

Mission Sydney

The Missional Malaise

'Something Completely Different'

"The significant problems we face can't be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

Albert Einstein



The Mixed Economy Option

Dr Martin J Bragger

**Missional Communities Consultant
Department of Evangelism and New Churches**

**Unboundedchurch.com
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Time For Something Completely Different

The motive for writing this booklet is threefold. Firstly, is a passion for the more effective proclamation of Gospel of Jesus with the result of bringing many more men and women into the Kingdom of God. Secondly, is the great concern shared by many at the low and decreasing missional fruitfulness of churches over now several decades. Thirdly, it is a desire to analyse the reasons for that decline in order to facilitate the design of another potentially much more missionally fruitful mission paradigm, that of the 'Mixed Economy' church.

Before anything else, it is important to acknowledge the fact that for many years (indeed decades) large numbers of godly, committed, faithful Christians engaged in local church gospel ministry have worked hard in 'Mission' campaigns and events, and in the development of new evangelistic strategies. However while we must honour those endeavours, the regrettable reality is that the fruit has generally been significantly and persistently less than is needed, and continues to be.

It is also important to state that, while this essay argues that we are now at a point where a tectonic shift is required in our approach to mission, the traditional parochial network will continue to provide a nurturing spiritual environment for the current 50,000 or so Sunday service attendees in Sydney Anglican churches. That network will also continue to have some missional success in reaching (perhaps optimistically) 20% of the population. None of this however in anyway avoids the conclusion that it is time for *Something Completely Different*.

This booklet contains an analysis that reveals some very unpalatable and unpopular truths that urgently require response. Then on the basis of that analysis moves on to propose, as at least part of that response, the development of what are called 'Mixed Economy Churches'.

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The Missional Malaise – 1. How We Got Here

"We have to understand our history in order to not repeat the mistakes of the past. I have seen too many instances where people continue to pursue wrong courses of action because they do not take the time to think critically about what has happened in the past"

Winston Churchill

The fact is that we cannot say we have not been warned. Many of the issues central to the current missional challenge have been raised at various points over nearly half a century. These were opportunities to instigate a process of substantive change which were largely not taken.

1972 'Looking Into The Parish'

As long ago as the early 1970s a remarkably prescient report entitled '*Looking Into The Parish*' commissioned by the 1970 Sydney Synod was produced.¹ There is not space here to make much comment on that report but a few quotes are highly relevant to today.

*"If the work of the Gospel is to continue with **effectiveness in a rapidly changing society** it is imperative that the present rigidity of structure be removed so as to permit the introduction of varied forms of ministry to meet differing needs and situations. . . . **With the emergence of new kinds of community we must be able to adapt our ministry and do so quickly.** New patterns of ministry can be required at very short notice."*²

It is hard to see that this '*rigidity of structure*' has significantly reduced yet it is the very antithesis of the '*Flexibility*' called for later in this

¹ 'The Parochial Ministry and Organisation Commission' 1972

² '*Looking Into the Parish*' p.37 – Clause 141. Author's emphasis

document. Further, the ability to adapt quickly and at short notice is not something the current parochial structure is capable of.³

Then there is probably the most prescient statement in the report-

“In changing the structure we must be careful not to merely substitute one rigid form for another. However much we may be convinced that a particular new form of structure will remedy existing deficiencies, there can be no guarantee that it will still be appropriate for the further changes in society yet to come. And such changes, no doubt beyond the range of present thinking, will most certainly occur.”⁴

Here is an awareness, even if embryonic and not described as such, of the issue of the ‘Knightian Uncertainty’ cultural environment, evident even in the latter decades of the 20th century, in which missional strategy must be developed.⁵ That ‘uncertainty’ environment is now even more ‘uncertain’, and is one where a large number of the parameters that will shape the future cultural, and therefore missional, landscape simply cannot be known. This is an essential consideration for missional strategic thinking yet is rarely discussed.

2008 Mid-Mission Reports

Then during the 2002-2012 Sydney Diocesan Mission a number of reports were issued on progress. In particular, there were ‘*The Diocesan Mission- Midpoint Report*’ (2008) and ‘*The Diocesan Mission- Strategic Directions 2010-2012*’ report. Both of these contained warnings that the ‘More and Better’ strategy was failing.⁶

³ As is more fully argued in ‘*Unbinding the Church*’ - [Unbinding the Church- Missional Realities and Better Options](#)’

⁴ p.37 – Clause 143. Author’s emphasis.

⁵ A term named after the American economist Frank Knight. It describes an environment where decisions for the future need to be made in the present but where the available data is insufficient to be sure about the future that is being planned for. This is a description of our current missional context.

⁶ See in the Diagnosis Section

One of those reports, the '*Strategic Directions*' Report, commented on '*Looking Into the Parish*'.

"While the ideas of the Diocesan Mission have been circulating since the early 1970's Synod Report "Looking Into the Parish", the reality of change was being shelved for another day".⁷

Sadly, in terms of mission it is very difficult to argue against the conclusion that '*the reality of change is **still** being shelved for another day*'. Nor would it seem that in terms of missional strategy much has substantively changed since that early 1970s report, nearly half a century ago!

The Mid-Mission reports of 2008 are replete with expressions of concern that should have sounded alarm bells, for example-

- "*We are yet to see **radical change** on a large scale throughout the Diocese*"⁸ It is still difficult to see anything that has happened in the area of missional strategy to which the word 'radical' can accurately be applied.
- "*Resources are still largely focussed on ministering to church members rather than connecting with the community*".⁹ They still are.
- "*The focus (should be)*¹⁰ *to **redirect ministry from congregational gatherings to parish outreach.***"¹¹ There is little evidence that this has happened on any significant scale.
- "*We want individuals and churches to be intentional and creative, recognising that will mean changes in our church programs and how our **paid staff and others spend their time.***"¹²
- This "*calls for **a fundamental mind-change/paradigm-shift in the way our churches see themselves and respond***".¹³ Here is the

⁷ Diocesan 'Strategic Directions Report' 2008, p.16 Author's emphasis.

⁸ 'Midpoint Report p.2 The implication being that this is what is needed

⁹ Midpoint Report p.2

¹⁰ Author's insert.

¹¹ Midpoint Report p.2

¹² Midpoint Report p.2 - Author's emphasis

¹³ Midpoint Report p.4

key issue, the long called for but so far unmaterialized 'mind set and paradigm' shifts without which increased missional fruitfulness will remain very elusive.

