



EMERGING, MISSIONAL, MOSAIC AND MONASTIC

How is God conspiring through those in the emerging, missional, mosaic and monastic streams of the church to give creative expression to that world that is already here?

We invite you to Dancing in the Streets with our homeless friends here in Tent City in Seattle,” Nathan, a young emerging church planter, loudly announced at Trinity Methodist Church during our recent international gathering. At the final session of the conference, participants were invited to imagine and create ways to give expression to God’s new order. Nathan’s group came up with an imaginative way to serve the homeless.

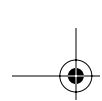
“Dancing in the Streets will involve inviting middle-class neighbors to meet their homeless friends who are camped in the parking lot at Trinity Methodist Church. We plan to have a huge outdoor party including all kinds of ethnic food, piñatas for the kids, music from the tent city and the neighborhood, and dancing for everybody. We want to see the walls come down and everyone experience a bit of God’s shalom.”

Our gathering, “The Church Has Left the Building,” sought to bring people together from different countries, across generations and from the four streams of renewal. While the gathering was comprised largely of twenty- and thirty-year-olds, people from across the age spectrum attended. We advertised, “All skateboards and walkers are welcome!”

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE LIVELY EDGE

For my entire adult life, I have tried to pay attention to the lively edge of





BEGINNINGS

“God is doing something new through ordinary radicals. Every day we are seeing ordinary people doing small things with great love,” declared Shane Claiborne at the opening of our gathering. Shane is a part of the lively edge of what God is doing through the new monasticism movement. Shane is right! God is doing something new through new conspirators in all four streams—and through many of us in traditional churches as well.

In this conversation, I will take you on a brief tour of the four streams, offering a brief description and a bit of history, and introducing a few key players and resources. Please understand I am doing only some very rough sketching; this topic merits a more in-depth analysis than space allows.

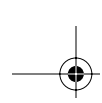


what God is doing in our constantly changing society. Back in 1968, when I was in my thirties, recently converted hippies suddenly started appearing at the church I attended in Maui, Hawaii. It was clear to me from the beginning that God was working through the remarkable Jesus People movement. So when I moved to Seattle in 1970, I volunteered with Jesus People. Over the years, I have enjoyed working with my friends in the movement’s last remaining remnant—Jesus People U.S.A. in Chicago. Their annual Cornerstone Festival still brings together Christians on the artistic edge.



In the late seventies and early eighties, I was involved in the Radical Christian Movement and the Christian community movement. With friends like Tony Campolo, Ron Sider, John Perkins, Jo Anne Lyon, Howard Snyder, Orlando Costas, John Alexander, Barbara Skinner, Tom Skinner, Manny Ortiz, Jim Wallis and a host of others, I witnessed thousands of people change their lifestyles to embrace a more radical form of discipleship: “to live more simply than others might simply live.” Many fashioned a range of alternative Christian communities. I believe God’s Spirit stirred thousands of people to join that movement and work for social change. It was during this season that I wrote *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy* and began experimenting with living in Christian community myself.





These days, God is working through a new generation of conspirators that won't be satisfied with anything less than an authentic faith that makes a real difference in the lives of others and in the care of God's good creation. I will briefly describe each of the four streams—emerging, missional, mosaic and monastic—though it is important to mention that the leaders in each stream don't agree on definitions that describe their movements, because the four streams are dynamic and fluid, and at points flow into one another.

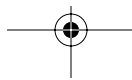
Leaders in these streams are honest about their shortcomings. They freely admit they don't always get it right. But much of what they are doing is experimental and generally underfinanced, so we need to cut them a little slack.

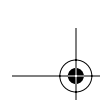
EMERGING STREAM

Seattle is being swamped with young church planters. Last week I met two guys who had moved here from Pennsylvania. They said they came to Seattle because of the high numbers of unchurched people in this region. The more we talked, however, the more I sensed their move might have had more to do with the coffee and the microbreweries than with the unchurched. But then I am a little cynical. Let's go back to the early beginnings of all things emerging.

Many American Christians have never heard of the house church movement that swept through Britain in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Charismatic movements like Pioneer, Revelation and Ichthus Fellowship resulted in thousands of Brits coming to vital faith and hundreds of new churches being planted all over the U.K. Toward the end of the decade, however, this renewal movement began running out of gas.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I met a number of young Brits associated with groups like Revelation and the Anglican Church who began creating new expressions of church. These leaders included Peter and Samie Greig, Phil and Wendy Wall, Gerard and Chrissie Kelly, Andy and Helen Harrington, and Jonny and Jenny Baker. In a variety of ways, they took initiative to begin the world over again. Some described themselves as post-evangelical. Others were experimenting with alternative forms of worship.





They all seemed to share a postmodern critique of both culture and church. Those I met had a sincere passion to follow Christ and to seek first God's kingdom in a broken world. Gerard Kelly's *RetroFuture* reflects how thoughtfully these young leaders brought their faith to bear on understanding culture and faith.

I still remember how this first wave of young leaders in the U.K. prodded me to take a good hard look at my theological assumptions. As Scot McKnight observes, they believe that "God didn't reveal a systematic theology but a storied narrative, and no language is capable of capturing the Absolute Truth who alone is God."¹ Their arguments that some older Christians take a hyper-rational approach to the gospel were spot on—certainly for me. Jonny Baker wrote in a 1999 e-mail that "the old certainties of 'Modernity' and the 'Enlightenment Project' have been replaced with a huge level of uncertainty and questioning. 'Reality isn't what it used to be.'"²

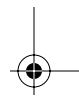
He and others helped me to rediscover the gospel as narrative, filled with mystery and wonder. Yet in spite of all I learned from them, I was still having a difficult time getting my head around postmodernism. Graham Cray, who was also immersed in that first wave and is now Anglican bishop of Maidstone, U.K., was kind enough to sit me down and sort me out—a couple of times.

