Group #5.
Solace, perhaps more than the other three case studies, demonstrates a clearly thought-through focus on spiritual formation. It is part of the founding ethos of Solace to explore spirituality in ways which are accessible to people of all ages and stages of faith. Olivia is hoping that spirituality will be an entry point for new people into the life of faith and their community. Remaking is evidence of the priority Solace places on a well-balanced spiritual formation. However, there is a tension in being a safe and nourishing place for burnt-out Christians while striving to be missional. Jude comments that a number of people who are deconstructing their faith have been attracted to Solace’s ‘authentic’ approach to worship and community, but since they are yet to reconstruct their faith it is difficult to lead them in missional endeavours. Other participants want more congregational mission efforts to complement the focus on spirituality and the everyday mission of members. As mentioned above, Solace is initiating some congregational mission efforts, but still believes its strength lies in celebrating everyday spirituality and expressing mission in all of life.

Solace has continued to stretch boundaries around which church community and mission revolve. It has not had many congregational mission projects but has a sense of solidarity in seeking mission in all of life:

We want to be a group of people who come together to create something more than the sum of us as individuals. We want to take up Jesus’ invitation to follow him and we believe this is to live the richest possible life. We know that God delights in so much around us because there is an inherent goodness to world, and we celebrate this. But we commit to changing for the better the things that sadden and anger God. All of this takes place in our everyday lives, not on some “mountain top”. Olivia says in 2007 that they are now finding more of their identity in mission than in community and alternative worship. Their fellow-Anglicans in the United Kingdom agree with Hirsch and Frost that mission is the best starting point for church

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91 Solace, Remaking.
92 Waldron, Interview #1.
93 Solace, Focus Group #5.
94 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
95 Maclean, Interview #2.
community: ‘Start with the Church and the mission will probably get lost. Start with mission and it is likely that the Church will be found’. 96

Summary

Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace have been reflecting afresh on their approach to community and its relationship to mission. Understandably this is a significant part of their life as churches. They are each exploring how to form community in ways which go beyond meeting together on Sundays or merely delivering religious goods and services.

The priority on community is shown in the name of Connection Community. Under Wayne’s leadership it blurred boundaries about community. For example, they affirmed community engagement as an aspect of church and broadened the community and influence of the church to incorporate, as much as possible, people in the broader community.

Urban Life reinvented itself around mission and community. Leaders formed ‘Get-Togethers’ as a new expression of hospitality-based small groups to deepen their experience of ‘doing life deeply together’. Renovating the café and engaging missional projects together have also been strong community or communitas-building activities.

Eastern Hills Community Church started with a desire to ‘do church’ with a ‘more-than-Sunday’ experience of community. As a church they worship, eat and play together, and as an ‘alternative community’ critique and seek to challenge the individualism they see in contemporary society and in themselves.

Solace aspired to be a ‘centred set’ whereby people belong simply if they are on a journey of faith towards Christ. As a network, Solace prioritised supporting people through the week as much as on Sunday, and makes diverse and creative space for worship and community life. Different Solace members appreciate different aspects

96 Cray, Mission-Shaped Church, 116; see also Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 209.
of Solace for building community – from ‘Sunday stuff’ to the annual weekend Festival, from Taizé services to tree planting and mug making.

The fresh focus on community of these communities has not been without tension. Wayne’s leadership team felt he was blurring the boundaries too much and Wayne had to finish his ministry. Eastern Hills pastors have not found it easy to challenge a culture of individualism. Urban Life have engineered significant cultural change to focus on doing life together as a community and taking an interest in the broader community, rather than being preoccupied with church meetings and charismatic worship. Solace’s mother church felt Solace stretched their centred set thinking too far in welcoming anyone to contribute to worship and not rejecting homosexual members, which led to their separation. Each leadership team has had to reflect on how their church should relate to homosexual people. They are each still exploring how to build community in ways which embrace diverse groups of people beyond merely gathering for Sunday worship.

Emerging church frameworks are giving these congregations fresh impetus for community and mission, but there are areas where the reality does not match the rhetoric. A number of Connection, Urban Life and Solace participants express a desire for more nurture, although this sometimes reflects members being bound by traditional expectations that the church will look after them. Of more significance, the four emerging churches prioritise community life and often talk about ‘belonging before believing’ for newcomers, but feelings of belonging are not necessarily any higher than other average churches. In fact, the NCLS measures for Connection and Urban Life showed belonging and inclusion as generally below average. They have healthy proportions of young adults. However, in other respects they do not appear any more inclusive or diverse than any other average church. To be missional in Melbourne they need to move beyond their predominantly white and middle-class membership. It would be helpful to gather NCLS and other quantitative data about Solace and Eastern Hills, and other emerging churches, to explore their levels of community belonging and diversity.
Figure 20: Eastern Hills paper-flower making


Figure 21: Solace Festival Eucharist lunch

Photo by author. 3 September 2006.
CHAPTER 9

INNOVATION AND EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

In the postmodern world, it’s not how loud you shout; it’s how deeply you listen that counts. Just as Dorothy engages her traveling companions by listening to their stories and evoking their needs, the postmodern leader creates a safe place that attracts a team, and then she or he empowers them by the amazing power of a listening heart. …

By the end of their journey, the lion, the scarecrow, and the tin man have joined Dorothy as peers, partners, friends. Her style of leadership was empowering, ennobling, not patronizing, paternalistic, creating dependency. So effective was her empowering of them that they were able to say a tearful goodbye and move on to their own adventure.

Brian McLaren, ‘Dorothy on Leadership’

This chapter discusses the expression of innovation in the four emerging churches and the role of creative dreaming and an empowering style leadership. The Shaping of Things to Come and other emerging church literature contend for innovative expressions of church and for an empowering approach to leadership which champions new ideas and pioneers new areas for mission. This chapter evaluates whether the reality matches the rhetoric and what shape innovation and leadership actually takes. It considers what other churches can learn about innovation and leadership from emerging churches, and what emerging churches still need to learn.

Chapter seven explored the shaping of incarnational mission in emerging churches and chapter eight further explored mission with particular reference to community, these next two chapters explore the shaping of innovation, how it is cultivated and

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1 McLaren, ‘Dorothy’; referring to ‘The Wizard of Oz’.
2 Frost and Hirsch, Shaping.
the measure of its results. Chapter nine focuses on an empowering approach to leadership and chapter ten explores the processes of planning and managing change. Thus chapters nine and ten begin to analyse how emerging churches engage innovatively with their communities and what theological frameworks influence their approach to innovation, leadership and change.

A dominant theme of innovation in the emerging churches is the creative dreaming and permission-giving leadership styles of their leaders. This chapter will evaluate the nature of this in each of the emerging church case studies. It draws on observation and interviews at the churches, some NCLS data and analysis of the ‘APEST’ leadership style of the emerging church leaders. Frost and Hirsch advocate ‘apostolic leadership’ as a pioneering approach to leadership which cultivates imagination for new approaches. Hirsch suggests the key leadership task is to cultivate the environment for mission and ‘to create the conditions that foster imagination, initiative, and creativity’. In William Schneider’s organisational taxonomy, leaders of the four case studies describe their groups as primarily a cultivation culture and secondarily a collaboration culture. This chapter explores the practice of emerging churches and their leaders as they seek to champion innovation and empower people to explore new avenues for mission and church.

**Connection’s ‘green-light brainstorming’**

Innovation and empowering leadership are particular distinctives of Connection. Connection was born in the imaginations of Wayne and Paula Nebauer and the group of young adults and parents left over from Croydon Church of Christ. The parents and older people at Connection gave permission to their young adult children and Wayne and Paula as new pastors to try new expressions. Paula acknowledged: ‘We were so fortunate that the team that we were a part of from the word go – the older

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people – the parents … were willing to take a risk and let us try new things’.\textsuperscript{6} Part of what attracted Wayne and Paula was the space Connection offered for innovation.\textsuperscript{7}

From the beginning, Wayne and Paula sought to empower the group with vision, training and a permission-giving approach to leadership. Paula describes how they encouraged creative dreaming through ‘green-light brainstorming’ and championed new ideas:

> We just wanted people to feel free to think up anything … [not] all the reasons why it cannot be done … Let us just take a risk, let us try it. We were big on being outside of the box thinkers … It does not matter if it fails … always thinking, how could things be done differently? Is there other ways? What else could we try? … Never settling for … maintenance mode … and becoming too comfortable.\textsuperscript{8}

Sometimes their experiments were effective and at other times they failed, but their commitment to giving people the power to experiment with innovative ideas was in itself an attraction for some new people.\textsuperscript{9}

Capacity for empowering leadership and cultivating innovation are among Wayne and Paula’s strengths. Wayne explains how he listens to people’s ideas and helps activate them:

> I seek to empower people. … [When] they have got an idea, I listen to them, I try to draw it out of them and I think I am good at cheering them on in saying, ‘You can do it. Yes, you can do this’, and then helping put in place things to help them do it.\textsuperscript{10}

After leaving Connection, it has been natural for Wayne to train as a life-coach, in order to continue to express this aspect of his vocation, although outside the sphere of the church.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{6}P Nebauer, Interview. 
\textsuperscript{7}W Nebauer, Interview. 
\textsuperscript{8}P Nebauer, Interview. 
\textsuperscript{9}Connection, Focus Group #1; Iona, Interview. 
\textsuperscript{10}W Nebauer, Interview. 
Many Connection partners refer to how Connection’s culture, and particularly Wayne’s leadership, encouraged them to think innovatively about ministry.12 Partners initiated playgroups, children’s ministries, drama groups, community ministries and short-term mission trips overseas. Zachariah commented on the influence of Connection’s empowering leadership on innovation:

We have always been in a place where we have asked people, “What dreams has God put on your heart? What passions and visions do you have? How can we help you fulfil them?” And in that, we have often found really innovative and “out of the box ideas” that we never would have come up with, but that we can see God in, and then help people to pursue that.13

Rather than stifling innovative ideas with rules and regulations, Nathan explains they strive to ask how they can help people pursue their dreams. Instead of responding ‘Well that would not work’ they tend to ask ‘How can we make that work, and in respect to the obstacles how can we work around them?’.14

Connection stresses the importance of young people and trusting them with responsibility. Isaac was an intern in 2005 and appreciated Wayne asking him to lead a ministry team and leading people older than him was never an issue.15 Yasmine commented:

Wayne never said to me “Oh, you have got to do this and you have got to do that”. He just asked me where my heart is and then said, “Okay, cool, let me find something for you to do in terms of your passions and what you want”.16

The team meetings and mentoring arrangements for staff and interns help foster a bonded and committed team. Meetings and retreats tend to be fun and upbuilding; utilising encouragement awards, ‘hot seat’ questioning of a team member and discussion of topical ministry dilemmas.17 Any church wanting to cultivate

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12E.g., Connection, Focus Group #1; Farris, Interview; Iris, Interview.
13Zachariah, Interview.
14Crouch, Interview.
15Connection, Focus Group #1.
16Connection, Focus Group #1.
17‘Connection Journal’, 26-29, 38, 229.
innovation will need to harness the contribution particularly of younger generations and Connection has done this well. As discussed in the previous chapter, the high proportion of young adults involved at Connection augurs well for its future.\textsuperscript{18}

Connection’s 2001 figures give some insight into the extent of leaders empowered for ministry as it started. 60\% of attenders were involved in leadership, ministry or administrative roles. The high rate of involvement reflected the high commitment of the Croydon Church of Christ remnant as well as Wayne and Paula’s capacity for recruiting leaders. By 2006 the proportion of Connection people involved in ministry roles had declined to slightly below denominational and Protestant averages. Only 49\% of attenders were involved in some role, compared to 50-53\% in Church of Christ or Protestant churches. It is difficult to sustain high levels of involvement.

\textbf{Table 19: Connection leadership involvement}\textsuperscript{19}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection Denom. CofC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involved in leadership, ministry, administrative roles</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2001 NCLS figures also show how favourably leadership was valued as Connection was starting. Wayne and Paula and their early leadership team were inviting people to dream about new possibilities and explore various options of community service. 36\% of 2001 attenders said leaders encouraged attenders’ gifts and skills to a great extent and another 36\% said to some extent – 72\% in total. 77\% said leaders take the congregation’s ideas into account to a great extent and another 15\% said to some extent, or 92\% in total. However, in 2006 these measures had dropped dramatically. 49\% of Connection said leaders encourage gifts and skills to some or great extent, compared to 57-60\% broader church averages. 54\% of

\textsuperscript{18}See pp.4-6, 191 above.

Connection felt leaders take the church’s ideas into account compared to 72-77% averages. The poor assessment partly reflect Wayne and Paula’s absence, as they were key mobilisers of ministries, although some attenders did not feel listened to by Wayne, for instance with concerns about the Connection Centre. It also reflects the leadership team’s preoccupation with transitioning to new leadership, and not having time and focus to listen to ideas and empower people for ministry. Despite the stated culture of being empowering, under crisis the church had a decline in people feeling empowered with their gifts and ideas.

**Table 20: Connection empowering leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders encourage attenders’ use of gifts and skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders take our ideas into account:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In parallel to the decline of confidence in leadership, Connection had a corresponding decline and lack of confidence in vision and future directions. Vision scored lowest of all core qualities. Compared to 2001, when Connection was new and 50% of participants said they were aware of and strongly committed to Connection’s vision, in 2006 only 19% were aware and strongly committed, compared to 39% as the Protestant average. More starkly, 60% were unaware of any clear vision, compared to broader averages of 19-23%. Only 5% of attenders strongly agreed that leaders were focused on future directions compared to 29-31% in other average churches. These measures show that attenders saw leaders as preoccupied, again understandably, with managing current dilemmas rather than looking to the

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future. Attenders were also significantly less confident than average that the vision can be achieved. There was a lack of strength of vision among those other than the founding leaders.

Table 21: Connection vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection CofC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the vision, goals &amp; directions, attenders are:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and strongly committed</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and partly committed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and not committed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware of any clear vision, goals or directions</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders focused on future directions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence vision can be achieved:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully confident</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly confident</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is evidence, furthermore, that there was a decline in confidence in leadership and vision before Wayne left. Connection was exceptional at including a broad range of people in creative dreaming in its early days, but in recent years some people felt disempowered, without a forum to share ideas. The November 2005 ‘overnighter’, when vision is shared and input is supposed to be invited, was dominated by one-way communication about the Connection Centre which Wayne promoted. When Wayne was suspended from ministry, the remaining leadership team said broad congregational consultation was limited by the sensitivity regarding the reasons they finished as pastors. After Wayne and Paula officially left, the team were so

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22‘Connection Journal’, 377; see pp.80-81 above.
consumed with transition issues there was little energy for facilitating broad congregational consultation let alone creative dreaming.

In terms of NCLS measures of innovation, Connection scored this core quality first of nine. In 2001 attenders scored Connection high on its readiness to try something new and 2006 measures, unlike other areas which had declined, were even higher than 2001. 31% of people in 2001 strongly agreed the congregation is always ready to try something new and this rose to 41% in 2006, more than twice Church of Christ and Protestant averages. 92% of Connection said leaders encourage innovation, compared to averages of 73-74%. Connection was less open to change their style of worship, perhaps because people feel it is distinctive and already an innovative approach and one which has attracted a lot of people to be involved.

Table 22: Connection innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection 2001</th>
<th>Connection Denom.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation is always ready to try something new:</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral or unaware</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders encourage innovation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to change – if others wanted a different style of worship, the church should:</td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change this service to include other styles</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer another service with different style</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer one service with style majority wants</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue the way we currently worship</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emerging churches are developing new forms and one of the noticeable areas is their engaging approach to worship gatherings. This is where Connection’s innovation is at its best. The question and discussion format of Life Connection encourages participation rather than spectating. Paula once counted up to eight different ways to learn and encounter God in the one morning – something visual, a question people thought for themselves, table discussions, someone’s testimony, hearing from someone’s experience, drawing something, creating with play dough and playing a game at the table.\footnote{P Nebauer, Interview.} 601 gatherings sometimes use photoboards, movies, journaling and painting as well as music to help people connect with God. For example, one evening had a sketch of Jesus cradling someone and people were invited to come to the front and write their response to it during a congregational singing time.\footnote{Farris, Interview.}

EMC creativity and innovation, however, are not just about alternative expressions of worship but rethinking how to holistically express mission. Part of Connection’s early brainstorming was how to connect with its community. There have been sports nights, musicals, Aerobics classes, pamper nights for women and ‘Tribe’ gatherings for men in order to connect with a broader range of people. Chris Spratt was dreaming about a ‘Fight Club’ to connect with male friends, and appreciated that Connection was a permission-giving context which allowed him to at least consider the possibility.\footnote{Spratt, Interview.}

Iris appreciates Connection’s innovation but contends that what is most important is missional action and helping people grasp the broader kingdom-agenda of God.\footnote{Iris, Interview.}

So, it is easy to get into the focus so how can we not be like a traditional Church and how can we do things differently … that can be a trap going down that way rather than pulling back and saying, “Where is the heart of God?” … “What is in the purpose of the Church?”\footnote{Connection, Focus Group #1.}
It is appropriate to ask what results from innovations of emerging churches and evaluate that in terms of *missio Dei*. Innovation that does not help people become and grow as disciples is limited in its value. Connection has articulated disciple-making objectives and processes because they want to define success in those terms.EMCs such as Connection need to ensure they calibrate measures of fruitfulness around evangelism and discipleship rather than innovation *per se*.

Innovation is part of the character and nature of God and thus part of the DNA of the people of God. Oscar, one of the creative leaders who helped pioneer Life Connection, said that God experimented in making people, and that it was innovative to take on material form through Mary:

> God is creative. God is an innovator, from the very start, here and all the way through and continually now. He is an innovator. So, I just think that we have got it as just a part of our DNA as followers of Jesus.  

Part of the process of emerging as the people of God is to get in touch with God’s creativity and innovativeness which is intrinsic in the people of God.

Another contributor to church innovation is preparedness to close programs. In 2003 Connection had eight Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in schools, but when they all pulled out Connection had to let CRE go the following year and start a kids’ club instead. The church started playgroups with Roxanne’s vision, but realises they might stop one day if she pulls out and the next eager person has another passion. Paula comments on their experience of ministries starting and stopping:

> So often, churches start something and they feel that once they started it they cannot stop it. It is like they feel like a failure or they feel like the kingdom of God is going to suffer. But the reality is, we started a lot of things and stopped them and started different things and that is … part of the culture of change … it depends on the people you have got rather than

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29Spratt, ‘Discipleship’.

30Oscar, Interview; see p.10-11 above.

31P Nebauer, Interview. Playgroups did stop at the end of 2007 when Roxanne left Connection.
saying, “We as a Church are going to do this ministry”. We never said that, we said, “Who have we got? What are their passions?”

Participants are proud that Connection celebrates people’s passions and is prepared to stop programs if the passion or effectiveness are not there.

A growing edge for Connection is to ensure there are systems to mobilise people’s passions and implement innovative ideas. Charles comments that consistency could be improved at Connection by not just introducing new programs but following up on them. He cites as examples partnership goals and a Bible reading plan which had been introduced the year before but not followed through. Sometimes ‘being prepared to close down a ministry’ may be used as an excuse not to evaluate its lack of success. Peta suggests that Life Connection at Dorset Gardens, Tribe men’s ministry, Chick’s nights and youth group have all struggled and in some cases closed, but with more research and team building they may have continued and flourished.

At the 2005 overnighter, an annual camp where vision is shared for the coming year, people completed a survey to volunteer for different tasks and outline their passions. In the busyness of 2006 the forms were not followed up. Nathan expresses disappointment that the 80/20 rule that 20% of the people do 80% of the work still applies to Connection. If this is true, the blame cannot be pointed only at people’s availability. Identifying and encouraging people’s giftedness and encouraging people to work together in new roles is one of the strengths of Wayne and the ministry team, but the systems of recruiting and follow up need strengthening.

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32P Nebauer, Interview.
33Connection, Focus Group #1.
34Connection, “Circles of Care” Pastoral Care Brainstorming Meeting’ (2 April 2006).
35Peta, Interview.
36Crouch and Spratt, Interview.
Eastern Hills’ emerging leadership

Eastern Hills started with a few young adults dreaming about expressing church differently. Like the other case studies, they were recipients themselves of empowerment. The core group were at Templestowe Baptist Church, and they had the opportunity to lead the evening service in alternative worship once per month. Alan Dunn, as the interim pastor at the time, affirmed them in their dreams of a new expression of church.37 He encouraged them and Templestowe released them to explore a new model and different way of doing church.

They started with an egalitarian and shared approach to leadership, a distinctive introduced in chapter four. They were eager to avoid starting a church which revolved around and relied too much on a pastor’s input. Claire explains they wanted to express themselves as a ‘royal priesthood of all’ rather than pastor as dictator.38 They wanted to encourage the whole church, or at least a core team, to take responsibility for the life of the church. The group asked Toli and Emma Morgan and Matthew Jones to be their pastors, recognising their gifts for leadership. Matthew coordinates the teaching and preaching on Sundays. Emma functions as a community builder and ‘social glue’ in encouraging people to share and enjoy life together and she also coordinates Sunday’s worship. Toli emerged as the main leader, as people looked to him for vision.39 The church recognised Toli’s leadership, and he in turn he invites the leaders to share the functions of leadership together.

Leaders and other participants appreciate that Eastern Hills, and Toli and Emma’s leadership in particular, champions innovation in areas people are passionate about. Ian and Imajin learned that if you have a passion for something, the church wants to endorse that and believe in you. Imagin experienced that with children’s ministry and Ian with his vision for a ministry in a local school and the launch of his SelahPhonic CD. Ian observed that the church invited a person with a strong interest in environmentalism to teach them about it one Wednesday evening, shaping a program

37Jones, Interview #1.
38Claire, Interview.
39Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
around his interest, rather than firstly trying to recruit him to lead worship or help fill another roster. Claire says she appreciates and values the regular mentoring Toli gives her and feels empowered by his permission-giving approach to leadership and dreaming together. Brad and Isabel appreciate the mentoring of Toli and the support of the church in developing a vision for establishing a children’s holiday program, ‘Camp Sunshine’.

A range of occasional or short-term events have reflected the church’s culture of encouraging people’s interests. The church has hosted nights for movie watching, filmmaking, story telling, multicultural cooking and open-microphone singing and poetry. A lot of the planning for these events does originate from one member of the leadership team, Emma, but she is identifying and encouraging people’s interests, and activities and ideas do not have to originate from official leaders. The pastors encourage everyone to use their imagination and come up with ideas for ministry and not always leave it to leaders, although a lot of the encouragement originates from Toli and Emma.

Eastern Hills puts a lot of effort into new forms of teaching and worship times. Emma and Toli did not always find their creativity welcomed in previous churches, but they particularly seek to empower artistic people at Eastern Hills. Emma is responsible for worship services and has cultivated a creative flavour in the Sunday services and involves a diverse range of people. Different people who are involved have a range of skills and confidence but generally come across as genuine and authentic. The fact that not everyone is a polished presenter would encourage others to be involved.

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40 Ian and Imajin, Interview.
41 Claire, Interview.
42 The first program was offered 29 Sep – 3 Oct 2008; ‘Follow-up Journal 2008’, 20; http://campsunshine.org.au/.
43 Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
44 Jones, Interview #1.
45 See also Mike Yaconelli, Messy Spirituality (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 85-90, 99.
Emma rosters a ‘Vibe Person’ to create a visual and environmental experience which relates to the theme and Scripture passage of the morning. A creative prayer segment similarly focuses around the morning’s theme but with different forms most weeks; a meditation, reflection, time to listen, a creative response, listening to an item, reading or journeying around the ‘vibe’. Emma explains that they seek to engage with people’s diversity:

The service doesn’t have to be complicated, just thoughtful. The coordinator must keep in mind that different people learn/express themselves in different ways. This means considering all the senses in the way you present things. It is important to keep language and activities accessible and sensitive to people with a range of backgrounds and experiences.46

Participants in focus groups said they appreciated Eastern Hills’ creative forms: ‘the creative element of being able to worship God in lots of different creative ways has been fantastic’.47

The pastors, Emma, Toli and Matthew, bring their creativity to planning colourful services but also empower others to contribute their gifts – from music to dance and from teaching to story-sharing. Creative services are not the only element of church life that they facilitate, and they are not unique to Eastern Hills or emerging churches in general. However, creative worship does require a shared and empowering approach to leadership which is a cultural distinctive and asset of Eastern Hills.

**Urban Life from Walt Disney to Dorothy**

Urban Life has been on a significant journey of transition which involves change in name, location, focus and leadership. Anthea Smits and her friends dreamed creatively about the reshaping of Christian Life Centre (CLC) and gestated ideas about what became Urban Life. Doug took them away on weekends to grapple with why they were dissatisfied with the status quo and to imagine alternative approaches to church. Anthea affirms Doug for his vision for transformation and his confidence

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46 Morgan, ‘Sunday Church’.
47 Eastern Hills, Focus Group #2.
in them as a group of young adults, who had basically been his youth group when he was a youth pastor. Doug modelled empowering leadership for Anthea, and she feels responsible to empower others:

I feel a sense of obligation towards the next generation, to ensure I am empowering them as I was empowered. That is almost an honouring and acknowledging of that done to me.

Anthea has natural leadership gifts and has drawn on her entrepreneurial experience in business, but has cultivated a participatory and empowering style of leadership which goes beyond her natural and professional tendencies.

Anthea used to work as a marketing executive with Disney Corporation, which Jim Collins uses as an outstanding illustration of innovation since the 1920s. Collins suggests that Walt Disney epitomised the capacity to preserve core values and purpose while endlessly stimulating change and improvement: ‘a classic case of preserve the core and stimulate progress, holding a core ideology fixed while changing strategies and practices over time’. Anthea naturally brought some of the innovation frameworks of her corporate background into her church leadership. To paraphrase Collins, Anthea’s drive is to preserve the church’s core ideology of mission and community while adapting its strategies and practices and stimulating change and innovation. Her commitment to evaluate everything in terms of mission and innovation was thoroughgoing. Anthea reports closing down almost every program they ran five years ago and starting a number of new ones which better contributed to mission and community. She was almost ruthless in her determination to see the transition process through, and now to keep it going on to the next level and not be satisfied with a new location.

Her Walt Disney experience fostered some of Anthea’s entrepreneurial and ‘make-it-happen’ determination, which she drew on in developing Urban Life, but there are

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48Smits, ‘Story of Urban Life’.
49Pastors, Focus Group.
51Pastors, Focus Group; Smits, Interview #1.
also elements in her background which she realises she needs to leave behind. She is intentionally transforming her leadership style away from the CEO-styled leadership she was comfortable with in a corporate environment. She realises that both her corporate experience and her personality incline her towards a dictatorial and dominating leadership style. She was comfortable leading and managing with the sentiment ‘this is how it should be done and do it because I am the boss’. However, she realises that this is not as appropriate in a postmodern voluntary organisation.\(^{52}\) She explains that a wise person once said to her, ‘Wisdom is not about what we learn but about what we are prepared to unlearn’, and suggests that it is necessary to ‘unlearn’ some approaches to leadership and recalibrate to approaches which are consistent with following Jesus and building the kingdom of God.\(^{53}\)

Anthea read a Brian McLaren article which pointed her to Dorothy, from the film \textit{The Wizard of Oz}, as an exemplar of leadership appropriate for postmodern times.\(^{54}\) Anthea observes that Dorothy did not presume or apparently aspire to set herself up as a leader but emerged as the leader among the group of friends on a journey together. Dorothy gathered these needy characters around her – the scarecrow, tinman and lion – and invited them on a journey. Along the way she displayed compassion to her companions, listened to their needs and helped them find what they were searching. The scarecrow discovers his brain, the tinman his heart and the lion his courage – all within themselves. She helped these virtues emerge. Dorothy also displayed determination to stay on the path, the yellow brick road, and at one stage needed her companions to remind her to keep going. Although Dorothy clearly emerged as the leader, the four are shown as travel companions, arm-in-arm skipping down the road. Anthea comments she is inspired to be a similar leader who invites whoever she comes across on an adventure, to journey with them and help them discover their strengths.

Urban Life gives priority to empowering its people and championing their innovative ideas. Roslyn is interested in engaging alternative spirituality seekers with Christian

\(^{52}\)McLaren, ‘Dorothy’.  
\(^{53}\)Smits, ‘Leadership Lessons’.  

