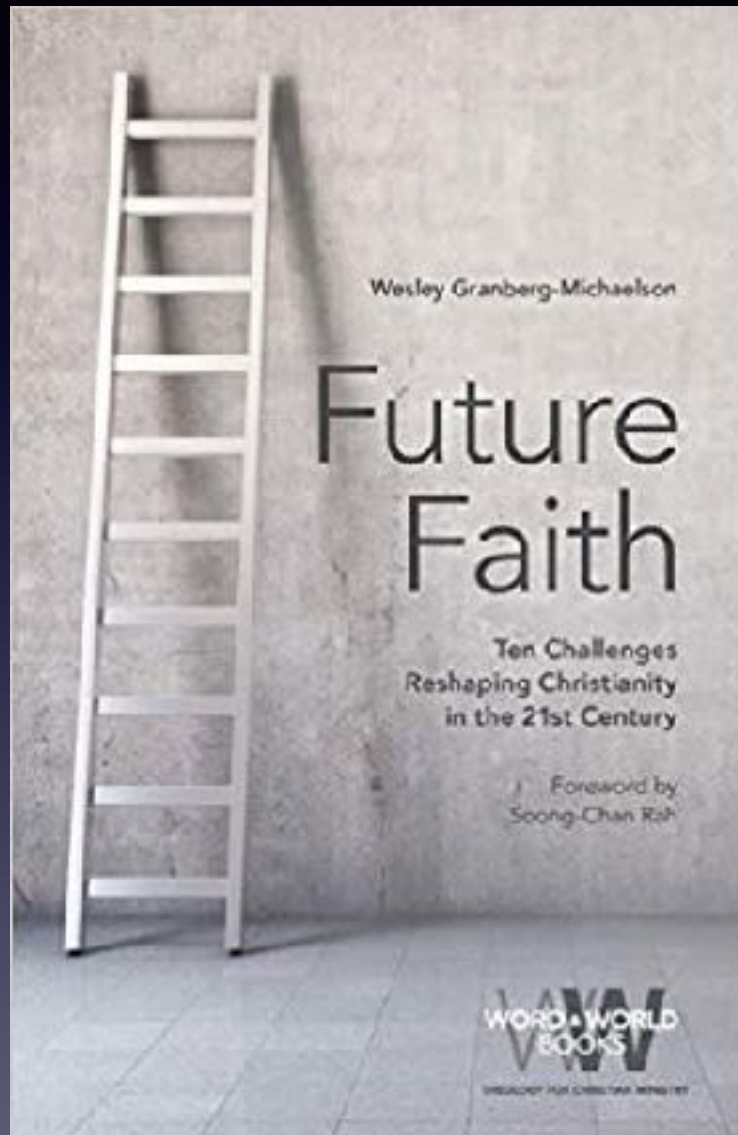


Future Faith



Holy Manners Bookstudy 44

ACTS
Winter 2020

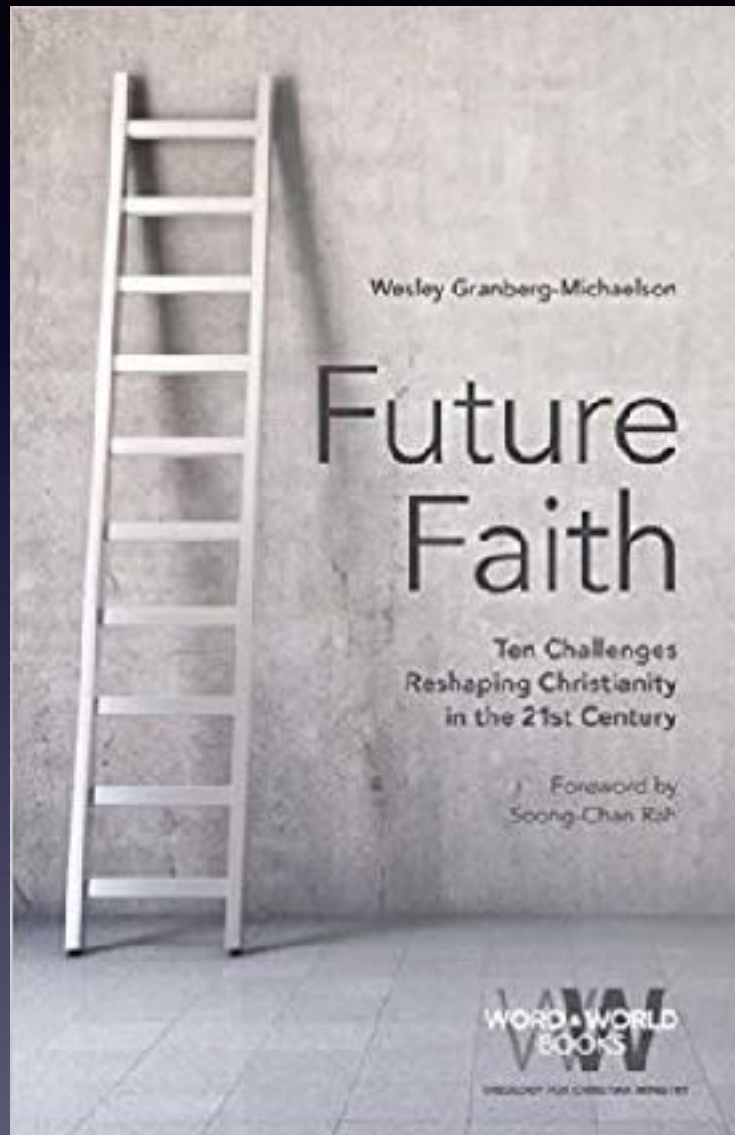
St David's United Church
Calgary

Session # 2

- Housekeeping - Wayne
- Opening - Guest
- Chapter Theme - Wayne
- Video Supplement- Jock
- Hospitality Break
- General Discussion -Brenda
- Closing - Guest
- Appx 1 - Mike Grammer's Notes
- Appx 2 - Joan's Discussion Notes

Housekeeping & Opening Prayer

Wayne





Opening Jock