Church plants such as Moot, an Anglican church plant in London, and leaders such as Ian Mobsby, Matt Rees and Kester Brewin are connecting to ancient symbols and practices in their creative worship experiences. Ian Mobsby, speaking in Seattle during a United States tour, pointed out that the emerging church is not only inclined to draw from the ancient but actively searching for "the sacred in the profane" of popular culture as well.³ Some of the most visible mentors to the emerging edge in the U.K. are Graham Cray and John and Olive Drane at St. Andrews College.

¹Scot McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," *Christianity Today*, January 19, 2007, accessed February 1, 2007, at <www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html>.

²Jonny Baker, e-mail on postmodernity, November 18, 1999.

³Ian J. Mobsby, *Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church: How Are They Authentically Church and Anglican?* (London: Moot Community, 2007).





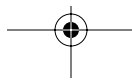
In a fall 2000 *Leadership Journal* article, I described what I was learning from this new movement: “In the last 12 years, a new generation of leaders in Britain is engaging postmodern culture. They are relational, and experiential, involve the arts, are more into narrative than propositional theology. They are more tribal and local. . . . In the U.K. they tend to display more global awareness than their U.S. counterparts.”⁴

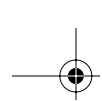
The emerging church movement has not experienced the numerical growth of the house church movement; its influence is evident everywhere. To illustrate, in 2006 Christine and I spoke at Spring Harvest, a remarkable Christian worship/educational gathering created during the boom days of the house church movement. Spring Harvest hosts 50,000 Christians for four four-day sessions at two different locations. Every worship venue reflected the growing influence of the emerging church. Artists often visually interpreted the message. Off to the side were areas with candles and traditional symbols and places for private meditation. Worship venues for teens were a direct appropriation of the innovative edge of what is stirring in postmodern churches in the U.K.

The Church Mission Society maintains a website (www.emergingchurch.info) where many emerging leaders connect to one another. The best place to meet many of these young leaders is at the Greenbelt Arts Festival, which gathers every August at the Cheltenham Racecourse in the U.K.

In the early 1990s some young Christians in Nelson, New Zealand, created a sophisticated venue called the Led Zebra. This safari-themed center was drawing more teens than any secular venue in town. Meanwhile, in the red-light district of Auckland, New Zealand, Mark Pierson, Mike Riddell and some of their mates created Parallel Universe, a monthly alternative worship opportunity for twenty- and thirty-year-olds, most of whom made no profession of faith. They redesigned a night club, surrounding the space with three floor-to-ceiling screens, and artfully crafted film and music from pop-culture sources to create unique multimedia worship expressions. Some two hundred young adults would come out to this unique venue on

⁴Tom Sine, “Brave New Worldview,” *Leadership Journal*, Fall 2000, p. 53.





Saturday nights to experience something of God's care for them. From those early beginnings, Mark Pierson went on to lead one of the most artistic churches in the emerging world—Cityside Baptist, also in Auckland.

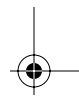
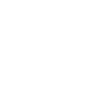
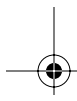
In 2002 the Baptist church in Australia realized it needed to invest in something more than the standard Baptist model of church if it was to engage a new generation. They invested \$1 million to train twenty church planters to create a range of new church models. Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, one of those church planters, reports that a tapestry of communities is beginning to spring up across Melbourne, including a group of artists that share prayer over paint and canvas, and exhibit their works to engage those in their community.

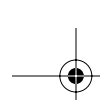
Steve Taylor, pastor of Opawa Baptist Church in Christchurch, New Zealand, is part of the latest generation of emerging church planters, authors and lecturers. His book *The Out of Bounds Church?* engages the post-modernity discussion and the need to create a post-Christendom church. Paul Fromont in Cambridge, New Zealand, along with Alan Hirsch, Michael Frost and their compatriots at The Forge in Melbourne, are also at the center of the emerging buzz Down Under.⁵

In the mid-1990s the emerging church movement made its way to North America. Funded by the Leadership Network, Doug Pagitt and a small circle of pastors started holding conferences around the country. Many young leaders at these conferences have subsequently planted new forms of church, such as Solomon's Porch in the Twin Cities, Minnesota, Ecclesia in Houston, Texas, and Mars Hill in Grandville, Michigan.

Since those first mustard seed experiments in the mid- to late 1990s, there has been an explosion of emerging church plants in North America, including Veritas in Southern California, which offers postmodern worship and the opportunity to make sandwiches for the homeless. At his church, Vintage Faith, in Santa Cruz, California, and in his writings, Dan Kimball (author of *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*) has significant influence on the

⁵The Forge in Melbourne is better-known as an example of the missional stream. As you will see, the missional and emerging streams often flow into one another.



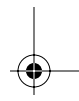


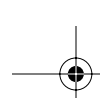
emerging conversation. Rachele Mee Chapman started the monastic flavored Monkfish Abbey and Mark Scandrette (author of *Soul Graffiti*) leads the Jesus Dojo in San Francisco. Sally Morgenthaler is one of the most creative leaders in the field of worship and use of sacred space in this movement. In Texas, Chris Seay is working with a group of artists to translate the Scripture in new ways that take both culture and the arts seriously. Andy Harrington, an immigrant from the U.K. who heads up Youth for Christ in Vancouver, British Columbia, has helped young Canadians plant new churches like Station X and Warehouse 180 to reach a new generation in British Columbia. There are a host of other emerging churches in North America that I regrettably don't have space to mention.