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spirituality and charismatic gifts and so, with Anthea’s encouragement, has attended Mind-Body-Spirit festivals and is thinking about offering meditation classes at The Urban. Mary has a passion to reach older people. Encouraged by the church leaders, she empowers other older church partners to get involved in community projects and to socialise with other older people especially lonely people referred by local council. Other Urban Life partners, with encouragement from the church leadership to put fresh priority and innovative thinking into connecting with their broader community, have started an exercise group, book club, and started dreaming about homework clubs and meditation classes.

When Oliver, a young adult at Urban Life, wanted to use the coffee shop area for a role-playing games (RPG) venue one evening every fortnight, Anthea applauded him and welcomed the concept. He wanted to know why she was so excited. She explained that his sort of group and its potential for community connections is what Urban Life wants to prioritise, and that RPG is an area no-one else is touching.

Anthea finds fulfilment in being a ‘Dorothy’ to people around her. She is planning to decentralise Urban Life further away from a Sunday morning service focus, and put more effort into empowering people to do all sorts of things for the sake of mission through the week. Anthea is passionate about ‘awakening the missionary in people’. For example, she is mentoring a young woman, Sharon, who is developing a My Space website that explores issues of faith. Sharon started writing on her site about her struggles with faith and the popularity of the discussion it prompted surprised both Sharon and Anthea. Anthea commented that some of the language and discussion would offend some church people, but Sharon is connecting with conversation partners who would rarely come to a church. Anthea does not want to smooth too many of the ‘rough edges’ of Sharon for fear of ‘blunting her missional edge’.

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55Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
56Kylie, Interview.
57Smits, Interview; Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
58Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
59Smits, ‘Story of Urban Life’.
60Pastors, Focus Group.
Urban Life leaders stress that they want to empower people to have big dreams and be missionaries wherever they are. 55% of attenders are involved in leadership, ministry or administrative roles in the church, which is the same as the CRC average and only slightly more than the 53% Protestant average and Connection’s 49%. NCLS does not measure the extent to which people feel empowered to express mission and leadership as Christians in their work and other spheres beyond the church.

**Table 23: Urban Life leadership involvement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involved in leadership, ministry, administrative roles</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban Life has changed from membership to ‘partnership’ for people who support their beliefs and mission and want to identify with the community. Anthea explains that membership implies a right to vote and receive services, whereas Urban Life wants to emphasise connective relationships and mutual obligation:

> I have an obligation to serve you and you have an obligation to serve me and that is really how partnership works. If you have a membership at your local gym, and they tried to hand you a broom as you walk in the door, you would laugh at them. And so why do we use the same word?

Partnership is about serving one another – the partner serving the church and the church serving that person in their mission. Cameron Burgess explains, ‘We’re not interested in creating church members but interested in creating missionaries to the

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62Smits, Interview #1.
first world – in their home, work and street’. A passion of Urban Life pastors is to help partners understand and pursue mission throughout the week.

Attenders scored Urban Life better than Connection in measures which suggest empowering leadership, but not significantly better than overall averages. 61% of Urban Life said leaders encourage attenders’ gifts and skills to some or a great extent, less than 68% on average in CRC and 60% in Protestant churches overall. 74% of Urban Life felt leaders take their ideas into account, again less than Protestant and CRC averages of 77-79%. Anthea and the leadership team say they intentionally seek to encourage people’s gifts and listen to their ideas, and participants appreciate the efforts, but they have not done better than average.

Table 24: Urban Life empowering leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders encourage attenders’ use of gifts and skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders take our ideas into account:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to measures related to vision, attenders scored Urban Life generally better than average. Vision was ranked second of the nine core qualities. 63% of attenders said they were aware and strongly committed to Urban Life’s vision and directions, which compares favorably to the denominational average of 48% and Protestant average of 39%. Only 9% were unaware of any clear vision, compared to 16% in CRC and 23% in Protestant averages. 92% agree or strongly agree that

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63 Burgess, ‘Urban Life’.
64 NCLS Research, ‘Urban Life’, 16.
leaders are focused on future directions, compared to 85% CRC or 81% Protestant averages. Although more aware and committed, their confidence that the vision can be achieved is slightly less than CRC averages and not much greater than the Protestant average, but they are perhaps starting with a more distinctive vision.

**Table 25: Urban Life vision**\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the vision, goals &amp; directions, attenders are:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and strongly committed</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and partly committed</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware and not committed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware of any clear vision, goals or directions</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders focused on future directions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence vision can be achieved:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully confident</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly confident</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban Life scored itself as highly in innovation as did Connection. They scored this core quality first of nine. 47% of people strongly agreed Urban Life is ready to try new things, which is more than double other averages of 18-21%. No-one disagreed that at Urban Life are always ready to try something new. 91% of Urban Life said leaders encourage innovation, compared to other averages of 73-77%. Members were also more open than average to change worship styles and add a second service. This is significant for them with their Pentecostal heritage and the particular cultural expectations that they worship with a charismatic flavour.

Table 26: Urban Life innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregation is always ready to try something new:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral or unaware</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders encourage innovation</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to change – if others wanted a different style of worship, the church should:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change this service to include other styles</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer another service with different style</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer one service with style majority wants</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue the way we currently worship</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Urban Life does not experiment a lot with worship forms. Leaders have encouraged regular storytelling through testimonies and experimented with reflective space and broader discussion rather than just monological preaching. But moving away from a Sunday worship focus has been an intentional paradigm shift for Urban Life. They have intentionally downgraded their expectations for worship services because the leaders feel the old CLC used to depend so much on developing a perfect worship service experience and overvalued the emotional expression of feeling the presence of God. Exploring creative new forms of worship which are integrated with their mission may be a learning curve in coming years for Urban Life. They could learn from Connection’s question and discussion format, Eastern Hills’ adaptive use of a church calendar and Solace’s allowance for all ages and all stages of faith.

67Smits, Interview #1; see also Bouma, Australian Soul, 86-101.
Solace’s ‘creative class’

Solace pastors give priority to empowering people in the Solace network for their mission in everyday life. They celebrate people who innovate and initiate ministry in different areas – inside and outside church programs. The Solace website explains how they recognise and seek to empower leadership that people show by their actions and not just their position:

Within Solace we have various forms and expressions of leadership. Leadership is primarily behaviour; a leader is someone who alters the community in some way through their influence or what they do and offer for the community. Our formal structures of leadership are geared at equipping such leaders. Leaders who emerge in the community are those who catalyse such things as a new way of meeting together (a weekend retreat, a regular small group, etc), promote healthy ways to examine an issue (through email, for example), and take initiative to invite others more fully into the life of the community.68

Solace expresses their mission in terms of enabling people ‘to thrive as followers of Jesus, celebrating and re-making their everyday world’. Empowering people to celebrate life and to develop and activate a vision for making the world a better place, more in line with God’s dream for the world, is central to the Solace ethos. They are not interested in being limited to recruiting people to fill church positions but have a bigger vision of empowering people to remake their world.

Totterdell argues that there needs to be freedom and empowerment for self-organisation and that the role of leaders is to embody the identity of Solace and nurture dreams in others:

It is important for staff not to be considered the people who “do” things. They do need to deeply indwell the identity and purpose and so part of that will mean that they will do some things coming out of their personal indwelling of the identity and purpose. However, they need to be envisioning and nurturing of others’ dreams and helping them to live out or into the identity and purpose.69

68Solace [Website].
69Totterdell, ‘Edge of Chaos’, 4-5.
Whatever innovation they might orchestrate themselves, this organic framework suggests that leaders are at their best when they champion innovation in others. To discern what areas to champion and encourage, Totterdell suggests using exploratory questions like ‘What are you passionate about?’, ‘How can we more fully experience and be the body through your participation?’ and ‘How is God calling you to participate in remaking the world?’.

In marketplace language, Solace is seeking to establish a co-operative of like-minded ministers and a people sent on mission instead of operating as a vendor of religious goods and services.

Solace leaders empower people through Dreaming nights, coaching and in general pastoral conversation. Dreaming nights have encouraged innovative thinking which integrates mission with people’s passions, including the seed ideas for intentional community and an alternative health centre with a Jesus-centred spirituality.

Abigail says that Solace leaders encourage her, if she sees a need, to try and create something which fills it. The leadership approach is not ‘What do you need and we’ll put it on’ but ‘If you feel a need see if you can fill it and it might help others as well’.

Like the other case studies, Solace leaders have developed an organisational culture of cultivation and collaboration.

Olivia coaches Jane in her community group involvement. A sufferer of pelvic instability syndrome from pregnancy, Jane realised there was no support group and little information available about her condition. So Jane and five other women started the Pelvic Instability Association to support those suffering it and educate the public, including medical professionals who often misdiagnose it. As she was starting the Association, the Solace Leadership Team (SLT) also tried to recruit her. But she could not do both and when the SLT heard what she was doing they withdrew their invitation to join them and sought to support her with her group. As her minister, Olivia went and talked with the committee about not-for profit management and

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70 Totterdell, ‘Edge of Chaos’.
72 Davey, Interview.
73 Solace, Focus Group #5.
focusing their objectives. Olivia says she wants to help Jane with her work for God in the world, not just recruit Jane’s energy to run what Olivia is in charge of under a Solace banner.74

Solace has an empowering culture which Olivia and others carry and which they, at least in part, learned from St Hilary’s. Solace grew out of a vision to express church differently for all ages and all stages of faith. This was an innovative idea in a church which generally streamed congregations on an age basis and which expected a certain level of maturity and commitment in people who wanted to be involved. St Hilary’s has a history of starting new forms of church, particularly for youth work, leadership training and multiple congregations. Peter Corney, the previous Vicar at St Hilary’s who first helped Olivia dream up Solace as an alternative congregation, is a leading Australian Anglican leader and elder-statesperson. He sees the need to champion innovation and not allow denominational preoccupations to distract churches from mission:

In Anglicanism, my own tradition, our emotional attachment to an anglophile and sentimental 19th century ethos of the English village church and cathedral has trapped too many of our congregations in a quaint cul-de-sac of irrelevance to Australian culture. The whole Vicar of Dibley Syndrome, through which the watching world can say “how eccentric, harmless and amusing” and by which the Gospel is trivialised, marginalised, and dismissed.75

Corney and other older respected mentors at St Hilary’s encouraged Olivia to dream and explore new forms of church.76 Olivia is a natural innovator but did not start the Solace experiment in an innovation vacuum.

Solace worship times often include gaps in the service for walking around, talking and participating in one of a number of available creative forms of worship. Creative prayer times incorporate poetry to write, newspapers to read, children to encourage, friends to talk to, projected images of the world, intercession candles, washing bowls

74Olivia Maclean, ‘Paul and Remaking’ (Tabor College class, St Paul’s Fairfield, April 15 2008).
76Waldron, Interview #1.
for prayers of cleansing and play dough to express and pray about areas of your life that God is working on.\textsuperscript{77} Participants comment that the freedom is good for relationship-building and makes space for hearing from God.\textsuperscript{78} There are sometimes sermons, to hear from the wisdom of one particular person, but just as often there are group discussions, \textit{lectio divina} readings, working on a task together, such as making mugs or lunch while others read the Bible and pray out loud, or other approaches to helping people interact with the Biblical text with transformational outcomes. They do not want to merely transfer information, but help people deeply understand and apply what they are learning. Olivia comments, ‘Most of us are educated beyond our ability to obey, so we are trying to slow down on our taking in of information and increase the follow-through in our lives’.\textsuperscript{79}

Writing and artwork by Solace participants show the honest approach to faith and theological questioning which Solace encourages. On my first Sunday there, 27 August 2006, I was interested to see a man working on his computer while everyone else prayed and discussed the morning’s topic. It later became apparent he was not catching up on his week’s work or linking into the next-door café’s wireless network, but doing some last minute preparation for his part in the service – leading the congregation in prayer. Lachlan, he later explained to me, has never found other expressions of church appropriate for him. His wife and children are active Pentecostals, but he always felt judged there and not accepted for his stage of faith.\textsuperscript{80} Solace has been liberating for him, and he lamented the state of the world and celebrated the potential contribution of Solace in his prayer:

\begin{quote}
Mate! What’s the deal with the franchise? 
The Zionists and Hezbollah are at it again
Sri Lanka’s tearing itself apart
Iraq is fffffffalling into the abyss
America’s . . . being America
The list goes on ad infinitum . . . and it looks to me like it’s all going to end in tears . . . and at the end of days, you’re going to get the blame mate. Hey, the buck’s got to stop somewhere
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{77}Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’. 
\textsuperscript{78}Solace, Focus Group #5. 
\textsuperscript{79}Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’. 
\textsuperscript{80}Solace Journal’, 172; Solace, Focus Group #5.
What were you thinking when you split the brand into a zillion labels? …

I won’t bore you with your ever growing list of Pentecostal Dutch Reform Uniting High Church Baptist Cat Swingers but seriously, where are you going with this?

And now you go and float something called SOLACE . . . Please, what do you expect 10 men and women, a pile of bambini and a black dog to do for the brand?

Ah, right . . . That was quick . . . You want them to do EVERYTHING they can.

Oakally Doakally, I’d best be off then, I’ll pass on the good news . . . woah, there’s a lot to do isn’t there. 81

Remaking has other stories and poems of Solace members reflecting honestly on their faith. 82 Solace leaders encourage this sort of honest sharing.

Emerging churches are learning from innovation in business circles and connecting with people who are leading the way with innovation in other spheres. There is a plethora of books coming out on innovation as a key for getting an edge for business. 83 Richard Florida shows that in the economy and society today, with the rise of the ‘creative class’, knowledge and technological workers who tend to gravitate to particular locations, we value creativity more than ever and cultivate it more intensely. 84 Oslo from Solace observes a connection with emerging churches, since the ‘creative class’ towns tend also to be hubs of the emerging church movement. There is also a shared ethos which includes communication in the vernacular, valuing ideas and free speech, a tendency towards deconstruction and a

82 Solace, Remaking.
84 Florida, Creative Class, 4, 7, 67.
certain ‘hacker ethic’ of open exploration and networking which characterises both emerging churches and the creative class.85

Creativity is ultimately derived from God the Creator. Olivia comments that Solace has been on a theological journey of understanding not just Jesus as redeemer-saviour but also God as creator.86 The creator God described in Scripture made people in God’s image and part of that image is creativity. Creativity and fresh imagination for mission is not just necessary pragmatically to connect with a changing era but is an appropriate reflection of the creative God to whom the mission belongs.

Excursus – APEST leadership

Hirsch developed an online APEST assessment tool that became available in May 2007, which was timely for this research. The following table shows the results of eleven leaders and ‘pastors’ from the case studies. This is perhaps the first such analysis using this tool. Eleven is too small a sample to generalise too broadly but the results show some interesting features about the leaders of these emerging churches.

The APEST assessment tool gives helpful insights into individual leaders and the tendency of these emerging churches to attract prophetic and apostolic leadership. Or perhaps it shows who is able to lead emerging churches. Frost and Hirsch claim that historically the church sidelines those who function apostolically, prophetically and evangelistically, preferring the pastoral-teaching model for ministry.87 However, in this, admittedly small, sample of EMC leaders, there is a clear dominance of apostolic and prophetic types. It seems EMC churches attract or need Apostolic-Prophetic rather than Pastoral-Teaching leaders. On average, among the four senior leaders, the apostolic is the highest scoring function (19) followed closely by the prophetic (18) with an average profile of APTES. Among all eleven leaders, on average the prophetic function is the highest scoring (18.9) followed closely by the

85Solace, Focus Group #5; see Florida, Creative Class; Pekka Himanen, The Hacker Ethic: A Radical Approach to the Philosophy of Business (New York: Random House, 2001).
86Maclean, Interview #2.
87Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 179.
apostolic (18.4) with an average of PATES. Frost and Hirsch would suggest this is appropriate for pioneering mission to Melbourne rather than just maintaining the ecclesiastical status quo. In the early phase of a normal lifecycle of an organisation or church, the apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic leadership types come to the fore.88

Table 27: APEST weightings of the emerging church leaders89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Primary gifting</th>
<th>Secondary gifting</th>
<th>Tertiary gifting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Wayne Nebauer</td>
<td>P (26)</td>
<td>A (22)</td>
<td>T (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nathan Crouch</td>
<td>P (20)</td>
<td>S (20)</td>
<td>A (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team average</td>
<td>P (23)</td>
<td>A (19)</td>
<td>S (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Hills</td>
<td>Toli Morgan</td>
<td>E (20)</td>
<td>A (17)</td>
<td>T (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team average</td>
<td>T (20)</td>
<td>A (16)</td>
<td>P (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas Faircloth</td>
<td>E (21)</td>
<td>P (20)</td>
<td>A (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team average</td>
<td>P (21)</td>
<td>A (19)</td>
<td>E (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solace</td>
<td>Olivia Maclean</td>
<td>A (20)</td>
<td>P (20)</td>
<td>T (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jude Waldron</td>
<td>T (21)</td>
<td>P (15)</td>
<td>A (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stuart Davey</td>
<td>A (24)</td>
<td>P (20)</td>
<td>T (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team average</td>
<td>A (19)</td>
<td>P (18)</td>
<td>T (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>4 senior leaders</td>
<td>A (19)</td>
<td>P (18)</td>
<td>T (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>All 11 leaders</td>
<td>P (18)</td>
<td>A (18)</td>
<td>T (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 178.
89These assessments are from the individual APEST assessment developed by Hirsch, Forge and Leadership Vision Consulting, available online at http://www.theforgottenways.org/. Results are given here with the letter of each function and their relative weighting score. Complete results are stored on CD at MCD.
Even leaders with mainly pastoral and teaching gifts speak of exercising these missionally. Jude, with a primary teaching gift (TPASE), explains how she teaches in her pastoral ministry and chaplaincy, and through her teaching expresses her secondary Prophetic function.\textsuperscript{90} Heather at Connection describes herself as a ‘small p’ pastor and with her primary shepherding function (STPEA) exercises pastoral care through her school and neighbourhood contacts and playgroup ministry as much as to people from her local church.\textsuperscript{91} Ronwyn’s Faith Community Nursing at Connection is a missional expression of community service with a pastoral caring basis. Apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic functions extend the church into the world, but shepherding and teaching ministry can also have missional expressions beyond the church.

Connection has a functional approach to leadership and has developed a strong complementing team. Both Wayne (PATES) and Nathan (PSATE) lead prophetically, but it is helpful for Wayne’s visionary and apostolic mode to be complemented by Nathan’s practical and shepherding follow-up. It is helpful for apostolic and prophetic-types (like Wayne) to have shepherds around them (like Paula, who did not do the assessment but has strong shepherding gifts, and Nathan) to help ensure people are cared for along the process of change. They complement one another in what they said was a ‘dream team’ when they were functioning at their best. Chris describes how he sees their gifts complementing:

Wayne is definitely a visionary. So for Wayne, any idea – the newer, the crazier, the better. I think starting new things is his fuel. … [Nathan] is definitely the one who is practical and sees the implications and the cost … I definitely am enamoured by new things and things that are slightly risky and upset the status quo a little bit and that is certainly something I carry from my background of not being in church and not being a big fan of church.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{90}Waldron, Interview #2.
\textsuperscript{91}‘Follow-up Journal 2007’, 7.
\textsuperscript{92}Spratt, Interview.
Eastern Hills has a strong sense of teamwork in its leadership. Shared leadership is one of its distinctives. The group started with the ideal of everyone contributing, but Toli has emerged as the main ‘pastor’ as one among many leaders.\textsuperscript{93} He says people look to him for leadership and have gathered around his vision, but also contributed to the vision in their own way. His primary evangelistic and apostolic gifting (EATPS) shows in the way he seeks to grow the church in numbers and guides the DNA:

\begin{quote}
I contribute theologically and biblically and maybe philosophically and ideologically, you know, all that sort of stuff to the forming of a vision and then inspiring people to, you know, to be part of that vision and sort of being able to see how different people sort of can be involved in that and the way that they can contribute.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

Toli had wanted to develop the leadership team to comprise ‘all of the major gifting’\textsuperscript{s}. One problem the original group encountered is that people’s gifts overlap and they do not have five leaders to represent each function.\textsuperscript{95} Yet they realise that a balanced team needs to include some components of each gift or the church will be imbalanced – such as being too inward or not caring enough. On their leadership team, the apostolic function is represented not in one person but different people including Toli (EATPS) and Emma (TAPES) who score high on the apostolic assessment and have an apostolic function in planting the church and leading the church to look outward. Toli said that he and Matthew (TPSAE) function prophetically (especially through their teaching) and Kim functions prophetically as treasurer when she brings prayerful suggestions on how to use and give away their money. Toli says he is the ‘Big P’ Pastor who coordinates shepherding functions, although he scores lowest in shepherding and highest in evangelism. Claire who loves coordinating pastoral care and Imagin who functions pastorally with the children also share shepherding. Matthew is the ‘Big T’ Teacher (TPSAE) who coordinates the teaching team.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{93}Morgan, ‘Church and Culture’.
\textsuperscript{94}Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
\textsuperscript{95}This reality is conceded in Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 169.
\textsuperscript{96}Morgan and Morgan, Interview #1.
At Urban Life, Anthea (PEAST), Adam (PAETS) and Doug (EPATS) all score highest on Apostolic-Prophetic-Evangelistic and lowest on the traditional Shepherding-Teaching combination. Their team average is PAEST. Anthea says she is pastorally concerned for Urban Life but celebrates how other leaders and partners in the church fulfil that function for people in crisis. She describes it as pathetic that the standard model of church is to pay someone to love us.  

97 She calls herself ‘senior leader’ rather than ‘senior pastor’ to designate her role in leadership rather than as primarily pastoral.  

98 One committee many pastors organise is a pastoral care committee, but Anthea displays her natural tendency in appointing a Prophetic Advisory Team (PAT), which includes Adam and Doug as members, to help discern what God is saying.  

99 Perhaps it would be more appropriate for prophetic leaders, like Anthea, to recruit a pastoral care team, and pastorally inclined leaders to recruit a prophetic team to help balance their relative weaknesses. Urban Life compensates in other ways – making a counsellor available at The Urban and mobilising the GT groups to care for one another. But the strength of Anthea and her team’s primary prophetic gifting positions them to habitually challenge the status quo.  

In contrast to Urban Life’s PAE dominance, the pastors at Solace gravitate towards APT – Olivia and Stuart (both APTSE) and Jude (TPASE). APTSE is thus their team average. Their apostolic and prophetic strengths help them pioneer new initiatives. Their teaching strengths help give frameworks for spiritual formation and working through theological questions. Each of them have shepherding as their second weakest area, for which they acknowledge they need to compensate. Jude says she expresses pastoral care through her teaching.  

100 Stuart says he prefers, partly because of his younger age, to delegate pastoral care to others with more life experience. When he does do ‘pastoral stuff’ he utilises spiritual direction and pilgrim-guide questions such as, ‘Where is God uniquely calling you?’, in order to encourage the person to recognise how God is leading them. This is part of his apostolic function in

97 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.

98 Faircloth, Interview #2. The adjective ‘senior’ seems a leftover from modernity or Pentecostal culture that could be replaced by ‘team leader’ or another appropriate term. Similarly, in the ‘Senior Leadership Team’ the ‘Senior’ seems redundant when they are the only leadership team.

99 Smits, Interview #1.

100 Waldron, Interview #2.
releasing and empowering people for their ministries.\textsuperscript{101} They are all weakest in the evangelistic function, which partly reflects their theological questioning and tolerance.

Hirsch’s APEST tool is new and not completely tested or proven. It is likely to grow in popularity among the EMC movement and in Forge training programs. Thus it would be appropriate to evaluate it further. It has generated some apparently useful data for considering the leadership gifting of these emerging church leaders, but further scrutiny could improve the accuracy of its results and validate whether it is a worthwhile research instrument and church consultancy tool.

**Summary**

The ‘pastors’ of the emerging church case studies strive to be innovative and empowering leaders. They are not limited by the traditional ‘pastor-teacher’ mode of ministry. According to Hirsch’s evaluative APEST tool, they tend more towards a ‘prophetic’ and ‘apostolic’ focus. They have a preference for pioneering new projects rather than maintaining the status quo and seek to help other people to dream and be equipped to pursue their passions. They all talk about listening and drawing out people’s passions, guiding them to appropriate avenues of service and helping them find other people and resources to help. The rhetoric in each of the case studies is that their pastors are empowering and permission-giving. They are not always exceptionally empowering, as suggested by some of the average NCLS results and the stated experience of a small minority, but they are aiming in that direction. Empowering leadership, at some levels at least, is part of the congregational culture of the case studies.

Empowering leadership was evident from the beginning of each church. They were all empowered by other leaders or gatekeepers in their church or sending church. Parents at Croydon Church of Christ gave Wayne and Paula permission to experiment wildly. Dunn released the small group of young adults from Templestowe Baptist to experiment with Eastern Hills. Doug made space for Anthea

\textsuperscript{101}Davey, Interview.
and her friends to dream about radically reinventing CLC as Urban Life, and handed her its leadership. Corney modelled innovation and released Olivia to explore an emerging model at St Hilary’s. Creativity studies have recognised that new ideas and fresh approaches come not just from the personality and intellect of creative individuals, but are systemically related to environmental factors and context: ‘To study creativity by focusing on the individual alone is like trying to understand how an apple tree produces fruit by looking only at the tree and ignoring the sun and the soil that support its life’.\(^{102}\) The leaders at the four EMCs are natural innovators, but none of them started or continued their experiments in an innovation vacuum.

Each of the leaders led their core group in an intense time of creative dreaming leading to the birth, or rebirth, of their congregation. Paula and Wayne led Croydon Church of Christ through a green-light brainstorming process to become Connection. Toli, Emma and Matthew led the small group of young adults to study and think through how church could be true to its biblical essence and value community, hospitality, creativity, mission and shared leadership in contemporary Croydon. Anthea led her peer group of friends in CLC’s leadership team to rethink everything about church life in terms of mission and community. Olivia led her group to form a network which worships for all ages and all stages of faith and which empowers people to remake their everyday world. Empowering leadership behaviour shows systems awareness that people are active participants in shaping their reality and encourages shared vision and team learning characteristic of learning organisations.\(^{103}\)


\(^{103}\) Senge, Fifth Discipline, 68-69, 205-273.
Figure 22: Connection ‘Overnighter’ Disco

Photo by Nathan Crouch. 19 November 2004. Used with permission.

Figure 23: Eastern Hills leadership team

Photo by Emma Morgan. 17 December 2007. Used with permission.
CHAPTER 10

INNOVATION AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

[Innovators] have a taste for producing a proliferation of ideas; they are more likely in the pursuit of change to reconstruct the problem (separating it from its enveloping accepted thought, paradigms, and customary viewpoints) and to emerge with much less expected, and probably less acceptable, solutions.

Michael Kirton, ‘Adaptors and Innovators’

This chapter explores innovation and change management in the four Melbourne emerging churches. The Shaping of Things to Come and other emerging church literature contend for experimenting with innovative approaches to church. This chapter evaluates to what extent the reality matches the rhetoric and how innovation and change is actually implemented. It expands on the previous chapter and analyses further how emerging churches exercise innovation in their expression and what frameworks influence their approach to innovation. It considers what other churches can learn about innovation and change from emerging churches and what aspects of processing change emerging churches are yet to learn.

Innovation is an appropriate quality in emerging churches. Everett Rogers defines innovation as ‘an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption’. Innovation, thus understood, is an appropriate aspiration for emerging churches in Melbourne. The literature as well as emerging churches which

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1Kirton, ‘Adaptors and Innovators’, 47.
2Frost and Hirsch, Shaping.
3Rogers, Diffusion, 12; p. 26 above.
have adopted EMC thinking, emphasises that innovation is essential for contemporary Western post-Christendom society. They see the missionary position of the church in the West as situated between its cultural context and the gospel, which calls for innovation.\(^4\) There are elements of the gospel and church which should remain unchanged, but the forms in which they are expressed call for innovation for different contexts. New forms and behaviours need to be developed to meet the challenge of emerging needs and opportunities.

Leaders of the four emerging churches spoke of building a culture of change. Some of them say this is a key factor in overcoming resistance to change and helping people welcome change. A culture of change invites participation of people who are eager for change and may filter out traditionalists who are less comfortable with change. Some participants spoke of being attracted to their emerging church because of its openness to change.\(^5\) When change is normal, furthermore, it is easier to accept. When leaders give permission for change and champion it in principle, it encourages people to consider other changes. However, emerging churches, like any other churches, or any human organisation, need to manage change with appropriate processes for the change to be constructive and sustained. The four congregations are grappling with how to manage change with greater and lesser degrees of thoughtfulness and success. They all aspire to foster a culture of change and exercise innovation, but the quality of their processes varies.

