

October 2008 – February 2009
Geoff Ellery

Researching Kiwi Churches

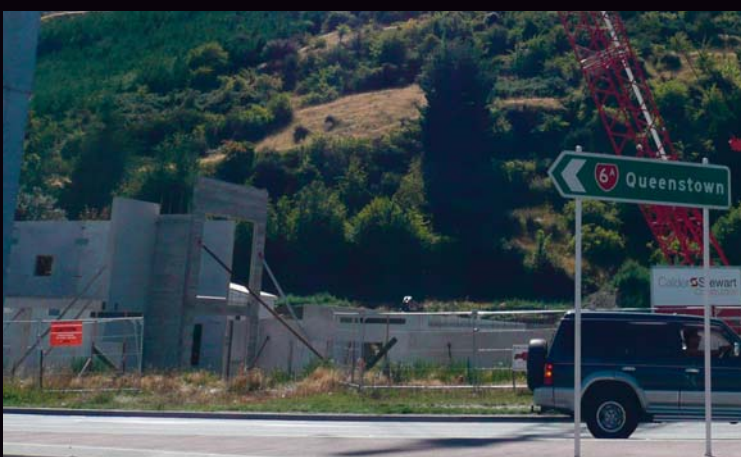
A study leave research project sponsored by: *The Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland*



*Assimilating
Children and
Families*



*In Tourist
Areas*



*In Rapidly
Developing
Areas*

CONTENTS

Introduction

Findings:

Section 1: Aspects of Church leadership	Page 4
Section 2 Development of community, worship and mission	Page 11
Section 3: Some miscellaneous comments	Page 19

Relating Research to the local Church or Parish:

Section 1	Page 23
Section 2	Page 25
Section 3	Page 27
Appendix 1	Page 28
Bibliography	Page 30

Researching Kiwi Churches

Geoff Ellery

October 08 – February 09

Introduction

In late 2007 I became aware that I needed to plan for my study leave which had accrued after six years of ministry in my Presbyterian Parish in Queenstown. At this stage in my life and ministry I wanted something practical that would benefit my Parish. I therefore chose three areas that I considered were the key areas that we are concerned with in Wakatipu Parish, Queenstown:

- Specific challenges faced in ministering in a rapidly growing tourist location.
- Ministering within a rapidly expanding development area.
- Ways in which families may be assimilated into the life and ministry of the local church (Wakatipu is very much an ageing parish).

With these three key areas in mind I spoke with as many people as I could – church leaders, Synod staff, friends, church contacts, and people in my own parish. From the outset I decided not to confine my research to Presbyterian Churches. I also believed it was not necessary to travel overseas as surely God is at work in Kiwi Churches sufficiently for us to learn from what he is doing, providing we are willing to look beyond our own denominations and share with each other and learn to network together.

Any research undertaken has to be selective. I am extremely grateful to the many people who offered suggestions. In particular Paul Windsor, Bruce Fraser, John Daniel, and Karl Lamb. Sincere thanks also to the Ministry Resource Committee of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland as well as my own Wakatipu Parish who have been financially supportive. I am indebted to Central Otago Presbytery for encouraging me in this venture. Special thanks must also go to Bronwyn Hartley for her suggestions and assistance in layout. My wife Marilyn has also been a key player as she has accompanied me on every church visit and her roles as note taker and questioner have been invaluable.

I also owe much to the ministers, leaders and staff of the churches listed below. Without their willingness to share time, hospitality, successes and struggles, resources and ideas this report would never have eventuated. Marilyn and I have felt profoundly privileged and richly blessed by the people we have met and shared with throughout this venture.

Northpoint Baptist, New Plymouth
 Bethlehem Baptist, Tauranga
 St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Mt. Maunganui
 Bethlehem Community Church (Presbyterian), Tauranga
 St. Paul's Presbyterian, Katikati
 Omokoroa Community Church (Co-operating Parish)
 St. John's Presbyterian, Rotorua
 St. Paul's Union Church, Lake Taupo
 St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Waipukarau
 Nativity Anglican, Blenheim
 Havelock Anglican
 Annesbrook Church of Christ, Stoke, Nelson.
 Victory Community Church (Anglican), Nelson
 Hope Community Church (Open Brethren), Hope, Nelson
 St. Arnaud Community Church
 Sumner Anglican Church
 Opawa Baptist Church
 St. Christopher's Anglican Church, Avonhead
 Majestic Church, Christchurch
 St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Geraldine
 St. John's Anglican, Latimer Square, Christchurch
 The B@tCH, Highgate Presbyterian Parish, Dunedin

There is considerable diversity in the churches listed above, yet Marilyn and I gleaned much from the different ways in which God is at work within each of them. In general, we found that many churches are more effective in *transfer growth* or re-connecting with people who have abandoned the church along the way. However, some report significant growth through people coming to faith in Jesus (who have previously had no contact with the Church). Such churches are generally quite specific and focused in their approach.

In the findings and suggestions that come out of this report I wish to point out that my background is ordained ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia. Therefore some input may reflect ignorance of the Presbyterian tradition. I seek your forgiveness for this and ask that you consider the report with open eyes and hearts, as these are urgent days for the Christian Church and we continue with the status quo and dillydally at our own peril.

It should be noted that the churches we visited were almost all single church parishes. Some of my research will therefore have to be adapted to fit into a multi-church parish, such as my own in Queenstown.

At the conclusion of this report you will find an appendix listing questions that were sent in advance to almost all of the churches visited. It may be helpful to refer to these at this point, as they indicate the direction I was coming from as I began my research.

FINDINGS

I have grouped research findings into three main sections, each with several subheadings.

SECTION 1: ASPECTS OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Leadership Teams

Some years ago, when attending a Willow Creek Conference in Australia, Bill Hybels made the claim that leadership is all-important in church growth and church life. At times I have questioned Hybels at this point, but my research has convinced me that leadership is extremely important in the growth of a local church. It is probably not too difficult to find biblical examples (in OT and NT) that also indicate the profound importance of leadership.

What we found is that (with the exception of one church) the leadership team was a relatively small group (generally no more than 8) which exercised overall leadership of the particular church. This applies even to large churches, irrespective of denomination. In some instances the paid staff exercised significant leadership in setting the strategy and direction of the church. However, when this happened constant communication was kept with the small leadership team of 7 elders to enable thorough preparation prior to elders meetings (as in Annesbrook Church of Christ). When they met with the Senior Minister key issues would have been highlighted prior to the elder's meeting. In other cases paid staff carried out day-to-day management of the church while a small leadership session of 8 elders (St. Andrew's at Mt. Maunganui) were the key leadership decision-making group.

