Called and sent to make a difference: Radical missionality

The concept 'missional' is well established within the so-called missional conversation. It is however often 'questioned' by scholars and pastors for different reasons. Sometimes it is almost dissected from the rest of theology, especially systematic theology. Recent developments in this field are given an account of in this article. The main purpose of the article is not to argue a case for the concept again. The purpose is to focus on whether theology and ministry in any way understand the radical implications if and when we are missional in being and doing. My assumption within the field of research on rediscovering discipleship in the development of missional congregations is that none of us have thought through how radical missionality is, especially over and against a 'volkskirchliche' understanding and practice of church. The article will also touch on some radical changes in philosophy of ministry and doing ministry within a missional paradigm.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article focuses mainly on Practical Theology and specifically Congregational Development ('Missionarische Gemeindeaufbau'). This field stands in a direct relationship with Missiology. The article contributes to a growing understanding of the radical nature of missional thinking and practice in congregational life and ministry.

Introduction

My reason for writing this contribution in English is because it is, in a sense, a follow-up on two articles already published (in English) as part of my current research interest, namely discipleship and its importance in developing a missional congregation and, as such, importance in youth ministry – the youth being an integral part of such a developing missional congregation.

The research questions I was and am challenged with are the following:

- My observation of whether within the missional conversation, discipleship (as often referred to) is comprehensively dealt with?
- My deep conviction that we are struggling to be a blessing to the world because we have confused (and even equated) confrontational evangelism and (with) disciplining.
- Whether we have shallowed the concept of discipleship, and with it membership, to become a culturally safe and comfortable experience of belonging to a community of the 'same'?
- Whether we are willing to be serious enough about the cost of discipleship, so much so that we do what the priority for disciples is – seeking the 'kingdom and his righteousness' (Mt 6:33) (NIV)?

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, we have given more weight to our successes
And our happiness than to your will.
We have eaten without a thought for the hungry.
We have spoken without an effort to understand others.
We have kept silent instead of telling the truth.
We have judged others, forgetful that you alone are judge and redeemer.
We have acted in accordance with our opinions rather than according to your commands.
We have not been your faithful servants.
Forgive us. Have mercy on us. Redeem us.
Help us to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. Amen. (Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton, NJ, Bulletin, Sunday, January 22, 2017)

Note: This article was read at the Annual Spring Conference, University of Pretoria, 22 September 2016.
In this article, I will focus on the research question of whether we have shallowed the concept of discipleship and with it missionality, and with it the reality of membership, to become a culturally safe and comfortable belonging to a community of the ‘same’? And, what would radical missionality entail? I have tried to argue a case in seeking some answers as to the first two questions in two previous articles and in my book (cf. Nel 2009a, 2015a, 2015b:186–201). The purpose of the article is therefore not to argue a case for everything that comes with an article on missionality as such.

The essence of the problem

Not many theologians differ about the theology behind the ‘sentness’ of the church. Bosch’s monumental work (1991) has almost silenced the arguments that some may have come up with. Bosch (1991) and Newbigin (1995; cf. also Nikolajsen 2015:23–94 for a discussion of Newbigin’s ‘post-Christendom theology’) were not the first to do so. In the Netherlands, for example, Hoekendijk (1966:15), who was so far ahead of his time, already argued for the same outcome. In South Africa, many scholars have written on the missional identity of the church, and for many years already (cf. e.g. Burger 1999; Hendriks 2004; Kganyapa & Kgatla 2016; Niemandt 2010, 2016; Van Niekerk 2014).

We do differ, however, on the consequences of being sent. I argue that none of us who are working in this field have thought through and understand how radical missionality is. It sometimes seems like in the old days of the ‘sendings’ mentality again: add a few help-giving programmes, add sending out a few more missionaries to wherever, as if programmes alone make us missional – or will help us ‘buy off’ our missional being. If we think and do in this way, we have once again tamed the concept, making it culturally and economically tame. Tame to the point that we can handle it, live with it and make it into something convenient. As if we think (again): God may dirty his hands, we will do the talking (cf. Nel 1994:130, 2007:98–117). Botman (2000:201–212) reflected, to my mind on this radical nature of discipleship in the South African context with his article on ‘Discipleship and Practical Theology: The Case of South Africa. Towards a Practical Theology of Transformation’ (cf. also Brueggemann 2013 and his discussion of the ‘countercultural nature of Scripture’).

