



Towards an understanding of 'mission motivated (property) development'

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Mission – God's sending forth

"Mission" means basically a sending forth. It describes purpose. Although widely used in many settings, it is fundamentally a Christian word. As God sent Jesus Christ into the world, so the church, the body of Christ, is sent into the world to continue Christ's mission (John 20:21).¹

"The church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The church is fundamentally and comprehensively defined by its calling and sending, its purpose to serve God's healing purposes *for all the world as God's witnessing people to all the world.*"²

The nature of church is grounded in the calling and sending nature of God. Para 3 of the *Basis of Union* commits the Uniting Church to this truth. By virtue of its nature, the church is not an end in itself. The Church is a partner to God's mission in the world; one of the means by which God's purposes or end for all creation might be achieved.³

In baptism each baptized person receives both the Spirit of God and the commission to God's mission. The Spirit's presence and gifts enthuse, enable and empower a person to engage their call to God's mission through the Way of Christ.⁴

A gathered community of baptized people brings together their various callings to God's mission. Together, they may discern the Spirit of God's call to God's mission.⁵ In the first instance, such a call to God's mission will be with people and communities where they are located. Sometimes, the Spirit of God may call people, groups - even

¹ *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 1

² Darrell Guder, *Walking Worthily*, (Princeton Theological Seminary Bulletin, Vol 28 No.3 2007)
See also *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 2 and 3.

"Mission is not simply an extra activity to the life of the church to be added to faithful worship and compassionate service for example. God the Creator has a purpose for creation and engages with creation to move it towards its intended end. The whole church and not only parts of it are called to participate with God in this all encompassing mission process. It involves nothing less than the reconciliation and renewal of people and the whole creation."

³ See the *Basis of Union*, Para 3 and 4; and Randal Prior's paraphrase in *Towards Intentional Missional Communities* (CFM 2008), Section One, p7, and in *Gospel, Culture and the Future Church, On The Way Together REPORT* p54ff, 2008

⁴ *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 13

⁵ *Ibid*, para 14, 17



whole churches - to God's missionary movement with people in places beyond their immediate neighbourhood or region.

God's mission is characterized by relationship, since God is community – father, son and spirit; or alternatively: creator, redeemer and sustainer. Understanding God as community drives the missioning heart of God into community.⁶ Thus, mission is invested in relationships between God and people, between individuals and groups, between individual persons.

A missional church

A 'missional church' is formed and informed by God's missionary nature and purpose for all creation at every point of its worship, witness and service⁷. Any 'missional commitment' arises from the Spirit's calling to God's mission. God's mission is invested in community and expressed through relationships. Mission is about identifying, developing and enthusing a particular, Godly, Christ-like character in community.

Mission begins with relationships. The Church asks, 'who is my neighbour?' Our tradition teaches that the neighbour is literally the person closest to us.⁸ Our neighbour may be a colleague in the workplace, the next-door-neighbour in the residential setting, a person standing with us in a queue. Our neighbour may be old or young, male or female, of like or unlike cultural or ethnic background, with us permanently or temporarily. Sometimes, or a larger scale, the Spirit may call us into relationships with communities distant from our immediate neighbourhood or region. We can this reflected in the Spirit's calling to and equipping of the Church to join God's mission in institutions, other regions or nations. Thus we find Christ's disciples faithfully engaging their vocations in diverse but particular places - such as work places, community care residences, schools, hospitals – as well as in diverse cultures.

Whoever the church's neighbours might be, God's good news through Jesus Christ is that of loving grace, extravagant compassion, liberating reconciliation, freedom from that which demeans and diminishes human dignity and worth. It is the good news of inclusion, justice, hope, wellbeing, and the restoration of all creation. The good news brings new life and new creation, faithfulness in relationships and loyalty in community, and abiding community. This is the Way of Jesus.⁹ To be called to Jesus' Way always results in being sent out by Jesus to live faithful to his Way.¹⁰ This is what marks out the church as an apostolic community: sent in the same style

⁶ From notes taken in an interview with Michael Moynagh, Wycliffe House, Oxford University, July 2010

⁷ *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 3, 7.

