Missional pastoral care: *innovation in charismatic evangelical urban practice*

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Contents

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Abstract

A new model of mission is emerging among participants in the urban ministry of the Eden Network which reimagines evangelical identity and missiology. The Eden Network is a charismatic evangelical organisation which has engaged in incarnational urban ministry for the last nineteen years. In the course of my roles as a staff member and as a local participant observer, I identified tensions arising for Eden team members between their inherited evangelical theology and their experiences of mission in urban communities. This research aims to explore this dissonance, identifying the subcultural narratives of evangelicalism and the ways in which these narratives are complicated by lived experience.

A narrative hermeneutical methodology accesses the experiences of ordinary people and considers the ways in which they engage with overarching theological and cultural narratives. Data consists of sixteen qualitative 'life-story' interviews, with seven Eden team members and nine community members who have encountered this ministry. Interview data is triangulated with participant observation obtained through my professional and personal experience of the Eden Network.

Missional pastoral care is a new form of missional living which centres on relationships of mutual meaning-making consonant with Charles Gerkin's model of hermeneutical play. It comprises seven elements: difference, locality, availability, practicality, long term commitment, consistency and love which enable the sharing and reshaping of personal meaning-systems to take place. It is effective in that it results in a complex good, consisting of a kind of flourishing alongside loss and ambiguity. Missional pastoral care has arisen from within charismatic evangelicalism and retains this character in its missional intent, its focus on life change and its spirituality predicated on a dynamic interaction with the Holy Spirit in daily life. However, it differs from contemporary conceptions of evangelical

identity in that it displays a lack of concern for protecting its identity, instead prioritising aligning with the kingdom of God in the world.

This research conceptualises pastoral care as meaning-making and offers a model of care which is situated in the micro-practices of everyday life. In doing so it contributes to debate on the nature of pastoral care and its role in contemporary society, establishing its centrality to mission. Missional pastoral care demonstrates that evangelicalism can clarify its relation to its cultural context through a belief in God's presence and action in the world. This work resources missional practice from the standpoint of practitioners and recipients of mission, providing a model of practice and a theological framework which is in keeping with the lived experience of evangelicals.

Summary of Portfolio

The portfolio preceding this thesis charts the trajectory that my thinking has taken throughout the professional doctorate programme. I began with questions generated by my personal experience of urban ministry and my professional practice in a national developmental role for the Eden Network. My primary concern was the nature of transformation, often summed up as 'what does it take to change a life?' I undertook the professional doctorate in order to understand what was meant by 'transformation' within the Eden Network's model of ministry and to discover what kind of ministry might enable this transformation.

In my literature review I surveyed four 'generating centres' of conversation within urban mission and ministry. This survey highlighted the underrepresentation of evangelicals in this field, leading to consideration of the possible theological causes and implications of this. I identified the Eden Network as distinctive within the landscape of urban ministry in its evangelical commitment, combined with its model of non-professionalised, lay team members. In my publishable article I explored the narratives of Eden team members through a qualitative research project. I argued that the experiences of Eden team members as they relocated into marginalised urban communities led to the re-evaluation of inherited theologies and that, as such, the Eden Network constitutes a contribution to the fields of post-modern theology, evangelical theology and ordinary theology. This project brought the engagement of Eden team members with their evangelical theology and identity to the fore, suggesting that the implications of my research may have relevance for evangelicalism more broadly.

My aim in undertaking the DProf was to inform the practice of Eden teams and others in Christian ministry. I therefore conducted a cycle of first person action research for my reflective practice paper which evaluated the process of turning qualitative research data into organisational learning and practice. In this I argued that reflective practice can be transformative for faith-based organisations by creating spaces for theological reflection, which have the potential to effect change in both the theology and practice of the organisation.

For my research proposal I returned to my focus on the perceptions of transformation among Eden teams and urban communities, developing a methodology and research design which enabled the voices of my participants to be heard. In conducting and analysing the research it became evident that the language of transformation was overlaying the emergence of an unarticulated model of mission in the practice of Eden teams. My thesis has thus moved beyond transformation discourse to articulate missional pastoral care as an innovative form of evangelical missional practice. Having undertaken this professional doctorate, the broader implications of my work for evangelicalism, models of Christian mission, and pastoral care present an exciting new horizon.

Introduction

> I think they had to adjust a lot, to get used to having basically their own little life and then they come down here into a council estate that was run down, it was not [a] very nice place to be and then they're just like "right we'll go pick this kid out of there and we'll go do this with them and we'll go do that" and it's like "one minute, my life used to just be simple, let's go to work and go to church and now it's I'm doing youth club, I'm doing cell group, it's like I go to work, I give up my evenings for the young people", so they change their whole life to help out. (Suzy, 19, community member, Manchester)

> I know that it made them see things differently… you didn't see it as some chav on the news who thinks he's all this or all that you saw it as, you see the people as like human beings… (Jack, 16, community member, Manchester)

Suzy and Jack are participants in this qualitative research project into the urban mission practices of the Eden Network. Nineteen-year-old Suzy and sixteen-year-old Jack offered their reflections on the process of change they had observed in the Eden team members who had come to live in their neighbourhoods. Their insights are telling. They indicate an awareness of stereotypical conceptions of urban communities and of the need to break these down. Suzy and Jack articulate having seen Eden team members navigate numerous shifts in their urban mission. Suzy mentions the difficulty of relocation to a new and challenging environment and describes the way that Eden team members needed to reshape their whole way of life in the course of their ministry, from the 'simple' work and church, to a more open and frequent approach to life and mission. Jack describes even deeper changes in thinking he has seen in Eden team members, the 'seeing things differently', which he understands as a process of humanising. In this thesis I argue that a new form of mission is emerging from the practice of Eden teams. It is concerned with mutual relationships of meaning-making and results in a complex good, comprising both flourishing and ambiguity. I call this model 'missional pastoral care' and argue that it constitutes a new form of charismatic

evangelicalism which prioritises aligning with the incoming kingdom of God above concern for its own identity.

There is a continuity of evangelical urban mission beginning from the nineteenth century. As a tradition, evangelicalism has been defined by its pragmatic activism; while this energy primarily serves its commitment to conversionism, the understanding that conversion will result in a transformed life has led to a focus on coming alongside the poor. The missionary zeal of the nineteenth century sought to maximise the influence of evangelical Christianity on British culture and also established evangelicalism as a compassionate movement with a desire for moral purity in society (Bebbington, 2010, p. 238). However, the evangelical urban tradition is mixed: philanthropic efforts by largely middle-class evangelicals did little to engage the culture of working-class people, resulting in welfare provision or, for those who converted, enculturation into the middle classes (Bosch, 2011, pp. 294-300). Equally there have been fluctuations in evangelical commitment to the urban, with a retreat from social activity in the early twentieth century leading to the majority of evangelicals losing touch with their urban tradition (Chaplin, 2015, p. 93).

The Eden Network is a contemporary expression of this evangelical urban tradition, arguably reviving it among mainstream evangelicals. It involves Christian volunteers intentionally relocating into urban communities and shaping their lives around mission to a particular neighbourhood. The Eden Network uses the language of transformation to articulate its aims in mission, aspiring to see communities changed through the lives of converted individuals. While the Eden Network has developed its own distinct model, relocation and voluntarism have a rich history in evangelical urban engagement. For example, in the 1890s the Salvation Army's 'slum sisters' moved into London's poorer communities and offered practical support to their neighbours as well as inviting people to convert to Christianity (Booth, 1890, pp. 137-138). At the same time the University Settlement movement involved middle-class volunteers occupying 'settlement houses' in poor communities with the intention to share life and culture as well as to provide services such as childcare and education (Davis, 1984, pp. 3-7).

Therefore the Eden Network is both old and new, situated within an evolving history of evangelical social theology and urban mission. This tradition has a particular missional narrative characterised by the belief that the world is lost and the church is tasked with bringing the good news of salvation which can radically change lives. I examine this narrative and its implications in more detail in chapter 2 and consider how it shapes missional engagement and defines the outcomes of missional effort – primarily as widespread conversion and life change, setting the expectations for those undertaking missional activity. However, in my professional experience of recruiting, training and supporting Eden team members I have become aware that the paradigm of evangelical urban mission no longer fits with the practice of Eden teams. In this opening chapter I outline the problem which has given rise to this research and consider urban theology, conceptions of evangelical identity and the work of Charles Gerkin and Grace Jantzen as resources with which to make sense of the new practice of missional pastoral care.

I have been employed by the Eden Network in a variety of national developmental roles for nine years, from 2005 to 2014. I also lived alongside an Eden team in Openshaw, East Manchester for seven years, experiencing firsthand some of the complications of being an incomer into an urban community. Creating spaces for members of Eden teams to gather is a central priority for the Eden Network and was a key aspect of my role. Eden team leaders regularly attend leaders' meetings, training residentials and prayer days, while monthly training nights in each region provide an opportunity for the whole Eden team to join with other teams in their area. In these settings we aimed to share and celebrate what is happening locally and resource one another. The journey of the Eden Network in the time of my employment was towards acknowledging and embracing the urban experience of its members. Facilitating these events across the country, I spent time listening to their reflections.

I observed that while the ministry of Eden teams had a clearly articulated model and expected outcome, it was becoming increasingly problematic as the experiences of Eden teams ceased to reflect their articulated aims and inherited paradigms. Volunteers join Eden with an inherited theology which shapes the

expectations they have for their urban ministry. For the majority, this means a hope that they will see people in their communities 'receive salvation' and begin to lead a radically different lifestyle. Over the years team members described feeling the tension between this expectation and the reality of their experience. It also appeared that the strongly evangelistic emphasis of The Message Trust, the Network's umbrella organisation, was at times unhelpful as it focused primarily on celebrating stories of conversion which for many Eden teams were less frequent than they had anticipated. Time and again Eden team members articulated to me a fear that they were doing something wrong. But alongside this was a growing sense that they were seeing significant things happening in their communities, just not what they had expected and they struggled to reconcile reality with their expectations. An Eden team member interviewed in an earlier project said: 'We hadn't expected to be close enough to see the real quality of the good stuff that's happened… that's been one of the real blessings, the detail of what God's been doing in the ones and twos really' (Thompson, 2012, p. 54).

This also resonated with my own experience of living in an urban community. In my local church, Sunday gatherings were very diverse and often chaotic, including people with a wide variety of perspectives on faith. It seemed that for some of these people church was something to do, somewhere to bring their children and a place of belonging, but that the shared activities of worship were perceived as irrelevant or unnecessary. On one occasion I facilitated us acting out the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18. Some of the more disengaged members of the group volunteered to participate and one man, in his twenties, read the lines of the tax collector. I asked him to share how he felt putting himself in the shoes of the tax collector and he spoke movingly about identifying with a sense of being looked down on by wider society. As we began to talk about the experience in small groups this man, previously on the fringe of the gathering, became a leader with a group around him keen to talk about how they found themselves in the passage. I found this transition a powerful provocation. This man did not fit with many of my expectations for leadership or participation in church life, although God was clearly at work in him, and through him in others. Incidents

such as these challenged me and roused my curiosity; something significant was happening but I was unable to find the language for it. Through these experiences I became convinced that rather than 'doing something wrong', Eden teams were doing something profoundly right, we had just not quite understood what that was.

This presents a challenge for the Eden Network: to begin to articulate what is happening among Eden teams in order to continue to support them and encourage the effective development of this model of ministry. Therefore my aim in this research is to discover how the emergent ministry of Eden teams might be understood. The unknown nature of this ministry, with its emphasis on transformation, calls for a broader perspective than that offered by the evangelical urban tradition. As a result I draw on other resources in order to describe what has happened in the Eden Network's urban ministry. I identify missional pastoral care as a new model of mission emerging from practice which can inform evangelical identity and missiology.

Introducing Eden

As this project has been prompted by the experience of Eden team members alongside my own professional and personal experience, I begin by introducing the Eden Network as a context for research. The Message Trust is a Christian charity based in Manchester, which articulates its purpose as follows: 'to share the Christian message in words and actions to young people through Creative Arts, Community Transformation and Christ-Centred Enterprise' (The Message Trust, 2015). The Message Trust launched the Eden Network in 1997 in response to the success of a week of mission in a high school in Wythenshawe, a large urban estate in South Manchester. Young people were gathered to a small local congregation, but it became apparent that the challenges of their estate context meant that for these young people to develop their own Christian faith a new approach to ministry would be required. Andy Hawthorne, CEO of The Message Trust, in consultation with other local church leaders partnered with a local church to recruit a team of volunteers who would relocate into Wythenshawe, join the church, and remain

long term to reach out to the young people and families living around them.[1] The team began to move into Wythenshawe in 1996 and teams in other locations across Greater Manchester soon followed. Matt Wilson was a founding member of the Wythenshawe Eden team and in 2003 was employed by The Message Trust to lead the growing Eden Network, becoming its National Director. In 2004 Eden consolidated its model of ministry in the five Cornerstones, which Wilson describes as 'five things of foundational value to each and every Eden partnership'. They are:

We are rooted in a local church

We are focused on the toughest neighbourhoods

A large team of people establish their homes in the heart of the community

Our first priority is reaching youth to see their full potential unlocked

We belong to a wider relational network (Wilson, 2012, pp. 84-86).

The Network has since developed teams across the country, focusing on regions of concentrated deprivation.

The five Cornerstones give the Eden Network model its structural shape and identity. Over time it was clear that local teams were also developing their own ethos, and in 2005 at an Eden Network weekend away I participated in a facilitated discussion to discover what was special about the Eden approach. In response the 'Eden Distinctives' were created as an articulation of the way of life of Eden team members. They are:

We are Incarnational

We are Relational

We are Purposeful

We are Countercultural

We are Holistic (Wilson, 2012, p. 213).[2]

These two categories function in the Network to clarify the model of engagement and to describe the way in which it is understood to be a distinctive lifestyle

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[1] An account of the origins of the Eden Network can be found on the Eden Network website: http://eden-network.org/about-eden-old/our-story/

[2] For a brief explanation of the Eden Distinctives see http://eden-network.org/about-eden/

(Wilson, 2012, pp. 212-213). In his 2012 book *Concrete Faith*, Matt Wilson states: 'During the Eden Network's first decade well over 300 people joined Eden teams… That number's probably getting closer to 500 now, which makes Eden one of the largest missionary-sending movements in our nation for about a hundred years' (2012, p. 53). At the time of writing, the Eden Network has twenty-nine partnerships either in operation or in development across the UK, in Manchester, Merseyside, Yorkshire, London, the North East, Scotland, South Wales and the Midlands (Eden Network, 2016).

The Eden Network functions by entering into a formal partnership agreement with a local church, or church planting denomination, in an area identified by government statistics as being within the 10% most deprived communities in the country.[3] It is pan-denominational, with local partners from both historic and new church networks, although all would describe themselves as broadly evangelical in orientation. Partnership agreements are open-ended, reviewed annually and may include some grant funding. The agreement involves the commitment of the Eden Network and the local church to jointly recruit a paid Eden team leader employed by the partner church either on a part or full-time basis and a team of between five and twelve volunteer Eden team members (Wilson, 2012, p. 55). The partnership continues enabling and supporting the Eden team to carry out community ministry in the area in accordance with the vision of the local church and the Cornerstones and Distinctives of the Eden Network.