While it may seem as though I am suggesting that a smaller leadership team is automatically the way to go for the future, I wish to add one word of caution. A small Leadership Team can easily feel overwhelmed and has greater potential for burnout. It is probably important to carefully assess your particular church situation and your pool of leaders before you make hard and fast rules in this regard. If you decide on a slightly larger Leadership Team (Session, Parish Council, Board, etc.), you will undoubtedly need a strong Chairperson/Moderator who is able to ensure that all members adequately contribute.

Time and time again, across the denominations, we discovered that for effective leadership to take place there must be a clear division between governance and management. Leaders are to deal with governance while the management of property and finance should be left to others suitably gifted in these areas.

We also found that if a church is to grow significantly in a post-modern environment, leaders must move from being traditional pastoral elder types to strategic thinkers, big picture planners and visionaries for the future. In other words there must be a change in attitude from chaplaincy mode to mission mode.

This is because the context in which the Church is now placed has moved from Christendom to a post-Christendom mission field context. It is this group or team that must work closely with the minister(s) and staff and then relate closely to ministry leaders across the church. They are not autocrats, but key thinkers, spiritual humble pray-ers and permission givers.

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk in their helpful book, *The Missional Leader* develop the whole theme of growing missional leaders for the emerging church of the future. Although primarily written for ministers, it is a resource worth studying in detail if we are serious about developing leaders who will lead the church into discerning the mission opportunities that God has for us in the future.

I believe this is something many Presbyterian Churches in particular must come to grips with in the future. For far too long we have relied upon a representative and primarily pastoral eldership leadership structure that has often become inadequate to lead a church into the future. If we fail to look at this issue seriously the status quo will most likely remain and our churches will continue to age and decline.

My research would seem to suggest that we also need to reconsider the size and makeup of some of our Parish Councils/Sessions as well as study the kind of business that we discuss at such meetings. Is it largely administrative management material or key leadership issues that a growing church of the future should be dealing with? To enable the suitably gifted people to be on our key leadership bodies, be they Parish Council or Session or under some other name, will probably involve a rethink of the election process of people coming on to these positions. Nominations that come unchecked from across a Parish or congregation may not be the wisest way towards determining Parish Council or Session membership in the post-Christendom missionary context the church finds itself in. Greater care needs to be taken in the election of Elders to ensure Parish Council or Session consists of leaders that will enable the Church to respond to the challenges of the new mission context.

The above comments do not necessarily do away with the usefulness of a Parish planning day or Church forums. However, what I have discovered is that when a leadership group (be it Parish Council, Elders or Board) is over large for whatever reason, decision making, grappling with key growth issues and arriving at a consensus as to a common strategy and direction is generally very difficult.

The importance of Vision, Core values, DNA



Vision statements, Mission statements and Core Values in churches have been around for some decades. Nevertheless, we often asked questions to church leaders regarding their usefulness. What we found was this – they need to be precise, active (not passive), memorable and achievable. Paul Milson from Hope Community Church put it quite succinctly. In his words, core values “define the kind of people that Christ is calling us to be.”

Hope Community Church has their core values listed on attractive cards:

Their church layout and ministry structure flows out of these core values.

Opawa Baptist has a simple summary statement:

Growing in God, Growing in Relationships (i.e. community) and Growing in Mission.

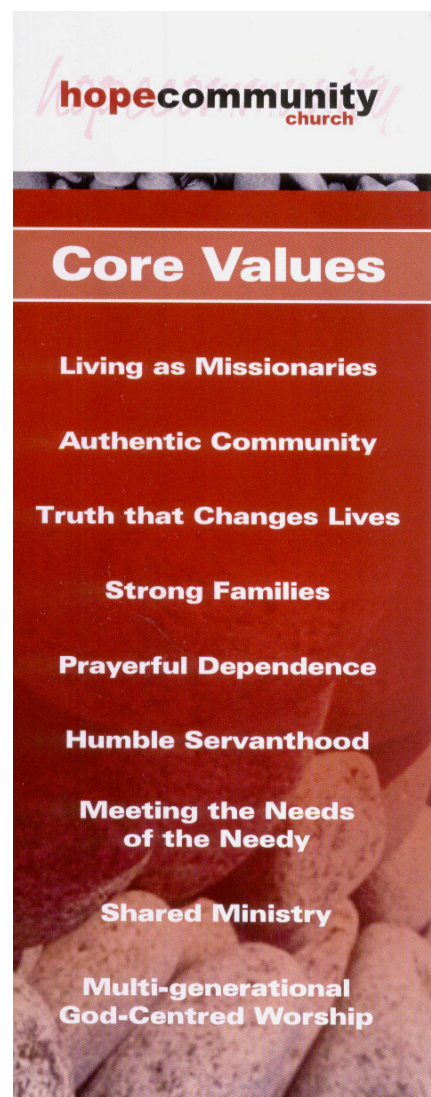
For **Northpoint Baptist Church** their key values are people, passion and purpose.

The welcome brochure of **Omokoroa Community Church** states the following values:

To live by faith
To be known by love
To be a voice of hope

St. Andrew's, Waipukarau:

Lost people matter to God.
Authentic Community
Community of Grace
The ministry of All Believers



I think it is important that churches examine their core values. In doing so they will probably find a distinction between what people believe in theory and how they act and relate in practice. In other words the difference between what people imagine and what they actually do.

Core values relate to the identity of the church, its defined purpose and they enable the vision to actually happen. In other words they partner the vision. In a sense they are in part what is often described as the DNA of the local church. Core values are crucial to what is really valued and it is these that generally determine outcomes. For example, some values (e.g. filling gaps in ministry without considering gifts) may work against growth while a value that states that lost people matter to God reminds the church membership that church is not for themselves! Core Values need to be prioritised and seen in their importance of creating a healthy culture within the local church. Annesbrook Church of Christ sees their importance in creating a culture of involvement and commitment to their mission, method and motivation. Core values in this Church are transmitted down through their Life Groups.