There is also a growing interest in all things emerging among younger leaders in mainline denominations in the United States. Check out Anglimergent (<http://anglimergent.groups.vox.com>), an online Anglican community focused on the relation between the emerging church, culture and mission. A number of young leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have started an online forum called Presbymergent (<http://presbymergent.org>) to try to "find the balance" between a traditional denomination and the new emerging expressions. Dwight Friesen, from Mars Hill Graduate School, has been engaged in a yearlong conversation conducted by the National Council of Churches. He reported that those in attendance from the Orthodox Church were the most interested in joining the emerging conversation.

There is a wide array of understandings around the world of what constitutes an emerging church. Emerging leaders in Britain, Australia and New Zealand tend to be more involved in a conversation about postmodern culture and a post-Christendom church. Some younger leaders in all countries define emerging as the creation of post-denominational and post-congregational forms of church. There are some other young leaders in the United States for whom "pomo (postmodern) churches" seem to be simply another way to describe alternative worship. But much of what we are seeing is a spectrum of fresh expressions of what it means to be the church and do mission.

There are also a variety of definitions of what constitutes the emerging





church. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger took a comprehensive look at this movement in Britain and the United States in their definitive book *Emerging Churches*. They offer a very succinct definition of this stream: “Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures.”⁶ Scott Bader-Saye observes that those in this stream often prefer to define the emerging church as a conversation instead of a movement—a conversation that “is still young, experimental and evolving.”⁷ Leonard Sweet sees it as “an ongoing conversation about how new times call for new churches, and that the mortar-happy church of the last half of the 20th century is ill-poised to face the promises and perils of the future.”⁸

No matter how we may choose to define the emerging church, it really exists in the blogosphere as no other Christian movement has. In his provocatively titled “We Know More Than Our Pastors: Why Bloggers Are the Vanguard of the Participatory Church,” Tim Bednar contends,

Our network of blogs exceeds the reach of any single pastor. . . . Thousands of bloggers circumvent hierarchies and relate unmediated from one another. We are part of a participatory phenomena that is impacting mass media, technology, education, entertainment, politics, journalism and business.⁹

In North America the Emergent Village, led by Tony Jones, and TheOOZE, led by Spencer Burke, are the primary groups hosting young church planters and wannabes in gatherings and online venues. Youth Specialties is also a primary player in the United States. Up until now the emerging church movement has tended to be white and male. We are seeing more women

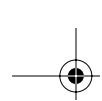
⁶Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), p. 44.

⁷Scott Bader-Saye, “Improvising Church: An Introduction to the Emerging Church Conversation,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 6, no. 1 (2006): 12.

⁸“God sent a person not a proposition . . .” a conversation with Len Sweet, interviewed by Tamara Cissna, *The George Fox University Online Journal*, <www.georgefox.edu/journalonline/archives/fall05/emerging.html>.

⁹Tim Bednar, “We Know More Than Our Pastors: Why Bloggers Are the Vanguard of the Participatory Church,” <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/1.0>>.



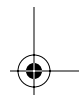


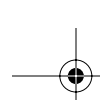
joining the movement, and it is beginning to go global. In fact, the Emergent Village has started reaching out to emerging leaders all over the planet. Brian McLaren has connected with leaders such as Claude Nkondeha in Africa; Sivin Kit in Asia; and Tomas Yaccino, volunteer facilitator for La Red del Camino.

There seem to be certain characteristics that are common to many different emerging expressions, though certainly not to all.

- Emerging leaders are much more into gospel as story, narrative and metaphor and have little interest in a propositional, dogmatic approach to theology common in many conservative churches.
- Unlike some megachurches that try to create programs that can be replicated all over the planet, emerging church leaders are committed to creating innovative ways to engage people in one specific cultural context.
- Emerging churches, informed by their postmodern instincts, tend to be highly experimental and artistic, often working compellingly with both image and word.
- Emerging churches tend to offer multilayered, experiential worship that draws on both ancient symbols and images from “profane” culture.
- Emerging leaders are committed to calling people to a more authentic, embodied, whole-life faith.
- Emerging churches, by their very nature, tend to be outwardly focused in mission, not only to engage a specific group, but with a desire to have an impact on the lives of people in their communities and the larger world.
- Emerging churches are relational, organic and communal with virtually no bureaucratic, hierarchical models of leadership, unlike many denominational and nondenominational churches.
- Emerging Christians tend to be concerned about a broad range of social issues, including social justice, reconciliation and creation care.

It is not clear to anyone where the emerging stream is headed in Britain, Down Under or in North America. *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, one of the newest books in this stream, features a host of thoughtful essays by





younger authors, not all of whom are from the emerging stream. Meanwhile some leaders in the American church, such as theologian D. A. Carson, express serious reservations about the writings of Emergent leader Brian McLaren and all things emerging.

I think if critics took the time to get to know these leaders personally, they would discover, as I have, that most of them struggle to be true to both Scripture and the rich traditions of our faith. In fact, I find that a number of them actually take Scripture more seriously than some of their detractors in their call for “ortho-praxy”—not only intellectual assent to faith, but also a more authentic living out of a biblical faith in believers’ entire lives.

