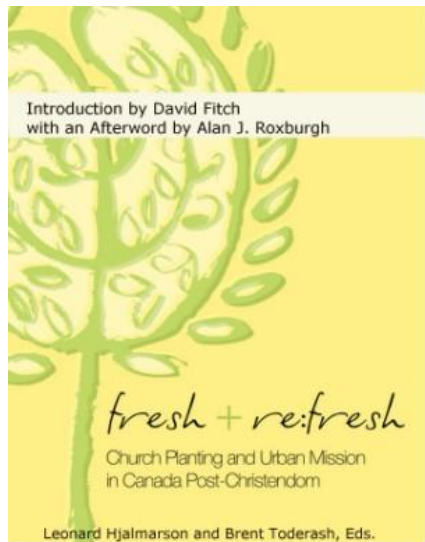


Fresh and Re:Fresh – Church Planting and Urban Mission in Canada Post-Christendom

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Fresh and Re:Fresh listens to the stories of ten Canadian church planters from Vancouver to Montreal. In their own words they describe the challenges of cultivating new faith communities in Canadian soil. As church planters and urban and suburban missionaries, they reflect on the context of pluralism, the relation of church and kingdom, describe the spiritual traditions and practices they embrace and the networks that support them, and the challenges of missional engagement in their communities.

Fresh and Re:Fresh also engages the mentors of church planters. These ones reflect on the changing cultural landscape, and describe the new challenges faced by church planters as they seed kingdom outposts. They also consider the specific skills needed by mentors and spiritual friends of church planters in the unique soil of post-Christendom Canada.

Finally, *Fresh and Re:Fresh* tells the stories of some Canadian churches in transition. Established communities of faith face particular challenges as they attempt to move attractional to incarnational, from an isolated and inward stance to neighborhood and community engagement for the purpose of transformation.

Leonard Hjalmarson and Brent Toderash, Eds.

Introduction - David Fitch

David is the founding pastor of Life on the Vine Christian Community—Chicago, ***Christian and Missionary Alliance***.

He is also Lindner Professor of Evangelical Theology at Northern Seminary, Lombard IL. He is the author of ***The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from American Business, Para-Church Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism and Other Modern Maladies*** (Baker Books, 2005).

Afterword – Alan Roxburgh

Alan serves as the Vice President for Allelon Canada. He is the Director of Educational Resources throughout North America and serves as the coordinating team leader for the Mission in Western Culture project. Alan is ordained in the Baptist Federation of Canada. He is a contributor to Missional Church, and author of ***The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition***. He co-authored ***The Missional Leader*** with Fred Romanuk.

Excerpt from Chapter 1 - David Fitch

Over the last three decades, I have watched church planting change dramatically in Canada and the Northern parts of the United States. Back in the sixties/seventies, we used to send fifteen or twenty people from one local church into another place several towns over that was “under-churched.” We would hold worship services, teach Sunday school, have a children’s ministry. We would set up shop. We would choose a pastor who “had all the tools” as they would say. He (most often a male) would be young, energetic and able to work like crazy. We would send out public announcements expecting many who were looking for a church to just show up. And if we did the basic services well, then we assumed the little gathering would grow into a self-sustaining church in 3 years. In many ways, these church plants resembled franchises.

Church planting worked like this because there were still large numbers of Christians to draw from for a congregation. We were in the great post-WW2 expansion in North America. New towns and subdivisions were springing up left and right. And just as each town needed a supermarket, a library and public schools, so also it needed a church. One could assume that out of the many thousands moving here into these new habitats, some would be Christians and need a church. So we planted churches like franchised local grocery stores. This was the era of Christendom.

To most Christians living in Canada, the days of Christendom are fading fast. There has been a change in mindset of those who would plant churches. As the number of Christians without a church shrinks, as the number of unchurched who once were catechumens of Christianity grows extinct, I have witnessed first hand a new wave of church planters who think of church planting in completely different ways. They are not interested in competing for the leftovers of Christendom. They resist the notion that the church is in need of just one more innovation. They are interested in nothing less than becoming missionaries, to plant churches cross culturally, to cross cultural barriers to people who have no knowledge or language about Jesus.

For those of us born before 1970, this change is truly stunning. The landscape of post-Christendom demands we think about church planting with a new eye for faithfulness, truth and integrity. Among the new missional leaders, *church* is the name we give to a way of life, not a set of services. We do not plant an organized set of services; we inhabit a neighborhood as the living embodied presence of Christ. Missional leaders now root themselves in a piece of geography for the long term. We survey the land for the poor and the desperate, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually as well. We seek to plant seeds of ministry, kernels of forgiveness, new plantings of the gospel among “the poor (of all kinds)” and then by the Spirit water and nurture them into the life of God in Christ. We gather on Sunday, but not for evangelistic reasons. We gather to be formed into a missional people sent out into the neighborhoods to minister grace, peace, love and the gospel of forgiveness and salvation.