⁸ Luke's Gospel gives us this understanding, drawing on Hebrew concepts of neighbour and stranger, the significance of relationships and community, and the importance of place as location. Luke applies this understanding to the practices of Jesus of Nazareth and projects these understandings to inform the early church to whom the gospel is written about the tradition and dispositions foundational to its faithful replication of Jesus' teaching and ministry.

⁹ *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 18 to 22.

¹⁰ Darrell Guder – *Walking Worthily*



as its Lord, to convey the same and continuing message of its Sender to bring about God's healing purposes for all creation.

Mission motivated behaviour

Motivation names impulses, causes or vocations that drive behaviour. Christians and churches find their vocation in God's mission through the Holy Spirit's particular calling to the Way of Christ in their context and cultural milieu.

How might Christians behave, given their calling to God's mission purposes? The Epistles and St Paul provide helpful direction. 'Walking worthily' is a favourite metaphor.¹¹ Paul uses this metaphor to emphasize that Christians are not only the beneficiaries of God's good news in Jesus Christ. The benefit comes with a commission to witness and serve God in the world. Each Christian and every local church's purpose is to be a blessing to its neighbours as it lives out the reality of being a community sent with a particular vocation cast in the tradition of Jesus Christ; sent into the contexts and cultures where it is located.¹² "They are to walk worthy of God, of his call, of the Lord, and of the gospel of Christ. The missional congregation, then, may be defined as the community that 'walks worthy' of the calling to which it has been called."¹³

A 'missional church' is one that '*walks worthy* of its calling to which it has been called' by God in Christ, through the Spirit. Jesus' life and teachings were grounded in his experiences of God, and in his calling by God to God's mission in the world. Since the Church is formed by the same Spirit and called by the same God who formed and called Jesus, the character and disposition of a missional congregation is grounded in and reflects the life and teachings of Jesus. A missional church continues God's mission in the world, as we understand that mission in Jesus Christ. The following guide suggests what might be observed of a mission motivated community in action.

1. *The church will know and accept the Spirit's calling to God's mission as its vocation.*

Vocation will be a defining characteristic of the church's life. In and through its vocation, the church bears witness to the Christ. Vocation gives purpose to each Christian's and local church's justification and sanctification. Vocation focuses a church's expression of the gospel. A church's witness and service is that which expresses its vocation. As such, a church is 'an instrument through which Christ may bear witness to himself'¹⁴

¹¹ See Ephesians 4:1-3. See also 1 Thess 2:10-12; 2 Thess 1:11; Col 1:9-10 and Phil 1:27 for allied passages about living a life worthy of ones calling to Christ and the Gospel.

¹² See, *A Door Set Open*, Peter Steinke, Alban Institute, 2010, Chapter 6 *Joining God's New Creation* – for a discussion concerning ways in which a Christian community or church can shape and adopt disposition expressed in walking worthily of its calling.

¹³ *Walking Worthily*, Darrell Guder, Princeton Seminary Theological Bulletin, Vol 28, Number 3, 2007

¹⁴ Basis of Union, Para 3





2. *The church will live out its calling faithfully and consistently, embracing its vocation of witnessing to and serving God's saving purposes in the world.* Such a church is not concerned with its own 'righteousness', its own well-being, social standing or status within the wider society. The church seeks not to be a beneficiary of rewards for its witness and service, but to be a blessing¹⁵ to those with whom it witnesses and serves in the name of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote to Corinthian churches, 'you are *living letters* of the good news of Jesus Christ'. The signs of the church's blessings received in the community are seen in acts of extravagant compassion, liberating grace and loving reconciliation. Where any community experiences healing, reconciliation, wholeness and recreation – there a church might be found, faithfully witnessing to God's good news in Jesus Christ.

3. *Walking is an active process, a movement.* The church is not called to be a monument to Jesus Christ, but to be a movement of God's Spirit in the world.¹⁶ Thus, the church must attend to how it walks worthy of its calling. The 'what' and 'how' of the church's walking matters. There is an ethical dimension to the church's life of witness and service. The leadership of the church must take responsibility for the formation of the people who gather as the church because their individual and collective witness and service must be true to the tradition and ministry of Jesus Christ. The church bears witness to that for which it stands in private and public life. In all matters of its conduct and common life, the church must be worthy of the gospel of Christ.¹⁷ Right thinking, right relationships and right acting are significant characteristics of a church's authenticity in its witness to the Christ.