Andrew Jones, something of a blogging apostle to the emerging movement, urges us to be more supportive of what God is doing through this movement, to “find what God is planting and . . . water it.”¹⁰ Many of us not only need to water and encourage what God is doing through these mustard seeds, but also to be open to learning from the commitment, risk-taking and imagination of these creative conspirators.

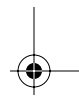
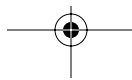
MISSIONAL STREAM

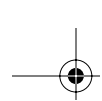
In 1996 I learned that my friend Phil Wall, an emerging church planter, was reading to Lesslie Newbigin because Dr. Newbigin’s eyes were failing. I am deeply indebted to Newbigin for his many important books and particularly his *Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, which I still use in a worldview course I teach for Fuller Seminary in Seattle. Phil was kind enough to arrange a meeting with Dr. Newbigin during a trip I took to the U.K.

I still remember that very leisurely afternoon with Lesslie Newbigin, discussing a broad range of topics over a pint of cider at his local pub. I recall the difficulty I had in keeping up with his keen intellect as he reflected on the writings of the early church fathers regarding the church and its mission. Dr. Newbigin expressed how impressed he is by the ways that Phil and other young emerging church planters reach out so decisively to do mission both locally and globally. He also expressed a longing to see traditional



¹⁰Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, p. 53.





churches place mission more at the center of their congregational life.

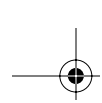
In fact, back in the 1980s the World Council of Churches, influenced by the incisive insights of Lesslie Newbigin, drafted a biblical statement that affirmed an integrated approach to word and deed mission and called churches everywhere to make mission central to congregational life. Inspired by his thoughtful writings on faith, culture and mission, a group of Christian scholars in the United States and Canada started The Gospel and Our Culture Network, publishing a book in 1998 titled *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. There they called the church beyond itself in order to be a church for others. I am sure that when Darrell Guder and the other contributing authors wrote this book, they didn't have any idea it would stir a new stream of renewal. The book captured the attention of leaders in both established mainline and evangelical churches in Canada and the United States.

Whereas the emerging church movement was birthed by practioners re-inventing the church for a postmodern context, the missional church movement was birthed out of the academy. Mature scholars challenged primarily traditional churches to focus more outwardly in mission and to rediscover their calling as "God's sent people." In 2004 the authors of *The Missional Church* addressed the question "What do missional congregations look like?" in *Treasures in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. They sketched nine diverse congregations that have found an array of ways God could use their mustard seeds to focus outwardly in mission to their communities and the larger world.

One of the Network's newest books, *Storm Front: The Good News of God*, is particularly helpful in moving beyond scholarly concepts to a practical understanding of what a more mission-focused congregation looks like. This book makes clear that missional churches, at their best, shift their focus from creating programs that meet the needs of those within the building to equipping members to address the needs of those outside the building. This shift should be reflected in practical choices like the stewardship of time and money.

In 2006 I discovered a couple of important British books that echo some of these same themes. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New*





World by Stuart Murray asks a provocative question about how we do mission in a post-Christendom world. David Smith's *Mission After Christendom* sees the churches in the majority world radically changing our understanding of faith and mission.

Australians Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost wrote *The Shaping of Things to Come*, one of the first popular books to reach out to those dissatisfied with the conventional church. Not surprisingly this book is also popular with the emerging church crowd and became one of the first bridges between the two streams.¹¹ In 2005 Hirsch and Frost led a conference called "Dangerous Stories" in Melbourne, Australia. Sponsored by The Forge, this high energy conference was the first I had been to that brought together people from the emerging and missional streams to explore innovative ways to become more a part of God's missional work.¹²

The missional movement deserves credit for raising important theological questions regarding what it means to be church and do the mission of the church. Several seminaries in the United States have responded: Fuller Theological Seminary, guided by Ryan Bolger, Eddie Gibbs and Kurt Fredrickson; Biblical Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, with the leadership of John Franke; North Park University in Chicago, with the support of Scot McKnight; Duke Divinity School, guided by Steve Hayner; and Mars Hill Graduate School in Seattle, under the guidance of Dwight Friesen. George Fox Theological Seminary also offers an emphasis in this area that often includes Leonard Sweet. One of the most recent offerings is Missional Leadership, started by Alan Roxburgh.

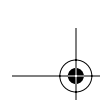
Slowly, practioners have responded to this missional call. These conspirators tend to look like their emerging church counterparts except that they are often seminary-trained and more multiculturally focused. Many, though not



¹¹I am sure Alan Hirsch's recent work *The Forgotten Ways* and Michael Frost's *The Exiles* will continue to feed the appetite of those in both traditional and emerging churches who are searching for new ways forward in a changing world.

¹²The Forge is a unique missional training center that enables students to actually create new missional church plants and mission ventures. Their training program emphasizes the need for both reflection and action. They maintain a network of innovators all over Australia <www.forge.org.au>.





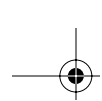
all, are seeking to plant missional churches within traditional denominations. The Anglican Church in the U.K. has started sponsoring a host of new missional experiments called Fresh Expressions. Andy Harrington reported that the Evangelical Alliance of Canada has created a nationwide program called Cadence to train younger Christians to become missional leaders.

In the United States, several major denominations have seen the handwriting on the wall regarding the serious decline of traditional congregations, and are making substantial investments in planting a broad range of new, experimental, missional churches with hopes of reaching a younger and more multicultural generation. Dave T. Olson, who directs church planting for the Covenant Church, is planting new churches that seek to reflect missional assumptions almost exclusively. These include NewSong in Irvine, California, and Life Covenant in Edmond, Oklahoma. Both the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) are making major commitments to plant a broad spectrum of new missional congregations to reach diverse populations. Tim Vink, who heads the RCA initiative, says its goal is to involve existing congregations in planting four hundred new churches by 2013. Allen Likkel is heading up a similar effort for the Christian Reformed Church as well.