Should we do so or continue to do so, the congregations miss out on, not only the real challenge but also the joy of being in mission as a mission. This is what congregational, contextual and missional ‘satisfaction’ is about, the cherry on the cake of being a missional congregation. Without this realisation of being changed into a new way of being and therefore doing, there is not much joy in being church. It is indeed about ‘becoming the gospel’ – to quote part of the title of Gorman’s book (2015; cf. also Russell 2016:259–260; Kim 2016:361–362). Finding fulfilment in who we are and what we, because of that, do is the fruit of radical missionality. Erikson (1958:115, 123, 134–135, 178–179, 1964:132ff.; cf. also Luecke & Southard 1986:14–15) referred to the fulfillment of a task as craftmanship and as confirmation of identity. In this way, a sense of accomplishment is directly related to pastoral joy for all members alike.

There may be several reasons why there are sometimes (often?) ‘negative reactions towards missional thinking and missionality as such’:

- One reason may be that ‘we’ who try to think holistically about being church sense an one-sidedness in some of the approaches. It is as if the balance is not right. I (Nel 2015b:21) have referred to this balance, with reference to Roberts (1983:72–73) as follows: ‘This “being build up” is always consolidation and missionary at the same time and in this sense always missional.’ I remember a day in a personal conversation with my then colleague, Prof A.B. du Toit, after a lecture where I used the terminology saying: One can never separate these two dimensions of being church in the New Testament. It may then be that some theologians, theological faculties and congregations feel that not enough attention is being given to ‘consolidation’, as Roberts has called it.

- A subconscious suspicion ré independence may be another reason for a certain hesitation or negativity against missionality. Some missional thinkers are almost per se negative towards the current church and its structures. What Brennan (2007:13) wrote about the situation in the Roman Catholic Church as to working on the ‘Refounding of the Church’ (Ar buckle 1993) is true for many other denominations. There is still a tendency to be more ‘about restorationism’ than about, what I pleaded for, reformation and transformation of the congregation (cf. Nel 2015b:50–63). And while this is not what Brennan meant by using the term ‘refounding’, in the case of the well-respected Brian McLaren (cf. 2004:21; cf. also 2008) it did lead to the formation of an independent nondenominational congregation (cf. also Nel 2009b:2/17). McIntosh (2012:169–177) added as an appendix to his book There’s hope for your church a chapter on Rebirthing a Church. He also, within the Church Growth movement, acknowledges the common statement by church planters, that it is so much ‘easier to give birth than to raise the dead’. Easier to birth a new congregation than to resurrect ‘dead’ ones. He then continues to argue for rebirthing, but almost as an exception. Rice (2017), a consultant, wrote: ‘My point is simple: we should stop sooner. A few congregations may dwindle down and still find a way forward, but most congregations, like most people, come to an inevitable end. At some point, most congregations die. What if, before that happens, we find a way to give the congregation’s resources to someone else rather than hanging on until there is nothing left? What if we close forward, but most congregations, like most people, come to an inevitable end. At some point, most congregations die. What if, before that happens, we find a way to give the congregation’s resources to someone else rather than hanging on until there is nothing left? What if we close
be turned around to become missional; it is to my mind this ‘easier to start new churches’ that puts our emphasis on missionality under suspicion among some scholars and pastors. We are not open enough to work with a ‘whatever it takes’ to reform the current many ‘declining’ congregations into fully functioning missional and contextual faith communities.

