

FUTURE CHURCH

Peter Rasmussen

March 2016

- Over the last few years I've noted some things that I believe will shape the future Church.
- The Church is to be built on Apostles and Prophets foundations.
- Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
- The prophetic always points forward to the potential and building of the Church.
- "You also are being built"
- Trans-local ministry often loses its voice because it keeps calling people into the past instead of the future.
- Trans-local ministry should operate on the edge calling the Church out to the edges of ministry and the world.
- Apostolic:
 - The new...apostles teaching.
 - The architecture.
 - The formation of the Church.
- Prophetic:
 - The old.... what God has spoken.
 - The future.
 - The plans for the architecture.
- So Apostles drive the Church into the prophetic architecture.
- Many Churches choose to live in an alternate future to the one spoken into the foundations.
- Let me say that there is no life there.
- Psalm 119:104-105 "I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore, I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

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- So I have over the last year tried to come to grips with the prophetic nature of the Church.
- What are the things that God may be emphasizing into our future?
- Are there things that if we would be aware we would potentially get on the front of the wave of what God is wanting to do?
- In the same way are there things that if we continue to do them or ignore would cause us great harm into the future.
- You may not agree with me on a few of these though most you will acknowledge are present in the Church just by observation.
- I believe these things will drive the agendas of local Churches over the next 10 - 20 years.
- My points really fall into two categories:
- Things in the future that would be best avoided.
- Things we would do well to embrace.
- I have 16 things I want to talk about but I suppose it's a growing list as more gets added.

1. "Re-old"

- There is a drive back to the past.
- Focus on embracing old patterns and styles.
- Pressure will be on introducing old liturgies again in our worship.
- Pressure to go back to titles long abandoned.
- Example: Ove Eckmann joined the Catholic Church.

2. Small is beautiful

- I don't believe the next 20 years will be the death of the mega Church but close to it.
- A lot of the modern mega Churches have been built on the basis of community and not mission.... result is that in the world finding new ways to relate.... community breaks down.
- Large Churches will find different ways to be small otherwise I believe they will die.

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3. Back to basics

- "Barefoot Christianity"
- Early Church Christianity will find a voice in the next 20 years.
- Many Churches will be set up around the world where the focus will be back to simple and basic away from complex and technological.
- I will be conducting an experimental Church here.
- Move away from technology.
- Teaming in leadership.
- No ministries....no offerings.
- Looser gender based emphasis on leadership.

4. Designer Church

- Churches will do progressively more to be focused on their community of reach.
- You could call this a very tribal focus.
- It has both a positive and a negative element:
- Positively the church will shape itself to a particular culture to reach it.
- 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.
- To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.
- I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.
- Negatively I believe the Church will become more polarized around race and culture.

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- Why we see all these aberrations of Church:
- Of a Nigerian Churches in London.
- Zimbabwean Churches in Johannesburg.
- Pilipino Churches in Copenhagen.

5. On-line Church

- Digital Church will become more and more popular in the next 20 years.
- People will go for a personally designed worship experience online and will literally belong to that Church.
- You will have the strange phenomenon of Church activities such as small groups etc. but no corporate meeting other than an online expression.

6. Drift away from "Pentecostalism"

- The power of God at work in a human life has always been difficult to explain and understand for believers they will therefore lean away from the power of God.
- The lean away from 'power' is done under the guise of trying to reach more people.
- Speaking in tongues will be the first casualty.
- It was the first casualty in the first century and it will be one again in ours.
- The order of things restored to the Church:
- Salvation by faith.
- Baptism.
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- Worship.
- Biblical leadership.
- Things will be lost in the same way:
- 'Cheap grace'
- Baptism as a ceremony not life change.
- Tongues lost.

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- Power lost.
- Worship as an experience not as a heart change moment.
- A W Tozer: "Worship is no longer worship when it reflects the culture around us more than the Christ within us".
- Unbiblical leadership.

7. Wild theological swings

- The "new" theological revelations around "old" truth will become more and more prevalent.
- Ephesians 4:14 "So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."
- The Church across the world will have a tendency to swing back and forth on the theological spectrum.... poorly taught.
- A move away from teaching the Bible to preaching series and topical sermons.

8. The irrelevant Church...politicization of the Church

- I say irrelevant.... but it is the Churches desire for relevance that will drive this agenda.
- The drive will be for the Church to be relevant to society but it is really a politicization of the Church.
- When I say the Church is becoming irrelevant it is only in the context of the scriptures that I think there is a drift away from Biblical relevance.

9. Counter cultural Church

- We won't be in it.
- There is another wave coming and we will traditionally persecute it. New younger less formal Churches.
- They won't look like Church.

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10. Mission in vogue

- Churches that have not been missional but rather thought about only building church will in the next 10 years find their missions feet.
- The last 30 years have been all about the Church....the next 30 will be all about the mission.
- One negative is a proliferation on "para-church" organizations again.... we don't learn our lessons well.

11. Interactive meetings.... preaching and worship

- The interactive congregation idea will become 'in'.
- People want to influence the outcome of things.
- You see it in the TV shows influencing the outcome of competitions.
- The positive is the encouragement of scripture has always been for this.
- 1 Corinthians 14:26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.
- I believe in corporate worship so how do we adapt?
- You could use technology.
- www.polleverywhere.com
- Develop a more conversational style of preaching.

12. New partnerships.... across denominational lines

- There will be a strong movement to partner.... I believe this will be driven by both necessity and by God.
- Necessity because the denominational Churches will progressively fail more and more and will of necessity begin to partner more.
- The second part of this will be a Kingdom of God thing where partnerships will be formed for the sake of the mission in a city or a region.

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- Churches that are not necessarily from the same families will plant churches 'together'.
- You may find this drive helpful in the obtaining new venues for our Churches.
- I do believe we need to get a little creative around our facilities if all they do is cost us money.

13. Church mergers

- We will see more and more of these and they will unfortunately mostly have a negative spin on it.
- Mergers will happen because Churches are failing.
- The assumption is that $1 + 1 = 2$ but it doesn't it generally equals 1.5 and ends up with just 1 again.

14. Church planting

- Church planting out of mission and not Churches to try and do mission.
- When Paul planted Churches he preceded every Church plant with gospel preaching not the other way around.
- Church planting will very much be part of the Church agenda in the next season.

15. Church blocks...for strength

- Churches will end up drifting into camps where for the sake of strength and having a voice politically they will group together.
- Don't be surprised if we see whole movements that some years ago couldn't tolerate each other get into the same boat together.
- There will be a dividing line through the Church which I believe will become more and more pronounced around 'alive' and 'not alive' Churches.
- In well-established Churched nations like the USA and South Africa the drift is very pronounced.
- Reformed group.
- Holy Spirit experience group.

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- Grace camp.
- Surely we were meant to hold all this in tension?

16. Social media revolution

- Churches will unfortunately wake up to this tool late in the game.
- I believe whole Church plants will be set up online before a single meeting has even taken place.
- This is a mission's opportunity for the Church.
- Example Dutch girl inviting friends to her 16th birthday.

CONCLUSION

- There is a new wave starting.... get on it.
- The prophets have always called the Church to the margins and the Apostolic has led the call to go.