

Relational Based Church Planting

By Linda Bergquist & Gary Bulley

The Nehemiah Project
Module 5 – Church Planting Strategies
Edited by Gary Bulley

Table of Contents

I.	Definition and Introduction.....	3
II.	Values and Assumptions	5
III.	Biblical and Cultural Apologetic Support	10
IV.	Strategic Advantages	17
V.	Strategic Disadvantages	20
VI.	Strategy Guidelines	22
VII.	Implementation Guidelines	27
VIII.	Bibliography & Recommended Reading List.....	31
IX.	Case Study	34
X.	Appendix	40

I. Definition and Introduction

A. What is a Relationally Based Church?

All churches are relational in some way because the nature of almost any regularly gathered group is relational, and because the gospel itself is relational. The relationally based church, however, derives its name because in its essence, it is built on and through relationship.

Just as the Purpose Driven Church structures itself around what it sees as the particular purposes of the church, and the Seeker Church is named because of its emphasis on being a church for the unchurched, the Relational Based Church is built principally around relationships.

The term is broadly used to define any kind of church that is based on relationships and is mostly used of smaller churches with loose structures and fluid organizations. In this study, churches in this broader category will be mentioned in the introductory material, but then the focus shifts to a particular type of emergent missional community: relationally based church networks. The relationally based networks that encompass the majority of this study are theologically and systemically whole and offer patterns for healthy church multiplication.

1. Types of Relationally Based Churches

- a) House churches. A house church in its best sense is a basic Christian community. In mathematics, consider the idea of least common denominator, with the church reduced to its essentials, but capable of performing all of the functions of church within itself. It is usually autonomous, and can be either highly egalitarian or very hierarchical. Single house churches, not related to the larger body of Christ, and not reproducing, can become ingrown and lose sight of mission.
- b) Intentional Christian communities. Usually this term refers to Christians who live together in a household with a high value on communal life. Some intentional communities have survived the years and provide models from which new groups can learn. Intentional communities, though they might seem unstructured, sometimes move to high structure and formal rules in response to the struggles of living so closely with one another. The community may or may not formalize a regular time of meeting in which others not living in the household are invited.
- c) Cell churches. If loosely organized, organic, and less hierarchical these may be in the category of relationally based churches. They are usually organized with high value on both community and evangelism, but not necessarily church reproduction or mission to the world. In cell churches, each individual cell is a Christian community, and membership in the cell church may be dependent on membership in an individual cell.

All of the above, plus the relationally based church networks, may have some common characteristics as pictured in Robert Bank's definition from his book, *The Church Comes Home* (p.6).

Home-churching involves face-to-face meeting of adults and children who are committed to developing a common life in Christ. They meet weekly in a house, apartment, or other convivial space. More important than the setting is their mutual care for and accountability to one another. As an extended Christian family they desire to sing, pray, learn, share, love, play, and have a meal (which is also their Lord's supper) together. Through their mutual ministry to one another they learn to identify and use the gifts God had given them and they are therefore more confident in engaging in mission through various individual ministries in their homes, neighborhoods, work places, and wider communities. While they view themselves as church they also recognize the importance of congregating regularly with a larger group of God's people.

Robert Banks

- d) Relationally based church networks. These are networks of basic disciple-making communities relating to one another, built around a covenant relationship to Christ in the context of shared relationships between individuals and groups. Participants demonstrate a commitment to follow the way of Christ together and a desire to be on mission with one another. Each church is structurally autonomous, but spiritually and relationally accountable to other churches in the network that have shared values about community, mission and a simple life style of following Christ. It is this type of relationally based church networks (may be networks of house churches) that the remainder of this material considers.

2. Models of Relationally Based Communities

1. Case study: Life Community, started in Southern California (see Case Study)
2. The Essence of Relationally Based Church (see Baton Networks, Case Study)

The early Christian church fits best into the relational based category.

The early Anabaptists and Baptists were relational based.

Pioneer Baptists in America were relational based.

Many major movements of God were relational based.

The call to a relational based ecclesiology is rooted in firm historical soil.

II. Values and Assumptions

The North American church, according to Van Gelder, was developed around a church centered focus rather than a mission centered theology. He calls for the need to refocus our church around mission, ecclesiology and theology. The relationally based church movement, especially in it's more recent expressions, is one that attempts to live out a missional theology, incorporating all three of the above areas. Only areas specific to the starting of relationally based churches are mentioned here, rather than attempting a more complete theology of church or church planting.

A. Theological Components

1. The Role of the Holy Spirit.

- a) In conversion. Church growth and church starting are dependent on conversion, including group conversion. Churches are not started from already affiliated believers, although initial ministry teams are made of sent out believers. Instead, there is a spirit empowered, gospel penetration into a culture, and the gathered new believers form the new church. (John 6:8, Acts 1:8; Rom 8:2, 4-9; I Cor 12:3; II Cor 3:6; Eph 6:17)
- b) In giving spiritual gifts to the church that are evident and expressed in the life of every believer as they minister to each other and in the world. Also, the Holy Spirit empowers the believer in ministry and gives opportunity for expression of the gifts. (Eph 4:1-3; I Cor 12, 14; I Pet 4:10)
- c) In the role of trusting new believers with the gospel. Spontaneous expansion happens only when there is freedom from control, and trust of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer and in the life of the church. The Holy Spirit guides, corrects, and teaches the believer in matter of faith and practice, though not in isolation from Christian community. (Luke 12:12; John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:12-15; I Cor 2:11-13)
- d) In body life. It is not the church structure nor a set of rules that holds the church together and assists it to function. It is the rule of the Holy Spirit in the lives of both leaders and followers, leading followers of Christ to act in mutual submission to one another. Everything is done decently and in order. (Acts 13:2; Eph 2:22; 4:3-4; Phil 2:1; I Pet 2:22)

*you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit
comes on you and you
will be my witnesses in
Jerusalem, and in all
Judea and Samaria, and
to the ends of the Earth*
Jesus

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:21 - 22

2. Images of the Church or ekklesia.

a) A gathering. First used by Paul in I Thess 1:1 to refer to the assembly of people who often seemed to be already gathering together in some regular fashion and who are called out of the world for God's purposes. The term may also refer to a particular local church or a group of churches (a community of communities) within a geographical area.

b) A community. When relationally based churches consider how to best gather, their response is based on the biblical pattern of small face-to-face communities found in scripture. These communities were of some size small enough to experience community, live out the Christian life together, and experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit together. Community is also rooted in the nature of the Triune God who is three in one, and who created humanity to be in fellowship with Himself and one another. (Rom 16:16; I Cor 11-14; 16:19; II Cor 8:18-24; 11:8; Gal 1:2; II Thess 1:1)

Greet Pricilla and Aquilla...also the church that meets at their house.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus...

Those in the household of Narcissus...

Greet one another with holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greeting.
Romans 16

c) A family or household. Though the word oikos is not the primary way to describe church in scripture, Robert Banks contends that there are so many descriptive family metaphors in the New Testament that the household is actually the primary way in which the early church is described. (Paul's idea of Community, p.49) The basis for close, family like relationships is the relationship of the believer to Christ and therefore to one another. The church and the family are the two God ordained social structures found in scripture. (Mt 12:50; Rom 8:16-17; I Cor 8:11-13; Gal 3:26; 4:4-6; 6:10; Eph 2:18-19; Eph 3:15; Phil 2:22; Rev 21:19)

Family metaphores for the church

The household of God – Eph 2:19

Children of God – 1 John 3:1

We are born into God's family
John 1:12-13

We are to relate as family – 1 Tim 5:1-2

Today if a man ventures to suggest that there may be something in the methods by which St. Paul attained such wonderful results worthy of our careful attention, and perhaps our imitation, he is in danger of being accused of revolutionary tendencies.

Roland Allen, Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or ours? (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1962) 3-4

3. The Mission of God.

a) The mission of the church as rooted in the Mission of God.

Mission is not merely an activity or program of the church; it is the result of God's initiative and rooted in God's purposes. Church is not the goal of the gospel but it's instrument and witness. (Guder, Missional Church pp.4-5) (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8;

b) The sent out, missionary people of God. Jesus said, "As the father has sent me , so I send you. John 20:21. As God's sent people (apostolos) The church is called out of the world in order to bless the world. "...we are blessed to be a blessing to the nations" (Gen 12) Apostolos can not be separated from ekklesia, it can be sent because it is gathered, and gathered because it is sent. The picture here is the double coinciding axis of the Great Commission (Lk 10:27) and the Great Commandment (Mt 28:18-20).