4. *There is congruence between a Christian's speech and action, between a church's words and its deeds.*¹⁸ Communication with integrity is concerned to demonstrate the gospel's healing power at work. The church's motivation of unconditional love for the neighbour is demonstrated in how it conducts relations with its neighbour. Loving one's neighbour precedes graciously acting with or on behalf of the neighbour, or in other words 'being good news' to their neighbour. Such a disposition arises from the congruence of 'head, heart and hand'. The 'mind of Christ', impassions the 'heart of Christ', and finds expression through the 'hands of Christ' in the world.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 20.

¹⁶ The *Basis of Union* uses the phrase, "a pilgrim people, always on the way to the promised goal (end)" Para 3, to express this understanding.

¹⁷ See, for example, Philippians 2:2-4

¹⁸ See for example, I Thessalonians 2:2-6.

See also *Towards a Theology of Mission*, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010, Dr Chris Walker; para 25.

¹⁹ See Philippians 2:1-18 and Ephesians 4:1-16.



Some guiding principles for mission motivated development

Development of property, or any other asset the Church might access, must be motivated by the Church's awareness of, calling and commitment to God's mission. Development of itself is not a virtuous end. Neither is development a neutral means or mere tool by which to accomplish some other worthy end. Development and progress are not necessarily concepts congruent with Jesus' Way. The disposition and activities as well as the product of development must be congruent with the nature, purpose and character of the church sent by the Spirit into God's mission in the world.

Reflecting on the understanding of a 'missional church' set out above suggests the following principles to guide discernment of what is 'mission motivated development' from any other development.

These principles can be demonstrated in proposals, plans, requests for permission to proceed and funding submissions submitted to the Property Board. By searching for these principles in any and each proposal to develop property associated with the Church we can test the missional validity of the proposal.

1. **Vocation**

Mission motivated development will be congruent with the calling or vocation of the congregation or church agency.

"The church is constituted in the work of the triune God."²⁰ Each Christian ought to be aware of and responsive to the Spirit's callings to God mission. This awareness flows from baptism, and is sustained by those Christian practices that nourish the spiritual life and wellbeing of every disciple. Likewise, each Christian faith community ought also to be aware of its particular calling to God's mission. Persistent attention to the Christian spiritual formation of each disciple, and the faith practices of the church as a whole, is essential to discerning vocation. Ongoing discernment nourishes the human spirit, and feeds the soul of individual disciples and the community that together practice the faith of Christ. This calling, or vocation, will be specific to the faith community's context and cultural milieu. Sometimes congregations or Christian faith communities produce a simple 'mission statement' of this vocation. The 'mission statement' can be used to focus dialogue and discussion about what disposition and activities might most faithfully express that call to God's mission.

2. **Relationship**

Mission motivation means that the development proposed is the result of experiences arising from existing relationships and the hopes identified for these, and new relationships.

²⁰ *A Theology of Property*, Section 4.2; A project of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Property Board 2008.



Such relationships will not be limited to those enjoyed within the local church, but are inclusive of all relationships. Thus extended family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbours, service delivery relationships, relationships occasioned by casual meetings, etc – each and all are of great significance. These are relationships between real people, with known names and addresses, phone numbers and beating hearts. There are various sources of data about people available to churches. The data is usually presented in abstract terms, expressed as percentages, shown in graphs and alluded to in interpretative commentary. Abstract data tells the church *about* people, but is not the same as knowledge *of* a person or *of* a group of people. Christians, following in Jesus' Way are committed to knowledge of another person. This is the Way of incarnation into which each Christian is initiated through baptism. This is what knowing one's neighbour implies. Abstraction to such terms of convenience as 'people groups', 'targets', graphs, 'identifiers of need', or some category of 'social disadvantage' suggest a proposal may not yet be grounded in real relationships with actual persons in real places and real time. Relationships precede buildings. Proposals ought to be probed for their relational reality.

3. **Community building**

Mission motivation means that the development proposed has as its primary concern to inspire, enthuse, develop, enrich, enhance, and deepen the many facets of a redemptive and thriving community.

