

Synod Presentation:

I have the chance to plant a NZ church:

~ what would be it's focus

~ what could it look like

~ who would be involved

Wow – an opportunity to plant a church and create a model that would have a focus on “being in the community”, as you may know from my introduction or knowing me I work fulltime for Flagstaff Community Church in our community to raise the profile of our church and more importantly to facilitate serving our community where there are needs. I may not talk a lot about what will happen on a Sunday service in that time between 9:30am and 10:30am, but rather what is happening all around that, during the week where community of both believers and unbelievers share the same spaces which I feel is equally important Some visionary type statements could be:

*A church that invites others to become part of God's family and which is working to transform our community to the glory of God.

* A church where people feel they belong to a family that grows in faith.

I love that analogy of family, where we all come together rather like Christmas dinner. All ages are at the table together, the youngest are cared for, modelled to and corrected by all the family. The newest members (the girlfriends, new son- in laws who are attending for the first time) are welcomed, room is made for them at the table, introductions to the traditions of this family meal are given by those surrounding them.

Before I begin unpacking my NZ Church any further, I want to acknowledge that most of my ideas, thoughts, etc I have collected from many other places, so to acknowledge a few of these:

- David Engwicht, who delivers “Place Making” seminars to city councils
- Jeff Watley from St John’s in Egham, England, who was visiting here and shared some initiatives they do in transforming their community
- Geoff Ellery’s study leave research project entitled “Researching Kiwi Cultures” 2009
- My Supervisor???

My background is in Primary School Teaching, so I’m going to use a model used in the classroom when asking children to brainstorm a new concept, it helps them organize their thoughts and ideas. Particularly relevant for vision type things, makes sure you have covered all the bases.

It is called a Y chart and for each section of the letter, so the gap at the top, and then either side of the stem of the Y you focus on each of the following:

What will it: LOOK like
 SOUND like
 FEEL like

LOOK like:

Easiest one to describe, I believe visual is a Huge “puller, inviter, feel comfortable” thing, so let’s see what it looks like.

- Where it is situated would be a “biggie”, I love the model of the local church in the local community in a geographical sense, and I know that isn’t always the case, but it’s my model so it will be in the centre of a community, not down the side street, round 3 bends and up the big hill but on the main street, people will always be walking past it to get to the bus, to the shops, to school

- David Engwicht's work with "Place making" is all about visual appeal in the city centres, he talks about "Making a home in the public domain", we are a society in motion, we are always going from one place to another, let's change that to a place where people will stop and engage rather than just walk past on their way to somewhere
- What will make people stop outside our NZ church???
- So it's got to start on the outside then, here's some ideas for the outside
- A giant chess set, the old table tennis table you have in the back cupboard – put it out on the front lawn with some bats and a ball,
- Rather than planting the community garden round the back tucked away, plant it on the front lawn with a "help yourself" sign
- A memorial/Remembrance garden to the side, a well tended garden where local people can place plaques for loved ones, for many a visit to the cemetery can be difficult transport wise etc, this could help
- What about an outdoor area with some play equipment and perhaps a bar-b-que, as Nz'ers we love to relate with others in this type of setting
- What about our signage? Is in 1 language only, what if we had it in other languages – someone walking past from a different ethnicity thinks "that's my language" it's a connecting point, they immediately feel something familiar
- Make our signage change periodically, people being looking for the new message, the new visual, is it eye catching and provoking?
- Our signage would enthusiastically advertise what we have to offer
- What about the buildings themselves:
- The "church building" is the physical home of the local congregation and this building needs to reflect something of the warmth, light, joy and hospitality of the God we worship.
- Quality buildings spawn ministry, they become a magnet for the local community and therefore a means of proclaiming the gospel.

- So I'm thinking a largeish building, may need to be multi-storied, with many rooms, looks inviting as in it has bright paint, I can see my way clearly to the front door or there are clear directions, what I can see through the windows looks pretty interesting and maybe I'd like to have a closer look
- Do you have a mental image from standing on the footpath and looking at our NZ church what it might look like?
- Let's move inside, what will it look like.
- Once inside the door spaces are labelled, signposted (and maybe in more than just 1 language) so we know where to go
- Yes we can see the central chapel area but surrounding this are many other rooms, there are offices, ministry rooms that can be multi-use, a kitchen, maybe a café area and toilet areas
- I can see from information on the walls, leaflets, photos that it's not just church on Sunday that meets here, there is also the ante-natal class, the mainly music group, a bereavement support group, ICONZ etc etc
- I also see the signage that WINZ will be here on the first floor on Wednesdays, fantastic I don't have to catch 2 buses into town for my appointment I can make an appointment here.
- Let's give some thought to the loo's - there are clear directions on where these are, when we go in there is a certain "wow" factor, because they are lovely, they are clean, there is a changing table for my baby, there are even "goodies" for me, soap, mouisteriser - this is going to make a difference in how I view this church
- The kitchen area usually has someone in it and delicious food coming out of it. Good food not only feeds the body but also builds the community when shared together. And let's not forget good coffee also.
- Inside the chapel/worship area it can look different for different purposes, so nothing chained/nailed to the floor, for one service it may be tables with chairs around them, plus bunches of cushions in other areas, looks a bit like a lounge - remember "homemaking in the public domain"

- For another service there may be seating for the hymn service
- Yes another service allows space for individuals to do art work as they reflect on a particular passage
- I can see from the church bulletin that there isn't just a service here on Sundays at 10:30, but several other services, some also on Sunday's and others during the week
- I read about the "Side Door" service which meets 1x month for art, readings, space and time for personal reflection

I hope you have built up a significant visual picture of our Nz church both outside and inside.