Church Culture

In my research it appears that the church culture is one of the most difficult issues to change. Most ministers express difficulty in this area. It is the environment in which a church operates and ministers. For example is the church permission giving, inviting, inclusive, friendly for all ages especially children, and encouraging, etc? Is the leadership model encouraging, generous and open? Is the minister a macro-manager or a micro-manager in style of leadership and ministry? Is worship joyful and uplifting? Does humour abound in the life of the church or is the church environment overly serious and intense? How do committees function – are they open and communicative? Is the church environment one that expects God to be at work and for prayers to be answered? Alternatively, is it simply an environment with business as usual? Do the church buildings contribute to a positive welcoming environment?

These are all issues to do with church environment. It would seem to me that the Leadership Team and church staff together shares a great responsibility in creating a healthy church environment. In fact this is only part of the whole picture. What has to be developed is a missional environment where people within the local church are taught to discern the voice of the Spirit in leading them into new areas of mission and ministry within the community and world in which God has placed them. Again I would refer you to *The Missional Leader*, by Roxburgh and Romanuk, especially Chapter 4.

Single Minister or Multi-staffing in relation to Church Growth?

Today, many churches and parishes have a paid minister(s) and a full time or part time secretary or administrator. The majority of churches we looked at were multi-staffed. That is they employed more than one ordained minister and secretary. It seemed to me that in many instances this was a significant factor initiating growth. Before I try and tease out why, I wish to add that I am not trying to do away with the traditional role of the minister in every church situation. We should not lose sight of John Howell's (St. Paul's in Taupo) firm conviction that the traditional role of minister needs to be refreshed and carried out in new and creative ways.

Now to try and answer my question as to how multi-staffing may impact upon growth of the local church?

- Employing new staff can actually help vision become concrete and practical within the life of the local church.
- To be on staff can give a person authority and define his/her ministry in a positive and helpful way. In the process the local church begins to change in the way they see ministry as a whole.
- Paid staff are accountable and more likely to get the job done.
- Suitably gifted volunteers are often difficult to find.
- Paid staff, if effective, create new ministry opportunities and can develop leaders in specific areas of ministry.
- If staff can possibly work on site there is greater creativity and sharing of ideas that enhances ministry across the board, thus breaking down the growing isolation of modern ordained ministry. This is a huge plus in my opinion.
- Additional staff frees up the traditional ordained minister to give greater attention to leadership, strategic thinking and development of ministry teams and leaders.
- And a word from my own experience – as I become older, I find that some areas of ministry that I led very well as a young minister are no longer the areas that I am best suited to. Hence I would argue for additional staff if possible.

We have noted that additional staff are often employed part time (e.g. projects manager at Opawa Baptist works 6 hours per week); others are half time or full time. In other words, there can be great flexibility in employment patterns.

Some issues relating to employing more staff:

- The kind of chicken and egg question. Does employment of additional staff precede a ministry need or should additional staff generally be sought when a ministry need becomes very obvious? After talking to many church leaders about this issue, it is my opinion that where there is considered ministry potential evident, seek to employ appropriate staff if possible and in most cases the work and ministry will grow.

St. Christopher's Anglican in Avonhead and St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Waipukarau both have a similar structure of Ministry Teams with the expectation that each ministry team leader is responsible for forming a team around them and thereby developing new leaders. 2 Timothy 2: 2 provides a sound basis for this important aspect of leadership development. Our discussions with ministers indicated that some Ministry Team Leaders do not automatically know how to do this and therefore have to be trained in developing a supportive ministry team around them. Paid staff (including the ordained minister) can play an important role in this area.



- **Funding.** Multi-staffed churches are expensive. Our research indicates that some churches are much smarter than others. If an appropriate Community Trust is set up, a Community Worker (and community work, Mainly Music, Child Care, counseling staff, etc) can be funded by grants outside of the church budget. Also, it is always important to remember in launching new mission initiatives that when people catch a vision, funding usually comes. Money follows mission, is a saying with great truth in the life of a healthy church.



A general observation of the Presbyterian Church in the South is that at the moment considerable funding is going towards upgrading buildings so that church facilities encourage community use in a variety of ways. While I am convinced that many of our church buildings need to be upgraded in order to adequately resource mission, the potential danger is that such buildings can easily become primarily very attractive rental facilities for community groups and programmes. This is not necessarily all negative, but I wonder whether greater emphasis should be placed upon funding adequately qualified lay staff to enable viable churches to take on board the opportunities for mission and growth that are presented to them. Modern multipurpose church facilities without qualified and suitably gifted lay leaders in aging churches that often lack the energy and vision of younger people may not in themselves provide the solutions to bring about the necessary change in a declining church.

- The finding of suitable staff can be a problem, particularly in rural areas. In most cases, ministers said that the most effective people their churches had employed were people that had grown up through the local church. They fitted in quickly, knew the church ethos and often had experience in a volunteer or part-time capacity prior to coming on staff. This was a real plus. However one church that has shown significant growth amongst families in recent years has intentionally employed appropriately qualified staff from outside New Zealand emphasizing the importance of compatible theology, godliness, being competent and hard working and possessing a healthy sense of humour without being over sensitive as definite requirements for staff.

Volunteers

Omokoroa Community Church is a church with two staff (Fergus Keith as a Locally Ordained Minister and a Manager). It is a growing church primarily based on volunteer ministry.

Fergus Keith has used Rick Warren's, *The Purpose Driven Church* to identify key ministries for the church. He uses key support workers (all volunteers) who are trained in pastoral care. He then identifies key ministry workers who are commissioned to their particular Ministries within the church and community.

If we are to use volunteers there are several important points to learn from this model:

- Volunteers need to work within their area of spiritual gifting (not simply filling a gap).
- They need to be adequately recognized by the church in their particular ministry. Commissioning them is a good way to go.
- The Ministry volunteers need to be well supported and resourced by the Minister. Fergus Keith meets with his volunteers fortnightly and invests much of his time and energy in them.

While not downgrading the importance of volunteers, it seems to me that if additional paid staff can be afforded, it is very likely that new ministries will be birthed and new volunteer ministry leaders will also most likely be part of the process. St. Christopher's Anglican at Avonhead would be a good example of where this has occurred.