**Connection’s dramatic changes**

Connection, of the four case studies, is the group that most champions innovation and change, but is also the most varied in the quality of process for implementing change. Connection started well with innovative thinking combined with good process on a ‘green-light brainstorming’ retreat. Wayne and Paula invited people to submit possible names and ‘Connection Community’ received the most votes – a democratic and inclusive process. It is unclear whether participants would say it was


\(^5\)E.g., Kristen, Interview.
just a coincidence or a result of Wayne’s leadership that the name chosen was the
name he submitted, but it was not merely a top-down decision. The group decided to
continue meeting on Sunday night, as Croydon Church of Christ had done, but
changed the location from the church building to a school hall. Wayne and Paula’s
leadership of what became the ‘601’ evening service was a model of team
empowerment and change management. They changed the order of worship
gatherings and experimented constantly with different ways of doing things.\(^6\) As
Alan Hirsch comments, ‘This process of disturbing the system is a critical function
of leadership. It is about creating conditions in which change, adaption, and
innovation will take place’.\(^7\) Connection’s culture of change and not letting the group
settle into the status quo generated further creativity.

Connection started well, with consultative vision-casting, but the leaders say they
made a significant mistake of poor process with ‘the Saturday night saga’. The
leadership wanted to diversify from a young adult focus, centred on the 601
gathering, to also engage young families.\(^8\) When they announced a three-month trial
of changing to a family-friendly Saturday night timeslot, the young adults reportedly
‘went ballistic’ against the change. It was a first order adjustment change and did not
involve a change of values,\(^9\) but apparently the culture of change had limits. The
surprised leaders realised they had made the mistake of making a key decision
without consultation. In the stages of diffusing innovation, they leapt past knowledge
and persuasion to a decision and expected people to just accept and implement the
experiment.\(^10\) The technique of proposing a trial\(^11\) was not enough to overcome
people’s resistance to an imposed authority innovation-decision that was
unfavourable.\(^12\) Wayne believes the process was wrong, not the decision. Chris
loyally agrees, referring to it as ‘one of the best ideas we have had that never

\(^6\)Connection, Focus Group #1.
\(^7\)Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 233.
\(^8\)Young families are a big part of the demographic in Croydon, although there are other demographic
groups, such as single parents and divorced people, who are more marginalised by existing churches
and which emerging churches could focus on. See Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 122-126.
\(^10\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 169.
\(^11\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 258.
\(^12\)Rogers, *Diffusion*, 28-30.
[happened]'. But on behalf of the leadership Wayne apologised to the church for not involving them in the process and organised a series of planning forums.\(^\text{13}\)

A group then met at Daisy’s bistro from October 2002 to discuss alternatives. Sitting around tables drinking coffee, brainstorming how they could do church differently, people said, ‘Why can’t we do it like this?’\(^\text{14}\). The institutional memory is that the idea dawned incidentally during that brunch, although Paula had planned it but wanted people to process it as part of taking ownership: ‘We never told people “this is what we need to do” or “this is what we are going to do”. We had to take people on a journey with us … help people think that it was their idea and that they are in control of it’.\(^\text{15}\) Although there was an implicit agenda Paula and Wayne brought to the table, the change involved deliberate and mutual goal-setting from pastors and church members.\(^\text{16}\) The hotel agreed to open early, and so with a focus on interactive learning and informal sharing Life Connection started in February 2003.\(^\text{17}\)

It seems Wayne and the leadership team learned from the Saturday night saga, Paula brought a commitment to creative thinking and an intuitive understanding of good process into the system and the group dreamed up Life Connection. It was a group plan and not just the vision of one or more leaders. Emerging church innovation is not just about one person’s creative ideas but needs good process to include others and generate even better ideas. Broad consultation helps people understand what is happening and utilises the group’s collective intelligence.

Wayne’s colleagues testify he is full of visionary ideas, but often starts with a piece of the puzzle and others bring further pieces to complete the picture. Where they end up is different from what Wayne had originally envisioned because he only had part

\(^\text{13}\)Crouch and Spratt, Interview; W Nebauer, Interview.
\(^\text{14}\)W Nebauer, Interview.
\(^\text{15}\)P Nebauer, Interview. The risk of having a clear direction before a consultative process is that people may resent going through the process if a decision or direction is already made.
\(^\text{17}\)W Nebauer, Interview.
of the picture, albeit foundational.\textsuperscript{18} Senge suggests that vision can die prematurely if diverse views dissipate focus, but it can also die if a leader is not prepared to listen and harmonise diversity: ‘Visions need strong advocates. But advocates who can also inquire into others’ visions open the possibility for the vision to evolve, to become “larger” than our individual visions’.\textsuperscript{19} Wayne acknowledges the importance of good process, both for getting people on board and for improving [his] ideas:

\begin{quote}
Process is so important … and involving people is important. That is what I have learnt and I have not been as good at that because I tend to see the final thing. That is what a visionary often does … you allow the vision to penetrate and to soak, and then as it soaks, you might find the vision gets tweaked a little for the better.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Broad consultation can improve an idea for the better as well as include everyone.

When Life Connection had to move from Daisy’s, the leaders remembered the lessons of good process and worked together with the group to explore options. There was a feeling that the group were moving toward something bigger and more suitable.\textsuperscript{21} Life Connection moved to Croydon Hotel and grew from 80 to 130, including the ‘Outrage’ children’s program which met nearby.\textsuperscript{22} The growing momentum built confidence that the experiment was working, part of the final stage in the diffusion of innovation that Rogers calls confirmation and reinforcement.\textsuperscript{23}

There is wide difference of opinion over the wisdom of the next move and multiplication from one to two Life Connections, but it is clear there was less consultation. The group outgrew their space at Croydon Hotel and with eighty adults it was difficult, with interactive teaching, to maintain group cohesion.\textsuperscript{24} So they trained extra leaders, hired another hotel and centralised Life Connection planning and Outrage for both venues. Wayne thought the multiplication would flourish as

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{18}Crouch and Spratt, Interview.
\item \textsuperscript{19}Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 227-228.
\item \textsuperscript{20}W Nebauer, Interview.
\item \textsuperscript{21}Iona, Interview.
\item \textsuperscript{22}Wayne Nebauer, ‘Connection Questions’, Email to the author (25 June 2007).
\item \textsuperscript{23}Rogers, \textit{Diffusion}, 169.
\item \textsuperscript{24}Connection, Focus Group #1.
\end{footnotes}
part of their vision of multiple sites, but it declined in momentum and numbers.25 Other leaders believed the multiplication was a good move but the process of change was premature and not planned or implemented collaboratively.26

Merging back to one Life Connection in November 2005, after just seven months, was even quicker and less well processed. Participants at the new Dorset Gardens group were content to be forming community as a group and new people were visiting every few weeks.27 But a number of factors led to the merge. The ministry team were disappointed Dorset Gardens did not grow and felt it stretched Connection’s resources.28 The hotels raised their prices and Sofia’s Restaurant offered a better deal. Wayne was eager to proceed with plans for the Connection Centre and felt that it would be easier moving from one location. So the staff ministry team decided to merge the groups and meet at Sofia’s.29 Broader consultation was limited. The pastors talked with Life Connection’s creative directors, but did not consult other participants before telling them what was happening with a fortnight’s notice.30 Even the non-staff members of the leadership team had limited input to the decision, which one of them described as a ‘knee-jerk reaction’.31 Yet again, in diffusing innovation, the staff leapt past knowledge and persuasion to a decision and expected people to just accept and implement it.

The decision to remerge Dorset Gardens demonstrated Senge’s ‘limits to growth’ archetype behaviour.32 People had been enthusiastic about Life Connection and developed a clear shared vision. But when the growth at Dorset Gardens did not happen like pastors hoped, or was delayed, they felt discouraged. Instead of holding the creative tension and persevering with the vision, they retracted the goal of multiple Life Connection venues and presented another vision.

25W Nebauer, Interview.
26Iona, Interview; Oscar, Interview.
28Crouch, Interview.
29W Nebauer, Interview.
30Connection, Focus Group #1.
31Iona, Interview.
32Senge, Fifth Discipline, 102-104, 147-159.
This repeated oscillation of good and poor process reduced momentum and dampened enthusiasm. Participants had grown to expect consultation and collective innovation-decisions, but closing Dorset Gardens imposed an authority innovation-decision which was disempowering. Focus group participants said they did not necessarily want a democracy with bureaucratic members’ meetings and a majority of people maintaining the status quo, but would appreciate more consultation:

If something directly affects someone, there should be some sort of dialogue whether they are looking for consensus or just keeping you informed on the journey like Dorset shutting down and it might have been less of a shock to us if we had any idea.

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33 Senge, *Fifth Discipline*, 229.
34 Rogers, *Diffusion*, 28-29.
35 Connection, Focus Group #1.
People wanted to trust the pastors and realised Connection had a governance model which gave pastors and leaders the authority to set vision and make decisions. But when participants are left out of the process, and when one apparently bad decision follows another, then trust levels dissipate.

Wayne and Paula’s planned Connection Centre shows their eagerness to step out in faith and connect with their community, but the drive for it to happen in 2006 created widespread concern around Connection. Large churches that Wayne saw in the United States inspired him with their cafés, community ministries and even their huge debts that seemed to him a sign of faith. However, back in Croydon, most of those who examined the financial implications of the bold proposal of the $2 million Connection Centre questioned its viability. Many others questioned whether it was consistent with Connection culture to buy and focus ministry from a particular building. The leaders did not seem to realise the scale of revisioning from a mission-shaped bistro and community focus to a community-oriented project or seven-day-a-week church. A more systemic concern was the way the proposal went ahead of the process and seemed rushed. It was a revisioning adaptive level change. Yet there was minimal process for developing a shared vision and as a result there was only minimal compliance. Oscar observed the lack of healthy process repeating itself:

In terms of implementing change of a major nature both in terms of location, but also philosophies of ministry, there was not a broader conversation, until late. In the early days, there was not the reflection, the opportunity for all the voices to be heard, the opportunity for planting seeds of the possibilities.

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36Nebauer, ‘USA’.
37Business Review Team, ‘Chirnside Connection Centre’.
38Connection, Focus Group #1.
40Crouch and Spratt, Interview. See pp.81-82, 224 above.
41Van Gelder, Ministry, 171.
42Senge, Fifth Discipline, 9, 218-223.
43Oscar, Interview.
The Connection Centre proposal showed an eagerness for innovation and entrepreneurship but there was not due process allocated for a proposal which was a significant cultural change and financial risk.

Wayne’s introduction of ‘open homes’ was, by contrast, a strongly collaborative process. Wayne shared his vision of this new expression of Connection, in general broad terms, and invited people to shape different open homes in ways which suit them and the people they want to involve. His guidelines were that they were to be inclusive and open, and include a meal. Wayne recruited a main leader and one or two others for each open home, organised training and empowered the leaders and groups to develop their own culture and rhythms. The way the groups would form would be a collective innovation-decision. However, before Open Homes could be established, major disagreements emerged over Wayne’s ministry.

Some of Connection’s leadership team had grown tired of Wayne’s apparently constant addiction to change and new initiatives. Everett Rogers might say they were uneasy with what they perceived as disequilibrium in the rate of change. That unease was not raised, however, until Wayne continued an intense counselling relationship without their full knowledge and then against their advice. Wayne became increasingly confident with self-referential accountability rather than relying on his team. The relationship went beyond normally accepted boundaries in terms of time, consuming up to twenty hours per week, and emotional involvement, draining much of Wayne’s initiative and energy. The client was in need of intense therapy but the leadership team disagreed with Wayne about the appropriateness of his ministry approach. Lack of professional supervision, emotional and family entanglement, unclear accountability and miscommunication led to an unfortunate breakdown of trust between Wayne and the leadership team. His ‘green-light’ thinking had limits for his team. They took the opportunity to suggest the church needed a new style of leader for the next stage of its growth.

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44Nebauer, ‘Open Homes’.
45Rogers, Diffusion, 403.
46Rogers, Diffusion, 452-456; also Senge, Fifth Discipline, 62.
47The ministry and conflict issues of Wayne finishing are complex. Some of the implications for Connection and EMC leadership in general are discussed here, but a conclusive assessment of the
It can be said that the risks involved in pushing the boundaries of change are that the personal fantasies of the leader can easily become contagions or neurotic constellations within the whole church culture.\textsuperscript{48} A change-oriented culture may be appealing for reasons of rational task orientation, but it may also be attractive to unsettled types with an addictive-compulsive approach to change. This could suggest that certain manic aspects in leaders transfer into cultural features of a ‘dramatic’ culture as described by organisational psychologists. The changes of Connection were dramatic when compared to the history of the previous Croydon Church of Christ, but also ‘dramatic’ in the hyperactive, impulsive, uninhibited sense of organisational dysfunction.\textsuperscript{49}

On the other hand, the response of the leadership to confront their leader and install a stable culture augurs well for the emotional wellbeing of Connection in the future. Leaders were enthusiastic about changes as they were implemented, but came to a point of placing boundaries around the extent and nature of proposed changes.

Organisational psychologists have identified that leaders and organisations can tend to be dysfunctional in their impulsive drive for change. Manfred Kets de Vries describes different types of neurotic organisations, including the ‘dramatic organisation’ which describes Connection’s culture.\textsuperscript{50} Connection’s reinvention is ‘dramatic’ because of its radical changes but also because of its dysfunctional drive for change. Kets de Vries describes dramatic organisations and leaders as hyperactive, unreflective, dramatically venturesome and dangerously uninhibited. He suggests dramatic leaders tend to make decisions with hunches and impressions

\textsuperscript{50}Kets de Vries and Miller, \textit{Neurotic Organization}, 31-33, 41.
rather than facts, and often without broad consultation. Lack of consultation was a common mistake in Connection’s brief history.

Kets de Vries suggests dramatic leaders centralise power to maintain the prerogative to take risks and independently initiate bold ventures. They make change for its own sake and eagerly close old programs and start a diversity of new activities. Understandably, this sort of leader would be attracted to the rhetoric of Shaping and emerging churches that encourages risk-taking and creative new ventures. Dramatic organisations and leaders readily put significant financial capital at risk, as Connection did with the proceeds from the Croydon Church of Christ buildings, using up a significant portion of the $800,000 in wages and operating costs. Connection was pursuing a church growth policy of adding staff to grow, using capital reserves in the hope that new staff would grow the church to a point that it could afford them. Yet financial giving never caught up with the unbridled growth in staff, and staff numbers declined just as dramatically over 2006-2008.

Dramatic organisations can yield dramatic growth, but they can also be a shelter for an unhealthy desire for significance in leaders. Kets de Vries comments:

> Most of these strategic moves are made in the service of grandiosity. Unbridled growth is the goal. The organization’s strategy is a function of its top manager’s considerable narcissistic needs, his desire for attention and visibility. It appears that the chief executive officer wants to be at the center stage, putting on a show. He likes to be noticed, to finally show “the others over there” how great an executive [or pastor] he really is.

Jay Conger similarly identifies the dark side to charismatic leadership in which unbridled ambitions and powerful personal motivation drives behaviour. Leaders need to be self-aware and watch that their eagerness for innovation is fuelled by a healthy desire for effective mission and not driven by unbridled ambitions for change for its own sake.

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52 Kets de Vries and Miller, Neurotic Organization, 32.
After the poorly processed events and crises of 2005, at the beginning of 2006 the leadership team asserted its role as leaders and not just as Wayne’s advisory board. The reappraisal of the leadership team model and the increase of collegial leadership was welcomed by the leaders, including Wayne and Paula, as a natural result of a growing and maturing church. In fact it was overdue. Peter Drucker counsels building a top management team before a new venture needs it, and suggests it is a common dynamic for organisations with lots of potential to get into trouble if they have not put appropriate management into place. The problem is that when the lack of management becomes evident, as at Connection, it can be too late and the organisation has to pay the price in disillusionment and cynicism.

The leadership team had to assert its role in budgetary and ministry oversight, but for reasons of pastoral sensitivity felt they had to do this with discretion. They felt they could not be completely open in their communication, saying they were protecting Wayne’s future ministry prospects, even though Paula and Wayne wanted more transparency in the process. Organic systems leadership suggests that a free flow of information is critical to empower people to organise amongst themselves and achieve the purposes of the group, yet this was not evident in 2005-2006. Budget figures were hard to access, few people knew the details of the church’s financial situation and even fewer people knew why Wayne and Paula were not able to continue in ministry. In crisis, the leadership team reverted to a ‘command and control’ mode and were slow to bring others along.

NCLS was conducted in October 2006, just after Wayne and Paula left, and it shows that participants were still appreciative of certain aspects of Connection’s leadership, but felt communication and systems were below average. As mentioned above, 90% of attenders felt leaders kept the church strongly focused on connecting with the broader community, 7-12% higher than averages of 78-83%. Furthermore, 73% of

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54 Connection, Focus Group #1.
58 Connection, Focus Group #1.
attenders agree leaders inspire them to action, slightly better than other averages of 70-71%. But other systemic leadership measures were all below average. The appreciation of leaders bringing people together to make things happen and helping the church build on its strengths was 4-11% below average. Even worse was that only 63% of Connection said leaders communicated clearly and openly, 16-18% below other averages; and 46% agreed Connection had good and clear congregational systems, 20-21% below other averages.

Table 28: Connection congregational leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Denom. CofC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attenders agree leaders:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep us strongly focused on connecting with wider community</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire us to action</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at bringing people together to make things happen</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate clearly and openly</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help congregation identify and build on strengths</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree congregation has good and clear systems</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure below outlines a decision-making system and the limits to growth of oscillating and poor decision-making processes at Connection.\textsuperscript{60} The leadership had the capacity, background learning and heritage of mistakes to exercise good process in implementing innovations, which they did at times. Unfortunately, they regularly reverted to poor decision-making process, which undermined trust and reduced momentum in a downward spiral.

\textsuperscript{59}NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 16; NCLS Research, ‘CofC Vic’, 16.
\textsuperscript{60}Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 95-104.
Figure 25: Connection decision-making and limits to growth

Growth factors:

May 2001  Starting Connection & 601
Feb 2003  Life Connection at Daisy’s
Apr 2004  Life Connection move to Croydon Hotel
May 2005  ? Life Connection multiplication
Nov 2005  Life Connection amalgamation
Nov 2005  Connection Centre proposed
Feb 2006  Open homes
Mar 2006  Connection Centre aborted
Apr-Sep 2006  ? Wayne’s finishing
Mar 2007  Plans to close Life Connection
Jun 2007  Sunday Experiments

Limiting factors:

Saturday night saga

? Wayne’s finishing

Plans to close Life Connection
This oscillating pattern of good and poor process has occurred at other times in the church’s history. A previous pastor suggested a ‘seeker service’ model of church, and when the change was not enthusiastically welcomed, partly due to poor process, the pastor took half the congregation to start elsewhere.\textsuperscript{61} After the crisis, the church conducted a careful healing and planning process. Again, after Wayne left, the leadership team explored closing Life Connection and everyone meeting in one group, but made moves in that direction with little consultation with Life Connection participants, to their consternation. When Life Connection asserted their desire to continue meeting, in what became known as ‘Sunday Experiments’, the leadership introduced a consultative process and eventually Life Connection and 601 did merge.\textsuperscript{62} The pattern of poor process followed by good process suggests that leadership dysfunction is related to something in the organisational culture of the church as well as the type of leaders it attracts. Systems thinking warns against scapegoating and urges organisations to pursue radical self-analysis and learn how the different parts of a system share responsibility for systemic problems.\textsuperscript{63}

The restructuring of leadership at Connection shows some lessons for emerging churches as they mature. Wayne observed from his USA tour the importance of strong leadership:

> Significantly growing churches are led by leaders who have the freedom to lead. This is reflected by a governance structure that allows them to lead while providing spiritual accountability and leadership through an Eldership (in our case Leadership Team).\textsuperscript{64}

Strong, almost autocratic, leadership may be helpful to start a new vision but, as a church grows, shared and consultative leadership needs to develop. While things were new and growing, Connection functioned well under Wayne’s strong leadership. The church had varying degrees of consultation and lots of people were involved in leading at different levels. Nevertheless, Wayne was clearly the visionary and took responsibility for overall direction and final decisions. This got the church

\textsuperscript{61}Oscar, Interview.
\textsuperscript{63}Senge, \textit{Fifth Discipline}, 67-79.
\textsuperscript{64}Nebauer, ‘USA’.
started and kept them on the cutting edge with innovation. But when facing
difficulties, the leadership team stepped up and asserted its role.  

The change in leadership structure was an unfortunately rough transition on everyone
at Connection, but a natural organisational life cycle development. As introduced in
chapter 1, different stages in an organisation’s life need different types of leadership.
Initially an entrepreneurial risk-taker is helpful to pioneer new initiatives. Wayne
filled this role well. But as an organisation grows, leaders also need to grow and
develop different approaches, or make way for another leader for the next stage. Lawrence Miller explains that the ‘visionary’ and ‘barbarian’ who creates
breakthroughs and drives the organisation in rapid growth needs to give way to the
more collaborative ‘builder and explorer’. The organisation becomes too complex for
centralised decision-making and the prophets and barbarians need to realise this and
adapt or move on, or risk holding the organisation back.  

Innovators like Wayne look outside the box rather than just challenge existing frameworks. Michael Kirton differentiates ‘adaptors’ who seek to gradually improve
existing systems for dealing with issues from ‘innovators’ who grapple with problems by imagining various alternative solutions beyond customary viewpoints. This ‘doing things differently’ approach brings innovators into conflict with
‘adaptors’ who prefer ‘doing things better’ by improving current ideas. Kirton’s
commentary on the difference of approach and the resulting tension resonates with
Connection’s experience:

Innovators are generally seen by adaptors as being abrasive and insensitive, despite the formers’ denial of these traits. This misunderstanding usually occurs because the innovator attacks the adaptor’s theories and assumptions – both explicitly, when he feels that the adaptor needs a push to hurry him in the right direction or to get him out of his rut, and implicitly, by showing a disregard for such things as rules, conventions, and standards of behavior. Irritations can occur in seemingly minor ways, such as the innovator’s marked preference to

65Crouch and Spratt, Interview.

66Frost and Hirsch, Shaping, 177-179; Lawrence M Miller, Barbarians to Bureaucrats: Corporate
produce a plethora of ideas when “a couple of good ones would do for now”. 67

Leaders who are proposing innovative new approaches, or adaptive second order change, need to be aware their approach will clash with people who prefer more gradual technical first order change.

**Eastern Hills’s open ‘pow-wows’**

Eastern Hills started by reflecting on how church could be different – not for the sake of being different but to better reflect the kingdom of God. The original small group encouraged imagining a fresh approach to church relevant for their young adult generation. They listened to one another express a desire for their experience of church to be more authentic and passionate, and discussed together the books on radical ecclesiology they were reading. 68 Although the group did not set out firstly to be an emerging church, they shared with emerging churches this desire for a new approach to church. Matthew Jones reflected:

> Our church shares an enthusiasm for church commitment to understanding our ever-changing world, and a willingness to be innovative with church projects and church structures in order for our church community to engage more profoundly with the context of Melbourne so as to more effectively represent and communicate the gospel. 69

Eastern Hills wanted to be a church that reflected the kingdom of God, and knew this would require changes.

Claire comments that as a group which is comprised predominantly of young adults they find decision-making easier and risky change more acceptable. A common sentiment about changing things and exploring new options, she appreciates, is ‘Let us give it a go. If it does not work, it does not work. If it does work, it does work’, rather than, ‘No, it has to be exactly the right decision’. 70 Actually, the diffusion

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68 E.g., Clapp, *Peculiar People*; Sine, *Mustard Seed*.
69 Jones, ‘Critique of Shaping’, 5.
70 Claire, Interview.
research shows no conclusive relationship between age and innovativeness. Claire’s observations are probably more about the age of the church, a young church without traditions able to make changes, rather than the younger age of participants.

The group tends to go with people’s passions as a guide for what ministries and initiatives to prioritise. When Claire wanted to start a soup kitchen, the other leaders encouraged her and got behind it financially. When Pria wanted to offer to serve the school community at Croydon Secondary College, other people got behind her efforts and offered to sew costumes and paint drama backdrops as an expression of service. When Stewart wanted to buy a sound system, the church purchased it. They needed it for Sunday services, though some of the young adults were not keen to spend money on that sort of item. But the group recognised Stewart’s passion for music and excellent sound and approved the expenditure. Eastern Hills decides on programs and expenditure not because of predetermined plans, or even a certain leader’s vision, but more according to people’s interests and passions.

Eastern Hills has developed certain rhythms and programs, but it is often changing into something different. The range of programs is remarkable for a small young church. The group willingly adopts new suggestions, and trials new ideas for activities and programs, but also freely lets them finish their course if people run out of energy or want to switch directions to another new program. Sven comments on the benefits of their freedom and spontaneity: ‘You are just almost waiting for God to do the next thing and to see where [God] might lead in terms of what is happening’. The culture fosters experimentation and enthusiasm for new initiatives.

Eastern Hills has some basic and clear processes for sharing leadership and decision-making. Part of the original ethos, as explored above, was a commitment to shared leadership. The group did not want to rely on any individual pastors but recognised that everyone had things to contribute as ‘the royal priesthood of all believers’. 

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71 Rogers, Diffusion, 288.
72 Claire, Interview.
73 Sven, Interview.
74 See pp.102-103, 229.
75 Claire, Interview; echoing 1 Peter 2:9.
leadership team has nine people but team meetings are open to all. They meet weekly on most Monday nights, but focus on a different topic – money and missions, pastoral care and prayer, children, Sunday Church, refugee assistance or a general ‘Leaders Howzit Going and Ideas’ brainstorming night. The formal leaders and other participants come depending on whether they have an interest in that area or not.⁷⁶

For bigger decisions, the whole church is invited to a ‘pow-wow’ discussion meeting. There were two pow-wows leading up to the move from Wyreena to Yarrunga Community Centre, as well as email communication and Sunday announcements. The leaders said they offered people three options for a new meeting arrangement, having done some planning but not imposing a decision.⁷⁷ In my judgement, however, the meetings missed the opportunity for creative dreaming by being dominated by communicating information about the plans to move.⁷⁸ Eastern Hills leaders are eager to involve people as much as possible and have often facilitated that well. As they grow, however, they need to develop new processes for involving the larger and broader group of people.

Diffusion of innovation is not as much an issue at Eastern Hills as at other more established congregations. They are not starting with set patterns and established routines to change from. When it came to the move, however, the church was changing from an established routine, meeting at Wyreena, to another location, at Yarrunga. Nevertheless, the change was only geographic and did not involve a change of culture. They were still meeting in a community centre, only slightly larger and in a neighbouring suburb. Eastern Hills’ changes are not as adaptive as Urban Life’s change from the country club to the café, nor as adaptive as some of the changes Connection has explored, unsuccessfully, such as moving to a Saturday night meeting or buying a community centre. When Eastern Hills plans to initiate more adaptive changes of revision or re-creation it will also, like the other case studies, need to implement more wide-ranging processes for change management.

⁷⁷Eastern Hills, ‘Leaders' Focus Group’.
Eastern Hills started with just a few young adults dreaming about expressing church differently. More recently involving everyone has not been as easy with a larger group. In 2006 the leaders were frustrated that it is they who usually produce any fresh ideas. Their ideal is to welcome creative ideas from everyone, but the ideas are not necessarily forthcoming. Less input from a broad range of people may partly be the dynamics of a church which is now established, but it is also sometimes due to the lack of process for inviting people’s contributions. The reality and challenge of including people in decision-making does not always match up to the ideal of open and shared leadership.

Urban Life’s thorough transition

Urban Life has been through three years of transforming change. Doug Faircloth, Anthea Smits and their team have fostered a culture of change as they have evaluated programs and changed their leadership, name and location. The change of location was a strategic move into the centre of Ringwood, an important symbol of their missional-incarnational ethos and a team-building process as they renovated the building through 2005. It meant they had to leave behind their old approaches to church and squeeze, literally sometimes, into new space.