It is increasingly clear that Progressive Christianity must open to other Christian communities, rather than continue our polite theological war of words.

Jordan Peterson is a professor of psychology at UofToronto. He is a progressive scholar who loves biblical mythology. Yet here he is with Liberty University, a place famous for its orthodox fundamentalism, respectfully discussing the basics of belief.



Jordan Peterson at Liberty University
Asked about the Resurrection

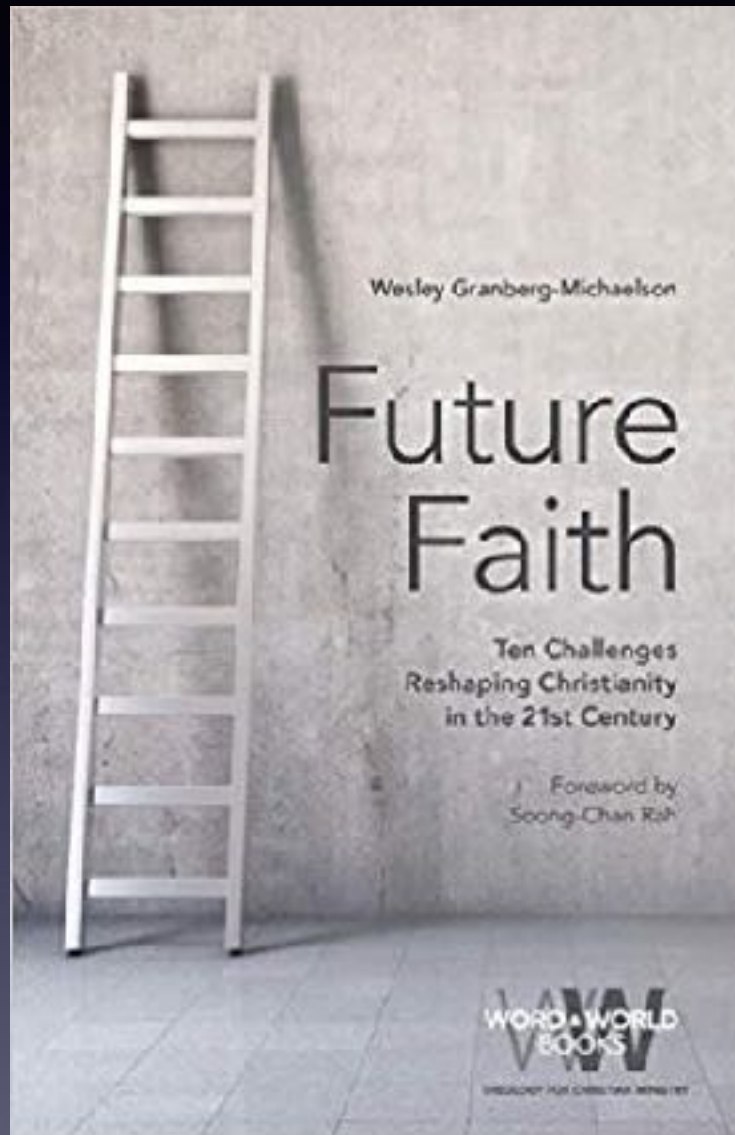
6m

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yTno34L6M8>

Chapter Theme

Challenge One:

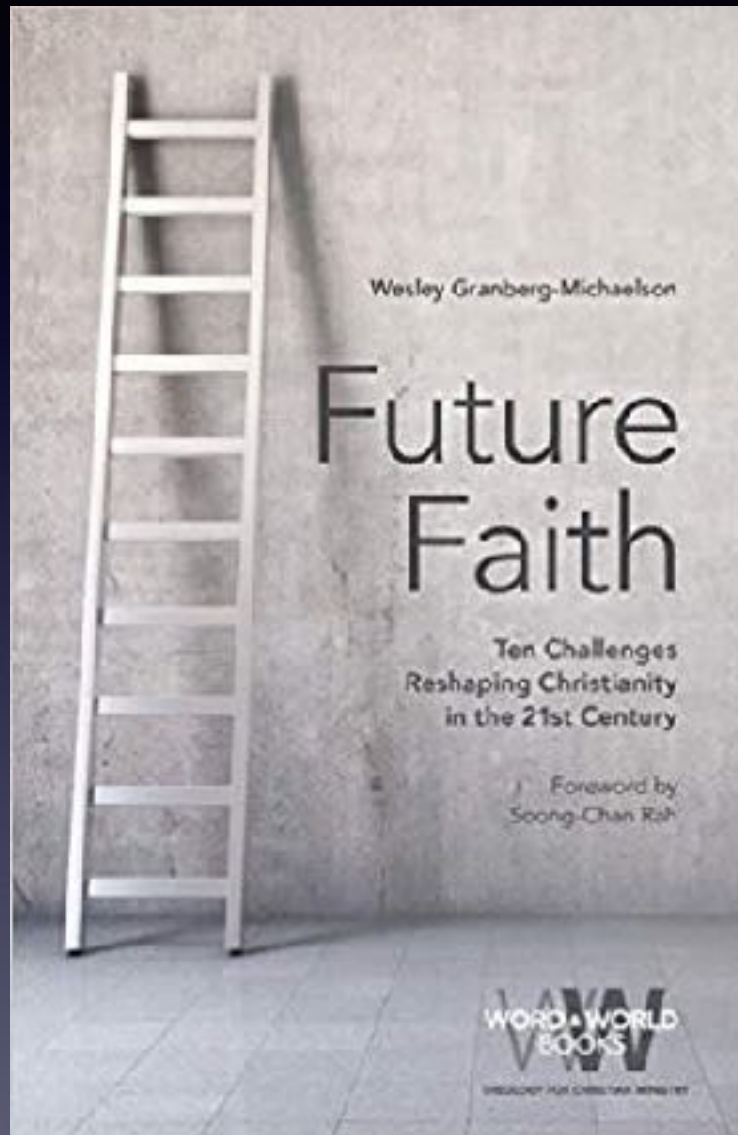
Revitalizing Withering Congregations



Introductory Videos

Dropping Church
Attendance in Canada

Short History of Largest
Church in the World





Church attendance is dropping in Canada | Your Morning
5m

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-ot-1mu-_g



World's Largest single Church with 800,000 members!

9m40s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25Jpdfip8-4>

With their own Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYMbi3EzSrTz6dxq4Qe3Bcg>



Challenge One: Revitalizing Withering Congregations

- Megachurches
- N/S Decline/Growth
- Mission Reversal
- Martyrs
- Migration
- Summary
- The Spirit of Haida Gwaii