SECTION 2: DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY, WORSHIP AND MISSION

Pastoral Care

Churches vary as to how this is carried out. Many emphasise small groups as the main way of pastorally caring. Those people who do not wish to belong to a small group are generally cared for by a pastoral care team or perhaps assigned to a small group for oversight. Many ministers find much of their time is taken up in relating to staff, developing leaders and doing more crisis care. It depends on the nature of the church congregation.

Pastoral care has traditionally been involved with caring for people when they are in particular need. But the other side of pastoral care is to enable people to feel that they belong. Hence we discovered some handy hints from churches that are doing pastoral care well, especially in helping people to belong:

- Ministers/staff members maintaining an 'open door' policy where possible.
- Pastoral care workers try to know the people who worship each Sunday – not just their names, but also their interests, activities, home situation, etc.
- Try and connect people with other people in the church
- Personally visit or contact via telephone people with known needs. Confine emails to committee or group work! Perhaps texting is also becoming an effective way of keeping contact, particularly among young people.
- Nametags don't seem to work anymore. Some churches have set up little pigeon hole boxes with names of worshippers. News sheets are placed in these and regular worshippers go to collect their news sheet each Sunday. The boxes with news sheets left in them indicate where contact needs to be made. Visitors who receive a news sheet at the door receive a different coloured one, so new comers are easy to spot.
- Distribution of food hampers. Bethlehem Baptist Church calls this Soul Food Ministry and has an excellent system worked out.
- Sending of flowers with cards containing a personal note from a staff member. St. John's in Rotorua has a very effective card ministry. They have professionally produced cards containing photos related to the life of the church, blank on the inside with a church logo and motto on the back. The Pastoral Care Worker uses these in times of sickness, birthdays, anniversaries etc. The minister or member of staff always signs them. Warm appreciation has been received for this ministry.



- Keep a record of birthdays and send out a card with a note from the church.
- Have a care box with attached pen and care forms on the wall of the church. Needs to be locked to retain confidentiality. People are encouraged to fill out a care card and place it in the box so that a needy person can be cared for with a visit, phone call, food parcel, note etc.
- Regularly encourage people to let staff know of people in need.
- If you work with a pastoral care team, regularly have breakfast/lunch with them and give opportunity for support and debriefing and training input as appropriate.



Assimilation of New People

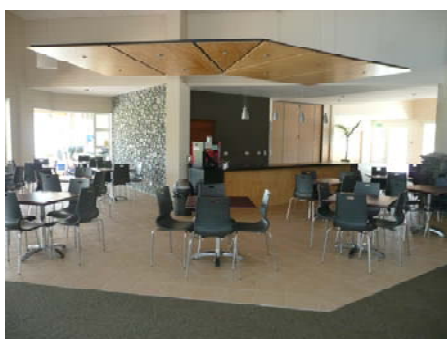
Here I believe connecting is the real issue, not simply being friendly on Sundays! Repeatedly we discovered that the assimilation of new people into the life of the church needs to begin on the very initial contacts (for some churches this is in the church car park). It needs to be intentional and generally it doesn't happen well unless specific people are set aside to do it. In general, people do not naturally reach out to new people! In Annesbrook Church of Christ all staff are expected to intentionally be on the look out for new people at every worship service.

We discovered that churches have various ways and different approaches in doing this. Pigeon boxes as noted above make easy identification of new people for follow up. Some use well produced welcome packs to give new people. One church had a welcome desk inside the entrance and the names of visitors were read out at the beginning of worship. In a number of churches Alpha has proved an excellent resource in assimilating new people into the life of the church.

Hospitality is generally considered an untapped resource in developing relationships and assimilating newcomers. Jim Wallace of Bethlehem Community Church believes relationship evangelism is the most neglected form of evangelism amongst Kiwis. Most larger churches host dinners or luncheons for newcomers where the ethos of the church is explained and people are given the opportunity of discovering more.

Our research indicates that greater emphasis should also be placed upon buildings being more user friendly and welcoming. This includes having clear directions to toilets, modern and adequate toilet/bathroom and where possible baby change room facilities and keeping the interior and exterior of the church warm and welcoming.

We noted that increasingly the church foyer is becoming the place for coffee, chatting, relating, etc. prior to and after worship. This is generally far better than having to move to an adjacent hall for coffee after worship. Hope Community Church has intentionally studied local culture and in the design of their church made their entrance foyer large and welcoming with coffee tables, excellent kitchen servery, two entrances so that congestion is avoided and an outdoor area that enables relating within a BBQ context. The outdoors area also has safe children's equipment with the whole play area safely fenced. Not surprisingly one of their core values is growing strong families.



What I would like to suggest is that assimilating new people is a multi-faceted process!

Worship

The main question that I wish to raise here is this. Is the main issue in worship between being traditional or contemporary? To our surprise we discovered that the church has finally moved on in this debate. A few churches have a single contemporary worship service (hopefully encompassing most needs and tastes), but most still retain both traditional and contemporary worship – particularly Anglican churches.

There are two noteworthy changes:

- Firstly, rather than use the names *traditional* and *contemporary*, which to some degree are value laden names, some churches (St. Andrew's, Waipukarau is one) use the terms *formal* and *less formal* to distinguish different worship styles.
- Secondly, the present emphasis is on doing worship well, whatever the form. All worship should be inspirational. We need to do the best we can with the resources we have. Worshippers need to be encouraged and blessed, regardless of age or background. Jim Wallace of Bethlehem Community Church has intentionally established a formal or traditional worship service as a means of allowing retired people moving into the area to reconnect with the church. Many who have left the church wish to reconnect as they age and find the need for familiar structure, hymns and music. Formal or traditional worship provides this.

We also discovered a few more helpful points that are worthy of note:

- John Howell of St. Paul's, Taupo emphasises the need to present the key worship theme from various angles in a given Sunday service. He rightly reminds us that it is easy to forget that some people are more visual while others connect through word or music or even through periods of reflective silence. We need to give as many opportunities for people to connect with God in worship as possible.
- It appears that in most growing churches consistent, effective and related preaching is still a high priority. St. John's Anglican in Latimer Square, Christchurch emphasises a strong preaching ministry as a central element of their church life.
- Worship needs to be indigenous and culturally relevant, hence Sunday evening worship events tend to be youth oriented, high tech and more visual in format. Greater effort needs to be made in taking into account the different kinds of people present in a given worship service. The little book by Ruth Fowke, *Personality and Prayer* explores how different personality types mean that people will have their own preferences as to where, when and how to pray. We need to be aware that similar factors are at work in a given worship service, so worship preparation needs to take this into account. A worship service I attended at Opawa Baptist took these aspects into consideration by allowing people to respond to the preaching by setting up various stations around the church building where people could go and make their own response in an appropriate way. I found this experience very helpful and memorable.
- I believe more work needs to be done in effective use of Power Point in worship. For example, being more aware of the importance of the visual in communicating, not simply using Power Point to reinforce the words of the sermon. Again I am indebted to John Howell for alerting me to this. He communicates the theme very effectively through visual images using a TV screen rather than Power Point.



