

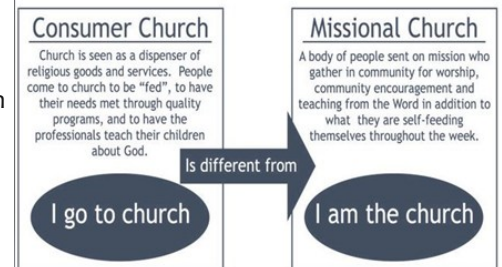
FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART

“Being a Missional Church”

Ever since Dr. Darrell Guder, retired Professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, published a book that he edited in 1998 — “*Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*” — the term “missional” has been used to describe what the purpose of a church should be. But the question still remains: What makes a church missional?

I remember attending a Presbyterian Global Fellowship conference in Houston several years ago, where Michael Frost, Founding Director of Centre for Evangelism and Global Mission at Morling Theological College in Sydney, Australia, attempted to define “missional” for the over 800 pastors and elders gathered. As one who has authored several books on the subject and spoken internationally about missional ministry and culture himself, Frost’s charge during the conference was to provide “a framework ... by talking about what it really means to ‘live missionally in a post-Christian culture.’”

Frost began his comments by saying, “I am anxious, my friends, that you do not domesticate the idea of mission ... The call to ‘missional’ is a full-blooded call to recalibrate the church around the call to mission.” He then shared three important concepts, with three Latin terms, to help us understand how we will be if we truly want to be a “missional” church:



1. We Will See God Differently — God is not far off and distant. He is involved in the world to bring order. He is persistently seeking us and constantly in search for us: ergo, *missio dei*. While many people have misinterpreted this to mean “the mission of God,” Frost corrected them to say that it should be more accurately translated as “the missioning God” or “the God of mission.” And so, we must constantly be in search of what God is doing in the world, and join him in this effort. “If you’re filled with the Spirit of God, filled with the *missio dei*,” he urged, “then you are propelled into the world.” In other words, we must see God as the *author* of mission!

2. We Will See the Church Differently — Church just won’t be a place to go on Sunday any more. It will be an integral, essential part of the city, of the makeup of the community. The church will add great “value to the village.” And so, we are to participate in what Christ is doing in the world (*Christi participatio*) through the work of the church. It’s not up to us to determine the agenda, nor simply copy Christ’s, but rather participate in his work, according to his call and guidance. In other words, we must see the church as a *partner* in Christ’s ministry!

3. We Will See the World Differently — If we begin to view God as well as the church differently, we will begin to also understand the world differently, and our place in it. We will have new perspective on our common broken humanity. We will begin to understand more of the *imago Dei*, the image of God, in those around us. We just might need to rearrange our world view. In other words, we must be able to see the image of God in every person in this world!

I must say what Frost said all those years ago has stuck with me and has inspired me to be more missional-minded in my own ministry.

As we begin our summer months, enjoying a somewhat more relaxing season of the year, let us prepare ourselves for another church ministry year in the fall, it is my hope and prayer that we at Riverside are able to be a “missional” church — not just saying that we are, but truly understanding what it means and what it takes to be one!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Bill



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