We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation... We have learned to speak of God as a "missionary God." Thus we have learned to understand the church as a "sent people." "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." (John 20:21)

Darrell Gruder, Missional Church, p4

4. Biblical Ecclesiology.

a) Authority.

- Christ is the head of the church and the only true positional authority in the church. (John 13:13; Rom 9:5; I Cor 11:3; Eph 1: 15- 23; Phil 2:10-11; Col 1: 13-18)

- Authority is functional and not positional; horizontal rather than hierarchical. The dominant leadership models in scripture were servant leadership and team leadership. The relationship of follower to leader is based on a voluntary choice to follow and not an imposed authority structure. (Del Birkey, The House Church, p.89). (Mark 9:35; Acts 13:1; Acts 15:22-27; Luke 9:48; II Cor 10-13; Phil 2:3-8; Hebrews 13:17)

in humility consider others better than yourselves. Phil 2:3

he who is least among you all – he is the greatest. Luke 9:48

If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all. Mark 9:35

Judaism revolved around the Temple, the Torah and the Priests. Jesus came to fulfill such things in himself. He is the Presence, Word and High Priest of God. The early believers understood this and practiced a faith that reflected it. One wonders if we are not going back to Egypt as we venerate our leaders and build ever bigger monuments to God. Are we losing the mystery of Christ as we strive for a tangible faith?

Editor's comment

- New Testament authority does not rest in the role of a high priest who makes temple sacrifices for God’s people. Furthermore, there is no scriptural evidence that the church today still needs a holy building (temple) in which to meet. Jesus was the fulfillment of priesthood and sacrifice, and pronounced believers as the new “tabernacle of the Holy Spirit.” Church buildings on the other hand, may hinder kingdom reproduction by:
 - limiting mobility, in that church buildings are permanent
 - utilizing large proportions of the tithes of believers that could be used for sending out missionaries
 - encouraging a theology of church as building rather than church as the community of God
 - limiting the understanding of evangelism to mean “come and hear” rather than a “go and tell” proclamation.

(John 4:20-24; Eph 2:21-22; Heb 4:14; 7:27; 9:14-28; Rev:21:3)

b) Leadership.

- Leadership is character based, and evidences spiritual relationship. It is carried out in the context of serving and mutual submission. In 1st Timothy 3:4-5, for instance, the concept is managing and caregiving based on spiritual maturity. (Acts 6:5; Acts 20:28; I Tim 3:1-13; I Tim 4: 11-14; I Thess 5:12)

They chose Stephen,
a man full of faith
and the Holy Spirit.
Acts 6:5

- Leadership is also based on how God distributes and chooses to utilize spiritual gifts in the church. The believer is responsible for the mature exercising of spiritual gifts as affirmed by the body. (I Cor12; Eph: 4:11, I Peter 4:10)
- Every person is a minister and is responsible to God for his or her part in carrying out the Great Commission. The church at Antioch was started, led and propagated throughout it’s world by lay people. The apostles were lay people. (I Cor 12:5; 14:26; Gal. 5:13; Eph 4:11)

- c) Interdependence. Paul's letters addressed both individual communities of believers and a regional church that seemed to consist of a group of churches in a region that related to each other for the purpose of mission. There is also opportunity to connect with the larger body of Christ through shared faith, story, traditions, and history, as well as for the sake of mission. (John 13:34-35; 17:11-23; Phil 2:1-5)
- d) Flexible organization. Scripture does not seem to lay down any inflexible system of church organization around which church must be instituted. Instead, it seems as if form follows function, and that principles of community and mission govern the value system inherent in how churches meet. Structures seem to be organic and flexible rather than rigid and stationary.

B. Missiological Component

1. Indigenaity.
 - a) Pattern for worship. Expression determined culturally by local indigenous believers.
 - b) Decisions. All made locally within a group of covenanting believers.
 - c) Self support. No support moneys should come from outside except for: short term missionary sending and social ministry needs.
 - d) Leadership. Raised up from the fruits of the harvest.
 - e) Giving. The mission church gives beyond itself to meet needs.
 - f) Self propagating. Each church is directly responsible to the Great Commission and should have a vision for church starting.
2. Reproducibility with the ability to travel lightly. Charles Brock in both his early work *The Principles and Practice of Indigenous Church Planting* and his 1994 update, *Indigenous Church Planting, a Practical Journey*, packs church starting into four essential components. These are Sower, Seed, Soil, and Spirit. Anything more, to Brock, is excess baggage.
3. Reproduction in all arenas. Different from reproducibility, this means that there is a conscious missional commitment for God to reproduce in every area including new disciples, new leaders, new ministry teams, and new churches.
4. Incarnational ministry. The sent people of God ministered as a life style. What Christ modeled for and through the apostles, was transformational change in the lives of people that happened by healing, proclaiming justice, and demonstrating mercy as well as proclaiming the Kingdom.

Indigenous Churches are

- ❖ Self Governing
- ❖ Self Supporting
- ❖ Self Expressing
- ❖ Self Teaching
- ❖ Self Propagating

Charles Brock,
Indigenous Church Planting

The Dual Focus of the Church: Community & Commission

Community: The primary activity of community is edification. The ultimate expression of true Christian community is sharing the Lord's Supper.

Commission: The primary activity of commission is evangelism. The ultimate expression of fulfilling the Great Commission is baptism.

III. Biblical & Cultural Apologetic Support

A. Biblical rationale.

1. This is a biblio-historical understanding of church life that patterns the early church but does not attempt to reproduce it. Some feel that these turn of the millennium times parallel first century times in such a way that this approach to church life should be reconsidered as the primary church planting paradigm.
2. The relationally based church offers a holistic, non-compartmentalized approach to the Christian life and a pattern for radical obedience to Christ. It is systemically complete, and in it's simplicity, is a balanced and rich expression of church. Since less time is spent on programs and administration of church life, more time can be spent living out Christian practices such as Sabbath keeping, hospitality, contemplation and showing concern for the well being of others. Priority can also be given to proclaiming justice and engaging in mission.
3. Many Biblical metaphors for church are communal and relational in nature, and point to the importance of experiencing the church in some deep sense as a community. (household, body, community, family, bride) Terminology used in the New Testament to describe individual believers were familial terms that implied close relationships (brother, sister, child, father, servant, caretaker). Some New Testament passages and scriptural commands, such as the one-another texts, seem to make more sense, and are more achievable if they are understood in the social context of church as people in close relationship with each other, than they do if applied to large groups. (see Appendix V)
4. This approach asks important foundational questions about the nature, essence and character of church, and of the mission of God. Asking questions about the nature of the church, for instance, may lead to a somewhat different understanding of church life than asking first a functional question such as "what is the purpose of church?" Also, the missionary nature of the church is rooted in the mission of God and the purposes of a local church are to be aligned with a biblical understanding of the mission of God.

The relational based church paradigm first asks:

What is our nature? not What is our purpose?

Who are we? not What are we to do?

How do we love God? not How do we serve him?

Relationally based churches believe the answers to the first questions naturally lead to the answers for the second, but the second questions do not always lead to the first.

B. Historical Rationale.

1. The relationally based paradigm has existed throughout church history. It isn't going away. Despite institutional objections to house churches and the rise and fall of their popularity, there has always been at least a remnant for whom meeting house to house is the most biblical expression of church. Certainly it was the definitive church structure of the New Testament period (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 20:20-21 Rom 16:5; Col 4:15; Philemon 2) and for the first several hundred years of church history. Robert and Julia Banks, leading advocates for house churches assert that tens of millions of Christians are now meeting this way. (The Church Comes Home, p.3)

In the early days, few Baptists had their own buildings... They met in private homes, sometimes in public halls, and quite often out of doors in good weather... Baptists required complete spontaneity in worship... Modern worship practices of Baptists, with hymns, printed orders of worship, Scripture readings, and choral responses all determined in advance, would have been unthinkable to early Baptists.

Leon McBeth, The Baptist Heritage (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1987) 92

2. The relationally based church approach incorporates some of the same principles that have been a part of the largest church planting and revivalistic movements in history (lay pastors, flexible structures, church multiplication, spiritual renewal).
3. Examples are the 16th Century Anabaptists, 17th Century Quakers, and 18th Century Methodist movements, the underground church movement in China, and the rapid spread of basic Christian communities in Latin America.