Congregations rather than separate churches

St. Andrew's in Mt. Maunganui, St. John's in Rotorua and Opawa Baptist each pushed me to do some rethinking about how we relate in parishes of multiple churches. My research has persuaded me that it is more healthy and unifying and more effective in outreach to begin talking about one church with several congregations rather than several different churches in a given parish context. Hence we may have a mid-week worship service congregation, a café congregation, a Korean congregation, etc. regardless of when or where they meet.

Opawa Baptist Church :: a resting place



Church services
at Opawa Baptist Church

Sunday morning
Sundays @ 10.30am
Sung worship, quality input, children's programme, creative worship responses.

Soak
First Sunday of the month @ 7.00pm
Sung worship, bible meditation, reflective spaces to respond.

Grow
2,3,4 Sundays of the month @ 7.00pm
Theme based, "menu" includes food, quiz, bible wisdom, movie clips, and more

Espresso
Tuesdays @ 7.47 pm
A question (your question?) discussed together, food and drink, regular social evenings.

Side Door
Third Wednesday @ 7.30pm
(+ Sunday 10 days later @ 5.30pm)
Art, readings, space and time for personal reflection.

Hymn Service
Third Sunday @ 3.00pm
Hymns, testimony, teaching, afternoon tea

 cnr Hastings & Wilsons
Phone 379 7680
www.opawa.org.nz
office@opawa.org.nz

Opawa Baptist has a very interesting blend of distinctly different congregations under the one church (Opawa Baptist). These are Sunday Morning, Soak, Grow, Espresso, Side Door, and Hymn Service. These cater for different kinds of people, allowing people to cross over from one to the other and also acting as different entry points into the faith and life of the church. Senior Minister, Steve Taylor is adamant that one is not seen to be more spiritual than the other. He is not interested in size and is open to some congregations fulfilling a purpose and ministry for a certain season only.

My research strongly suggests that providing more options in worship styles and providing a variety of ways in which people may gain entry into the life of the church and thereby embrace faith in Jesus are key factors in enhancing church growth. One or two well-tried traditional approaches will no longer suffice as they have in the past.

Developing significant congregations (even if some are relatively small) and seeing them as part of the whole of being church seems to me to be a healthy way forward. And from a positive point of view some congregations need not be as energy demanding or people intensive as others for them to function effectively.

Global Mission

Increasingly, a significant number of growing churches are investing time, money and energy in global mission through work parties, mission projects, mission workers, etc. These may be through independent links they have or through their denomination Mission office. For example, one large church in Christchurch is working towards a church plant in Korea.

This outward thrust beyond the traditional approach of sending missionaries is a healthy sign, particularly in what is fast becoming a multi-cultural society and global village that we live in.



Ministering to Tourists

Despite this being one of the key objectives in my study leave research it has been difficult to find many churches in tourist locations similar to Queenstown. However, we did discover a few specific things that some churches are doing in relating to tourists.

For example, St. Paul's in Taupo specifically welcome tourists during their worship and encourages them to place a pin on the world map in the foyer to indicate

where they are from. They also have professionally produced cards with Lake Taupo scenes and a written prayer (by John Howell) available for tourists visiting. There are also prayer packs available with 4 cards each with a different Lake Taupo scene and a prayer and St. Paul's website address on the back. The prayers are called *Prayers nourishing the spirit* and there are at least four themes: A Prayer for Waiting, A Prayer for Grieving, A Prayer for Healing and A Prayer for Saying Goodbye. John Howell's own beautifully produced book of prayers encompassing Lake Taupo scenes, *Sighs Too Deep for Words: Prayers and Images from Taupo* is also available for \$10. John tells me that this prayer book has ministered to people around the world.

Also, through a chance conversation with an Anglican lady in a hamburger shop in Picton we discovered that each Easter people from the local Anglican Church go down to the ferry with 1,500 hot cross buns all wrapped with a particular Easter greeting from the Church. They also run a low cost meal for tourists and for the elderly in the local community on a Friday evening during the tourist season called *The Welcome Mat*.

My own Wakatipu Parish has for some years run a very effective Pasta Café on Friday nights for ski workers and local families as a specific way of ministering to tourists.

Hence, there are a few summary points that I should share regarding ministry to tourists:

- Tourists being away from normal home, family and work commitments are often very open to the spiritual dimensions of life and indeed to the ministry of preaching.
- Tourists are often helped if they have written material to take away with them. They often have the time for further reflection so prayers used in worship, written and included in the news sheet are something helpful that they can take away with them. Other positive scriptural material can also be included in *give-aways* to tourists.
- Some churches (e.g. St. Andrew's, Geraldine) make part of their church open for tourists each day for prayer, quiet reflection and for taking of Christian material as desired.
- Some churches such as St. Peter's Anglican in Queenstown provide opportunity for tourists to write their own prayers or to leave prayer points that the local prayer team can take and pray for confidentially.
- I have found that very often Christian tourists are quite devoid of Christian contact and so welcome the warmth, worship and love of the local church that they can experience on a Sunday morning.
- Tourist resorts present special challenges to local congregations and their leaders. It is not uncommon for local Christians involved in the tourist industry to have little energy for relating to tourists on Sunday or at other times when the local church meets. Often over the years people have developed relationships with itinerants only to feel the loss keenly when they move on. Understandably they become somewhat reticent in continuing to develop relationship with newcomers. Hence more energy is spent in maintaining local relationships. As I have found in Queenstown some Christian folk involved in the tourist/hospitality industry never actually connect with the local church.
- From a leadership point of view churches in a tourist location are often more likely to gain potential new leaders, but are also just as likely to lose them. This can be a significant challenge.
- The above factors may also impinge upon ministers and church staff who work in tourist areas, particularly if they arrive without children attending local schools. A sense of isolation and difficulty in building deep friendships may be some of the issues that have to be worked through.