- Reservations about the concept and issue at stake in missionality may also be because of a subconscious ‘fear’ for the radical consequences of missionality. Being transformed into a missional congregation may disturb the peace and may make ‘us’ lose members and donors. I will never forget his story. He was a young pastor in a small rural congregation. He never confirmed this with me, but this small church was probably run by a few families as is sometimes the case in smaller rural congregations. After he preached on a Sunday morning on reconciliation between people (in South Africa), he received a call – even before being back home. It was from a farmer saying how unhappy he was about the sermon and would like to see him. He visited the family that same week, and after learning what the unhappiness was about, he started explaining and referred to Scripture. After the third time referring to ‘the Bible says’, the farmer pointed his finger at him and said: ‘This is the last time you use those words in my house. I do not want to know what the Bible says’. When people who are ‘Gott-entfremd’, while not yet estranged from the church, fills the pews, pastors become –subconsciously afraid for the consequences of radical missionality – all over the world, but even more so in a country like ours, South Africa.

- A last possible reason, closely related to the previous, may be to make a final peace with the understanding that ‘christendom’ is over. Hoekendijk (1966:15) already argued against Christendom (cf. also 1948, 1952). When the death of Christendom goes with the loss of political power for ‘us’ in Afrikaans-speaking churches, saying goodbye is even more difficult. Boshoff (2012) has shown beyond a doubt that when congregations have not worked through (mourning) the trauma of losing the benefits of an apartheid-defined Christendom, it infringes heavily on the development of a missional congregation. When these losses affect, like in the case of the Afrikaans-speaking churches, even the language of the members the mourning process is hampered even more. Hamman’s (2005:12–13) important distinction between grieving and mourning explains how, when we only grieve, we are held captive to and by what we have lost. In Hamman’s theory, he would encourage us to mourn, as ‘mourning … is the intentional process of letting go of relationships, dreams, and visions as your congregation lives into a new identity after the experience of loss and change’. Only when we do this might we discover that a missional future was (and is) in God’s plan for the congregation all along. Hamman (2005:13) encourages congregations to: ‘do the work of mourning [which] is not about replacement but describes a process of evoking memories of the past, discerning the impact of change on the present, envisioning a future, and then living into that new identity’. (For how Hamman relates this theory to the South African situation, see his description under a heading ‘when steeples cry as autobiography’ [2005:14–18].)

Being called is in itself radical

The calling of the congregation is radical grace at it most beautiful. And to fail to understand this, has often proved to be disastrous. Volf (2015) reminds us in no uncertain terms that not living out this invested grace may make ‘us’ a curse rather than a blessing:

As it travels in time and space, the Christian faith needs regular realignments with its own deeper truth; such realignments are termed reformations. Christians, too, and not just their convictions, will need to keep realigning themselves to the authentic versions of their faith; these realignments are termed renewals. I exhort us as Christians to reform and renew our faith so as to lead lives worthy of the calling to which we have been called (Eph 4:1). If we don’t, the Christian faith may well turn out to be a curse to the world rather than a source of blessing—an embodiment of the fall into the temptation to live by bread alone rather than a means of resisting it, a faith insufferably self-righteous and arrogantly imposing itself on others to control and subdue them, a source of strife over worldly goods rather than a wellspring of confident humility, creative generosity, and just peace. (p. 26)

Calling reminds us of that divine passive. God is the acting Actor. Being church is a ‘because’ affair. And this divine involvement makes the congregation special – a counter community, an alternative possibility for living life in communion with the One who called and with the other called ones or many. In a book on Truth Speaks to Power Brueggemann (2013) added as a subtitle: ‘The countercultural nature of Scripture.’ Called by and in the presence of the God of Scriptures nothing is really culturally comfortable and convenient.

Calling also reminds us constantly of ‘our’ intentional presence in this world. One would be able to tell the story of creation all over again: out of nothing humans were created to be with and for creation what the Creator planned for the creation to be. Within every context, as part of the whole, this brings a real awareness of being here with a purpose.

This, too often, has become common knowledge. Congregations should be reminded of this radical claim of God on our lives (cf. Nel & Scholtz 2015). Behind our ‘being here’, is God. Who we are, we are because of Him. We are being determined and defined by whose we are (Burger 1999:136ff., 155ff.). In our Reformed understanding of Identity, God is central and so it should be (Nel 2015b:38–48; Wright 2010:28–30,149).