Eden team leaders and team members join the Network from a variety of denominations. They are mostly, although not solely, from middle-class backgrounds and the majority identify with charismatic evangelicalism. Methods of recruitment for Eden teams primarily focus on large, trans-denominational Christian gatherings such as New Wine, Spring Harvest and Soul Survivor, which are characteristic of late-twentieth century English evangelicalism (Warner, 2007, pp. 15-19), as well as through partner church networks. Many team members first

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[3] Communities are identified as being within the qualifying 10% by using www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk which provides both detailed and summary data on a variety of indices of deprivation according to postcode.

heard about Eden from Andy Hawthorne or another Message Trust speaker at one of these events. Applicants undergo a recruitment process not unlike discerning a missionary call which can take up to a year or more, depending on individual circumstances, and involves visits, a prayer journal, application forms, references, and an interview. For Eden team leaders there are additional employment elements to the process. Both team leaders and team members make an open-ended commitment to living directly in the neighbourhood and becoming full members of the local partner church. Single team members often live in shared houses, although this is not prescriptive, and married team members or those with children usually live in their family units.[4]

Within the Eden Network model local church partnerships provide the theological and practical context for the work. Eden team leaders are line-managed by the local church leader and the congregation is the primary source of pastoral support for team members as well as becoming a wider 'extended team' for their community engagement. Partnership with the Eden Network provides a national network of relationships with those involved in the same kind of ministry. Practically the Network provides coaching and peer networking for Eden team leaders, ongoing training for the team, processes to support their community ministry,[5] and strategic support for the local church leader as needed.

Eden teams aim to proactively participate in the lives of their communities. They focus initially on work with young people, but their engagement inevitably expands as they become more embedded locally and in keeping with the skills and passions of individual team members. Teams engage with the community in various ways, usually running some activities themselves: for example youth clubs, detached

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[4] The Eden Network has been cited as an example of 'new monasticism' (Cross, 2010) resulting in the assumption among some observers that it involves a monastic kind of living 'in community' i.e. families and single adults sharing accommodation and a common life. This is not the practice of Eden teams, whose focus is rather on being a part of the community of the neighbourhood. Eden teams often practice shared meals and open houses but they are oriented outward, intentionally reaching beyond the team.
[5] For example reporting tools and a safeguarding policy which specifically covers community and home-based work with young people and vulnerable adults.

youth work[6] or kids clubs. They also volunteer for existing community services and in civic engagement roles such as school governorships or residents and tenants' associations. Additionally, team members seek to be 'good neighbours' and cultivate an openness toward the people they live amongst, building community with others on their streets. Some teams are known primarily as Eden team members in their community, for others the name of the local partner church is a more helpful identifier. At the launch of a team there is usually a strong team identity and the name 'Eden team' is used in the majority of cases. Over time this identity often becomes blurred with that of the local church; sometimes Eden teams find they need to step back from a distinct team identity in order for organic initiatives to flourish with the community and the wider church congregation. At its best an Eden partnership is a catalyst for a local congregation to restate its focus on its community.

The Eden Network has undergone a process of formation during its nineteen-year history. As Wilson acknowledges: 'Eden had a lot to learn about being team and sustaining transformative presence over the long term' (2012, p. 70). He articulates the learning gained in supporting Eden team members to prevent burn-out or boundary issues and in creating healthy partnerships with local churches so that teams can be stable and sustainable (Wilson, 2012, pp. 74-81). In this thesis I am not seeking to critically evaluate or idealise the journey of the Eden Network; it is single-minded in its focus, characteristic of many entrepreneurial movements, leading to inevitable challenges and tensions which it has weathered along the way. I am, however, arguing that amidst the complexity of pragmatic and entrepreneurial urban mission, Eden team members undergo a process of discovery. They have wrestled with their evangelical commitments and their experiences of urban ministry and have cultivated a way of life and ministry which can be recognised as a distinct model of mission.

While the Eden Network has caught the attention of many reflecting on mission and

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[6] Detached youth work refers to youth workers engaging with young people informally in public spaces such as streets and local parks.

new forms of church[7] there has been little research done on the Network itself. In 2005 The Message Trust published a report examining the work of Eden Harpurhey. The report, entitled *Building Bridges to Inclusion in North East Manchester,* was undertaken by the Centre for Citizenship Studies in Education at the University of Leicester. This qualitative study concluded that the Eden team provided a 'bridge' between local young people and the statutory services designed to support them. It also named the approach taken by the team as 'matrix mentoring', referring to the multiple relationships built with a young person which provided a network of positive support (Centre for Citizenship Studies In Education, University of Leicester, 2005). The William Temple Foundation has drawn on this report and included Eden teams in elements of its research into the engagement of local faith groups in urban communities (Baker, 2008, pp. 9-10). More recently Samuel Thomas has completed his PhD in Human Geography entitled *Incarnational Geographies? The Faith-inspired Praxis of 'Living Amongst'*. In this ethnographic study of Eden Fitton Hill, a partnership with the Salvation Army in Oldham, Thomas argues that incarnational approaches to engagement with urban communities are an alternative thread of faith-based social engagement, going beyond a focus on service provision (2012, p. 3). My research provides a uniquely 'insider' perspective, enquiring into the developing ministry of Eden teams, its efficacy and its implications. I conceptualise a new missional approach, enabled by but moving beyond the Eden Network's model of urban ministry.

The Eden Network is not alone in cultivating incarnational teams working in marginalised communities. Movements such as Servants to Asia's Urban Poor,[8] Innerchange[9] and Urban Neighbours of Hope[10] work internationally, and in the UK Urban Expression,[11] XLP[12] and Urban Devotion[13] also share the incarnational ministry model of Eden. Literature on these movements has primarily been

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[7] For example see Baker (2011), Bessenecker (2006), Cross (2010), Kilpin and Murray (2007) and Kuhrt (2010).
[8] www.servantsasia.org
[9] www.innerchange.org
[10] www.unoh.org
[11] www.urbanexpression.org.uk
[12] www.xlp.org.uk
[13] www.urbandevotion.org

produced by them in order to tell their story rather than conducting research into their activity and its outcomes. For example, Juliet Kilpin and Stuart Murray's *Church Planting in the Inner City: The Urban Expression Story* (2007) recounts the history of Urban Expression and offers their insights into contextual church planting in urban communities. While Eden has much in common with these other networks it has a particular journey, shaped by its charismatic evangelical commitment and its location at the intersection of evangelicalism and the urban social issues of the late 1990s and early twenty-first century (Hunt, 2005, p. 7; Wilson, 2012, pp. 1-14). Acknowledging this, and having described the Eden Network in detail, I now turn to these wider contexts, urban theology and evangelical identity, demonstrating the relation of Eden to these traditions and the ways in which my research will contribute to them.

Urban theology, asking new questions

The Eden Network's commitment to the urban is rooted in a sense of missionary call to 'neglected neighbourhoods' (Wilson, 2012, p. 12). This neglect is partly concerned with issues of poverty and deprivation, as Wilson describes: 'it's within these urban areas that the vast majority of Britain's social problems reside' (2012, p. 11). It is also due to an awareness that 'evangelical Christians have tended to stay away from the inner city' (Wilson, 2005, p. 41). Urban communities experiencing severe deprivation are the context for the emergence of new forms of ministry among Eden teams. Therefore, in seeking frameworks through which to understand their ministry, I firstly consider urban theology.

There are three themes which run throughout contemporary urban theology: marginalisation, incarnation and contextualisation. Laurie Green claims that marginalisation is a defining feature of the 'urban' in his conception of those who cannot participate in the market systems of our cities (1997, p. 118). For Green, the prophetic role of the church is to hear the marginalised voices of urban communities (1997, p. 123). Presence, conceived as incarnation, is seen as central to urban ministry in the work of John Vincent. He argues that incarnation both identifies the practitioner with Jesus and the disciples and becomes a term for the

'sanctification of the created world' (Vincent, 2003, pp. 299-301). This leads to urban ministry being done from within urban communities. Vincent relates this to what he calls 'theological practice', which understands theology as the core and reality of practice, not simply preparation for or reflection on it. This, he suggests, is the 'implication of a theology created by incarnation', making urban theology essentially contextual (Vincent, 2003, p. 296).

These themes are present in the developing ministry of the Eden Network but, despite the rich history of the urban theology tradition, there is no evidence that this had any significant impact on the development of the Eden Network model. As Wilson notes the initial growth of Eden was somewhat 'make-it-up-as-you-go' (2012, p. 43). The theological and practical methodology developed over time, through practice, rather than with an awareness of earlier urban ministry. This disconnect in part relates to the predominance of ordained church leaders within urban theology, who are seeking to discover new ways to enact their ministry in urban contexts.[14] This contrasts with the Eden Network as an organisational rather than ecclesial vehicle for urban ministry, and as a movement of lay people becoming urban mission practitioners. While these factors may have made connections less likely, I suggest that the central reason for the lack of awareness within the Eden Network of the urban mission tradition is its evangelical theological and cultural context. In both *Eden: Called to the Streets* (2005) and *Concrete Faith* (2012), Wilson draws on evangelical and missional church sources rather than authors from the urban theology tradition. An evangelical urban theology thread is evident, expressed through organisations such as the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission, which Eden has connected with to some extent. But this has had limited impact within the wider evangelical tradition and the Eden Network has been more influenced by mainstream evangelicalism.

I suggest that the Eden Network is situated at a missional and activist meeting point between charismatic evangelicalism and urban theology. Jon Kuhrt comments on the historic and contemporary interplay between urban theology as a distinct

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[14] See for example Rowland and Vincent (1997), A. Smith (1983), and G. Smith (2003).

tradition and mainstream evangelicalism. He cites Eden as an example of 'new ecumenism', which describes the commitment to unity and to mission enabling churches of diverse theological standpoints to work together in the post-Christendom context (2010, p. 14). Kuhrt concludes that charismatic and Pentecostal influences are motivating mission in which the historic division between 'liberal' and 'conservative' theological emphases is being overcome (2010, pp. 14, 20-21). In this research urban theology provides experiences of 'coming home' and of being 'brought up short' (Osmer, 2008, p. 22). Coming home in discovering that the emerging mode of ministry among Eden teams actually has a considerable historical precedent, and brought up short in acknowledging the differences between the inherited theological narrative of Eden teams and the questions raised by their ministry. While it is evident that urban theology was not the inspiration for the Eden Network, the urban context created the conditions for the emergence of missional pastoral care, and within urban theology I find the theological resources of incarnation and contextualisation with which to approach my investigation into the work of Eden teams.

Current conceptions of evangelical identities

The Eden Network identifies as evangelical and it can be located within the trajectory of evangelical urban engagement. However, evangelical identity is problematised among Eden teams as it is challenged by their experience; therefore I consider contemporary conceptions of evangelicalism in order to address this issue in my research. I take as my starting point David Bebbington's characterisation of evangelical Christianity as a revival movement which began in the 1730s and which remains a distinctive tradition within Christianity shaped by a 'quadrilateral' of doctrinal priorities:

> Conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the
> expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible;

and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (Bebbington, 1989, p. 3)[15]

The Eden Network further identifies with the charismatic movement within evangelicalism which began in 1963 with experiences of baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Mathew Guest argues that while the charismatics drew from Pentecostalism, they were less extreme and were influenced by trends such as therapy and self-fulfilment in late-modernity. He traces the development and rapid growth of charismatic evangelicalism to the extent that charismatic music and styles of service have come to dominate evangelicalism (Guest, 2007, p. 109). Bebbington describes this movement as characterised by commitments to the exercise of spiritual gifts, expressive worship, insight and experience, community and an emphasis on church as the people of God rather than as a specific institution (1989, pp. 241-244). The Christians among my participants demonstrate these traits and identify with charismatic evangelicalism. Therefore, while I address evangelicalism as a whole in this project, I acknowledge the particular position of my participants within charismatic evangelicalism. This creates specific practical and theological dynamics which are enabling of missional pastoral care, as I will explore further in chapter 5.

Evangelical identity is commonly understood in terms of doctrinal characteristics and from the perspective of organisational structures. I suggest that accounting for the diversity within evangelical identity necessitates a different approach, informed by the lived experience of ordinary evangelicals. In his historical account Bebbington shows that, far from being static, evangelicalism is flexible and adaptive. He demonstrates the ways in which evangelicalism has been interdependent with the cultural, social and industrial changes occurring in British society throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1989, p. 272). Bebbington notes that while evangelicalism claims to adhere to 'changeless content' it has both influenced and responded to cultural shifts, rearticulating itself within new social contexts throughout its history (1989, p. 271). Rob Warner

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[15] I give a fuller analysis of Bebbington's quadrilateral in relation to my research in chapters 2 and 5.

extends this to consider the character of late-twentieth-century English evangelicalism. He claims that in the 1970s, divisions led to new opportunities for 'parachurch agencies, the charismatics and the Pentecostals, and the new churches to develop new constructs of evangelical identity' (2007, p. 180). Warner categorises evangelicalism as a pan-denominational subculture divided along two axes, the 'conversionist-activist' and the 'biblicist-crucicentric'. He places charismatic evangelicalism as part of his conversionist-activist axis, dominated by 'entrepreneurial pragmatists', prioritising results with 'a rhetoric of advance and success'. The biblicist-crucicentric axis, he suggests, describes more theologically oriented evangelicals both conservative and progressive, but he acknowledges the dominance of conservative Calvinists (2007, p. 20). Warner's assessment is that accommodation to the success narratives of modernity led to an inability to adapt to postmodern culture and increasing secularisation (2007, p. 64). He is very critical of the trans-denominational organisations and networks of English evangelicalism (2007, p. 15), arguing that it articulated 'societal expectations that were adventurously assertive but risked proving inflated, quixotic or even delusional' (2007, p. 41).

This study of evangelical organisations contrasts with the work of others studying contemporary evangelicalism who seek to understand evangelical experience from the perspective of ordinary evangelicals (Bielo, 2011; Guest, 2007; Smith, 2000; Strhan, 2015, p. 4). My research into missional pastoral care in the ministry of the Eden Network can be seen to address the intersection of subcultural evangelical narratives and the experiences of evangelicals. While I begin with the narratives of evangelical subculture, I go on to show the ways in which the ministry experiences of Eden team members have forged something new, challenging and reshaping their inherited evangelical missional narrative. The emerging picture in the work of Guest, Anna Strhan, Christian Smith and James Bielo suggests that evangelicals are not unreflective; rather they are engaging critically with their inherited narratives and with the social and cultural influences around them. This provides a helpful starting point for my research, resonating with the critical engagement with theological tradition I find among my participants.

I argue that missional pastoral care articulates a new strand of dialogue within the evangelical tradition. Bielo suggests that Christianity should be understood as 'dialogic', in that it consists of multiple 'Christianities' which are formed through critical dialogue honing the priorities and concerns of each 'Christianity' in relation to other Christian expressions and the wider culture (2011, p. 198). He advocates attention to lived religious experience in order to access these dialogues, undertaking a multi-sited ethnographic project as a 'case study in what happens when Christianities interact' (Bielo, 2011, pp. 197-202). Bielo's conception of 'emerging evangelicals' describes a subgroup within contemporary evangelicalism who, in response to the Emerging Church movement which occurred between 1995 and 2005, define themselves by 'the idea of being a missionary in one's own society' (2011, p. 11). He argues that emerging evangelicals engage in a cultural critique of inherited evangelical practices and seek to cultivate a more authentic expression of Christianity rooted in missional engagement with post-modern aspects of culture (Bielo, 2011, pp. 10-17). Also in the North American context, Smith uses a combination of qualitative interviewing and surveys to challenge what he sees as simplistic portrayals of evangelical attitudes toward politics and pluralism. He suggests that 'field research with ordinary evangelicals… shows that they live in different worlds and have different experiences, concerns, thoughts and goals than those [whom] journalists and scholars often take to be their leaders' (2000, p. 8).

In my research I explore the ways in which evangelical identity is shaped in dialogue with the charismatic evangelical tradition of my participants and their missional practice: engaging with urban people. This engagement with the 'other' is present in the work of Strhan who conducts an ethnographic study in a large, London-based, conservative evangelical church, and observes how her participants navigate the competing influences of secular urban life and the claims of evangelical faith. Her central argument is that conservative evangelicals are both aware of their subjective fragmentation and are seeking coherence in their desire to be 'disciples'. She proposes that in their 'practices of listening and speaking' they are able to create networks of support in order to sustain their quest for coherence (Strhan,

2015, pp. 4-11). Guest's congregational study of St Michael-le-Belfrey in York, a well-known charismatic evangelical church, also demonstrates an awareness of this dialogic character (2007, p. 74). Guest is concerned with the relation of evangelicalism to 'the world', opposing conceptions of evangelicalism which focus on either cultural accommodation or resistance as ways to understand that relationship. Rather he articulates a more complex relation, drawing on Smith's 'engaged orthodoxy' (2000, p. 157), in which evangelicals negotiate a relation to modernity, benefitting from opportunities such as higher education while retaining a strong identity through 'internally constructed discourses, [and] shared traditions' (Guest, 2007, pp. 13-19).