The leaders carefully processed the adaptive re-creation or second order change, though without knowing exactly where the process would lead. The leadership board gave Anthea and a small group the task of considering options. Later they held weekend leaders’ retreats to discuss how church could change for them. They invited guest speakers in to learn of innovations in other places, but mainly wanted to forge their own way forward. The process did not follow a carefully laid-out plan. Anthea says it is no use looking to Urban Life for a five-year plan because they did not have anything like that.79 It was much more like living on the edge of chaos. They were not exactly clear where they were going but they still exercised a careful process to discern where they would go and how they would get there.

79 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’. 
The leadership team led the way but strove to engage the congregation in groups and as individuals to help them understand the reasons for changes and to get their ideas. Kylie said, ‘We want the people to come up with the new ideas and see what’s in their heart to do in the community, not the leadership implementing all the ideas’.\(^{80}\)

People were encouraged to dream and to feel free to consider options ‘outside the box’ of their denominational and geographic boundaries. Steve, who was one of the leaders through the process, explains:

> Everything that we have gone through has been a process, whether it is tithing ... moving building, ... how we do worship and how we take communion and all that sort of thing. Everything has been challenged and everything has been worked through in a process.\(^{81}\)

Throughout the process, they exercised a free flow of information and strove to keep people relationally networked.\(^{82}\) The ideal is that shared vision develops from personal vision\(^{83}\)

NCLS shows more attenders than average are confident in Urban Life’s congregational leadership and communication. 87% of attenders agree leaders communicate clearly and openly, compared to other averages of 81-84%. 89% agree leaders identify and build on the church’s strengths, compared to 79-83% for broader Protestant and CRC averages. 82% of attenders agree leaders inspire them to action, better than other averages of 70-80%. As mentioned above, 96% of attenders felt leaders kept the church strongly focused on connecting with the broader community, 11-18% higher than other averages. They are close to average in measures of bringing people together to make things happen (78%) and having good and clear systems (77%). Overall, NCLS measures suggest they are in a healthy position for congregational communication and collaboration.

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\(^{80}\)Kylie, Email.

\(^{81}\)Steve and Rowena, Interview.


\(^{83}\)Senge, *Fifth Discipline*, 211-223.
Table 29: Urban Life congregational leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of people:</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Urban Life</th>
<th>Denom. CRC Vic.</th>
<th>Anglican/ Protestant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attenders agree leaders:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep us strongly focused on connecting with wider community</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire us to action</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at bringing people together to make things happen</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate clearly and openly</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help congregation identify and build on strengths</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree congregation has good and clear systems</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When they were preparing the church to relocate, the leaders talked to people one to one by appointment and sought people’s opinions. When people opposed things, Anthea said she practised an invitational approach to explore their opposition. Instead of responding to ‘That’s wrong’ with ‘No you’re wrong’, she would ask ‘Help me understand and reflect on your perspective biblically.’ She was thus balancing inquiry and advocacy, taking a position but instead of merely arguing for it also investigating others’ views and remaining open. They encouraged the whole church to engage the book of Joshua devotionally and through a month of sermons and read through Paul Scanlon’s book Crossing Over. Although not constitutionally required, the leadership took the sale of their property to a vote and were upfront about their intentions. The fact that they did not end up selling the property was immaterial to the leadership team, because they feel the vote helped them leave the building-focus behind and if they do sell in a few years time no-one can say that was not intended.

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85 Julie, Urban Life partner, Interview by the author, Ringwood (8 September 2006).
88 Faircloth, Interview #2.
At one early stage Anthea felt the process was taking too long and told the church board she wanted to go and plant another church. They said they would release and send her if that was what God had put on her heart, but she realised that God had put on her heart to accompany a group of people in transition.\textsuperscript{89} Kylie, who sometimes would have liked change to happen quicker, realises they needed to bring people with them and could not run too far ahead.\textsuperscript{90}

However, the time from the announcement of a planned move (January 2005) to voting about it (March 2005) was brief for such a big transition.\textsuperscript{91} It was a short timeframe for moving from knowledge to persuasion and decision, although implementation and confirmation is an ongoing process.\textsuperscript{92} It did have components of being a collective innovation-decision, but the consultation involved was at a fast rate.\textsuperscript{93} It appears the leadership group processed possible changes over a period of years but expected the congregation to catch up with them and make the change in perspective much quicker. Congregational consultant Alan Roxburgh counsels allowing eighteen months to get the first 10\% of innovators on board, which Urban Life did with their leadership team. But then he suggests taking another eighteen months to get the next 15\% of responders to engage the change.\textsuperscript{94} Christian Life Centre, as it was then, accelerated the process and took a few short months to implement substantial changes of name, location, leadership and focus.

They view their move as an experiment in which they are prepared to innovate and evaluate success or failure:

\begin{quote}
It is a way of exploring new avenues of reaching the community. And so, as with any experiment, you try something if it works, you will look at why it works, if it is repeatable. If it does not work, okay, what went
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{89}Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
\textsuperscript{90}Kylie, Email.
\textsuperscript{91}‘Follow-up Journal 2008’, 21.
\textsuperscript{92}Rogers, \textit{Diffusion}, 169.
\textsuperscript{93}Rogers, \textit{Diffusion}, 28-29.
\textsuperscript{94}Roxburgh and Romanuk, \textit{Missional Leader}, 103-105.
wrong, how do we look at it, do we fix it or are we going to do something else?95

Urban Life did not set a five-year plan but have explored Scripture, listened to the experience of others and considered their own dissatisfaction with existing church forms in order to chart new directions. A lot of Urban Life’s most significant changes came from frustration with the status quo – such as building space unused from Monday to Saturday and Bible-study-focused small groups which leaders did not enjoy.96 Identifying these dissatisfactions led to relocating into functional space in Ringwood’s central business area instead of being locked into a less-than-functional worship sanctuary, and developing ‘Get-Togethers’ as fun times of hospitality and friendship.97 They continue to evaluate their approach to church and are decentralising further away from a Sunday-service focus.98

When they moved, the leadership team felt God say to them not to copy anybody else, but to create their own path and place.99 As a Pentecostal group, they have a keen sense of hearing from God and often do things based on revelation through listening to God in prayer. It is unclear what discernment processes they use to determine what is God speaking to them and what might be merely human desires. But whatever the origin of their drive to be unique, Peter Senge claims this sentiment is what leads to fresh experimentation and advancement. He explains that learning organisations do not try to emulate ‘a model’ nor pursue the ‘best practices’ of supposedly leading firms: ‘Such descriptions can often do more harm than good, leading to piecemeal copying and playing catch-up.’100

A noteworthy aspect of their change is that they initiated a transition process before they had to. It was not driven by institutional survival but missional eagerness. Christian Life Centre (CLC) were a viable church with staff, land, buildings, over a

95Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
96Lewis and Carolyn, Interview.
97Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
98Pastors, Focus Group.
99Urban Life, Focus Group #1.
100Senge, Fifth Discipline, 11.
hundred people and ideas for gradual first order change. But they opted to proceed with more radical changes. That decision was probably timely, because if they had waited until they declined further they would have had fewer emotional and personnel resources for change. Milfred Minatrea applauds churches which are prepared to change before becoming too small and terminal. The crisis theory of change assumes organisations will be more willing to change when their survival is threatened, but the risk is they are less able to change when they reach a near-terminal position.

Churches like Urban Life may not have to change to institutionally survive in the short-to-medium term, but missional leaders assert that churches in the West need to face the reality that they are struggling overall. Change agents suggest that bringing people to an awareness of the desperate challenges a group faces is critical in helping people’s openness to change. After a two-year study of a small and rare sample of declining churches which managed to turn around, Hirsch concluded that awareness of the problem was a foundational first step. Commenting on the importance of understanding organisational culture, Edgar Schein says:

One of the crucial functions of leadership is to provide guidance at precisely those times when habitual ways of doing things no longer work, or when a dramatic change in the environment requires new responses.

At those times, leadership must not only insure the invention of new and better solutions, but must also provide some security to help the group tolerate the anxiety of giving up old, stable responses, while new ones are learned and tested.

Churches in the West face the adaptive challenge of missionally engaging their ever-increasingly-changing context. They need cultures of change to adapt appropriately.

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101Faircloth, Interview #2; Roxburgh and Romanuk, Missional Leader, 41-47.
103Hirsch, Interview.
It is important to recognise the process of diffusion of innovations and the diversity of people they depend on. Innovations need an innovator to propose ideas but equally need others to help their adoption. Doug was Anthea’s sponsor who coached and mentored her from when she was a teenager, sponsored her into ministry, handed over leadership to her and then affirmed her vision for innovation. Others, notably Mary and Owen, helped champion the proposed innovations as respected opinion leaders. They did all they could do to ensure its success.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, innovators may come up with new ideas, but it is the early adopters who tend to successfully promote innovations to others. At Urban Life, for example, Anthea proposed innovations. She is a natural entrepreneur and innovator. But she recognises that without people like Owen and Mary, Doug and his wife and others who Anthea said ‘got the vision early’, recognising those who were the early adopters, she would not have been able to communicate with and get some people on board.¹⁰⁶ Anthea was a new leader who was loved. But when people like Doug, Owen and Mary, whom many in the church trusted, expressed trust in Anthea, others grew to trust her. Anthea appreciated Owen publicly saying he trusted God working through Anthea and wanted to follow that, even though he did not always understand where they were going.¹⁰⁷ Thus Anthea’s innovations were supported by a significant group of early adopters who fostered the proposed changes.

A culture of change and innovations are not a result of one creative individual, but the result of a system which works together to introduce, endorse and implement new ideas. Innovativeness is a community characteristic, not just a leader’s. Leaders are important but an innovative church is a reflection also of openness to innovation in the church community. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi astutely observes:

Creativity cannot be understood by looking only at the people who appear to make it happen. Just as the sound of a tree crashing in the forest is unheard if nobody is there to hear it, so creative ideas vanish unless there is a receptive audience to record and implement them. And without the

¹⁰⁶Smits, Interview #1.
¹⁰⁷Smits, Interview #1.
assessment of competent outsiders, there is no reliable way to decide whether the claims of a self-styled creative person are valid.  

As well as the innovators and early adopters, other supporters are needed to function as program managers who physically help make the changes happen.  

Innovativeness categories also help explain conflict when change is introduced. Some people take longer than others to adopt new ideas. At Urban Life, a majority adopted the vision for change before the move, and so the vote to move was overwhelming. When the leadership put the move to a vote, it gained 96% approval but the move lost one third of the church. The leadership team interpret this as meaning they agreed that it was a good and needed idea, but did not want to be part of it. An alternative interpretation is that they disagreed but did not want to vote against it, did not feel they could influence it or did not even attend the meeting to vote. As well as those who left the church, there were others who did not believe the change was appropriate but stayed and ‘whinged’ about it, as Lewis recalls. He says the leadership could have tried to wait for them to get the vision, but decided instead to ‘go and do something, get some runs on the board’.  

They also experienced conflict with denominational leaders. Christian Life Centre was one of two landmark Christian Revival Crusade church buildings in Australia, alongside the main CRC church in Adelaide. Denominational leaders, when they heard of the plans for a move and possible sale, flew to Melbourne to persuade Doug and Anthea against it. CLC members who had laid the bricks of the building and believed the area was ‘anointed ground’ also criticised the plans. Dealing with

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109 Afuah, _Innovation_, 237. Interestingly, Doug fulfilled parts of the role of sponsor, champion and project-manager.


110 Lewis and Carolyn, Interview.

112 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’. The local church autonomy of CRC congregations sets them apart from other Pentecostal churches like the Apostolic Church and Assemblies of God. Barry Chant, _Heart of Fire: The Story of Australian Pentecostalism_ (Unley Park: House of Tabor, 1984), 185. CLC, or actually its leadership team, could decide to sell the property without reference to denominational leaders.

criticism is a necessary skill of change agents. Doug commented that change works against political and other influences which are geared towards the status quo and so confrontation is inevitable. Anthea comments from her experience: ‘Change is painful and there has to be a preparedness to embrace the pain that comes along with change. … You [may] not be well understood or even always well liked’. Urban Life learned that some of the costs involved in change management include conflict within and without.

**Solace’s organic chaos**

Solace also was born out of rethinking how to express church and grew with a culture of change. In fact Solace has experienced so much change that many of its people long for stability and security. It has been a challenge to discern how much change and resulting discomfort is conducive to growth and how much leads to ‘change fatigue’, which is draining and distracting from mission. Rogers warns against the disequilibrium of introducing a rate of change too rapid for the social system to adapt.

Olivia says she seeks to balance a culture of change with maintaining a safe place for people who are struggling:

At Solace change is the only constant. Regular members know that they will enter the ‘rough’ but will not be pushed too far out of their comfort zones. They also know that it will be informal, participatory and authentic but one week it will be around tables, another will have music and a third will offer multiple options of working with a spiritual truth. Whilst the way is Jesus, the step each needs to take is different as are the things which will enable them to take that step. We seek to provide an environment where choice and multiple options enrich the journey.

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114 Faircloth, Interview #2.
115 Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.
116 Waldron, Interview #1.
117 Totterdell, ‘Edge of Chaos’.
118 Rogers, *Diffusion*, 453.
119 Moffat, ‘What Kind of Church?’.
Solace recognises it needs to change to be relevant to a society which is different from fifty years ago, and needs to be comfortable with change to be relevant in an era where change is so constant.

Solace has also stopped programs over the last few years and not just started new ones. A basic principle of Solace is readiness to stop programs or groups when and if their usefulness finishes: ‘We will continue to exist whilst it seems that we have some life giving things happening, but we plan to have courage to close ourselves down when the time comes’. Peter Drucker argues that any organisation needs a systematic process for innovation, including letting go of what already exists, even practices which have been successful, with ‘organized abandonment’:

The innovative company therefore puts on trial for its life every produce, process, technology, service, and market. It asks, “Knowing what we now know, would we now go into this product or service?” And if the answer is no, the company does not say, “Let’s make another study.” It says, “How do we get out?”

Of the four emerging churches studied, Solace has reflected most intentionally on the relevance of chaos theory and organic systems thinking. Participants in focus groups noted how much books like Leadership and the New Science and Surfing the Edge of Chaos have been influential for Olivia and other leaders. Olivia recognises that her background and tendency is to gravitate to old-style top-down leadership structures, but she has sought to learn and reskill in more organic and less hierarchical approaches. She described some of her early reflections in a paper ‘What Kind of Church?’. One of her metaphors, for example, is that of snowboarding as a new sport which represents a paradigm shift in viewing the world. Instead of skiing around rough places, snowboarders look for the rough places and jump off them. In such an

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120 Solace, ‘Draft Constitution’.
122 Solace, Focus Group #5; Pascale, Millemann, and Gioja, Surfing; Wheatley, Leadership.
123 Maclean, Interview #1.
environment, chaos is everywhere, change is the only constant and life is not like the smooth slopes but the rough areas to snowboard over.\textsuperscript{124}

Barb Totterdell described organic systems thinking and explored its application to Solace.\textsuperscript{125} She explains that the predominant modern worldview has seen the universe like a machine, where people contribute to organisations as cogs in the system. In contrast, seeing the world as a living system makes for different approaches to relationships, leadership and the ways things get done. Some of the ‘clues’ which Totterdell suggests are that organisations that aim for stability will die, and that it is on the ‘edge of chaos’ that growth and new ideas emerge. It is not a leadership role to micro-manage but to put an organisation’s DNA in place and let the vision and values permeate the culture and so influence what people do. Given permission and left to work out solutions as a group, people will tend to organise themselves and achieve more than they could alone. What is important is open and abundant communication and good interconnecting relationships.

When Solace moved to St Paul’s, for example, they did not seek to take over but to partner with the dwindling congregation. Together they focused on relationships, mutual support and shared mission. That has taken shape in their discussion about what God is doing in Fairfield and how they can partner with that together.\textsuperscript{126} Their collaboration in SHAPE has been a learning process of how to communicate and process possibilities. This sort of learning is central to healthy organic systems. People learn to depend on one another and take an interest in the goals of the group.

Through a process of discernment and emergence, SPACE’s aims have been refined and by 2008 narrowed to focus on children and families. Focusing on this demographic does not sound very innovative compared to many contemporary churches. But for SPACE it derived from a careful reading of their context and seeing who was joining Solace. The leaders wanted to welcome everyone but have realised that many demographic groups in Fairfield do not mix.


\textsuperscript{125} Totterdell, ‘Edge of Chaos’.

\textsuperscript{126} Waldron, Interview #1.
Shop and drop-in lounge is comfortable for the poor and marginalised but not as welcoming for the young upwardly-mobile professionals (‘yuppies’) and young children who are increasingly represented in Fairfield’s demographics. Barb Totterdell described narrowing whom they want to shape their space for as an agonising journey in discernment. Demographic statistics, local experience and informal interviews showed that children and young families had significant local presence and need. Furthermore, the group noticed that a number of new Solace people have significant experience, expertise and qualifications in children’s ministry, education and development. They went with the interests and passions they knew in their own people, as well as knowledge of people’s needs in the broader community.

Thus, SPACE is now aiming to develop as a family wellness centre. The group wants to invite its suburb Fairfield to experience a holistic spirituality, initially focusing on family wellness, learning, adventure and play. The plan is to reshape programs around family wellness, renovate the building, raise funds to pay for it and change the church’s commercial activity into something central to their refocused mission. So they will close the Opportunity Shop and launch a children’s play and learning centre, café and bookshop. This will also create space for children’s parties, parenting courses, short-term child minding, meditation groups and more family-based spirituality gatherings. The underlying business plan boldly closes the existing business/ministry of the Opportunity Shop and requires significant financial outlay, including a $1.4 million renovation of the building. But it is carefully planned, draws on expertise in the congregation and seeks strategic partnerships with other groups in the broader community to participate in doing good in Fairfield. The refinement of the vision has involved a process of hours of conversations in and beyond the congregation. The focus is not on maintaining a congregation but discerning how to bless the broader community. The plan says, ‘When we talk of mission we mean endeavours that are Jesus centred, about the whole of life and which build the local community’. The SPACE changes in which SOLACE is playing a leading role are

127 St Paul’s, ‘Feasibility Study’, 4, 7.
128 St Paul’s, ‘Ministry Assistance Plan’, 1-6.
129 St Paul’s, ‘Ministry Assistance Plan’, 7.
motivated by this missional goal of contributing to the remaking of their neighbourhood.

Summary

These four Melbourne churches are seeking to put into practice the rhetoric of *Shaping* and the broader emerging church literature of applying new missional structures in Western society. The emerging church literature argues that change is essential; emerging churches such as these four generally accept this. They are responding to the urging from Frost and Hirsch and others to cultivate their imaginations and pioneer new church experiments for the sake of mission. Furthermore, the emerging church literature, including *Shaping*, begins to outline some suggested processes for cultivating innovative new approaches. But the emerging churches vary in their application of such processes. The four have all developed a ‘culture of change’ but manage it differently. They start at different places in terms of their need and readiness for change, and vary in the processes they use for introducing innovation and managing change.

Croydon Church of Christ had dwindled in numbers and literally closed, so the remaining members were ready and even desperate for change. Connection had the highest commitment to change, but the quality of its process was also the most varied. It oscillated from thoughtful and consultative processes for change to reactive and dominating approaches. Their ‘dramatic’ culture and leadership shapes their driving commitment to change and yet inconsistent application of process. Transitioning to new leadership over 2006-2008 has given them space to reconsider their culture and values including how best to implement mission and change.

The small group which started Eastern Hills were planting the church from nothing, except for their shared history of church experiences, so they had little in the way of established culture to change. Eastern Hills have tried many new activities and programmes, but were not as compulsive as Connection in change for its own sake. Its leaders use simple and open processes for consultation including open leaders’
meetings and ‘pow-wow’ brainstorming sessions, though are still learning how best to plan and utilise such processes.

Urban Life had perhaps the most daunting challenges to change since it did not ‘need’ to change in order to be viable. Yet their leaders engaged a far-reaching process for change – changing leadership, name, location and focus. They thoughtfully implemented a thorough process of vision-casting, communication and consultation. The process has not been without conflict, and the leaders are proud to say the process is ongoing as they plan for further transformation over the coming years.

Solace was a new church plant, but still under the umbrella of its planting church which had its own expectations and boundaries. Its changes have been both thorough and tiring for those involved from the beginning. In some senses, they are happy to be settled with St Paul's and developing regular rhythms for worship and mission, yet they continue to explore innovations in mission and their use of the St Paul’s space. Of the four churches, Solace has the most clearly articulated approach to leadership, change and decision-making. Its leaders practise open consultation and give permission for anyone to contribute input and debate to whatever issue they like. They draw on insights from chaos and emergence theory for cultivating innovation in organic ways.

In contrast to churches which discourage risk-taking and avoid surprises, these emerging churches have discovered some fresh and innovative directions. Their changes are largely a factor of leadership but never dependent on just one person. The seeds of innovation are found in a permission-giving environment and are not just the function of an individual. Pastors may propose innovation, but it is important also to recognise the systemic influences which foster openness to innovation, as well as the quality of the processes, or lack thereof, for managing the diffusion of innovation and the management of change.

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Figure 26: Life Connection locations

Photos by author. 21 December 2007. Clockwise from top left: Daisy’s bistro, Croydon Hotel, Sofia’s Restaurant, Dorset Garden.

Figure 27: Urban Life play area and band

Photo by author. 23 July 2006.
Your dream is beautiful.
Are you trying to build something new? something that makes the world a better place? something that expresses who you are? Are you living or working in the midst of something that is yet to fulfill its potential? Aspiring entrepreneurs, risk takers, dreamers and leaders all welcome.

This workshop will explore inspiring models found in strange places like the world of chaos mathematics to give you hope, clarity and practical help.

The morning will include some spiritual experiences, talks, discussions, and practical workshops. It is especially useful for people trying to grow or duplicate their work and define its essential DNA.

What: workshop on “emergence” and “chaotic” theories of leadership and business development
When: July 28th 2007
Where: St Paul’s Anglican Church
88a station st. Fairfield
Time: 8am to 12 noon
Other: $30 (as able)
morning tea and coffee free flowing
call Olivia for info or to RSVP
olivia@solace.emc.org.au
0425 768 441
CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSION

It is important that the deep critique of this book be matched by some suggestions of a way ahead, and that these suggestions be grounded in functioning communities. In choosing to describe some models, however, caution is needed. To portray a community in words is not the same as participating in the reality of that community. Something which sounds very fine in words can be guilty of obscuring the frailties and defects of the all-too-human reality. None of the ventures described here would want to make grandiose claims about having found the answer. They are all rather small struggling ventures which count survival an achievement.

Michael Riddell, *Threshold of the Future*

This thesis investigated mission and innovation in four emerging churches in Melbourne. Emerging churches are expressing new forms of mission and innovation appropriate for a post-Christendom context. This is the rhetoric of Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch’s *The Shaping of Things to Come* and generally expresses the reality of the case studies of the research.

I came as an interested participant but also brought a hermeneutic of suspicion to explore what is actually happening in emerging churches. As the location for research I chose my own city of Melbourne and the Eastern suburbs where I live and work. The research focused on four in-depth phenomenological case studies in order to explore, describe, understand and compare the dynamics of emerging churches. I acknowledge the generosity of the four emerging churches in opening up to research.

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2Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping.*
I spent at least a month in each congregation, learning through participant-observation, document analysis, interviews and focus groups, and limited quantitative surveys. This approach is consistent with a postmodern preference for learning from local expressions rather than grand theories or metanarratives. The objective was to learn not so much from the emerging church as a global movement or theory, but primarily from local and particular expressions of mission and innovation at Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace.

The four churches are a sample of emerging congregations seeking to be relevant to their post-Christendom, postmodern context. Their distinctives are not necessarily generalisable to all emerging churches but they do show what is happening in this selection of churches in Melbourne. Each of them was planted or replanted in the first decade of this century. Two were reinvented congregations, one was a fresh church plant and another was a congregational plant within an existing church. Using Stuart Murray’s terms, Connection and Urban Life emerged from inherited churches, Solace emerged out of inherited church and Eastern Hills emerged within a particular context (with some influence out of inherited church). All four are interested in mission, community, worship and spirituality. But, to generalise, the founding focus for Solace was re-imagining worship (and then spirituality and mission), Eastern Hills was reconfiguring community (and worship), Connection was reshaping mission (and community), and Urban Life reviewed community and mission.

The thesis investigates ‘the shape of things now’ in these four emerging churches. It is a present, local and particular perspective that provides a window into what is happening in the emerging church scene, as inspired by missional literature and in particular Frost and Hirsch’s *The Shaping of Things to Come*. Frost and Hirsch’s vision of a preferred future for the church in the Western world is one that is shaped by missional structures, incarnational ecclesiology, messianic spirituality and apostolic leadership. The four emerging churches in this research are forming and reforming in this general direction, and are aware they still have things to learn.

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4Murray, *Changing Mission*, 44.
5Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*. 

Evaluation

The study concludes that the four emerging churches are identifiable as ‘learning organisations’, drawing on Peter Senge’s organisational analysis. At their best they are learning to foster incarnational mission, inclusive community, empowering leadership and planned change. Their reality, however, does not always match up to their espoused hopes. For instance, the four emerging churches are not reaching as many unchurched people as their ideals suggest and some of their decision processes are identified as being haphazard. This gap between ideals and experience provides creative tension that invites ongoing evaluation and learning about the shaping of mission and leadership for 21st-century churches.

The four emerging churches demonstrate a number of distinctive strengths which they can build on and other churches may learn from. Their first and obvious strength is their commitment to mission. They espouse an approach to mission that is incarnational in going to people in their networks and third places and not just wait for people to come to them. The theological basis for their mission is grounded in missio Dei and the incarnation of Christ. In refreshing ways they are discovering an interest in local as well as overseas mission, and want to demonstrate a commitment to holistic mission through mercy, justice and evangelism. They are also exploring ways to cultivate and celebrate the mission of the whole people of God.

Second, the churches espouse authentic and inclusive community and advocate a centred-set approach in helping people grow towards Christ. Inviting people to belong to a church community, even before they may believe, is a path which arguably suits many postmodern people, and is the experience of some newcomers at these emerging churches. The four churches have been particularly effective in attracting and mobilising young adults in church and mission.

Third, the emerging churches foster innovation through empowering leadership that encourages people to foster their creativity and passions in mission. Participants

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Senge, *Fifth Discipline*. 
fondly recall times of creative dreaming and brainstorming about how to express worship and mission. Each congregation engages in creative and alternative approaches to worship, some of them all the time and some occasionally. Empowering leadership is part of the role of apostolic leadership of the five-fold APEST leadership matrix. The churches value innovation and experimentation with new expressions of mission. They are empowering people in mission and building community with a mostly collaborative and affirming leadership style.

Fourth, the four churches are committed to change. They pride themselves on fostering innovative approaches to church and mission in order to connect with a changing society. They foster a ‘culture of change’ and drive innovative approaches to mission, community and worship. Their changes are not always successful, but they proudly hold to the importance of experimentation to try new avenues of mission and adapting church life to connect with changes in society.

Incarnational mission, inclusive community, empowering leadership and planned change are four distinctive characteristics of the emerging church case studies. All of them engage their communities in mission, foster inclusive community, seek to empower people, encourage ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking, and initiate and implement ongoing change. The project showed that emerging missional frameworks are fostering these fresh expressions of mission and innovation which are appropriate to encourage. Other churches seeking to express new forms of mission and innovation appropriate for a post-Christendom context would benefit from reflecting on how to express these distinctives in their context.

There are also weaknesses that appear in some or all of the congregations which they need to address and of which other churches can beware. If church leaders are conscious of these potential weaknesses, and the factors which can positively influence mission and innovation, then they will be better equipped to engage their world with effective mission. When there is dissonance between rhetoric and reality, the important leadership behaviour is to maintain creative tension and sustain commitment to the ideals of the vision despite any delays or discouragement. Lasting and fruitful change will come from holding on to the vision despite dissonance, and
to allow the dissonance to motivate and foster energy for ongoing mission and innovation.⁷

First, each of the churches has a stated commitment to holistic mission, although with their community service programs they tend to be stronger in mercy than evangelism. They are not exceptional in their effectiveness when measured according to traditional church growth criteria. The two churches that could be measured with National Church Life Survey criteria were not, on many indicators, any healthier or more missionally effective, by virtue of being emerging churches, than other average congregations. Significantly, they are not yet attracting more newcomers from previously unchurched backgrounds and do not appear to be more active in faith-sharing. Anecdotal evidence from the other two case studies supports this finding.