Key Themes - Megachurches

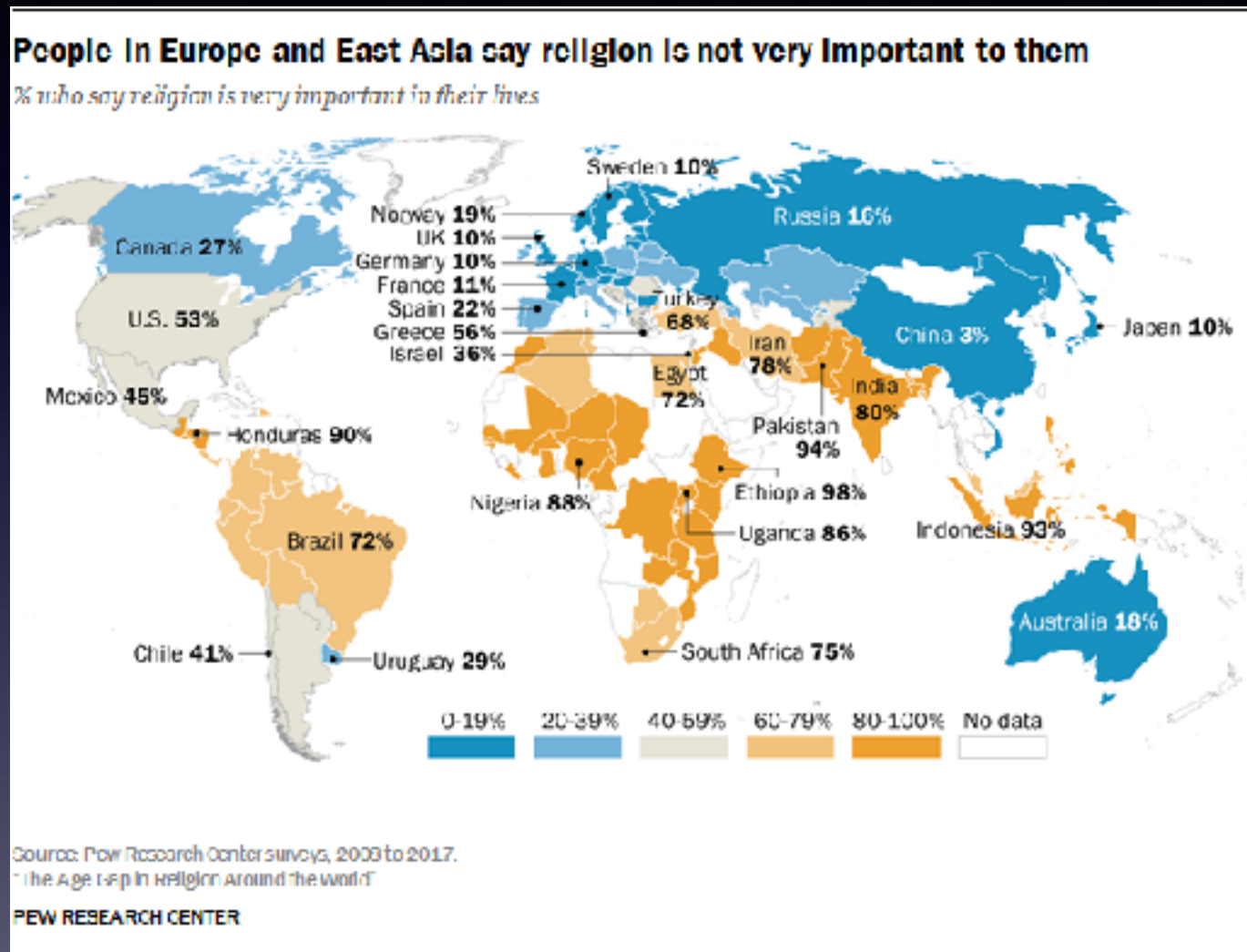


In North America, and elsewhere around the world, "full service" megachurches seem to be replacing traditional parishes and denominational organizations

Do you think this is true?

What needs are being met that were previously unmet?

Key Themes - N/S Decline/Growth



While we seem to live with a mindset of "decline" the global faith picture seems to be just the reverse

Does this seem to be the case?
Why do we think so?

Key Themes - Mission Reversal

Reversal of the traditional mission story -

While at one time the Christian growth trajectory was North to South - today it is just the reverse

What evidence do we have for this in Calgary?

Key Themes - Martyrs



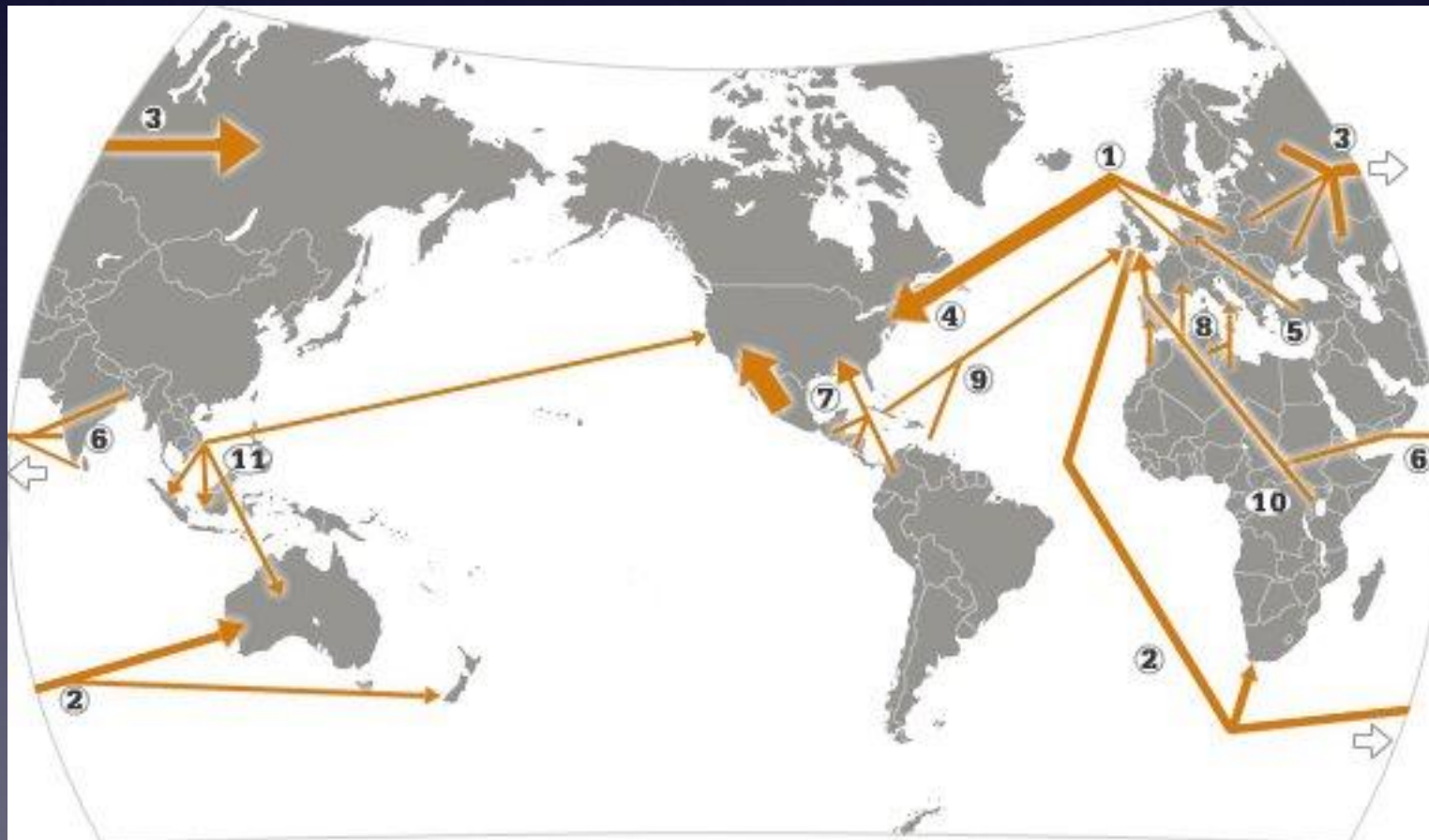
"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" is a classic summary of how the church often grows.