In Warner's analysis evangelicalism is a weakening subculture, conflicted and deluded (2007, pp. 31-32), inhibited by the anti-intellectualism noted by Mark Noll (1994, p. 1). But Guest, Strhan, Smith and Bielo present an alternative narrative through the lived experience of evangelicals themselves, rather than 'any super-organic version of evangelicalism' (Bielo, 2011, p. 27). Their contributions highlight the need to move beyond the doctrinal and organisational categorisations of evangelical identity offered by Bebbington and Warner in order to understand its complexity as a tradition.

Transformation, meaning-making and human flourishing

The way in which Eden teams and community members interpret and make sense of their experiences is a central concern of this research, highlighting the presence of inherited narratives, while questioning their adequacy. Urban theology offers the resources of incarnation and contextualisation which resonate with the experiences of Eden team members. Contemporary work on evangelical identity has further enabled my engagement with the complex processes of reflection in the lives of evangelicals. But these frameworks do not completely satisfy the needs of my project. The Eden Network frequently articulates its aims in terms of transformation, using the strapline 'Transforming communities from the inside out' (Wilson, 2012, p. 53) between 2005 and 2013. This language is indicative of uncertainty about the outcomes of its mission. While Eden team members primarily

hope for conversion they more frequently find themselves seeing different, fragmentary kinds of life change, more akin to the example from my own practice above.

Transformation and the reframing of inherited meanings can be found in the pastoral care model of Charles Gerkin. He orients his conception of care toward transformation, understood as positive change, for example from 'suffering to health' (1986, pp. 54-55). This change is achieved through critical and reflective engagement with worldviews in the light of the Christian narrative in order to make and re-make meaning for the care-seeker (1997, p. 111).[16] Gerkin's conception of pastoral care provides an embodied narrative hermeneutical approach which is illustrative of the experiences of my participants, making his work critical for my understanding of this research. However, I suggest his conception of transformation is underdeveloped. To account for the breadth of the outcomes seen among Eden teams and community members I use the work of Grace Jantzen who develops her feminist philosophy of religion with a conception of flourishing as 'growth and fruition from an inner creative and healthy dynamic' (1998, p. 161). She also engages with theological paradigms, positing flourishing as an alternative theological idiom to 'salvation' which has dominated Western Protestantism (1998, p. 157). I will argue that missional pastoral care leads to flourishing, which challenges its traditional theological narrative and which has been obscured by dependence on the language of transformation.

Objectives and summary of the thesis

Thus far I have demonstrated the tensions experienced by Eden teams in their urban ministry and have connected these to the emergence of a new form of mission which is not accounted for in their inherited evangelical identities. In this research I address this problem by exploring the practices of Eden teams from the perspectives of team members and the urban community members they have come alongside. My objectives in this project are as follows: Firstly, to hear the

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[16] I give a full examination of Gerkin's model in chapter 3 relating it to the practice of missional pastoral care and revisit it in chapter 4 in relation to the complex good which is the effect of missional pastoral care.

stories of Eden team members and urban community members, in particular their experiences of urban ministry and its effects, and explore their relation to their corporate and theological contexts. Secondly, to conceptualise and define what is emerging in the ministry relationships between Eden team members and urban community members as a previously unrecognised model of mission. Thirdly, to understand the ways in which this model is effective and how it is an expression of charismatic evangelicalism; and finally to engage critically with the evangelical tradition, contributing to conceptions of evangelical identity, mission and pastoral care.

In chapter 1 I present my methodology by examining the role of hermeneutics, experience and narrative in my work. I outline my qualitative approach, and describe the design, execution and analysis of this research which aimed to prioritise the perceptions and experiences of Eden team members and community members. This necessitates consideration of the issues raised by my positionality within the research and the kind of knowledge this methodology generates.

In chapter 2 I argue that the Eden Network model of urban ministry has created a problem for traditional evangelicalism. I propose a narrative approach to evangelical identity, outlining the evangelical missional narrative and its implications for missional practice, including that of the Eden Network. My research shows that while the Eden Network model of relocation was expected to produce conversion, there was in fact a different outcome: missional pastoral care. Chapter 3 examines and defines missional pastoral care as a distinctive model of mission. I develop this model, as an unforeseen outcome of the Eden Network approach to mission, through a critical engagement with the work of Charles Gerkin. I argue that it involves a set of constituent elements which create space for hermeneutical play as a relational dynamic.

Chapter 4 considers the efficacy of missional pastoral care, both to what extent it can be considered effective and the nature of its effects. I first discuss the way in which Eden team members and community members experience the emergence of missional pastoral care. I then describe the effect of missional pastoral care as a

complex good, which involves both a kind of flourishing (Jantzen, 1998, p. 157) and loss and ambiguity, drawing on Gerkin's concept of the 'paradoxical self' (1984, p. 100). This chapter concludes with an acknowledgement of the implications of this model for the evangelical missional narrative, highlighting the degree to which the theology and practice of missional pastoral care has shifted away from the inherited models of Eden teams. This leads to my final chapter, in which I ask to what extent missional pastoral care is still a charismatic evangelical practice.

In chapter 5 I argue that missional pastoral care represents a new and distinct thread within charismatic evangelicalism by examining the ways in which it both continues and extends conceptions of evangelical identity. I show that missional pastoral care makes use of *missio Dei* theology to develop a distinctive spirituality defined by God's active presence in the world and shaped by particular relations to the Bible, experience and the conviction that 'something will happen'. This chapter concludes with a presentation of the theological framework of missional pastoral care which can resource a new evangelical missional narrative.

My final chapter critically evaluates missional pastoral care as a concept and assesses its significance as a contribution to pastoral care, evangelical identity and missional practice. By demonstrating connections between evangelical models of mission and pastoral care, and highlighting how they coalesce in the practice of my participants, this thesis articulates a form of evangelical identity in which pastoral care is integral to the mission of God.

In this chapter I have introduced the problem presented by experiences of evangelical urban ministry practice which has prompted this research. The Eden Network has provided a context for the tensions between the lived experience of evangelicals in urban mission and the overarching narratives of evangelicalism to be expressed. I suggest that in the course of this practice new forms of ministry have emerged, calling for further examination and have introduced the conceptual frameworks through which I interpret the experiences of my participants. In the chapter that follows I turn to the design and implementation of my research introducing a narrative hermeneutical methodology.

Chapter 1: *Hearing stories of emerging ministry: a methodology*

> This is the dimension of being embedded in the stories of a community and of responding to the expectations of the people around us. We cannot tell whichever story we like but have to respond to what those around us consider a legitimate story. In doing so, we follow the narrative models or canonical stories provided by the community in which we live. (Ganzevoort, 2010, p. 335)

Ruard Ganzevoort argues that the construction of narratives is always done in relationship with others: that the audience, as well as the narrator, shapes the story. In the case of the Eden Network, I suggest that the 'canonical story' of evangelicalism has been called into question by the new and unanticipated experiences of Eden team members. My research seeks to hear these experiences, both from Eden team members as those initiating mission and from urban community members who are recipients and increasingly participants in the ministry of Eden teams. It aims to understand the nature of this activity, and whether it can be seen to be effective as a model of charismatic evangelical mission. In this chapter I outline the narrative hermeneutical methodology used to conduct sixteen semi-structured life-story interviews alongside participant observation undertaken in the course of my professional and personal involvement with the Eden Network.

A narrative hermeneutical methodology

In order to design a programme of research which has the capacity to discover the nature of the ministry taking place among Eden team and urban community members, I developed a methodology which asserts the validity of the experiences of ordinary people as the object of research, and the capacity of ordinary people to speak theologically. This narrative hermeneutical methodology acknowledges the value of experience in qualitative research, of hermeneutics as the way in which experiences are given meaning, and narrative as the form in which that meaning is

expressed. In my project I take a practical theological approach in order to foreground the critical engagement between ministry experience and evangelical theology.

In Practical Theology the use of qualitative research methods creates a critical correlation between experience, theology and other sources of knowledge (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 95). By starting with the experiences of Eden team members I consider them 'an interpretative context which raises new questions, offers challenges and demands answers of the gospel', in contrast to systematic theological paradigms which bring theology to experience in application (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, pp. 6-18). I ask who defines ministry: the organisations and denominations who plan and recruit for ministry, the practitioners conducting ministry or the recipients of that ministry. I prioritise the perspective of Eden teams and community members and suggest that a function of practical theology is to make audible voices obscured by organisational hierarchies or class differences. This approach is evident in Beverley Skeggs' ethnographic exploration of working-class women's experience. She argues that 'experience is important as a practice of making sense, both symbolically and narratively as a struggle over material conditions and over meaning' and acknowledges the liberative potential of attending to experience, allowing those traditionally objectified to tell their story (1997, p. 27).

A focus on lived experience is particularly apposite to the study of evangelical identity in which the traditional conceptions of religious identity have been abstracted from ordinary evangelicals (Smith, 2000, p. 2). For Guest: 'individuals and social institutions share a common project – the quest for a coherent reality – and the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the everyday construction of that reality' (2012, p. 7). In the ethnographic approaches of Guest, Smith, Strhan and Bielo they prioritise the daily experience of ordinary evangelicals in order to create conceptions of evangelical identity which do justice to the complexity and diversity of the tradition (Smith, 2000, p. 196). Qualitative, ethnographic approaches enable this kind of investigation as they take account of inner personal narratives and the role of shared cultural frameworks of meaning (Geertz, 1999, p. 53). By inviting

Eden team members to share their experiences of ministry I address the theological and organisational superstructures of evangelicalism from the perspective of ordinary practitioners. Furthermore, by drawing on the experiences of urban community members I enable the working-class recipients of middle-class evangelical mission to define it for themselves, undermining the power relations inherent in social class and between missioner and missionised.

The narrative hermeneutical nature of experience

Prioritising the experience of my participants calls for consideration of the way in which it may be understood as a form of knowledge; primarily, it is concerned with the *meaning* of experiences (Punch, 2014, p. 156). Skeggs argues: 'All experience is processed through practice, discourse and interpretation. We do not have pure experiences.' (1997, p. 28). Therefore, if, as Mason suggests, 'being is an ongoing constructed process' (2002, p. 14) then hermeneutics is the process of construction, interpreting life events in the light of existing paradigms and attributing meaning to them. For Clifford Geertz, qualitative data must be seen as interpretation, as 'our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to' (1973, p. 9). Experience as a category is complicated by the pre-understandings and interpretative frameworks brought to it by both the subject of that experience and those witnessing or hearing about it. Researching experience then must acknowledge a process of interpretation, both in the telling of the participant and the hearing of the researcher.

A commitment to experience as the subject of research leads to a necessary engagement with hermeneutics and narrative as the means by which experience is interpreted, understood and made meaningful (Bold, 2012, pp. 22-23). Ganzevoort describes the 'narrative turn' within Practical Theology, which acknowledges narrative as fundamental to human knowing, defining it as 'all forms of representation of real or fictional situations in a time sequence. This sequence connects events into patterns of causality, desirability, development and meaning'. (Ganzevoort, 2011, p. 216; Bold, 2012; Ellis, 2004). This indicates that a narrative approach to research is necessary in order to access the lived experiences of

individuals. My project concerns the way in which received evangelical theological narratives engage with missional practice; making the interpretation of life experiences and the narratives within which they are communicated central to my investigation.

Research design

In keeping with my narrative hermeneutical approach I selected semi-structured interviewing as my primary data collection method. While this method limits the number of participants in the study, qualitative interviewing affirms the personal narratives of my participants and recognises the reflexive role of the interviewer in the research process (Mason, 2002, pp. 65-66). Semi-structured interviews contain a consistent framework for the interview encounter alongside some flexibility, ensuring data collection is rigorous whilst enabling the voice of the participant to be fully heard (Fielding & Thomas, 2008, p. 246). I developed 'life-story' interviews, designed to access my participant's personal life narratives and the theological frameworks they used to understand them. To achieve this I have drawn on Steiner Kvale's 'semi-structured life-world interview' which he describes as 'an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (2007, p. 7). This approach meets the needs of my project in that it is primarily focused on *understanding* the views and experiences described by my participants.

In addition to qualitative interviewing I understand my professional and personal experience of the Eden Network and its ministry practices as 'participant observation' in relation to this project. Participant observation involves 'direct observation and experience' in order to access 'the meanings of human existence as seen from the standpoint of insiders' (Jorgensen, 1989, pp. 14-23). This is conducted through a variety of roles, from the 'full participant' to the 'mute observer' (McCormak Steinmetz, 1991, p. 45). I was an 'active participant' in relation to my research as I had a job to do in addition to my observation (McCormak Steinmetz, 1991, pp. 42-45). I used field notes and reflexive journaling to record and reflect on my professional practice as a staff member of the Eden

Network and my personal practices in my neighbourhood and church involvement (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, pp. 61-63). In my journal I noted specific instances in my work or personal practice which surprised me or connected with the themes of my research reflecting on the meaning of these events and my relation to them. For example, having spent a day visiting Eden teams in 2010 I recorded the statement of one Eden team leader: 'It's not about what do you want to do but about who do you want to become'. Eden was changing people's understanding of their identity, which I have come to refer to as a change in meaning-system.

Using participant observation alongside qualitative interviewing acknowledges that interviewing necessarily involves observation, as the researcher pays attention to more than just the words of the participant (McCormak Steinmetz, 1991, p. 43). It also provided context for the semi-structured interviews, both shaping the research questions and offering an additional perspective with which to correlate the answers emerging from my interview participants. Participant observation is time-consuming, necessarily limiting the size of a study; however it suited my project as the Eden Network is a discrete context for research (May, 2011, p. 188). Unlike other forms of research, participant observation is focused on understanding human behaviour, including why and how people change. This is pivotal to my investigation into the ministry of the Eden Network, making it an appropriate choice of method for this study (May, 2011, p. 169). David Hufford acknowledges that this kind of ethnography risks 'mere self-justification' (1999, p. 295); although he also states that, when undertaken with reflexive awareness, ethnographic research has the 'potential to reveal the culturally-situated, human quality of all knowledge' (1999, p. 295). My use of participant observation therefore necessitates careful consideration of my role in the research.

Positionality

My standpoint in relation to this project is complex, requiring a commitment to reflexivity. Hufford defines reflexivity as the 'inclusion of the actor (scholar, author, observer) in the account of the act and/or its outcomes' (1999, p. 297). Developing reflexive awareness enabled me to acknowledge the impact of my positionality,

both positive and negative. The research was conducted between September 2009 and June 2014, with the interviews taking place in 2012, from April to July. During this period I was an insider to the Network as a staff member, a resident in an Eden neighbourhood and an active member of an Eden partner church. I had, to a degree, experienced the issues this project seeks to address and included my own experience as a starting point for learning (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 8). However, my role was complicated by my positioning alongside an Eden team, rather than as a full Eden team member, my role as a staff member, and my status as a middle-class university student and researcher. This research goes beyond my own experience and practice to focus specifically on the understandings of Eden team members and those they have come alongside. Therefore I am a 'practitioner-researcher' researching within my own community and organisation (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, pp. 76-79; McNiff, 2000). The positionality of researchers in ethnographic work raises specific methodological and ethical considerations: to what extent is it possible to understand the beliefs and actions of others which you may not share (McCutcheon, 1999, p. 2); and how might the beliefs of the researcher, whether shared or not shared with their participants, influence their interpretations (Aston, Cornish, & Joyce, 2015, p. 7). My particular standpoint provided both advantages and challenges in approaching the research.