- "We need to shift our thinking **to become a missional church** . . . much in the way Christian missionaries have traditionally viewed bringing the gospel to Africa".¹⁴ However, rather than becoming a 'Missional Church', we generally still continue to be 'Churches that do mission'.
- "We must do **something different** to what we have been doing if we desire different outcomes."¹⁵
- "While the ideas of the Diocesan Mission have been circulating since the early 1970s Synod Report "Looking Into the Parishes", **the reality of change was being shelved for another day**".
- "How slow we have been to put (the mission) into effect and **how urgent the need is for change now**."¹⁶ How much more urgent 10 years later!

Highly relevantly, in the 2013 report by the Mission Board to Synod on the 10 year Mission the following assessment was made-

Question - "Did the 10 year Diocesan Mission achieve its goals?"

Answer given – "Clearly not."

Given that analysis, it is perhaps a little perplexing that the response was to initiate another Diocese-wide mission - Mission 2020 – with little obvious difference, either in focus or strategy, from the acknowledged failed 2002-2012 Mission. The 2016 NCLS data and 2017 attendance statistics indicate that Mission 2020 is also not achieving its goals.

2015 Synod Motion

¹⁴ Midpoint Report p.4

¹⁵ Midpoint Report p.14 Author's emphasis.

¹⁶ Diocesan 'Strategic Directions' Report p.16 Author's emphasis. And this ten years ago!

Motivated by a deep concern in regard to the chronically very limited missional fruit from consecutive Diocesan Missions, the author submitted the following motion to the 2015 Sydney Synod.

"For the purpose of greater missional fruitfulness, the Synod requests the Archbishop to establish a working group that will investigate the formation of Alternative forms of Anglican Church.

- i) That are theologically Anglican.*
- ii) That are shaped by the principles for Christian community voiced to us by the New Testament.*
- iii) That are specifically designed to penetrate and engage with the multiplicity of non-Christian spiritual and cultural worlds in which the majority of Australians now live.*
- iv) That are not necessarily required to owe anything to our traditional (Christendom-form) parish model.*

Further that the working group report back to Synod 2016 with specific and concrete proposals for the initiation of a process to create such alternative forms of church."

Subsequent to that motion being passed by Synod, the Archbishop formed a Working Group,¹⁷ of which the author was a member. The group, via Standing Committee, reported to the 2016 Synod as requested,¹⁸ and the report was passed by Synod.

A key recommendation of the report was that the Department of Evangelism and New Churches (ENC) Ordinance be changed to broaden the ENC mandate to require it to explore the establishment of "*Alternative Forms of Anglican Church*", as per the author's original motion. ENC is now operating within this extended '*Alternative Forms of Anglican Church*' mandate, in part in promoting and encouraging the establishment of Missional Communities.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Alternative Forms of Anglican Church* (Resolution 8/15 – Synod 2015)

¹⁸ Special Report 8/15 – *Alternative Forms of Anglican Church* – Synod Proceedings 2016, p.88

¹⁹ ENC is the Department of Evangelism and New Churches

One key phrase that should be noted is "***Alternative Forms of Anglican Church***".

Despite the warnings given over several decades, spoken, written and evidential, of the need for change, together with the chronically declining levels of missional fruit from the standard parish platform, few changes of substance have been made. There has not been the Paradigm Shift called for by the 2008 Mid-Mission reports, nor substantive change in Diocesan missional strategies. Fundamentally, the prevailing thinking re 'church' and 'mission' continues in the same vein as it was in the 1970s.

The comment cited above on the '*Looking Into the Parishes*' report was that-

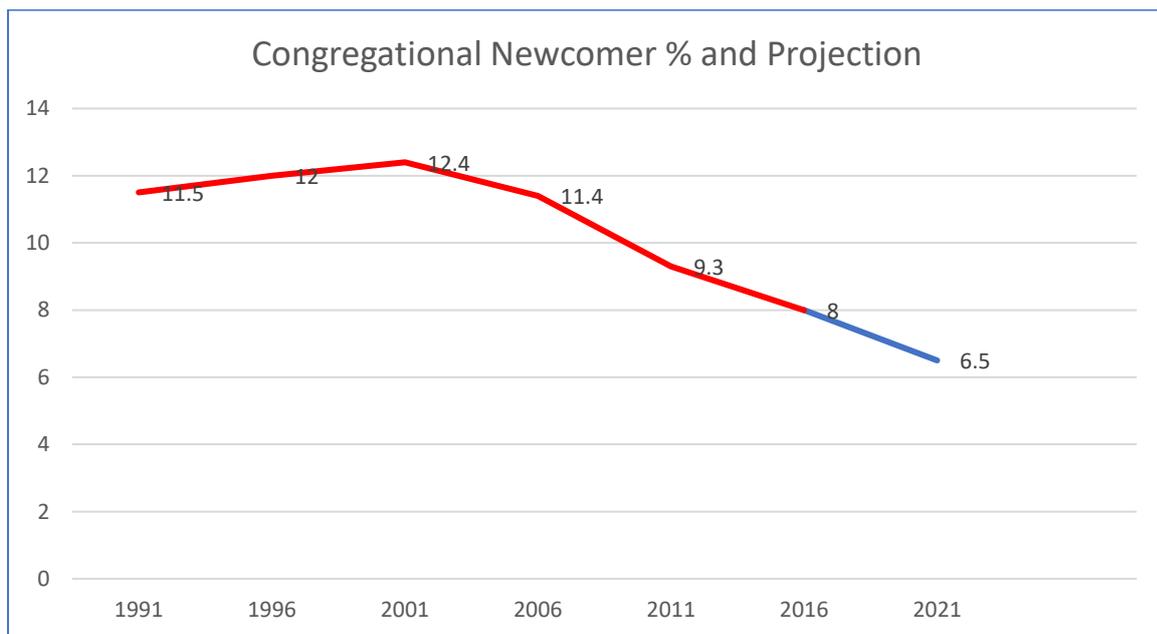
"the reality of change was being shelved for another day".

Nearly half a century later it seems to be the case that it still is!

The Missional Malaise – 2. Symptoms

It is now indisputable that, despite the hard work and commitment of large numbers of godly Christians in successive mission campaigns, there has been for nearly half a century a failure to respond to evidence of the need for, and various reports calling for, significant change in missional strategy. Consequently, there is a now well documented entrenched and chronic decline in missional fruitfulness, as the following 5 significant symptoms of this missional malaise indicate.