Connecting with the local Community

Growing churches are finding all kinds of simple ways of connecting with their local community, raising their profile and in the process gaining the respect of the local community. There are many examples that I could share.



- **Omokoroa Community Church** has formed a security team to ensure that elderly residents are safe. They have developed a veggie box for communal veggie growing and have also found people from outside of their church wanting to become involved in a World Vision work party organised by the Church.
- **Annesbrook Church of Christ** run Ante-Natal classes which are recognised as being better than those of the local hospital!
- **St. John's** in Rotorua have a *Barnabas Group* which meets monthly as a bereavement support group.
- **Northpoint Baptist** have organised a *Blokes Shed Crawl*.
- **St. Arnaud Community Church** have shown considerable initiative in setting up an annual community calendar of events which includes both church and community events in the same calendar. Every household in the community receives one free.

Several churches are now running Light Parties as an alternative to Halloween, others connect with local schools through chaplaincy. Food banks are a great way of making contact as are offering financial counselling services, Mainly Music programmes, How to Drug Proof Your Kids programmes, Newcomers Networks, pastoral ministry based on knowing the people in your street and opening up a local Op Shop. The list could go on.

We have found that more churches are intent on becoming *community facing*, to use one of the slogans used by a recent moderator of the PCANZ. The tide is gradually changing. We can no longer expect people to simply come to us.



There is an additional issue that needs to be addressed under this heading. This is one of my favourite topics – the issue of church signs. While on leave we took many photos of church signs quite deliberately. Church signs are important, as they should communicate what is happening in your church.

Most church signs refer to Sunday worship times and a Minister's name and contact number. In doing so, we have failed to realise that we are in a market situation and we need to enthusiastically *advertise our wares*. Some churches have developed a logo and have this prominently displayed in all kinds of ways. Other churches (e.g. St. Andrew's, Geraldine and St. Andrew's, Waipukarau) have a message sign on display at certain times that is eye catching and thought provoking. This is a great way to identify your church. I particularly liked the sign that St. Andrew's in Waipukarau were about to install when we visited – *Come as you are, no perfect people allowed*.



SECTION 3: SOME MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Finding helpful resources

Those involved in church ministry are always looking for useful resources. I have found that church leaders who continue to grow, network almost constantly. There are many helpful resources out there and most leaders regardless of denomination are generally willing to share resources, web sites and even refer you to helpful people. It is a pity that we don't relate more across the churches and encourage each other in our various ministries.

Helpful children's resources, evangelistic and discipling resources can be found and ideas in pastoral care can be shared.

All we need to do is to lovingly and respectfully ask!

Conferences e.g. New Wine NZ, South Island Ministry Conference, are great ways of discovering new resources and meeting new people to network with.



Communication within the Local Church

This is an increasingly important issue in larger churches or in parishes where there are several congregations. It is even more important if the decision is made to have a smaller leadership team.

It is essential to be thoughtful and creative in this area. Some communication needs to be official via committee reports or the weekly news sheet and some can be communicated via email or a church web site. I have noticed that in some churches the Sunday worship is where a lot of communication is done spontaneously, yet quite intentionally. Power Point prior to and during Sunday worship is also used extensively to communicate key events in church life.

However we choose to do it, it is a key to making people feel valued and that they belong. We can seldom have too much communication.

Prayer in the Life of the Church

Most churches talk about it and few do it really well. The Leadership Team members need to be prayerful people. Prayer points need to be distributed to the regular worshippers and I believe set times need to be set aside for people to be able to come and pray.

For example, Majestic Church in Christchurch has an evening once per month for prayer. This includes a brief time of worship and then an organised time set aside for praying for the church, city and world. A smaller prayer meeting occurs each week.

My own Wakatipu Parish has a monthly prayer sheet distributed to all worshippers with a prayer point for each day as well as a small Saturday morning prayer group. Opawa Baptist Church has a similar approach.

Sumner Anglican Church has a regular prayer breakfast and Victory Community Church in Nelson organise prayer walks where church members form teams and pray for the community as they walk, leaving a sensitive note in letter boxes from the church saying they have been praying for their community.

Creative prayer days (perhaps three times a year) are another way of integrating prayer into the life of the church in a way that is not demanding or threatening.

Staff meetings should also include a significant time for prayer.

However well we plan, whatever gifted people God may have blessed us with, little of Kingdom significance is seldom achieved without coming to God in humble prayer.

Churches - how do they grow?

This is an interesting question. What do we mean here – numerical growth, spiritual growth, growth in mission, service, etc.? It also implies tackling issues concerned with the shape or form of the church. Most of the Churches we visited were basically institutional churches, with similar shape and structure according to the size of the particular church or perhaps denomination. The two exceptions were Opawa Baptist and to some degree The B@tCH. Opawa Baptist Church is experimenting with alternative congregations, irrespective of size and seeking to develop welcoming communities that attract diverse kinds of people.



While visiting The B@tCH I asked several people how important they felt the breakfast was in the Sunday worship. Very important was the usual reply. There is an important insight here. Good food not only feeds the body but also builds community when shared together. So called ‘secular culture’ in all kinds of communities whether rural, urban or city attests to this. Sadly the church is often slow to realize this in its ministry and outreach.



However, does a church congregation such as The B@tCH as it increases in size automatically become more institutional and take on characteristics of how church has been done in the past? I believe that here in New Zealand we need to do a lot more thinking at this point. We need to make some deliberate decisions and take more risks and move away from a numbers mentality.

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk in *The Missional Leader* refer to Southside Church in Vancouver as an example of a church that deliberately planned to do something quite different. Right from the outset they decided to develop a ‘multi-congregational’ church with each congregation serving primarily as a mission group to engage with the local neighbourhood people. Southside is an example of a church that decided to take seriously how a church could become incarnational in the local community. This is much more than simply developing some new programmes to attract new people to the local church. The church website is worth looking at (email info@southside.ca). Two other resources that may prove helpful at this point are Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, *Church Next* and Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches*. I would also recommend the *Fresh Expressions* material produced jointly by the Anglican and Methodist Churches in the UK.