My position as a professional and personal insider afforded me a long-term and intimate perspective on the cultural norms and narratives of the Eden Network and experience of how these interact with the everyday practice of the Eden model of ministry. This enabled me to frame the questions of this research, shaping my intention to hear from the practitioners and recipients of ministry and to understand the ways that their insights critique organisational perspectives. While they must be navigated, the categories of inside and outside are themselves contested. Geertz asserts that analysis must be 'neither imprisoned within [participant's] mental horizons… nor systematically deaf to the distinctive tonalities of their existence' (1999, p. 52) and advocates both 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' stances for researchers in ethnographic practice. His anthropological approach has been adopted within the study of religion in which

questions of the belief system of researchers have been of particular concern (Aston, Cornish, & Joyce, 2015, pp. 4-7). Hufford argues that 'disinterest is impossible in religious issues', rejecting the category of outsider completely (1999, p. 297).

My insider status not only involved sharing some of the beliefs and experiences of my participants; I also knew many of them. These relationships benefitted this research as personal investment in the relationship with a participant best serves the purpose of learning about their experiences (Oakley, 1981, p. 41). My relationships with Eden team members meant that they recognised me as someone who shared their values. Furthermore, through my training role they had experienced me as someone willing to ask difficult questions and critique accepted wisdom. I also knew three of my community member participants personally through my work and local church involvement. The positive effect of these prior relationships was evident as participants shared their views openly in the interviews, even where they were voicing theology or practice which challenged their own and the Network's theological paradigm. This indicates the presence of Shulamit Reinharz's 'rapport', an 'openness to intimacy and striving for empathy' which characterises feminist approaches to participant observation (1992, p. 68; Joseph, 1996). Despite this familiarity, and particularly for participants with whom I did not have a personal relationship, I took care in conducting the research (described in the following section) to mitigate against the power imbalance caused by my position as an employee of the Eden Network and my status as a middle-class researcher, ensuring that the participant's own experience was heard. The complexity of role and relationship in my study is reflective of the shifting allegiances and modes of relationship identified by Aston et al as features of ethnographic research on religion. Rather than attempting to resolve issues of positionality, I adopted their stance by developing reflexivity in the process of undertaking research (2015, pp. 7-8).

The research group

Interviewees were identified using a purposive sampling strategy based on a 'relevant range' of criteria (Mason, 2002, pp. 123-124; May, 2011, p. 100; Punch, 2014, p. 164). These were: experience of the Eden Network approach to ministry, either as a team member or through team members in their local area; and self-identification as having experienced transformation. Through these I aimed to understand the kinds of ministry practices which were effective and to identify what constituted that effectiveness. As the Eden Network is a distinct group with a strong culture of sharing stories both within the Network and publicly, ensuring anonymity for my participants requires care. Team members could be identified within their teams, and community members may be identified by team members in their neighbourhoods. Therefore I have adopted Cory Labanow's approach, limiting the amount of personal detail given for each participant (2009, p. 41). I do not identify a participant's specific Eden community and I refer to the two Eden team leader participants simply as Eden team members. I introduce participants with a pseudonym, specifying whether they are a community member or an Eden team member, their age and general geographic location, adding additional detail only where relevant and where it cannot lead to them being identified.

The sample consisted of seven Eden team members and nine community members representing sixteen different Eden neighbourhoods across Manchester, Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and the North East. The Eden team member participants were all in their 20s or 30s and included two employed Eden team leaders and five volunteer team members. Three were female and four male; they represented five different denominations including both historic and new churches. Five participants had been a part of the Eden Network for more than five years, and the longest-serving team member had been in their community for twelve years. Two team member participants had been a part of the Network less than five years.

Of the community members in my study, five were female and four male. Four were aged 16 to 21 and five were aged 22 and above, the youngest being Jack and Jess at 16 and the oldest Helen and Margaret, both in their 40s. I selected

participants who had been involved with the Eden team in their community for varied lengths of time as my professional practice indicated that the early months of getting to know an Eden team member can result in a strong perception of personal change. I wanted to include this catalytic effect but also to discover the long-term implications of relationships with Eden team members beyond this initial phase. Four of my participants had been involved for over five years with two of them having been involved for twelve years. Five participants had been involved for less than five years.

<u>Conducting the research</u>

My role as an employee of the Eden Network presented both benefits and challenges in accessing and obtaining consent from my participants. As a known figure across the Network I was able to approach Eden team member participants and some community members directly. I accessed additional community member participants through Eden team leaders, who introduced me to possible participants according to my criteria and I then began the process to see whether they were happy to take part. In these cases I was seen both as a friend of the Eden team leader and as a staff member of Eden Network. My role led to the potential for participants, particularly those with whom I did not have a pre-existing relationship, to feel inhibited or to say what they felt was expected of them.

To mitigate against any sense that I could be looking for certain responses for the organisation I was clear with all participants, in my invitation and on a Participant Information sheet, that this research was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time and that it was independent from the Eden Network.[17] I sought to minimise my power as a middle-class researcher by asking the participant to choose the location of the interview (Clark-King, 2003, p. 19) and I met with most participants in their own homes, although some suggested a local church or a friend's house. I reviewed the purpose of the project again with each participant at the start of the interview, checking that they were fully informed about the

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[17] See Appendices for the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.

requirements of involvement, and that they were still willing to participate. I then obtained signed consent and used an mp3 recorder to audio record each interview.

I was aware of the impact of my professional role acutely when two community member participants volunteered their thanks to Eden in the course of the interview. Ellen Clark-King acknowledges her positionality as an Anglican priest in her study of the theology and spirituality of working-class women in inner-city Newcastle. She described her commitment to personal honesty in her relationships with participants and how, as a result, they also responded honestly, if apologetically, even when they knew they would be disagreeing with her theological standpoint (Clark-King, 2003, p. 19). I sought to overcome this issue by focusing on the personal story of each participant, only later asking questions relating to their specific involvement with Eden as necessary (Kvale, 2007, p. 74). This meant that I gained a broad picture of the experiences of my community member participants and I was able to situate their relationships with Eden team members in that context. The interviews are co-constructed narratives representing a retelling of the participant's story particular to the time, place and relationship established prior to and during our meeting (Kvale, 2007, p. 1). This makes a reflexive awareness of my own influence on, and response to, the narratives of my participants integral to the research process (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, p. 188; Hufford, 1999, p. 306).

Data analysis began with recording my field notes, including attending to my own inner reactions, directly after each interview (Kvale, 2007, p. 56), and by transcribing, which I began shortly after conducting the first interviews; this enabled me to identify themes as they emerged. I used Kvale's transcription conventions, including symbols to indicate where there was overlap of voices, where tiny pauses occurred, where words were stressed or sounds were prolonged (2007, p. 96). In this way I was able to capture the pace and flow of the interview, identifying subjects of importance or sensitivity for my participants.

Some of my community member participants were under eighteen and others I considered vulnerable using Hannah Farrimond's definition of vulnerable groups as

those 'traditionally marginalised, disadvantaged or stigmatised' and 'groups living in dangerous or impoverished structural environments or engaging in risky behaviours' (2013, p. 159). For example Kevin, aged twenty-three and from Manchester, shared his life story including abuse, self-harm and time in care; he spoke with emotion and at one point asked: '…is it OK to speak like this?'. It is the responsibility of the researcher to adequately prepare for and resolve ethical issues arising from the research (Gregory, 2003, p. 3). With vulnerable participants I took extra care to remind them that they did not have to take part and they could at any time stop and withdraw from the process (Farrimond, 2013, p. 161). One interview was in fact cut short as the participant was having a difficult day and felt she would prefer not to continue, although she agreed for the shortened interview to remain a part of the project. Two of my community member participants were under the age of eighteen and so parental consent was obtained for them to take part. In one case the participant's mum stayed in the same room during the interview, looking after a younger sibling. While this will have undoubtedly affected the stories that this sixteen-year-old chose to share, I considered that it was important to enable the participation of young people even in this limited sense.

Kevin's interview, among others, contained the discussion of issues which I considered 'sensitive'. Farrimond acknowledges the subjectivity of this concept but offers her definition as subjects which are not usually part of everyday conversation, including criminal or illegal activity, and personal topics which may cause distress (2013, p. 163). The discussion of 'sensitive' topics applied to some degree for all of my participants, such as the tensions and confusion felt by Eden team members in relation to the perceived success or failure of their ministry. Louise, a team member and mum of two in her thirties from Greater Manchester became tearful during our conversation: '…some bits have been and still are hard for me really. I suppose there are some people that… you wish you could say "Oh there's been this transformation" and there hasn't been…'. In order to maintain a duty of care to my participants I took steps in the planning of my interviews to accommodate times when participants became emotional or needed a break (Farrimond, 2013, p. 96); my approach was to listen actively and empathetically,

gently facilitating their telling of their story. Despite this sensitivity, in all cases participants accepted the opportunity to participate and even alongside stories of great pain there were narratives of hope and resilience.

The experience of conducting the research interviews was particularly instructive, honing my skills as a researcher. As Kvale notes, through the process of research the 'interviewer gets wiser' (2007, p. 43). Arranging and conducting interviews with many of the community members was challenging due to their at times chaotic lifestyles, as was hearing participants' personal stories as many contained abuse, neglect, and addiction. Distractions such as pets, family members or, in one case, the noise of torrential rain on the roof of the conservatory we were in, interrupted many of the interviews, impacting the participants', and my own, concentration. Furthermore, I found the process of interviewing my more vulnerable participants personally difficult and felt keenly the responsibility to hold these stories with integrity and gentleness.

In addition to these practical and pastoral challenges I found that after the first few interviews I was not hearing the detail of experiences that I had hoped for. Following my central concern to identify the nature and effectiveness of Eden's ministry, my initial interview plan had focused on asking explicitly conceptual questions at the beginning and then following up by asking for examples. In practice I found that this hampered the interview: participants were filtering their stories through their initial response and in many cases found telling their stories more difficult. I found, as Kvale suggests, that focusing primarily on listening to the life experiences of participants generated a much richer picture of their ministry experiences (2007, p. 57). In response to this I changed my interview plan to take a more narrative approach as described by Christine Bold, focusing on drawing out the participant's life story (2012, pp. 97-98). I began each interview with a 'generative narrative question' (Flick, 2002, p. 102) asking them to 'Tell me a bit of your personal story' in order to invite their main narrative, following this up with questions of clarification or prompts. In the majority of cases this was the longest section of the interview (Bold, 2012, p. 98). I then asked for participants' experiences in relation to features of the Eden Network model of ministry that I had

identified as distinctive: relocation, intentional relationships and communicating Christian faith. As these questions introduced my concepts to the conversation which so far had been shaped only by the participant's story, I printed these phrases on A4 paper as a visual aid to assist participants in remembering the question and give them a focal point to reflect on. In keeping with this narrative approach, only towards the end of the interview did I ask for their associations with concepts including transformation, salvation and discipleship, again using these words printed on A4 paper as visual aids.

Early in the research I was keen to include some 'negative instances' (Mason, 2002, p. 133) in order to identity ineffective or even destructive ministry practice. However, in the course of the interviewing it became evident that all participants, both Eden team members and community members, were presenting a nuanced picture of the Eden Network model of ministry, as Clare, a thirty-three year old mum and community member from Greater Manchester, articulates: 'I'm going forward then I'm going back'. Similarly, the majority of community member participants described times in their lives when they had disengaged from their relationships with the Eden team and times when they had felt their life change was fragile or they had gone 'backwards'. Additionally, finding participants who claimed not to have been affected at all by their involvement with Eden teams proved very difficult. Therefore I decided not to designate specific negative instances within the sample, instead focusing on understanding the complex nature of the emerging ministry of Eden teams as presented by my participants. Having allowed for flexibility in my research proposal, I stopped collecting data after sixteen interviews as I was recognising the same themes emerging and became aware of reaching saturation (Mason M., 2010). The interviews were each extremely rich data sources, thus by limiting the project I was able to focus on the depth of insight they contain.

Generating knowledge in narrative hermeneutical research

In order to understand the significance of my participants' narratives I developed a data analysis strategy taking a narrative approach to thematic analysis and coding.

Narrative analysis in qualitative research focuses on the data as a narrative structure and pays attention to the content of the story as 'descriptions of events which contain meaning as well as facts' (Earthy & Cronin, 2008, p. 423; Bold, 2012; Ellis, 2004; Ganzevoort, 2011). Acknowledging the narrative form of my interviews I conducted thematic analysis, which looks for the themes that prompted the research in the data, in this case the ministry practices of Eden teams and the effects these had had on participants (Bold, 2012, p. 129). I went on to use 'open coding' to identify and explore unexpected themes and categories (Bold, 2012, p. 130). Using multiple methods of reading the data highlighted anomalies and critically correlated my conclusions; I found, as Kvale describes, 'a free interplay' of methods during the analysis process (2007, p. 115).

As the analysis progressed the concept of the 'self' became significant and I reviewed the transcripts highlighting agentic and non-agentic language, that which gives participants agency or makes them passive (Yardley & Murray, 2004, p. 99). For example, community member Helen repeatedly attributed the agency for life events to outside sources: 'I felt that the devil had just took it all away from me'; later of God she says: 'I know he's gonna do something with me'. Conversely, Eden team member Adam described events in which he exercised his own choice and drove the narrative forward, for example in meeting a well-known character in his community: 'I was walking through the street and he was just sat on a bench. I thought I would sit down near him just to start chatting to him'. This enabled me to see the patterns of each participant's sense of agency in their life story and in this particular retelling of it.

By taking a methodological approach focused on meaning I have positioned my project within ethnographic and narrative research. As I have noted, these choices have limited the scope of the study as the sample of sixteen interview participants did not include representatives of every Eden team or community; specifically, it did not include participants from the London Eden teams. This had particular implications for ethnic representation. The sample reflected the predominantly white and British membership of the Eden Network as it was when the research was conducted; such diversity as existed in the Network was primarily in the

London Eden teams, meaning that this was not represented in my study. This methodological approach also prioritises the subjectivity of participant's narratives above generalisable 'facts', thereby limiting the normative potential of this research (Bold, 2012, p. 5). Conclusions are interpretive, as Geertz acknowledges; outcomes may be second or third order interpretations, they are 'something made' (1973, p. 15). This raises issues of validity and transferability in relation to the project, how useful is this kind of knowledge? (Angrosino, 2007, p. 60).

My methodology has generated a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) of the ministry practice of the Eden Network which can further clarify debates concerning evangelical identity, mission and pastoral care. Geertz distinguishes between a 'thin description', which focuses on the physical, observable events of a situation, and a 'thick description' which sets these events within the 'ideas, constructs of thought and behaviour' of the participants in order to understand what the events mean to the participants (1973, pp. 6-7). While the outcomes may be fragmentary and inconclusive, this approach enables me to account for the way in which individuals construct 'spiritual and self-identities' (Ganzevoort, 2011, pp. 223-224). It can be evaluated on its capacity to illuminate the context of the research and to bring its particularity into conversation with broader theoretical frameworks (Geertz, 1973, p. 17). Geertz describes the process of engaging the local detail of ethnographic research with global structures or concepts as 'dialectical' movement, a cyclical process in which they begin to explain one another (1999, pp. 61-62). The knowledge generated by my research therefore functions to *clarify* the events occurring in relationships between Eden team members and urban community members and draw out their points of engagement with theoretical conceptions of evangelicalism, pastoral care and urban mission.

The primary finding of this research is that a new model of mission, missional pastoral care, is being enacted between Eden teams and urban community members which is subversive of the inherited evangelical theological narrative of my participants. In the chapter that follows I discuss the context of evangelical identity in which the Eden Network is situated and its relation to missional practice,

demonstrating the ways in which the practices of Eden team members have ceased to fit with their theological tradition.