Our calling is what makes us persevere. To be called is to know that you cannot turn around. You may flee from calling, but will return. Being called is to discover how not to stop. Even though it may include your own conversion to begin to understand what grace is – like the ‘conversion’ of
Jonah (Jnh 3). Guder (2000:97–141) called it the continuing conversion of the church – a continuing turning away from our man-made ‘reductionisms’. The implication of missional theology is indeed the conversion of the church (Guder 2000:143). As he (Guder 2000:26) has stated it: ‘Evangelizing churches are churches that are being evangelized. For the sake of its evangelistic vocation, the continuing conversion of the church is essential.’ In the words of Newbigin (1989:227), ‘I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live it.’ This is indeed the radical essence of developing or building a missional congregation (cf. Nel 1994, 2015b).

This continuing conversion for pastors and congregations is not only radical but difficult. Staying within paradigms that we have managed to be comfortable with seems more convenient. Rodríguez (2012) devoted a book to writing up the several paradigms ‘of the church’s self-understanding of being the church and of mission’. Of special importance, here is his chapter on the Christendom paradigm, as it figures so obvious in the missional conversation (Rodríguez 2012:31–44).

**Missionality or being sent**


1998 the term ‘missional’ has become a basic concept in the global missiological discourse. At the same time, the term took on a life of its own and soon became as much a cliché as a useful theological formulation. (p. xiii)

Guder (2015:xv), searching for a theological centre, says that he senses that such a developing centre is taking shape. ‘But with the risk in mind, I offer for the consideration of my readers the possibility that the underlying theme of these diverse studies is “Trinitarian missiocentricity”’ (cf. a review by Paas 2016:58–59 on this publication).

**A few core characteristics**

My attempt here is not so much to describe the core characteristics again. I have stated it above that I am not arguing for a case for the missional identity of the church. Many have done that already and I have done so in 2015, where each of the following values or characteristics was discussed in some depth. Having said that, I find the five core values as noted by the Church of England’s Mission and Public Affairs Council (2009:81–82) valuable and to the point.

Five values for missional churches:

- a missionary church is transformational
- a missionary church makes disciples
- a missionary church is incarnational
- a missionary church is focused on God the Trinity
- a missionary church is the church in this sense, has a ‘thin identity’ (2010:65). My personal leaning is towards a Biblical departure point. I want to respect the predicament as to what identity is, but also want to stay faithful to a faith-determined confession of who we are because of God. Our very being and reason for being is caught up in and by God, the Creator who is present and at work in his creation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote: ‘The church is nothing else but a sector of humanity where Christ is really taking form’ (Quoted by Fowler 1991:155).

The work done by Wright (2010) is another good example how an understanding is growing that a changed or transformed church and an understanding of mission helps the church finds its God given place (again). Answering the question who and what are we here for?, he wrote (Wright 2010):

> It is not so much the case that God has a mission for the church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God’s mission… Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God. (p. 24; A quote from Stott 1992:335)

He continues:

> So when I speak of mission, I am thinking of all that God is doing in his great purpose for the whole of creation and all that he calls us to do in cooperation with that purpose ... But when I speak of
God is present in his creation and especially so in humans, or as Moltmann (1985:15) said: ‘God creates the world and at the same time manifests himself through its being’. And in this world, we, however difficult to define, are ‘a fellowship of differents: Showing the world God’s design for life together’, as McKnight (2015) titled his book.

The sending of the Son testifies to this presence of God: ‘The mission of the Son means that God is present in the history of the whole of creation. He is for the world and its inhabitants’ – for all of those who lives in it (Pasztor 2001:140). The mission is God’s and we participate in it, so much so that God’s mission becomes the mission of the church.

**Important and radical consequences**

**Ecclesiological reformation**

Developing missional congregations can never escape radical reformation. It is my conviction that building up a missional local church is in essence a ministry of reformation (Nel 2015b:50–63). Whatever re- is put in front of whichever concept, this process is ultimately a process of reformation. This in itself is radical. Reformation has never been popular. Reformers are often, at least for a time, seen as heretics – like in the case of Luther. Many re-’s have been used to explain what is at stake. The most popular are: revival, renewal, revitalisation, rebirth, rekindling, reactivation and refounding.

