

## **WORSHIP AND MISSION**

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The contemporary challenge, to which the church must respond, is how to engage in mission in the context of a society of largely un-churched and de-churched people. The question that this paper intends to explore is how worship offered by long-established, and often-traditional, churches and that mission interact. It is recognised that the fastest growing Christian communities are those groups that gather, sometimes in secular spaces, to offer lively ‘contemporary’ worship before dispersing again until the next week. The assumption that the primary purpose of the church’s mission is to bring people into worship, which such communities imply, must be examined.

The missiologists, Bevan and Schroeder write that ‘mission is not an innocent word’.<sup>1</sup> They continue by suggesting that ‘mission ultimately is witness to the hope of a new heaven and a new earth.’<sup>2</sup> It should be added that neither is worship a benign activity, nor the church a place of repose. The church at worship is a seditious, life-changing and perception-challenging expression of the life of God in the world.

Worship is the highest calling of the church. Worship is everything that the church offers to God in response to God’s love. The two-edged sword of the church at worship causes wars and brings people into relationship. Worship draws people close to God and builds faith. Worship convicts and challenges God’s people to reach out in adventures of faith that are bigger and more bold than reason alone would endorse. Worship is from God, of God and for God and the church which underestimates its significance does so at its peril. The whole life of the church’s mission, ministry and spirituality is located within the milieu of worship. The converse is also true, that worship is rightly located within the expression of the mission, ministry and spirituality of the church. Recognise, though, that the church which can only worship remains visible and viable as the church. In those places where regimes seek to starve the church of the life-blood of faith, by prohibiting mission and evangelism, the body of Christ’s people remains viable because of the worship they offer. In such contexts, where all the

church may do is worship, then the life-enhancing benefits of worship sustain Christian faith and life through many generations. Conversely, in those situations where the mission of the church has been separated from the church itself, then that institution ceases to be visible and viable as church, becoming instead an agency – albeit an agency for good.<sup>3</sup> The mission of the church depends upon the worship of the church for its identity and focus.

In July 2012, the annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain received the report concerning *Fresh Expressions* in the mission of the church. Amongst the conclusions in the report were a number of important, yet challenging, statements and affirmations. It was recognised that *Fresh Expressions* have a legitimate place as part of the mission strategy of a mixed-economy church. For some people, *Fresh Expressions* represent an unprecedented and radical innovation in Christian mission which requires the wider church to revise its ecclesiological self-understanding. On the other hand, ought it not to be possible that these *Fresh Expressions* be accommodated within the existing self-understanding and self-expression of what is commonly held to be church?

The report acknowledges eight essential ecclesial elements by which a Christian community can be identified as a church.

1. They are a people called by God to be committed disciples of Jesus Christ and to live out their discipleship in the world.
2. They regularly assemble for Christian worship and are then sent out into the world to engage in mission and service.
3. They proclaim the Gospel in ways that are appropriate to the lives of its members.
4. They regularly preach and teach the Scriptures.
5. Baptism is conferred as a rite of initiation.
6. They celebrate the Lord's Supper.
7. Pastoral responsibility and presidency at the Lord's Supper is exercised by the appropriate authorised ministry.
8. They are united to others through: mutual commitment, spiritual communion, structures of governance, oversight and communion, and an authorised ministry in common.

It is asserted that a Christian community that lacks any of these essential ecclesial elements is not a church.

