

Re-imagining Church

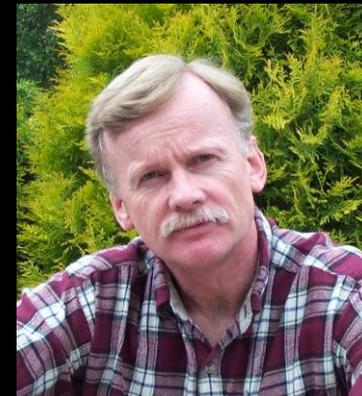
The Gathering: Canterbury 2013



Andrew - admin



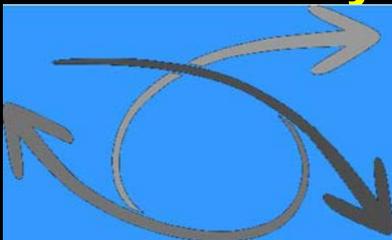
Elsbeth - stats



George - ?



Church Army's Research Unit



See and sharing
what God is doing in mission

Re-imagining Church?

Legitimate or fraudulent?
Opportunity or danger?

It must be more
than re-inflation



'Re' - 'Imagine'

Boundaries	Permission
Continuity	Change
Faithfulness	Creativity

*After all whose
Church is it?*

What is Anglican? – a simple version

When I was a lad ...

- Parish
- Special 'Church' building
- Male Clergy take services
- 1662 BCP
- Bishop – ordains & confirms

And now it might be ...

- Churches for networks
 - In secular venues
- Either gender Clergy
- Liturgical creativity
- And the Bishop...

50 years of gradual change

Today ...

- ❖ what a Bishop approves of and has relationship with

Change and Anglicanism

- ❖ Nationalised - Henry VIII
- ❖ Reformed - Edward VI and Elizabeth I
- ❖ In the view of Paul Avis:
 - Nation as Church: punctured 1689, dies 1830s
 - Episcopal Succession: – punctured 1896
 - Church of the Baptized: – but that's all Xtns?
- ❖ One of our values is the ability to evolve

Change is OK - it's even original

See Paul's writing and NT practice

- ❖ God's people are Jews only; to Jews, Greeks & Romans. Rom 10:12
- ❖ The language for scripture changed from Hebrew to Greek. N.T.
- ❖ The meeting moved from Synagogue to Ecclesia. Rom 16:23
- ❖ From concentration in the Temple to dispersal in homes, even tenement-based church. Rom 16:5
- ❖ The day moved from creation-based Shabbat to resurrection-based Sunday. Rom 14:5
- ❖ Different models of Atonement are used to fit varied contexts – contrast Romans & Hebrews
- ❖ Circumcision was dropped – though part of the covenant. Rom 2:30
- ❖ Many food laws were suspended Rom 14:14 – and who you ate with
 - Some resisted & campaigned against most of this– the Judaisers

Christ and the Church



Are fresh expressions of Church theologically possible?

The Incarnation

Exhibits continuity and change

- cf Philipians 2
 - Christ Jesus = fx of God the Son?
 - A typically bipartite process: HS & Mary
 - Jesus' call : the planned/ proactive
 - Jesus' openness to change / reactive
 - 'Tis mystery all, the immortal dies
 - *Continuity* : his ID, relationship to Trinity etc
 - *Change*: Enfleshed, ministry ups and downs, Death and Resurrection
- So church too can do continuity and change
- which is what fxC exhibit



Copying Church won't do

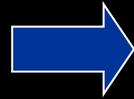


Reasons against:

- God the Son changed, taking on flesh, born of Mary as Jesus
- Copying is one sourced – God chooses the bipartite path
- Creating, not copying, holds continuity and change together

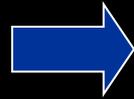
Why do we need any re-imagination?

