

Mission Advisor Report to 2009 Annual General Meeting

Mission is more than a programme or a strategy. In fact, I would go so far as to say mission is neither of these things although it may incorporate them.

Mission is about relationship. Relationship with Jesus that flows out in relationship to each other and those in our community who as yet do not have that relationship with Jesus. A relationship where we are invited to join that relationship of love which is at the heart of the Trinity. Mission is primarily a life of worship. So worship is not a Sunday activity but a chosen lifestyle that includes a corporate gathering on a Sunday, or any other day for that matter. Worship is a lifestyle that seeks to bring glory to God. God is glorified by the believer's life being continually conformed into the likeness of Jesus by the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. So to live a life of worship is to live a life of character development, a life that is one of constant surrender to our passions and desires to live more in life changing communion with God who is Trinity.

Therefore a key to mission is Christ-like character in the believer.

I came upon this quote by David Platt reported in an article in Christianity Today International Leadership Journal. Platt says, 'The Kingdom of God is not advanced by programmes or budgets but by men and women who are radically surrendered to Christ.' How true, look at the New Testament. That causes me to ask if our Christian community is one that actively encourages us to be people radically surrendered to Jesus. Listening to the way we talk, I don't think it is a major emphasis at all. Our conversations too often sound like a cry to keep things as we want them, what is comfortable for us, while at the same time saying we have a desire to reach others. But so often that desire is on our terms which are, perhaps, not God's terms. So many of our conversations sound remarkably like self interest which makes us little different from the surrounding culture. a Christian form of hedonism. it must suit me. it must be what I want. I wonder if our wants are the same as God's? In Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers* the Bishop's wife, who is in many ways, the real Bishop, is always saying 'The Bishop thinks, and I agree' q Much of what we say is in the same vain, 'The Lord says, and I agree' q It's surprising how often God just seems to agree with me!

Therefore a life devoted to worship is a life devoted to mission and is a life that is based and modelled on the life of Jesus. Character development is about my life being transformed by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit conforming me more and more into the character or image of Jesus.

I have always strongly felt that this ongoing transformation is fundamental to our Christian walk. albeit most often neglected. but will become very obvious a need in the challenges that are unfolding before us.

Crunch time is fast approaching for us if it has not already come upon us. We have little time left for playing. The days are urgent, the needs will only grow. Our institution will be hard pressed to stand in its present form. I don't see that as a bad thing but as a gift from God as we will be forced to come to the essence of who we are in Christ and the essence of the gift we have been given by being Presbyterian.

Randall Prior raised this at the last General Assembly in his second presentation when he said:

'If the church is preoccupied with its form or its survival, and fails to recognise and respond to its unique calling as the representation of God's future for the world, then it has lost its purpose and in a sense is already dead.'

The heart is: a life lived in devotion to God through Christ Jesus; a life that is being changed more and more into His likeness by the work of the Holy Spirit within; a life that is, by the way it is lived, a continual act of worship that shows forth in the quality of our relationships within the community of faith and in service in Jesus' name in the community. A life of worship is a life of mission.

Thank you to those who allowed me the privilege to work among and serve you. Thank you to those who have in so many ways extended gifts of hospitality.
Bruce Fraser