It is important that *Fresh Expressions* should be orientated towards their eventual full expression of the koinonia/communion of the church. In 2011,

the General Assembly of Church of Scotland received a report on emerging church which stated that ‘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. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the Gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.’<sup>4</sup> The search for contextually appropriate ways of expressing Christian community is nothing new and, in a post-Christendom context, the church can no longer expect its voice to be taken seriously.<sup>5</sup> Western culture is indeed a missionary context in which Christians have to learn a new language and culture. The authors of the report rightly recognise that ‘as a Reformed church, the Church of Scotland is no stranger to the concept of change as an integral aspect of any faithful following of Christ. The slogan “reformed and reforming” is deeply embedded within the DNA of the tradition. Moreover, mission has ... been high on the agenda in Scotland ... and the sort of questions that are now surfacing under the guise of “emerging church” are, in principle, nothing new.’<sup>6</sup>

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, writing in the foreword to *Mission-Shaped Church*, identifies that church is what happens when people encounter the Risen Christ and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounters with each other. What holds together these diverse encounters is the overarching will to identify the living Christ at the heart of every expression of the Christian life. Such a definition leaves plenty of room for diversity of rhythm and style.<sup>7</sup> In the Scottish context it is good to refer to the Reformers, who adopted the ancient understanding of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic and expanded upon its expression. Calvin wrote:

Wherever we see the word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence, since his promise cannot fail, ‘where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’.<sup>8</sup>

When we consider the challenges that are placed before the mainstream churches by the emerging church in our midst we find ourselves greatly tested. We are not talking about those many and various alternative churches which rise up in our towns and cities. We are considering those expressions of missionary endeavour which seek to reach beyond our walls and beyond our traditions, but from within our walls and within our traditions.

The un-churched and the de-churched become engaged in these *Fresh Expressions*, these emerging churches, which rise up in our midst, and challenge the way we do things. Around these events also gather people who have not previously been a part of the mainstream Christian communities, or who have previously made a conscious decision to leave those communities. Questions arise up about the manner in which we do things. Do we really have to have set patterns of worship, should we always sing 'traditional' hymns, why does the sermon have to be monologue? Who are our leaders, why can they not preside at the communion service if we want them to? Why do we have to parachute a minister into the service if they have not previously been in leadership? By whose authority, according to whose rules, do we do things? Questions of leadership, authority, established order, content and style, challenge the traditional churches who seek to engage with these emerging *Fresh Expressions* of church. The missionary motivation, within itself a good and worthy thing, can rapidly find itself biting off more than it can chew.

For some parts of the church, the mission imperative takes them beyond established patterns in order to create *Fresh Expressions* of the ways of doing things. If the premise that these *Fresh Expressions* are somehow related to us, and remain linked to us, is true, then would it not be reasonable to be able to recognise their form in some way, to be able to engage with them in some manner, and to find some place of common ground with them? Do they share the common values of 'our' family culture, do they engage with us at any level, can we sit together around the family table and find things in common? Or is our relationship with them more akin to that of the parent and the truculent teenager, where there is no understanding of ways of being, where each other's culture and understanding of life is alien to the other, where the music each values is cacophony to the other? Whose responsibility is it to bridge that gap?

The missionary calling of the church is not about the church simply becoming attractive. It is not about how to make the church better, how to get more people to come to church, or how to turn a dying church around. It is not about getting the church back to cultural respectability in a time when it has been marginalised. All of these are good things, but they aren't the focus of a missionary imagination.

God is up to something in the world that is bigger than the church, even though the church is called to be sign, witness, and foretaste of God's purposes in the world. The Spirit is calling the church to a journey outside

of itself and its internal focus. Rowan Williams has suggested that 'It is not the church of God that has a mission. It's the God of mission that has a church.' He is saying God is at work in the world to redeem creation, and God invites us to participate in this mission. God is not interested in getting more and more people into the institution of the church. Instead the church is to be God's hands and feet in accomplishing God's mission. This imagination turns most of our church practices on their head. It invites us to turn toward our neighbourhoods and communities, listening first to what is happening among people and learning to ask different question about what God is up to in the neighbourhood. Rather than the primary question being, 'How do we attract people to what we are doing?' it becomes, 'what is God up to in the neighbourhood?' and 'What are the ways we need to change in order to engage the people in our community who no longer consider church a part of their lives?'<sup>9</sup>