Chapter 2: *Theology in practice: challenging the evangelical missional narrative*

> 94% of Evangelicals [surveyed] agree that everyone needs to be born again
> in order to become a Christian and be saved. 94% agree that people who
> come to Christ will see their lives transformed. (Evangelical Alliance, 2012, p.
> 8)

These statistics are the findings of a programme of research into contemporary evangelicalism conducted by the Evangelical Alliance [EA]. They feature in the report *21st Century Evangelicals: Confidently Sharing the Gospel?* published in 2012 which presents the views of 1242 evangelical Christians taking part in an online survey (EA, 2012, p. 3). Despite the limited size of the group surveyed, the convictions expressed in these statements and the strength of support for these convictions lead to the report concluding that 'It's great to see that the overwhelming majority of us are clear that... everyone needs to be born again' (EA, 2012, p. 22). In this chapter I show that this brief snapshot, produced by the largest organisation representing British evangelicalism, is indicative of a widely recognised evangelical missional narrative which frames the missional practices of evangelicals. I argue that the emerging practices of the Eden Network diverge from this narrative, thereby calling it into question. Beginning by proposing a narrative approach to evangelical identity I outline the evangelical missional narrative characterised by the lost world, God and his church, a salvation plan and evangelical expectation. This worldview is generative of evangelical missional practice which has developed in three strands: social action, church growth and urban theology. The Eden Network has arisen from within this paradigm, but, due to a positive engagement with context, missional pastoral care has emerged as a new model of mission, challenging its tradition.

The evangelical missional narrative

Evangelical identity has traditionally been conceptualised based on its doctrinal commitments, whereas I argue that a narrative representation of an evangelical worldview is better suited to understanding the evangelical subculture. David

Bebbington understands evangelicalism as a continually changing tradition shaped primarily by cultural movements (1989, p. 272). He conceptualises evangelical identity as a 'quadrilateral' of doctrinal priorities which, he claims, have remained constant throughout its history: conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism (Bebbington, 1989, pp. 2-3). This schema fails to account for the way that evangelicalism functions as a distinct subculture, with organisations and networks, such as the EA, which are concerned to construct and maintain evangelical identity (Guest, 2007, p. 17; Warner, 2007, pp. 31-32).

Evangelical networks generate their own narratives into which the ordinary evangelical is invited as a way of affirming their religious and cultural identity (Guest, 2007, pp. 197-198; Warner, 2007, pp. 81-85). These narratives are not necessarily a reliable statement of religious identity, as key leaders or organisations do not speak for all evangelicals, and ordinary evangelicals frequently engage critically with the views of their leaders (Smith, 2000, p. 7). Nevertheless, identity narratives constitute the backdrop of the faith of ordinary evangelicals; they are received as articulating true religious identity and therefore they must be navigated in relation to the complexity of daily life. Strhan understands this as 'practising the space between' which, in her research, involves cultivating daily disciplines, engaging in mutual support with other Christians and awareness of a struggle with doubt (2013, p. 237). Evangelicalism is a contested tradition (Warner, 2007, p. 15), with variations in its identity narrative developing among conservative and charismatic evangelicals (Guest, 2007, pp. 32-34), and ordinary evangelicals mixing elements of the narrative as they encounter them in different churches or through subcultural events (Smith, 2000, pp. 11-13). This particular version, present in much of mainstream British evangelicalism is the paradigm received by Eden team members, and which they have had to navigate in their practice.

The evangelical missional narrative can be seen as an example of Stephen Crites' 'sacred story' through which 'men's [sic] sense of self and world is created' (1971, p. 295). It differs from Bebbington's doctrinal approach in that it demonstrates the worldview created by evangelical priorities and the practices which then follow. The evangelical missional narrative is an interlocking worldview which forms evangelical

identity and shapes missional practice. It comprises four features: The lost world, God and his church, a salvation plan and evangelical expectation.

The lost world

The foundational assumption of evangelical mission and theology is that the world is in need of redemption, leading to the clear demarcation between the world and the church, the lost and the community of faith (Guest, 2007, pp. 2-3). Bebbington describes the 'three Rs' of nineteenth-century evangelical theology, 'Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration' and argues that the primary focus of evangelical theology is 'soteriological', taking fallen humanity as its starting point (2010, pp. 236-237). Salvation is understood as achieved primarily through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Bebbington's crucicentrism, which describes the focus of evangelical soteriology on a substitutionary theory of the doctrine of the atonement (1989, pp. 14-16). Within the evangelical worldview this historic intervention creates a situation in which conversion leading to peace with God, a transformed life and a secure eternity is available to all (Bosch, 2011, p. 408).

God and his church

This worldview is shaped by the agency of God and of his church to intervene in the lost world. In addition to the sending of Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of the world, God continues to exert agency by sending and empowering the church and effecting salvation for those who respond to the gospel. His church is the community of converted individuals in a process of ongoing sanctification who are sent by God into the lost world. Bebbington attributes evangelical activism to the assurance of salvation, resulting in gratitude and enthusiasm to pass on this good news to others (1989, p. 10). In this narrative perspective, activism is also evidence of the agency of Christians in the story, as they work out their salvation in part by sharing the good news of the gospel with those outside the church in words and actions. Evangelicals demonstrate a confidence in their ability and obligation to impact the world, and activism is the logical consequence (Bosch, 2011, pp. 10-11). This agency stands in contrast with the experience of those outside of the church. In this worldview non-Christians are characterised primarily by their need of

salvation and often by their need of moral and social transformation (Booth, 1890, pp. 76-77). Their role is to receive and respond to the challenge presented by the witness of the church.

A salvation plan

The focus of the evangelical missional narrative is conversion. God sends his church to witness to his love for the world and to invite lost people to receive salvation, as Bosch states: 'Salvation does not come but along the route of repentance and personal faith commitment' (2011, p. 410). The activism of Christians in the world both in service and in 'verbal evangelism', telling people about Jesus (Bosch, 2011, p. 430), is to enable an opportunity for lost people to receive salvation, to become a Christian. This is effected through conversion, or being 'born again', understood to occur primarily though 'crisis' or decisive moments, as shown in the 'Time to decide?' section of *21st Century Evangelicals* which focuses on the age at which participants 'made a decision to follow Christ' (EA, 2012, p. 4).

Having received salvation through a conversion experience, one becomes a member of the church and it is expected that life change will follow quickly in most cases (Bosch, 2011, p. 343). Bebbington sees this conversionism as the catalyst and starting point for change (1989, pp. 5-6), but in the evangelical worldview life change is definitive rather than catalytic (Warner, 2007, p. 18). This narrative is linear, conceiving salvation primarily as being 'saved from' not only one's old life (Coleman, 2000, p. 119; Guest, 2007, p. 3), but also one's old self (Hiebert & Hiebert Meneses, 1995, pp. 373-374; Sremac, 2014, p. 43; Strhan, 2015, p. 68). As a result it is expected to lead to a dramatic shift in lifestyle and habits as well as attitudes and beliefs. An important aspect of lifestyle change is enculturation into evangelical subcultural norms, often the product of an uncritical confusion of cultural values and spiritual values (Bosch, 2011, p. 325). This initiates an ambiguous relationship to self and world, as by rejecting the former self and context the convert risks subjective fragmentation.

Evangelical expectation

The final feature of this evangelical worldview is a mood of optimism and expectancy (Bebbington, 1989, p. 150; Bosch, 2011, p. 343). There is an expectation that personal transformation and widespread conversion are imminent, articulated by Warner as 'revival aspirations' (2007, p. 18). The narrative progresses with the growth of the church playing a part in the extension of the kingdom of God, taking another step closer to the fullness of Jesus' reign (Bosch, 2011, p. 430). While kingdom theology has traditionally been associated with Liberal Christianity (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 19), evangelicals have drawn on conceptions of the kingdom of God in order to understand their mission (Bielo, 2011, p. 141; Bosch, 2011, p. 387; Smith, 2000, p. 154). Bielo acknowledges different theologies of the kingdom within contemporary evangelicalism derived from various eschatological positions: 'the kingdom is coming', 'the kingdom as now, not yet' and 'the kingdom has come' (2011, pp. 141-152). The perception of the lost world and the expectation of imminent transformation in the evangelical missional narrative indicates the presence of Bielo's first category, 'the kingdom is coming', in which the world is considered 'doomed', destined to be replaced by the kingdom of God when Jesus returns (2011, p. 142).

This approach to evangelical identity demonstrates the way that Bebbington's doctrinal priorities are interpreted in an evangelical worldview. The evangelical missional narrative is perceived as biblical in that it is rooted in the authoritative narrative of scripture. This emphasises the importance of a narrative, rather than doctrinal, perspective on evangelical identity, as evangelicals understand themselves as continuing to participate in the story begun in the Bible (Bosch, 2011, p. 532). As I argue in the following section, this narrative is both shaped by, and perpetuates, evangelical models of missional practice.

Evangelical missional practice

There are three distinct strands of activism in evangelical missional practice: evangelical social action, evangelical church growth, and evangelical urban theology. These strands emerge at different periods of evangelical history and each

retain a degree of ongoing influence, including in shaping the Eden Network model of mission as an outworking of the evangelical missional narrative. Any typology is inevitably a simplification; Jonathan Chaplin acknowledges that, given the diversity of missional practice within evangelicalism, attempts to classify such practice must be tentative (2015, pp. 94-95). While these categories overlap, and there are exceptions and diversity in each period, this chronological and thematic approach provides a survey of evangelical missional practice which demonstrates the outworking of the evangelical missional narrative in the lives of ordinary evangelicals and particularly the way in which it has influenced the Eden Network.

Evangelical social action

The century prior to the First World War has been described by Bebbington as the 'evangelical century' due to the impact of evangelical activism on wider society, from family life and manners to politics (1989, pp. 149-150). This was motivated by a horror of the 'lost world' as it is perceived in the evangelical worldview. The newly industrialised cities of the nineteenth century and the 'social evils' afflicting the urban poor, for example drunkenness and inhumane working conditions, confirmed this narrative of the lost world leading to a desire to win the 'war on sin' (Bebbington, 2010, p. 238). Bebbington notes the conviction that 'a converted character would work hard, save money and assist his neighbour' (1989, p. 5). The early years of the Salvation Army exemplify such activism. In 1890 General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, published his vision for the transformation of the lives of those in Britain's urban slums. In *In Darkest England and the Way Out* he intended 'to show how light can be let into the heart of darkest England'. He criticised short-term charity and advocated 'not anaesthetic but cure' with an extensive programme of social reform designed to 'create the desire to escape and the means to do so' (Booth, 1890, pp. 60-65, 77). Booth imagined the kingdom of God established as an alternative to the world, envisioning new colonies of 'self-helping and self-sustaining communities, each being a kind of co-operative society or patriarchal family' (1890, p. 82).

This horror of social evils in a lost world can be identified in the Eden Network's early narratives; Wilson describes urban Manchester: 'Looking for a story about high crime, poor health, shoddy housing, educational underachievement… you won't have to look far in Manchester' (2005, p. 14). As Andy Hawthorne and others first communicated the vision for the Eden Network among evangelical networks in the late 1990s they proclaimed the injustice of young people in deprived urban communities not having the chance to hear the gospel (Wilson, 2005, p. 15), and called the church to face the challenge of poverty in the UK. They quoted Psalm 37, articulating the 'justice of [their] cause' (Psalm 37: 5-6, New Living Translation) demonstrating the conviction that God was endorsing the actions of the new Eden teams.

Bosch describes the nineteenth century as the 'age of energy', noting that 'the Protestant missionary mood… [was] pragmatic, purposeful, activist, impatient, self-confident, single-minded, [and] triumphant' (2011, p. 343). The Eden Network called for an equally confident and activist response in the course of authentic discipleship. Wilson refers to Eden team members as 'history makers' (2005, p. 27) and contrasts the sacrifice of following Jesus with what he calls 'McChristianity' which is oriented towards personal comfort rather than the radical life modelled by Jesus (2005, pp. 38-39). Wilson articulates Eden as 'a twenty-first century urban missionary movement' and describes team members as those who 'choose to exchange their own ambitions and agendas for promises of "streams in the wasteland."' (2005, p. 31). Using the language of missionaries highlights both the agency of the Christian in mission and the lostness of the world, the 'wasteland', to which they are sent. 'Streams in the wasteland' is a reference to Isaiah 43:18-21, which is used by the Eden Network as a prophetic image of God acting in a new way in urban communities. Hannah, a married team member in her thirties from Yorkshire used this passage to describe her aspiration for her ministry:

> …God was speaking to us even before we came here… the place is a desert and God brings streams and life and water, and you see that in people's lives you see that they are dry and hopeless and then God kind of chucks a lot of water over them and it's just like so refreshed…

Despite its concern for the urban poor in the nineteenth century, Bebbington shows that evangelicalism remained largely middle-class. Rather than embedding the evangelical gospel in working-class communities, their philanthropy carried the strong message that conversion was being saved *from* the structural and moral sins of poverty. Therefore evangelical conversion became 'an avenue of upward social mobility' involving enculturation into middle-class lifestyles. This resulted in bolstering the middle classes while leaving working-class culture largely unchanged (Bebbington, 1989, p. 111). The issues of class and culture remained unresolved as evangelicalism moved into the twentieth century. This can be seen in the work of the Eden Network, as team members like Sally acknowledge the tensions in their own early experiences of living in an urban community:

> We were terrified and also not too happy with the idea of living on a council estate… when we first came here I was like "why have all these people got all these problems, why don't they just you know pick themselves up and get on with it". (Sally, Greater Manchester)

This indicates the challenge which the urban context presented to Eden team members who have had to acknowledge their suburban, middle-class, social and theological paradigm in contrast to that of their urban neighbours.

Evangelical church growth

This strand encapsulates the development of evangelical mission throughout the twentieth century. It indicates the emphasis given to conversion, understood as adding new disciples to the church, and the expectation of increasing volume of conversions in this period. The Eden Network is most strongly a product of this category, exemplified in its entrepreneurial character and its emphasis on conversion.

From the beginning of the twentieth century evangelicals 'retreated [from social engagement] into a doctrinally narrow, ecclesially defensive and socially passive mentality' (Chaplin, 2015, p. 93). While this was not universal, it is a shift, also noted by Bosch and Bebbington, which significantly altered the missional practice of evangelicals. The move away from social action as missional practice indicated a

rejection of the public sphere as the locus of redemption. This was replaced by the individual with an increased emphasis on personal, and verbal, evangelism (Bosch, 2011, p. 325; Chaplin, 2015, p. 93). Bosch argues that this rejection of the world did not include a critical evaluation of Western standards of living or middle-class values; rather, these continued to be held as the ideal into which individuals were saved (2011, p. 325). This perpetuates the complex relationship between evangelicalism and 'the world' inherent in the evangelical missional narrative. On the one hand there is a suspicion and rejection of 'the world' as lost, whilst uncritically embracing Western middle-class cultural norms in enculturation into the church.

In the mid-twentieth century the Church Growth movement, initiated by Donald McGavran in *The Bridges of God* (1955), brought church planting to the fore and popularised the use of business management techniques in planning and evaluating missional practice (Glasser, 1985, p. 10). In the 1960s, the role of social engagement in mission was clarified further with a progression through to the 1980s toward understanding social action as a valid aspect of mission alongside evangelism. However, evangelism was usually given priority with the understanding, shared with nineteenth-century evangelicals, that individual conversion would lead to social reform (Bosch, 2011, p. 416). Tim Keller maintains this view, describing 'the gospel as alternative to other identity structures' (2005, p. 8). He advocates entering into the culture of global cities and presenting the gospel through church services which are accessible and acceptable to contemporary people in order to enable them to hear a clear gospel message (Keller, 2005, pp. 9-11). This approach exemplifies the distinction between the church and the world and the agency of the church to intervene, presenting the people of the world with opportunities to be challenged by the gospel and to respond in conversion. By maintaining a focus on the preaching event as revelatory, Keller emphasises conversion as a crisis or decisive moment in which one's previous identity structure is rejected in favour of the Christian narrative being preached.