This helpful material gives us a glimpse of what new expressions of a mission shaped church can look like while recognizing the value of the more institutional church that is still with us. The Fresh Expressions web site is: **www.freshexpressions.org.uk/resources/movingon**

While suffering from Chron's disease, I once asked my specialist/surgeon whether he believed in divine healing. His response was a wise one, "We can only put the parts together. We can't make the healing take place."

And so it is with church ministry and growing churches. Church growth is complex, particularly in a culture of *supermarket Christianity*. Our research seems to indicate that even in city areas some churches may flourish for a season and even draw people from healthy neighbouring churches and then the *anointing* seems to move somewhere else with no apparent reason. There are also additional sociological factors that may be unique to a certain geographical location as well as factors in a particular church's history that enhance or impede the growth of a particular church.

In smaller rural towns church growth can also be complex. While it would appear that leadership might be one of the key factors in a healthy rural church, other factors such as an absence of any significant competition from other churches in the town is no doubt a relevant factor. New families arriving in town are attracted to a lively church and in turn new leaders and opportunities of ministry are the spin off for the church that assimilates them into its life and ministry.

However we understand the complexity of Church growth (which is a term I don't particularly like) we do need to remember that God honours wise stewardship and faithful ministry and that it is ultimately he who adds to the Church (Acts 2: 47).

RELATING RESEARCH TO THE LOCAL CHURCH OR PARISH

The following material is basically in question format listed under the research headings used above. These are suggestions only. This may prove helpful as a way of using the research material in a local church context.

SECTION 1: ASPECTS OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

- Draw a diagram illustrating how **leadership** is exercised in your church or local parish. Does it tend to occur formally or informally, in committees or out of committees? Is it primarily top down or emerging from the grass roots? Who are the people that contribute most to the leadership process?

Identify strengths and weaknesses within your leadership structure. Is the structure empowering or disempowering to potential leaders and the general church membership? Are leaders given authority to make significant decisions in their areas of ministry? List any improvements or changes that could be made to enable a more healthy and open leadership process.

- Examine the key issues that the leadership in your church has been involved in during the last 12 to 18 months. This may require looking into the appropriate minutes for this period. What % would you place in the area of governance and what % in the area of general administration and property? How much was related to key missional growth of your church in terms of praying and planning for the future?
- Consider your main **leadership team** (e.g. Parish Council/Session). Take some time to identify the gifts, professional experience, spiritual outlook, church experience, age range and personality types of this team. Are there gaps that need to be considered carefully if this team is able to lead so as to embrace the demands and opportunities that are before you as a church?
- Discuss the size and dynamics of the leadership team in terms of discussion, ease and speed of decision-making and kinds of decisions that are made, particularly in meetings. Are there any issues that need to be addressed?
- In what ways do members of the leadership team bond together outside of committee meetings?
- Discuss how your church goes about identifying **potential leaders** for ministry areas. How are leaders intentionally developed? What steps are in place to ensure that the leadership team consists of people that are suitably gifted for the task of leadership required by the Church as it faces issues in the present and future?

- How do creative ideas in terms of future direction and ministry/outreach emerge and develop within your church? Give some examples of how significant initiatives have emerged in the past.
- Evaluate the **vision statement and mission statement** of your church in terms of the material in pp. 4-5 of the Report. When were these statements put together? Are there weaknesses or strengths that need to be reviewed? Are any changes necessary? How well are these statements known across the church? How are they regularly communicated?
- What do you understand by the **core values** of your church? (see p. 5 of the Report) Try and identify the desired core values and then discuss what can be termed the actual or real core values. Are there any differences between the real and the desired? Begin to identify what you would see as the desired core values and then prioritise them in order of importance.
- In looking at the section on **church culture** in the Report (p.6) try and find some adjectives or phrases to describe the culture and environment of your local church. List these and discuss which are positive and which are negative in terms of the church reaching its full missional potential.
- The Report raises the issue of **multi-staffed and single staffed churches** (pp. 6-7) List the advantages that these two models of ministry may bring to your church. What are some creative ways in which you may be able to begin new ministries through finding new volunteers or employing additional staff (perhaps part time)?
- Are there ways in which additional funding can be sought that at present lies untapped? Discuss the connection between funding, vision and communication.
- Ministry through **volunteers**. How are volunteers recruited in your church? How are they supported and resourced? How is their particular ministry recognised? Is your church lacking in volunteers for ministry? If so, are there obvious reasons why this is happening? It may be important to consider the age profile of your church and discuss what are realistic expectations of volunteers in this age group.

SECTION 2: DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY, WORSHIP AND MISSION

- **Pastoral care** (Report pp. 8-9) Identify the key ways in which this ministry is carried out in your church. Is it primarily intentional or does it just happen? Is it primarily left to the minister or elders or pastoral team or pastoral staff? Are there gaps that need to be addressed in this ministry?
- How do people develop a sense of belonging in your church? It may be helpful to talk with the newest people regarding how they feel in this regard.
- In relation to a sense of community, what activities are in place to ensure that a sense of community is constantly being developed?
- Looking at some of the suggestions on p.9 of the Report, are there some that could be adapted to enhance the pastoral care ministry in your church? If so, which ones?
- **Assimilation of new people** (Report pp. 9-10) In what ways are people being connected to each other, to ministry opportunities and to God? How intentional is this ministry? How are visitors (others than tourists) welcomed and encouraged to take the next step towards belonging to your church, if they are seeking a church?
- How are hospitality and friendship offered in your church? In what ways do you consider your church to be welcoming and user friendly? How are children welcomed and valued? Comment on the facilities, attractiveness of buildings, etc.
- Do your church buildings embrace some of the key elements of your local culture? It may be helpful to discuss what you consider are the key aspects of your local culture. For e.g. café/coffee culture.
- **Worship** (Report pp. 10-11) Comment on the nature of the relationships between the people of the various worship services or congregations in your church or parish. In what ways are they connected and what are the factors that bond them together? For example are they embracing of one another or is there more of an superior/inferior, them and us, almost competitive kind of relationship? Do they feel they are a part of the bigger local church picture?
- The Report suggests using terms of *formal* and *less formal* worship instead of *traditional* and *contemporary*. Would this be a helpful distinction to use in your particular context? Why?
- Is the worship in your church led in such a way that as many different kinds of people as possible are enabled to connect with God?
Are there ways in which worship in your church can be more effective and embracing of the differences among the people who come to worship? (refer to Report pp. 11-12)