In 1776 the Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and the Presbyterians seemed to be *the* colonial denominations... by 1860 there were actually fewer than 500,000 Congregationalists in America, while Baptists numbered nearly two million. What Happened? ...other groups depended on a well educated and well paid clergy... The Baptist farmer-preachers came with the people because they *were* the people. Baptists operated with incredibly low overhead. Baptist clergy received little, if any pay... The average value of local church property was very low for Baptists.

Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, The Churching of America 1776 – 1990 (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1992) 54 - 82

4. The Reformation addressed theological and ecclesiological shifts needed in the Church, but some of the institutional realities which most needed reform were never addressed, and the post Reformation Church became almost as institutionalized as what it left behind. “Sola scriptura” was needed not only as a cry against the traditions of the church, but also it’s structures. If realized, a new kind of reformation could assist the Church in being more flexible, missionary and in contextualizing it’s message.

Early Anabaptists referred to Luther, Calvin and Zwingli as partial reformers because they refused to apply reformation principles to the church structures of Rome.

C. Missional Rationale.

1. Relationally based churches offer unlimited potential for church reproduction among every people group in response to the Great Commission. Obvious barriers to church planting movements, such as formally trained leaders, salaries for church planters, super-pastors, and facilities for weekly large group meetings are not even issues here. This understanding of church structure is both flexible and mobile, posing fewer hindrances for the mobility of the gospel.
2. The approach recognizes the complex make up of urban areas and presents ways of evangelizing and congregationalizing people in the way they choose to organize themselves. Missiologist Paul Hiebert provides some insights: In postmodern urban contexts people are figuring out new ways to manage life and relationships. Some organize themselves into urban

*The world has taught
me not to trust.
Government, business,
religion, education, the
military and even social
organizations all run on
their private agendas.
I trust my friends;
that's it.*

Anonymous Gen Xer

tribes and bands. (“Trans-virtual Urban Tribes”, Brad Sargent 1997) Paul Hiebert outlines church planting methodologies for traditional band and tribal societies that also present solutions for urban postmodern contexts. He suggests that especially in band cultures, close personal, face to face relationships are valued while institutions, programs organizations and money are distrusted. In band cultures, there are loose fellowships and no formal organizations. Hiebert believes that when people are left to govern themselves they will organize their churches like families and clans, (Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies. p.161) This pattern is similar to the patterns of relationally based churches.

3. This approach greatly increases the size of our mission force. Lay leaders, including those with time and abilities to better shepherd smaller congregations, are often effective in team ministries as pastors and church starters. In this more egalitarian church structure, there are also fewer objections to woman pastors since there are no formal titles or senior pastor roles. The inclusion of these leaders at least doubles the potential missionary pool for church planting.
4. Our missions challenge, according to missiologist Jonathan Campbell, is not to pursue an ever-changing vision for a church relevant to its culture, but to “rediscover the essential nature of church that can then be translated across cultures.” (The Translatability of Christian Community: An Ecclesiology for Postmodern Cultures and Beyond. p104) Some involved in the edge cultures of relationally based churches today are aggressively adopting this challenge.

D. Cultural Rationale: The Postmodern Context. The Church in North America is beginning to realize that it stands in the doorway of an overwhelming cultural and world view shift that is shaking its deepest roots: postmodernism. Darrell Guder, in *The Missional Church* (p.3) observes that when the modern church responds, it has almost always asked, “what is the problem, and how can we solve it?” Self-help, problem solving approaches to church life flood the market, but they have for the most part acted like medicine that soothes the pain but masks the symptoms. With its current techniques and strategies, the modern Church has reached those they still know how to reach more effectively than ever, but there are growing numbers of peoples among whom Christians have no idea how to plant the gospel of Christ. Guder states that “the answer to the crisis of the North American church will not be found at the level of methods and problem solving...The real issues...are spiritual and theological.” (*Missional Church*, p.3) In the midst of this crisis of Christendom, there is also great opportunity as the church turns to Christ and His Word for hope.

1. An explanation of postmodernism

- a) Postmodernism is a reaction to modernism. Modernism espouses objective, scientific truth as the only way of knowing; the application of empirical information and reasoning will solve all problems. Post modernism rejects not reason, but the authority of reason.
- b) Postmodernism has been defined as “incredulity toward meta-narratives.” (foundational stories that try to explain or make sense of everything). In the last century, the supposedly emancipatory meta-narratives of fascism and marxism have failed, and many postmoderns also see Christianity is a failing meta-narrative.
- c) Postmodernism is expressed as anti-foundationalism and reactionary toward modernism rather than a philosophy in its own right.
- d) Modernism emphasizes the individual while postmodernism emphasizes the community, even believing that we don't exist independently of our communities.
- e) Postmodernism is not a unified worldview, but it is holistic. It demands authentic, non-compartmentalized lifestyles. Spirituality, for the postmodern, reflects not so much a category of life as the context of one's whole life.
- f) Postmodernism is more concerned with process than product, participation more than distance. It values openness, expression, and nonlinear format.

Young adult Christians intuitively demand more from the church than what they have already experienced. The first postmodern generation can also be the first “post-Constantinian” Christians. We believe young adult communities have already begun to emerge which will show the world a different kind of gospel hope and love.

This is nothing new, but a return to a very ancient way of Christian living.

**William Mahedy & Janet Bernardi, *A Generation Alone*
(Downer's Grove, Ill, Inter Varsity Press, 1994) 50**

2. Opportunities presented in the cultural context of postmodernism.

- a) The relationally based church offers the opportunity to extend hope to those seeking simplicity and wholeness in their lives. Dorothy Bass poses this challenge:

“We long to see our lives whole and to know that they matter. We wonder whether our many activities might come together in a way that is good for ourselves and for others... We... invite you to join us in envisioning a way of life that is whole, a way of life that can be lived with integrity in our times... In all the communities we know, people yearn for deeper understanding of how to order human life in accord with what is true and good. And beyond this desire, we recognize another need for urgency: the good of all people, indeed of all creation, may depend on our ability to order our lives well.”

Dorothy Bass (Practicing Our Faith, p. 2)

- b) The relationally based church at it’s most basic form is authentic Christian community. Postmoderns deeply desire to be in community but often don’t know how until confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Modernism emphasizes the individual while postmodernism better appreciates the community (ie: we do not really exist independently of our communities) and more informal, flexible networks of affiliation.

“Christian mission and ministry must adjust to a world which is markedly different from the one of even fifty years ago, and finding appropriate forms of presenting the Christian message and living in community must be among our urgent priorities.”

“For the Christian, God’s call to love is a call set in the context of community. Specifically, it is in worshipping communities that we are nurtured and it is in these communities that we can most fully express our love for God and praise him. Whereas a postmodern world looks ever more fragmented and lonely, the Christian Gospel calls us back into communities in Christ.”

Lecture delivered by The Archbishop of Canterbury, at Notre Dame (Wednesday July 24, 1996)

- c) The relationally based church connects with history in a way that is appreciated and needed by many postmoderns. Since postmodernism is often expressed as a reaction toward modernism rather than a philosophy in it’s own right, some postmodernists react by turning to the pre-modern or even the primitive. A historical relationship with the ancient church is helpful, and the patterns of the early church lived out in relational communities offer that connectedness.

d) Relationally based communities are places to work out personal story. While meta-narratives are rejected by postmoderns, personal narratives are valued. The postmodernist may call Christianity a meta-narrative, but the Christian calls it a relationship. Every Christian has a personal testimony, and postmodernists are committed not to reject an individual's own story. Though the response is usually, "whatever works for you", that is exactly the point. Christianity continues to work over time. The relationally based church offers a community of opportunity where the gospel is tested over and over again in story and relationships.

E. Organizational rationale.

1. The institutional church is being seen as needing reexamination from the grass roots.

"Instead of continuing to expend such energy trying to make outworn patterns of institutional life serve us, it seems appropriate to devote more attention to the task of creating new forms of common life that may, over time, allow a new consensus to emerge. And it seems probable that the relearning of the meaning of Christian faith and life is most likely to occur in communities that are small enough to permit all their members to participate fully in the process of reflection, decision, and action."

(Dixon Junkin, "Up From the Grass Roots"
an essay from Church Between Gospel & Culture, p. 312).

2. Even modern adaptations of institutional churches are being critiqued in this time of cultural transition, with each generation exploring for itself the meaning of church.