Today, Christians all over the world in both traditional and emerging churches have embraced the word *missional*. Darrell Guder, editor of the book *The Missional Church*, says the word has taken on a life of its own. In the article “Missional Buzz: Will the Real Missional Church Please Stand Up?” Tim Conder, pastor of Emmaus Way in Durham, North Carolina, considers *missional* the new buzz word: “So many fellowships that once boldly self-identified as cell churches, meta-churches, seeker-style or purpose-driven now claim to be missional.” Conder defines the term as “a corrective to or an outright rejection of commodified and cultural Christianity, steeped in institutionalism, individualism, and sentimentality” where “programming and finances are directed outwardly.”¹³ I like his outward empha-

¹³Tim Conder, “Missional Buzz: Will the Real Missional Church Please Stand Up?” *Out of Ur*, January 12, 2007, accessed January 28, 2007, at <http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2007/01/missional_buzz.html>.





sis, but in my research I find that description reflected in emerging churches more consistently than in many of the churches that identify with the missional label.

MOSAIC STREAM

Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson's book *The Hip-Hop Church* and Tommy Kyllonen's *Un.orthodox* offer compelling evidence that God is doing something new through young people from a spectrum of different cultures. Both books recognize hip-hop as not just an expression of urban African American culture but the language of a new generation all over the planet. In fact, as I write, a young friend from England is having back surgery as a result of break dancing with youth over several years in an urban ministry in Manchester, England.

Observing that most of the leadership in the mainstream church—and most of those he meets at emerging church conferences—are Caucasian, Kyllonen reminds us that the times are changing.

The emerging church is also the young black male in the hood. It is the second generation Mexican in LA and the child of the Chinese immigrant in Houston. The emerging church is the Puerto Rican female on Wall Street.¹⁴

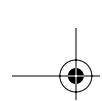
Though most of those in this stream have never heard the word *postmodernity*, many of the urban young that are a part of hip-hop culture share with the emerging young a suspicion of modernity, authority and pat answers.¹⁵ Efrem Smith tells me that urban hip-hop culture isn't just post-modern but also post-institutional, post-soul and post-civil rights too.

Urban African American young are hungry for a spirituality they can relate to. There are reportedly some twenty hip-hop churches in the United States and their numbers are growing. Phil Jackson's multicultural congregation, Lawndale Community Church in Chicago, responds to this hunger

¹⁴Tommy Kyllonen, *Un.orthodox: Church, Hip-Hop, Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), p. 180.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.





by offering hip-hop services on the first and second Saturdays of every month. The first service is called House Party and the second is called House Unplugged.

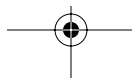
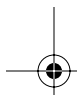
Hip-hop churches are only one expression of what God is doing through a growing number of multicultural churches. A number of second-generation Asian churches in Canada and the United States have chosen to become multicultural congregations. Some churches in California came together around interracial families that didn't feel completely at home in monocultural churches.

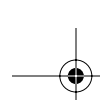
There are even a few monocultural churches that are beginning to question whether that model is fully biblical. Kingston United Reformed Church in Britain, comprised of Koreans, Russians, Nigerians, Chinese and English, has intentionally worked to become a multicultural congregation. Pastor Leslie Charlton believes diversity is essential to being church. "You cannot call yourself a church if you are all the same," she says. "It may be a nice group, but a church, like the kingdom of God, must have room for everybody."¹⁶ Of course race and class diversity may not always be possible in monocultural communities, but Pastor Charlton certainly has Scripture to support her case.

There is another important reason to consider moving beyond a monocultural church experience. I have seen the future and, whether we recognize it or not, it looks like London, Los Angeles and Auckland. These cities reflect the wonderfully diverse cultures of our world. In fact by 2060 the United States will become the first non-European Western nation—a nation of Latinos, African Americans and Asians. Those of us from European roots will just be another group. Our churches need to help people prepare to not only live in this future, but to receive and celebrate the gifts from other cultures.

God is indeed raising up new conspirators who are determined to create churches that look like God's multicultural kingdom. A recent article in the

¹⁶"Council for World Mission: Welcoming Strangers," <www.cwmission.org.uk/features/default.cfm?FeatureID=1607>.





Christian Science Monitor reports that one of the major characteristics of the fastest growing churches in America is that they are multiracial.¹⁷ Peter Brierley, who directs Christian Research in Britain, reports that the multicultural church in London is one of the few parts of the church in the U.K. that is growing, comprising 17 percent of churchgoers.

For those of us who are part of white culture to join what God is doing in this stream will involve first coming to terms with the history of slavery, racism and oppression that is a part of all Western societies. Inspired by the horror of slavery that is powerfully documented in the film *Amazing Grace*, David Pott started Lifeline Expeditions in Britain in 2000. He invites whites to walk in chains in former slave ports in Western countries, including the United States, as an act of contrition for their ancestors' enslavement of peoples of African ancestry. These demonstrations have had a powerful effect on both blacks and whites who have witnessed them.

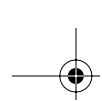
In Australia, European and Aboriginal Christians gather at former massacre sites and pray for God's healing and reconciliation. (I would love to see European Americans and Native Americans in the United States follow this model and pray for healing and reconciliation at genocide sites on our continent.)