- In considering the preaching segment of your worship is it God-centred, related, practical and uplifting, seeking primarily to satisfy the needs of those present? Are people being connected with the overall biblical narrative of God's story and encouraged to live their lives within this context?
- If you use Power Point in your worship, how does its use enhance the worship? Is it some times distracting? If so, in what ways? Are there ways in which its use can be improved?
- **Congregations.** Comment on the thoughts expressed in the Report on pp. 11-12. Are there any ideas that could be adapted to your situation?
- **Global Mission** (p. 12 of Report) What might your church understand by the term *Global Mission*? Are there any possibilities of involvement in your church, if some members are not already involved in aspects of global mission at present?
- If your church is located in a **tourist location**, how are tourists welcomed, blessed and ministered to in intentional ways? Refer to pp. 12-13 of the Report for some simple yet constructive ideas.
List some of the unique difficulties and challenges faced by those ministering in a tourist location.
In what ways might local church leaders in a tourist location require additional support and resourcing?
- **Connecting with the local community.** Discuss the suggestions in the Report pp. 13-14. To what extent is your church *community facing*? In what specific ways?
- Consider your church sign/signs. What is being communicated about your church? What is not being communicated about your church? Are there improvements that could be made? List some of the things that you would want the surrounding community to know about your church.

SECTION 3: SOME MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

- In any discussion of **resources** I heartily recommend the book mentioned several times throughout the Report – Alan Roxburgh & Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*. The authors clearly identify the present context, particularly of smaller churches and present a balanced way forward whereby a local church may become a missional church.
Is there any way in which the leadership group(s) of your church is able to commit to studying this book in detail? If so, why not form a group or groups, purchase the book and begin. The group could then move on into using the DVD's produced by *Fresh Expressions* (see Report p. 17) to gain some practical ideas as to what a mission shaped church may look like.
- **Communication** (Report p.15) Identify and assess the ways in which key decisions, information and aspects of church life are communicated in your church. How effective is this? How is the ordinary worshipper in the know-how? Are there ways in which communication can be improved?
- **Prayer life.** Discuss suggestions in Report p.15. Which ones may be used to enhance the prayer life in your church? Are there are other suggestions that you may have that are not mentioned in the Report?
- **Church growth.** Think about what might be understood by the term *church growth* in the light of comments on pp. 16-17 of the Report.
How do you desire your church to grow? In what ways? What might this entail in terms of values, structure, planning, direction, and staffing?

In looking at alternative ways of doing church, what are some of the basic Christian roots from our past that are essential to retain? (For example should our worship be primarily on Sunday?) Which ones may be helpful, but not essential? What are some that may still be valued by post-moderns, perhaps more than we think? For example I was surprised how many young people walked to the front to light candles in the first worship service for 2009 at The B@tCH.

APPENDIX 1

The following questions were sent to most churches prior to visiting them indicating the key areas I wished to focus upon. Church leaders were encouraged to be selective, as all questions were not necessarily relevant to the variety of churches we intended to visit.

- Could you share something of your Church's story/journey over the past 10-12 years? Are there any key events, stages, changes in leadership, patterns or happenings that stand out during this period?
- Age and energy profile of church being studied. Are local demographics reflected in the age profile of the Church?
- What is your overall growth pattern? For example, is it numerical (transfer/conversion), organic (growing together in community), conceptual growth (growing to maturity in Christ), aspects of all of these, etc.? Where does discipling fit into this pattern? How is this measured? Are you aiming for a large regional church, smaller rural church in local community, being a church based on small house group model, or are you aiming to plant new churches? Or is there another model or form in mind?
- Could you comment about local population mobility? Is it transient and are there definite seasonal rhythms that have to be contended with, particularly if the Church is in a tourist area? How are these issues managed or overcome or perhaps made into opportunities?
- How is the local Church 'salt and light' in the surrounding community throughout the week? How intentional?
- Determining principles of ministry rather than simply observing programmes. For example, how do such programmes form part of the overall ethos of the Church and how are these developing into ministries? What is the reason or need behind the programmes observed?
- How are the programmes known in the surrounding community? How indigenous are they to the particular community? Give some history of their development.
- Can you share something of your evangelism process or strategy that you have in place? How intentional are you in this area of the Church's life?
- Are there significant serving ministries in place? Is there a mixture of these being for the Church faithful as well as for people outside of the Church?
- Are there different or innovative expressions of 'being/doing church' being tried or being experimented with? If so, could you share something of what is happening and being learned please?

- Could you share some approaches to ministry or programmes that have been set up and yet have not worked? Were there specific lessons learned?
- What is central to the life of your Church? How is the Church an attractive and yet alternative community?
- What is the significance of prayer in the life of the Church being studied? How is prayer practiced as part of the life of the Church?
- How central is gathered worship to your church's life and witness? On what days are the main worship events?
- What are the key links or bridges with the community? Do these tend to be one-way or two-way points of contact (i.e. primarily coming to us or us going to the community without looking for anything in return)?
If the Church is located in a tourist area, what specific ways are you attempting to relate to and minister to tourists?
- What are the key entry points into your church life? Are these primarily 'front door' entry points or are there specific 'back door' entry points? What keeps the various groups of people (families, children, young people, singles, elderly, etc.) in your church so that they have a sense of belonging? How do you make contact with newcomers who may appear on a Sunday 'looking' at your Church?

If you have a web site, how important is this as a source of information or potential entry point and how do you go about maintaining it?
- How important is leadership and at what level? What kind of leadership structures do you have in place? Could you comment about ministry structures as well please?
- How important are vision and mission statements in the life of your Church? If they are in place, how often are they revised and how are these communicated?
- Would you comment about the importance of preaching and worship styles in your Church? How many services in a given week?
- Your denominational ties. In what ways do these help or hinder your ministry and growth?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Resources used or referred to in the Report:

Ruth Fowke, *Personality and Prayer*. (Surrey, UK: CWR, 2008)

Eddie Gibbs & Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005)

Eddie Gibbs & Ian Coffey, *Church Next*. (England: IVP, 2000)

John Howell, *Sighs Too Deep for Words: Prayers and Images from Taupo*. (Taupo: Quality Print, 2007)

Alan J. Roxburgh & Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006)

Websites:

Fresh Expressions:

www.freshexpressions.org.uk

Southside Community Church, Vancouver:

www.southside.ca

