

## Mark Wakelin

*Keeping track of Mark's thinking was a challenge. My notes are fragmentary as is this summary of the two sessions Mark led. I have used square brackets to indicate things I have added from memory or for clarity. KT*

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We need both small and large churches and a rhythm between them.

We need to be in the city and to affirm those who want large churches.

There should be enough people to have good worship.

[Sean Stillman in talking about Zac's Place] described the best bits of my ministry, the richest part.

Churches see themselves as *for* others. I am challenged by the phrase 'of others' instead of 'for others' – being *of the world* is being Christ.

Where is God in this? We must put God back in. We need to have hope because God is in it. We need to repent and believe and put God back in the centre. [We need to heed] the gentle tap on the shoulder and turn round and hear 'You're being too hard on yourself.'

There is an increasing challenge to be more radical.

Song of Solomon 2:10-12

My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. ..." (NIV)

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; ... [KJV]

The first day of the Christian Church.

We use the language of management talking about inputs and outputs. To what purpose? Why all the energy and the effort? Rather than inputs and outputs we should talk about outcomes. It is difficult to show what we have achieved, except for our own exhaustion.

What difference do you want to see happen? In the church? The people? Where we live? The nation?

[Ask yourself:] What difference has the church made to me?

In his Conference address Mark had wanted to say: I am needy – we're not allowed to be vulnerable. The church is more like Alcoholics Anonymous than the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

I am loving God, but I am needy. What do I need in Christ?

I need to feel I belong ... I long to belong

In heaven your name is known.

[Some one asked] 'Does the church ever pray for lonely people?'

I am lonely sometimes.

I am not a wreck ... I am more able to be content ... more at ease with myself.

I long to be different ... but it is a weakness.

I long to make a difference.

You [Sean Stillman] rekindled something in me ... the ministry of incompetence elicits help because they pity you.

I was moved by the story of the woman who lived rough.

I long to make a difference.

God never says you've done your best ... the best is yet to come.

I long for space to be ...

[Ask yourself:] What are you longing for?

We find it difficult to follow ... we think our leaders are idiots.

What difference do we want to make?

What would we like Christians to be like?

What would we like people to be like?

What would we like church to be like?

What would we like the nation to be like?

What would we like universe to be like?

What happens when someone becomes a Methodist? Do they catch the vision of CPD?

Christianity is a way to become a human being ... made in the image of God.

We need the intimacy of small groups ... but [need to] belong to something bigger.

The church [thinks it] needs to look after itself and then bother about the world [and] it is the middle class who look after the needy.

If the church was *of* the world rather than *for* the world, how would the church be different?

At least today [Mark tells himself] do no harm ... not always achieved.

It is more blessed to give than receive.

Tolerance is rubbish.

Be hospitable ... Jesus said I am coming to yours ... Zaccheus.

Accept what you are given, even though it is not what you wanted.

Jesus was a graceful receiver ... a prostitute washes his feet.

The signature act of breaking the bread [with the two he met on the road to Emmaus] indicates that it was an act familiar to many.

Ask yourself: What would my church look like if we were more 'of' than 'for'?

[The world] is challenging, but there are no glib answers.

A story: a keen young Christian, full of energy, very demanding ... killed herself. We can't do it all.

Accompanying each other to be fully human, to be fully alive.

Rediscoveries about the Kingdom ... I want to belong ... a child knows she belongs ... she doesn't doubt it ... this is being fully alive.

In the church we learn not to be loved ... the fragile and the chaotic learn to be like children ... and be loved.

Children know they can learn to be different ... adults have forgotten how to learn ... we need to get back to being children.

[We need] a healing place where we can learn to be children, to belong ... [to long] for a better world.

[Imagine] a miracle happens while you are asleep ... the church becomes the people God wants it to be ... you notice things ... How do you *know*?

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Theological reflection ... two things: We need to remember that God is still sovereign and we need to keep looking for angels.

Love shall reign over the universe. We've been doing it for 2000 years and we're tired. Methodist [is seen] as the end of summer.

Song of Solomon 2:10-12 ....

My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. ..."

It is not the end of summer but the beginning of spring.

What if we are only on the first steps of a journey when we are beginning to understand human happiness, living on this planet.

What-ifs are helpful...

What if we are in the early part of spring ...with uncertainty ... frosts ... shocks will come.

What if we are in liminal space ... the space before the not-yet ... the space of the just-after.

The sea is the future and we are only just paddling [in the shallows].

What do you do in that liminal space ... scary ... plunge me in that sea<sup>1</sup>.

People don't like strong leadership ... we need leaders who are clear and pay attention ... not dominant ... have direction, courage and creativity ... see the possibilities of the building , the people.

Methodist leadership has been vague and/or dictatorial.

If the leader doesn't know where we are going we are lost ... in the past city centre superintendents knew where they were going.

History is full of uncertainty ... we ask for certainty ... we should emphasise with the world of uncertainty... we are at our best when we engage ... watch over each other in love supreme.

[Do we] consume [or are we] creative[?]

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<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the hymn 'Now I have found the ground where in ...' Johann A Rothe, translated by John Wesley. In the fourth verse: 'By faith I plunge me in this sea,/Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;/Hither, when hell assails, I flee,/I look into my Saviour's breast;/Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear!/Mercy is all that's written there.'