Discuss examples noted in the book, and others (like Equador)

Do we have examples of that from our own history?

Key Themes - Migration

Most church growth in North America is the result of migration from parts of the world that is experiencing a vital Christianity



Discuss

Summary Statement (p.20)

(North) American churches tend to live with a narrative portraying society as becoming more secular and are losing the loyalty of their young people, who are rapidly exiting establishment churches.

Further, congregations can't reverse the momentum of aging and they struggle for the courage to change, hoping at least to survive, if not thrive.

Summary Statement (cont)

The world is interconnected as never before. The irony is that the global narrative tells of a world becoming more religious, with Christianity experiencing dramatic growth and change that is bringing fresh spiritual vitality and relevant social impact.

The question is whether (our) churches will be locked into a parochial story of their gradual demise, or liberated by a global story that is bringing new life into its midst from unexpected places.



We're In This Together

Article in the Anglican Journal
17 January 2010

[LINK](#)

Wayne Holst

As I read the articles on the statistical decline of the Anglican Church in Canada, the image of the “Spirit of Haida Gwaii” surfaced dramatically for me.

The variety and interdependence of the canoe's occupants represent the natural environment on which the ancient Haida relied for survival. These passengers are diverse and not always in harmony, yet they must depend on one another to live.

The Spirit of Haida Gwaii, a sculpture by Bill Reid.
Photo: Bengt Oberger/Wikipedia5m of 9m40s



We're in this together By Wayne Holst - Anglican Journal - 17 January 2010

As I read the articles on the statistical decline of the Anglican Church in Canada, the image of the “Spirit of Haida Gwaii” surfaced dramatically for me. This iconic sculpture by Bill Reid has several versions—appearing at the Vancouver International Airport, the Canadian Embassy in Washington D.C. and the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau. These magnificent art works represent a great myth of the Haida Gwaii Indigenous heritage.

Reid renders a traditional dugout canoe with passengers, including Raven, Mouse Woman, Grizzly Bear, Beaver, Sea Bear and Killer Whale, among others. The significance of these travellers, according to Haida tradition, is highly symbolic. The variety and interdependence of the canoe's occupants represent the natural environment on which the ancient Haida relied for survival. These passengers are diverse and not always in harmony, yet they must depend on one another to live.

Summarized poignantly, it says, “We're in this together.” And that, in effect, is my response to January's *Anglican Journal* articles on the state of the church.

Understandably, most of the pieces on statistical decline focus on the Anglican Church in Canada, but in a larger sense, “we're in this together.” Let me unpack some of what I think that means.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls reminds us insightfully about the future: “[The result] may be a smaller church, but it will be a church.” The Rev. Neill Elliot, key author of the study, adds, “God will have a church.” The prospect involves everyone, not just the leadership.

Other mainstream Canadian denominations are experiencing similar decreases. Lutherans, Presbyterians, the United Church of Canada and some Baptist groups are not surprised by the news, because their experience is similar. If Canadian denominations, including the Roman Catholic and many Evangelical Protestant denominations, are increasingly aware that the traditional tributaries of church growth have been drying up. Some pentecostalist groups have had to deal with slow growth. Immigration patterns have changed; birth rates, scandals and hypocrisies—they have all taken their toll.

An encouraging sign in this rather dismal story is that some of our denominations have been paying more attention to evangelical Christian voices, who are thankfully different in tone and philosophy from their American sisters and brothers. We need to listen to those voices.

