

Life Beyond the Offering Plate



What This is Not About . . .



Posts . . .

Post-modernism

Post Christendom

Post-secularism

Post-materialism

Post-conventionalism

Post-mortems

Post Office

What else this is not about . . .



Doom

Gloom

Crisis

Closure

End of the church

End of Christianity (or Baptists)

Armageddon

or

If you buy my book, read my blog, subscribe to my internet site, you will avert all the above crises . . .

What the seminar is about . . .



A Provocation . . .

Open enquiry . . .

Both/and not ***either/or*** . . .

Solutions not problems . . .

Risk . . .

Hard Work . . .

Imagination . . .

Strategic Foresight . . .

The Framework for the Discussion



BUV Strategic Document 2006-2010

3.8 'We want to see under-resourced churches and pastors more able to find sustainable ways to move beyond survival and engage in mission'

&

3.11 'We want to develop an understanding of the death and renewal of mission in local church life, affirming that the ~~end of~~, *size and location* of a congregation's life does not mean the end of the mission of God in the area'.

The Framework – An Overview . . .



- Three paradigms or broad-brush scenarios of church models
- The use of the language of business and marketing (product, customer base, revenue streams)
- No one paradigm or model is offered as better than the other
- The third paradigm could however be identified as most relevant to this discussion

Paradigm 1



Numbers Maketh the Church

Revenue Stream: Primary revenue source congregational 'offerings'; some venue hire income or limited income from specific activities or interest groups. Financial sustainability connected to number of 'givers'.

Customers: Primarily middle-class suburban Australian baby-boomers.

Product: Christian Gospel

The focus on numbers is primarily because the assumption is made that those attending can provide the required finances/revenue through weekly offerings to make the church financially viable. When numbers fall off and revenue is affected the viability of the church is questioned.

Paradigm 2



Missional Maketh the Church

Revenue Stream: Primary revenue source external income or grants; limited revenue from offerings; some revenue from sale of books and materials & conference income where organisation is large enough.

Customers: Generation X & Y transitional 'refugees' from Mum & Dad's suburban middle-class church

Product: Christian Gospel

In this paradigm 'church' viability is focussed on 'emergence'. This 'emergence' is out of the gloom and predicted doom of the 'established' church upon which these 'emerging churches' are primarily dependent for their income.

Paradigm 3



Connectedness Maketh the Church

Revenue Stream: Mixed revenue stream from commercial and community based activities with limited dependence on income from 'offerings'.

Customers: The local community and church community.

Product: Christian Gospel

This alternative paradigm starts with a different focus. In this paradigm the focus for local church viability is not on the size or location of the church but on **the quality of its connectedness and relevance to the local community** within which it is embedded.

The Application and the Challenges



- Relevant to all three scenarios
- Particularly relevant to under-utilised church property
- Particularly relevant where churches experience huge lost opportunity costs
- The challenges include:
 - ✓ Church member fears and anxieties
 - ✓ Financial risk and exposure
 - ✓ Local planning regulations and community expectations
 - ✓ Theological presuppositions
 - ✓ Lack of vision
 - ✓ Risk aversion
 - ✓ Short-term financial outcomes at the expense of long-term gains
 - ✓ Limited 'futures' thinking or limited strategic foresight



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Moral Impediments & Strategic Foresight

The Global Outlook Panel created as part of the Millennium Project by The American Council for the United Nations University identified the following 'moral impediments' to strategic foresight planning:

- ✓ Insufficient attention to the needs of future generations
- ✓ Caring about the wellbeing of only one's own group or nation
- ✓ Corruption of leaders and policy makers
- ✓ Greed and self-centredness
- ✓ Acceptance of inequities
- ✓ Lack of a holistic view of the world
- ✓ Lack of respect for the environment
- ✓ Lack of compassion and tolerance for others
- ✓ Failure of nerve and imagination

[Hayward, P 2003, 'Resolving the moral impediments to foresight action', *Foresight*, 5, 1, pp. 4-10]

But how do you do it? What are the Critical Success Factors?



- The Project Champion.
A person who can articulate the vision, drive the process of analysis, and engage others in the process – what some have called the ‘social entrepreneur’.
- A Church Development Task Group.
A working group around the Project Champion, with the required skill set and drawn from a generational cross sector of church attendees/members, who have captured the vision and can advocate for change.



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Critical Success Factors

- **Mission Alignment**
The final outcome of the process of transformation of under-utilised church property must be aligned to the mission objectives of the church. Non-alignment will divert energy and focus and result in a weakening of the core focus and activity of the church.
- **Governance**
Whatever governance mechanism is put in place to manage both the development of church properties and ongoing operations (whether a not-for profit Company, an Incorporated Association, a Cooperative, a Benevolent Society or other) governance must be maintained by the church members.

Critical Success Factors



- Management and Operating Skills

An operating model and ongoing management structure will be crucial to any mixed use development providing a mixed revenue stream. This may need to be outsourced or an appropriate manager employed accountable to the church through the Pastor.

Critical Success Factors



- Rigour and due diligence in concept development utilising some basic business tools:
 - ✓ Opportunity Evaluation
 - ✓ Feasibility Study
 - ✓ Concept Plan
 - ✓ Business Plan (financial model)
 - ✓ Operating Plan

Conclusion – Hope Not . . .



‘Imagination is more important than
knowledge.

Knowledge is limited.

Imagination encircles the world’ . . .

(Einstein 1929)

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