"...the continued drift toward the development of large, independent community churches, with their focus on user-friendly, needs oriented, market-driven models...is in need of careful critique. While celebrating their contextual relevance, we need to be careful that we are committed in using these approaches to maintaining the integrity of both the gospel and the Christian community. These churches may just be the last version of the Christian success story within the collapsing paradigm of modernity and Christian-shaped culture."

**from the essay Defining the Center- Finding the Boundaries
by Craig Van Gelder in Church Between Gospel & Culture, p. 45)**

In an interview with Leadership Magazine (Winter 1997), futurist Faith Popcorn states: "If you're going to have a successful religious organization, this would be the next ten years to do it." Popcorn, not a Christian, has studied Christianity as an observer. She sees a growing trend in churches toward both large and small, with the middle falling out. Especially she sees a cultural trend toward that which is intimate, tiny, boutique.

3. Even in secular organizations of our day there is a move toward de-centralization, team leadership, group ownership, and stream-lined structure. This shift naturally aligns itself with a New Testament picture of church, and shares critical values in common with the relationally based church.

Now – here is my secret:

I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God – that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.

Conclusion to *Life After God*

(a book on searching for spiritual significance in postmodern culture)

Douglas Copeland (Coiner of term “Gen X” & Father of Gen X movement)
Life After God (New York, Pockett Books, 1994) 359

IV. Strategic Advantages

The Gospel is always understood contextually. The missionary goal is not cultural relevance but contextualization, with relevance as the result. This means that the message is reproducible and not reducible, non negotiable and fully translatable into any cultural setting. The relationally based church is based upon a biblical approach that attempts a fully translatable proclamation, ecclesiology and missiology.

A. Among Whom Does it Work Best?

Those who hold personal and theological convictions that the relationally based church is the most authentic biblical pattern for church life would argue that everyone can be reached with this way of doing church. They would be reluctant to engage in discussion about what cultures or peoples this works best. The relationally based church is best understood as a lifestyle more than a model. However, there are also some particular missiological contexts that may drive church planters to first consider this paradigm from a missiological basis. There are also some missiological contexts in which God may strategically direct church planters to begin relationally based churches because they are such an obvious cultural fit.

1. Missiological contexts that may drive planters to consider the relationally based church as the best approach.

- a) People groups that are anti-institutional, including, but not exclusively anti-church.
- b) Cultures and subcultures that are more postmodern and unchurched.
- c) Small communities that define their relationships among some natural kinship, affinity group, or geographical area, such as multi-housing communities.

Lessness: A philosophy whereby one reconciles oneself with diminishing expectations of material wealth: "I've given up wanting to make a killing or be a bigshot. I just want to find happiness and maybe open up a little roadside café in Idaho.

Douglas Copeland, Generation X, p 54

2. Missiological contexts which may offer strategic catalytic opportunity.

- a) Never churched people in unchurched areas who do not have a pre-conceived definition of church.
- b) Voluntary associations of people that hold some of the same shared values as Christians in relationally based church settings. (ie: relationship, simplicity, holistic life style, and secular home school networks)
- c) Cultures with a desire for self-leadership but where traditional church leadership concepts are too culturally cumbersome, or leadership has not been permitted, taught, or encouraged.

B. In What Cultural and Missiological Situations Does the Relationally Based Church Help Problem Solve?

The relationally based church will simply become “small church” if it is done with the sole purpose of problem solving. Problem solving is more consistent with the methodologies of the modern church, and seen as an overly pragmatic approach by relationally based church missiologists. However, as the preferred Christian life style of a group, this paradigm can actually help solve some missiological and cultural dilemmas. These dilemmas may be related to leadership, resources, or culture.

1. Leadership.

- a) Cultures or people groups in which it would be difficult to find leaders to fill traditional church leadership roles or among whom leadership is understood differently than in most western culture churches.
- b) Where there are issues related to women in ministry leadership. Team led churches utilize women in leadership roles, generally eliminating cultural-theological issues related to women senior pastors.
- c) Where the Spirit of God is moving faster than the ability to fill ministry positions with paid, seminary trained leadership. Leaders are raised up from the harvest and are given the opportunity to assume pastoral responsibilities that are in keeping with their gifts.

Some people have the very erroneous idea that only a preacher can start churches. Some would think one must have seminary training in order to plant churches. Also, these would usually think that one must have a public ordination ceremony before being qualified to plant churches. It is amazing how man-made, extra-Biblical tradition can come to the place of being considered sacred. All of the above ideas about who can plant churches have arisen from religious/political sources.

Charles Brock, Indigenous Church Planting

2. Resources.

- a) When money is an issue for church multiplication, since this way of doing church does not require much money. This is an effective strategy for church multiplication movements.
- b) Where institutional churches are not allowed to hold worship services or own property, or where there are not enough available or affordable buildings to meet the evangelistic need.

Self-Support begins very early in the life of the church. Before the church is born the people provide the meeting place, the lights and the chairs. After the church is born, the members continue to provide the meeting place, the song books, Bibles, etc.

Charles Brock, Indigenous Church Planting

3. Culture.

- a) Where traditional church forms do not work because of an antagonism toward Christianity.
- b) In complex heterogenous urban situations where the goal of reaching every people and language group can not realistically happen by starting traditional churches.
- c) In rural or tribal situations where the population is sparse and it is unrealistic to imagine a traditional church structure or building in each location where a church is needed.
- d) Among nomadic groups, whether indigenous peoples or other types of travelling bands that see themselves as a community.
- e) In cultural situations where there is a preference for small, non-structured and non-institutional. (such as urban postmodern cultures)
- f) Among groups who would never enter a church building but might encounter Christ in a home setting.

This generation-more accurately, this generation's reputation-has become a metaphor for America's late twentieth-century loss of purpose. Polls show that Americans of all ages have become disappointed with our institutions, with our economic performance, with our sense of community, with our culture. We regret our today-fixation but are unable to shake it, and we fear for the future. Yet the caricatured image of our collective woes, the indelible icon of national decline, doesn't include most of us.

It doesn't include the federally subsidized senior in a sunbelt condo or the midlife swinger skipping out on his children or the ex-hippie professor waging old ideological wars at his student's expense. No, the image is a blow-up of only one figure: an eraser head kid with reflective shades, a backwards ball cap, and high-top sneakers, his Walkman tuned to heavy metal, a \$300 price tag dangling from his designer leather jacket. That 13er (Gen Xer) is our manchild of the 80s. He, all grown up, is the future we fear.

Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, 13th Gen: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?
(New York, Vintage Books, 1993)23-24

Who will reach the urban, pluralistic and frightening postmodern?

Relational based churches, that's who

V. Strategic Disadvantages

(Added by editor for continuity with other modules)

- A. Does not work well with churched people or those with a strong preconceived mental image of church as institutional. Such people nearly always attempt to impose organizational standards and forms on their relation based context.
- B. Does not work well with trained or ordained clergy. Many clergyman will attempt to lead out as they were trained to do, this will usurp the natural leadership patterns emerging within the group. Some clergy are aware of this and attempt to compensate. This generally leads to the church continuously defaulting to the expert on most issues. Again, the natural leadership pattern is challenged. It is a rare clergyman and rare people that can be a relational based church, accept one another as spiritual equals and still appreciate the unique contributions of all.
- C. Struggles amongst those with a consumer mentality. If the people expect the church to program to serve their family, they will be disappointed with relational based churches. Relationships, not program meets the needs of people in these churches. Those too busy or comfortable in invest in community or risk intimacy will find relational based churches imposing.
- D. Is not well accepted by the religious establishment. Contemporary denominations have reacted strongly against relation based churches because relation based churches do not need denominations. Even if the relationally based church is entirely compatible with the theological tradition of the denomination, it will tend to be seen as rogue and independent.
- E. Is not well respected by Western society due to centuries of dominance by the institutional church. Although relational based churches tend to be the predominant church pattern the world over, they are suspect in North America and viewed as cultish. Moderns are particularly suspicious of any group not tied to a respected institution.
- F. Can become ingrown and dangerous. If a relationally based church loses its interdependence with other churches and becomes isolated, if it becomes controlled by an unhealthy individual, if it becomes legalistic, then it will likely become ineffective, unhealthy or harmful.

“Show me where Relational Based church planting is working and I’ll support it.”

John Worcester, Church Planting Leader

“You cannot impose first century church forms on a twentieth century culture. Two thousand years of history and growth demand a response. “

Academic Dean of SBC Seminary responding to relation based concepts

Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care,
serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing,
as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;
not **lording it over those entrusted to you**, but being examples to the flock.