Ethnically diverse or “big tent” communities are worthy alternatives to the shared nature of our traditional (usually single-ethnicity) constituencies. We are learning that there is no substitute for community outreach, discipleship training and meaningful worship experience. Creative forms of youth ministry continue to be important congregational investments. We have tended to neglect these.

In spite of the importance of heritage and tradition, denominations like the Anglican and Lutheran ones have been cooperating for more than a generation and have much solid experience (not just the quick fix) to share across our divides.

“We're in this together” is not a cliché. It is a lived human experience—one needed if we are to survive as humans and as human communities of faith. Necessity is the mother of invention. Again, this is not just a platitude.

Let's be grateful to those who are sounding alarm bells that can spur us to change. The “Spirit of Haida Gwaii” is an inspiring image.

"We're in this Together"

- Visual pages with handout

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/were-in-this-together/>

Wayne's Anglican Journal Column, January, 2020

A reflection on congregations "struggling for the courage to change, hoping at least to survive, if not to thrive.

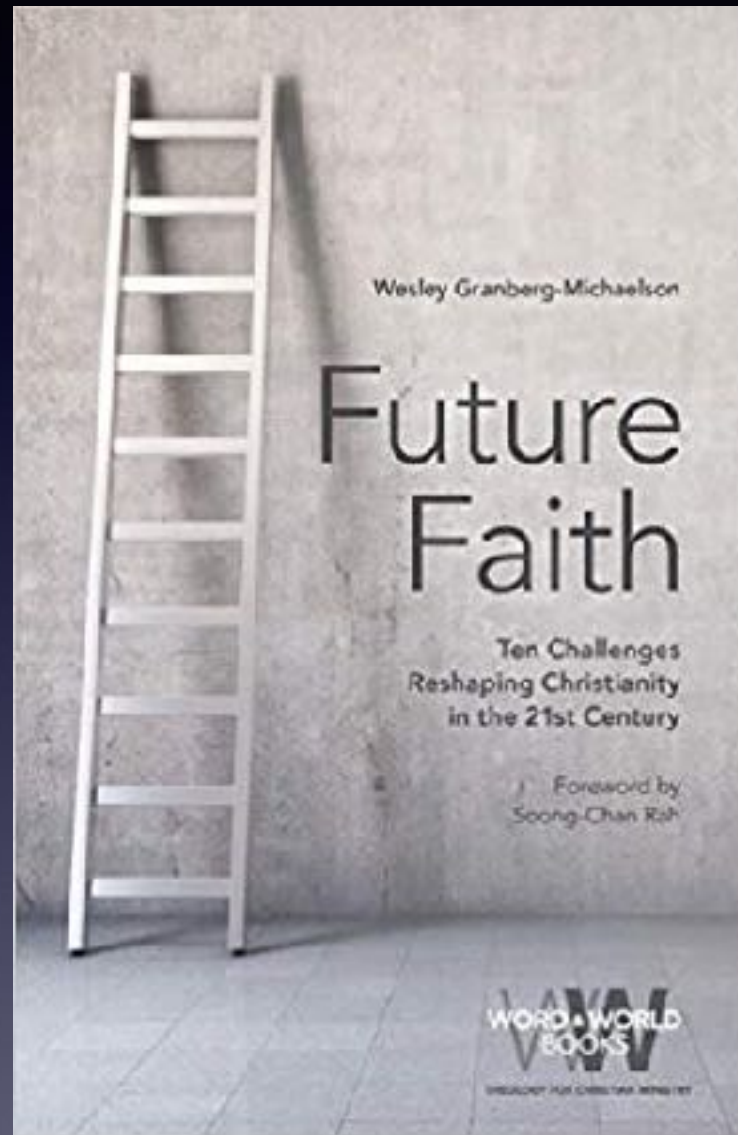
- Discuss

BREAK





Time now. Please return.



Large Group Discussions

Challenge One: Revitalizing Withering Congregations

Brenda



Challenge One: Revitalizing Withering Congregations

- Megachurches
- N/S Decline/Growth
- Mission Reversal
- Martyrs
- Migration
- The Spirit of Haida Gwaii

Next Readings

Session 3 - 27 Jan 2020

**Challenge Two:
Embracing the Colour of the Future**

Study Website

sduc.ca

Supplementary Info

Chapter Notes

Conversation Notes

Chapter Notes

By Mike Grammer, Toronto - 20 January 2010

FUTURE FAITH

REVITALIZING WITHERING CONGREGATIONS

7 bottom, 8 top. My dad was fuming a bit when my two nephews, at Kol Nidre, seemed to take little interest in the service. It's one of the few times I've had to remonstrate with him. I said to him: "do you see *anyone* else their age here tonight? Enough that they *are* here." What I chose not to say at that time....there is a terrible danger in imposing *your* view of what religion should be on your (grand)children. It is for them to choose their path and what religion looks like on that path. All you can do is provide an example. Earlier this year, my older nephew read torah, along with me, for the special service my dad leads for the army veterans who cannot get to synagogue anymore

8, so they become religious tombs and museums?