If the old ways of planting a church were like setting up a grocery store, now it is more like seeding a garden, cultivating it, and watching God grow it amidst the challenges of the rocks, weeds and thorns.

From the INTRODUCTION by Len Hjalmarson

In this volume we explore the Canadian cultural landscape and the intersection of faith and culture through the lenses of three groups of practitioners. It's helpful to begin that exploration with a taxonomy. Stuart Murray in *Church After Christendom* distinguishes between "inherited" and "emerging" churches,¹ a more helpful framework than emerging vs. institutional. Murray notes that all church is "inherited" to some degree, then suggests three types of emergence, some of which are closer than others to *inheritance*.

- * churches emerging from inherited church through processes of renewal and transformation. The outcome is not another church, but a church more or less radically different from the past in structure, ethos, style, focus or activity

- * churches emerging out of inherited church through processes of community engagement, liturgical exploration, church planting or missional reflection. The outcome is a new, or embryonic church, that becomes more or less autonomous.

- * churches emerging within a particular context without the shaping influence of or significant connection to inherited church. The outcome is a new church, which may be more or less radical, that will need to build links with other churches.

Murray calls for open conversations between various groups rather than formal consultation. We need to hear the stories as we attempt to reengage our culture, thus becoming a learning community.² He offers Peter with the Jerusalem church in Acts 11 as a paradigm for conversation.³ The church planters, mentors and urban missionaries who tell their stories in these pages are all *ekklēsia* workers, in relation at some level to the larger story of which they are a local and temporal expression.

But there are other stories of engagement told here. You will also hear the stories of workers who are in more traditional settings, and who inherited leadership in an existing faith community and who are on a journey of renewal and missional engagement.

The third group represented here are mentors of church planters and urban missionaries. Their perspective is unique because they stand in the midst of cultural change, having been raised in

¹ Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004) 113

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_community

³ Murray describes the key elements as story-telling, theological reflection, critical questioning, careful listening, passionate advocacy and thoughtful conclusion (115).

one world but having set foot on a new shore. Their excitement at this adventure is often palpable. By nature they are learners, and by their own admission, they are discovering new questions as they walk alongside others in the new world. Reggie McNeal offers,

Culture roils and churns in the collision of the old with the new. At the dawn of the third Christian millennium, continuity battles with discontinuity; the emergent dances with what is passing away. Leaders of spiritual enterprises, like many of the adherents of the faith, have oars in both currents. The challenge involves getting as many through the rapids as possible, knowing some will never make it. The success of the mission largely depends on the ability of the leader, the river guide, to know how to "read" the water.⁴

Any medical student knows that treatment is dependent on accurate diagnosis. A plethora of books, articles and dissertations are attempting to help us exegete our culture.⁵ At the same time a variety of fresh expressions are under the spotlight, and books and papers are rising from observers.⁶ One of the recent taxonomies proposed by Tom Sine and others is the observation of at least four distinct streams of renewal in the missional, monastic, mosaic and emergent movements.⁷ **If Thomas Homer-Dixon is right that synergistic energy can result in *catagenesis* in complex systems, we may be observing the emergence of conditions that will engender a new storm system for change.**

Chapter Six from Jim Loepp Thiessen

Jim Loepp Thiessen has been in full time ministry for seventeen years, twelve of those in a traditional rural church outside of Baden, Ontario.

I didn't know how we would build this church: I'd never done anything like this before. It would have to be Jesus doing the building...

We found a few things that were compelling. We would celebrate with our community; we would serve them in love; we would gather in small groups as a church; we would try and make our worship "post Christendom" in its approach. That is, we would not start with the assumption in our worship that you knew the Gospel story you just weren't telling us.

I also knew it had to start with Jesus, not Menno Simons, the sixteenth century leader of the Anabaptists of which I was a part. It needed to be about going beyond the cultural values embedded in my Anabaptist tradition to meeting people at the level of "transcultural" values. For

⁴ Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000) 79

⁵ For example, James K.A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* and *Everyday Theology*, Kevin Vanhoozer, Ed. and Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens and Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City*. See also Vinoth Ramachandra, *Subverting Global Myths*. On the secular side, Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Up Side of Down* and Naomi Klein, *Shock Doctrine*.

⁶ For example, *Mission-Shaped Church* is a report from a working group within the Church of England (2003) and Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger published *Emerging Churches* in 2005.

⁷ Tom Sine, *The New Conspirators* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 2008).

example, rather than inviting folks to serve because that's what Mennonites do, to seeing service as a way of embracing and loving others and as a way of following Jesus.

One of the best things my denomination has done, apart from our mission minister support, is freeing me from huge growth pressure. They didn't come with, "we need to be this size by this time..." Our family recently watched "Quest for the Bay..." the story of eight people who recreated the York boat journey from Winnipeg to the Hudson Bay in the mid 1840's. When the Yorkmen took sixteen days to travel up lake Winnipeg, a trip that two hundred years ago used to take only nine days, they weren't discouraged but celebrated the first major step.

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