

Some notes on the SRN Conference – Leeds 2006

Tim Horobin: Introduction

The aim of the conference is to be a safe place to experience something different, to see it in a new light.

George Gammick: Theological tools for mission

‘Let’s get it sorted’

Theology is part of all of us and accessible to all - two corrections needed to balance theosophical theology – one relational theology, one immediate theology.

Doing theology spiral – engagement, disturbance, presence and kingdom – leads to new engagement. Spiral moves us on to new transcendence. God is moving us on and taking a shape and releasing what is in inside. What is hidden is waiting to be discovered in you.

Theology of creation and redemption – process of moving us out of meaninglessness and chaos, demonstrated in the covenant. Covenant set up and broken is renegotiated and reordered, so in broken communities which result in engagement and disturbance there is a renegotiation with people, buildings and the environment.

10 dimensions of mission:

1. Context – keeping the story alive in the immediate not falling into the trap of recording the past.
2. Selling-out – not a market place, not selling something. Amos and the cleansing of the temple. Selling creates guilt if people don’t want to buy. Mission is an unconditional giving.
3. Listening and receiving, not telling – the ‘church for others’ mission is a ministry of messy moments, it is an active and costly engagement not just about listening, also receiving. Messiness is a reversal of the tradition. John Keats talks about the negative capability as a kenotic process where we enter into the dramatic being of others.
4. Feeling – mission must recognise the transmission of feelings – cf suffering servant and Psalm 88.
5. Language – Edwin Muir quotes “the word made flesh is here made word again” – the words that Jesus used with the paralysed man. Language either crosses or puts barriers across the barriers of relationships. Do all accounts of faith need to mention Jesus – do we say the words or do we really empathise?
6. Story – shows us the depths of suffering the Church needs to tell the story. New theologians are storytellers. The gospel is story not doctrine. Quote from the wounded storyteller’s restoration story, chaos story, and quest story. We accept the challenge but not necessarily what it is – we may not agree but we do have to look and see what the challenge is doing to us. Love is love whatever flesh it inhabits.
7. Threshold Places – places of welcome, safety and engagement. Places where we recognise the other/foreigner in ourselves. The inner ability to deal with the fear of otherness within ourselves – reference to Julia Kristeva a stranger to ourselves.
8. Hiddenness and Mystery – something precious in the hiddenness of ourselves – John 1 verse 10.

9. Circulative Theology – the myth of the one-way goat, not a linear model of salvation. New parables that illustrate the circulative theology – theology of ferry crossings, the parable of engaging, disturbing and rebuilding.

10. The form of Christ – ‘the church is a section of humanity where Christ has taken the form’ Bonhoeffer. Phillipians chapter 2 verse 6-8 ‘and the form the Christ is God’s slave human being’. Mission is about being the form of Christ.

Happenings:

Mission is engaging with and then moving on, creating new order out of brokenness.

Questions for the Panel

1. Could you each give a one sentence definition of mission?
2. How can Churches prevent outsourcing mission and best enable their projects to subvert, contaminate and disturb the Church?
3. What is the relation between Kingdom and the Church?
How do we express Kingdom values in Social Responsibility? What does it mean to make disciples not just converts?
4. How can we get mission and SR networks working together? Or is the impact of each of them as patterns of ministry more important?
5. What is the relationship between spirituality and mission?
6. What would a messy, risky Church look like and would I recognise it? Does it matter if I don’t recognise it?
7. How do we challenge the mindset that would colonise and control rather than be open to risk and vulnerability?
8. Given that the Church is emerging, is there a ‘new’ social justice it will evidence; will there be new models of social justice and social action? Is social responsibility not seeing something/holding onto old models?
9. By what criteria should we define and judge success?