9, smaller numbers don't necessarily mean there is a lack of attraction. You can be attracted to such a congregation knowing that your presence and participation counts much more, is more important in its way. But the effective reach is, without doubt, affected.

10, I've said many times about friends---they have to be interested. And they have to be interesting. And they have to be both. Your job? It has to be interested. And it has to be interesting. And it has to be both? Your religion? Well, I don't need to spell it out for you, do I?

12, I wonder if there is a "spectator syndrome" catching on with the megachurches. If you're there as one of thousands, you need not be recognized? That and strength in numbers.

13, "innovation is in their DNA". Yes. I have spoken to Deb by email about this already. About the corporate concept of "disruption". Today's Western Church must DISRUPT. Must engage in this kind of behaviour. Only then can it "cool up"---can it become interesting to the critical younger population. The advantage? Arguably, Christianity has sales in its DNA too, so it is just a matter of identifying the wants and needs of that younger generation and then design the promotional program---as a first step, anyway.

13, bottom, I should really transmit a terrific picture I took in Singapore of St. Andrew's church. Anglican in derivation, it hosts, I think, 7 services for 5 different cultures.

16, Christianity's growth doubled Asia's population growth—that is really interesting!

18, health care in Zambia. It's beyond the scope for me to talk too much about this, but I see a distinct role for religions---believe it or not---in whatever the next iteration of democracy ends up being. It/they have the potential to fill the gap of cynicism and keep the concept of democracy alive.

20, I commented—or at least alluded to--in a recent-ish opening or closing, that listening is not something the Christian religion in Canada and the US has done a lot of historically. That time seems to have come.

Chapter Notes

By Mike Grammer, Toronto - 20 January 2010

21. Traditional core, diverse vision. I am positive but uncertain. I will say that without our klei kodesh---our spiritual/religious leadership, it would probably be unsuccessful. And that is because each one of them—the rabbi, assistant rabbi, cantor, ritual director, director of education and director of young people’s outreach have each made the effort to interact with me—and not just by email. I’ll get back to this in a bit

22. Yes but no but yes, as my friend Heather likes to say. My immediate faith community, conservative Jewry, has experienced a decline. Attendance at synagogues has overall been up in Toronto, I think, but that is due to the specific dynamic growth of the orthodox and Chabad movement.

23. These parts of the world have less to be able to do more with. To them, religion **is** important enough. In Western civilization? We are “blinded by the lights”. The key ingredient of personal, **physical** attendance and connection is the most difficult to obtain now in this sphere. How do you make the church important enough? Important enough to get out of your bed, get off your kitchen chair and shut down the phone, ipad or computer to spend some 3 hours going to and participating in a church service? Good luck with the answer.

24. Tie between Zambia and the involvement in a “government” sphere of health, and Ecuador with willing and eager indigenous groups Christianizing. I’m not sure how I feel about that, honestly.

25. I want to see some of the methods he’s seen trying to be implemented here that have worked to produce hundreds of thousands of single-church worshippers in Korea, etc.

So here are my questions for you guys. WHAT ONE THING, IF IT WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM ST. DAVID’S, WOULD BE A BACKBREAKER, WOULD CAUSE YOU TO LEAVE THE CONGREGATION? AND WHAT ONE THING THAT ST. DAVID’S DOESN’T HAVE WOULD ENERGIZE YOU TO INSIST TO A CHRISTIAN FRIEND THAT THEY HAD TO COME TO A SERVICE? AND ARE THOSE THINGS (IN BOTH CASES) RELEVANT ACROSS AN AGE DEMOGRAPHIC SPECTRUM?

Discussion Notes

By Joan Gary - 20 January 2010

Notes - Jan 20, 2020 Session 2 - Chapter 1 - Revitalizing Withering Congregations

by Joan Gray, ed. Jock McTavish

Mike Grammer - from Toronto, Mike sends his chapter notes which are appended to the powerpoint. And he challenges us with this: “So here are my questions for you guys. WHAT ONE THING, IF IT WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM ST. DAVID’S, WOULD BE A BACKBREAKER, WOULD CAUSE YOU TO LEAVE THE CONGREGATION? AND WHAT ONE THING THAT ST. DAVID’S DOESN’T HAVE WOULD ENERGIZE YOU TO INSIST TO A CHRISTIAN FRIEND THAT THEY HAD TO COME TO A SERVICE? AND ARE THOSE THINGS (IN BOTH CASES) RELEVANT ACROSS AN AGE DEMOGRAPHIC SPECTRUM?”