Reformation is about rethinking, Biblically and contextually, who we are and how faithful we are to our calling. Mann (1998) said that:

> no strategy, structure, or program will make much difference in the long-term viability of your church unless you go back to the fundamental question: How will we connect our deepest faithfulness to the realities of our context today? (p. 98)

Gittins (2008) wrote:

> [A] Church relying on imperial, hierarchical, patriarchal, sexist model that is unquestionably broken ... surely cannot be fixed, whether by fiat or fad, and certainly not by fission. Some things are beyond simple fixing; they must be radically restructured – ‘restored’ in the truest sense of ‘brought back into existence; brought back to health’ (cf. also Nel 2015a:4/11). The remarks by Gittins (2008:185ff.) is critical: ‘Would Jesus recognize the Church? What church would Jesus recognize?’ (pp. 187–188)

Reflecting on missional ecclesiologies in creative tension as to the work of Niebuhr and Yoder, Park (2007:63) refers to the church as alternative community, ‘in service of the universal community’. He then reflects on Yoder’s understanding of the church as alternative community, defining the church as:

> God’s people gathered as a unit, as a people, gathered to do business in His name, to find what it means here and now to put into practice this different quality of life which is God’s promise to them and to the world and their promise to God and service to the world. (Park 2007:69; Yoder 1971:30–31; cf. also Nielsen 2012)

Any theologian and pastor would know that reforming into this direction of being church is radical and expensive – it may cost you your popularity.

**Missional hermeneutic**

It may be necessary to state it one more time: I am not arguing a case for what belongs to missional theory. That will take me outside of my purpose in this article. This also applies to this section. Others have done so in excellent ways (cf., e.g. Flemming 2005, 2015; Gorman 2015). I do however want to briefly draw attention to this insight, an insight with, to my mind, a radical impact on our understanding of missionality.

Guder (cf. 2016:36) brought to the table that: (1) If mission is central in our understanding of God and his involvement with and in creation and (2) if the church does not have a mission, but are in mission, in God’s mission, then it follows that the Bible was given to prepare the church, the people who know, love and serve God for its participation in the mission of God. Guder (2016:36) refers to this as one of the ‘trajectories [that] may prove fruitful and transformative’. He then describes what I refer to here as: ‘Developing and testing a missional hermeneutic that reads and interprets Scripture as the formation of communities of faithful witness in particular cultural contexts’.

God wants his people to fulfil their calling and his Word is their preparation for life, a life seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, as Matthew (6:33) recorded Jesus saying. In the letter to the Ephesians, this is spelled out in even more detail. In my brief (Nel 2015b:13–21) Biblical exploration I have tried, with reference to several Old and New Testament sources, to point out that the concept ‘building up’ is missional in nature. The task at hand then is preparing (katartizō) people for exactly this ministry: preparing everyone in the body or wall to be able to build into the wall those not yet in the body or wall (cf. Eph 4:1–16; cf. also Kok 2015 on the ‘The radicality of early Christian oikodome’).

The point is rightly so made that the whole of Scripture fulfilled this role in the early church. The letters were not just to comfort and console but to encourage and prepare for the missional task at hand. A beautiful example of this is Paul’s reference to what one may call the total lifestyle of the Christian and being called to follow Paul as he follows the Christ:

> 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. I follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Cor 10:31–11:1)
Rediscover the reason for being

Osmer (1990) remarked as to the teaching office of the church:

Rediscovery is the activity of discerning once again the meaning and power of tradition that has been repressed or forgotten. Recovery goes further. It involves the positive evaluation and appropriation of that tradition, using what has been rediscovered to structure present patterns of thought and action. (p. 141)

In my description of this process in developing a missional congregation, I used the concept of ‘unfreezing’ (Nel 2015b: 223ff.) to describe the uneasiness that may go with this rediscovery and recovery. My attempt was and is to refer to the pain that often goes with the returning of life and emotions. When deformation is also because of plain and straightforward disobedience to God and his calling upon us, the conversion is also painful and shameful. Who will ever forget what two Afrikaans-speaking churches (NG Kerk 1986 and Ned Herv Kerk in 2015) went through when they had to admit and confess that apartheid was wrong and ‘we’ were wrong in supporting it. Realisation of wrongdoing is painful and shameful – so much so that many still today avoid the pain of admitting and confessing.