Second, although they value inclusive community and attract a healthy number of young adults, they do not appear more inclusive or diverse than other average churches, and in some cases have a lower than average sense of belonging. Emerging churches need to grapple with how to serve and engage people in a multicultural context, and need to recognise the broader body of Christ. To balance their ‘centred set’ belonging, they need to articulate their theological basis for membership and discipleship.

Third, as well as the emphasis on mission, community and empowering people for leadership, the churches need to remember to nurture and disciple people through spirituality, community and worship. Missional ecclesiology may begin with mission, but to be balanced and sustainable emerging churches need to also cultivate other aspects of church life. Church without meaningful worship or supportive care is not living up to all church should be, just as church without mission is substandard.

Fourth, the churches value change but have not always been good at processing change and including people in decisions. As well as fostering a culture of change, leaders need to ensure that thoughtful and consistent decision-making processes are implemented for planned change. Change in itself is attractive to some mission-

minded Christians. But they still want to be consulted and led wisely. Moreover, the appropriate balance to strong leadership is clear accountability, which emerging churches and leaders need just as much as any others, or more than others as they stretch boundaries and explore new areas for ministry and theology.

As Hans Küng suggests, to think of any church as set apart from error and sin would be an ‘idealizing misconception’ which makes it ‘an unreal, distant ideal surrounded by a false halo, rather than a real historical church’. Rather than adopting an idealist or supra-cultural perspective, this thesis used a historical or realist perspective and examined the local and particular cultures of four emerging churches. Like any other congregation, these emerging churches thrive on good leadership and healthy systems, attention to nurture, decision-making processes and clear accountability, or suffer when such elements are lacking.

This is not to say that the emerging churches are not effective in mission or that they should not be encouraged in their innovation. Mission in the Western world, including leading fruitful churches in Melbourne, is not an easy task. Frost and Hirsch and the Forge-inspired churches are pointing in some helpful directions for taking church into the community and experimenting with different forms. Hirsch acknowledges it is critical to get beyond the rhetoric and live out the challenges of incarnational mission, non-dualistic spirituality and pioneering leadership:

I believe that, by and large, as a movement we need to move from rhetoric and missional theory to real action. If we have anything to offer to 21st Century Christianity in this land it must come from our actions. … If we are to have anything helpful to add to the church in the 21st century, we will need to actively model new ways forward.

Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace are emerging missional churches that are actively modelling new ways forward. In some respects they still have

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lessons to learn. But they are still young churches and a thorough evaluation needs to wait another few years. In the meantime, my judgment is that emerging churches merit encouragement to persevere in their initiatives and that Melbourne and the rest of the Western world need more fresh expressions of mission and innovation of the kind displayed in these emerging churches.

Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace are not presented as models to emulate in their particular details but case studies to learn from in their general approach. Each of them has been influenced by Forge Mission Training Network, but is not bound by any Forge model. Emerging churches resist the tendency to pursue a particular model, preferring to see their approach as a mindset characterised by mission and innovation. Senge similarly warns that great organisations are not built from emulating models with ‘best practices’, which can lead to piecemeal copying and trying to catch up with what another organisation has done in its context. These case studies are not models for others to imitate but local and particular examples that may help other congregations seeking to live out the gospel in their contexts.

The experiences of these emerging churches are also ‘the shaping of things to come’, and where the reality does not match up to the rhetoric, it leaves space for aspirations to grow and learn. There is space and grace for the hope, even eschatological hope, that these communities are growing into the shape of missio Dei to which they are called. It is the difference between historicist realities of congregational life, as shown in the case studies; and idealist possibilities of biblical hope and the missional literature, towards which they are growing. Miroslav Volf describes the sojourning church as existing between the ‘historical minimum and eschatological maximum’ to leave room for churches to grow into possibilities God has given them. Churches aspiring to express missio Dei cannot be content with the historical minimum, yet they are still shaping up to their eschatological maximum.

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Further research

Further research of emerging churches will be helpful. Emerging churches take different shapes in different places. This thesis discussed four emerging churches in Melbourne. Elsewhere around Australia alternative communities are emerging, such as Third Place Communities (TPC) in Hobart, GO Network in Adelaide, Upstream Communities and Cheers in Perth, Fair Go in Darwin, Joshua Tribe in Brisbane, and Café Church and Small Boat Big Sea in Sydney.¹⁵ A comparative study of these or other emerging churches, or a study localised in another capital city or area, as mine was in Melbourne, would provide useful points of comparison.¹⁶

Moreover, new communities have been birthed over the last decade in Melbourne cafés, community centres and homes. The four case studies of this research were all in the Eastern suburbs, worship on Sunday mornings and employ their pastors. The similarity among the case studies provided ease of comparison on the one hand, but less diversity for contrast on the other. Other emerging churches on my original shortlist, that functioned as house church networks or operated ‘under the radar’, were not as available or did not respond to my requests for research. The more organised churches on my list self-selected into the sample by responding efficiently. Other churches in Melbourne which could form the basis of a more informal and organic set of case studies might include Inspiral, The Junction, Living Room, Missio Dei, Northern Community Church of Christ, Red Network and Seedy Mobs.¹⁷

Other communities which do not identify with the emerging church movement but which are thoughtfully expressing mission in our context and which would show


¹⁶Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’ investigated some of these churches though without participant-observation.

interesting contrasts with emerging churches include South Yarra Community Baptist Church with its liturgical Eucharist, the missional order Urban Neighbours of Hope and the monastic community of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Breakwater, Geelong.\textsuperscript{18}

Whatever other research is undertaken, for ease of comparison it would be helpful to follow a similar methodology to this thesis and/or other already existing research.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, it would be instructive to follow up this research with future longitudinal research, to explore how these four case studies develop. A thorough evaluation of the four case studies, and the broader Emerging Missional Church (EMC) movement, will be even more appropriate in five to fifteen years when they have been going a decade or two.

The research methodology of four case studies drawing on participant-observation, document analysis, interviews and focus groups generally worked well and provided invaluable data. Four case studies proved to be a useful number. Any fewer cases would have reduced the points of comparison and therefore the strength of the argument. More would have produced excessive data and more shallow treatment. More interviews rather than focus groups of participants may have generated more personal reflections and sensitive cultural information. But the focus groups gathered large amounts of data and prompted discussion that may not have arose in interviews alone.\textsuperscript{20} The methodological aspect that requires more work is quantitative data collection.

\textsuperscript{18}http://www.laughingbird.net/SouthYarraBaptist.html; http://www.unoh.org.au/; Barker, Surrender All; Paul R Dekar, Community of the Transfiguration: The Journey of a New Monastic Community (Eugene: Cascade, 2008).


The two quantitative data sources were disappointing in their results. Firstly, the questionnaire for interview and focus group participants produced limited useful data. I did not get all the questionnaires back. Those that were returned gave some insights, and hopefully helped prepare participants for the interview. But when I started getting questionnaires that did not look useful, and when I suspected giving the questionnaire to people before the interview and asking them to bring it to the interview may have discouraged them from coming, I grew less diligent in handing out and following up the survey requests with later case studies. The questionnaire was closely adapted from Steve Taylor, who had distributed it to everyone in Cityside Baptist Church, which is a better strategy for getting an overall representation of the church.\textsuperscript{21} Frost collected a representative 68 surveys from his 7 churches, which was 19\% of the total estimated 350 members.\textsuperscript{22} The limited number of questionnaires I collected did not give a substantive or representative picture of the overall composition of the case studies.

One reason the research design did not seek to survey the churches as a whole, and the reason I did not persevere with getting a better return of surveys, was that I was expecting quantitative data from the 2006 National Church Life Survey (NCLS). But this was disappointing since only two of the four case studies participated. Taylor extensively used and compared his own survey and NCLS data. This project was limited to NCLS data from Connection and Urban Life, which added a useful complementary set of quantitative data to the qualitative interviews and focus groups, but the data and potential for comparisons would have been enhanced if all of the case studies had engaged NCLS.

The hesitancy of Solace, Eastern Hills and other emerging churches to participate in NCLS is a challenge for evaluating emerging churches and comparing their effectiveness with other churches. Their hesitancy to be involved may reveal something about their unwillingness to evaluate their effectiveness or at least their resistance to be measured in traditional ways. NCLS are striving to fashion their survey tools to recognise the strengths of emerging churches. Connection and Urban

\textsuperscript{21}Taylor, ‘New Way of Being Church’, 308-315.

\textsuperscript{22}Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 105-112.
Life are two ‘ideal’ cases of emerging churches, according to their denominational leaders, but it would be interesting to do a broader analysis of NCLS data in emerging churches to evaluate their average results. Hopefully in 2011 more emerging churches will be willing to engage in the five-yearly NCLS and measure and compare their strengths and weaknesses alongside other Australian churches.

It is useful to compare NCLS results of emerging churches, but it is also important to evaluate emerging churches according to their stated aims. When an emerging church like Solace, for example, gives priority to empowering a network of believers to influence their everyday world, it is important to consider how to evaluate their effectiveness. NCLS have made some efforts to measure incarnational as well as attractional mission, and have started to collect stories of effective mission through new churches in Ruth Powell’s NCLS ‘Innovations Project’. Frost developed a questionnaire survey to evaluate the missional engagement of emerging church members, which includes incarnational mission questions that may be useful for future NCLS or specific EMC surveys. EMCs need to evaluate their objectives in the first instance, and then develop appropriate mechanisms to evaluate whether those objectives are being reached.

More research is needed to develop tools that survey and evaluate the mission of the people of God in the world. If mission is broader than church on Sunday, then we need to identify indicators of fruitful and effective scattered church life. For David Bosch, missio Dei of the emerging ecumenical paradigm was a crucial breakthrough for seeing mission not limited to, though including, the church. He commented, ‘It is inconceivable that we could again revert to a narrow, ecclesiocentric view of mission’. EMCs need not only a theology of incarnational mission but tools to foster and evaluate its development through congregations and the scattered people of God.

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23 Kaldor et al., *Mission under the Microscope*, xvii-xx.
26 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.
Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom suggest it is possible to measure the effectiveness of decentralised networks, or ‘starfish’ organisations, by focusing on the activity and reproducibility of their circles of influence:

Just because starfish organizations tend to be ambiguous and chaotic doesn’t mean that we can’t measure their results. But when measuring a decentralized network, it’s better, as the saying goes, to be vaguely right than precisely wrong. Even if we could, it wouldn’t really matter if we were able to get a precise count of how many members are in a network. What matters more is looking at circles. How active are they? How distributed is the network? Are circles independent? What kind of connections do they have between them? ... How’s the circle’s health? Do members continue participating? Is the network growing? Is it spreading? Is it mutating? Is it becoming more or less decentralized.27

Future research may evaluate the network influence of individual EMCs and the movement as a whole.

Emerging church theology is another area which calls for more in-depth study. Emerging churches need to rethink their practice in light of good theology and reexamine their theology in the light of missional practice. It is appropriate to apply innovative thinking to the theology of ministry as well as its practice. Yet sound biblical study and guidelines for theological reflection are needed to help emerging leaders avoid repeating heresies arising from pursuing theological innovation for its own sake or allowing a changing culture to dictate their theology. Emerging churches need to follow in the rhythm of the Reformation, ‘Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda’ (the church reformed and always reforming) but also remember the phrase which belongs after it: ‘secundum verbi Dei’ (according to the Word of God).28 Frost recommends that theological reflection is needed on the uniqueness of Christ’s role in mission, Trinitarian theology, the relation of kingdom of God to ecclesiology, conversion, evangelism, the missional role of the gathered church, APEST leadership and how apostolic leadership is expressed in congregationally-governed churches.29 I suggest that ongoing work is needed on gospel and culture

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28Roger E Olson, Reformed and Always Reforming (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Van Gelder, Ministry, 54-56.
29Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 49-52, 66-68, 89, 92-95.
issues, unity and cooperation between emerging and other churches, and a theology of innovation and change.

Emerging and inherited churches also need research into the procedures and processes for innovation and planned change. This study showed some advantages of developing a culture of change and fostering permission-giving leadership. It pointed to some helpful processes for implementing change and showed weaknesses when consultation is limited and processes go astray. There are a number of consultation processes available for helping churches transition to be more mission-shaped. A useful research project would investigate, describe and evaluate selected different programs, and suggest culturally appropriate processes for particular contexts.

Another prospect for further research is to explore and evaluate Forge and its history and training. Forge has developed an innovative action-reflection training program for developing missionary identity and pioneering leadership skills. It operated first in Melbourne, and now in all Australian states, and is a model other training providers in Australia and overseas may learn from. Moreover, with the numbers of interns who go through the program and the importance placed on Forge training by many emerging church leaders and some denominational leaders who partner with Forge, a thorough evaluation would be appropriate. It would be insightful to investigate what Forge interns have done in ministry and the lessons they have learned. A longitudinal study of the experience of interns in Forge training might be particularly valuable. This could be part of an evaluation of the Forge training program and syllabus and planning for the next decade of its training.

Related to training, another area that deserves more careful scrutiny is supervision and accountability of pastors. It would be useful to evaluate leadership models in


31Hirsch, Interview.

32See also Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 35-38, 97.

33Similar to Hunter, ‘Supervised Theological Field Education’.
emerging churches and investigate the exercise of power and influence. Lack of clarity about church governance and personal accountability for leaders can undermine the ministry of emerging leaders. Research may reveal the particular challenges and temptations emerging church leaders face because of the nature of young and innovative churches and the sort of leaders and people they attract.

We also need further reflection in how emerging churches relate to inherited churches and denominations. A strength of emerging church thinking is encouraging diversity of models, but a weakness is that this can be perceived as questioning the validity of inherited churches. Emerging churches have prophetic challenges that mainstream churches need to hear, but emerging churches similarly need to be listening to and appreciating the place of inherited churches. One of Solace’s founding principles is that they want to stay connected to helpful traditions and ‘hold the hand of the historical church’. This is admirable sentiment, but not necessarily widespread in emerging churches. Murray suggests emerging and inherited churches can question and learn from one another in situations of ‘parley’, the term pirates use for a conversation under truce to avoid unnecessary conflict. It is critical for the health and future of emerging and inherited churches that cooperation, learning, encouragement and sharing resources are mutual and free-flowing.

Furthermore, it is important to research expressions of church for Generation-Y. Emerging churches are largely a Generation-X phenomenon. These EMC case studies had a high proportion of young adults but fewer teenagers. This was evident from the NCLS statistics for Connection and Urban Life, but was also observable at Eastern Hills and Solace. How can emerging churches connect better with teenagers? What will today’s teenagers need in churches when they are young adults? Doug Faircloth encourages emerging churches to stay open to new expressions:

I think one of the things about Church history is that as new things emerge in the Church, the last reinvention of the Church is the greatest

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34 Solace [Website].
35 Murray, Changing Mission, 132-139.
opponent of the new. And we are at the highest risk of being the greatest opponents and what the new thing is which we would see as this reinvention.\footnote{Faircloth, Interview #2.}

As well as initiating their own innovations and missional experiments, it is important for emerging churches to be open and affirming of the next generation of fresh expressions of church that are yet to emerge.

Alternative expressions of church are on the rise in popularity. People are increasingly dissatisfied with institutional church and its normal \textit{modus operandi}. Church researcher George Barna estimates there are 20 million Christians in America who are experimenting with new forms of faith-based community, based on 9\% of 5000 Christians randomly surveyed who had attended alternative models of church, up from 1\% a decade earlier. He estimates that one third of Americans by 2025 will view alternative faith-based communities, rather than a traditional congregation, as their primary or exclusive means of experiencing or expressing faith.\footnote{George Barna, \textit{Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary} (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2005), 13, 48-49; George Barna, ‘House Church Involvement Is Growing’, The Barna Update, (19 June 2006), \url{http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrowPreview&BarnaUpdateID=241} [Accessed 29 May, 2008]; also Frost, ‘League of Their Own?’, 11.} Barrett and Johnson estimate there are 111 million Christians worldwide without a local church and that there will be 125 million by 2025.\footnote{David Barrett and Todd Johnson, ‘State of Christianity 2001’ (2001), \url{http://www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/2001/dawn07.html} [Accessed 11 August, 2008]}

Hirsch suggests more young adults claim to follow Jesus outside the institution of the church than in the church and predicts that the emerging missional church will become the dominant paradigm of church in Australia.\footnote{Hirsch, \textit{Forgotten Ways}, 34, 68-71.}

If these estimates eventuate, then the shape of Christian religious expression in Australia as the twenty-first century proceeds will look even more informal and diverse than the churches of this study. Further research is essential to investigate the shaping of new emerging forms of church, and of faith without church. Richard Thomas counsels developing new paths for discipleship for people who do not
belong to churches or who have only loose associations.\textsuperscript{42} Useful research projects could focus on developing freshly appropriate approaches to mission, leadership, worship, community belonging, membership and discipleship.

**Personal perspectives**

‘The Shaping of Things Now’ has been a significant and formative project for me as a researcher and reflective-practitioner. It has helped me develop skills and appreciation for qualitative research – I was amazed at the insights and reflection on experience that participants shared in interviews and I have realised the value of participant-observation in understanding a group. The project has renewed my passion for ministry. Listening to emerging church leaders and hearing the appreciation of participants for their permission-giving leadership has given me fresh enthusiasm and helpful frameworks for leadership and congregational transformation. The project has introduced me to colleagues in ministry and valued friends who have enriched not only my research and ministry but also my character and family.

I have become involved in the emerging church movement and leapt into its ‘hermeneutical circle’ of meaning. This was more effective than trying to stand outside the circle, totally bracket out my experience and analyse it from an objective, external perspective. The roles of participant-observer and reflective practitioner have been helpful.\textsuperscript{43} My emerging church involvement has meant I had to be particularly conscious of my presuppositions and bias, but it has also given me unique access and insights. I still believe in and love the church, and now like to think of it as a context for ‘Connecting with God and people’, focused on ‘Creating lives which reflect the kingdom of God’, inspiring people to be ‘Living for the wellbeing of our community’ and functioning as God’s organism for remaking the world: ‘a people [who] thrive as followers of Jesus celebrating and remaking their everyday lives’.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42}Richard Thomas, *Counting People In: Changing the Way We Think About Membership and the Church* (London: SPCK, 2003).

\textsuperscript{43}Schön, *Reflective Practitioner*.

\textsuperscript{44}Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace’s mission statement.
Furthermore, participating in emerging churches gives me opportunity to apply what I am learning, an implication I see as a continuing part of the research process. I have appreciated the value of working with Forge, to help me understand emerging church dynamics and to give me an outlet to begin to apply my research findings. I am also now working in a leadership-training role with the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV). I expect that the findings of this research will continue to inform my teaching at both Forge as a training network for missional churches and BUV as a denomination rethinking leadership and community engagement. I am learning about mission and innovation in order to engage in mission more thoughtfully, and to invite others into a similar process of learning and praxis. I appreciate the strengths of emerging church perspectives on mission and innovation and want to avoid their weaknesses, and help those I serve and teach to learn from the lessons of this project.

The emerging missional church literature and churches informed by it are pointing in some helpful directions for expressing mission and innovation in the twenty-first century Western world. There are weaknesses in emerging churches and areas in which they still do not match up to the rhetoric, but they are becoming more missional and innovative in a variety of areas. The rhetoric of the literature, notably *The Shaping of Things to Come*, is being matched by the reality of some fresh expressions of mission and innovation. The gaps between ideals and experience make for creative tension that invites more careful evaluation and ongoing learning about how to do better. If Connection, Eastern Hills, Urban Life and Solace are typical of emerging churches, then it is appropriate to empower the movement of these churches to continue experimenting, developing their approaches to mission and improving their approaches to change management.

However, lest human agency eclipse *missio Dei*, the theological truth is that emerging mission and innovation is not just a result of clever strategising or timely plans, but part of how God is reforming the way the people of God gather and influence the world. After seeking to understand emerging churches with qualitative research techniques, it is important to remember that God is shaping things. Darrell Guder reminds us that the church is visible because it is made up of real people, but sociological and organisational frameworks do not explain everything:
We do not believe, however, that once the sociologist or historian describes a particular church as a fully human, thoroughly sociological organism, there is nothing more to say about it. While the church is always a real, human, social organism, it is also the body of Christ, a community grafted into the life of God in its baptism and by the action of the Holy Spirit. Elements of it are true that are not made visible by the categories and presuppositions of the sociologist, elements that rest deep in its faith and hope in the divine promises on which it was birthed.\footnote{Guder et al., \textit{Missional Church}, 12-13.}

There is a deeper truth and mystery that God is at work in these churches. God is there in the community engagement and empowerment of Connection, the variety and heart for justice at Eastern Hills, the courage and reinvention of Urban Life, and the everyday spirituality and networks of Solace. We have a window into how God is at work in the shaping of things now, and the shaping of things to come.
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Explanatory statement

The Melbourne College of Divinity

Established by the Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910-1990
Affiliated with the University of Melbourne 1993
21 Highbury Grove • Kew • Victoria • Australia 3101
Telephone: +61 3 9853 3177 • Fax: +61 3 9853 6695
Email: hrec@mcd.edu.au www.mcd.unimelb.edu.au

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Doctor of Theology research project -
Explanatory Statement for participants)

Dear [potential participant],

My name is Darren Cronshaw and I live at 7 Coolaroo Court, Mooroolbark. I have been a Baptist missionary and pastor and student and teacher of practical theology, and am currently a Doctor of Theology student at Whitley College (Melbourne College of Divinity), researching emerging churches. Thanks for being willing to work through this form. I am writing to introduce myself and my research and to ask you to please consider the possibility of participating.

Purpose
This research project is designed to gather data about innovation and mission in selected emerging churches in Melbourne. I am fascinated to explore how churches, pastors and other church participants understand, experience and express innovation and mission. I have selected a short list of emerging churches that I could study and compare. I would like to participate and observe in your church, interview the pastor(s), and interview a representative group of participants. This study will lead to a number of recommendations to help those who are leading new-style missional churches (or training or supervising them), and may offer a resource that a local church might use to increase its effectiveness. Thus participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experience and contribute to the ongoing development of innovation and mission in churches in Melbourne.

Requirements
Pastors or key informants who decide to become involved in the research project will take part in two in-depth interviews. The interviews will happen at a convenient time for them and will be between one and one-and-a-half hours duration. A third one-hour session may be held if necessary.
Other church participants who decide to become involved in the research and are chosen for the research group will take part in one or two focus-group discussion sessions. They will happen after hours on a weeknight evening and/or on a weekend and will be sixty to ninety minutes duration. A third optional session may be held if necessary, either with the focus group or with an individual, for a maximum of one hour. Each focus group participant will have a questionnaire to complete prior to their participation in the sessions. It should take about one hour to recollect the experience and represent it in written form. The total time commitment for each focus group participant will be about one hour preparation time and between one and four hours interview time.

In the focus groups, with about seven to ten people from the church, the kind of questions asked for the sessions will be: “Describe your experience of new things happening in your church? What happened? How did you feel about it?” This is so that each participant can express freely the impact that the designated experience had on them. Focus groups will be asked to explore these topics and, because potentially sensitive information may be disclosed, participants will be asked to keep their contributions and discussion of other participants confidential. Interviews and group sessions will be audiotaped and then transcribed by a confidential secretarial service.

**Implications**
The research is part of a Doctor of Theology degree through the Melbourne College of Divinity. The research will result in a set of data that will be used in evaluating the contribution of emerging church thinking and practice. The data will be stored securely without explicit identifying labels, and stored for five years and then destroyed. Church names will be identified but the identities of the participants (other than the pastors) will not be disclosed in the thesis or any subsequently published documents. Most of the references to the data in the thesis will be to the group process and group interpretations of the experience of emerging church dynamics, although it may be necessary to refer to some individual representations pseudonymously. The thesis that results from this work will be published in hard copy, and housed at Whitley College and with the MCD. Research findings may also be presented at conferences and published in journals or a book.

It is unlikely that a participant would experience an adverse reaction to any of the processes involved in the research. However, should any participant experience distress through their involvement in the research (e.g., by recollecting a difficult church situation) she/he may, at any time during the research, request a personal interview with me or with a church pastor/leader to de-brief any unexpected reaction.

Each participant is also free, without fear of penalty, adverse consequences or harming the research process, to withdraw from active participation in the research project at any time. Any participant may also request that information arising from their participation is not used in the research project, provided they exercise this right within four weeks of completing their participation in the project.

The participant may request a copy of personal information about them that is collected in the course of the research project. Pastors and other key informants who have an in-depth interview will have the opportunity to read the transcripts of each of
their interview in which they share, and will be offered the chance to modify the transcript.

**Timetable**  
The research will commence in April 2006 and continue through till March 2007. The involvement of participants from any one church will involve a research period of 2-8 weeks within that time frame. I do not expect to complete processing the data and writing up the research until mid 2008, but will be happy to give interested participants progressive information from time to time. I would expect the dates for the interviews and focus groups for your congregation may be between _____ and _____ [usually 1-2 months]. The dates for the focus group for your congregation are _____ and _____ [usually within 1 month].

**Response**  
Please let me know whether or not you are willing and available to participate in the research by Friday [date in two weeks time]. If you are prepared to be involved you will need to sign the Participant Information and Consent Form (below) and return it to me.

**Further information**  
I would appreciate you giving time to this study, which is in an area that is significant for me and I think significant for churches in Melbourne and beyond. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Whitley College, 271 Royal Parade Parkville VIC 3052, phone (03) 9733 5455 or email shapingnow@optusnet.com.au. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Ross Langmead at Whitley College, Parkville VIC 3052, Phone (03) 9340 8021 or email rlangmead@whitley.unimelb.edu.au.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the MCD Administration, (03) 9853 3177. If you have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Liaison Officer, MCD Human Research and Ethics Committee: phone 03 9853 3177, e-mail hrec@mcd.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Yours sincerely

Darren Cronshaw
Appendix 2: Questionnaire survey

The Melbourne College of Divinity

Established by the Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910-1990
Affiliated with the University of Melbourne 1993
21 Highbury Grove • Kew • Victoria • Australia 3101
Telephone: +61 3 9853 3177 • Fax: +61 3 9853 6695
Email: hrec@mcd.edu.au   www.mcd.unimelb.edu.au

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Doctor of Theology research project -
Explanatory Statement for participants)

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. Thank you if you decide to participate. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and thank you for considering my request. Completing the enclosed ‘Participant Information and Consent Form’ and filling in the survey form is an indication of your willingness to participate and that you understand that:

1. Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary
2. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage
3. The data collected will be securely stored. The survey forms and any personal information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project except that, as required by the MCD’s research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage in electronic format for five years, after which it will be destroyed
4. The results of the project may be published but your anonymity will be preserved. Only churches and pastors will be referred to by their real name.

This information will be used as part of Daren Cronshaw’s doctoral research, to be presented in the form of a doctoral thesis of the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). Results of this project may be published but any data included will not identify you as an individual. You will be most welcome to view the results of the project. At the conclusion of the research, I will contact you by letter, email or telephone to advise you that the thesis can be viewed at the Whitley College library or at the MCD where the thesis will be lodged.

This survey is adapted from a survey used by Steve Taylor in his research of alt.worship in New Zealand. (‘A new way of being church: A case study approach to Cityside Baptist Church as Christian faith “making do” in a postmodern world’. PhD thesis. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago, 2004.)