The Eden Network is located in this category, influenced by Ed Silvoso who visited Manchester in the mid-1990s. Silvoso's *Transformation* initiative drew on the

Church Growth movement, focusing on encouraging church leaders and congregations to unite in prayer and evangelism to 'take their cities for God' (1994, p. 15). He advocated a strategy of united prayer and local community evangelism by lay Christians combined with larger 'crusades' (Silvoso, 1994, pp. 269-270), and recaptured the revival spirit of early evangelicalism by sharing stories of the movement of God in mass salvation and the miraculous across the world. The language of the kingdom of God is used by Silvoso to articulate their mission: 'Our primary call is not to build the Church but to take the Kingdom of God where the kingdom of darkness is still entrenched in order for Jesus to build His Church' (Transform Our World, 2016). This exemplifies the understanding of the kingdom of God as an alternative reality which is brought by the agency of the church into the lost world. Among other contemporary movements in charismatic evangelicalism,[18] the *Transformation* campaign can be seen reflected in Wilson's reference to the late 1990s as the 'peak of "revival mania"' (2005, p. 140), a trend also noted by Hunt (2005, p. 70).

The focus on conversion was established in the Network by recruiting likeminded team members. Wilson says: 'workers must understand the sense of lostness felt outside the grace of God. At the core of every team is a passion to see broken hearts healed and lives restored through Jesus' (2005, p. 41). This was enacted in early evangelistic youth events carried out by Eden teams: 'week after week the wildest tearaways in Manchester would be herded through the little door to the even tinier counselling room to ask Jesus into their hearts for the fourteenth time' (Wilson, 2005, p. 178). However, Wilson acknowledges that: 'there was huge controversy about the event approach both inside and outside the team, and eventually it was cancelled and the energy poured into detached work' (2005, p.

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[18] Warner suggests that the heightened expectations of the 'decade of evangelism' with initiatives such as Jesus In Me (JIM) and Challenge 2000 alongside the revivalism coming from Toronto and the rise of intense subcultural experiences such as Spring Harvest perpetuated expectations of an evangelical Christendom (2007, pp. 82-109). Hunt notes the 'monumental' failure of such large-scale initiatives (2005, p. 66) which Warner attributes to unrealistic projections of success and a lack of understanding of the secularised context (2007, p. 102).

178). This indicates that even in its early stages the Eden Network was wrestling with its received missional narrative in the light of its experience.

Late twentieth-century evangelicalism was strongly influenced by 'a late-modern ideology of imminent success' (Warner, 2007, p. 65) and dominated by a charismatic entrepreneurialism, prioritising pragmatism over doctrine (Warner, 2007, p. 237). In his discussion of evangelical missional practices Warner notes the emphasis given to entrepreneurial but formulaic approaches to encourage church growth such as seeker services and church planting, and argues that a neglect of context in favour of these and other models, led to a loss of connection to the real impulses and concerns of the contemporary people who were the focus of such mission activity (2007, p. 63). Despite more positive models of 'Relational evangelism', for example the Alpha course (Warner, 2007, p. 118), which Hunt argues epitomises 'the church-growth imperative of many charismatic congregations' (2005, p. 77); Warner concludes that due to a lack of attention to context, expectations of widespread conversion were unrealistic, leading ultimately to disappointment (2007, p. 64).

These features of late-modern culture are also visible in the Eden Network approach. Wilson writes that for Eden team members, 'experience is helpful but not essential. The ability to innovate, however, is standard kit' (2005, p. 181). The heightened expectations accompanying this entrepreneurial spirit were described by one Eden team member:

> At Soul Survivor when we were sold this big vision of Eden you know "come in we're going to see loads of young people get saved and everything's gonna change and we're gonna see revival" …and then the nitty gritty of Eden, it hasn't been like that. (Thompson, 2012, p. 53)

Both the context of missional practice from which the Eden Network emerged, and the presence of the evangelical missional narrative fundamentally shape the Eden Network approach. Although there are signs that this narrative is inadequate to help Eden teams navigate their experience of urban ministry.

Evangelical urban theology

While urban theology did not substantially influence the development of the Eden Network, the emphasis on incarnation in Eden's model, and the presence of evangelical voices within urban theology, meant that over time the Network began to attend to this tradition. Despite this, evangelical urban theology has had a limited impact on mainstream evangelicalism and therefore a limited impact on the Eden Network. Evangelical urban theology began to emerge through the writing of David Sheppard, particularly *Built as a City: God and the Urban World Today*, published in 1974. Sheppard wrote to challenge the church to get involved with the poverty and powerlessness of urban communities and became an influential voice (Joslin, 1994, p. 300). He addressed some of the key themes in evangelical theology, challenging the evangelical church growth strand named above and arguing for a more contextual theological approach. Sheppard drew on 'the Bible, other Christians and an openness to the world' to develop his incarnational theology (1974, p. 403) which prioritised structural redemption over personal salvation, questioned understandings of success, emphasised the 'now and not yet' of the kingdom of God and framed an eschatology which emphasised the resurrection of the body, new heavens and a new earth (1974, pp. 392-441). He represented evangelicals within an ecumenical urban theology becoming a member of the Commission which produced the *Faith in the City* report in 1985.

Other voices continued to challenge elements of evangelical thought and practice. Lesslie Newbigin confronted the Church Growth movement in 1982 asserting that the prioritisation of evangelism over social action is a misunderstanding of mission (1982, p. 148). He also disputed the emphasis on the lost world in evangelism, arguing that the Christian position is that of 'witness' not 'judge' (1982, p. 151). Evangelical urban theology consolidated in the form of the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission, and challenged much of the evangelical missional narrative and the practices of earlier evangelicals.[19] But it included many evangelicals influenced by both ecumenical urban theology and evangelical church growth ideas. For example,

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[19] See Greg Smith (2003), Floyd McClung (1991) and Ray Bakke (1987).

Roy Joslin proposed in 1994 that Christians should live and witness in urban communities because Jesus came to save the 'sinful' world (1994, pp. 22-25). In this he articulates elements of the evangelical missional narrative, but he goes on to call for the need to discern the difference between Christian faith and culture in discipleship, demonstrating a critique of the tendencies toward enculturation within evangelicalism (Joslin, 1994, pp. 240-242).

The developing Eden model of ministry was predicated on relocation, articulated as 'a large team of people establish[ing] their homes in the heart of the community' (Wilson, 2005, p. 214). John 1:14, particularly as it appears in The Message paraphrase, became a significant reference point for the Network as it aligned the actions of Eden team members with those of Jesus in the incarnation, providing a powerful justification for relocation as a model of urban ministry: 'The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood…' (John 1:14, The Message). In this focus on incarnation the Eden Network demonstrates a core value of evangelical urban theology; but it exemplifies the mixed nature of this category as its cultural context and practices were largely derived from the evangelical social action and church growth strands, only later discovering the urban theology tradition and the presence of evangelical voices within it.

The Eden Network was not the only example of evangelical relocation ministry in the 1990s. Mike Pears describes Urban Expression as a response to the theological and practical tensions experienced by evangelicals engaging with urban communities, a network of 'convictional communities' – small, experimental groups whose aim is to 'embody their values and theology in community' (2013, p. 87). In writing the story of Urban Expression in 2007 Kilpin and Murray draw their theological reference points from the ecumenical urban theology tradition claiming that most evangelical church growth initiatives only addressed 'dechurched' people rather than addressing unreached, urban communities (2007, pp. 7-9). Despite the innovation of these convictional communities I suggest that evangelical urban theology is situated primarily within an ecumenical urban theology tradition and has largely failed to influence the evangelical church growth strand articulated above which continues to dominate mainstream evangelicalism.

Contesting Context

Social action, church growth and urban theology as strands of evangelical missional practice show the ways in which the evangelical missional narrative has been expressed and challenged throughout evangelical history and in the activity of the Eden Network. My analysis of evangelicalism indicates that at the heart of its narrative and practices is a contested relationship to context, both that of the world and of the self (Chaplin, 2015, p. 103; Guest, 2007, p. 3). Evangelicalism has often uncritically reflected cultural influences throughout its history (Bebbington, 1989, p. 271), while also adopting an antagonistic 'paradigm of resistance' to cultural trends (Guest, 2007, p. 3).

A conflicted relationship with culture leads, in practice, to a failure to engage with the 'other' and a resulting tendency within evangelicalism to cultivate 'subcultural isolation' (Warner, 2007, pp. 81-82). Guest argues that community is a central value for evangelicals and highlights their commitment to embrace the twenty-first century reinvention of community as networked and trans-local space (2007, p. 204). He recognises that as more aspects of life are co-opted as tools for evangelism a rich subculture develops which is strongly middle-class in its affinities and values (Guest, 2007, p. 205). In his congregational study Guest concluded that the 'church's accommodation to a particular target audience i.e. mobile, middle-class, evangelicals' is the primary cause of falling numbers and levels of commitment at St Michaels (2007, p. 221). This highlights the way in which contesting cultural context results in insular communities lacking diversity.

Contesting context within evangelicalism equally applies to the context of the self, or subjectivity. Evangelical soteriology, with its emphasis on conversion, instigates a rejection of the pre-conversion 'lost' self and an ongoing suspicion towards the resurgence of that lost self in the process of sanctification. Simeon Zahl suggests that evangelical converts experience 'private frustrations' at their inability to change, and the Holy Spirit primarily works to expose this sin and limitation: 'we die to ourselves again and again, in such a way as to pave the way for transformation and new life' (2010, pp. 88-89). Evangelical conversion therefore involves

constructing a new identity. This is problematic as Srdjan Sremac argues that to avoid subjective fragmentation and de-conversion the convert must find a way to integrate past and future selves into a coherent narrative (2014, p. 39; Gerkin, 1984, p. 69). The rejection of the pre-conversion self which is central to the evangelical missional narrative may lead to a disrupted sense of self.[20] This conflicted relationship to context and to subjectivity is a serious critique of evangelical theology and approaches to missional engagement; nevertheless, there is a more nuanced model of ministry practice being developed between Eden teams and urban community members. This model has emerged from within the evangelical missional narrative but, due to its commitment to urban relocation, has led to a positive encounter with the context of the world and of the self.

While the Eden Network developed within the evangelical church growth strand and drew inspiration from the missionary activism of Victorian evangelical social action, it did not generate the outcomes of widespread conversion and enculturation into Christian norms that were expected. As Eden team member Louise from Greater Manchester expresses:

> I suppose being here eight and a half years – after two years [wondering] what will it be like when we have been here ten years, there'll be all these amazing stories, which there has been [but] I suppose there are still some you wish you could say "oh there's been this transformation" and there hasn't been and... [I] think I am annoyed... which has been hard in a way. ...what I can do is pray...

Wilson includes a number of personal stories within *Concrete Faith* and Ruth Lancey, a former Eden team leader, reflects on the results of her time living on the Valley estate in Swinton. She writes:

> The Valley may not now be gentrified with middle-class Christian clones, but it is full of young men who never did end up in prison. And mums who never did commit suicide. And teenage girls who never did get addicted to drugs...

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[20] Post-evangelicalism may also be understood in this context as de-conversion resulting from the failure to integrate the self with a Christian identity (Lynch, 2002, pp. 37-39; Tomlinson, 1995).

and huge families who believe in God, understand why Jesus died, and know how much he loves them. (2012, p. 84)

In voicing her disappointment and confusion Lancey concludes '…maybe the "promise" was not unfulfilled at all, but simply misunderstood…' (2012, p. 83). Eden team members are wrestling with the emergence of something unknown in their missional practice, a depth of relational engagement in which both they and those they are coming alongside are changed.[21]

Missional pastoral care

The Eden Network's innovative and pragmatic model of urban ministry has arisen within the context of charismatic evangelicalism described above. The expectation of Eden teams was that through this model the evangelical missional narrative would play out in urban communities, with young people and their families being transformed (Wilson, 2005, p. 33). My research demonstrates that this was not the case; rather the implementation of the Eden model has led to the emergence of an unexpected form of ministry practice which I call missional pastoral care. Community member Suzy is nineteen and from Manchester; she first met the Eden team in her community when she was nine years old, and her story illustrates this new model of mission:

> I think more having the support of people saying "look you can do it, if you put your mind to it" 'cos at home my dad was, well a lot of the time he was in the pub so I didn't have the support at home, so I end up getting it from the Eden team…
>
> …I used to spend quite a lot of time with Lynn, I think I used to spend 4 or 5 days with Lynn after work that's just going round, going on the computer and just chilling out, having something to eat. …Lynn was like my mum

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[21] While this thesis focuses on theological and practical evolutions in evangelical mission, the shifts occurring among Eden teams also find resonance in other theological traditions. Bevans and Schroeder describe the trajectory in Catholic missiology from a militaristic stance to understanding mission as 'dialogue' (2011, pp. 19-29). Within a broad Anglicanism, priest, theologian and ethicist Samuel Wells addresses Christian responses to poverty and advocates 'being with' rather than 'working for' or 'working with' as a relational and theological approach to social engagement more resonant with the Christian tradition (2015, pp. 23-25).

figure 'cos I never had my mum. …me and Lynn used to go out for days out, to the shops or just chilling out in the garden. …It was mainly chilling and talking about how my life's changing and how I was feeling at the time and how the bullying was affecting me and… my school work… Lynn helped me a lot with my school work to keep me on track outside of school, so amazing.

…Lynn and Julie eventually started involving my dad in things, so getting me and my dad to do things as parent and daughter which we hadn't done in a long time. Lynn helping my dad out with how to keep the housework on top and stuff like that, inviting him over for food… so I had the support and then I had my dad's support it's like "I want to know God now".

In this interview fragment Suzy describes frequent, varied and meaningful encounters with Eden team members. She sees Lynn and Julie as family, even parental figures and spends regular time with them relaxing, having fun, and in more purposeful activity such as school work. They evidently provided a listening role, hearing her experiences of bullying and also practically provided food, and support with household tasks for both Suzy and her dad. The breadth of activity, scope and depth of the relationships described by Suzy and other interviewees provokes the question what *kind of task* are Eden team members engaged in? Suzy's story and those of my other participants problematise the evangelical missional narrative, illustrating a different process of mission and a different outcome. In the chapters that follow I consider the shape and character of missional pastoral care, its effectiveness and how it functions as charismatic evangelical Christian practice.

In this chapter I have explored the evangelical missional narrative as an alternative representation of evangelical identity. This worldview has given rise to three strands of missional practice in which the narrative is lived out: social action, church growth and urban theology. I have argued that while the practice of the Eden Network expresses this tradition, its engagement with the urban context has led to a new form of mission, missional pastoral care, subverting the evangelical missional narrative. In the next chapter I use the stories of my participants to build a picture

of the practice of missional pastoral care, defining it as an emergent model of ministry.

Chapter 3: *The practice of missional pastoral care*

Missional pastoral care is a model of mission which characterises the interactions between Eden team members and urban community members. In this chapter I develop my conceptualisation of missional pastoral care, beyond the practices of the evangelical missional narrative, as a new mode of mutual relationship which is specifically concerned with meaning-making. Firstly I introduce missional pastoral care as an extension of the understanding of mission held by the Eden Network and consider the work of Charles Gerkin as a framework for meaning-making relationships. I then explore the role of relocation into urban communities in bringing about this new form of ministry before discussing its constituent elements: difference, locality, availability, practicality, long-term commitment, consistency and love and concluding that they create the space for 'parabolic' relationships.

My two groups of participants, team members and community members, had very different starting points in the relationships of missional pastoral care. The seven Eden team members had relocated from different parts of the country, motivated by a sense that God was calling them to join the Eden Network. They had settled in their urban communities and life had unfolded there; Michael, Louise and Adam had each married and become parents since joining Eden. Team members all gave significant time to building relationships and getting involved in their local areas. Hannah, Sally, Dan and James worked in professions that took them outside of their community for much of the week, whereas Michael, Louise and Adam worked locally. The community member participants were more diverse in terms of age and life experience, from sixteen-year-olds Jess and Jack, to Margaret and Helen who are mums in their forties. They had all met Eden team members in the course of their everyday lives and, while for Eden teams engagement was intentional, for community members it was just what had happened. Margaret and Helen had an inclination toward faith before meeting the team; David, Jack, Clare, Kevin and Suzy had adopted faith to varying degrees since meeting the Eden team; and Paul and Jess felt it was not for them. They all shared the depth of friendship they had

established with Eden team members and the ways in which it had shaped their lives.