1. The longstanding and persistent decline in 'Newcomers' in congregations.²⁰ The 'Newcomer' statistic is arguably the best measure we have of Missional fruitfulness, and this fell by 35% between 2001 and 2016, and continues to do so, as indicated in the following graph.



2. The Desalination Effect.

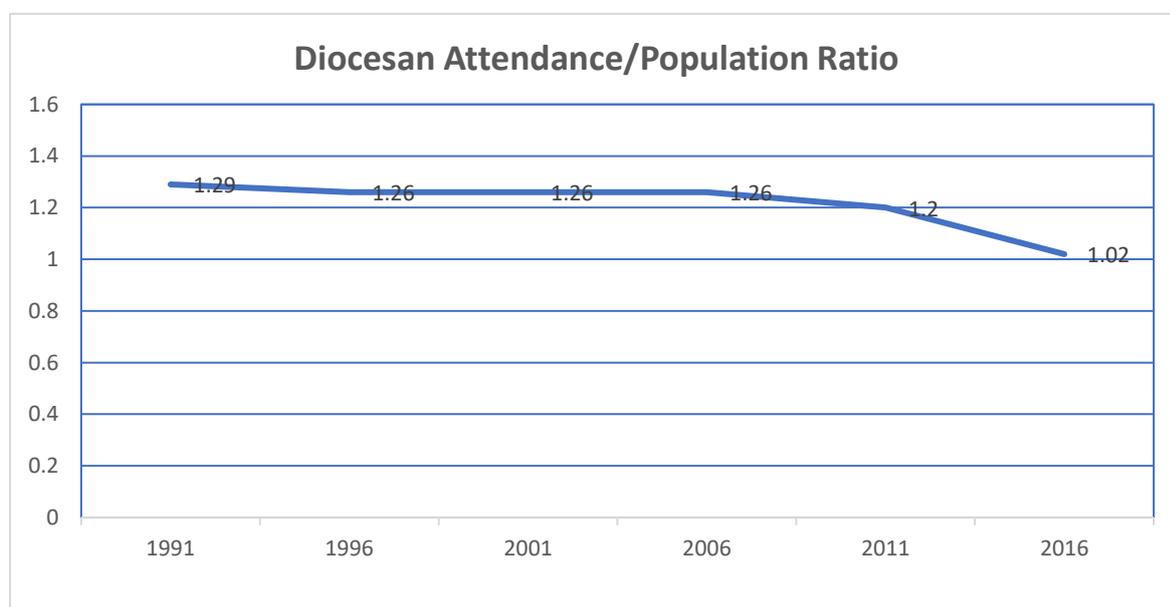
The ratio of aggregate Sydney Anglican Church Attendance to the Population of the Diocese (the SALT Index) declined by about 20% in

²⁰ 'Newcomers' means those who have joined their present congregation or parish in the last five years but had not previously attended a church for many years or have never attended. This is arguably the best measure of missional effectiveness we have.

the 10 years to 2016, and had fallen to 0.98% between by 2017. On this trend it will be 0.78 by 2022. i.e. barely three quarters of a percent of Sydney-siders will be in a weekly Anglican church service.

This represents a trend of diminishing Gospel influence on the Diocesan area, an effect further exacerbated by the evidence that what 'Salt' there is has to a great degree lost its 'saltiness' (Matthew 5:13), as indicated by the fact that only 19% of Anglican church members are willing to talk about their faith.²¹

Given the approximately 10% population increase over the 2013-2017



period,²² and (generously) assuming flat aggregate attendance over the same period, just to stand still against the population trend, the Diocese needed to have increased by 10% the 2013 weekly attendance of 53000, that is 5300 attendees over the four year period, or 1325 per year. This amounts (again assuming flat attendance numbers) to 26 new 50 attendee strong congregations a year, or about one a fortnight. However, that is a generous analysis that assumes attendance has remained flat over the period- It hasn't! If we add the recorded attendance drop of 3000 people a week between 2013 and 2017 to the

²¹ NCLS 2016

²² Population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics

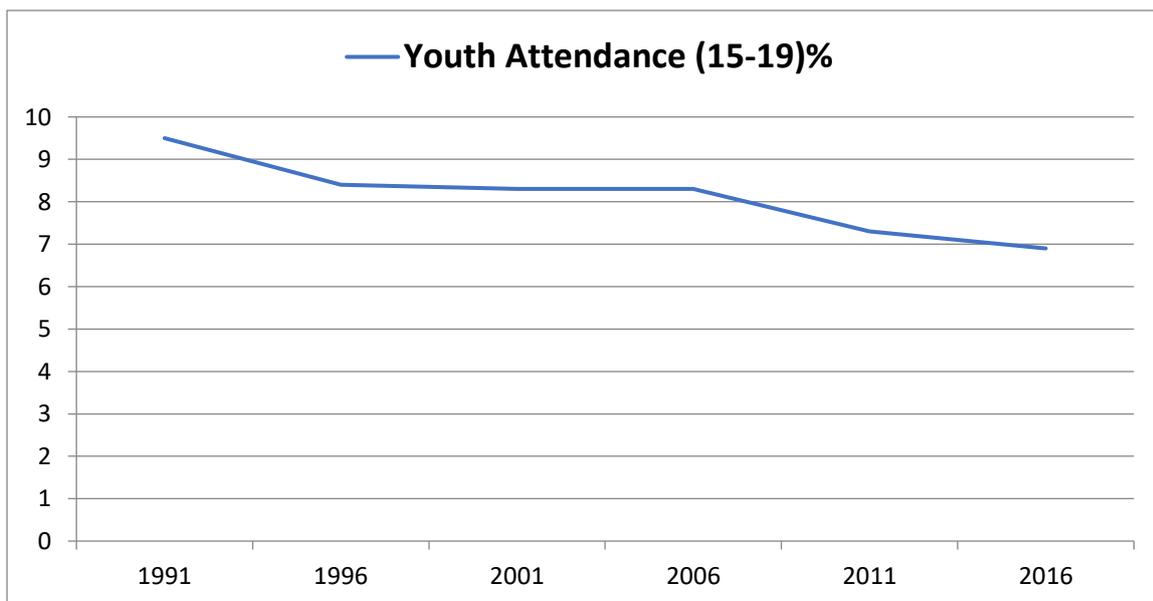
above calculated 5300 i.e. = 8300,²³ then the number of new 50 strong congregations needed per year just to stand still against the population rises to around 41, or more than three a month. This of course is not remotely within reach given current strategies and their results.