A thriving community is an inclusive community, one with fluid, perhaps at times and some places even nonexistent boundaries. When the church thinks about its nature and purpose, hopefully church members realize that the church is not a community *over against* the world, but *one deeply engaged with* and *embedded in* the world. A redemptive, thriving community is a particular sort of community because it is a community especially influenced by God's good news and the presence of God's Spirit at work. The community the church seeks is unique because it is the result of the Holy Spirit's work amongst both Christians and neighbours. Both Christians and neighbours will be transformed as they get involved in the life and flow of such a community. Missioning communities are not focused on services and programs as 'service delivery' ends in their own right, but on applying them to establish the very fabric of a transformed, alternative community to that which services and programs enable or prop up in some way or another. At the centre of this community is the missioning heart of God. That is what energizes, directs and weaves the community's fabric. Christian community development then, gives particular attention to engaging with, informing and forming the spirituality of all involved. Some might even experience personal or collective spiritual transformation through engaging deeply in the community building functions associated with any property development.



4. Presence

Mission motivation means development to sustain the Church's commitment to be '*an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself*' (BoU para 3) with the people of the neighbourhood or wider locality.

This implies 'staying the distance' with respect to place, time and calling. The call to God's mission is not limited to the provision of a service, or the life-span of a particular program. Presence suggests developing ever deepening, mutual and committed relationships. Presence suggests making and delivering on promises and commitments to the general community. Presence is more than merely 'being there, faithfully over a long time', however. Presence is also about the essential character of Christian spirituality. A sustained presence is one in which the 'saltiness' and 'enlightenment' of God's good news is embedded into the very fabric of the community. A sustained presence leads to influencing the direction of the community – away from a community's own direction, towards living Jesus' Way. A Christian presence, faithfully sustained over time, empowered by God's Spirit and persistent in its practice of the faith of Christ will influence and impact a community. While specific expressions of a Christian presence might vary over time, sustaining that presence is an essential element of being faithful to the Spirit's call to God's mission.

5. Story

Mission motivated development refers to particular locations, places, or sites, where the people of God live, work, and enact the faith of Christ; and gather to generate, share, collect and value stories.²¹

Stories occur when people's lives are linked-up, joined together by common experiences and shared meanings. Individual identities are connected to the people who live there, to Christians and the church – whatever expression the church might take in that place. Mission motivated development makes space for, and encourages stories that connect people. These are highly valued. They are stories that convey a higher meaning and more profound end: to nourish, sustain, grow and enrich individuals and whole communities. They are, therefore, stories that become deeply embedded in the spirituality of the people and whose telling is woven into the fabric of the community's practice of its spirituality.

However, the stories that the gospel raises within a community are especially those associated with compassion, liberty, reconciliation, renewal, redemption, healing, hospitality and hope. Gospel stories are also about the care of creation, nurturing the environment and sustaining diverse ecologies. Gospel stories are about whatever is of virtue and grace. Mission motivated development initiates buildings that create spaces for telling and exploring these stories, for making yet more discoveries of the power of gospel stories

²¹ *A Theology of Property*, Section 3.2 Place, Community and Story; A project of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Property Board 2008.



in the lives of individuals and communities.

6. Place

Mission motivated development acknowledges that 'place' matters; that the context of the development is critical to the nature and purpose of the development.

The gospel is grounded in the incarnation - a real person who came to a specific place, whose daily life expressed God's message of love, grace, compassion, liberation and reconciliation in real and tangible ways. In the life of Jesus of Nazareth we observe both his own encounter with God *and* his witness to God's sending grace. Mission motivated development must find ways to continue this two sided expression of God's mission – encounter with Christ, *and* God's witness – and to do so through architecture that encourages relationships, community discipleship and the practice of a distinctly Christian spirituality. "Questions about how a particular place supports both dimensions of mission, the encounter with God *and* the witness of God, need to be part of the dynamics of sacred places in Christian communities."²²

7. Shared decision making

Mission motivated development accepts that from time to time the particular form or expression of mission may change.