Changing Sundays



Church at different times

Changing relationships



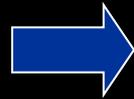
Church for different networks

Changing cultures



Church in different cultures

Less knowledge of faith



Church for beginners

Deeper spiritual hunger



Church for disconnected
explorers



Reasons from the Bishop of Sheffield, Steven Croft

A dynamic discovery

“... what has been so extraordinary, so life giving and wonderful in the last decade or so, is more and more stories coming in of how those fresh encounters happen..... God is showing us examples of *what the church is*, in startling new ways, because we are seeing what corporate forms of life actually happen when people meet Jesus.”

Archbishop Rowan at UK Church Planting conference June 2004

How fxC are changing assumptions re Church: 1

Assumption challenged	By what kind of fxC	Discontinuity or Development?
❖ Day, time, and venue are chosen more by context, than tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mid week Ch, Messy Ch, School based Church, Traditional church plant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midweek HC, House Churches
❖ Context is more significant for inculturated mission than territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Network Ch, Special Interest Group Ch, <5s Ch, Youth Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chaplaincy, x cultural mission
❖ Church is multi-level, so congregation is an option not a necessity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cell Ch & Clusters/Mid sized communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diocese/Parish & small group movement

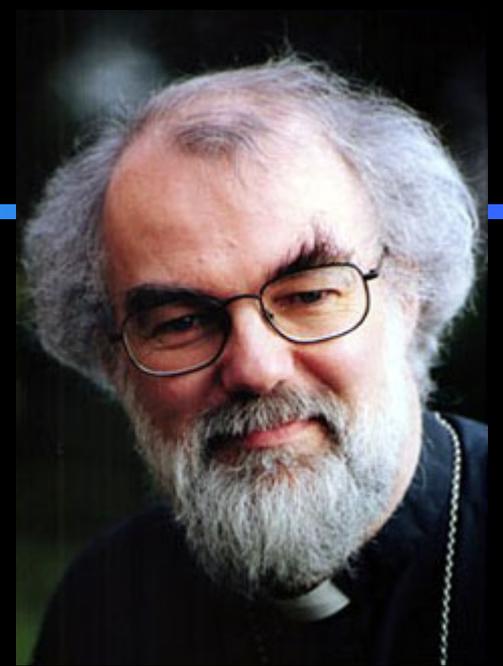
How fxC are changing assumptions re Church: 2

Assumption challenged	By what kind of fxC	Discontinuity or Development?
❖ Passivity is replaced by participation & Quality Control by trust in the people, word and Spirit	• Alternative worship, Cell Church, Clusters, Messy Church, New Monasticism, Youth Ch.	• Family Services, writings of Roland Allen, Vincent Donovan
❖ Community round Jesus is central, from which authentic worship springs	• Community development plants, New Monasticism, Messy Church, Cell Ch	• BEC movement
❖ Leader is not necessarily clergy or pastor/teacher	• More than half of all kinds of fxC	• Tiller report of 1982

How fxC are changing assumptions re Church: 3

Assumption challenged	By what kind of fxC	Discontinuity or Development?
❖ Discipleship, not attendance, is core	❖ 70% of fxC take steps in discipleship	❖ Wesley & Methodism
❖ Non ID reproduction of church is normal	❖ many fxC do not clone but create	❖ 3 self teaching by Henry Venn
❖ Church at edge not centre of society	❖ Community Developm't plants, & Special interest group fxC	❖ Desert Monastics Anabaptists

What is Church?



'Church is the event of Jesus' presence with its characteristic effect of gathering people around him and making them see one another differently as they see him.'

'The Church exists for nothing else but to draw people into Christ, to make them little Christs.'