3. **'The Transferee Mirage'**- In the ten years up to 2011, aggregate Diocesan attendance figures grew at approximately the same rate as the population of Sydney (some saw this as 'Success'), but between 2012 and 2016 the trend has been flat or downwards.

The key point is that over the 2001 to 2016 period the percentage of 'Newcomers' in congregations consistently declined which indicates that any alleged 'success' in terms of missional fruit is really a *'Mirage'*. This is because any attendance growth or stability is largely due to people transferring from other denominations, or regions, but probably mostly due to high immigration, NOT the result of missional strategies.

4. **The Average Age of Congregations.** This continues to rise decade on decade.

5. Reducing Youth Attendance.



²³ 2013-2017 attendance figures supplied by the Archbishop in answer to a question asked at the 2018 Sydney Synod on the 15th October.

As shown by the graph above, there has been a gradual erosion of Youth involvement and attendance.²⁴ This will be a factor in overall attendance levels, average congregational age and may well impact enrolments at Moore College. This represents a 26% decline in the youth component of congregations since 1991, and a 17% decline since 2006.

The inescapable conclusion from all of the available evidence is the reality of a now long entrenched trend of decline in the number of converts, and a continuing loss of gospel influence on the region. Yes, the parochial network will continue to provide a nurturing spiritual environment for the current 50,000 or so Sunday service attendees and will have some limited missional success in reaching perhaps 20% of the population. However, it clearly cannot be the main vehicle for future mission to the other 80%. The argument of this essay is that *'Something Completely Different'* is required.

It must be acknowledged that there are a few parishes that are showing greater missional fruit, however the number is limited and nowhere near enough to significantly affect the negative trends outlined above. Further, critical analysis usually reveals that special circumstances, mostly not present elsewhere, contribute to their 'success'.

Regrettable though it is, for the reasons canvassed above, only a combination of extreme optimism and wishful thinking can argue against the truth of the following statement.

'Unpalatable though it may be, the current parochial structure has not been for over 20 years, is not, nor on its own can it be made to be, capable of achieving trend-reversing missional goals'

²⁴ NCLS Data supplied by Dr John Bellamy, Senior Researcher, Communications, Marketing and Research, Anglicare, Sydney. 10/10/2018

The Missional Malaise- 3. A Diagnosis

Before making any proposals as to how the entrenched decline in missional effectiveness might be addressed it is important to explore reasons for that decline. This would help avoid repeating the 'mistakes of history', and once more look back and again be condemned by the statement that the "*reality was that change was being left for another day*".

The argument here (brief for the sake of space) is that there are serious and systemic factors militating against missional effectiveness which if left unaddressed will continue to vitiate missional endeavours. While not claiming to be exhaustive, the following is a list of what I would argue are some of the most significant reasons for the chronic missional malaise.

1) The 'More and Better' Delusion

After now decades of disappointing results from heavily resourced missional endeavour, the belief that continuing with a 'More' of what we have been doing and trying to do it 'Better' missional strategy (as seems to generally be the case) will achieve different outcomes is surely a 'Delusion'. To keep on doing this would appear to have at least a whiff of Einstein's definition of 'Insanity' about it.

*"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again
and expecting different results"*

2) The 'SIC' Church Model

A major reason for the missional failure is the almost ubiquitous persistence with the Sunday-Centric, In- Drag, Christendom-Form (SIC) church model which was originally designed for the maintenance of Christian congregations in a Christendom society, and never for the challenge we face, that of local mission to our own, now Pagan, culture.

- **Sunday-Centric** – This is the idea that the main focus for growth is Sunday services. This when 40% plus of Australians can't attend even if they wanted to because of work, sport or recreational commitments.
- **In-Drag**- Nearly all 'Outreach' strategies try to get (drag) people into our church buildings, an approach that has now generally been failing since the last century.
- **Christendom-form**- Continuing to use the centuries old model of church as the main platform for mission, despite the fact that it is now in almost every way alien to, and culturally inaccessible by, the vast majority of 21st century Australians

3) Reinventing Square Wheels²⁵

The [Square Wheel](#) concept comes from a very old comedy movie in which a caveman is the first to invent the bicycle. However, his design had square wheels, and of course he discovered it didn't work that well! The 'Square Wheel' is the design (mission strategy) that didn't work very well last time we used it.

In our missional endeavours there is a continual reinventing of the 'Square Wheel', i.e. 20th century missional strategies and events, that were last effective in the more 'Christianized' society of yesteryear, despite there being ample evidence that they now haven't been greatly effective for a long time. Regrettably, many examples in the last year or so can be cited, some of which have already failed or are failing.

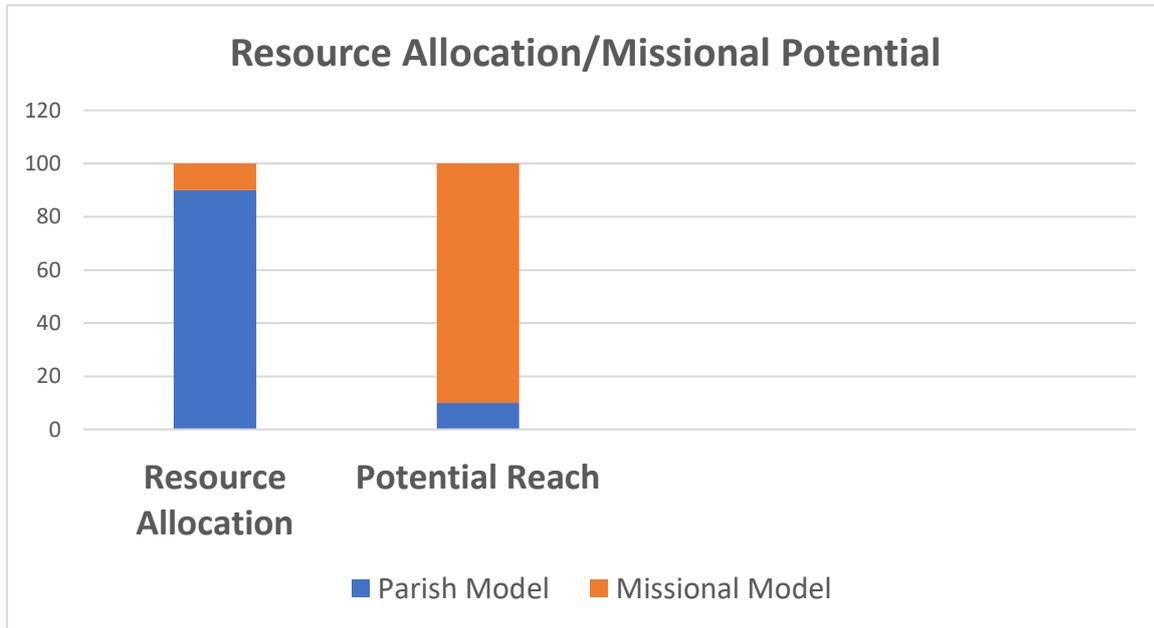
4) Upside-Down Resource Allocation

While not claiming to be precise, the following chart is indicative of how resources are distributed. Around ninety percent of resources continue to be focused on our missionally failing parish-centric model, which will