Bevan and Schroeder describe God as a verb – a flow, an embrace, a movement, a dance. They write that to speak of such a God is to speak of mission. God is present everywhere in creation. God is not static, but is in relationship, and this relationship is enabled and enacted by the Holy Spirit who works from the inside out and who is perceived out of the corner of the eye rather than straight on face-to-face. The Spirit which brooded over the darkness, which was active in creation, which was elusive and distant, was given a human face in Jesus. In Jesus' ministry God is revealed as a verb and the mission is expressed in the life of the Christ. The people find that they can kill the Christ, but they cannot kill God and the mission continues. The disciples discover and realise that Jesus' mission, God's mission, is their mission. The mission began to have a church, and this mission is the work of proclaiming, demonstrating and embodying God's reign. This church comes into being as the church engages in mission, as it crosses the boundaries of Judaism and engages with the gentiles.<sup>10</sup>

Bevan and Schroeder remind us that mission precedes the church and is, first of all, an activity of God.<sup>11</sup> This mission requires the church to engage in a dialogue with the world. Mission has got to be lived in dialogue, because the nature of God's relationship with the world is as dialogue and because mission is participation in that divine nature and activity. As liturgists, people who engage in worship in all its forms, we know that the church never celebrates the liturgy in a vacuum – but always in a particular context and from a specific culture. Therefore, in considering the worship life of the church we need to be attentive to the community in which that church is located. And in recognising this we also recognise that mission is an expression of ambiguity for an ambiguous church in an ambiguous

world. There can no longer be the same sense of certainty of expression or assumptions of orthodoxy or orthopraxis that we have come to believe was held in a former age. The church today has to live from the centre with its eyes fixed on the borders. The liturgy is worship, but true worship is not what happens in the church, but what happens in the world.

In his standard text on mission, David Bosch identifies some missional themes in the scriptures. The Gospel of Matthew is concerned with the making of disciples and reaches its climax with those oft-quoted words of the great commission. Luke-Acts wishes to emphasis solidarity with the poor and expresses a pneumatology which both initiated mission and sustains it. Salvation is offered as economic, political, psychological and spiritual. The apostle Paul, once on the outside and then brought close to the living Christ, works to offer an invitation to join the ecclesiological community with a missionary theology that is integral to his identity. Paul's paradigm is of the church as a new community for mission, of that mission being exercised in the context of God's triumph and of this mission as being for the transformation of society. Bosch, saying what we have been saying all morning in a succinct manner, writes: 'The church is not just the outcome of mission but is the medium for mission ... and the church in mission is primarily the local church everywhere in the world'.<sup>12</sup>

So, if the challenge to engage in mission is placed before the local church everywhere in the world, if this mission is a process of dialogue with context and culture, if discipleship is responding to the challenge to go into every place and engage with what we find there, what does this mean for today's church as a worshipping community?

When we consider the demands of Christian discipleship within the context of mission, when we consider the implications of that mission upon the expression of worship in our churches, when we recognise that in our midst there are people for whom our ways are not their ways, what can we do? Does going into the world and making disciples of all nations mean making them like us? What do we mean by discipleship in this context and how does our liturgical expression, our worship life, begin to express and to form our discipleship? In an apparent context where things might not be what they seem, in a context where we are called to engage with difference, in a context where our missionary imperative is to find out what God is doing and join in, how do we enable the disciples to worship?

Every action of our lives does something towards moulding our character. The influence of worship upon the formation of our spiritual character is

not excluded from this assertion. Christian character is nurtured by engagement with the scriptural narratives, our images for God, specific worship practices, prayerful consideration of means and ends, tiny choices in daily life, the values of the community, and our interactions with its members. All these things together contribute to who we are, how we live. Some churches do scramble to find better worship ‘methods’ to increase their membership, or stewardship or educational effectiveness. We must remember, constantly, as we seek to be God’s church that most of all God wants holy people.