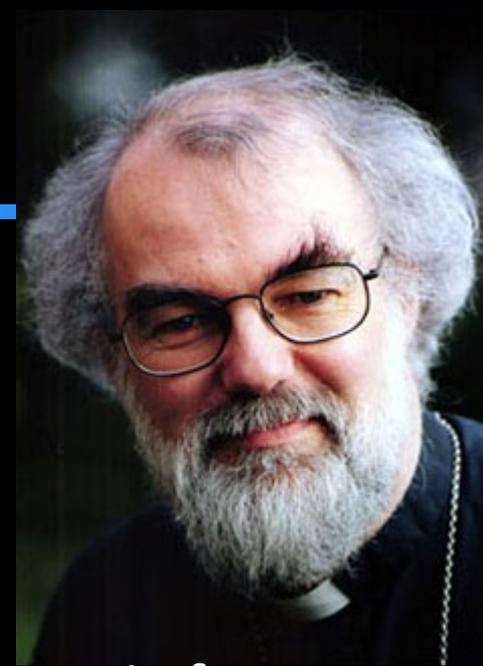
C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity p. 166

What is the greatest re-imagination?
That we become more and more like Jesus

Book recommendation:

By the Renewal of your Minds, Ellen Charry

What is Church?



Are there structures and patterns which let that basic event of encounter [with Jesus] happen again and again? Because if not, the church has become something very different from where it started. It has become a community that says once there was an encounter with Jesus and we like to remember that ...

We have to ask more radically how do we structure a society in which it goes on being possible, even likely, that people will meet Jesus and in meeting Jesus, will want more people to meet Jesus.



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“QUESTION TIME”

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A 'Change' model?

Key:

M = Main Line

B = Branch line

T = tension

S = sideline/ sect

future

Now

M1

B1

T

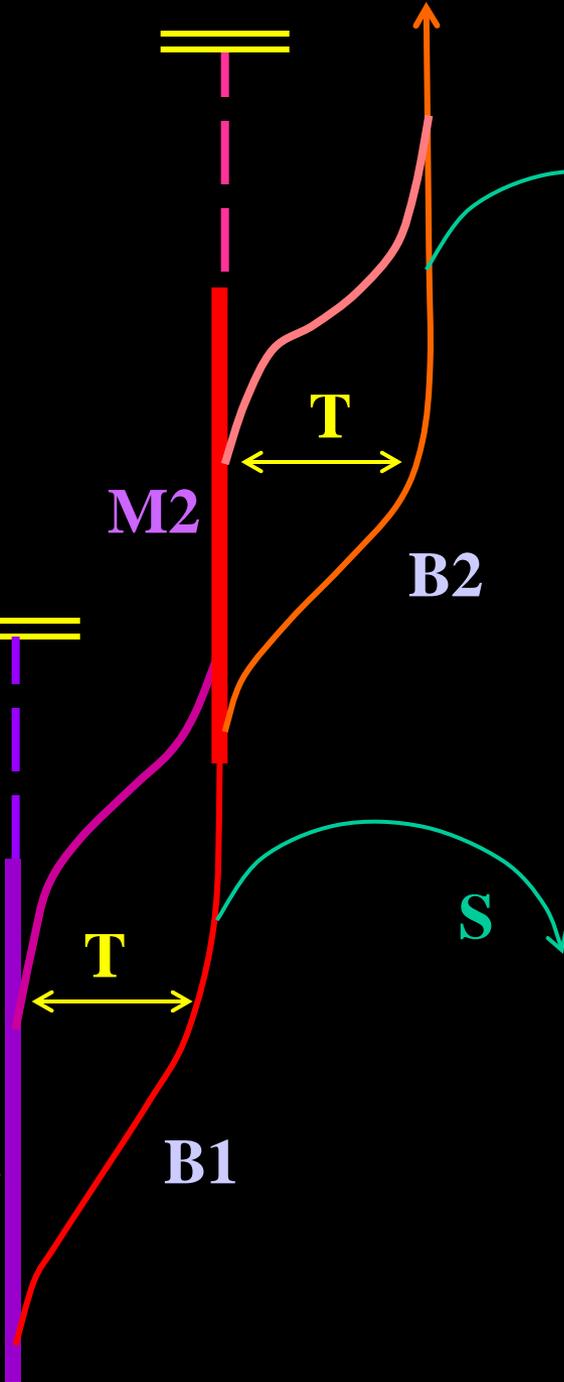
S

M2

B2

T

S2



e.g.