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me at Whitley College (MCD), 271 Royal Parade Parkville VIC 3052, phone (03) 9733 5455 or email shapingnow@optusnet.com.au. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Ross Langmead, also at Whitley College or phone (03) 9340 8021 or email rlangmead@whitley.unimelb.edu.au.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Melbourne College of Divinity.
Please tick one box per question, or write in the space provided

1. How frequently do you attend church services at this church?
   ❑ Hardly ever
   ❑ Less than once a month
   ❑ Once a month
   ❑ 2-3 times a month
   ❑ Usually every week

2. How long have you been attending church services here?
   ❑ Less than 1 year
   ❑ 1-2 years
   ❑ 3-5 years
   ❑ 6-10 years
   ❑ More than 11 years
   ❑ I am visiting from another congregation
   ❑ I am visiting and do not regularly go anywhere else

3. Do you regularly take part in any mission activities of this church (e.g., evangelism or outreach, community service, social justice or welfare)?
   ❑ No, we don’t have such activities
   ❑ No, I am not regularly involved
   ❑ Yes, in evangelism or outreach
   ❑ Yes, in community service, social justice or welfare
   ❑ Yes, in both evangelism or outreach and community service, social justice or welfare

4. Are you regularly involved in group activities here?
   ❑ No, we have no such groups
   ❑ No, I am not regularly involved
   ❑ Yes in a small prayer, discussion or Bible study group
   ❑ Yes, in a fellowship or social group

5. Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this church?
   ❑ Yes, a strong sense of belonging which is growing
   ❑ Yes, about the same as last year
   ❑ Yes, although perhaps not as strong as in the past
   ❑ No, but I am new here
   ❑ No, and I wish I did by now
   ❑ No, but I am happy to stay on the fringe
   ❑ Don’t know
   ❑ Not applicable
6. Over the last year, do you believe you have grown in your Christian faith?
   - No real growth
   - Some growth mainly through this church
   - Some growth, mainly through other groups or congregations
   - Some growth, mainly through my own private activity
   - Much growth, mainly through this church
   - Much growth, mainly through other groups or congregations
   - Much growth, mainly through my own private activity

7. What is the main reason you came to this church?
   - Worship style
   - Had friends here
   - Ethos
   - Preaching
   - Location
   - Knew the pastor
   - Other (please state)

8. List your previous church/religious experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years (eg 1990-96)</th>
<th>Best label (liberal, evangelical, charismatic)</th>
<th>Size (&lt;75, 75-200, &gt;200)</th>
<th>Reason moved *</th>
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* Reason for move could include relocation, social needs, spiritual needs, ministry needs, theological change, church changed, other – state

9. How did your previous church experience (positive & negative) contribute to your move to this church?
10. Rate the following aspects of this church in terms of their contribution to your spirituality

- **Preaching**
- **Community**
- **Communion**
- **Worship**
- **Visuals**
- **Use of contemporary culture**
- **Personal participation**
- **Seeing others involved**
- **Dealing with conflict**
- **Prayer**
- **Use of liturgy**
- **Use of art**
- **Honesty**
- **Use of technology**
- **Story telling**
- **other (please state)**

11. How often do you have a sense of God’s closeness during church services?
- Always
- Mostly
- Often
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever
- Never
- Don’t know

12. What do you think is the purpose of this church? If possible, complete the following sentence:

I believe the church exists in order to

__________________________________________________.

13. What do you value about this church? If possible, complete the following sentence to explain this church and what you feel is important:

What really matters to me about this church is

__________________________________________.

14. What group of people do you think the church is most focusing on. If possible, complete the following sentence to explain:

The people we are seeking to reach and influence are

_______________________________________.
14. As a result of being at this church:

I feel that my faith is more integrated with my workplace
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that my faith is more integrated with my culture
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Christian
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am willing to express in actions my Christian faith
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am willing to express in words my Christian faith.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. What is your understanding of mission? How does your church express mission?
16. To what extent is your church open to innovative and new approaches to worship and mission in your life together?

17. In what year were you born? 19__ __

18. Gender
   □ Male
   □ Female

19. What is your highest educational qualification?
   □ Primary
   □ Some secondary
   □ School certificate
   □ Sixth form certificate/UE/Bursary/Scholarship
   □ Recognised trade certificate
   □ Recognised diploma or equivalent
   □ Bachelor degree
   □ Post graduate degree or diploma

20. What is your present marital status?
   □ Never married
   □ Co-habiting in a de-facto relationship
   □ Married
   □ Separated, not divorced
   □ Divorced
   □ Remarried
   □ Widowed

21. Where were you born?
   City/ area ___________________ Country _______________

22. Which of the following best describes your journey to church last time you attended?
   □ Walked
   □ Biked
   □ Public transport
   □ Drove 1-5 minutes
   □ Drove 6-10 minutes
   □ Drove 11-20 minutes
   □ Drove 21-30 minutes
   □ Drove >30 minutes
Appendix 3: In-depth interview outline

These introductory remarks and guideline of questions and topics are to help people articulate the kind of information the research project is seeking to address. They are presented here as a guide to topics to talk about in a semi-structured dialogue and not as a list that have to be worked through.

The first interview, at the beginning of the research period for each church, will follow these guidelines. The second interview, timed towards the end of the research period for that church, will follow questions that were not answered in these guidelines and/or follow up on issues or questions that have been raised during participant-observation or focus groups.

1. Interview objectives

The aim of the in-depth interviews is to be introduced to the pastor(s) and the emerging church they serve and to begin to explore and understand their experience of mission and innovation.

2. Interviewees

One or two main pastors or key informants from each church will be interviewed.

3. Introductory remarks

- Purpose
- Recording and transcription details
- Mention I have some things to explore, but if there were anything else the person would like to talk about I would love to hear it.
- Ask for any literature, information packs, statements of vision and goals.

4. Question guide

Questions will be open-ended rather than directed in order to encourage pastors or key leaders to share a diversity of their experiences and stories. There are five main topics I want to explore. Depending on the situation, the sort of questions that will be explored and the general order in which they might be asked is as follows:

1. What is your history and focus?
   a. Tell me about the history of the church as far as you know it? And yourself and your call here?
   b. How would you describe your church and its focus, values and vision?

2. Tell me about how you understand and express mission? When you think about how your church has related to your community and the world, what do you think has been most important? When you are at your best, how do you express God’s love and mercy and justice to others? ’
a. Definition: What is your understanding of mission?

b. Inspiration: What books, leaders or churches helped shape your understanding & practice of mission?

c. Activities: What does your church do, in terms of mission, which other churches might be able to learn from? What forms does mission take, in lives of individuals? Through the congregation?

e. Models of mission: incarnational or attractional? Some mission-shaped churches focus on an ‘incarnational’ approach to mission that takes the ministry to where people are, rather than seeking to attract them to ‘church. To what extent can your church’s mission be described as ‘incarnational’? And how much ‘attractional’ mission occurs?

f. Process: How do you teach about mission and how do you mobilise people for mission?

g. Inspiration: How else could it be encouraged? What is your dream for the mission of this church?

3. Tell me about your innovativeness. What are the most valuable aspects of your congregation’s innovation? In innovative approaches, particularly to mission, what has been most significant, most helpful in reaching out beyond the church?

   a. Inspiration: What books, people or messages helped shape your understanding and practice of innovation and innovative approaches to church?

   b. Evidence: What innovation is your church fostering? Have there been things that are new and innovative your church has done, perhaps particularly related to its mission, that you could reflect on and tell me about? What were they and how were the changes introduced and accepted? What is your experience and your church’s experience of making decisions about innovation and new ideas? Tell me some specific examples.

   c. Process: How does your church deal with management of change and encouraging people to adopt & endorse new ideas and approaches? What frameworks do your church use for presenting and managing change and championing innovative new ideas? What processes (if any) are involved? Are you satisfied with these?

   d. Aspiration: How else can it be encouraged? Have you got ideas about how churches can better manage change and promote innovative new approaches to mission?

4. How would you describe your style of leadership? Your leaders’ leadership? Don’t be humble, this is important information: What are the most valuable ways
you contribute to your church’s ministry – your personality, your perspectives, your skills, your activities, your character? Give me some examples.

5. Tell me about the culture of the church as an organisation.

   a. If I were a newcomer, what would I need to know to understand how the place ticks?

   b. Do you think your church, to a greater degree than others, attracts people who are innovators?

   c. Does the church intentionally build a culture of change that enhances its innovativeness? How?

   d. What can other churches learn from you and your church about how to lead the church through change and into innovative new approaches to church life and mission?

6. To conclude:

   a. Make three wishes for the future of the church. Describe what the church would look like as these wishes come true.

   b. An ‘anything else’ question: Thanks for what you have shared. If there were one other thing you would really want to tell me, what might that be?

Close and thanks
Appendix 4: Focus group interview outline

These introductory remarks and guideline of topics and questions are to help people articulate the kind of information the research project is seeking to address. They are presented here as a guide for a semi-structured discussion and not as a list that have to be mechanically worked through.

1. Group objectives

The aim of the focus groups as a research tool is to explore, understand and compare the experience of mission and innovation among emerging church participants.

2. Group composition

Focus-group participants will be a stratified purposeful selection of each church selected in consultation with the pastor(s) to represent a diversity of church life.

3. Introductory remarks

- Purpose
- Recording and transcription details
- Request that people speak up, speak one at a time and be honest with responses
- Mention I have some general topics to explore, but if there were anything else the people would like to talk about I would love to hear it.

Questions will be open-ended rather than directed, and encourage people to share a diversity of experiences and stories. My intention with this project is to focus the research on what I believe to be the most important aspects of emerging churches; that is, mission and innovation. When there are two focus groups with overlapping people, in general the first focus group (A.) will explore the topic of mission (with reference to innovation). The second focus group (B.) will explore innovation (with reference to mission).

4. Question guide

(A.) Focus group interview outline – mission focus (usually first of two groups)

1. For an introductory topic, around the table, invite each person to briefly share, in one or two sentences: How would you describe your church to a newcomer?

Having listened to one another’s initial responses (thanks for sharing them), let’s have some open discussion about how the church expresses mission...

2. Firstly what is your understanding of mission? (How would you define and describe mission?) (And what books, people or messages helped shape your understanding of mission?)
3. **How does your church express mission?** What does your church do or have, in terms of mission (and/or innovation in mission) that other churches might be able to learn from? What forms does mission take, in the lives of you as individuals/as congregation? I.e., When you think about how your church has related to your **community and the world**, what do you think has been most important? When you are at your best, how do you express God’s love and mercy and justice to others?

4. How does your church **teach about mission**?

5. How has this helped foster your **missional activity** as a Christian? How do you express mission?

6. **What motivates you** to engage in mission? What factors detract from missional activity?

7. **How else could mission be encouraged?** If your pastor or leaders asked you for your opinions and ideas on how church could better foster mission, what would you say?

8. Some mission-shaped churches focus on an ‘incarnational’ approach to mission that takes the ministry to where people are, rather than seeking to attract them to ‘church. To what extent can your church’s mission be described as ‘incarnational’? And how much ‘attractional’ mission occurs?

9. How is **mission affected by leadership**?

10. Do you think your church, perhaps to a greater degree than others, **attracts people who are interested in mission and outreach**?

11. An ‘**anything else**’ question: Thanks for what you have shared. If there were one other thing you would really want to tell me, what might that be? (1 minute each around the circle.)

Close and thanks
(B.) Focus group interview outline – **innovation focus** (usually second of two groups)

1. For an introductory topic, around the circle, invite each person to:
   Tell me, if I were a newcomer, what would I need to know to **understand how the place ticks?**
   OR
   Reflect on your whole experience at your church, remember a time when you felt most engaged, alive and motivated. Who was involved? What did you do? How did it feel? What happened?

Having listened to one another’s initial responses (thanks for sharing them), let’s have some open discussion particularly about the church’s approach to innovation (and mission).

2. **What are the most valuable aspects of your congregation’s innovation and creativity?** In innovative approaches, particularly to mission, what has been most significant, most helpful in reaching out beyond the church? Tell me what has made the most difference.

3. **How else can it be encouraged?** If your pastor(s) or leaders asked you for opinions and ideas on how your church could better manage change and promote innovative new approaches to mission, what would you say?

4. **What is your experience and your church’s experience of making decisions about innovation and new ideas?** Tell us some specific examples.

5. How would you describe your **pastor and leaders’ style of leadership?**

6. **What frameworks do your church use for presenting and managing change and innovative ideas?** What processes (if any) are involved? Are you satisfied with these? How do you know or believe as a church that God is guiding you to do something? What can other churches learn from you and your church about how to lead the church through change and into innovative new approaches to church?

7. Does the church intentionally build a **culture of change** that enhances its innovativeness? How does it do this?

8. Do you think your church, perhaps to a greater degree than others, **attracts people who are innovators?**

9. **Make three wishes for the future of the church.** Describe what the church would look like as these wishes come true.

10. An **‘anything else’ question:** Thanks for what you have shared. If there were one other thing you would really want to tell me, what might that be? (1 minute each around the circle.)
### Appendix 5: Research timetable

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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Secondary tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005 Jun-Dec</td>
<td>Topic selection, research design, literature review and draft chapters 1-2</td>
<td>Research methods class</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006 Jan-Mar</td>
<td>Research proposal, confirmation of candidature and HREC approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar-Apr</td>
<td>Recruit churches for visits:</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>#1. Connection Community</td>
<td>Confirm extra churches to visit:</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>#2. Eastern Hills Community Church</td>
<td>Visit Café Church and New Community Ringwood and interview pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>#3. Urban Life</td>
<td>Interview Inspiral and Red East pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Urban Life and Solace EMC</td>
<td>Visit Urban Seeds church and interview leaders and participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>#4. Solace EMC</td>
<td>Begin to sort data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Nov</td>
<td>Draft chapters 3-6: Introducing the cases</td>
<td>NCLS survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-Feb</td>
<td>Sort and code data collected</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Feb-Mar</td>
<td>Draft chapters 7-8: Mission</td>
<td>Rewrite chapter 1: Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-May</td>
<td>Draft chapters 9-10: Innovation</td>
<td>Further data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-Jul</td>
<td>Draft chapter 11: Implications &amp; conclusion</td>
<td>Analyse NCLS survey data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-Dec</td>
<td>Edit and redraft whole thesis with deeper analysis</td>
<td>Conduct Delphi group of experts to comment on findings and invite the input of the visited church leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Jan-Nov</td>
<td>Rewrite whole thesis</td>
<td>Associated writing and teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Make research results available at Whitley &amp; MCD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Appendix 6: Case study characteristics and data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church &amp; denom.</th>
<th>Suburb, region</th>
<th>Description &amp; emergence source</th>
<th>Founding focus</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Pastors</th>
<th>Year began</th>
<th>Mth visited</th>
<th>Interview data collected</th>
<th>Key narrative</th>
<th>Distinctives</th>
<th>Looking forward to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection Community Church of Christ</td>
<td>Croydon, Outer-Eastern</td>
<td>Reinvented congregation - From inherited church</td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Bistros &amp; community</td>
<td>Wayne &amp; Paula Nebauer</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>May 2006</td>
<td>13 interviews, 3 focus groups 155,000 words</td>
<td>Dramatic reinvention</td>
<td>Innovation Shop windows Community service Empowering people</td>
<td>New leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Hills Community Church, Baptist</td>
<td>Croydon, Outer Eastern</td>
<td>New church plant - Within particular context</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community centre &amp; homes</td>
<td>Toli &amp; Emma Morgan</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>June 2006</td>
<td>7 interviews, 3 focus groups 86,000 words</td>
<td>Young proliferating church plant</td>
<td>Creativity in worship Community &amp; hospitality Engaging the world Shared leadership</td>
<td>Changed location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solace, Anglican</td>
<td>Balwyn &amp; Fairfield, Eastern &amp; Nth-East</td>
<td>Congregation plant in mother church - Out of inherited church</td>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Network &amp; everyday life</td>
<td>Olivia Maclean/ Stuart Davey &amp; Jude Waldron</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sept 2006</td>
<td>6 interviews, 6 focus groups 88,000 words</td>
<td>Interactive network</td>
<td>Interactive worship Theological questioning Everyday spirituality &amp; vocation</td>
<td>Dreaming</td>
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</table>

1Murray, Changing Mission, 42-43.

2Murray, Changing Mission, 44.
### Appendix 7: Characteristics and qualifications of leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church (Denomination)</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birth order</th>
<th>Personality (MBTI)</th>
<th>APEST</th>
<th>Tertiary qualification</th>
<th>Bible College</th>
<th>Ministry accreditation</th>
<th>Family status (as at 1/7/2006)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connection (Church of Christ)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wayne Nebauer</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1st of 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>PATES</td>
<td>BEng GradDipMin</td>
<td>BCV &amp; Tabor</td>
<td>None (marriage celebrant only)</td>
<td>Married 15 years, 3 children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paula Nebauer</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1st of 4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Applied Science Degree</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan Crouch</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3rd of 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>PSATE</td>
<td>Building trade (BMin student)</td>
<td>Tabor (current student)</td>
<td>None (marriage celebrant only)</td>
<td>Married 4 years (1st child 9/2/07)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Spratt</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>2nd of 4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Presbyterian (incomplete)</td>
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<td><strong>Urban Life (CRC)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthea Smits</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1st of 3</td>
<td>ESTJ</td>
<td>PEAST</td>
<td>(BMin student)</td>
<td>Tabor (current student)</td>
<td>CRC minister (ordained 2003)</td>
<td>Married 12 years, 2 children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adam Smits</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1st of 2</td>
<td>ISFP</td>
<td>PAETS</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Douglas Faircloth</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3rd of 5</td>
<td>ENTP/ENFP</td>
<td>EPATS</td>
<td>Bible College CertIVAWT</td>
<td>Tabor</td>
<td>CRC minister (ordained 1986)</td>
<td>Married 31 years, 2 children</td>
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<td><strong>Solace (Anglican origin)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Olivia Maclean</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2nd of 3</td>
<td>INTJ</td>
<td>APTSE</td>
<td>BTh</td>
<td>Ridley</td>
<td>Anglican priest (ordained 1998)</td>
<td>Married 4 years, 2 children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jude Waldron</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3rd of 3</td>
<td>ENFP</td>
<td>TPASE</td>
<td>BMus MDiv</td>
<td>Whitley</td>
<td>Baptist pastor (ordained 2005)</td>
<td>Single</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuart Davey</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>ENFP</td>
<td>APTSE</td>
<td>BTh(Hons) CertIVMassage</td>
<td>BCV</td>
<td>None (unofficial Baptist pastor)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern Hills (Baptist)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toli Morgan</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1st of 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>EATPS</td>
<td>BMin</td>
<td>BCV</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Married 4 years (1st child 23/9/06)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emma Morgan</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1st of 3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>TAPES</td>
<td>DipHospMgm DipArts</td>
<td>BCV (audit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matthew Jones</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3rd of 4</td>
<td>INTP</td>
<td>TPSAE</td>
<td>BSc DipEd MA(Theo)</td>
<td>BCV</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Single (married 4/1/07)</td>
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<td><strong>Average (or most common)</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>PATES</td>
<td>(BMin)</td>
<td>(BCV)</td>
<td>(None)</td>
<td>Married years, 2 children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: (Pre-)history timeline of Connection

Appendices nine to twelve outline the timelines of the history and any pre-history of the four case studies. The historical information varies depending on available information that the research uncovered. This first timeline of Croydon Church of Christ outlines the almost thirteen decades of history up to Connection in 2001 and an outline of Connection’s ministries and moves.

➢ Croydon Church of Christ, 1873-2000

1873

Croydon Church of Christ started with three people in a Ringwood home.

Over a decade the church made several moves firstly to Nelson’s Hill, then in 1877 the home of Brother Parr at Mooroolbark with 11 members, then Mooroolbark State School then the home of Brother Styles in Dorset Road, Croydon.

1886

Brother Thurgood donated a block of land in Main Street, Croydon. A chapel at Nunawading was donated and its land sold to pay for its removal and renovation.

1894

Membership had risen to 57. The cause at Mooroolbark was recommenced and 11 members went back to join them.

1923

By this year membership at Croydon had declined to 32.

1924-1929

Membership grew to 41 members and dropped to 6.

1934

Membership grew to 20, and was then constant for 12 years.

1946-1947

Dramatic post-war growth as church doubled from 21 to 42 members.

1948

H E R Steele and a student were preachers of Croydon-Wonga Park Church of Christ meeting at Edinburgh Rd Mooroolbark.

1949-1956


1955

Main Street sold and church moved to 7-9(-11) Jackson Street. The Main Street building was relocated then a brick building erected.

---


Appendix 8 : 323
(Pre-)history timeline of Connection
(Croydon Church of Christ)
1957 New building opened at Jackson Street.

1957-1960 P Retchford was preacher and the church was known as Croydon-Bayswater-Wonga Park Chapel. Membership varied between 57 and 47 members and attendance averaged about 44 communicants.2

1960-1965 W J Thompson was the first full-time minister, initially supported by the Department of Home Missions and Evangelism, and membership grew steadily and more than doubled to 119 members, although attendance in 1963 only averaged 74 communicants.

1966-1968 A John Lloyd was preacher and membership grew from 126 to 140 in 1966 then declined to 115 members in 1967, with average attendance rising to 80 then declining to 68.

1969-1977 A B Clark was pastor and membership went down to 105 members in 1969 then up to a highpoint of 148 members in 1975 and finally 139 members in 1977, with attendance rising to 91 then back to 83.

1978-1983 Les S Dewberry was pastor. Membership remained constant until 135 members in 1983, but average attendance rose from 74 to 93.

1983-1989 Wally G Gibney was pastor. Membership had dropped back down to 122 but rose to 140 by 1989. Average attendance rose from 98 to 119. Gibney left when he failed to get 75% endorsement to continue his ministry, missing by two votes.

1988 Martin A Burgess appointed as associate pastor.

1990-1994 Martin A Burgess appointed main pastor. Membership remained constant at close to 140 1990-1991, then revised to 82 in 1992 and back to 98 by 1994 (while attendance steadily increased to 124 in 1993). Burgess sought to introduce a Willow Creek styled seeker-service approach.3 With some opposition he decided to leave and try it elsewhere, so the church portrayed it as a church plant. Six families went with Burgess and based at Mooroolbark Secondary College but the effort faded out within two years. Others who had been supportive were disappointed over the pastor’s process in implementing his new ideas and did not go with him, but later some of them left.

1993-1994 Isobel Marshall, a Licensed Minister (LM), added as associate pastor.

1994-1996 Richard Gordon as youth worker. 55 attending evening services.

1995-1996 Ian Baker was appointed as interim pastor on the recommendation of one of his sons, one of Burgess’s friends. Membership declined from

---

2A ‘communicant’ is a person who takes communion.

3See Hybels, Rediscovering Church. Ironically this was part of Wayne Nebauer’s later inspiration for proposing reinventing the church, which the church under Wayne’s ministry adopted.
Appendix 8:

(Pre-)history timeline of Connection (Croydon Church of Christ)  

98 to 56, including many in their thirties, reacting against the interim pastor’s age and overt Pentecostalism. Attendance declined 89 to 67 in the mornings and down to 28 in the evenings.

1997-1999  
Ben Richardson was pastor. Membership continued to decline from 56 to 43 members. However, service attendance, 44-48 average in the mornings and 20-24 in the evenings, remained fairly constant.

1999-2000  
No pastor. Membership was at 46 and service attendance averaged 32 in mornings and 28 in evenings. Then the church closed, sold its church building and retirement village and the people met as a small group in homes.

➢ Connection Community with Wayne and Paula Nebauer, 2000-2006

Jul 2000  
Wayne and Paula Nebauer felt called from Wattle Park Chapel to plant a new church

2001  
Wayne and Paula Nebauer called as pastors to reinvent the church and moved to Wonga Park. Church membership was 36. NCLS 2001 showed 93% of the congregation had attended for more than 5 years and the only new people were the 7% who had switched in from another denomination – no newcomers from a dechurched or unchurched background. From June 2001 the church office was in Railway Crescent, Croydon, alongside Compassion for India (CFI).

20 May 2001  
First ‘601’ service on Sunday evening at Yarrunga Community Centre, which soon moved to Croydon Hills Primary School, where it averaged 63 in attendance.

2001-2005  
Community ministries which started as Connection grew included:
  o 2001-2004  
    Croydon Hills Primary School programs.
  o 2002-2006  
    Internship trained twenty people including.
  o 2002-present  
    Maroondah Secondary College (MSC) programs.
  o 2004-2006  
    Ronwyn developed Faith Community Nursing.
  o 2004-2005  
    Farris organised three drama productions.
  o 2005-ongoing  
    Croydon Soup Kitchen and Dining Room ministry.
  o 2005-2007  
    Roxanne ran ‘Kids@Play’ playgroups
  o 2005  
    Open Homes training and introduction

2001-2006  
Other significant moves and changes during Wayne and Paula’s ministry included:

4This summary of Connection’s history and ministries draws on information from the thesis, especially pp.70-86 from chapter 3 and Connection, ‘This Week @ Connection’, Church e-newsletter (29 June 2007); Nebauer, ‘Connection’.

5NCLS Research, ‘Connection’, 22; see p.154-155 above for 2006 comparisons.
Appendix 8:

(Pre-)history timeline of Connection
(Croydon Church of Christ)

- **2001-2006** ‘601’ Sunday evening services held at Yarrunga Community Centre, Croydon Hills Primary School, (from April 2002) and Maroondah Secondary College (from February 2003).

- **2003-2007** Life Connection at Daisy’s Bistro (from February 2003), Croydon Hotel (April 2004), multiplied also to Dorset Gardens (May 2005) and merged back at Sofia’s Restaurant (November 2005).

- **June 2004** Church office moved to ‘the milkshed’, 134 Croydon Road, Croydon.

- **2004** With new ‘partnership’ system, 75 people became ‘partners’, including many who had been members. At this stage, attendance averaged 53 in the mornings and 118 in evenings.

- **Nov 2005** Connection Centre options explored (and aborted).

- **2006**

  - **Feb 2006** Open Homes proposed and training commenced.
  
  - **April 2006** Wayne suspended from ministry.
  
  - **Jul 2006** Church office and 601 moved to Croydon SDA buildings.
  
  - **Sep 2006** Wayne and Paula officially finished their ministry at Connection.
  
  - **Dec 2006** Adrian Turner called as interim pastor to work with Nathan Crouch. Other remaining staff finished because of budgetary restraints.

- **2007** Life Connection moved to Croydon SDA (February) and renamed ‘Sunday Experiments’ (June).

- **Sep 2007** Wayne started his own business ‘Inner Tuition Life Coaching’.

- **Dec 2007** Adrian Turner completed his interim ministry.

- **Feb 2008** Nathan resigned and concluded his employed ministry at Connection, moving to be Young Life youth worker at MSC.

- **Mar-May 2008** Martin Boutros came as a consultant to help the leadership team and speak at Connection services and camp.

- **Sep 2008** The Dining Room formally separated from Connection and came under Revive (Croydon SDA)

- **2008** Recruited Brian Macallan, from South Africa, as pastor.
Appendix 9: Historical timeline of Eastern Hills

2002  Small group of young adults met to read and dream about a different approach to church together.¹

Apr 2002  Toli and Emma married.

Feb 2003  Commenced public worship gatherings at Wyreena Arts Centre hall.

2001-2006  Ministries at Eastern Hills which started as the church grew included:

- 2002-2005 Make-a-movie nights.
- 2004-ongoing Krystal led Sudanese asylum-seeker assistance.
- 2003-ongoing Ian and team started ‘SelahPhonic’ band. EH started supporting them when Ian joined the church in 2005.
- 2005-2006 Claire ran Monday night Croydon soup kitchen.
- 2006-ongoing Emma started ‘Colour Life’ program for Supported Residential Services housing occupants.
- 2006-ongoing Croydon Secondary College lunchtime program.

Feb 2007  Relocated Sunday morning gatherings to Yarrunga Community Centre.

Appendix 10: (Pre-)history timeline of Urban Life

This timeline outlines the five decades of history up to Urban Life in 2006, and its various church pastors, plants, groups and difficulties.¹

- CRC and Anglican forerunners, 1957-1971

1957  Small Commonwealth Revival Crusade (CRC) group started in Hal Oxley’s home and then Loyal Orange hall in Box Hill.²

1960  CRC Melbourne Assembly started in Lonsdale Street Melbourne, merging Box Hill and St Kilda assemblies. Hal Oxley and Russ Hooper both claim founding pastor status.

1969  CRC Melbourne Assembly moved to Kew, into the former Kew Baptist Church building, now Bob Stilwell’s car yard.³


1971  Bishop asked the charismatic group to leave. They met in a Wonga Park hall and then a Croydon house basement, becoming Croydon (Christian) Fellowship Centre (CCFC/ CFC) with ‘covering’ from Oxley.⁴

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²The church probably started as a group disenfranchised from Lloyd Longfield, the immediate past president of CRC Victoria who had left CRC to form his own group. Later Longfield taught doctrinal errors including ‘you have to speak in tongues to be saved’. Don Dawson from Frankston CRC (now Peninsula City Church) supervised the group preaching there most Sundays. Faircloth, ‘Short History of CLC’; see also: Chant, Heart of Fire, 193; Barry Chant, ‘Teaching Leadership’, in Creating Churches: Ministry in the 21st Century, Messages from the 2004 National Conference (Adelaide: CRC, 2005), 108; Cooper, Flames of Revival, 105, 115, 134.

³Cooper, Flames of Revival, 160-161.