²⁵ <https://wordpress.com/post/unboundedchurch.com/1523>

optimistically reach only 20% of the population, whereas the focus should be –

"to redirect ministry from congregational gatherings to parish outreach".²⁶



5) A 'Cultural Intelligence Deficit'

There seems to be a general 'Cultural Intelligence' Deficit i.e. failure to exegete the culture(s) of 21st century Australia.²⁷ Cultural Intelligence is a measure of the ability to understand the times and the churning kaleidoscope of church-alien, even hostile, socio-spiritual cultural universes comprising Australian society. The reality is that the Christendom society,²⁸ in which and for which our model developed, is long gone and importantly, increasing numbers of Australians, even those born here, are from cultures that were NEVER IN IT!

History has not previously presented anything like our rapidly and constantly changing culture, changes being inexorably driven by brilliant technological innovation and the immigration flows reordering society's

²⁶ Again this point was made in Sydney Anglican Diocese's 'Midpoint' analysis of its 10 year mission in 2008. Now TEN Long years ago! Yet not much has changed.

²⁷ See - <https://unboundedchurch.com/2018/01/08/cultural-intelligence-understanding-the-times>

²⁸ See Appendix

ethnic mix. The Christendom society is now shattered into a **Kaleidoscope** of 'Live, Work and Play' micro-communities, cultural 'universes' that are alien to the 'church' universe.

Thus, the **Key** missional challenge is to grasp the reality that our ever morphing Kaleidoscope culture is truly unique, and that for the church to be effective in mission, intrinsic to its DNA must be an ability to constantly reinvent itself.²⁹ Here is the key 'Mind-shift' required,³⁰ because the missional church must not be locked into any specific shape. So perhaps Darwin may provide food for thought?

"It's not the strongest of species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change"

Charles Darwin

6) The 'Prior Question'

In assessing the future needs of 'Mission Sydney', it is not evident that, what might be called, the 'Prior Question' has been asked. Yet the asking of such a question is essential, in *any* organization, for a Vision for the future to be developed. In terms of Mission Sydney such a question might take the form of-

'If we were to develop a Mission strategy for a Sydney where there were no churches what would it be?'

In part, the answer to that question most certainly will not be 'the strategies currently being followed' which would confirm that 'what we are currently doing' is not what is required. Such a conclusion should instigate a process of critical analysis as to what we actually do need, which would enable the development of a strategic Vision for the increasingly difficult missional challenges ahead.

²⁹ A challenge implied by the 'Looking Into the Parish' report 50 years ago!

³⁰ Midpoint Report p.4

7) Multiplication Mathematics

A simple mathematical analysis of church attendance and population trends indicates that just to match population growth there would have to be a very large annual increase in the number of standard sized congregations. As previously argued, this means that the Diocese of Sydney would have to create around 25 or more **additional** 50 attendee-strong congregations **EVERY YEAR** (again on the improbable assumption that none fail). To emphasise this, it is the equivalent of around at least two new congregations a month!

There is no possibility that this can be achieved by standard congregational sized fellowships, or by 'Classic' church planting. Strategies for effective mission in 21st century culture need to be ones that enable the rapid multiplication of Christian fellowships. These will, by necessity, be small.

8) The Dead Hand of Apathy

'Only 1 in 5 Church members are willing to talk intentionally about their faith. This is equivalent to trying to win a war with an army where only 20% of the soldiers are willing to fight!'

A few years ago, about half way through the Diocesan Ten Year Mission, as part of a thesis I was writing at the time, I carried out a small survey in regard to the level of passion in congregations for reaching the community with the gospel. The format was that I asked a number of Senior Minister colleagues to respond to the following statement.

"My Congregation has a real Passion for Mission to the Australian community" with the following results (rounded figures)-

Strongly Disagree –	21%
Disagree -	50%
Neutral -	7%

Agree –	7%
Strongly Agree –	14%

While it is acknowledged that it was only a small sample, it does indicate that very few congregations were considered by their church leaders to have significant passion for mission, this despite decades of teaching on and exhortation in regard to the importance of this matter.

The conclusion reached here, actually just confirmation of my own observations from experience of leading parish churches, is that there is a general mission-blocking apathy and lack of passion for mission to the Australian community among congregational members. This concern is given weight by the fact that, according to the 2016 NCLS, less than 1 in 5 Church members are willing to talk intentionally about their faith. This is equivalent to an army where only 20% of soldiers are willing to fight! The idea that such an army can win the war is surely little more than wishful thinking.

This missionally deadening 'Dead Hand of Apathy' is very prevalent and is one reason why it is difficult to think that the standard (SIC) parish model can be reinvented, at least fast enough, to achieve the radically increased missional fruitfulness so urgently needed.

As Tom Frame has commented-

*"the culturally compliant strain of Christianity promoted in Australia does not. oblige (people) to embrace lifestyle choices that might involve discomfort."*³¹

9) A New Mindset³²

The 2008 Mid-Mission reports previously referred to called "*for a fundamental mind-change/paradigm-shift*".³³ However, and most regrettably, the reality is that ten years later that totally new 'Mind-set'

³¹ Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009) p.15

³² Midpoint Report p.4

³³ Midpoint Report p.4

required for effective mission in our 21st century western culture has still not been developed.³⁴ This is where this Einstein quote is helpful-

"The significant problems we face can't be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

The great concern is that if we continue to operate at *"the same level of thinking"*, and particularly the same level of thinking about Church (ecclesiology) and Mission (missiology), as we have in the past, we will keep on with the same failed mission strategies of the last 20 years and longer. If so we will almost certainly see a continuation of the now chronic lack of missional fruit.