Being holy people means something of our relationship with God. Holiness is not so much a state of being as a way of life. It is a way of life which is centred upon worship. It is essential that the church keeps God as the subject of worship, since to be a Christian means to believe that the God revealed in Jesus Christ is everything to us – creator, provider, sustainer, deliverer, redeemer, Lord and all of that. Friendship, instruction, and other aspects of the gathered community are important, but we lose our reason for being if we do not constantly remember that God has called us to be God’s people and that our ability to respond to that call in worship and life is totally the gift of God’s grace. We, who live by the name Christian, are those rescued from ourselves by the salvation wrought by Jesus. Since salvation is entirely God’s gift and not deserved or earned Christian worship, above all else, makes clear who is the giver of that and every other gift and challenges the world to respond to who God is.

American Lutheran liturgist, Thomas Schattauer, writes that the assembly for worship is intrinsically connected to the mission of God in Christ for the sake of the whole world (*missio dei*), and consequently worship is integrally related to every form of the church’s mission of witness and service ... the missional intention of the means of grace needs to be recalled. By God’s gift, the word and sacraments are set in the midst of the world, for the life of the world.<sup>13</sup>

In discussing the liturgical assembly as the locus of mission, Schattauer identifies three models. The first model he calls ‘inside and out’ and identifies as the conventional approach. His second model he calls ‘outside-in’ and identifies as the contemporary approach. His third model he calls ‘inside-out’ and identifies as the radically traditional approach.

Looking more closely, we find that the ‘inside and out’ model of worship is for those inside the church community and mission is what takes place outside it. Worship nurtures the individual and sustains the community in

its life before God and in its life together. It is the place from which Christians go out in mission and they return to worship maybe with a few more members and the cycle repeats. The 'outside-in' model brings the outside activities of mission directly into the context of worship. The sacred precinct of the liturgy becomes the stage from which to present the gospel and the platform from which to issue the call to discipleship expressed in service to neighbour and commitment to social action. The final model, 'inside-out' or radically traditional locates the liturgical assembly within the arena of the *missio dei*. The focus is upon God's mission towards the world, to which the world witnesses and into which it is drawn, rather than the specific activities of the church undertaken in response to the Divine initiative.<sup>14</sup>

The *missio dei* is God's own movement outward in relation to the world – in creation and covenant with Israel, and culminating in Jesus Christ and the community gathered in him. This community is created by the Spirit to witness to the ultimate purposes of God – to reconcile the world to God. This assembly is mission – it is the visible locus of God's reconciling mission to the world. The seemingly most internal activity of the church at worship is, ultimately, directed outward to the world. The judgement and mercy of God, enacted within the liturgical assembly, signifies God's ultimate judgement and mercy for the world.

Today's world has come to regard worship as the private, internal, and often esoteric activity of the religious people who retreat from the world to practice their mystical rites. By definition, though, the *ekklesia* is a public assembly, and its worship has got to be seen as the first form of mission, the reality of God that is proclaimed in worship is to be announced to and for the entire world.

Worship presents the world with an alternative vision. Between its thankful remembrance and its hope-filled supplication, the church in its liturgical assembly carries out its eucharistic mission to witness to God's liberating judgement of the world and the world-encompassing mercy of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. The horizon of the great prayer of thanksgiving is always the world and the world's future in the unfolding of God's plan of salvation. Such a prayer celebrates *koinonia*, the reconciled communion with God that is already possible through Christ in the community of the church and yet remains a hope for the world – all people and for the whole created order. In this way, the liturgical assembly witnesses to and participates in the *missio dei*. Here is presented the story and memory in a celebration which enables our lives to be directed in hope to the Kingdom



of God that Jesus proclaimed and promised. The church in every present moment lives towards the reign of God inaugurated by Jesus Christ. And so the *missio dei* is nothing other than what the church, as an eschatological community, enacts in its liturgical assembly and in which it participates precisely by this enactment. Such an assembly is not focused on the past but lives in the present toward the future God has promised in Jesus Christ.