But this is what is at stake in missionality: because we are different, we do differently. We continually rediscover the reason(s) for our existence because of our God-given identity in Christ and through the Spirit. The sermon on the Mount is a great example of how Matthew packaged this: After 16 verses of who we are and what is true of us as a group of ‘blessed’ people – only then we are reminded of how different we behave in the presence of the King (cf. Mt 5:1–16 and followed by 5:17–7:29).

May I try to paraphrase the insights of McKnight (2015:16–23) with regard to this radical difference in being and doing?:

God has designed the church – and this is the heart of Paul’s mission – to be a fellowship of difference and differences. It is a mixture of people from all across the map and spectrums … The church is God’s world-changing social experiment of bringing unlikes and differents, the congregations represent:

• a life with joy about differences
• a life of communion in love, justice and reconciliation
• a life of bringing unlikes and differents
• a life being transformed

Mcknight then explores the most ‘invisible’ ones of this world and names the many unseen brokennesses, like in the case of the widow, child (‘who are so often wall flowers’), young adult, senior, woman, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer (LGBTQ) person and others:

The church is God’s grand experiment, in which differences get connected, unlikes form a fellowship, and the formerly segregated are integrated. Those are to be one – not scattered all over the city – and they are one in Christ Jesus … That thrashing it out is what the church is about – and that is what the Christian life is all about: learning to love one another, by the power of God’s grace, so we can flourish as the people of God in this world. (McKnight 2015:23)

In summary of how different ‘we’ are, I quote McKnight (2015):

God loves us, and God’s kind of love transforms us into loving and holy, God-glorying and other-oriented people in God’s kingdom. God’s with-ness transcends simple presence and advocacy: his with-ness and for-ness are a transforming power … The church God wants is one brimming with difference, and that will mean the Christian life is all about loving whoever happens to be with you in this fellowship of differents… The million-dollar question for you and me and how we do church is this:

How diverse is your love?

Or

How ready are you to love the differents in your fellowship?

To love everyone in or fellowship is a work of God’s grace, the kind of grace that transforms us into a fellowship that welcomes and loves all. (Cf. also Schnelle 2009:114–121 for his discussion on the ethical radicalism of Jesus and the ‘love command’ as central in the ethics of Jesus). (pp. 59, 63)

Contextually different and relevant

A local congregation once wanted to erect a radio station, able to broadcast the gospel to people in Nairobi. When asked what they do where they are, the pastor paused for a long while and then shared that there was a ‘squatter camp’ (his words) across the street from their facilities and they do nothing there. I then asked: why then should people in Nairobi believe you? (cf. for the whole story Nel 2011).

The congregation is indeed God’s gift to a very specific part of God’s creation. For every local faith community, their ‘world’ is first of all their direct context. While individuals can make a difference on our behalf somewhere, maybe even ‘far’ away local faith communities as a whole can only make a difference here. Blauw (1962:43ff.) has said it then already: ‘All the emphasis falls on the fact that the world of nations is a gift.
to the Messianic Servant; there is no reference here to the world as a "mission territory" of the Servant (italics in original).

In South Africa (as all over the world) the context of local congregations is often challenging and very painful. Nowhere in the country can one escape the "realities of injustice, oppression, poverty, discrimination, and violence." (Bosch 1991:10). We are only beginning to rediscover, like Bosch (1991:10) said then already, that mission is God's 'yes' and God's 'no' to and in this broken world: 'In our time, God's yes to the world reveals itself, to a large extend, in the church's missionary engagement in respect of the realities ...'