In Summary

As has been highlighted earlier, alarm bells in regard to the urgent need for change have been sounding for nearly half a century, yet there has still to be seen any real evidence of that change occurring.

Consequently, the key metrics of the 'Newcomer' percentage in congregations, the 'Attendance/Population' ratio and Youth decline have for a very long time indicated falling missional effectiveness and decline in the Diocesan gospel influence on the region. Is it not therefore time to do **'Something Completely Different'** and engineer the **'Paradigm Shift'** the 2008 Mid-Mission reports called for 10 long years ago?

The urgent need is, whatever form it takes, to specifically develop a mission strategy that can be the platform for the task of 'pagan mission', something that western mainline denominations have arguably never really done 'in our own culture', or even thought we had to do. Is it not long past time to ask the question as to whether it is not just *'thinking outside the box'* that is needed but to actually *'get out of the box'*. This leads to the concept of a Mixed Economy church'

³⁴ The point was made in Sydney Anglican Diocese's 'Midpoint' analysis of its ten year mission in 2008. Now TEN Long years ago, yet there is little evidence of such a changed mindset!

The Missional Malaise 4. The Mixed Economy Option

*"I have become ALL things to ALL people so that
by ALL possible means I might save some."*

(1 Corinthians 9:22)

As already outlined, there is an entrenched and longstanding trend of declining missional fruit as measured by 'Newcomers' in congregations.³⁵ As we face this challenge, the reality is that we live in a truly 'Unique' time of a rotating kaleidoscope of ongoing, rapid and accelerating cultural change. This requires new fellowships which are adaptable, have a capacity for self-reinvention and a facility for multiplication.

A further challenge is that Australia is now a fundamentally 'Pagan' country and so the task is one of '*Pagan Mission*'. This is something we have yet to learn how to do *in our own culture*.

The Mid-Mission reports in 2008 (ten years ago) called for four things (among others) - '**Radical change**', driven by a '**New Mindset**' that would create a '**New Paradigm**' in regard to Mission, and in order to achieve this a '**Reallocation of Resources**', away from "*congregational gatherings to parish outreach*". Ten years later there is little evidence that these have been implemented in any significant way, yet surely it can no longer be argued that those four things are not urgently required.

In terms of the '**New Paradigm**', the argument here is that, whatever form it takes, it needs to be a truly and deliberately new missional entity, one option for this is that of the Mixed Economy church.

³⁵ 'Newcomers' means those who have joined their present congregation or parish in the last five years but had not previously attended a church for many years or have never attended. This is arguably the best measure of missional effectiveness we have.

Key Requirements

In the current rapidly revolving 'Cultural Kaleidoscope' and in the light of the previous analysis, certain things can be said about the '*Something Completely Different*' (whatever form it takes) if it is to be missionally effective— i.e. It must-

- **Not Be Sunday-Centric-** For large numbers (over 40%) of Australians are simply not free to attend on Sundays, because of work and locked-in Recreational and Sport activities. While there may be some theological issues with the Missional Community networks established in the UK (of which there are now thousands), the fact is that 'missiologically', in terms of gaining 'Newcomers', they are highly effective (60% plus) and **the majority do not meet on Sundays.**
- **Be able to enter and penetrate the constantly morphing multiplicity of socio-spiritual cultural universes** that comprise 21st century Australian society. That is, it is able to implement a '***Go, Penetrate and Stay***' in the community strategy.
- **Be Easily and Rapidly Multiplied.** This is simply a mathematical necessity if the Diocese is to even match the region's population growth, let alone increase the gospel footprint.
- **Be led by a new breed of Leaders** who are both gifted and trained to be 'Missionaries' in a 'Pagan' society.
- **Be largely a Lay movement,** due to the large number of MCs required.
- **Be very low cost.** Given the high rate of multiplication of new fellowships needed, the high funding requirements of 'Classic' church planting means it can only form part of future mission strategies.
- **Be Small** missional units in order to be low cost and for ease of multiplication.

- **Be parallel to but functionally separate from the traditional church.**³⁶ This is because the DNA of the standard parish is generally governed by the old, missionally constraining, mindset not the radically 'New Mindset' required for a 'New Paradigm'.
- **Be capable of Self-Reinvention.** This is because the current missional environment/landscape is one of 'Knightian Uncertainty'.³⁷ That is one where the future missional landscape is not, and cannot be, known with any certainty because of the ongoing cultural ferment.³⁸

For this reason, we generally cannot plan to plant (as in Classic Church Planting strategies) a certain fixed type of new church, in a certain fixed place at a certain time, in order to reach a certain community. Rather, to be missionally effective, the Christian fellowships of the future must be able to regularly adapt themselves for a constantly changing cultural landscape.

The above set of 'Key requirements' can be met by what is known as a 'Mixed Economy Church'. This is where a Network of Missional Communities is developed in parallel with the standard parish, as we will describe in the following pages.

Firstly - What Is a Missional Community?