The Biblical story, upon which our lives and our worship are centred, tells not just of us and our history, but it is the story of grace, of God's action, and of a new thing not yet imagined. We gather into the story and the story takes us to a new place. We hear the words, but the words speak of greater things than simple words contain. We speak of God's grace, and the liturgy leads people into God's presence and mercy. When God's people encounter God's presence and mercy they find themselves changed, from glory into glory, from where they were into a closer place with God in God's holiness. Such holiness challenges boundaries and perceptions of who is, and who is not, allowed to stand upon the holy ground. When, in mission, we open our doors and invite all who would come to taste and see, we might find that we open up to more than we envision. We might find that holiness is not where we expected to find it or where we thought it should be – we find it in the outsiders, the utterly poor, the unconventional, the loud and louche, the tone deaf and clumsy – and in the face of the expansive grace of God we are challenged to remove our shoes in humility – because it means that we too can find place.

In turning to the world, from our liturgical assembly, what do we see? Does the holiness of that place and that moment expose and emphasise the unholiness of the world around us? What if the authentic liturgy somehow heals our eyes and we are enabled to see the world as held in the holiness of God? What sort of ordered world does our liturgy and worship imply? Orthodox liturgist Alexander Schmemmann has written of the eucharist that 'here we see the world in Christ as it truly is.' American liturgist Aidan Kavanagh suggests that worship and liturgy is 'the church doing the world as God means it to be done in Christ'.<sup>15</sup>

And so we ask ourselves what we need in order to have church. In the face of the demands of mission, when challenged by *Fresh Expressions* and emerging ministries, when we encounter the needs of the un-churched and the de-churched, how are we to respond?

We have to recognise and acknowledge that worship is not about our holiness, but is about God's holiness. The assembly of people gathering

together in worship constitutes the most basic symbol of the church at worship. All other actions and symbols depend upon the gathering. Each aspect of worship, no matter how expressed, presumes a gathering, an assembly, of people coming together with the intention of worshipping God. When we gather as the liturgical assembly we are formed into the very unity of the Holy Spirit which is the unity of the holiness of God. God makes the assembly holy, God's holiness authenticates the church. All who come to the assembly need to understand themselves as together with the outsiders and the seekers, representing a seeking earth. The mission of the church is, surely, to be the holy assembly in each place, the focused, open assembly in communion with all other assemblies, that gather in order to shout out the life-giving word in the midst of each culture and to engage in a loving dialogue with that culture.

If in our worship we are engaging with the culture of the world. And if the missionary imperative is high on our agenda then what happens next will be quite crucial for the life of the church. If we give credence to Schattauer's final model, inside-out or radically traditional locates the liturgical assembly within the arena of the *missio dei*. Then the focus is upon God's mission towards the world, to which the world witnesses and into which it is drawn, rather than the specific activities of the church undertaken in response to the Divine initiative. This, surely, has an impact upon how we relate to the world around us as well as affecting the way we consider the impact of *Fresh Expressions* of church and the fruits of emerging ministries.

In thinking about mission we have recognised that the activity upon which we are engaged is not simply a case of filling pews and increasing the collection. The church is a part of God's missionary engagement with the world, the mission has a church, and our challenge is to find out what God is doing and join in. The consequence of failure to engage with what God is doing is that the church shall be left behind. Our failure to find out what God is doing, our failure to join in, our failure to be what we are called to be will lead to us becoming the church from which the glory is departed – *Ichabod!*

Do not hear me wanting to destroy our tradition, do not see me as some sort of liturgical iconoclast! I am not arguing that our engagement with the mission of God is taking us away from our tradition. I am a Methodist and Methodists do theology by reference to the interaction between scripture, experience, reason and tradition. The treasures of our various traditions are our treasures – and we all have them within us and we would be the poorer

for not having them. You worship according to the Presbyterian pattern and you have your specific treasures and perspectives. You worship in the Episcopalian or Anglican pattern and you have your specific treasures and perspectives. You worship in the Methodist tradition and you have your specific treasures and perspectives. We all have our treasures and bring them to the conversation. Engaging in the mission of God does not mean that we deny our history or discard our traditions – for they are the rock from which we are hewn and upon which we stand.

