

Becoming a Missionally Focused Church

Introduction: The greatest challenge before us as a denomination and as individual congregations is to become more missionally focused.

Our annual denominational statistics belie the thinking that we are a healthy, growing Church. No, we are not in decline, but we are not in a growth mode either given our 1.5% rate of growth over the past 5 years, (2% in '06). While at MNA we have seen a new church planted every week for the past 3 years: underscoring decentralization and partnership.

The two great influencers for us to understand at MNA I've called: The Nation and The Nations

I. The Nation

We are no longer the nation we were when we began as a denomination in 1973 culturally, religiously, or demographically. The progressive shift in the last 20 years from modernity to post-modernity is the most subtle for me.

The 21st Century is another time and place. I see the radical changes taking place culturally, religiously, and demographically. I understand that we are living in a post-Christendom era and that the only hope that we have is to move from being a church in mission to becoming a missional Church. Our thinking must change from sending missionaries to being sent as a missionary into ones own local community to a generation w/o a Christian base!

Several recently published books underscore the shift confronting us:

After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of Religion, Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University Press, 2007.

They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations, Dan Kimball, Zondervan, 2007.

Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity...and Why It Matters, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, Baker Books, 2007.

II. The Nations

We passed the 300 million pop. mark in October 2006.

We are now 67.6 % non-Hispanic White

14.8% Hispanic

13.4% Black

5.0% Asian but by 2020 the Hispanic population will total roughly 102.6 million representing 24% of the total US population.

Every 7 sec birth; 13 sec death; 31 sec an international migrant = net gain every 11 sec
Or an increase of over 2.87 million people who every year need to hear the Gospel!

Gwinnett County, Georgia in the last 6 years grew 29% to over 757,000 residents. Our county is now larger than Alaska, North Dakota, Vermont, Wyoming, and DC. The white non-Hispanic population decreased from 90% in 1990 to 67% in 2000 to 52.5% in 2007. 1 in 4 is now foreign born, an increase from year 2000 by 72%.

We are Georgia's largest ethnic hub: 19.8% Black, 17.1% Hispanic and 9.1% Asian, PTL! We are home for 43% of the region's Korean pop; 29% of the Vietnamese pop; 25% of the Chinese pop.

And these numbers underscore nationally and locally our challenge/ opportunity to change the heart and the face of the PCA.

These books, articles and paper are helpful reading:

Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church, Mark Deymaz, Jossey-Bass, 2007.

"Go and Plant Churches of All Peoples," Christianity Today, Sept. 2007

"Hispanics in America," Outreach Magazine, Nov/Dec, 2007

"Ministering Among the Changing Cultures of North America," MNA October '05 paper

One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church, Manuel Ortiz, InterVarsity Press, 1996.

We are continuing to decentralize our ministry emphasizing the equipping role as we help facilitate a grassroots church planting movement; to help the PCA to actually become a church planting "culture." We are working harder and seeing an increased need for resources, consulting, and support services for churches, presbyteries, and networks.