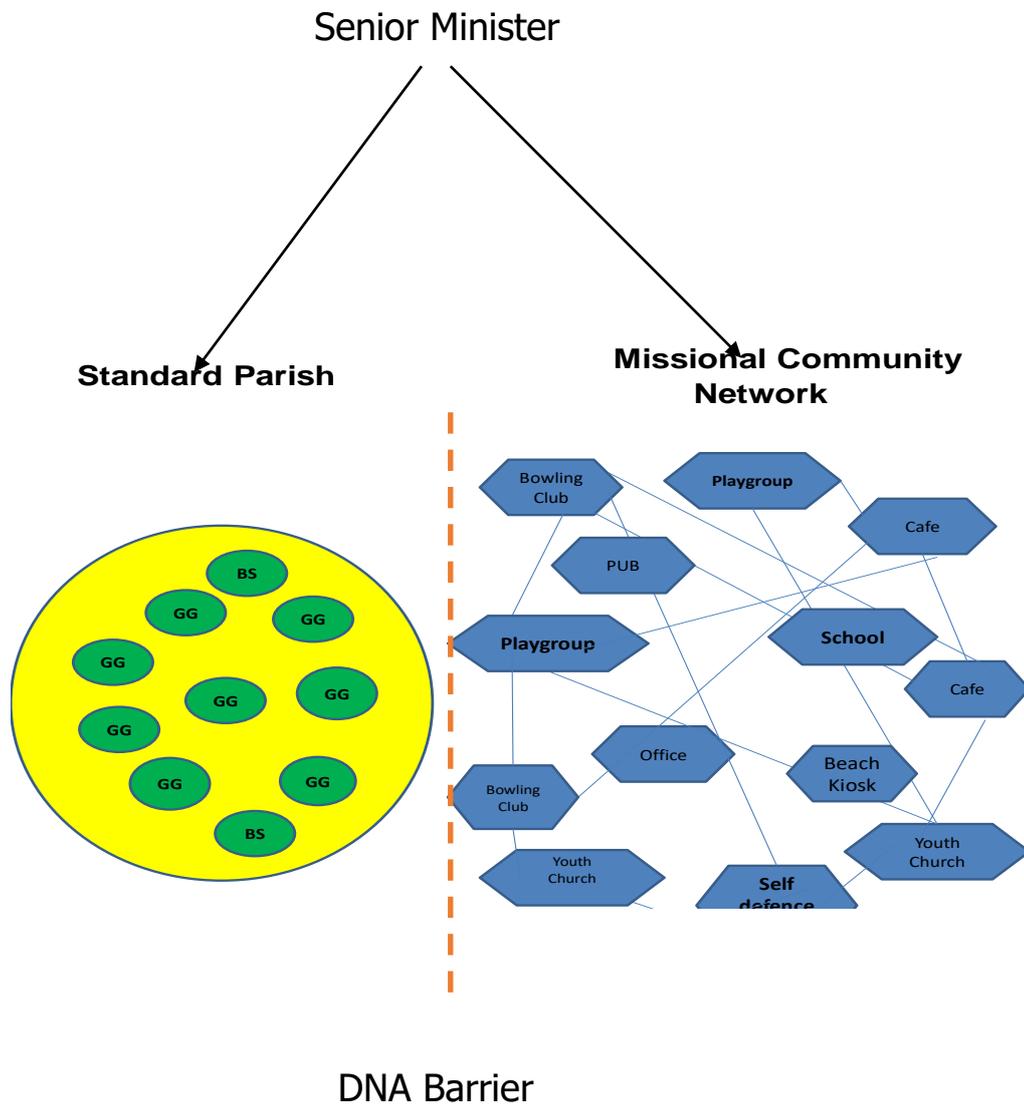
It is necessary to understand that a Missional Community is a

³⁶ This is what is called a Mixed Economy church. See the Appendix

³⁷ See foot note on page 4

³⁸ As was recognised by the Diocesan Report "*Looking into the Parish*" 50 years ago.

A Mixed Economy Church



BS – Bible Study Group

GG – Growth Group

 - Missional Community

'A Live Christian community embedded or constructed in, and for, places where non-Christians already are or are comfortable to gather'

Some of the main characteristics required for a Missional Community to be missionally effective are that it will be³⁹

- a) **An *Organic Mission-Fluid*** community not locked into *any* specific shape so that essential to its DNA is an ability to 'flow' into any form required for the mission needs of any cultural context.
- b) Highly '**Flexible**'-one more like a skeleton-less unshaped *Amoeba* than a skeletoned mammal. As Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:22.
- c) '**Adaptable**' - a community with the rapid adaptability of a Chameleon to fit into its background because of the constantly turning cultural Kaleidoscope
- d) '**Visible**' as much as possible. The principle is that MCs need to meet where non-Christians already gather or can easily be gathered. Over time this enables real 'Connections' to be made (not the 'Brief Encounters' of 'Event' evangelism activities), relationships to be built and favour to be gained. (Acts 2:47)
- e) **Dispersed and Embedded.** This is in order to reverse the flow from 'Go and Bring' into church services to 'Go and Stay' in the community. This means going to those who will not, often cannot, attend on Sundays and create networks of small missional Christian fellowships of variable sub-congregational sizes. These will be dispersed throughout and embedded in the Kaleidoscope of 'Live, Work and Play' micro-communities in which non-Christians already spend their time.

³⁹ For fuller explanation of this see [Unbinding the Church- Missional Realities and Better Options'](#) Booklet downloadable from unboundedchurch.com resources and events section.

- f) **Culturally Accessible** – in the sense of reflecting, using and relating to the cultural forms of, and the 'street' language of, the context in which they are set. The Key Idea here is –

Their style, their language, their place, their time!

- g) Defined by **Spiritual (NT) DNA** not any particular **Form-** i.e. a multiplicity of MCs shaped by the principles for Christian community voiced to us by the New Testament.

- h) **MESSY** in development process and form. A 'Start and See what the Holy Spirit does' strategy (John 3:8)⁴⁰

- i) A **Gathering** of people, seeded by a 'Core' group of Christians-
- Which meets intentionally in the name of Jesus
 - Where the Bible is learned
 - Where 'Newcomers' hear the gospel and are discipled in Jesus.
 - Where there is Prayer
 - Where there is Pastoral Care
 - Which meets on a regular basis as much as possible where non-Christians already meet or can easily be gathered
 - Which is publicly accessible
 - Which is as much as possible observable by the non-Christian people around its location, in order to make real 'Connections'.
 - Which is Missionally intentional, that is it-
 1. Seeks to 'Serve' i.e. actively show God's love to those around, so is looked on with favour (Acts 2:47).
 2. Deliberately seeks to make disciples
 3. Multiplies- i.e. Forms a 'Movement'⁴¹

A group defined by the above DNA set can be of any shape and of any size as is appropriate for the context, can meet at any time in any place, all or any of which can be changed quickly and at will.

⁴⁰ An 'Effectuation' process rather than the mostly 'Causational' approach of 'Classic' church planting.

⁴¹ There are many ways to multiply – not just by cloning. See <https://wordpress.com/post/unboundedchurch.com/524>

Part of Something Bigger

In order to show MC members that they are part of something bigger than their own group, the MCs in a Network should gather together at some regular (but not frequent) interval, perhaps 3 or 4 times a year. This larger celebration would also provide an opportunity for deeper teaching and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

All the evidence indicates that for significantly greater missional effectiveness what is needed is '*Something Completely Different*' i.e. the long-required but yet to eventuate '*Paradigm Shift*'. That is a missional community platform that is specifically designed for the very difficult missional challenge we face, a challenge the standard parochial model, despite great effort, has failed to meet for a generation or more. Given all the evidence, to believe otherwise can surely only be wishful thinking.

One suggested possibility for the '*Something Completely Different*' is the development of parish-established '*Mixed Economy*' Churches as described above.