We have, though, identified that worship is not a neutral act, but is seditious, life-changing and perception-challenging – if we allow it to be. We know this because worship is our encounter with the living God, it is our standing in that place betwixt heaven and earth, it is our engagement with the one in whom we live and move and have our being. If we can survive that encounter, stand in that place, or engage with that One, without being challenged and changed, without coming away as different people, then there is something wrong – either with that worship or with our participation in it. Worship is the highest calling of the church – it is what we do that makes us distinctive as a community. Do we sometimes seek to tame our worship and keep it constrained within the words and actions of which we approve? We have recognised the rise of other ways of worship within our traditions. This is nothing new. There have always been developments in worship patterns – there was even a time when the use of the organ was seen as an unworthy development in worship! It is not so very long ago that the use of the guitar in worship was seen as outlandish – and maybe there are still places where this is still so!

If I am not arguing for an overturning of tradition, or a destruction of our ways, or a demolition of all that we hold dear, then what am I suggesting? I am arguing for accommodation. I am arguing for recognition of the potential found in that worship-mall approach of which Spinks has written. Remember that quotation from Rowan Williams' foreword to *Mission-Shaped Church* in which he reminds us that 'church' is what happens when people encounter the risen Christ and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other. What holds together these diverse encounters is the overarching will to identify the living Christ at the heart of every expression of Christian life. Such a definition, we have to admit, leaves plenty of room for diversity of rhythm and style.

*'Reformed, reforming, emerging and experimenting'*, the Church of Scotland report on emerging ministries and the emerging church, reminds

us to set the conversation within our general consideration of discipleship. The authors of that report challenge us to 'be radical ... return to the roots of faith, asking fundamental questions about the nature of discipleship ... what it means to be a community of faith that is continuous with the historic tradition while being appropriately contextualised in today's ... different cultural situation.' That really is the crux of the issue.

Being disciples of Christ puts us firmly into the crowd of saints, sages and sinners who have travelled the road of faith that has carried the story from first century Palestine to the Gorbals, Glasgow, in October 2012. Over that journey, the scenery has changed immensely, the people have changed greatly and the developing processes of understanding have found new words with which to express the experience. All through their journey the people have known the importance of offering worship. The way the disciples have offered that worship has not, though, stayed the same. They began as just a few people meeting in secret, and then it became safe to meet in larger groups and in bigger venues. The things that they needed to do with two or three in a small room didn't look quite right in the bigger basilicas, and so ceremonies developed and music was introduced to accompany their actions. The pilgrim disciples travelled around and visited each other, sharing their stories and taking back ideas of actions which spread across the various Christian groups. Then some of the leaders of the disciples decided it would be good if all of the groups did things in the same manner, and believed exactly the same things, and saw things the same way. Controls were put in place and people found themselves included or excluded. As the disciples continued their journey, different groups developed, as like-minded and like-thinking people gathered together to do what they found useful. Traditions were formed and 'our ways' became the norm and 'your ways' became suspect. Today the journey continues and some people have begun to walk in different ways, and to tell us that 'our ways' are no longer 'their ways'. Yet there are others who have begun to recognise that the road on which the disciples walk is no longer the dusty narrow track through the Palestinian wilderness, but is more like the twelve lane motorways of the twenty-first century developed world. People can travel towards the same direction at different rates, they can turn off and take an alternative route if they choose, and they can get off the motorway completely if they want to take a radically different route. They might be like the ancients, seeking guidance from the stars, they might have a tatty and torn road map which has been kicking around the boot of the car, they might be guided by the latest GPS-enabled satnav system, or maybe they are more like me – just going from corner to corner asking, groping for the next direction on the journey. But the end purpose, the

destination, the reason for travel remains held in common. To find our way to the loving and living God, like the Magi searching for the stable, that we might offer our worship.