Eric Dyson declares, "Whiteness looks like the universal, therefore it never gets talked about in any particular fashion." Dyson recommends "white study programs" in universities for those of European heritage to learn about the issues of race, class and power.¹⁸ Differences of race and class are painfully evident in a film like *Crash*. The film makes it clear that prejudice and racism are universal. However, while those of us who are white may deplore a past that has discriminated against and oppressed other people groups, we are still beneficiaries of that past. As we travel into the future, we all need to come to terms with the reality of white power and privilege. In addition, followers of Jesus from all racial and cultural groups need to create new ways of celebrating and receiving the varied gifts we share with one another as a foretaste of our coming home to God's great multicultural homecoming.

¹⁷G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "From US Churches That Are Growing, a Sound of Drums," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 3, 2007, pp. 1, 10.

¹⁸Eric Dyson, *Debating Race with Eric Dyson* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 117.





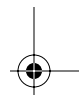
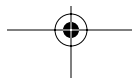
Doug Lee, pastor of the church plant Catalyst in Culver City, California, shared how his congregation is already enjoying some of the rich gifts of different cultures. “South Pacific Islanders bring a spirit of warmth, welcome and generosity to our community. Our African American friends have taught us much about really being fully present to God and highly invested in worship. Our Latino brothers and sisters remind us of the importance of family and hospitality. . . . Our Asian members bring the importance of service without the need for recognition. As a new family we are all richer because of the diverse gifts we bring.”

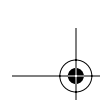
I experience something of the rich gifts of tapestry of God’s new community at the annual conference of the Christian Community Development Association, started by John Perkins. CCDA always has an urban choir that lifts our souls to the rafters. I also experience the rich gifts at Urbana Student Missions Conventions because those who lead us in worship represent the many parts of our world. We at Mustard Seed Associates hosted an evening with community activist Rudy Carrasco called “The Color of Love in the City.” The event was designed to start a conversation about color in our communities. After Rudy shared his stories Eliacin Rosario, a member of our MSA team, led a discussion on race and culture. To my surprise people from a range of racial backgrounds shared openly about both their pain and their attempts to live faithfully in a multicultural society.

One of the most innovative U.S. congregations in the area of ethnic diversity is a church in Southern California called Mosaic. It is comprised of “people from all over the world who have settled in the Los Angeles, California area. Their audience is multi-cultural, postmodern, pluralistic and global culture seekers.”¹⁹ Like the emerging church, Mosaic gives a major place in its life and mission to the arts; its group Urban Poets includes artists, dramatists and social innovators.

Most of the pastors of these multicultural churches are not content to simply create interesting programs to meet the needs of people within the building. They are intent on involving their members in word and deed min-

¹⁹Text taken from the Mosaic website: <www.mosaic.org>.





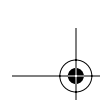
istries that impact the lives of people in their communities. In this sense, many of these churches are close to the missional models we discussed earlier. For example, Eugene Cho's multicultural church plant in Seattle, called Quest, from its inception has been devoted to local and global mission. Quest's coffee shop, the Q Café, serves as a place to engage the surrounding community and provide a performance space to local artists. Members also work with the homeless and offer computer education classes for kids struggling in school, and contribute time and resources to global initiatives.

Church of the Redeemer, a three-year-old church plant in South Central Los Angeles pastored by Danny Martinez, was started by people strongly committed to social justice, working with the poor at home as well as mission abroad. Congregants serve their communities through activities such as working with the homeless, volunteering in a local convalescent hospital and serving in urban schools.

David T. Olson told me that over 50 percent of the new missional church plants in the Covenant Church in America are ethnically or culturally diverse. Covenant's Pacific West Coast Conference actually requires all church planters to take a "Journey to Mosaic," a three-day bus trip for forty-eight people that begins in Oakland, California, and ends in Los Angeles. Typically it begins with hearing the stories of those in an African American congregation in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Oakland. The next stop is in the farm region, where participants hear the stories of immigrant Hispanic farm workers. Then the bus heads south to Los Angeles, where time is spent with those who lived through the Japanese internment camps of World War II. After a visit with leaders in an ethnic church, the trip concludes by hanging with the homeless in East Los Angeles. Another Covenant Church Conference sponsors a bus tour, called Sankofa, that takes riders 3,500 miles along some of the historic sites of the civil rights movement: Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, the Martin Luther King Memorial in Atlanta, Georgia, the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, and the historic slave market site in Mobile, Alabama.

As you can see from this brief overview, multicultural churches—along





with the increasing number of immigrant churches—are going to be one aspect of the growing edge of the church in Western countries. This new mosaic stream is quite diverse, but what its adherents all seem to share (like those in emerging churches) is their desire to reach out to a new generation. Like the missional churches, they also focus their mission on the needs of those beyond their own congregations. As a consequence they are much more significantly involved in local and global mission. We need to pay much more attention to what God is doing through the mosaic stream as well as ethnic and immigrant churches and explore new forms of collaboration that enable the church to lead in celebrating the gifts that will be a part of our multicultural future.

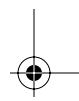
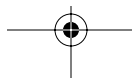
MONASTIC STREAM

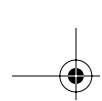
The final new stream of renewal I will be describing is the monastic stream. This stream is different in several ways from the other three. Most of the groups in the monastic stream have no interest in church planting. While large numbers of twenty- and thirty-year-olds are involved, it is comprised of a larger number of the over-forty crowd than the other three streams. It is also significantly more multicultural and multinational than the emerging and missional streams.

