

THE CHURCH AND MISSION

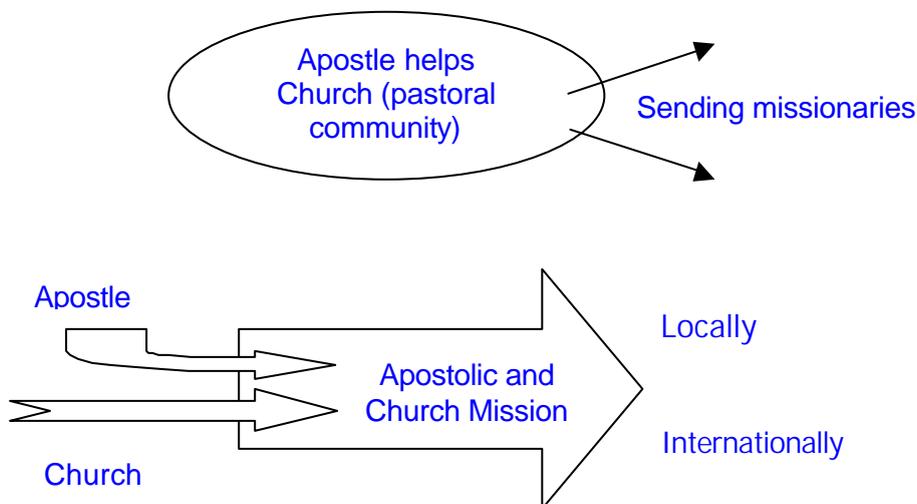
Presented at the Global Connections 'Global Interface' Consultation in May 2004

INTRODUCTION

- Debate about local churches and mission agencies.
- Perspectives of new churches whom it is rumoured have not had strong 'missions' ethos.

1. WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE CHURCH?

- Universal church.
- Debate is concerning local churches and their involvement in mission.
- Church is essentially a missional community.
 - A community – a group of people from all walks of life who have a common faith in Christ and are committed to one another and to leaders who care for them to whom they have willingly given themselves.
 - Missional. The essence of the church is missional, "sent as Jesus was sent" – recorded in the prayer before Jesus died (John 17:18 (mission), v20-23 (community)) and the first meeting of the church after the resurrection (John 20:21).
- The church's mission was intended to be cross-cultural in nature. Acts1:8.
- The early apostles involved the churches they planted in world mission e.g.
 - Send me to Spain Romans 15:24
 - Paul took people on his missionary team from those churches
 - Even the church's own spiritual health was to help apostles get to 'regions beyond' 2 Cor 10:15-16



- The church therefore should be a mission agency – so why do you need mission agencies?
- ‘Modality’ and ‘Sodality’ arguments (C. Peter Wagner)
 - Early the church was seen as a pastoral community and the monasteries, or later the travelling friars, would have been the mission arm of the church. (Bosch)
 - Traditional church models have a parish mentality. Non-conformist churches. A preacher caring for a congregation.
 - “Why Bill Bright is not your pastor”. (Leading Your Church to Growth). Wagner quotes one missiologist, George W Peters as follows, *“An unfortunate and abnormal historic development which has produced autonomous, missionless churches on the one hand and autonomous churchless missionary societies on the other hand.”*

2. HOW IS MISSION DONE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND HOW CAN THAT APPLY TODAY?

- Through the Holy Spirit breaking through prejudice (e.g. Acts 10)
- By spontaneous and strategic means:
 - Spontaneous – people scatter from Jerusalem Acts 11:19ff and Rome Acts 18:2
 - Strategic – apostolic journeys led by the Holy Spirit described by Paul in Romans 15:19-20.
 - Where examples of spontaneous are specifically given in scripture, the apostles sent to teach/lay foundations – e.g. Samaria and Antioch.
- Those going whether strategically or spontaneously went from churches and planted churches. There was no notion of ‘non-church planting mission’.
- Once churches were planted, Paul wanted to move on – ‘no more room’ Romans 15:23.

3. WHERE DID AUTHORITY FOR THE MISSION LIE?

- With local sending church or missionary team?
- There was accountability to sending church – e.g. Antioch for Paul was obviously joined relationally to local churches he planted e.g. 1 Thess 2:6-9, Acts 20:37-38.
- However Paul did not refer back to Antioch for instructions as to where he should go (e.g. Act 16). Authority was with the apostolic team in terms of the mission strategy.
- Authority rests with the apostles for a local church until the local eldership is established who may then chose out of friendship and relationship to continue to receive the benefit of that apostolic ministry.
- So local churches were involved in the mission but were not the final authority for the mission.
- The function and gift of an apostle was:
 - Planting and laying foundations in churches (1Corinthians 3:10)
 - Appointing leaders Acts 14:23

- Moving onto regions beyond 2 Corinthians 10:15-16, involving the church in wider mission Romans 15:24
- Bringing wisdom into difficult situations 1 Corinthians 7
- Ensuring the poor are remembered Galatians 2:10

4. HOW DOES/COULD THIS WORK TODAY?

- In practice, many have gone to serve with mission agencies supported from our churches over the years.
- We have a commitment to reach out with the gospel and plant new churches amongst the so called 'reached' and increasingly the totally unreached.
- If somebody in one of our churches is trained and prepared to go to another nation with the gospel, the local church sends them and supports them but the authority for the new church plant comes from the apostolic 'sphere' or 'field' (2 Corinthians 10:15) – though some of those sent will emerge with apostolic gifts themselves.
- Apostolic spheres also take initiatives to reach the unreached near to them (e.g. Kenya, Ghana)
- Local churches will be planted, style will reflect local culture, foundational values will reflect the apostolic input.
- When local elders appointed, it is up to them whether they continue to relate to the apostolic ministry.
- Kingdom projects, mercy ministries and ventures such as micro-enterprises come out of/work alongside the local church that has been planted/is being planted and are therefore under the authority of local leadership once that is established. So expatriates serving these projects must be accountable to local leadership. They are not primarily accountable to their home base church or to a missionary agency.

5. WHAT IS THE NEED FOR MISSIONARY AGENCIES THEREFORE?

- Biblically, we should value and benefit from the gifts within the whole body of Christ – and not allow any party spirit (1 Corinthians 3).
- Biblically, church based, church planting apostolic teams did the cross-cultural mission.
- Pragmatically – some work cannot be done by one church or one family of churches/streams/denomination on their own e.g. bible translation. However such para-church activity must genuinely serve the local church.
- Pragmatically there needs to be 'value added' to justify partnership.

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