Housekeeping

Nice evening (Especially from last Monday.) Chinook winds are welcoming. Brenda acknowledged as well as the participants how hard Jock and Wayne work to present this study each Monday. Thanks to Joan for note taking. Thanks to Cindy's for her comments and suggestions; there was a lot of thought put into it. (Staying in a large group rather than breaking up, not everyone may need the mic.)

Chapter 1 has lots of statistics, numbers. Brenda pulled up our own demographics of St David's. To find it, go into SDUC website and go to About. Handout provided. Brenda did a trajectory on this handout of what all statistics might look like in 2024/2025 based on averages of the previous 4 church years.)

Wayne mentioned this Sunday ACTS will focus on our previous book study, Holy Envy - Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor. There are 6 participants from the book study that will be part of the service.

Mike D's reflection yesterday at church was very good. It can be found on the SDUC website under Sermons. Perhaps other church members would like to share as Mike did on a Sunday. Share their own personal history and faith journey. Would be challenging for some.

Introduction Video : Jordan Peterson at Liberty College. Asked about the Resurrection <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yTno34L6M8>

Comments:

Jesus taught in symbolism.

That's what Jesus spoke of in his parables - to teach by story, metaphor.

Video - David Haskell interview - Decline of Churches in Canada.

Discussion Notes

By Joan Gary - 20 January 2010

Video - As mentioned in Ch1, the world's largest church - Yoido Full Gospel Korean Pentecostal Mega Church. A short history and review of their current operations.

Comments:

Many, many people in this church don't have a lot. (Post Korean War.)

CindyS. reported on her research. The video was scary, upsetting. It is driven by desire for wealth, greed. Regarding the miracles - the Korean people have a history in belief shamanism. The leader of the Pentecostal - Dr Cho was convicted on financial inappropriation. Fined millions of dollars. His son was jailed. This church reminds her of brainwashing. Evokes intense fear. Other stats found - In 2015 - 69% of Koreans in their 20's had no religious beliefs. In 2005 - 55% of Koreans in their 20's had no religious beliefs.

Korean Mega Churches, like others similar, are a denomination onto themselves.

Do they follow the Bible? Yes they do.

There is a current reverse trajectory of Christianity growing in South America instead of North America

Lots of these mega churches and large denominational churches are against LGBTQ.

What UC needs is a forceful orator.

Wayne mentioned the Spirit of human goodness.

Summary of Chapter 1 - Wayne. Megachurches, N/S Decline/Growth, Mission Reversal, Martyrs Migration, The Spirit of Haida Gwai

Large Group Discussions - Brenda

Statistics at St David's shows we are in decline of 10%

Of the 122 members attending St David's in Dec 2019, 81 are Par donors (automatic contributions from bank.) We want to increase to the 480 as confirmed membership.

The question is why are we in decline? However, St David's is in the top 8% compared to the rest of Canada's United Churches comparing our expenses to income. We are a very giving church. Although this is a sad statistic if we are in the top 8%.

Being a church no longer gets people in the door today.

The culture in the 1950s and 1960s was that Sunday was reserved for church. One was rather shamed if you were found to not attend on Sunday. Now, there is no guilt for not going to church.

Discussion Notes

By Joan Gary - 20 January 2010

In 1942/1943 Canada Post had a slogan and was stamped on every letter: Observe Sunday.

It was different 23 years ago. Now, so many people go somewhere in the summer. Perhaps because the summers are shorter. There is an El Comino Trail in Nova Scotia that she walked during one summer. It was wonderful.

The United Church seems to have let us down:

We used to be in the news with our social justice position. We spoke up in the House of Commons. Now we hear nothing.

In the Broadview United Church magazine, there is not anything in there to keep one motivated to keep coming.

Public Leadership seems missing.

St David's has a small devoted Garden Group. It is lead by Karen. Her view is that a garden is part of a church. It is very important to make a good first impression to someone entering. If we are declining we can't give up and let our garden go. This is her devotion. Prior years she volunteered at the Children's Hospital. The hospice building had the saddest garden going. The children entering there were not coming out. She felt a committment to make it beautiful, for the children and their parents. Now she has left this task to others and is concentrating on St David's.

We seem to be doing reasonably well compared to the national average. The United Church is ahead of it's time. Youth are less interested in fundamental churches than progressive.

We are not going to get people in the church if they are not welcome. (Deb made chicken noodle soup for the Taize Service last Friday, to make people welcome.)

There had been 2 aboriginal people in church last Sunday. We could have done a better job of welcoming them. (Although someone gave them a gift card for food and bus tickets which was very good. There was some hamper food for them but no one could find where it had been put in the office.)

Someone had said we can be a very clicky church. There is a problem with our ethnocentricity.

On a positive note, a young couple felt St David's is a very welcoming church. They love the message. As a result they are getting married here.

A reminder to the Book Study people: If we could keep in mind items for the food hamper. (Items that can be eaten or drank on the go. Not microwavable items or cans that need a can opener or have to be warmed before eating.)

Closing - Brenda.