These conspirators perhaps raise more questions than any of the other streams regarding what it means to be disciples of Jesus, be the church and do the mission of the church. Though the people involved in new monastic experiments tend to come from evangelical backgrounds, they are being drawn into the richness of the Catholic, Orthodox, Celtic and Anglican monastic traditions.

Monasticism with the middle class. First, there are a few groups I will describe that are drawn principally to the spiritual aspects of the monastic life. The expectations for these followers of Jesus are to pursue more serious spiritual practices in the midst of their regular middle-class lives. These Protestant monastic streams draw most directly from monastic traditions like the Franciscans, Benedictines and Celts.

The lay monastic Third Order of Franciscan movement, which started at





the beginning of the twentieth century, paved the way for this new stream. Today, over two million lay Christians all over the world develop and follow a rule of life under the oversight of Franciscan brothers, which enables them to live a life of prayer and service. Since this small beginning, a number of other lay monastic orders patterned themselves after the Third Order model. The Iona Community in Scotland, the Northumbria Community in England and the Order of Saint Aidan and Saint Hilda in England are primarily devoted to helping participants more fully enter into a life of spirituality. Though some may live in residential communities or work with the poor, the majority of people who participate in these orders do not.

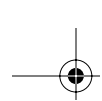
A few years ago a group of Christians at St. Thomas Crookes Church in Sheffield, U.K., started a monastic order called The Order of Mission. This is now an official order within the Anglican Church in the U.K. and has roughly three hundred people following its rule of life. Like other lay orders, this order takes the life of prayer seriously. Adherents are also active in small groups called huddles and participate in a broad range of ministries, including working with the poor. But most of them don't live in residential communities.

Even more recently, Peter Greig, who started the global 24/7 Prayer Network and has been involved in the emerging church movement in the U.K., has founded yet another group called The Order of the Mustard Seed. This order also emphasizes a life of prayer and service. But adherents tend to be less structured than most of the other models described here.

There is a growing interest among a new generation of Western Protestant church leaders in exploring ancient monastic practices too. For example, Karen Sloan is a Presbyterian minister who has written her intriguing journey into Dominican spirituality in her book *Flirting with Monasticism: Finding God on Ancient Paths*. In fact, a number of those in the emerging and missional streams are drawn not only to ancient liturgies but to ancient spiritual practices as well.

Monsasticism with the poor. The most radical expressions of the monastic stream are comprised of groups, inspired particularly by the Franciscans, who view following Christ as living in community, working and liv-





ing incarnationally with the poor, and taking time for serious spiritual practices. In fact many of them choose to live at the economic level of the people around them. John Hayes, who leads the monastic movement InnerCHANGE, insists that “the world doesn’t need more words, not even more ‘right’ words. The world needs more words made flesh. The world needs more people to live the good news incarnationally, in a way that can be seen heard and handled.”²⁰

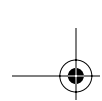
A ministry of Christian Resources Ministry, InnerCHANGE is an expression of the leaders’ discovery that God was calling them to a Franciscan lifestyle, living incarnationally with the poor and maintaining a strong commitment to prayer. Out of that small beginning, InnerCHANGE has birthed communities in Cambodia, Romania, Venezuela, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Minneapolis. Recently over dinner, John Hayes told Christine and me that he is headed to Britain to start a new community there. John reflects in his book, “We have found that incarnational ministry among the poor is worth the personal costs. To be told by our neighbors, ‘you are one of us’ is a sacred moment.”²¹ However, John makes clear that it takes time and a serious investment in the life of one’s larger community to reach that moment.

During the radical Christian movement of the 1970s, a new Protestant monastic expression was birthed that focused on service to the poor. Viv Grigg, a Kiwi who had been ministering as a missionary in Asia, was astonished to find no missionaries living in the slums. So he decided to take initiative and move into the squatter settlement of Tanalon. In his book *Companions with the Poor*, he called other followers of Jesus to consider this radical new vocation. His initiative gave rise to two of the earliest new monastic orders: Servant Partners and Servant to Asia’s Urban Poor. Servant Partners is involved in creating monastic communities in Bangkok, North-east Africa, North Africa, Nairobi, India, the Middle East, Manila and Mexico City. Their community in Mexico City is building bridges between the rich and poor to support programs in holistic health care, small business

²⁰John B. Hayes, *Sub-merge* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 2006), p. 113.

²¹Ibid., p. 140.





creation and children's ministry. Servant to Asia's Urban Poor works in the Philippines, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, the U.K. and the United States. Recently Servant Partners in Manila opened a two-room center for street children. Onesimo Kids hosts twenty children a day. They are also involved in a broad range of ministries with the poor in the other areas where they live and serve.

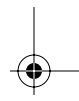
Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH) was started in 2001 as a "missional order among the poor" by the Churches of Christ in Australia with the help of InnerCHANGE. The vision is to be a missional order living out the gospel and seeking the transformation through Christ of urban neighborhoods facing poverty in the Asia-Pacific region. UNOH has teams living in Bangkok, Sydney and Melbourne. Participants feel God calling them to live in neighborhoods facing poverty, "inviting the homeless to live with us; limiting our work and income (partnership or outside work no more than 20 hours/wk and our income pegged to Henderson poverty line in Australia)."²²

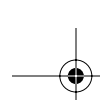
Word Made Flesh (WMF) started in 1991 to serve the poorest of the poor. In 1994 WMF started its first children's home in Madras, and today WMF communities can be found not only in South Asia but in Africa and South America as well, "in the sewers of Eastern Europe meeting with children living on the streets, with former child soldiers in the refugee camps of West Africa, among victims of sex trafficking and children with aids throughout Asia, and in the shanty-town and *favelas* of South Africa."²³ WMF strives to create a multicultural and multinational staff and also takes an ecumenical approach to life and faith.