1 Peter 5:2-3

- G. Can lead to elitism. Many proponents of relational based churches advocate relational based churches as the only biblical model. They become modern day separatists. This isolates them from the larger Christian community and limits healthy input from outside sources.

In my experience, those who claim to have all the answers don't; those who think they are righteous aren't and those who know the only way to accomplish a task usually end up frustrated. Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourselves with sober judgement (Romans 12:3). Perhaps, we ought to just follow what God is calling us to do, and let him worry about everyone else. Maybe the relation based church is the only way, but its probably not.

- H. Few Western experts to draw from. In spite of the rich heritage of the relational based church and its global predominance, Westerners are having to relearn this pattern of church. This translates into a lack of leadership and expertise as the movement struggles to expand. There are few sources in the past fifty years for those seeking to learn from the success of a Western relational based church leader.
- I. Can lack formal leaders in the biblical sense. The founders of relational based churches are often reacting to unhealthy authority structures in some institutional churches. This may lead them to reject all formal church authority and they may deny their own natural role as leader and influencer. The Bible clearly demands that leadership rise up from among the church. When this biblical purpose is frustrated, the church lacks healthy leadership.
- J. Can be transitory. Since most relational based churches are small, they are easier and more likely to dissolve if problems surface or key leaders move. Relational based churches do not generally last as long as their institutional counterparts. Some would argue that this is a good thing and that God will sustain the life of the church until he transitions the participants to new directions.

Like every other church planting approach, relational based church planting can become unhealthy as sin enters the picture. Human beings, even well meaning ones, have a knack for corrupting what is holy and good. Many relational based churches are ineffective, in-focused and even harmful. Just like all other kinds of churches. The drawbacks to relation based church planting are real, but they can be overcome by God. In fact, the relation based approach will be best for many people in many contexts. Those who choose this approach may be doing the right thing, but they still had better address and prepare for the potential dangers. This is wise in all types of church planting, and especially so with relation based planting.

VI Strategy Guidelines

Planting the relationally based church cannot be reduced to a formula or a procedure. It is a way of life, a loop tape, having no beginning or end, repeating the same message, over and over. It is a great tool for language learning in that it invites the listener to practice hearing and speaking again and again. In a similar fashion, the processes outlined below invite the believer to engage in practicing a lifestyle of community that is in and on mission, the outcome of which includes the reproduction of new disciples, new leaders, new ministry teams, and new reproducing faith communities among many groups of people - all whom learn to speak the heart language of faith. It is difficult to know where to begin playing the tape, for it could begin in different places, depending on what life cycle stage is first entered.

A. Personal Preparation.

1. Begin to live a life of radical obedience to Christ and of practicing the way of Jesus in all arenas of life. Seek God's heart for personal transformation.
2. Search God's help in understanding the vision, values, and lifestyle of basic Christian community, especially with immediate family members. Then begin living these out in a covenant relationship with others.
3. Develop an ongoing ministry of prayer. (Mark 1:35-38; Acts 10:9-20; Acts 16)
4. Begin to internalize relation based values, especially the scriptural principles, in such a way that not only are you living them out, but can communicate them with others in your church.
5. Seek God's heart for with whom and amongst whom you will plant a church.

B. Forming a Church Planting Team.

1. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, ask God to call out a team with whom you will plant. If married, this includes your spouse. This happens best when there are already indigenous relationship patterns and team members enjoy one another.
2. Determine agenda harmony in the team's understanding of church life and covenanting together in mission and community. There should be a fit in vision of ministry, the people to whom God is calling, leadership gifts and abilities.
3. Begin living out the Christian life together as a Spirit-led, covenanting community.

Insights on Church Multiplication Teams

Imitate the outreach and witness of Apostolic teams Eliminate burnout by going in teams Define wife's role in team
Agree the team is temporary in a locale Pray about who you work with Appreciate cultural differences in field of work
Carefully determine best way to penetrate target Focus on one people group at a time Target the responsive segment
Arrange OJT for team members Help locals take responsibility ASAP Turn over pastoral problems to new pastors
Recruit members committed to see project through Filter out non essentials Choose team members who satisfy requirements

C. The Ministry of the Sending Church.

The role of the sending church is to continually raise up and empower apostolic leaders from the harvest that God provides, then for it to commission, bless, release, and send them out. In the best of circumstances, a team rather than singular leadership will be raised up from one sending church. When the apostolic team is sent by the Spirit to another place, it may be that the sending church would also support the sending of the team with money. In addition, the sending church and the apostolic team remain spiritually and relationally connected through prayer and regular communication.

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:2-3

D. The Apostolic Team Engages a Community.

1. Ask God to show you the people(s) with His eyes.

See the “peoplehood” of the people. Jesus really cared. People were not the means to his end of building a successful Christian organization. Ask: “who are these people”, not “how do I communicate my evangelistic agenda.” Consider what changes you must make in order to pour yourself out to them. Paul, in I Corinthians 9:20 says “To those under the law I become like one under the law so as to win those under the law.”

2. Consider the cultures. Paul ministered in diverse contexts including Athenian intellectuals. (Acts 17 22-31) idolatrous Lystrans (Acts 14:15-17) Orthodox Jews (Acts 13: 16-41). Ask questions about how people are already living in community. Search for ways to understand the broad scope.

Layers of Cultural Exegesis

World View – modern, postmodern, Christian

Cultural of Origin – Asian, Hispanic, African American, European, etc.

Region of Origin – Southwest, Bay Area, American South, urban, country

Religious Background – Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Baptist, Wicca, etc.

Language – English, Spanish, Chinese, German, etc.

Stage of Assimilation – 1st gen, 2nd gen, 3rd gen, bi-cultural

Subcultures and Lifestyles – Cultural creative, Celtic, Goth, Techie, Cyberpunk

Sexuality – Strait, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transvestite

Generations – builder, boomer, buster, millennial

Values – moral, philosophical, social, political, environmental

Education – none, elementary, high school, college, post grad

Social Organization – tribe, band, clan, extended family, nuclear family

3. Begin building relationships, evangelizing those who are receptive:
 - a) Build credible and caring relationships, not treating people as “evangelistic targets” but nevertheless asking God to move them closer to Christ.
 - b) Identify potential networks or oikoses that are natural bridges.
 - c) Ask God to help you locate and bridge to a “person of peace.” This is a biblical concept, (Luke 10:5-7) but here is used as in the lectures of Dr. Thom Wolf, urban missiologist, to mean the bridge person to an existing network of relationships that God sends to help penetrate an entire oikos.
 - d) In God’s timing, put a public face to the gospel. (Acts 11: 19-26; 16:12-15; 17: 15-17; 18: 1-8; 19:1-9)

Relation Based Gathering Tips

Pray for a movement of God Be incarnational Communicate gospel essentials
Convert people to Christ, not your church Pray for people we witness to
Practice reproducible witnessing Befriend and win heads of households
Help influencers win their friends Look for persons of peace
Form new churches around natural people groups give time for Bible to take root
Allow influencer to affirm message at every gathering do not push people
Start with stories of redemption help influencers share gospel
Get people talking about gospel every where they go Use easily imitated methods

Patterson and Scoopins, Church Multiplication Guide, p 49-54

E. Gather New Believers into New Churches.

Group gathering events, strategic prayer, including prayer walking, blessing others in meaningful ways all might be part of the gathering stage for the new church.

1. Baptize new believers.
2. Begin meeting together as church on a regular basis.
3. Begin discipling new believers in the context of a new community.
4. Begin to identify and train new leaders.

Indigenous Strategy Considerations

1. The Bible should be our guide in missiology.
2. The strategy and methodology should be simple.
3. The approach should be reproducible.

The planter should not use anything the people cannot provide for themselves including material things, strategic process and leadership style.

Charles Brock, Indigenous Church Planting, 124-132

F. Multiplication Stage.

1. Reproductive Patterns.

While relationally based churches flow best within networks of relationships, there is also a biblical pattern of God's spirit intentionally instructing apostolic teams to enter place where a people needs to be evangelized, and the newly evangelized believers become the church. A missional intentionality of making disciples of all peoples is motivation to remain aware and listen intently to where God is sending. Below are some types of situations where God might instruct the apostolic team or the sending church to reproduce.

a) Geographical patterns.