All Uniting Church property is held to be a common wealth and is 'owned' by the Church through the provisions of its Property Trust. Various Church bodies – such as congregations, agencies and faith communities - may be granted a beneficial use of specific property. There are *Regulations* to guide the assignment and reassignment of beneficial use. The *Regulations* commit the various Councils of the Church to inter-conciliar consideration in matters of beneficial use.²³ The Regulations, protocols and processes involved might at times seem time consuming. *Regulations* provide a means whereby the Church as a whole may reflect on and discern the Spirit's guidance when fluidity is required. Such discernment is essential to the missional nature of the church. "Although the work of the Church cannot be separated from property, property of the church cannot be theologically thought of apart from the Christian community... (it) has a purpose and function... the mission of

²² *A Theology of Property*, Section 3.1 – On the Way; A project of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Property Board 2008.

²³ See *Understanding Commonwealth within the UCA Synod of Victoria and Tasmania*, Resource Paper, John A Emmett, May 2011. Synod Website. This paper discusses in detail the provisions of the Church's Property trust with respect to Beneficial Use. See also, *Discerning Mission and the use of Property*, Board of Mission and Resourcing, 2011.; Synod website. This document sets our policies and gives practical examples of the policies in operation.



the church... is the context in which property is to be understood".²⁴

8. Innovation and initiative

Mission motivated development implies creativity and innovation according to the nature and purpose of God's mission in specific contexts.

When Christians become aware of issues others encounter in their daily living - especially issues of injustice, alienation, marginalization or abuse – they are alert for opportunities to join God's mission in such circumstances. The first way of doing so is through prayer. Prayer joins us to those for whom we pray and commits us to being a part of God's mission in response to the distress, dysfunction, disease and evil we have observed impacting the lives of others. We may also consider activities and practices that address that which has been observed. Sometimes, our creativity is required to include property development as an element to effectively addressing the human condition we have observed.

Creativity extends to ways in which property is designed, developed and used to bring God's compassion and reconciliation to one's neighbours. Innovation and initiative imply change. Changes to property might be involved, in which case they ought to be tested for mission motivation. Are the changes to benefit or reward the people of the church, or to be a blessing to the neighbours to whom the Spirit has called us? The church as a movement, can appreciate that mission motivated development includes change to property with respect to design and use.

9. Holistic approach

Mission motivated development means that the Church will exercise a wholehearted commitment to a holistic approach to all development.

Thus, church property development must take into account the impact of development on all creation, including the well-being of the earth, particular environments and ecologies. There is a necessity to consider spiritual, physical, emotional, ecological and communal implications of any property development. It is also necessary to identify any risks to the reputation of the church, with respect to its nature and purpose, and to propose ways to manage such risks within the ethics of the gospel.

²⁴ *A Theology of Property*, Section 4.3 – Property is Bound to Mission; A project of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Property Board 2008.





10. Contextualization and fluidity

Mission motivated development means being responsive to the particular context where the church is located.

Contexts are fluid, changing as populations and land use change. For example: Church properties once established to serve small rural villages might not be appropriate to the diverse communities arriving as the result of urban sprawl and ribbon development. Fluidity requires a commitment to a considered, critical reflection on the changing nature of a particular context. As the context changes, what awareness of the church of God's mission in this locality also changing arises amongst the various councils and communities? Contextual inquires are an essential element of and contributor to mission motivated development.²⁵

Conclusion

Mission is God's activity in all creation. Christians are invited to join God's Mission in the world through their baptism and by constant discernment of the Spirit's calling.

Mission motivated development is development that reflects the nature and purpose of the church as a partner to God's mission in the world. Such development must reflect the character and disposition of God's nature and purposes for all creation. Mission motivated development is an expression of the spiritual nature and character of the Church.

Ten principles can act as signposts. These are: vocation, relationships, community building, presence, story, place, shared decision making, innovation an initiative, a holistic approach, and contextualization and fluidity. Taken together, these principles point to mission motivated development as distinct and different from any other motivation for development. Taken in isolation each begs the company of the others. Each submission with respect to property development can be assessed in the light of the ten principles.

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²⁵ See, *Approaches to Ministry for a Missional Church*, [Appendices – Resources for Workshops – Contextual Inquiry](#). John A Emmett and Beth Hancock, Commission for Mission, UCA Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, 2009. Also available for download from the Synod's website – www.victas.uca.org.au in the CFM Resources section.