To Conclude

Once more, it is important to acknowledge the hard work and gospel commitment in the cause of Mission of large numbers of church leaders and members over many years. However, the tragic reality is, as demonstrated by the statistical evidence, that missional fruit is not only less than expected, but continues to decline.

For 50 years the alarm bells have been sounding, warning of the need for substantial change in missional strategy. Yet they have largely been unheeded, the result being the decades long chronic decline in missional fruit. Critical analysis reveals a significant number of systemic issues that militate against missional success, which if left unaddressed will continue the decline.

The only conclusion to be reached from the above analysis is that '*Something Completely Different*' is required because-

Unpalatable though it may be, the current parochial structure has not been for over 20 years, is not, nor on its own can it be made to be, capable of achieving trend-reversing missional goals'

I want to suggest '**Four Keys**' to unlock and shape the '*Something Completely Different*', the suggestion here being that of a Mixed Economy church.

- **The Key Reality** – Frankly acknowledge the Key Reality that the Parochial system, in terms of Mission, hasn't worked, isn't working and cannot be made capable of working, and heed the alarm bells which have been ringing for nearly half a century.
- **The Key Verse** - *"I have become ALL things to ALL people So that by ALL possible means I might save some."*
(1 Corinthians 9:22)⁴²
- **The Key Mindset** '*Their style, their language, their place, their time*'. Missional effectiveness requires a significantly increased 'Cultural Intelligence'.
- **The Key Strategy** 'Go, Penetrate, Stay and Multiply'

The already mentioned sobering quote from the 2013 Mission report to Synod should keep our minds focused-

"While the ideas of the Diocesan Mission have been circulating since the early 1970s Synod Report "Looking Into the Parish", the reality of change was being shelved for another day".

The question and challenge is - Will future generations look back on this time and make the same condemnatory statement on us.

"The reality of change was being shelved for another day"?

⁴² Author's emphasis

Appendices

The Cultural Reality

Christendom - A society-

- *Ethnically and linguistically homogenous*
- *Where the majority went to Sunday services. This would have included no doubt many non-Christians, and so there was no need for 'Outreach' activities.*
- *Where all had a biblical world view (even if sub-consciously)*
- *Where the church was the centre and integrating hub of community life.*
- *Where everybody worked locally, and not at all on Sundays.*
- *Where church structures and ministries were constructed not for mission but for the maintenance of existing Christian congregations.*
- *Where **Change** was so slow as to be imperceptible.*

In contrast

21st Century Australia is a Society that is—

- *Neither ethnically nor linguistically homogenous-(26% and rising born overseas).*
- *Where the pool of Europe-originating people that has formed our natural constituency is shrinking as a proportion of the population.*
- *Where few go to Sunday services.⁴³*
- *Where the biblical world view has disappeared.*
- *Experiencing the rampant collapse of religious affiliation.⁴⁴*
- *Where the church is on the retreating periphery of a society increasingly hostile to it.*
- *Where 'work and play' micro-culture activity has consumed the erstwhile activity-free zone of Sunday.*
- *Where **Change** is rapid, ongoing and accelerating*

⁴³ Less than 1% and falling in Sydney Anglican parish churches.

⁴⁴ According to the ABS national census of 2016 around 30% of Australians indicate no religious affiliation.

Standard Church and Missional Community Characteristics Comparison

Characteristic	<i>Missional Community</i>	Standard Church	
Place	Anywhere	Fixed	
Time	Anytime	Scheduled*	*Still mostly on weekends.
Visibility	#Open Observable (No walls)	Bounded -Closed (Walls)*	*Members=those who come through the door #Members=those who attach themselves
Style	As required	Relatively fixed	
Flexibility	High (Amoeba)*	Low (Skeleton)	*Mission Fluid
Cultural Accessibility	High	*Low	* A Parallel alien cultural Universe
Mindset	Post Modern-21stC*	Modern-20thC	*'Humpty Dumpty' mindset i.e. A word mean what I say it means!
Mobility	High (Guerrilla Units)	Low (Standing Army)	
Adaptability	High (Chameleon)	Low	
Change Readiness	Very high	Very limited	
Mission DNA	Missional	Church with Mission 'Add-ons' *	*Usually called Outreach activities
Mission Strategy	'Go and Stay' Community Presence Relational Dispersed Kingdom focus	'Go and Bring' 'In-Drag'- Programs Events Campaigns Church centre focus	
Leadership	#Star Trek (Entrepreneurial)	Pastoral/Maintenance*	*Focus on Members #Focus on the Lost
Nature (Ontology)	Organic Movement	An Institution	

The Divine Freedom

While there are variations, the missiological strategies of most mainline churches are primarily based on and operate with a fundamentally 'SIC' mindset. This despite there being what might be called a '**Divine Freedom**' to do things very differently. There are a number of arguments that can be made for such a freedom, for example-

- i) The New Testament gives that freedom by implication because it does not specify any particular model for 'doing church and mission'. Rather it gives us principles for the forming and shaping of Christian community.
- ii) A study by the Sydney (Anglican) Diocesan Doctrine Commission (2008) in its report "A Theology of Christian Assembly" concluded that-

"Christian assemblies can take place anywhere, do not require the presence of any particular person, can occur at any time on any day and do not involve any essential ritual. Christians do not have a place on earth to which they must come to worship . . . and there is no need to observe particular days or rites" (Clause 24)

- iii) Further, the Anglican articles of faith reflect this Divine freedom. In particular Article 34 says –

"It is not necessary that the Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places, one and utterly alike: for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word."

- iv) That things can be different is also reinforced by Griffith-Thomas when he writes with reference to this Article-

"It is a matter of simple fact that Traditions and Ceremonies have never been alike, and it is not going too far to say that they never will be. The history of the church. . . has been again and again, marked by change, according to differences of place, occasions and circumstances."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ 'The Principles of Theology. An Introduction to the Thirty Nine Articles', W. H Griffith Thomas, p.440

Therefore, in the search for greater missional fruitfulness we should obey Paul's exhortation to "*imitate him*" (Phil 3:17) by following his example when he says-

*"I have become ALL things to ALL people
so that by ALL possible means I might save some."*⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Author's emphasis

For further information or

To enquire about –

- Staff/Leadership Team Presentations
- Introduction to Missional Communities Seminars
- Training Workshops
- Mission strategy analysis

Please contact Department of Evangelism and New Churches
on 02 9577 9874

Or - unboundedchurch@gmail.com

Phone 02 4267 5626
 0410492546