- A geographical community where a new church is needed.
- To meet the spiritual need of people for whom there is no indigenous church.
- A community that is geographically isolated or an identifiable community within itself. (nursing homes, trailer parks, etc.)

b) Strategic patterns.

- Near a university campus or military base where there is unlimited long term potential of evangelizing people who are naturally sent out.
- Among one people group partly as a more inclusive strategy for reaching another people group.
- Where God seems to be opening doors in an unusual way.

c) Organic patterns.

- When a believer in a sending church is sent in some way, such as family needs, job transfers, to a new community that needs to know Christ.
- When a church member has overlapping relationship groups, each with a need for an indigenous church. In fact, churches without some overlapping relational networks will have a more difficult time reproducing organically.

Those who had been scattered
preached the word wherever they
went. Philip went down to a city
in Samaria and proclaimed the
Christ there. Acts 8:4-5

2. Becoming A Network of Churches.

- a) When the church multiplies, spiritual and relational accountability continues to exist between the churches and the leaders of the churches.

Many ask about dealing with heresy, sin and other problems given the lack of formal accountability in relational churches. Think about it. Where do your strongest loyalties lie: to some organization or to one who saved, nurtured and empowered you? Relational ties are always stronger than organizational. Editor's note

- b) These churches, already in relationship with each other, meet together occasionally for a larger group meetings, training, celebration, and mutual nurture. This is even recommended when there are distance factors such as geography or language. Churches may share in the responsibilities of the larger gathering.
- c) There may be times when churches send out a team in cooperation to start another new church.
- d) As churches multiply, those with natural relationship to the others network together. When there are too many churches in a network to engage in real relationship, new networks may be formed.

A New Testament Rationale for a Fellowship Amongst Local Churches

Early churches held a strong sense of connectedness and interdependence to one another.

- ❖ **First Century churches recognized that in Christ they had a common bond with one another and particularly with the church in Jerusalem.** (Acts 15:1-2; Rom 15:26-27)
- ❖ **Churches regularly sent Christian greetings to each other.** (Rom 16:6; 1 Cor 16:19-20; Phil 4:23)
- ❖ **Churches collaborated for ministry.** (Rom 16:26; 1 Cor 16:1-3)
- ❖ **Churches sent representatives to one another.** (Acts 11:22-27; 15:1-2; 1 Cor 16:3-4)
- ❖ **Churches supported the Apostle's labor in other fields.** (Phil 4:15-16)
- ❖ **Churches shared with one another letters from the apostles.** (Col 4:16)
- ❖ **Churches were a model to one another.** (2 Cor 1:24; 9:2; 1 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:14)
- ❖ **Churches cooperated in the common cause of evangelism.** (1 Thess 1:8)

Jonathan Cambell. The Relational Church. Unpublished

VII. Implementation Guidelines.

A. Signs of Health in the Relationally Based Church.

1. The church engages in genuine, face to face, covenanting community as it follows Jesus together in regular gatherings and apart from the gathering as a way of life. Believers ministers to one another and in the world. Obedience to the Word of God means obedience to the scripture and to Christ who is the Word of God.
2. The gathered church engages in New Testament functions of church, including worship, prayer, scripture reading, fellowship, mutual edification, communion, and baptism. Each member of the group brings something to offer to the group, and each ministers to other group members in tangible ways.

Although there is no set church pattern in a relational church a typical meeting may look like the following:

Gather and Fellowship
Share struggles and praises, edify one another and pray
Share a meal
Worship and sing
Study the Bible
Discuss personal evangelistic efforts and mission challenge

3. The clear missional purpose of the church and it's vision for planting the church among all peoples keeps it from becoming ingrown. Missions is not an activity or program of the church but is acknowledged as integral to what it means to be church.
4. The church is planted through the evangelizing of natural networks of people with respect for their significant relationships. (oikos evangelism rather than extraction evangelism) This is part of a healthy, holistic life style and not compartmentalized into one arena of life called evangelism.

Discovery Study Questions

Used in evangelistic Bible study context for any text

- What did you like about the passage?
- What made you uncomfortable about the passage?
- What about the passage did you not understand?
- What does the passage tell us about God?
- What does the passage teach that can help us in our lives?
- Condense the teaching in the passage to one potent, easy to remember sentence.

These are questions for the group to work through. The Holy Spirit will use God's word to convict people of sin and draw them unto himself.

Discovery studies are the product of Church on Brady in Los Angeles. California

5. Believers are equipped for ministry and mission. The church identifies, acknowledges, equips, sends, and maintains supportive relationships with indigenous leaders they have raised from the harvest. Reproduction is happening in all spheres of church life, so reproducing leaders is a natural outgrowth of reproducing disciples.

Typical monthly church network meeting
 Reports from the churches and accountability issues
 Time of training and leadership development
 Time of prayer for the churches
 Church leaders and apprentices are present

6. Giving is not for programs but for people, specifically for those experiencing particular need and missionaries as they are sent. It is a lifestyle of acknowledging Christ’s Lordship over one’s possessions, and a Christian practice, rather than a rule about tithing.
7. Several churches, possibly with shared roots, meet together for occasional celebration, training, and mission purposes. They have some relationship of mutual accountability to each other, especially through their leaders.

B. Mistakes to Avoid.

1. Leadership Dynamics.

- a) Starting solo. The predominant New Testament pattern is the sending out of teams to minister together. This also makes practical sense in terms of shared responsibility, mutual accountability, and a broader range of spiritual gifts. Also, with two or more gathered in His name, teams can immediately begin meeting together as church.

My Three Enemies
 Constantinianism
 Individualism
 Neo-Palageanism (if it works its of God)
 Dr. Stan Nelson, Theology Prof GGBTS

- b) Skill-based leadership decisions. While people have a tendency to judge based on outward appearances, including natural (though God-given) abilities, God examines the heart. Leaders with great character are more important than leaders with great skills.
- c) Control issues. Churches will grow and multiply in direct proportion to the ability of leadership to trust Spirit of God in others. These churches must be free from power control issues. “Spontaneous expansion must be free: it cannot be under our control;...If we want to see spontaneous expansion, we must establish native churches free from our control.” Roland Allen, The spontaneous Expansion of the Church, p 5.

Cult of Aloneness:

The need for autonomy at all costs, usually at the expense of long-term relationships. Often brought about by overly high expectations of others.

Douglas Copeland
Generation X, p69

- d) Failure to discover and equip indigenous leaders. churches need to raise up, disciple, and set free indigenous leaders who help define (contextualize) how the church will look and how it will be led.
- e) False expectations. Those planting the church need to be free from burdensome expectations (their own and other people's) about quantitative growth. While to be certain it matters that reproduction happens, real transformation growth may take a longer period of time to begin. Meanwhile, teams learn to live in covenanting communities, and God's Spirit breaks rocky soil. It also takes several generations of church reproduction for exponential growth to become significant.
- f) Pragmatism. The Bible does not invite obedience only if it can be measured pragmatically. Truth is not always reflected by the accumulation of objective data nor the necessary outcome of our actions. The reign of God and how He chooses to work always retains an element of mystery. This is true, both when our activities seem to not be producing results, and when we are experiencing spontaneous reproduction.

2. Missiology.

- a) Starting little institutional churches based solely on practical or missiological objectives, or on methods rather than theological truths and biblical values. When this happens, churches can start, but they may not be relationally based churches, or even missional in nature.
- b) Sponsor rather than sending church relationships. The term "sponsor church" often implies control, and the term "mission church" can indicate dependency. Instead, in the relationally based paradigm, team leaders for the new church are raised up, blessed, sent, and released by a sending church. In addition, the new church needs less than in a institutional paradigm, though there may need to be some financial support for the planting team in the initial stages of the plant. Prayer and blessing are always necessary.
- c) Allowing money to become an issue. Paying pastors of individual churches limits the effectiveness in becoming a multiplying movement. It reduces the ability to be truly indigenous, and establishes a "receiving" rather than a self-giving" mentality in the church.
- d) Creating artificial lay/clergy terminology and splits, hierarchical systems, and training leaders in skill sets not available to all believers also limits potential for growth.

3. Spiritual.

- a) Making it a natural rather than a spiritual endeavor. God must establish the church by His Spirit. In this paradigm of church, it is even more obvious than in other types of plants if church planters depend on their own abilities, skills, or methods to plant the church.

Adventure without risk is Disneyland

Douglas Copeland, Generation X, p153

- b) Over control, not trusting spirit of God in others. This includes insecurity over right doctrine instead of trusting the Holy Spirit to teach others.