Let's move onto what it would sound like?

Sounds like

If we were to close our eyes and just use our sense of hearing, what would our NZ church sound like?

Once again let's begin outside:

- Walking past there would be sound all the time (not just on Sundays')
- You would hear people talking as they gather vegetables, as they walk around the remembrance garden, the sound of people playing table tennis outside
- Maybe some of the sounds are in a language which I don't hear usually in this country
- There would be the sound of cars constantly coming and going from the carpark as they have attended one of the many groups/activities that are here
- As we walk inside, using just our sense of hearing what does it sound like
- There isn't a lot of silence, the sound that may surprise me the most is the laughter – humour is part of the culture of our church
- If I listen I can hear multiple voices excitedly talking together, on another visit I may hear those same voices in earnest prayer together supporting each other

- These are the voices of the ministry team, both paid and volunteer who have space in this church to work from and interact with each other, who meet regularly for prayer and for planning. Strategic thinking.
- As I move from room to room the noises are all different, there's the sound of children's songs and the beating of sticks on buckets used as drums, there's the recorded voice of the instructor leading a group of people through the "steady as you go" programme,
- There's the voice of the counsellor in a session with a client
- The voices are old, they are male and female, they are young and excited
- What about in our church/worship area - what does it sound like in there? Quite different than the foyer and surrounding rooms?
- No it sounds the same, the mixture of voices, the excitedness,
- There is music here that I can join in with, depending on what service I walk in on this music would sound different
- I can hear multiple voices during any of the services, the voices change regularly, the voices come from all around the room, not just the front but people are adding conversation from the back, the sides, the cushions.
- There is conversation within small groups in the church, maybe they are discussing a question, or meeting some new people and getting to know them over the coffee break mid service
- There are times of quiet reflection at particular services or I could choose to attend one of the prayer stations that is a quiet meditative prayer rather than the prayer station that asks me to write a post it note prayer as if I was on the Road to Emmaus walking with Jesus
- When I talked to one of the ministry team about all the different church services they offer here, the reply sounded like
- We have an ethos of being multi-congregational, so creating services for different kinds of people, some of these congregations fulfil a purpose and ministry for a certain season only

- These multi-congregations act as different entry points into the faith and life of the church
- One congregation is not seen as more spiritual than another and it's not about size and numbers
- We see each of these congregations as significant and each one of them are part of the whole of being church
- I can hear you asking, that's a lovely model BUT how do we resource each of these congregations, luckily I'm just here to share my model and Bruce didn't ask me to go into how to resource such a model

Can you hear the voices, the music, the quiet, the laughter?

Moving onto our last part – what does it feel like?

Feels like

Let's use all our senses to get a sense of what our NZ church "feels like", what sort of feeling do you get, in every environment you walk into – it engenders a feeling. Like when you come home at the end of the day – how do you feel, or when you're at the traditional family Christmas dinner – that's hopefully a nice feeling. So what feelings would we feel at our NZ church?

- A feeling of welcome would be the biggie, someone calling me by name, I feel okay to pick some carrots to take home, it's okay to walk around the remembrance garden, I don't feel like I'm intruding
- When I walk in the doors I am addressed by name, they know me and I'm only here to lead the ante-natal class
- It physically feels warm, I don't want to rush home and put the heater on
- I feel okay bringing my children here, I know they won't be told off for being noisy, I know there is the playground outside plus toys inside that they love to play with and there's always an honorary brother/aunty/uncle/grandma who they will run to and spend time with as well
- I feel like I could also bring my friends here, it wouldn't be a big deal and I can see them fitting in as well. There wouldn't

be a feeling of “I’m doing it wrong during the services, they would be welcomed as I was welcomed.

- I feel like I can fit in here, I like the look of the “Grow” service they offer, it has food a quiz, some bible wisdom and movie clips – I quite like my movies so that feels comfortable for me.
- I feel that if I had an idea for a new group or a way we could do things better, that I could approach the ministry team and they would listen and I know they have said yes to other people, so I feel there is a culture of permission giving here in this church
- I feel encouraged in my faith journey here, I am having input, I am having fellowship and I am being challenged. I am growing.
- I feel valued,
- I feel valued in my ministry at the local school, the church even commissioned me, prayed for me and our team who go out to the local school each week
- I feel at home, I feel like part of the family, I feel I belong

I trust you have all used your senses whilst I’ve been talking to now know what my NZ church would look like, sound like and feel like, I hope it’s a place where you would like to be part of.

I’d like to finish with a verse that has been sitting with me over this past week:

It comes from Ephesians 3:20

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever Amen.”