⁴For an account of a big baptism in the back yard of the house they were meeting in see Tony Kostas, ‘What a Day!’, MOC News 1, 6 (December 1971).
Hal Oxley establishing Christian Life Centre, 1971-1975

1972
Under Oxley’s leadership, CRC Melbourne Assembly purchased Oban Road property (Ringwood). With Hooper’s construction company, they built the hall, apartments and lecture room. CCFC became part of CRC and moved to Oban Road as ‘Operation Spearhead’ and met in the hall while construction was taking place on the rest of the property.

1973
Christian Life Bible College (CLBC) moved from Russell Hooper’s Merricks campsite to Oban Road.

9 Mar 1974
CLC official opening with 600 people. CRC Melbourne Assembly moved from Kew to Ringwood.

Feb 1975
After Hooper and Oxley showed disturbing signs of disunity, Hooper left to establish new church at Black Rock, which reportedly grew to 80 people in 4 months, or maybe it was 60 people in 18 months.

Post-Oxley Christian Life Centre with Russ Hooper, 1975-1990

April 1975
Oxley decided to move CLC out of CRC, in order to support the Charismatic Renewal. In a complicated legal battle, Hooper took legal action against Oxley. Oxley left and started Life Ministry Centre (LMC) with 500 of 550 people from CLC. In 1979 they bought their property at Chirnside Park and later birthed the ‘Associated Christian Assemblies Movement’ of about 44 independent churches. LMC say they can claim continuation of the church (not CLC/ Urban Life). Hooper dissolved the Black Rock church and moved with about 30 people to Oban Rd to join the 50 who remained.

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5‘People and Places’, Revivalist 357, December (1972), 2, 20; Cooper, Flames of Revival, 201.
6‘Bible Colleges ... Successful Opening’, Revivalist 361, April (1973), 16; Cooper, Flames of Revival, 206, also 151, 201.
8‘The Holy Spirit was moving up the highway’, Oxley said, and they followed. Owen and Mary, Interview. Another explanation is that they were following the suburbs out. Usually inner suburban churches grow smaller as outer suburban churches grow. CLC pre-empted the inner-suburban decline by moving out with ‘the Bible belt’.
9See Cooper, Flames of Revival, 237.
10See Cooper, Flames of Revival, 240, 248.
CFC had moved to Pembroke High School, but then half the group (30 members) returned to Oban Rd. CFC soon dissolved.

1975-1980

Years of expansion and influence. CLC grew to biggest size of 800-850, one of the mother churches of CRC, alongside Adelaide. The Bible College and halfway house grew. Memories are of international speakers, lots of people, frequent healings and miracles.\(^1\)

1980-1990

Erratic years of general decline.

1981

Doncaster CLC was planted with 140 people from Ringwood CLC.\(^2\) 75 people also moved to Mt Evelyn Christian Fellowship, and CLC Ringwood declined to 300.

1984

Senior Pastor Barrie Ryan started, steady growth to 440.

1986

Doug Faircloth came from Myer as youth pastor (300 in Youth).

Sep 1987

Ian Richardson and CLC oversight wanted to help Tabor establish in Melbourne.\(^3\) Ian Ridgway had started Tabor at Blackburn Baptist then North Fitzroy Church of Christ.

Dec 1987

Former senior leader Russ Hooper returned again and took over leadership, opposing CLC’s help of Tabor.

1989-1990

Hooper resigned and membership dropped to 170.

CLC consolidates in the 1990s with Doug Faircloth

1991

Doug appointed as senior leader. He led CLC through a financial bankruptcy threat and freshly prioritised missions giving and local mission efforts. He helped lead a time of healing and ‘got away from picturing buildings to picturing people’.

1994

Urban Life experienced the ‘Toronto Blessing’.\(^4\)

1995

Doug started leading CLC through an ‘ideas bankruptcy threat’, asking ‘what is church?’ and picturing the church not as a meeting but a community, including the wider community.\(^5\)

1997

Leadership team thought Doug was leaving behind orthodox Pentecostalism. Doug asked them to resign and rebuilt the team with

\(^{1}\)Faircloth, Interview #2; Kylie, Email; Smits, ‘Paradigm Shifts’.

\(^{2}\)Doncaster Assembly’, Crusade News (September 1981); Cooper, Flames of Revival, 286.

\(^{3}\)See Cooper, Flames of Revival, 309, also 274-275.

\(^{4}\)Porter and Richter, eds., Toronto Blessing?.

\(^{5}\)Faircloth, Interview #2.
'sons and daughters'; including Anthea whom when she was 25 he saw would be the next leader.\textsuperscript{16} Numbers at 320, lost 80 people.

2000
Doug helped a local Shepparton pastor plant South Shepparton Community Church

1999-2001
Leadership team dreamed together with weekends away and lots of reflection. This led to stopping the evening service and redesigning the morning service. They also felt the need to move from Oban Road. Alan Hirsch came and spoke at Urban Life and inspired the leadership team with his vision for missional-incarnational church.

2000-2003
Doug and leaders recast vision in terms of mission.

2002
Introduced new small groups as ‘Get-Togethers’ (GTs).

Jan-Feb 2003
Leaders cast vision of the Urban and the move.

Mar 2003
Voted on move with 96% approval, but lost a third of the church who agreed with the need for the move but didn’t want to be part of it.\textsuperscript{17}

2004
Anthea on maternity leave with first child.

- Emerging years with Anthea Smits, Urban Life 2005-\textsuperscript{18}

2005
Kylie led a team to be involved in Croydon Soup Kitchen.

2005
The church began involvement in relational ministry at Maroondah Secondary College, in partnership with Connection.

13 Feb 2005
Last service at Oban Rd. Doug handed over leadership to Anthea, they changed the name from CLC to Urban Life and moved to Maroondah Secondary College while renovating the Urban. Tabor took over lease of the whole Oban Road property, except for the manse for Doug.

August 2005
Moved in to the Urban after 6 months of renovation. Began preaching series to redefine core values as community and mission.

1 Oct 2005
Urban Life kids’ play area, community centre & café official opening.

Feb-Jul 2006
Attendance averaged 70 (with a flat trend line).

2006-2007
Anthea on maternity leave with second child.

\textsuperscript{16}For other women in leadership in CRC congregations see Cheryl Catford, ‘Explaining the Recent Increase in Numbers of CRC Women Pastors’ (PhD thesis, Deakin University), 2007 ; Jim Reiher, ‘Women's Participation in Victorian Church Leadership’, \textit{Australian Pentecostal Studies}, 7 (March 2003).

\textsuperscript{17}Burgess, ‘Urban Life’; Faircloth, Interview #2; Steve and Rowena, Interview.

\textsuperscript{18}This outline of Urban Life history is drawn from the thesis, especially pp.107-123 from chapter 5.
2007 Senior Leadership Team (SLT) did a Forge internship together in Phil McCredden’s transition stream.¹⁹

2008 Work-for-the-dole contract and ministry commenced.

Aug 2008 Cameron Burgess started on staff as Associate Pastor.

¹⁹In 2006 Forge introduced a transition stream for leaders seeking to transition existing churches to be more mission-shaped, led by Phil McCredden, who over the last decade successfully merged four congregations around Preston as Northern Community Church of Christ. McCredden, ‘Forge Transition Stream’; Phil McCredden, ‘NCCC’, *Novus: Innovations in Australian Church Life*, NCLS Research by Ruth Powell (November 2006), 9.
Appendix 11: (Pre-)history timeline of Solace

This timeline outlines the twelve decades of history up to Solace in 2006.¹

➢ St Hilary’s history and growth 1888-ongoing

1888 St Hilary’s established to cater for the growing population of Kew and as a more evangelical alternative to Holy Trinity, Kew.

1889-1891 First incumbent/minister was Rev’d H Stanley Mercer ‘the scholar’. He is remembered as attracting large crowds but stayed only a short time, particularly when compared to the six ministers who followed who have not left until at least sixteen and up to twenty-five years. Church averaged 32 communicants.

1 Jan 1889 First service in new church building – a ‘temporary’ weatherboard building which ended up lasting until 1939 when it was replaced.

1889 Parsonage built across the road.

1892-1912 Second incumbent was Rev’d Harry Collier ‘the saint’. He was appreciated particularly for his Christian Education initiatives, including Bible classes for children, domestic servants and Chinese market gardeners. Church grew steadily from 32 to 42 communicants.

1913-1929 Third incumbent was Rev’d Charles H Barnes ‘the sympathiser’. He added a number of social clubs and societies, and tried unsuccessfully to get a new church building built, partly because the old building could not be consecrated because it was wooden. Church declined to 28 communicants by 1929.

1929-1950 Rev’d Arthur Reginald Mace was the fourth minister. He supported his parishioners through the difficult years of the Depression, World War II and the post-war fear of Russian communism. Church grew from 28 to 50 communicants by 1940 and plateaued and stayed at 50 until 1950.

1929 New Parish Hall built for Sunday School.

1939 New church building completed.

1946-1948 First part-time associate minister appointment: Rev’d F Maling.

1950-1975 Rev’d William V L Lloyd’s ministry included challenges to active spiritual life and the appointment of a number of youth directors to develop a youth ministry which grew and is still renowned today. The church was an early pioneer of youth-focused evening services with contemporary worship and aged-based Bible cell groups. Church grew from 50 to 99 communicants between 1950 and 1960 then declined to 70 by 1975.

1954 St Martin’s in Deepdene was established with Rev Lloyd’s support.

1957 Vestry built.

1960 New vicarage built.

1975-1999 Rev’d Peter Corney, who had been youth director 1965-1967, was sixth incumbent. He and his staff team were particularly appreciated for their pastoral care, counselling and welfare, inside and outside the church, and effective communication with youth through ‘Sunday Night Live’. Corney brought a diverse range of people of different ages together as a more united church family and involved a widespread number of lay people in ministry. Staff added including a small-group coordinator, various assistant ministers, children’s workers and youth workers including Russell Downie (1982-1987). They also developed a ‘multi-congregation’ model for church life with ministry teams developing the unique focus of each congregation. Church grew from 70 to 125 by 1985, and to 858 by 1999.

1986 New building redevelopment finished.

1992 Peter Corney established the Institute for Contemporary Christian Leadership, and after retiring as Vicar of St Hilary’s became Director of ICCL before retiring from this position in 2001.

1997 Olivia Moffat had a pastoral placement at St Hilary’s as part of her course towards ordination.

1998 Olivia came on staff, working on the multi-staff pastoral team with the 5pm service. This year was ordained as an Anglican priest.

1999- Rev’d Paul Perini was called from Sydney as Vicar. Key programs continued to include vibrant youth and children’s ministries, schools’ ministries, a ministry training internship and Alpha groups. Missions and social justice continued to be important at St Hilary’s, to which they give at least 20% of their budget. New congregations developed include Solace, which first met off-site at Carey Grammar School and has since developed more of its own identity (see below); the 7.15pm
congregation for people in their middle years (40+); and Sunday Family Spirit. In 2007 seven unique congregations operated at SHAC.

May 2005 St Hilarys merged with the St Silas’ parish at North Balwyn and became known as the Parish of Kew North Balwyn with two sites. It changed its acronym from SHACK (St Hilary’s Anglican Church Kew) to SHAC Community (St Hilary’s Anglican Church), which meets in two main locations. Paul Perini became the new incumbent.

**Solace as a congregation of St Hilary’s 2000-2005**

Jan 2000 Solace began at Carey Chapel in Kew as an experimental congregation of St Hilary’s.

2000 The first ‘clean up the billabong’ Sunday happened in the first six months of Solace.

2003 Stuart Davey and Barb Totterdell did the St Hilary’s internship program with their ministry component at Solace.

Mar 2003 Solace began its ‘spiritual traditions course’ course with monthly gatherings for ten months. In 2004 the course ran again. In 2005 it was called ‘remaking’ and followed draft chapters of the book being written. At the end of 2005 the twenty participants who had completed the course contributed to the book.

2004 Solace became a ‘type 2’ congregation of St Hilary’s with greater independence.

Mar 2004 Solace adopted a ‘multi-part-time’ staff model. Olivia went to four days per week and Stuart’s internship flowed into a half-time paid appointment. Stuart’s employment was complemented by one day per week employment with a BUV New Missional Communities project focusing on the arts community, which has developed into ‘Searching for Oscar’ business and hub.

Sep 2004 Jude Waldron appointed part-time to the pastoral team, and also part-time with St Hilary’s children’s department.

Nov 2004 Taizé services began in someone’s house, and moved to St Paul’s in Sep 2005 and are ongoing.

2005 Olivia, Stuart and Ursula did Catalyst-Innovation training.

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2This summary of the history of Solace draws on information from the thesis, especially pp.125-142 from chapter 6 and ‘Follow-up Journal 2007’, 10-15.

3Solace, *Remaking*.

1 May 2005  Solace’s relationship with St Hilary’s ended.

➢ Solace EMC and Community Trust

Apr 2005  Solace moved to St Paul’s Fairfield and Balwyn Baptist. Olivia was called to serve as priest of St Paul’s and leading a Sunday 5pm service. Solace EMC was incorporated as a legal platform for themselves and other similar groups and commonly known as Solace EMC Inc.

Oct 2005  Jude ordained with the Baptist Union of Victoria, and, as well as at Solace, worked at Kilvington Girls Grammar School as a chaplain.

2006  Thursday nights held weekly at Balwyn Baptist throughout the year, after a brief trial period in late 2005.

July 2005  Dreaming nights began, and are ongoing.

Sep 2005  Anna joined the pastoral team as children’s integration worker.

Feb 2006  Solace published Remaking, edited by Stuart. 5

Apr 2006  Opportunity International project fund-raised $10,000, stemming back to an idea which started in September 2004.

Dec 2006  Having been involved as volunteers since November 2005 in the Opportunity Shop at St Paul’s, Solace members took over its operation and redesigned it with a community lounge.

Jan 2007  After conversations since Sep 2005, Café Church officially joined Solace and their Sunday group joined in ‘Sunday stuff’ at St Paul’s.

2007  Jude left Solace and went to Whitley College as residential chaplain.

Feb 2007  ‘The Hub’ started, to run Solace’s administration and offer support to other groups, managed by Barb Totterdell.

Jun 2007  SPACEmakers plan proposed to Archdiocese with funding request.

2008  Solace and St Paul’s focused vision on developing their Fairfield property as a centre for family wellness, learning, adventure and play. They are seeking partnerships with local traders and diocesan funding for a proposed $1.4 million redevelopment. 6

5Solace, Remaking.

6St Paul’s, ‘Feasibility Study’.
Appendix 12: Sample transcript – Connection focus group

Connection, participants. 'Mission at Connection'. Focus group #1 by the author. Croydon, 21 May 2006. Digital audio recording and transcript stored at MCD on CD.

Title: Focus_at_C_master_trans
Date of transcription: 06/05/06
Page: 337 of 16
Characters: 57,816
Lines (65 c/line): 889

1c. How would you describe the church to newcomer?
[words in italics are coding sections and questions added later]

Darren: I would like to invite you to share in one or two sentences how would you describe Connection Community to a new comer? Just briefly, how would you each describe Connection Community to a new comer?

Answer: I would say we have got a group of people with a few core values and purpose for meeting, or purpose of being some sort of identity of the group together, core values being in connecting with God and people in the community, so that is who we are and that affects how we then operate and how we meet together, where we meet together and the way we do things.

Answer: That is an interesting question.

Answer: I would say that we are at our call with people who seek to follow Jesus, and how we express that and how we do that is something that we are in the process of working out. I guess that is part of what I would say Connection is all about. It is a community of people, but within community you always got issues that you work through and are working out or how does these work, what shape does it look like, does that shape change, da da da da, how do we go about being the body of Christ. So, to someone coming who is new I would say, look, we are still in the process of working out how this ticks, but at our core is the fact that what we have in common is that we follow Christ, or try to.

Answer: It is not an easy one to think of something off the top of your head. It depends on the person you are talking to. I would probably generally say that we are a group of Christians who are meeting together to do Church in a way that is different and that is meaningful to us and to other people with that we come in contact with.

Answer: I would say I would basically describe us as a Church that does things a little bit alternatively, almost just to try and connect with the community in a way that they feel comfortable.

Answer: I would say young, innovative, interactive, open to discuss somewhat difficult issues - but connecting with God just seems to be the real focus and out of that being with people.

Answer: I guess I would say that I think the importance of being the Church (we might not use that word exactly, but that is what we are essentially - the people of God in some sense) so that is our focus is to try to encourage one another and be who God wants us
to be, but I see that we are not bound up in a lot of tradition. We do not have to things the way they have been done in the past. So, there is flexibility and innovation there and I guess we are inviting people to go on a journey with us.

Answer: For me in the sense of following God in a very relaxed setting and laid-back kind of way. I look at life connections in just relaxed discussions of things and working out what that means and what it looks like, and it is great.

2. Mission at its best?

2a. Mission definition?

Darren: Let us have an open discussion about our mission. But first of all, let us discuss what is mission? What is your understanding of mission? Perhaps, are there any books or people or Bible passages or influences that particularly shape your understanding of mission?

Answer: My understanding of mission is that it is about conveying the good news of Jesus, which is God in the flesh who actually lived as one of us. To people, whether near or far, who are not actually aware of that. I believe we have a responsibility to convey the message in a way that it could be clearly recognised and is appropriate to the particular culture that we are in.

Answer: Mine was to reaching out to the community through love, acts of service and friendship, … not audible … and an expression on how Jesus would want us to love.

Answer: I said that mission is to be the Church. To act and speak as Christ showed us to … not audible … dark lost world. Mission could be next door or on the other side of the world. Mission takes on a thousand different forms. So, I guess it is being something more than necessarily doing something. The latter could be true, as well. I could … not audible … specify mission but I don’t think you can go and do mission until this has changed, until you are actually understanding that I am the Church. So, if I am say by myself, I am still the Church. If I am with a hundred other of like mind well that is Church as well. So, in my mind, in many ways, one precedes the other - being in a Church. Just everyday being the Church is mission. But, also out of that can arise well we are going to do a specific mission over here or over there or next door mowing Mrs. Pratchett’s grass or whatever, you know what I mean?

Answer: I reckon you nailed it. I would emphasise being sent scripturally … not audible …and just go at it fairly well, but that is certainly clear in what we have already heard anyway.

2c. Mission activities – congregational?

2d. Mission activities – individuals?

Darren: So, how does Connection express its mission? What might other Churches be able to learn from Connection in terms of the way Connection does mission? What forms does mission take in the life of you as individuals and/or the congregation as a congregation?

Answer: Connection has in one sense tried to start with their meetings which are kind of us, our territory but locating them not on our territory. In a sense to say our starting point is to be in the world so that sentness ... ??? ... is sort of there in the very first step of us not pulling back and hiding away in a cathedral. That is the kick-off point. From there, there is a fair bit of activity that results in mission.
Answer: That is one thing. I mean, when we first came to Connection I really liked about it was well, it was like, they got rid of the Church building and they were in the community centre, in the school. Wherever they were meeting was a place they felt the community would meet as well.

If. use of building

Darren: So just meeting in community places attracted you?

Answer: Well, yes, it showed the focus that they had is about connecting with the community and then they have gone on and done more things with the community. They have got playgroups and they go to into … not audible … secondary, we have got a dining room, small things … not audible … Life Connections … not audible … There are heaps different things that are centrally in the community.

Answer: There seems to be like a combination of mission when we talk about Connection. I would like to echo what [someone] said earlier. There idea is maybe we do not look or smell the same as the next Church or whatever and that could be a good thing, and it might not be such a good thing; that is okay. We are still working it out. That is fine, but I think the mission is two part - we have a group of people who are like-minded either or the fringe of that and there are meetings like in Life Connection and the 601 sort of thing and that is great, that is fine, and that is needed. So we need to encourage each other but also at the same time we try to make that as least threatening as possible. For example, I would, at my last Church, I am not knocking the Church, it was a great place, but the last Church, I would not feel comfortable even entertaining the thought of inviting my friends because I mix with a lot of friends and do not go near a Church with a 40-foot pole and they would never come. I do not even want them to come because I would sit there and put myself in their shoes and go, No, I would not want to come here either. There is no explanation of why people are doing what. It is just so foreign. Not that those things are bad, but it was kind of was a bit of, ‘Yes well everyone is welcome’, but the kind of people who say everyone is welcome would sit at the back and go I do not feel welcome at all. It is like a different world. I do not feel the same way about our larger gathering or larger expressions of Connections …? … That is just the kind of people I mix with. I know that it is not because it is something they would feel weird at. Anything to do with Church, forget it. If they walk through the door, I know they would actually go oh it is not too bad you know. You get lollies thrown at you or whatever. It is pretty relaxed …? …It is around a table with coffee and they do not actually mind that. I can say that I do not believe in God and people say well let’s talk about if they wanted to. So within the gatherings in terms of mission, I like the fact that they are trying to make it as inclusive as possible, but at the same time, it is important that we do not just do that, and I think things like the dining room are incredibly important. There are things like doing RE in the schools and that kind of thing is really, really important. So it is two-fold.

Answer: I think it is interesting that on one hand we know that we are seeking to create a very welcoming, friendly environment where people feel comfortable, like you said. On the other hand, there have been times when I have felt distinctly out of my comfort zone coming along to Life Connection because for years I was going along to traditional Sunday morning services. Particularly, when I was going through a rough patch in my life, I could literally hide in that service and the worship and it was just very much me and God and that is where I was getting my spiritual nourishment from. I did not particularly feel like I fitted in with some of these Churches that I was visiting because my circumstances did not fit the typical person that attended there and I felt on the outer, but yet I felt comfortable in that environment. Sunday mornings, there are times when having a microphone thrust under my nose and having to think of something like that is a bit meaningful: it really challenges me
and I have to be prepared to say what I think and not think oh well that is person up the front row … not audible … to be pulling this thing together. So it is not always comfortable for me and it is not that cozy Sunday morning experience that it had been for many years.

**Darren:** So Life Connection might be meeting in a community place would be more accessible but its format you find to be perhaps even more challenging than other forms of Church anyway.

**Answer:** Yes. It does. It stretches me to actually find everyday language to talk about my experience, rather than quickly come up with them, a word that I know other a Christians would recognise and that is an easy way out because we all think we know what these words mean, but we need to speak in more everyday language at Life Connection.

**Answer:** I think mission, one thing you say in Connection, it is more of a dialogue than a monologue - but, you know, there is still I think a way to go in that, to move in that.

**21. Mission aspirations & dreams – how else?**

**Darren:** So, how else could mission be encouraged, like the Church leader said to you how can we foster more effective mission? What kind of suggestions or ideas would you come up with, ‘Peter’ or ‘Alana’?

**Answer:** I think equipping just everyone to do mission rather than leaving it to a couple of people to do everything. Because I think if we just leave it to a couple of people to do the missional activities of the Church, then they get burned out. They are doing everything, and that goes nowhere. They themselves are affected. … not audible … They often just wear out. They get very disheartened. So, yes, I think it is important that we all are equipped to be missional.

**Answer:** And get supported in that as well and have input into our lives, enough input to help us give out as well and that kind of thing. If that makes sense.

**Answer:** And to have the freedom to be creative and that.

**Answer:** I think at Connection we are actually given permission to have a go at things. I felt I am tremendously empowered to have a crack at faith community nursing like, you know, when I took a long shot on and putting me on as intern and giving this a go, and there is the opportunity to try things like no one is going to knock it on the head and … not audible … They actually want to hear and they want to know and that is a very empowering environment to be in.

**Answer:** One of the things that I wrote about mission was I really feel it needs to start in your heart, so it needs to be what God is calling you to be, and a lot of what mission has been in the past with Churches is that something was founded 40 years ago and just rolls on and on and on. We are always looking for people to continue it. Because Connection started fresh it did not have that problem, but as we get older we will run into those problems. There will be things that someone started that people feel as though they ought to keep going but nobody really has the heart for it anymore. That is one of the dangers as you get older as a Church. But there will be those things, that were significant once, that may be are not significant anymore. So that is really, I like the idea, too, that people have freedom to pursue what God is putting on their heart at the moment. I would like to think that Connection will stay in a place where we can say OK nobody has a heart for this anymore. That is it. So, if it is dying road and if everybody is worn out and if nobody wants to do it anymore, we have are happy to say: That is it, we won’t do that for a while. Maybe we will come back to it. But that sort of engaging of mission, so that is not a chore. I know when you commit
yourself to things, sometimes you agree that you are going to do the sort of duty things and the chore things, but in the end, you cannot have ministries functioning that are a chore to people and do not really allow them to give of themselves. It is just I have got to be there again this week and that kills off what you are really trying to do.

2i. Mission – affected by leadership?
Darren: So, feeling free to start things and have a go also means feeling free to stop doing something.

Answer: Can we stop anything yet?

Darren: What are the list of things you stopped?

Answer: We have stopped most of the out-reaching kids. The only thing left to see are … not audible … mostly because I have stopped, too.

Answer: And … not audible … a little bit of a lull at the moment and it is fine by me, I mean bringing it before God. I guess it is probably just not quite the right time. Whatever it is, there is no compulsion to go on with it or to come up with anything great while there is no need for it. You know it is in response to a need.

2o Mission & Nurture
Darren: Could I pick up on something ‘Pria’ said and see what others think in terms of, I liked how you put it in the frame work ‘Pria’ of wanting kind of input so that we can have output. Can you tell us more about that or do others want to comment on that? How does kind of our nurture relate to our mission? What is good about Connection in terms of how that is done and where is the room to grow in terms of relating nurture and mission?

Answer: I think there is … not audible .:.

Answer: ‘Peter’ said that before that we have got a way to go, but I think the beautiful thing about Connection is that it is like something that - I do not like using the word evolving - but it is … not audible … developing and we have all got a lot more potential in us, a lot more ideas and possibilities that just need the right situation and right time to come out, I suppose.

Answer: I think one of the things that concerns me is that the Church has been going for that long and so I think a lot of people have come in and they are all doing stuff. Looking at myself, I have come in at a certain point and possibly not getting enough nurturing for the output – growth in the last time and what I have had up to then has helped me get through to now, but then it is starting to struggle in the last few months, but I do not know if that is something that other people are dealing with as well because it has only been four or five years since the Church has been going. We have been there before, with the people who get to a point that they start feeling burned out, that kind of thing, and they are not getting that nurturing.

Answer: I think that is one danger with mission outside. Although mission within ourselves we can sometimes forget about nurturing and encouraging each other. We are so busy with our context outside of Church, and that is more valuable or whatever it got. As Christians, I think we can get pretty easily burned out in the sense that we just always seeing kind of opportunities where we can be loved to others and so forth. We can forget sometimes just looking after each other within the Church.
Darren: So what else does nurture look like for you guys, the sort of nurture that might fuel mission and the nurture you need?

Answer: I think their needs to be a fair amount of courage in what ‘Peter’ said before about the equipping. I think it is the word he used. I think a lot of people just do not think beyond themselves unless they are encouraged to do so. I also think as I said this morning that it is very easy for people to think we are doing a great job because we got the playgroup, the dining room and the school and not actually worry about doing anything individually. So, I think that a fair bit of coaching and equipping that needs to happen.

Answer: I think mostly sometimes we get caught up in doing and we forget that we are human beings in doings and I really hear what ‘Pria’ is saying because it is a similar need that I have noticed in myself and in others, just the sense of being with people and community and just being, but unfortunately, it seems like we have to have a label over what we are doing. We are gathering for some reason. A real lack of just rubbing shoulders with people, just in a normal everyday sort of sense and logistically, I do not know how we can do it because we actually live almost half an hour’s drive away from here, literally, and yet the longing in my heart is to really be in community with people and perhaps that is probably why I like Sunday morning, because I am actually looking at people’s faces, and you do not have to say a lot: I can read your body language. I know that you are for me and for this whole thing, like we are all pulling together. It is an unspoken thing that just you do not need a lot of words to spell it out. Just by being in that situation you know a lot of stuff that does not need words.

Answer: I think it is great that we do have an outward faith. I think we are encouraged individually as well as a community to be looking out. I think then you can start to look at yourself as a tool that the Church can use to grow and to reach out. And I think God looks at us and wants us to grow and be enriched so that our relationships benefit, but also just in our relationship with Him, we are growing to be who He wants us to be and not just be a tool that He is using. So, I wonder if our peer relationships and, as we said, coaching or being in a mentoring relationship is something that could be encouraged more and to be discipling someone under us is an enriching thing, too. I do not think the mature Christians amongst us are encouraged to find someone else to input. We are encouraged to ‘do’ rather than so much to enrich someone else and be enriched. So, that is just a thought.