The Eden Network, informed by the evangelical missional narrative, conceives of its work as 'urban mission' (Wilson, 2012, p. 22), primarily understood as sharing 'the Christian message in words and actions' (The Message Trust, 2015). My participants also understand their involvement as urban mission, Hannah from Yorkshire explains: '…I had never considered the possibility of urban mission at all before we moved here and being here I realise it is a different culture within your own culture…'. However, their stories demonstrate activity and impact beyond that specified in their inherited missional narrative. This ministry involves faith-sharing but is not focused primarily on verbal evangelism. Further, it includes social action in supporting vulnerable people but that action is not instrumentalised as a means to the end of evangelism; and, while it often includes conversion this is not the sole aim. Therefore I understand this emerging ministry practice as activity which enacts the mission of God in three specific ways: in a holistic sharing of life for the good of one another; in an articulation of life narratives, including faith narratives; and in hermeneutical play, reshaping the meaning-systems of all involved. I have called this missional pastoral care, accounting for the holistic understanding of mission in the practices of Eden teams alongside an emphasis on meaning-making, which I identify as the relational dynamic of pastoral care, drawing on Gerkin's narrative hermeneutical pastoral care approach.

Charles Gerkin and the task of pastoral care

Theological understandings of pastoral care have been shaped by the work of Charles Gerkin in *Living Human Document* (1984) and his theory of narrative hermeneutical pastoral care has dominated the field (Couture & Hunter, 1995). Gerkin critiqued what he perceived as the over-dependence of mid-twentieth century pastoral care on psychology, resulting in individualised care which failed to take account of the rapidly changing social and political contexts in which contemporary people need to establish their sense of self (1984, pp. 11-20; Couture & Hunter, 1995, pp. 7-10). To counter these trends Gerkin integrated insights from

psychology with a Christian theological worldview. He developed a model for individual pastoral counselling followed by pastoral care in congregational contexts and as prophetic social action, allowing for an engagement with issues of justice and addressing the fragmentation which he perceived in contemporary society (Gerkin, 1986, p. 14).

Gerkin's model is predicated on the centrality of narrative for human identity, that 'humans structure meaning and hold in coherence the diverse elements of experience by means of a narrative structure.' (1986, p. 19). He utilises object relations theory and the hermeneutics of Gadamer to develop his model of narrative hermeneutical pastoral care as a dynamic process in which meaning-systems are challenged and changed. Gerkin conceives pastoral counselling as understanding and supporting an individual in their relation to their own self and with the 'object world beyond' (1984, p. 93). He uses Ricoeur's languages of force and meaning to describe the structure of the relations between the self and the object world as experienced by an individual. For Gerkin, the language of force describes the facts of a person's experience, things which may be impossible to change, placing parameters on the scope of change. The language of meaning refers to the interpretations of events and characters that an individual holds to be true. Gerkin suggests that the way that these two languages interrelate with the self creates a fundamental narrative unique to each person, their 'life of the soul', which gives meaning to their experiences and carries issues equally unique to the individual (1984, p. 123).

In this schema personal problems stem from an inability to find coherence between experience and the overarching narrative of meaning. Gerkin's model of narrative hermeneutical pastoral care seeks to provide 'dialogical space' between the Christian narrative and the life stories of individuals seeking help. The pastoral carer (in Gerkin's model, the pastor or counsellor) facilitates the dialogue, faithfully representing the Christian tradition and empathetically engaging with the narrative of the care-seeker (1997, pp. 111-113). This process involves the carer entering into the 'force/meaning world' of the care-seeker, to identify their narrative issues and help them to cultivate different meanings through a process of 'hermeneutical

play'. The pastor must seek to achieve a 'fusion of horizons of meaning and understanding' with the care-seeker (Gerkin, 1984, p. 44); a shared language world in which both understand the other's meaning-systems and can explore new meanings, 'playing' in the safe space created. For Gerkin this is also a space in which the Spirit can work (1984, p. 124) and he understands the Christian narrative as a vital source of alternative meaning, offering a 'unitary vision that is finally meaningful' (1984, p. 53). Gerkin advocates the use of Gadamer's hermeneutical circle in a pastoral counselling conversation as the primary mode of this hermeneutical play. This describes a circular or spiralling pattern of conversation in which the counselee shares their account of significant life events and the counsellor explores the meanings underpinning these stories; together they work to articulate alternative interpretations, bringing new perspectives to bear on previously held meanings (Gerkin, 1984, pp. 138-139). Gerkin's model of a fusion of horizons and hermeneutical play can be seen in the relationships between Eden team members and community members in which it serves the same end of meaning-making. However, my research extends his understanding of pastoral care by offering a non-professionalised, community-based and practice-oriented model of care.

Urban relocation: enabling missional pastoral care

Immersion in contexts of urban marginalisation has created the conditions for the development of missional pastoral care, enabling the emergence of new forms of ministry. As Eden team member Hannah observed: 'People here are from a completely different background, it's really enlightening, challenging and amazing at the same time… learning to love like Jesus loved a bit more'. Relationships with those experiencing urban deprivation initiate a reflexive process, shaped by the embodiment characteristic of urban life and the holism of the Eden Network approach.

For the Eden Network, the act of relocation is validated by the action of God in his incarnation leading to an openness to the new challenges and opportunities it presents (Wilson, 2005, p. 88). In his chapter 'Be the Message' Wilson articulates

the Eden Network's understanding of incarnation as God's self-revelation to humanity (2005, p. 83). He describes Jesus' life on earth as a 'divine conversation' which revealed God's character and states that Eden teams relocate with the same intention: 'to commence a redemptive conversation, and our moving in is the loudest and most consistent statement we will ever make' (Wilson, 2005, pp. 85-88). Wilson develops this understanding of relocation further in *Concrete Faith* (2012) as the 'proximity principle'. This closeness is physical, 'being someone's next-door neighbour', and relational, having a 'significant role' in a person's life. He claims: 'when the two intersect, [as in the Eden model] the potential for transformation increases exponentially' (2012, pp. 115-116). Relocation then, challenges Eden team members as it enables an encounter with the urban 'other'.

Urban deprivation is an indicator of inequality in contemporary global and hybrid cities (Amin, Massey, & Thrift, 2000, pp. 20-21; Shannahan, 2010, p. 4). Economic, political and social inequality creates communities which are fragmented, in which marginalised groups become entrenched, developing a protective self-understanding and a negative reputation among those outside (Baker, 2009, p. 27). This is articulated by Paul, a community member in his twenties from Manchester:

> 'Cos where a lot of these are from it's all posh an all that innit and they come here and are all "Oh [estate name]" but I don't think it's a bad place but obviously everybody else does, so that's their challenge to change themselves int it, to get to be liked by everyone here.

Paul's perspective indicates that on relocating Eden teams cross social and economic boundaries and encounter issues of marginalisation and deprivation in their new relationships. They discover that their new neighbours are not simply passive recipients of their activism but that they too have a voice.

The middle-class backgrounds of many Eden team members contrast with those in their urban communities who struggle in situations of poverty. This creates the potential for an imbalance of power in the practice of missional pastoral care (SteinhoffSmith, 1995, p. 141). Eden team member Adam is in his thirties, married with one son and is from Greater Manchester. He described a significant moment

for his team in a conversation with a friend from their local area who said: '…it sounds like you guys are beginning to accept the community, you need to change that around and you need to be accepted by the community'. This indicates that Adam and his team understood themselves to be the actors in their mission, choosing to move in and accept their neighbours. In telling this story, Adam emphasised its impact: 'that kind of stopped us all in our tracks, you know'. Eden teams brought features of middle-class culture along with their evangelical spirituality leading to their objectification of those in their communities, described by Bielo as 'the imagining of a missionalised subject' (2011, p. 132). But in building relationships with the people around them teams discovered that they interpreted reality in profoundly different ways. Eden team members began to realise the extent to which the urban environments and experiences of deprivation of those they met had shaped them, and, significantly, the shaping stories and places in their own lives. Sally, in her thirties and from Greater Manchester, described the life she and her husband might have lived had they not joined an Eden team:

> …I think we probably would have been just living in a little middle-class housing estate somewhere, we wouldn't have known our neighbours, probably would have friends and or family living miles away, and actually not really have a sense of community…

This reflective process involved a re-evaluation of their previously held assumptions, including a shift from perceiving the community as dangerous to feeling safe, and from seeing it as an entirely fragmented place to recognising the community spirit among many locally. Team members talked warmly of their adopted homes:

> …people kind of turn their nose up a bit at [estate name] generally who don't live here. [But] people who live here are quite protective over the area, 'cos it's nice actually… there is a lot of really good people here, …initially I thought it was gonna be really difficult I think because that's what people expect when you move to a more difficult area and I thought we were going to have people vandalising things, noise and lots of threats… and

> while some of that has happened… it has been more positive for me than I thought it would be… (Hannah, Yorkshire)

Through their encounters with urban people Eden teams have had their own worldview called into question. This process is physical and material as they move house and begin to build relationships in their urban neighbourhood. It also involves the whole of life as they establish patterns of work, family, friendships, leisure and spirituality in a new place.

The relocation of Eden team members into urban communities has led them to an acknowledgement that life is essentially enfleshed and that, along with all of its weakness and vulnerability, embodiment is good. Eden team member Adam states:

> …if you're moving into the area you're actually making a statement, firstly that you love the area that you're prepared to move into, you've got a heart for it to see it changed, you're not just seeing it as a project, you're seeing it as a place where you want to live, make friends and it's not just a place to make change, it's a place where you want to do life.

Adam's commitment to 'doing life' in his community discloses the importance of his own embodiment in his new place. This has come not only from the materiality of moving house but also from their urban neighbours for whom life is visceral, often raw and frequently funny – Eden team member Michael from Manchester relates one incident:

> …I made some cakes for this quite tough family a couple of doors down from us… and she offered to thank me in a somewhat inappropriate way… I was just really embarrassed… she said when are you making more of those, I said I don't know maybe next week and she said you can make me breakfast in the morning if you want. I said no thanks and went in the house very quickly…

Green notes that for urban communities abstracted belief is an 'intellectual luxury' whereas belonging is a necessity for survival (1995, p. 86). He argues that an affirmation of the physical in urban experience, for example a celebration of emotion and recognition of essential human experiences such as birth, death and

sex are vital to developing spirituality in urban contexts (Green, 1995, pp. 82-89).

The raw, embodied nature of urban experience also resonates with the affective and this-worldly nature of charismatic evangelicalism (Guest, 2007, p. 129), paving the way for a broader emphasis on embodiment drawn from the urban to develop in the spirituality of Eden teams.

Relocation and encounter with the urban other effects a process which involves the whole of life for both Eden team members and community members. The Eden Network Distinctive: 'We are Holistic', is defined as a conviction 'that God cares for whole people – not just souls' (Wilson, 2012, p. 213). This holism is expressed in both the routines of daily life and the ways in which Eden teams seek to engage with their communities. In *Concrete Faith*, Eden team member Jen Graves describes the way in which her routine was shaped by her community:

> Being ready for the knock meant my kitchen always needed to be stocked with… tea, biscuits and banana-flavoured hot chocolate. …the hours would drift by, sitting on the carpet, by the doorstep, chatting about life and school and family…. Of course there were times when it was just not a good time for visitors but I would always try to be gracious… I learned that one thing I could never do is ignore the young people who turned up. (2012, pp. 45-46)

Eden teams develop an awareness of the complex factors which contribute to deprivation in urban areas and undertake a variety of different activities and modes of relating to their communities. Some volunteer at local statutory youth clubs, run children's holiday clubs, become members of community action groups or volunteer at local schools. The holism practised by Eden teams has resulted in theological reflection:

> I always think of it as a pyramid, if somebody as a result of the godly influence of a church or of Christians make some great choices in their lives whether that's salvation or just like keeping their head down and studying or taking care of their kids with a little more attention or skill than they otherwise would have, then their kids and their kids' kids, you can see the impact, it's not ones or twos it's actually a multiplication… we are looking to

> see a culture change which will not happen overnight… (Michael, 33, Eden
> team member)

Father of two Michael's focus on long-term, community change which encompasses all aspects of life challenges the priorities of the evangelical missional narrative. He sets conversion alongside education and attentive parenting as significant positive life choices.

Embodiment and holism provide an initial critical engagement with the pastoral care tradition. Samuel Park uses Gerkin to propose 'an identity-embodied and community-embedded pastoral theology' (2005, p. 67). This refers to the necessity of the pastoral theologian reflecting on their own pastoral practice as the source for their theology (2005, p. 64), and a recognition of the broader congregational and social context of pastoral theology as it seeks to explore the network of care and the moral context of pastoral care practice (2005, p. 57). Park follows Gerkin in his focus on the embodied professional and positional carer but in doing so neglects the need for an embodied *process of care,* involving the whole of life. 'Identity-embodied and community-embedded' describe the activity of Eden teams for whom pastoral care is a way of life and through whom daily interactions become spaces of creative tension in which transformative meaning-making can take place.

The Eden model of relocation recognises the importance of coming alongside urban people and by including incarnation and holism in its Distinctives demonstrates awareness of these as transformative elements of the Eden way of life. However, rather than being the end point for Eden's development, the reflexive process of engagement with the urban other, enabled by relocation and characterised by embodiment and holism, provides a starting point for a new ministry to emerge.

Constituent elements of missional pastoral care

Missional pastoral care practice involves seven constituent elements: difference, locality, availability, practicality, long-term commitment, consistency and love. These create a sphere in which relationships of hermeneutical play can be practised, both exemplifying and critiquing Gerkin's model of pastoral care.

Difference

Community member Clare, in her mid-thirties and from Greater Manchester, describes her first experience of going to church along with the Eden team:

> I think it was the people who went there as well, it wasn't like the people you'd normally meet, they thought a lot of theirselves, they thought a lot of their health, you know of each other, things like that…

Difference may relate to a whole range of factors from personal preferences to inherited identities, my research suggests it is significant in ministry because it provides an occasion for meaning-making, opening the possibility for new modes of living. Clare continued:

> …there's some, …live here there's a lot of drugs… and you have to get yourself away from it d'y'know what I mean, but I think going to church helped me do that, to think this is not all of – you don't have to be like this to be cool, to be good.

> …because they live here, they live in the same place you live so you can all relate I suppose. 'Cos if they say something to you, you can't [say] "oh well I can't do that 'cos I live on [estate name]" [because they] live on [estate name] as well…

In getting to know the team Clare discovered a group of people who lived in the same location but by a different set of values. This caused her to reflect on her own life and the community she inhabited, introducing the possibility of making different choices. Difference creates awareness of alternative ways of being. Community member David highlighted the stark contrast between Eden team members choosing to live in the community and the response of other people to the reputation of his neighbourhood as a young person in Greater Manchester:

> …it was really good just to have someone right within the streets we were living in who actually cared about everyone there 'cos a lot of the time… people [were] so hostile towards the idea of gangs and robbers and crime in the area…

Among the most prominent instances of difference between Eden team members and community members was the faith commitment of Eden teams, with intentional faith-sharing playing a role in missional pastoral care relationships. Community member Margaret is a mum of two from Yorkshire and had previously been the victim of severe anti-social behaviour on her estate. She had responded to her experiences of violence and intimidation by staying at home and keeping her children inside for much of the time, even keeping the curtains closed around the house. She described the way in which an Eden team member shared his faith as an alternative and challenging narrative:

> I bumped into [Eden team member] and he just said you know "you shouldn't be just behind closed doors that's not how God wanted us to live our lives"… and I thought well, you know I think you're right, and I'm passing that down to my children that it's OK to live in a cave and that's not how you live… (Margaret)

Alongside class differences faith-sharing is an additional dimension of power at work in missional pastoral care practice. Margaret's story could be read as an example of proselytising while she was in a very vulnerable situation. However, the manipulative potential of faith-sharing is mitigated in missional pastoral care by its function as part of an ongoing relationship of care, rather than as an isolated activity. As single Eden team member Dan, in his twenties and from Manchester, describes:

> …I've just got to know 'em that's it… just learnt to be there for 'em and then, if they want to do stuff or speak to you about stuff then you can do. But it's just not about forcing anything down their throats 'cos they'll just vomit it back up in your face…

Relationship is seen by my participants to be a higher priority than explicit faith-sharing, as another Eden team member describes:

> I think if we ever think we're here to be missionaries to them then that's not the right attitude to have, because we want to be a part of the community

rather than converting them to be us, and even if they find Jesus, well they need to be them. (Thompson, 2012, p. 55)

These narratives indicate self-awareness among Eden teams regarding the political nature of their faith-sharing. Gerkin asserts that recognising one's own 'pre-understandings', which are shaped by nationality, gender, class, position and experience, is essential for the pastoral counsellor (1984, p. 123; 1997, pp. 13-16). He uses incarnation to describe the deliberate immersion of the carer into the world of the care-seeker (Gerkin, 1984, p. 43). While Eden teams are not pastoral counsellors they offer a form of care and recognise the need not only for awareness but for humility in bringing difference. Wilson writes: 'Yes we may have some special gifts and some important insights that we can share with others, but we recognise that we have flaws and problems too' (2012, p. 144). Humility affirms the culture and identity of community members whilst allowing those who choose, to critically engage with it in the light of Christian faith.