One of the newest expressions is a group of young Christians, connected to the 24/7 Prayer Network and led by Ralf Neumann, moving to East Germany to start a monastic order. They want to be salt and light in an economically depressed region, where the people are struggling with depression and addiction.

²²"UNOH Constitution 2004" <www.unoh.org>.

²³Christopher L. Heuertz, "A Community of the Broken: A Young Organization Models What It Might Mean to Be the Church in a Suffering World," *Christianity Today*, February 9, 2007, <www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/36.90.html>.





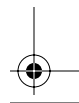
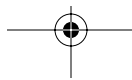
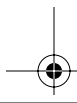
In his book *The New Friars*, Scott Bessenecker (director of global projects for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA) writes, “God’s Spirit is moving through [these twenty-first century monks and nuns] . . . intent on pouring out their lives for people on the fringe.”²⁴ Scott’s summer program for college students, Global Urban Trek, is designed for students who want to discover whether God is calling them to live alongside the poor in cities from Cairo to Manila. Mission Year offers college grads a similar opportunity working with the poor in American cities. Recently Christine and I had the opportunity to work with the students from Mission Year. We were impressed at how many of these young people were deeply influenced by this experience to discover new ways in their lives and vocations that God might continue to use their mustard seeds to make a difference with those at the margins.

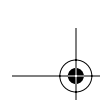
New monasticism with the poor and the middle class. One of the newest expressions of the monastic stream is called the “new monasticism movement.” It was birthed at a 2005 gathering in Raleigh-Durham that was comprised of several hundred young people (plus a few of us who are older). I was impressed by the commitment of the young at this gathering, many of whom are already investing their lives in living and working with the poor in the United States. However, this gathering had much more the flavor of a modern academic classroom than some of the more free-form, postmodern gatherings I have attended with the emerging tribes. Out of the initial conference a book was published, *Schools for Conversion: Twelve Marks of the New Monasticism*. These adherents offer hospitality in their communities as well as educational opportunities in several locations known collectively as the Schools for Conversion.

Shane Claiborne, one of the founders of the new monasticism movement, recalls that the earliest monastic communities “found it necessary to go into the desert to find God. . . . Our desert is the inner cities and abandoned places of the empire.”²⁵ Jason Byassee, writing in *The Christian Cen-*

²⁴Scott Bessenecker, *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World’s Poor* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2006), pp. 24-26.

²⁵Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), p. 166.





tury magazine, describes the new monastics as “living in the corners of the American empire . . . a harbinger of a new and radically different form of Christian practice.”²⁶ These conspirators not only make their homes in the abandoned places of the empire with the poor; they reach out to those of us in the middle class and invite us to become more a part of God’s mustard seed revolution.

New monastic communities include Rutba House in Durham, Camden House in Camden, New Jersey, Communality in Lexington and The Simple Way in Philadelphia. Their network also includes older communities from the radical Christian era, like Sojourners Community and Reba Place. Many of these communities are comprised of more mature believers and not all are working directly with the poor, nor do they all identify with the monastic tradition.

Other monastic groups who work with the poor share with the new monastic participants a strong commitment to work for social justice, reconciliation and political advocacy for the poor. However, the new monastics seem to have spent more time reflecting on the theological basis for their movement than most of the other groups. They position their small initiative against the backdrop of the analysis in *After Virtue* by Alasdair MacIntyre: the Enlightenment project is a failure and modern culture is a threat to vital faith.²⁷ In *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*, Jonathan Wilson argues that “the church is in grave danger of compromising its faithfulness to the Gospel.” He expresses concern that the church has become increasingly subverted by the values of the global culture of modernity and asks the important question, “What must the church do in order to live and witness faithfully as a minority in a culture where we were once the majority?”²⁸ In the final chapter he answers his own question, calling for communities of faith to not withdraw from the world but rather to seek

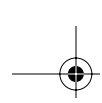


²⁶Jason Byassee, “The New Monastics,” *The Christian Century*, October 18, 2005, <www.christiancentury.org>.

²⁷Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theology*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

²⁸Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre’s “After Virtue”* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press, 1997), pp. 1-19.

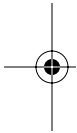




to more authentically embody the gospel as small living, breathing communities in the world.²⁹

This analysis raises huge new issues for those of us in conventional churches and even for those in the other three streams. Many of us seem largely content with our own understanding of church as a place you go once a week for worship and fellowship. The monastic stream is calling us to fundamentally transform the church into a community in which we live seven days a week—in order to live more faithfully in our deeply fragmented world.

We need to not only celebrate and support what God is doing through those on the conspiratorial edge, we need to join them in order that we might fully discover how God can use each one of us to quietly change our world. To do that, we need to make sense of some of the forces creating turbulence and impacting our lives and values in ways we don't always recognize. Join me as we travel back to the year 2001 and try to make sense of how the global context is changing in a post-9/11 world, and also the ways in which the new global mall is seeking to influence our sense of what is important and what is of value.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

- What examples from these four streams have particularly provoked your interest or stirred your imagination?
- What theological questions came to mind in this brief tour of those on the creative edge?
- Imagine one new possibility for your own life or church that was stimulated by reading about these experimental groups.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 68-78.