Jewish to Gentile

Roman Empire to Celtic

Monastic Orders arise

Reformation

post 1790 world wide Mission

And now in "Western" Church ?

Change equation : $c=(d-m)t$!!

Learning this is both/and – not either/or

- ❖ How does the church organise itself in such a way that ..
- ❖ it doesn't simply send out the message that fresh expressions, new encounters are a kind of tolerable eccentricity on the edge ?
- ❖ but neither does it send out the message that everything people are doing as the moment is wrong and they need to forget it.
- ❖ Mixed economy ... means that the Church is always a mixture of the disciplined regularities of the prose and the unpredictable encounters, the new creation beginning to happen afresh somewhere, the poetry.

Does anything remain the same?

Yes, Church DNA

- 1 Church is formed by continuing encounter with Jesus
- 2 It continues by inspiration of, and cooperation with, the Holy Spirit who 'constitutes the church'
- 3 Church lives as an instrument, sign, and genuine foretaste of God's Kingdom

- 4 Within these foundational dynamics all expressions of the Church of God seek to live out their common life across four **dimensions**, or four sets of *relationships*.

Four DNA strands

Across four **dimensions**, or four sets of *relationships*.
All churches aspire to:

- Faithful commitment *to one another*, reflecting the loving diverse **oneness** in the Trinity
- A corporate life of presence, acts and words, which communicates the reality of Jesus *to people outside the church*, continuing his **apostolic** mission.
- Lives dedicated *to Jesus as God*, encouraging transformation into **holiness**, expressed in corporate Trinitarian worship including the practices of attending to Scripture, Baptism and Communion.
- Valuing, supporting and learning from Christians *different to them*, as part of Christ's universal/**catholic** people.

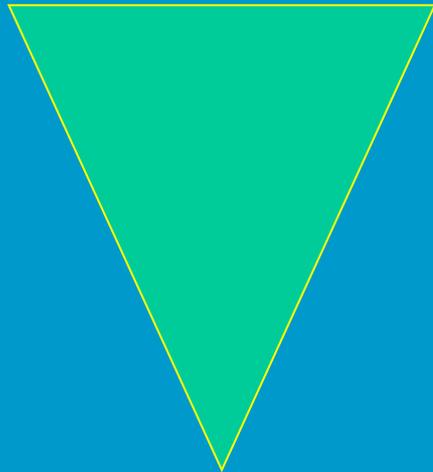
Beneath all this ...

- A Re-formation about sources of Authority, another term for Re-imagination

The 1st Reformation and Authority

“Medieval Catholic”

Reason Tradition

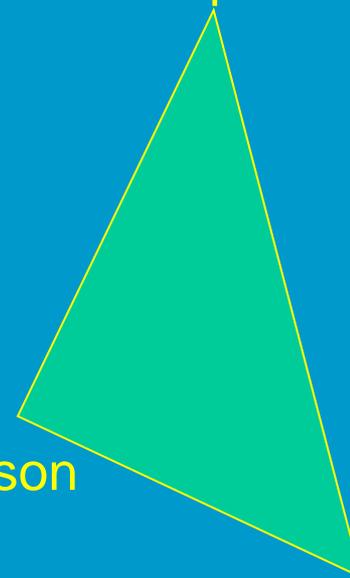


Scripture

~~Experience~~

“16th C Protestant”