I do not know of any other place in this world where the temptation to escape contextual involvement may be more 'attractive' than in my own country. How do we get involved in the reality of the 'squat camp' across the street? Or in the down town or mid-city a few blocks from 'my' convenient home? And how do we discern how to do so as faith community and not only as individual with a 'hand-out' at the corner?

To be born again, to become flesh in our context is the radical challenge and very 'expensive' ministry venture. Guder (1998:11) wrote: 'There is but one way to be church and that is incarnationally'. In a later publication, he argued (Guder 1999):

What the world should experience in the church is not perfect Christians, but honest Christians whose life enflshes the real possibility of new life, a new creation, living hope, and confidence that ‘the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6). (p. 23)

I will never forget a quote from Albert Schweitzer (without a reference) in the annual congregational calendar in the local church where we worship. Freely translated, it states: 'To be an example to others is not the main way of influencing others – it is the only way.'

This is indeed an obvious emphasis in literature within the missional conversation. In a book on five views in [this] conversation, Stetzer (2016:91–116) wrote on a view he calls An Evangelical Kingdom Community Approach. He summarises this view as:

God's people are to participate in the divine mission to manifest and advance God's kingdom on earth through the means of sharing and showing that gospel of the kingdom in Jesus Christ. (Stetzer 2016:92, italics in original)

Misional churches are not necessarily convenient. Being misional challenges barriers of discomfort. Where the Kingdom of God breaks through, people react differently. And God’s mission is for a kingdom, and 'God's people have a Kingdom mission' (Stetzer 2016:99, 103). Warren's (2008: 61–73) contribution on Youth Ministry in an Inconvenient Church' reflects exactly on how challenging the call to discipleship and faithful missionality is. He compares live where consumerism is ruling and 'looking to the behaviors of Gospel practice' as faithfulness to the call of Christ and to recognise 'seeing others as the proxies of Jesus and as the locus of God's presence' (pp. 65, 71).

**Contextual implications**

What follows below are a few, to my mind radical implications, of being missional, especially so in my own reformed tradition. A continuing discovery of the meaning and implication of being missional asks of the church to be different:

- In our seriousness about God in Christ. This is and should in no way threaten our inclusivity but it does challenge our unique devotion and commitment to the Christ (cf. Root [2014] and his plea for an explicit Christopraxis; cf. also McDonald [2004:127–143]) and his mark for discipleship being 'A heart for Christ alone'. Guder (2016:27) stresses this to by referring to the Solas of the Reformation. To my mind, he justly states: 'Solus Christus (Christ alone!) is the overarching and undergirding conviction that shapes Reformation theology.'
- In our watchful jealousy, over our Reformed Identity.
- In our koinonia or relational being and our pastoral involvement with one another.
- In our concrete, earthly, Kingdom-like involvement in our communities and context.
- In our inclusivity, even if it hurts and irrespective of whether it hurts, like for instance in accepting the LGBTQ community.
- In our radical hospitality to the 'invisible' (McKnight 2015:20, 23) and the stranger.
- In our understanding of disciplining, learning together how to live life as we follow the Christ, as the only way of evangelising our neighbours.

I could add to this, many stories of congregations who are on this journey, not pretending to understand in full, but learning what it means as they discern how to be grateful for grace received – some would call this obedience because you love and are grateful!

Such stories can be found and read:

- Towers of Hope, Bloemfontein (http://www.towersofhope.org/).
- Central Presbyterian Church, Atlanta (https://centraloac.org).
- North Avenue Presbyterian Church, Atlanta (www.napc.org).
- Ned Hervormde Congregation, Kempton Park-Oos.
- Nel (2005).

**Conclusion**

This article is more of a confession than anything else: I do not know how radical missionality is. I do admit that I am trying to understand, while confessing that I do not know yet. There is integrity in us admitting and discovering as we discern what it might entail in a specific South African
context, and hopefully share as we discover, as so many stories have been shared in the official weekly publication of the Dutch Reformed Church in the last 50 plus editions.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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