The Leader must be in control at all times

One of the signs of a toxic faith in book Toxic Faith, Arterburn and Felton

- c) Spiritual superiority or alienation from the rest of the body of Christ, including institutional churches, modalities and sodalities that are all trying their best to follow Christ.

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Jesus

VIII. Bibliography and Recommended Reading List

A. Recommended Reading List

Texts:

Banks, Robert and Julia. *The Church Comes Home*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998. (a practical guide to living in basic Christianity communities)

Guder, Darrell, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. (missional ecclesiology for sending churches)
Also see this web site for other resources on this topic from a North American postmodern perspective: <http://www.gocn.org>.

Patterson, George. *Church Multiplication Guide: Helping Churches to Reproduce Locally and Abroad*, Pasadena, William Carey: 1993. (excellent for house churches)

Other Recommended Reading:

Allen,Roland. *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962. (first published in 1912)

Allen,Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962. (first published in 1927)

Banks, Robert. *Paul's Idea of Community*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

Birkey, Del. *The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church*, Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1988.

Brock, Charles. *The Principles and Practice of Indigenous Church Planting*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981.

Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996.

Neighbor, Ralph, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here?: A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*, Houston: Torch Publications, 1990.

Nelson, Stan. *A Believer's Church Theology*, Mariposa: Widow's Mite, 1994.

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

B. Bibliography

Church Planting

Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962. (first published in 1927)

Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962. (first published in 1912)

Brock, Charles. *The Principles and Practice of Indigenous Church Planting*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981.

Faircloth, Samuel D. *Church Planting for Reproduction*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991.

Hiebert, Paul G. *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal Peasant, and Urban Societies*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.

Patterson, George. *Church Multiplication Guide: Helping Churches to Reproduce Locally and Abroad*, Pasadena, William Carey: 1993.

Shenk, David W. and Stutzman, Ervin R. *Creating Communities of the Kingdom : New Testament Models of Church Planting*, 1988.

Relationally Based Churches

Banks, Robert. *Paul's Idea of Community*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

Banks, Robert and Julia. *The Church Comes Home*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.

Birkey, Del. *The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church*, Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1988.

Neighbor, Ralph, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here?: A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*, Houston: Torch Publications, 1990.

Postmodern Culture

Anderson, Walter Truett. *Reality Isn't What it Used to Be*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990.

Clapp, Rodney. *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996.

Grenz, Stanley. *A Primer on Postmodernism*, New York: Eerdmans, 1996.

Sweet, Leonard. *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic*, Dayton: Whale Prints, 1991.

Sweet, Leonard. *Soul Tsunami; Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture*, Zondervan, 1999.

Missiology/ Cultural Exegesis for North American Church

Guder, Darrell, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

George Hunsberger, George. *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist society*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Robb, John D. *Focus: the Power of People Group Thinking*, Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989.

Theology, Faith and Practice

Nelson, Stan. *A Believer's Church Theology*, Mariposa: Widow's Mite, 1994.

Bass, Dorothy C., ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

IX Case Study

Baton Networks

The following was excerpted with permission from the doctoral dissertation of Jonathan Campbell, 1999: *The Translatability of Christian Community: An Ecclesiology for Postmodern Cultures and Beyond*. (p366-369). When published, this book may be the most definitive book for relationally based church missiology.

Our Strategic Values: Light, Mobile, Open-Ended

These values are Christ-centered and cross-cultural. They shape our life and facilitate world evangelization and church reproduction:

Our passion is Jesus Christ: He is our Authority for Faith and Practice.

We are driven by a passion for Jesus and His purposes in the world. Jesus is not only the way to life eternal, He is also the way of life. (Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Our mission is motivated out of the love we share with Jesus (II Cor 5:14). Jesus is our passion, motivation, model, and strength for mission.

The picture of Jesus living in community with his disciples is the most profound picture of community and mission we shall ever see (John 13:15; 17:18; 20:21). We discover the ways of Jesus through both His Word (John 8:31-32; I Tim 3:15-16; Col 3:15; II Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12) and through His Spirit (Matt 22:29; John 14: 15-31; 15:26-27; 16:5-15; Luke 11: 5-13; Gal 3:3). The Bible is God's inspired Word and is relevant for all times and cultures (II Tim 3:16-17).

A Process for Church Growth and Reproduction (Book of Acts)

Great commission churches send out apostolic teams. These teams gather people by evangelizing the lost and connecting the undisciplined and then covenant them into disciple making communities. These churches continue the process of sending out apostolic teams. Each of the phases should be seen as independent and continuous rather than separate and sequential.

Patterns for Mission Movement:

1. Contact Patterns: Engaging Receptive People. We intentionally share the Gospel and establish Christian communities in the midst of the unreached and undisciplined (Persons of Peace) (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 16:1ff; Rom 15:14).
2. Conversion Patterns: Discipling Social Networks. We seek group conversions (oikos evangelism) by sharing the Gospel in and through relational networks and cultural systems (Luke 10; Acts 16, I Cor 9:19-23).
3. Gathering Patterns: Meeting From House to House. We equip and empower every believer to actively participate in fulfilling Christ's mission in and through the church (Acts 2; I Cor 12; Col 4:17; Eph 4; I Pet 2).

4. Financial Patterns: Giving for Benevolence and Mission. The New Testament provides for two reasons for collecting money: Benevolence (Acts 2:44-45; II Cor 8:1-7; 9:1) and Missions (II Cor 11:9). Most missionaries were self-supporting (I Cor 9:1-14; Phil 4:14-18).

5. Leadership Patterns: Empowering Indigenous Teams. We identify, equip and empower indigenous leaders to partner together in relationship and mission (I Tim 3; Acts 4:13; 6: 3-7; 13: 1-3; 14:23).

6. Growth Patterns: Reproducing in Every Sphere. We intentionally reproduce in every sphere of church life: disciples, leaders, churches and teams (Gen 1:22, 28; II Tim 2:2; Titus 2:3-8).

7. Relational Patterns: Relating Between Churches and Teams. We partner with churches, teams and groups of like faith and mission for mutual edification and mission (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23; Phil 2:1-5).

The Power for Movement: The Holy Spirit

Church planting is primarily a spiritual endeavor. Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem to “ receive power” before they go to “the ends of the earth.” From this point on the disciples would have the indwelling dunamis power of the Holy Spirit.

This word implies “strength based on inherent physical, spiritual, or natural powers.”

It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to accomplish our God-given mission.

Therefore, we listen and obey as the Spirit leads us in fulfilling His mission (Zech 4:6; John 5: 19-20; Acts 1:8; Rom 15: 13-19; Gal 3:3; Eph 3 16-21; I Thess 1:5; II Tim 1:7).

The Story of Life Community

(Campbell, 1999: pp 356-357; 361-362)

Life Community began in January, 1993 as a cell church. Though we started the church without a specific model in mind, we had been influenced by cell church strategies that were just beginning to be discussed seriously. We liked cell church because of its value on community and relational evangelism. Nine months after the start, life community was operating with three strong cell groups meeting in homes, five evangelistic bible studies and a weekly celebration in a Karate studio. We began with a strong desire to multiply not only cells, but also churches. For this reason, the teaching at the Sunday celebrations was shared among five people.

A major shift of direction occurred during a leadership meeting in September 1993. In deciding what should be studied in the cells, the group came to the conclusion, “If these cells are basic Christian communities, who are we to decide what they study? Let’s let them be basic Christian communities (i.e. Practicing the one anothers of Scripture) under the headship of Jesus Christ, founded on God’s word and empowered by the Holy Spirit . . . if these believers are functioning as churches then who are we to tell them what they

can and cannot do.” The issue was not of whether we could trust the people, but rather could we trust the Holy Spirit to guide a group of believers in community with one another. If these are functioning as churches, why not let them be churches? This was the “Ah-Ha” that began the shift from being a cell church to becoming a community of churches.

The transition to a community of churches was a significant but very natural shift. The issue here was really about control. The controlling structures of cell church are systemically the same as “traditional churches.” Like any other institutional forms of church, cell church structure is dependent on highly skilled leaders organizational charts and top-down controls. They also need significant resources to pay for professional salaries, buildings and equipment, all of which are irrelevant to most postmoderns. As we studied the New Testament we realized the first century church was not a cell church as many cell church leaders advocate, but was rather churches that met in homes throughout a city.