Scripture



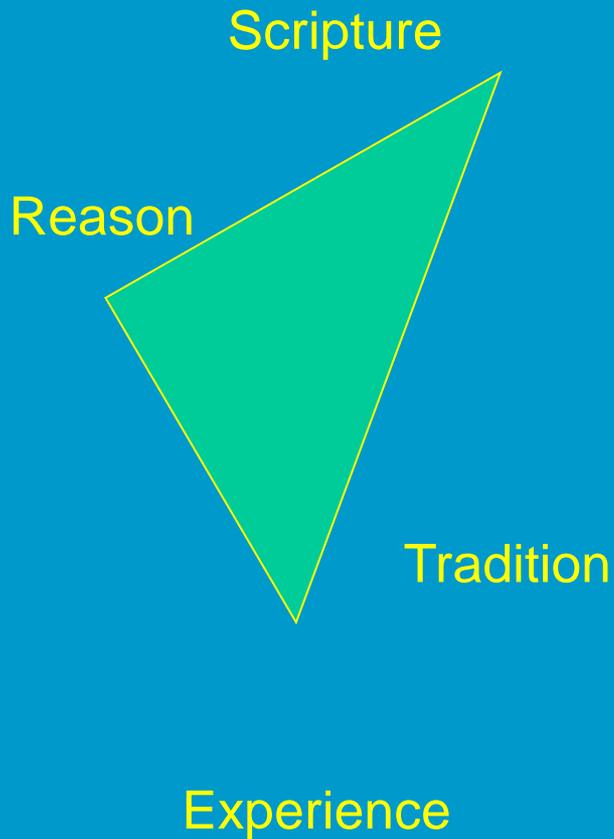
Reason

Tradition

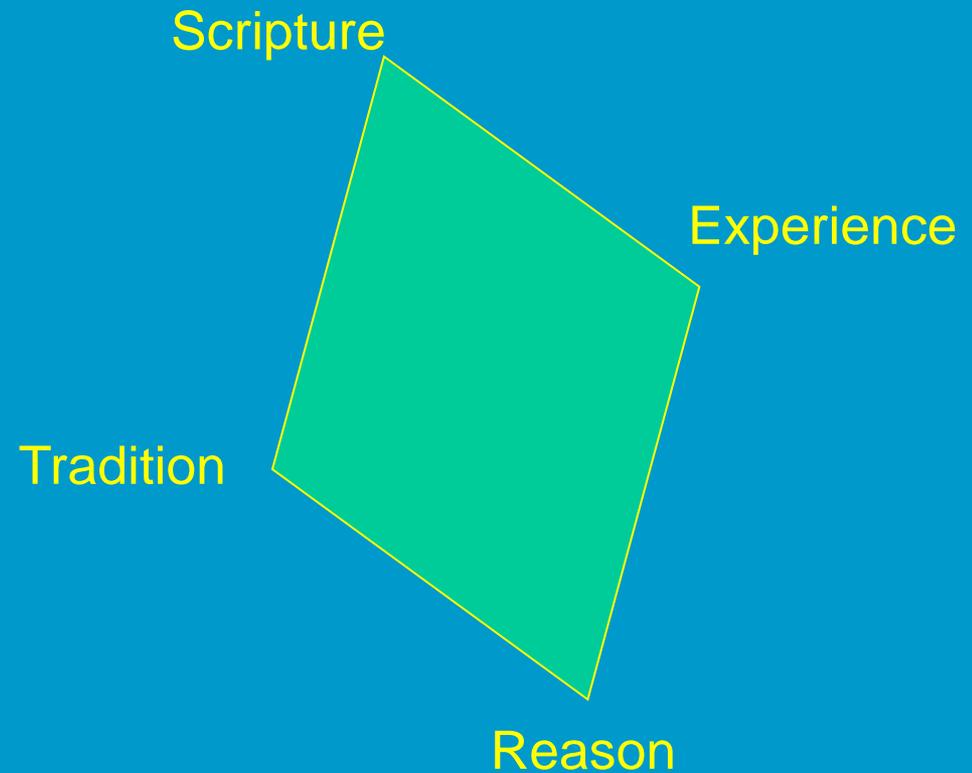
~~Experience~~

A half way House?

"Protestant"



"Charismatic"



A 2nd Re-formation – learning in mission?