How do we decide what is an acceptable route? Does the shared destination make any route allowable? Are there boundaries to the road within which the disciples must travel in order to be recognised as fellow travellers?

When we considered the challenge of mission, we recognised that we are not engaged in our mission – either as the church or as individuals. We recognised that the mission on which we are engaged is actually bigger than us. God is about God's business in the world, and that business is bigger than the church. And the church which does not engage with God in God's will find itself left behind, the glory will be departed.

Engagement with context is a missiological imperative. What works for me in city centre Leeds will not be quite the same as works for you in urban Glasgow, or suburban Edinburgh, or whatever context into which you offer your works of mission and ministry. And what works for me in city centre Leeds will not be quite the same as works for John who sleeps under the railway bridge in Leeds city centre, or for Emily who works in the bank headquarters that are located in Leeds city centre, or for Joan who travels in from the suburbs because the church in Leeds city centre is the one she has attended for the past 75 years. And what works for me in Leeds city centre definitely does not work for the crowd of young men who gather to talk of things of God in the *'Fresh Expressions'* project set up in the Royal Armoury buildings just a little way across Leeds city centre.

But whose story is the right story, whose journey is the most acceptable, whose expression is the most authentic?

One of the challenges of *Fresh Expressions* or emerging church projects is that they are often portrayed as being easy access acts of religious experience for those who are seeking their way into faith. There was a tendency, when some of them were first set up, to see them in purely missionary terms. Some of them were not even quite sure that they were church plants in any traditional sense. Some of them did not see themselves even as church. They saw themselves as opportunities for religious/spiritual engagement in a 'safe' and easy manner. I used to be minister in the North East of England – one of my neighbours established the 'mind the gap' project. It was focused upon fellowship, mutual support, teaching of the things of God, cell groups and the like. Great. What was its involvement in

the worship of the church? We have suggested earlier that worship is a seditious, life-changing and perception-challenging expression of the life of God in the world. If we say that, can we then believe in and offer a safe way into church? Safe from what? Surely, though, no encounter with the loving and living God can truly be safe, can it? If our offering of worship is a true engagement with that God, made known in Jesus Christ and alive in the Spirit, then worship will change us, challenge us, and send us back into the world to be the mission-focused pilgrim people whom God demands. If that is what our worship does, then each time we return we shall do so as different people, in a changed community, as a challenged church, in order to engage with what God is doing in the world and we shall know ourselves to be joining in with the stuff of the Kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Bevans, Stephen B. and Schroeder, Roger P. *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Prophetic Dialogue*, 71.

<sup>3</sup> An example of this could be offered in the Amity Foundation in China. Established by Christians in order to deliver those mission activities which the church was, at the time, prevented from delivering, the Foundation is now recognised as an NGO rather than as a church. That is not to decry or in any way diminish the work of Amity Foundation, but it is not a church.

<sup>4</sup> *Mission Shaped Church* quoted in *Reformed, reforming, emerging and experimenting*. Report of a joint working party of the Ministries Council and the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, May 2011, 1.1.7.

<sup>5</sup> *Reformed, reforming, emerging and experimenting*. Report of a joint working party of the Ministries Council and the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, May 2011, 1.1.3.

<sup>6</sup> *Reformed, reforming, emerging and experimenting*. Report of a joint working party of the Ministries Council and the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland, May 2011, 1.3.1.

<sup>7</sup> *Mission- Shaped Church*. (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), v.

<sup>8</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.9.

<sup>9</sup> *Mission-Shaped Church*. v.

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<sup>10</sup> *Prophetic Dialogue*. 3f.

<sup>11</sup> *Prophetic Dialogue*. 3f.

<sup>12</sup> Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Twentieth Anniversary Edition). (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 538-9.

<sup>13</sup> Schattaer, Thomas H. (ed). *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), viii.

<sup>14</sup> *Worship Inside Out*. 2-3.