

Global Connections – Webinar
'So what?' – Mission Beyond Covid-19
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Issues and Challenges: Will we listen to the scriptures?

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2 big picture conversation starters:

- Institutions and systems
- Mission as the place of discomfort

A. Institutions and systems

Look up Hilary Cottam's book, *Radical Health*, or watch her videos. An example is this one on YouTube entitled 'Radically reinventing social systems':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA2JCZhIGSI>

Institutions and structures exist to facilitate or enable an activity, like care or learning. Humans have always learned... schools exist to facilitate learning. If they are not doing that, what has gone wrong? What needs to change?

Ask the question of your church or mission agency – are you fit for purpose? Why do you exist and does its current structure or system enable that primary activity?

At a macro level, we exist to participate in God's plan to bring all things together in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10). What does this look like for your organisation or your church? How do you facilitate or enable this in your contexts?

Another question is how do we navigate those systems and how are we aware of when the system disables mission/evangelism/witness/discipleship... [fill in the blank]?

B. Mission as the place of discomfort

Drawing on the work of Joel Edwards on John 4 and the story of the Samaritan Woman, note that the Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always pushing the disciples into places of discomfort. The disciples in this story had to learn about mission by staying in the home of Samaritans for 2 days (at least)!

Reference to Edwards podcast: <https://podcast.redcliffe.ac.uk/episode-11-joel-edwards-spirit-filled-mission/>

How do we provoke the church into a place of discomfort?

What aspect of faithfulness is the church/mission agency/Christian organisation today willing to embrace that would set it at odds with the surrounding culture?

3 smaller picture examples:

- Economics
- Creation
- Racism

A. Economics

Being different around sexuality is quite easy. Christians have done that for a long time. Being a visible alternative to the market logic and criticising the dominant script at the same time, that is radical.

No one is against sharing. Even your most die-hard capitalist will say sharing is a good thing. But to live and to say (e.g. Acts 1-2) that this is the way God wants it to be and to take the stones that are thrown our way, that is radical

B. Creation

This is deeply tied to market economics and the practice of accumulation. In the Anglican church look at the 5th Mark of Mission. Even conservative scientists agree that there are about 60 years worth of farmable land and the reason we are in this situation is that we have not been obeying the first commandment to care for the earth.

How we produce food is related to how we steward the earth. We need to disentangle mission from the practice of accumulation that has been the paradigm over the past 75+ years.

Again, to Cottam's analogy: are our institutions or churches fit for purpose? Are they even asking questions about God's commandment to care for the earth or about food for the hungry? Have we learned anything about how all these things are related and how COVID-19 has only put into bold the inequalities that were already in existence leading up to this point?

C. Racism

It should not take the murder of a black man in America for the church around the world to think racism is an issue or a challenge to our witness. It should not take Black Lives Matter for a white church leader or mission head to ask a black church leader, 'please, can you help me. I do not understand what is going on here and I need to learn.' If you have not even taken that small step then how will you ever know what God's Spirit is doing and the many gifts God has bestowed on the one you see as 'other'?

What does solidarity look like? What or who will actually have to step aside so that those who are oppressed can speak and lead? It is not sufficient to say 'my church/organisation is open to all'. We must learn to go outside our comfort zones, to allow others to be the hosts who may or may not welcome us in their space.