Answer: I guess maybe I see a slightly different picture because, I do not know, at 601 I see something slightly different. I think there are bucket loads of encouragement, absolutely truckloads of people encouraged all the time to get out there. There are opportunities to do like couple of years ago, I used to think maybe part of our problem is we were doing thousands of things and not focusing and that is great. There are thousands of opportunities, but the problem was that in the 601 demographic had a huge amount of 18-25-year-olds, and for one reason or another, a lot of people were not getting involved with actually being in Church in an active role because either they were brand new and [they were] still finding their feet, which is fine. They did not actually understand what Christ was on about, or what the Church exists for or did not give stuff basically, and then it brought us back to the age-old every single Church 20/80 problem, 20% of the people doing 80% of the work. The problem is that the 20% are often the people who are either in full-time ministry outside of the Church anyway and in leadership inside the Church. They were absolutely stuffed, absolutely knackered. I do not think the problem was people not feeling like they should be encouraged to get involved. I think still every week we got bucket loads of opportunities … not audible, Josh? … about two weeks ago said we are going to need people for the dining room, and the 20% all go, “Oh man! I would love to do it” because they do, and that is … not audible …because they love it. They do things because they love it, but they are totally stuffed and a lot of other people are sitting there going, “Oh that is nice the 20% can do that”. So, I am not sure that it is lack of encouragement. That is just purely
through a 601 thing. I do think the nurture thing is some of it, not to say that is a reason to leave the Church and go on ... not audible ... because it ... not audible ... and this is also two-fold. I think there needs to people to meet coming from the front. To be frank I am not at this Church because of the teaching. That is okay. I love this Church and I will stay here, but right from the start, it was clear that even the leadership said in terms of the people in leadership here, they are not going to really grow much during the teaching from the front. That is fine. That is great. For example, about a month ago, I put out an email to about a dozen in the 18-25’s – I head-up a group that sort of overseas the ... not audible ... in a small group thing. We do that on a fortnightly basis and I wanted to open it up to see what people think. I would like to make this like a dinner every fortnight kind of thing - and a learning and teaching thing. I did not get any response. So, what do you do? There is encouragement and there is opportunity to nurture and grow and in that demographic there seems to be people who just do not care or it is not important enough to drop some thing else to make space in your life and I have put myself in that category ... not audible ... It is very hard to find a space and commit to that space, but that is one of the things in life. The discipline of going I am going to commit to soccer every Thursday night and whatever happens I am there. It is very hard to do. So, I guess I feel a little bit cynical about that, a little bit angry and hurt. That is my story of the last X amount of years of being involved in this and this and this and this and I am tired of it.

**Darren:** So, you recognise the gap in nurture ... not audible .. .understands in terms of Sunday events and you are offering another context for nurture, but there was no space in people’s lives.

**Answer:** Yes, that is okay. I am not about to ever go ... not audible ... I not like that. It is a great place. I love it and I knew right from before I came to Connection that the teaching, it is not that you do not have the attitude to come. ... not audible ... everywhere can go. There are still things to learn and God speaks on a parallel, but it very hard digging beneath the surface. My question is - and if that is what we need to do and hold that line that it is great because maybe we have been called to do that for all the younger. That is fine. That is great. Not to say that other people cannot learn stuff as well, but is that a reason why people are not moving out? I do not know.

**Answer:** I think one-on-one nurturing and mentoring is the key. From my own personal experience, that what I have done it with one or two other people in the past that is bad ... not audible ... them grow. It is just one on one. Anyway, that is my experience.

**Answer:** I started thinking, as Jenny was talking, how much really great people doing mentoring and I am sort of thinking I know that I could be mentoring people and the reason why I probably hold back is because, it sounds selfish, but who would be mentoring me? I have been in Church for quite a long time now and I am in a different age and demographic to ‘Charlie’, but where once I would have jumped in at getting email like that, now, I probably hold back because I think basically I have done all these ... not audible ... and I guess I burned myself out more than once. At the end of the day, who is looking out for me? I do want to go into a mentoring relationship with say ‘Pria’, and then I am telling ‘Pria’ what you know like sort of being over ‘Pria’ - I would rather be shoulder to shoulder with ‘Pria’. That is the sort of mentoring relationship, I think, we need. We do not need a hierarchical structure, but I think James is saying that. That is what I thought of straight away. I thought of mentoring like taking someone younger under my wing and looking after her.

**Answer:** It can work both ways with the older to the younger. The younger can teach the older as well.
Answer: Yes, it is not the age so much, but it is the experience and perhaps not someone who has not journeyed for quite as long. I have seen too much of that hierarchical structure in Church. It does not count with me anymore. I have just been there and totally done that.

2g. Mission - teaching and mobilisation?

Darren: So, whether it is mentoring, or Sunday teaching or whatever, how have people at Connection coached you in mission? How does Connection teach you about mission? Could you give me some specific examples that you have seen in general or that has applied particularly to you, or that you have done for others?

Answer: I can comment on the last one about what... not audible ... the coaching side of things. I have got a small group and I am basically the coach of the people in that group. So, as part of the teaching of that, there is often a focus from Biblical teaching in mission and then practically. So, every now and again we will say right for our small group, we will do the basics in Gospel for six weeks and bring someone along. So, that is what we have been doing in our small group with some progress.

Answer: For me, some ... not audible ... I have been coached a bit possibly ... not audible ... is the fact that there are always opportunities to get involved. When Life Connection first started, they said we need people to get involved. If you want to do anything particular, let us know what you want to do and stuff like that. I wanted to go involved in the planning and I did no know what I am getting myself in for. I found myself meeting with ‘Andrew’, ‘Oscar’ and Wayne and just sitting there in silence most of the time, but it was a real a learning experience for me. I was there for a while until I had the baby and then I stopped. Then years later, I suddenly got involved again and I felt like that was a real training opportunity and that made it much easier down the track.

Darren: And now you are chairing it?

Answer: Until the next one pops out?

Answer: I found we have been looking at open homes and that has been a real journey in just having a whole lot of questions put at us on what does open homes look like and really being given the freedom, but there is actually no, what it looks like, what really journeying with God about. Well for us, what do we think it looks like and having gone through all questions and how are we going to be, being open, in that it is literally open, that people will want to come, not just Church people, and so that is just a process. I would not say anybody is being at me teaching me, but it just being a real journey in process, just discussing issues like that with others. That has taught me a lot in that process.

Answer: It probably is one of the ways that our Church has communicated that generally in that there is always the leadership. People are always thinking through ways of facilitating or reaching that mission thing and the open home was just the latest plan that came out through ... not audible ... people and people think about. It is effectively what we were doing in our small group, but also it could be very different to what we are doing in small groups. The scope is wide for the open homes thing, but it is good that there are people always thinking, “What else could we do, we are always dreaming,” and that should filter down if it is communicated well, and it obviously has because … ‘Zarina’ … has been thinking it through.

Darren: It is interesting to me because I have seen and been part of processes like that and been encouraged individually, and I have heard, like ‘Charlie’ said, lots of times people standing up and saying here is something else to be involved in, but I think
this morning was the first time I can remember where the kind of teaching was directed at mission and saying this is the reason we have been doing it and that is just an interesting comparison that perhaps other Churches I have been a part of where is a lot of talk and very little action whereas here there are plenty of mission opportunities, but I have heard very little explicit preaching on it. Is that an accurate read do you think? Is that good or bad or what or indifferent?

Answer: Well, the thing about today it was a monologue that turned into a dialogue. In a lot of Churches, you only get the monologue and then people go home.

Answer: That is right. It is true.

Answer: In terms of what our Church has done in the past, it has been the once-a-year overnighter. So, it is all being whacked into that weekend, which has been a little bit harder for those who has been around since the birth of Connection, because we think we have come here with the same vision being portrayed, but as Wayne keeps reminding us, vision leaks and you lose it if you are not reminded of it. Then you get a sick of it because you have heard it all before, but the new people come and they need to know the vision and you do not want to forget the vision. So, that is where it has been.

Answer: I think Wayne often uses the term “equipping people” and you hear it a lot about wanting to equip people in areas that they feel ... not audible... to be involved in or something in that they want to do. You see it as well; you do not just hear it. I mean you see it. When Suzanne wanted to do a playgroup, it started, that kind of thing.

Answer: I think generally I feel quite good about where it is heading because no Church has arrived. We have got the correct balance of teaching and how do you get there unless you make mistakes? So, yes, it is sort of balanced, like I have said before. I think it does need to be a little bit more lead from the front and that is okay, but it is not all about rights - there are responsibilities. … not audible … choose to grab that and then run with it, or actively seek mentors or actively seek to mentor. There is always things that are going to slip through the cracks. Sometimes you actively seek a mentor for years and no one wants to mentor you. Sometimes, you actively want to mentor others and no one really wants to or has the time or anything like that … not audible … Even though I have already said what I have said and some ways I am not, it does not mean that I feel discouraged about Connections. As I said it is part of … not audible … journey, Churchey … not audible … I do see it as part of the reason. And if people … not audible... all my life growing up in the Church, my dad is a pastor, you see people come and go from different Churches and some with the right reasons and some are reasons that are wrong reasons. In the case of that person’s history, they just bounce from Church to Church every three years because they are looking for the perfect Church. I heard a pastor once said, “I was looking for the perfect Church, and I came to this one, and then it was not perfect anymore because I was in it.” A classic joke, but it is so true. There is no such thing. I think that is an upside. We are not to blame … not audible … but at least we are talking about it. That is big upside. There are things happening and we can only improve.

2h. Mission – motivation?

Darren: Can I ask each of us to reflect on what is it that motivates you to engage in missional activity whatever that is? What detracts from that? What is it that motivates you and what detracts from that?

Answer: I think one big motivation for me is to change the world and we can only change the world with God and through people. The biggest hindrance is time and the rest of life and being self-focused.
Answer: For me, what motivates me is that it feels right. You know it is God working that something springs up, an idea or whatever, and just seems to gel. I suppose more recently we are having card nights ... not audible... but all just felt right it has always been for me, like that is what our open home has ended up being, a card night for playgroup mums and so forth. In a sense, that is not really open home and it is almost too easy. I feel guilty. I always kind of do that but I was also going to do an open home. But in there when people come along and it does not matter who comes along, if it is one or if it is ten, you know you get into deeper discussions with people that motivates that you see God working in it despite me and my failings, it is something is there and motivates you.

Answer: I would like to think that it is relatively easy to do. In a sense that it can be a normal part of your life. Geoff this morning was talking about how his wife said that when they were at other Churches, there was this invisible glass wall between them and out there, but this is seamless and it is harder than everyday life and that is what I aspire to in this community. I would really like us just to be, probably, in contact with each other a whole lot more. Doing Church in a way that we do not have to put anything on, that we do not have to behave or dress in a certain way. We can just be and invite people into our community. I think a big thing in my life too is being going into site nurse training and just seeing that there is real sort of within psychiatry a real suspiciousness about Church and religiousness and a person might speak about their faith might actually end up with, you know, you will see “religious delusions” or something written there on his or her notes. I mean there is a real suspiciousness, but then I think you go into some of our Churches and it is really weird and it is to what the average person, who would normally be home on a Sunday dagging around, goes into this, you know, very unnatural environment and it is a whole new language that I have to learn a whole new way behaving, a dress code. People have their own spoken roles and are it is just really odd and foreign to people that have never being in that environment before.

Answer: Sort of karaoke and then alexia. … not audible …

Answer: So I come to give anything similar to that people ordinary everyday … not audible … that is like it, it is really out there.

Answer: A kind of football.

2j. Mission – attracts missionaries?
Darren: Do you think Connection perhaps more than our Churches attracts people who are interested in mission and outreach?

Answer: As I have said before me, because we have done the forecasts, sells ... ? ... in a community spot for we were do get together, that has been the attraction and the ... not audible ... sort of up-front efforts to make some contact in the community like the ones we have mentioned in other tracks ... <Darren ? whether it works or not>. Yes. Though we are have a crack at it. <Darren ? It shows >

Answer: If I could just rewind and talk about the previous one, … not audible …

Darren: What detracts, what holds us back.

Answer: I do not remember if the discussion happened on the recording or beforehand, ‘Peter’ was talking about living in a spot, and not actually talking to anyone in the community for however many months that he has been there and then bringing up the stats of Melbourne, what was it, the second in the world of loneliness?
Appendix 12: Sample interview transcript

Answer: And we are in a culture … not audible … unless there is specific reason you do not mix with even the very people you live next to you. And I think breaking that barrier, it is easy for people in certain cycles of life, like the young mums. And I heard a guy recently say that he suddenly realised that his kids kind of growing up, the youngest one is 19 or whatever. But, suddenly he does not connect with any of the other adult around except just to wave goodbye on his way to somewhere else. And I think that is the biggest hindrance and Jeff pinpointed six different spots of connecting this morning through conflicts and crowds all those … not audible … he had. But I still think that is barrier we need to attack.

2e. Mission models – incarnational or attractional?
Answer: I think the whole thing about mission is, well certainly 30 years ago mission was all about what you did within the Church. So if you were a Sunday school teacher, you were a club leader, whatever, all those sort of things and somebody did not feel comfortable about that, was almost like they did not have a mission despite the fact that they went to work and … not audible … friends or they might be involved leading the Guides or Scouts or something of that nature. That was not seen as being missional. And I think this is a sort of beginning to overcome that, but I think that is an area where we need to … not audible … my neighbourhood should be a ministry for me. I know a few neighbours to sort of waive to … not audible … and if we could as a group of people say, one of our primary focuses is going to be to actually meet our neighbours and you know have a BBQ with them and do some non-threatening things that just enables you to build some relationships. I just think that is a significant key to opening the doors to faith to them. But we, for so long we have been told that we need to invite them to Church, we need to get them here, we need to bring them to this. And somehow I sort of feel as though those things are breaking down. I feel as though we are getting to the stage where we feel as though all of life is a ministry, all of life is missional. So, when we go off to work, we may be the only Christian … not audible … in life in that situation. And if that is all somebody does, and they are not involved in the choir, and they are not involved in Sunday school teaching or whatever else, they are still doing mission. But that has never been in my upbringing, that was never recognised, you are doing something ministerial or missional; that is your alibi. I just think this whole of life, holistic approach to effect that whatever we go … not audible … We need to pick that up more and run with that. Maybe that is an area of teaching that needs to happen so that people begin to see that, that is not all about what happens on Sunday or Wednesday night or whatever. It is everywhere you go.

Darren: Does that resonate with others?
Answer: Yes very much.

Answer: The need for other motivation for mission is, in this country, is so obvious … not audible … two seconds. If … not audible … ads, because we are stuck in this soup, we do not even know we are in it. It is like asking a fish what water is, they are in it all the time. We are in it; we are like frogs slowly getting boiled in this country. … not audible … first learn … not audible … is actually killing us. So the need for it is really, really obvious. The thing that demotivates us, I think, is almost the same thing, Australia is such a hard hearted naval gazing bunch of tossers … not audible … talk to someone works inside a big Church, full of 40 staff, and they are surrounded by Christian and they are going to say, “No it is not, it is a piece of cake” - but where do you stand determines what you see. It has not been my experience that, in this country, people want to know about Christ. That is true … not audible … not audible … persecuted until the cows come home, come to Australia and calls it the hardest nation he has ever been in. That is a demotivator for me. I can count on one hand the amount of people that I know are walking with Christ from the last X
amount of time in high school, or prisons, or whatever. You read all the books that people write about. Show people your life and one day they will ask you, “What is … not audible … a load of crap?” That has never happened to me, not once. It is more like punch you in the face and when you are on the ground, kick you in the guts, and walk away, thanks very much. Australia is a very hard place and that is a really easy excuse to give up or reason to not do mission, because it is so hard when you think about … not audible … and finally, or whatever. It is not always the way. It just happens to different people for different horses for courses. Some people put in situations where, just go walk with them; you might never see it until the next life. Then you hear about the team that come back from Uganda, and in one day, 60 people go, “Yup, sign me up”. That is, in this country, how hard, hard it is and how blinded we are is a real demotivator. Especially if you are in mission, whatever that may be to your next-door neighbour or to a school or to whoever. It feels like you are trying to run through treacle all the time. It is just so hard.

Answer: It does come back to your motivation though. Because, in the whole perspective of what we are doing, if your motivation is simply to glorify God and obey him, then you have just had 12 years of success, because you have done that. But … not audible … at it 12 years of … not audible … because no one has responded, because that is not your responsibility. Your responsibility is to glorify God, obey him, get it out there, and of them all slap you, kick you, and walk off, you still have 12 years of success. True.

Answer: That is like emotional human beings.

Answer: Yes.

Answer: You know, like everyday at school, I just ache for so many kids and in the last two weeks, every one has come up to me. … not audible … I have had four different people come up to me and say, “You look really sad. What is wrong with you? You have not been cheeky to me today.” I was talking to ‘Eddie’ about it the other night, and he said, “Yeah, there have been just so many awful things that happen to 11-year-olds and 12-year-olds” and things that you people here could not even dream would happen to your kids. I just always try to find something good in every one of them that I deal with that you just think, “How can just one person make a difference to all these shattered lives?” I just get so - it overwhelms me sometimes. I think, you know, you feel like chucking it all in and then one kid will come up and say, “Gee, ‘Louise’ you are the best person here.” You go, “okay”. The kids will come in and say, “I like coming in here. I feel safe in here.” You think, I will come back another day sort of thing. But there is just so many. We have just got it so easy in our lives and you are think you have just got to try and somehow make a difference. I fear for my grandchildren and even my children. Just growing up now, it is just such an awful place. … not audible …

Answer: I have been a missionary and lived in an indigenous type community and we used find it a real strain, because 24/7, you are on display to these native people and you cannot slip-up of anyway because you are being watched the whole time. It is everything you do. You know, one night, we were sitting around in my bedroom; four of us playing cards, there is a knock on the door. … not audible … It was a close shave. It was the only time we got caught. We were not gambling, we were just having a game of cards. The whole time, you are aware. Now, I am still aware that I do not have that same probably, real awareness that you have in that sort of situation.

2b. Mission inspiration – books, leaders or churches?
Darren: Who would you are Connection’s role models or heroes for mission, either within the congregation or beyond?
Answer: But I was going to say before when ‘Peter’ was talking was that, with the example of the community and the neighbours and stuff like that, Wayne and ‘Oscar’, are, set examples? They are an example of that. They always are trying to connect with their neighbours and they have been their neighbours over and they tell you that they doing things like that and so they are the role models. They have set the example and they are living it out as well, and that just helps with why we are going that way.

Darren: Or they are doing kind of a message on ten ways to reach your neighbours.

Answer: Yes! They are just do it. You say, “What are you doing Friday night?” We are having all our neighbours over we cannot have a meeting Friday night. That is part of what they are do. They are not just preaching it.

Answer: You see my generation would never do anything like that. We just could not do it.

Answer: I reckon we have heroes right here. Having the mums over for cards. I reckon connecting with those broken kids. I think the nursing. You got heroes in this room.

Answer: And I think you answered the question that you were talking about. You answered the next question anyway, … not audible …

Answer: I think the beauty of the Life Connections is that discussion. You have not got just one person talking at you. You discuss it and you have. I just am amazed. When you are sitting at the table, you get all these great examples of how people are working in peoples’ lives. It is kind of amazing that I feel the Church is so rich with really Godly people that are kind of really working hard at doing stuff. And it is great to have it in expression that you can talk to them and you are learning from each other, you are not just from one person. You are getting input from all over.

2i. Mission – affected by leadership?

Darren: How else does leadership affect mission? How else is mission of community influenced or a function of leadership?

Answer: Leadership has to cast a vision. And cast a vision of what? How mission can make a difference. And if the leadership is not mission-focused or missional then I think very quickly the Church as a whole becomes a club, overnight.

Answer: It is very much not, as we say before it is not, okay. This is our mission; this is what we are going to do with the Church. It is what do you feel called to do, you know I think, and in equipping people in those and bringing out some ideas and sharing with them and exploring them rather than top down.

2f. Mission – culture of

Darren: So, the culture is to encourage people’s passions for mission rather than impose it?

Answer: Yes. I think so.

Darren: How long has that been the culture? Is that distinctive of Wayne and Paula or is that part of the leadership culture more broadly or is it part of Croydon seven years ago?


Appendix 12:
Sample interview transcript

Answer: Or do you disagree that is not the culture.

Answer: No, sorry I was looking to ‘Betty’ to answer the Croydon one, but I actually fazed out just for a little bit of what you have said ‘Pria’. I am sorry.

Answer: I was just saying that leadership does not take a top down approach of saying OK we are going to do these and these in, what to get involved in, but encourage people to look at what they feel comfortable called to do and then equip people that way.

Answer: Do want to speak to Croydon?

Answer: Yeah, ‘Peter’ you can say … not audible …

Answer: It is more probably more of a club don’t you think? I mean we had our op shop. We used to have programs. This is a culture where we invite people to things that was the, you know, you will say “Come along, we are having a trivia night, or we are having a barn-dance or something.” We had home groups. I suppose we did have people from outside. … not audible … But it was more religious things. You know, like you did it for that purpose not just to say, you know, be a friend to the person. It was for a specific reason you asked them along.

Answer: I think one of the things too is that culture evolves over time. One of things is the leaders at that time were the people who come through the Churches in the 50s, whenever it was big and everybody went and they sent the kids to Sunday school and all of that sort of thing and so that, I think there was this deep feeling that we just needed to be there on the street corner and people would arrive and that has taken a long time to sort of change that mindset. In fact, some Churches still have not changed it. If we just here and we open the doors every Sunday night, then God will send people along, but it is interesting that Jesus has sent his Disciples out. He did not say and set up a stall and see who comes along. I think the Church has reached the stage where in the 50s when I do not know what percentage of population went, but certainly heaps more than now, and so as Churches were reasonably comfortable enough anyway. So, the people felt as though there were enough of them around… not audible … really reach out and touch other people to the stage where increasing numbers of Churches are now becoming viable, small numbers, possibly Croydon ended up with only about 30 people. It was really hard work and I guess at the end, I feel like God did this actually, we moved everything we were doing. People got tired of doing of what they were doing and so, we are left with the stage where there was nothing happening, except we were trying that … not audible … But in the end, that is sort of washed the slate clean to enable Connection to start with a blank piece of paper. … not audible …there were no things we had to pick up and continue with – I am not sure how I ended up there.

Answer: … not audible … did this all start with Wayne? Because in my mind, what I see is that it has been Wayne’s strong leadership that has driven this Church in the direction of being a missional Church.

Answer: I think that is true.

Answer: Yeah, it is true.

Answer: I reckon it is in the case of what empowers mission in a Church is if Wayne and Paula preach their hearts out about getting out there, and not do it, would not mean anything in my book and in most people’s books. Because they do it, they do it because … not audible … have an example to set on Sunday because we are preaching our mission. They do it because I love it. My dad is a hero of mine. He has got his faults. He spends time - he has a Church of mostly retired people, but he does not ask them to do what he won’t do.
It is funny, a lot of them will sit there and will say to him, literally, “No that is your job, you are the pastor.” A lot of them are 70 plus years of age. There are some great people in there, I am not knocking them. But he goes to pubs and he sits in the shopping centres, with the lonely people who sit on benches by themselves or drink themselves under the table, or whatever. He loves it, he absolutely loves it. But he would not ask his congregation to do that, if he was not doing it, like the captain of an army does not expect his men to go into something that he has been doing for the last 30 years … not audible … I think that is empowering in terms of mission. If it is just spoken, this is a good idea, it is not empowering at all, because you know, what the person’s life is like. But Wayne and Paula and others, ‘Aaron’ and a whole stack of people, the leaders and the elders of our Church, even the people sitting right here.

Answer: ‘Peter’ is doing it on a daily basis.

Answer: That empowers mission I think more than a well-put together Biblical sermon on why we should.

5d. Anything else?

Darren: Terrific! Well, thanks for everything that you shared that is insightful and helpful. How about anything else, question? So is there is one other thing that you would really like to tell me, what would that be? If there is anything else you would really like to tell me, perhaps related to what we have been talking about or anything else about how Connection tics, what would that be?

Answer: I still think the meet issues is an issue. I think if you are going to do a mission and I know, like what you have said about the12 years and not necessary that people who come to know God. But, if you are getting new people into, and who do come along and get involved and become Christian then, they need to have, I do not know where that next step is, how much growth is there for them. I know there is a lot if you decide to become an intern and all that kind of stuff, but if you do not have that time, I do not know what is there. That concerns me down the track that nurturing and growth to the next step and the next step and the development in your lives.

Answer: It is possibly why I think God sometimes does not give the responsibility of looking after people who have actually come through because you got no plan of what to do with them if they do.

Answer: I think just like what you have said wrap up stuff, that family and community are messy and ugly at times, family is fighting, but they do not 9 times out of 10 run away from each and you see that happening, … not audible … I think in my experience of going up in Churches that we are very quick to … not audible … that is fine, that is important, we need to do that. But also I realise it that it is messy but I love it. It is messy and that is what community is, not leaving your troubles at the door. No! Bring him in for heavens sake. This is who I am. And we are in a messy time right now. And that is okay.

Darren: … have you got anything else?

Answer: I have had a lot of thought running through my head, but just building on that last one about being messy … not audible … my prayer at the moment for Connection is that we will stick with this process and that we will find ways to really flesh out what this dream of Connection is. I so clearly see that Wayne has really spelt it out really well and I do not know what the future holds for Wayne and Paula. I certainly hope that they continue to journey with this but I think it is so good that we can have opportunities to talk through
what Connection means to us so I really thank you for the opportunity there is has been really good to, you know, … not audible …

**Darren:** ‘Peter’?

‘Peter’: … not audible … I have been thinking about likely is, we are in a very success-driven society, like everything has to be successful. I have been thinking about what makes a Church successful and the common things are bums on seats and money in the bag. But surely, it is more than that. So, how do we know when we are being success? And does God call us to be successful? I did a Bible study thing look through the word “success” in the New Testament and found it once. And I thought that is interesting, you know, and so I searched a number of things and the word “success” was only used four times in one of the versions. I just sort of felt like God’s idea of success is not our idea of success. God calls us to be listening to Him … not audible … success is, you know, that is up to Him. Whereas, we live in the society where we feel … not audible … that is God’s … not audible … I am just sort of. Those sort issues. You know, because we always like to say, “Oh, we had a hundred people there, we collected $2,500 in the offering or whatever we did.” Because of our tribal nature, we like to say to the other tribes, “We are doing okay”. “We have got all these people coming here.” “How many do you have?” “We have got 404 … not audible …” We get embarrassed about some things. So the whole thing is about, what Church is and how we measure, whether we are doing well. … not audible … difficult to discern, except that I know it is about sitting at God’s feet, sitting at the feet of Christ, and understanding what he is saying and then doing it. And that may not bring the traditional measures of success. That is just what I am thinking through at the moment and I look at things and that sort of think, “Why do we get so bound up in some other success measures that are … not audible …”? Why do we believe that that is the most important thing? It may be with some things. I mean, obviously there are more people there, that is good. You can draw a crowd, you just have to put a footy match on here to draw a crowd. But really, what are we about?

Answer: Yes! That has been a particular challenge for me too, with these card nights. You kind of, a success, “Look, great how many people came tonight” and then the next week, it might be only one person and it has been a really on my heart … not audible … I went a lot deeper with that one person than I would have been if there were 10 people there. You know and it is that real sense of, “Okay God!” You know, leaving it at His feet, help me to see your successes rather than that number thing.

Answer: Particularly for me also, another challenge is being really, really loving someone. In the sense I have got this girlfriend who is not actually part of our Church, of different Church, and she has been really struggling. She has been sick for nine months, like bed-bound and the struggle was with her people will make a … not audible …. Very generous, no one wants to make fun of her. But for nine months that kind of dries up. That is okay if you are sick for two weeks, you feel very loved. It is the long term, how do you love like Jesus would and other people. You kind of tend to, you do not hear about when somebody is really struggling until maybe later. They will say, “Oh yeah, it was really hard time for me.” And kind of knowing and kind of seeing, being a bit more open to those kinds of situations and going a bit deeper than just the one soft casserole-type thing.

**Darren:** …Anything else?

‘Julie’: I do not think so Darren.

**Darren:** Did I miss anyone say anything else? Or anything else?

**Timed at 1.13.29**


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