Our changing understanding of leadership also influenced our transition. A few months after beginning to empower the cells as churches we experienced a radical “pruning” among our leaders. Hidden agendas began to surface which were contrary to our common values. Three of our most experienced Christian leaders each had a different primary objective: one wanted us to build specialized programs along with a building to match, another wanted to be paid for ministry as a church administrator, and the other wanted to be ordained as “pastor.” Programs, pay and position were contrary to the direction we were being led. We lost our three most “qualified” leaders and all but died, only to be reborn as a humbled community of believers striving to know what it means to be a living expression of the Body of Christ. From this very difficult time we also learned that the qualifications for being a leader was a desperate dependency upon Jesus which would be expressed in genuine humility toward one another. Soon, we began to see God raise up an entirely new group of leaders.

Another reason we moved away from cell church structure was that meeting together at churches every Sunday took emphasis off the churches that met during the week. Why leave your neighborhood on the very day that those that did not know Jesus were likely home? At the same time the churches recognized the need to meet together for worship, connection, encouragement, and accountability among the churches. We transitioned into meeting as churches during the week and coming together as a community of churches once a month. This was a freeing change, which put the emphasis on the churches that met throughout the week and increased the mission focus of these churches. From here we saw the churches become established, new people reached and new churches started.

Our Struggle with Church and Culture

In our struggle to be church in such a changing culture, we realize that our problems are deeper than they seem. The real issues are not methodological or structural; they are theological and deeply spiritual. We see the modern-postmodern shift as exposing the

enculturation of the church. Postmodernity threatens the church as we know it because it rejects the modern cultural forces that have shaped the church.

We questioned the institutional paradigm that had shaped church for the last 1500 years. This Christendom paradigm was initiated by Constantine, affirmed by the Protestant Reformation, and fueled by the culture of modernity. Church as a missional movement with a distinct lifestyle was sacrificed on the foundation of institutionalism. The marks of the modern church are perversions of the simple patterns of Jesus and the early church: the foundation of the resurrected Christ, the cornerstone, was institutionalized (Eph 2:20. 1 Pet 2:6), individualism replaced mutual community, {Mat 18:20), gnosticism replaced teaching for obedience (Mat 28: 19-20), pragmatism replaced faithfulness (Rom 12:1-2; Col 2:8), and clericalism (a limited priesthood) replaced the priesthood of all believers (I Pet 2: 1-10). All these lead to a syncretistic mix of modernism and Christianity.

Although we see many churches making strong efforts to respond to the postmodern shift, the changes are primarily cosmetic. The basic modern perceptions of church remain unaltered. Church is still described in institutional terms- a “worship service” whereby passive laity sit in a “sanctuary” listening to a didactic monologue from a professional cleric. The differences in today’s churches are found primarily in the superficialities of “style”- music style, clothing style, program style, and architectural style. Styles may change, but the systemic structure is still entirely modern. In spite of being well intentioned, creative, entrepreneurial, and purpose-driven, the church and mission remain slaves to modern ecclesial tradition.

We are not suggesting that the contemporary church does not care for postmoderns. On the other hand, there is increasing desire and attempts by churches to “reach” postmoderns and even start “postmodern” churches. And all these may well be contemporary, they can hardly be described as indigenous or biblically authentic. At best, most attempts are superficially postmodern. They remain systemically modern (perhaps even hyper-modern). While the style of ministry may be creatively relevant to the culture, modernity’s influence on the values, structures, and leadership remain for the most part unchallenged. None of them are fundamentally culturally translatable.

How We Live As Communities on the Way

The churches of Life Community are committed to facilitating a movement of reproducing churches. We have a strong desire to be the Body of Christ in the world. We embrace the relational nature of the New Testament church- the living Body of Christ through which lives are transformed and relationships reconciled. Whether it is called a church, fellowship, neighborhood church or gathering, we do not go to church with a focus on receiving, but rather giving to others. The primary question is “How does Jesus wish to use me to edify others?” or “How can I find, or deepen, the experience of Christ which the New Testament offers, and how can I pass it on to others?” The church exists to bring people into right relationship with God and into right relationship with one

another. We are continually amazed to see how the Holy Spirit orchestrates our gatherings as everyone comes prepared to not only receive, but to give to one another.

Teams are an integral part of how we reproduce churches across cultures. We advocate teamship in every sphere of leadership- both in the local churches and for church planting. A church planting team is a group of two or more believers who join together in making disciples and reproducing discipling communities. Teams hold no authority over churches, nor do churches hold authority over other teams. However, churches and teams work together for movement. Church starting is not affected by the common limitations of buildings, money, or seminary graduates. They can meet anywhere (homes, apartments, businesses, community centers, public places, etc.) and can be started by any group of people God calls and the church sends to make disciples.

The good news of Jesus was validated by the lifestyle of the church. The church is a living sign of the powerful reality of the risen Jesus. The New Testament reveals patterns that sustained the movement of the Gospel throughout the first century. These patterns reflect and reinforce the essential nature of the church as a missional community. (Eph 1:5-5, 11-12; 14, 3:21; II Thess 2:12) When these patterns are compromised we impede the gospel from spreading unhindered to the ends of the earth.

1. Community- We experience the power and presence of Jesus Christ in covenanted fellowships that meet from house to house. (Acts 2; 16: 29-34, 20:20; Rom 16:23; I Cor 12-14; 16:15-19)
2. Permeation- We intentionally share the Gospel and establish disciple-making communities in the midst of unreached and/or undisciplined people groups. (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom 15:14)
3. Incarnation- We seek group conversions (oikos evangelism) by sharing the gospel in and through relational networks and cultural systems. (Luke 10; Acts 16; I Cor 9: 19-23)
4. Reproduction- We reproduce the character and Way of Jesus in every sphere of church life: disciples, leaders, churches, and teams. (Matt 28: 19-20; John 15; II Tim 2:2; Titus 2:3-8)
5. Teamship- We identify equip and empower indigenous leaders to partner together in serving the church and starting new churches. (I Tim 3; Acts 4:13; 6:3-7; 13:1-3; 14:23)
6. Interdependence- We partner with churches, teams, and groups of like faith and mission for mutual edification and mission. (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23; Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28; Phil 2:1-5)
7. Family- We uphold the family as the primary context for the spiritual nurture, discipleship, leadership development. (Eph 5:22-6:4; Titus 2:1-8)

8. Tentmaking- We affirm tentmaking as the primary pattern for supporting pastors and missionaries. (Luke 10:1-8; Acts 18:2-4; I Cor 4:12; 9:1-18; II Cor 2: 17; I Thess 2:9; 5:12; II Thess 3: 7-13) No one is on salary, though some money is pooled to help send teams overseas.

9. Open Ministry- We affirm the priesthood of all believers and empower every believer (regardless of culture, age, education or gender) to actively participate in fulfilling Christ's mission for his church in the world. (Acts 2; I Cor 12; Col 4:17; Eph 4; I Pet 2)

10- Holy Spirit- We listen and obey as the Spirit leads us in fulfilling his mission. (Zech 4:6; John 5: 19-20; Acts 1:8; Rom 15: 13-19; Gal 3:3; Eph 3:16-21; I Thess 1:5; II Tim 1:7)

Appendix

One Another's of Scripture

Be at peace with each other (Mk 9:50)
Wash one another's feet (Jn 13:14)
Love one another (Jn 13:34)
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Rom 12:10)
Honor one another above yourselves (Rom 12:10)
Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)
Stop passing judgement on one another (Rom 14:13)
Accept one another just as Christ accepted you (Rom 15:7)
Instruct one another (Rom 15:14)
Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:16)
When you come together to eat, wait for each other (1 Cor 11:33)
Have equal concern for each other (1 Cor 12:25)
Serve one another in love (Gal 5:13)
Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other (Gal 5:26)
Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2)
Be kind and compassionate to one another . . . forgiving one another (Eph 4:32)
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19)
Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)
Consider others better than yourselves (Phil 2:3)
Forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other (Col 3:13)
Admonish one another (Col 3:16)
Make your love increase and overflow for each other (1 Thess 3:12)
Build each other up (1 Thess 5:11)
Encourage one another (Heb 3:13)
Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)
Do not slander one another (Jas 4:11)
Do not grumble against one another (Jas 5:9)
Confess your sins to each other. . . Pray for each other (Jas 5:16)
Love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Pe 4:9)
Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Pe 4:9)
Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others (1 Pe 4:10)
Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Pe 5:5)