These experiences of difference resonate with and challenge Gerkin's model of pastoral care. For Gerkin, the care-seeker is motivated into the pastoral relationship by finding themselves unable to make sense of their life narrative in the light of conflicting experiences (1984, p. 121). In missional pastoral care relationships are more often motivated by curiosity, in which the contrasting lifestyles and values of Eden teams are a positive experience of difference. Gerkin's carer makes positive use of difference in the hermeneutical play of the counselling conversation, using the Christian narrative as an alternative story which offers different interpretations of the care-seeker's life narrative (1986, p. 54). In missional pastoral care faith-sharing is more nuanced, occurring as part of sharing whole personal life narratives in developing relationships. The presence of various kinds of difference risks the misuse of power in relationships. Despite this, difference cannot and should not be avoided as it initiates the process of hermeneutical play in which personal meaning-systems can be called into question and reshaped.

Local

Eden team members focus on a relatively small and defined area and 'live local' (Wilson, 2012, p. 114), prioritising time in the community and using local facilities alongside other residents. This is a response to the significance of local geography in urban communities and, for my participants, represented empathy, insight and proactive involvement. Eden teams address the isolation and fragmentation of marginalised communities by becoming 'insiders', invested in the same issues and concerns and able to understand the reality of the lives of those around them. Baker argues that urban theologies require a sense of place, shared identity and belonging in order to address the issues facing urban communities (2009, pp. 126-127). It is this which James, a single Eden team member in his twenties from Greater Manchester articulates:

> For me it's all about, changing a lifestyle, it's not just like "oh you know we're youth workers, we come onto the estate 9-5 then go back to our nice houses" you know it's very much become part of the community, live side by side, you struggle with your neighbours in what they're struggling with…

And David, also in his twenties, offers a community member view:

> …they can see around 'em like what's going on and they became part of the community rather than just being an outsider who's trying to come in and improve it just to make themselves look good, they were part of the community and said let's be the change of the community ourselves.

Locality involves affirming contested and fluid urban spaces and the people who find themselves there, as Eden team member Louise said: '…it's the longest amount of time I have ever lived in one place which is just really cool, [it] really feels like my home'.

Availability

Living locally enables availability as a further element of missional pastoral care, resonating with the commitment to incarnational presence within urban theology

(Davey, 2001, pp. 93-94; Graham & Lowe, 2009, p. Xv). Eden team member Dan describes his approach to availability:

> …it's took up quite a bit of my time… not so much now 'cos I live in a flat and it's just changed a bit but when I first moved in there was loads of kids knocking on… it means that a lot of time and effort has gone into that 'cos you just have to be like open to 'em whenever and even if they come round and start knocking on your door and peeing on your doorstep and juggling with firelighters while they're lit you know… it[s] just a very simple thing I've spent a lot of time doing it, so other people would've done other things but I just did that. …you decide what you want to invest in don't you, your priorities in your life, and that was one of them...

In this interview fragment it is possible to see the intentionality and flexibility of availability. It may also involve a challenge to inherited habits, as Eden team member Hannah describes: '…it's helping me to come out of my schedule a little bit more and find time, intentionally spend time with people or to be deliberately a bit more hanging around rather than appointment to appointment'.

Endorsing availability as an element of missional pastoral care raises questions of boundaries and sustainability. As Jan Berry notes, some models of ministry emphasise 'unconditional self-giving and availability' making 'talk of boundaries …feel like a denial of the Christ-like nature of love which is required in pastoral care' (2014, p. 205). Wilson acknowledges that support for Eden team members in the early years of the Network was inadequate, with some leaving Eden suffering burn-out and disillusionment (2012, p. 74). Maintaining a sustainable balance of life is sometimes a challenge for Eden teams motivated by a strong sense of calling, making encouraging reflection on boundaries and life balance an important priority for partner churches and the Eden Network. A driven or unboundaried conception of care is embedded in the assumptions of the evangelical missional narrative in which 'we' the church do care 'to' or 'for' urban people in order to win them for Jesus. This creates a weight of obligation on the carer. Missional pastoral care involves a different kind of relationship – mutual, long-term and an end in itself, not simply a means to the end of evangelism. Therefore availability may be described as

an intentionally open orientation, rather than a lack of boundaries; it changes over time according to circumstances but maintains a commitment to hospitality and a willingness to engage. Jack, a sixteen-year-old community member from Manchester describes the significance of this for him:

> The fact that they were living on here it made it a lot easier to confide in the Eden team members 'cos you saw them kind of like as just next door not as someone who was going to take your problems all the way over there.

The combination of locality and availability created a safe space for Jack to be open with team members about the challenges he faced.

A commitment to locality and availability enables shared experiences and regular interaction alongside difference, creating the opportunity for Gerkin's fusion of horizons and hermeneutical play to take place. They also provide a critique and extension of Gerkin's model in relation to the *locus* of care. Gerkin and the pastoral care tradition following him focus primarily on formal or informal counselling conversations as the context for pastoral care. Preaching, social action and advocacy are also recognised as vehicles of care in their capacity to bring the stories of congregation members into critical conversation with the Christian story (1997, p. 103). Within my research, rather than being a feature of church-based counselling conversations, preaching or ritual activities, the hermeneutical activity of care occurs in the ordinariness of life events. Participants do describe occasions when significant conversations or events brought insight, but as seen above, the majority of their stories are not based around formal interactions. Care occurs over time and through the working out of relationships in daily life.

This everyday hermeneutical interaction between Eden teams and community members sometimes occurs as literal play, for example community member Paul described the way he and his friends behaved when they were young teenagers: '...if it was still raining we'd go and cause trouble [so] we'd get to go in his [Eden team member's] house, so that's what we used to do all the time...'. Other times it is accidental, for example Clare, not anticipating the challenge to her meaning-system that would follow, coming to church and discovering 'they weren't like the

people you'd normally meet you know'. Eden team member Sally tells the story of a friend on the estate:

> There's a mum of a lad who was about eight or nine when we moved here and his mum is the same age as me... and our lives are just worlds apart and yet she was always just so interested in me... And there was a couple of things that happened a few years ago that she was quite distraught about and we were able to put her in touch with some people who could offer some counselling... and she so appreciated that, like no one would've ever thought that she was worth taking the time to sort something out for... the family that she's a part of are quite influential on the estate as well as quite vocal and actually she's always been sort of a positive advocate for us because she's our neighbour...

The formation of a fusion of horizons and the creative space that it opens up is developed over time in the daily course of being neighbours and friends in a community.

Practical

Missional pastoral care is fundamentally practical. It may involve programmed diversionary activity such as a youth club or, as in Sally's story of her friendship with a local mum, a more informal friendship built up over time. Community member Jess is aged sixteen and from Yorkshire, she describes joining a youth band as her first association with the Eden team: 'I started going and it were really fun, it were something I could do, something I could like go out and just like forget everything what's happened'. The practice-oriented nature of missional pastoral care is significant for both Eden team members and community members and describes conduct or action which an individual has undertaken by choice, expressing their personal agency or initiative. I suggest that practice constitutes hermeneutical play, the interplay and reconstruction of meaning-systems, in action rather than words. This challenges Gerkin's focus on the counselling conversation as the *mode* of pastoral care (1984, pp. 121-122). Eden team member Louise illustrates hermeneutical play through practice:

> I remember one woman who comes from quite a large family... when I met
> with her, she'd talk a lot and I would listen a lot and I'd be aware that she
> wasn't good at listening... but sometimes I'll be there and there'll be all
> together... they'd all be like talking at one another which made me think
> when I meet up with her in the week even if she has just twenty minutes or
> an hour of someone just giving her attention and listening to what she has
> to say and caring... that could be quite a big thing...

Spending time listening to her friend Louise noticed she was acting in contrast to
this woman's experience of family relationships. Louise's perseverance in listening
is a deliberate pastoral action which subverts her friend's life myth by *enacting* an
alternative narrative: that she is worthy of attention.

Community members also describe their choices to take certain actions or adopt
specific practices as part of the interplay of missional pastoral care relationships.
Community member Margaret describes how taking up the practice of Bible
reading brought her peace and helped her to choose a way forward for her family:

> I found myself at night putting away my *Take a Break* and me *Bella* and me
> *Chat* and reading the Bible and I found so much peace with it and I just
> thought I want to invest in... in the church…

This action may also be undertaking practices of care for others, as Margaret
continues: 'It's widened me as a mum, whereas I thought before it was just my
children I've got enough strength and enough love now for other people's children'.
Nineteen-year-old Suzy demonstrates this by taking up the responsibility offered to
her by Eden team members:

> …they give you responsibilities for doing the tuck shop or clearing up or
> setting up so we used to help quite a lot. ...It made me realise that people
> had faith in me to do things. That they can say actually "oh look you are old
> enough and you can do it" and having the support saying "look we trust you
> to do this"...

The practical nature of missional pastoral care fosters mutuality, giving both Eden
team members and community members the opportunity not only to think of

themselves differently as a result of the contrasting experiences of encountering one another, it also begins the process of practising life differently.

Long-term and consistent

Two closely linked features of missional pastoral care are the long-term commitment of Eden team members and their consistency in presence and approach. Eden team member Adam from Greater Manchester talked about the assumptions from members of the community when he first moved in:

> …when I first moved [here] in 2006 the one question I was asked by almost every person that I met was "how long are you going to be here for, are you just here for six months and then going?" …it wasn't until that six-month period that my relationship with young people changed, they began to trust me a little bit more because I'd been there for eight months, then a year and so on… it screams out that you are here for the long term, that you are not just flitting in and out.

The open-ended and long-term nature of missional pastoral care allows time for growth in people and in relationships, for example in Eden team member Sally's relationship with a local young person:

> ...about 5 years ago now, there was a young lad who had a lot of stuff going on at home, ...he used to regularly take an overdose and then come and knock on our door and collapse on the doorstep. ...so we used to just encourage him to if he felt like he needed to do something like that then come and knock on the door... and let's try and talk it out a bit. ...now as an adult we don't see him for months at a time and if there's a drama going on in his life he turns up on the doorstep, he'll sit here for three or four hours he'll talk it all out, we'll pray with him at the end of it and he'll go and we won't see him again for you know another five or six months until the next drama arrives. ...he knows that we're reliable... he just never had anybody like that in his life that he could just talk things through with...

In comparison to Gerkin's pastoral counselling model the hermeneutical process of missional pastoral care is more diffuse and may happen over a longer period of time. Pastoral counselling is a focused process entered into deliberately by both care-seeker and counsellor. The hermeneutical circle of evaluating interpretations and re-making meanings used to progress the conversation in Gerkin's model is dynamic and the counsellor takes responsibility for preventing it becoming stuck (1984, p. 140). Within missional pastoral care a mentoring or listening encounter may happen at the initiative of either a community member or an Eden team member. Although, more commonly a less focused but still significant process may happen as a friendship is built, or simply by their awareness of one another as sharing the same neighbourhood. It is a more dilute process than the counselling conversation with a widened hermeneutical circle; nevertheless, each interaction remains a valid part of an ongoing cycle of meaning-making. Eden team member Dan articulates his understanding of time in relation to missional pastoral care:

> God's out of time isn't he, so ten years to us is a long time but to God it isn't and the main goal is… not an instant thing, it's not an instant commitment, everything's alright; it's working through stuff.

This comparison with a pastoral conversation highlights a tension within missional pastoral care. The boundaried nature of pastoral counselling is far removed from an unintentional process of hermeneutical play enacted in the context of an ongoing relationship. A limit of this model therefore is that it may be too incremental and fragmented. Hermeneutical play may not continue for long enough in order for any remaking of meaning-systems to be established, especially in very transient contexts such as neighbourhoods with a high proportion of asylum-seekers or immigrants who often move on once their claims have been processed. Additionally, it is not a controlled or managed process, making the outcome often unpredictable and the path winding. The response of Eden team members to these tensions is consistency as seen in the stories of Sally and Adam above. For Eden team member Hannah this is primarily expressed as stability: '…people do move around and their lives aren't very stable [so] to have people who are there through their teenage years while everything else is chaotic around them is really

important'. This stability and consistency enables strong, mutually significant relationships to be built which leads to the final feature of missional pastoral care, love.

Love

The affirmation of the sense of self of each individual, which allows them to stay the same as they change, is the way in which love is shown in missional pastoral care relationships. Alongside the significance of difference the importance of staying the same emerges within the stories of my participants. Participants repeatedly articulate that they are 'still them' even when describing profound changes in their outlooks and life choices. Eden team member James describes his Christian conversion as: '…about… becoming comfortable in who I was actually…'. While Kevin, a community member with a complex history of abuse and self-harm, refers to the way that the Eden group that he is involved with makes him feel about himself: '...it gives you a reason, you know to, to live, so yeah it's good, I feel dead uplifted, I feel more confident, it gives me more reason you know just to be, just to be me...'. Sixteen-year-old Jack demonstrates this in his understanding of transformation:

> …when you think about transforming you think about [a] …tree, it starts off as just like a little thing and just expands so maybe it doesn't change much in particular apart from just getting bigger and bigger and bigger and broadening itself. And I think whether that's your mind, whether that's your heart, whether that's your soul, whether that's your relationship with God or something, transformation is just not necessarily, maybe not changing completely but broadening.

He observes this process in a friend:

> …he's a friend of mine but really he wasn't very good, but he didn't change like, he, he just broadened. He didn't change particularly as a person, I saw him grow but maybe not properly change, I think he stayed him which made [him] quite easy to talk to, and as he grew in faith, which means as he grew and broadened but stayed him. (Jack)

These stories of staying the same are told by my participants as an integral part of stories of life change. They communicate the importance of agency and affirmation of the self in ministry, indicating that the coherence of a personal life narrative and stable sense of self are achieved by the integration of changes in meaning-system into a pre-existing life narrative (Gerkin, 1984, p. 100), while changing, my participants also remain the same. Community member participants frequently described Eden team members as 'like family', sixteen-year-old community member Jess said:

> …you just feel better about yourself and half the time you're like "I can do that", like they inspire you to do stuff… It's like your family, like you can talk to them about anything and they wouldn't judge you, they wouldn't think owt bad, they'd just help yer and it's really good, it's just like your family, that's what you need.

This indicates the non-judgemental, safe quality of missional pastoral care relationships in which love affirms participants' sense of self.

The emphasis on loving affirmation of self within missional pastoral care means that Eden team members aim for their relationships to be mutual and equal, necessitating a final consideration of the nature and role of power in the relationship. The differences of background, faith commitment and the fact of their relocation as part of a missional initiative create an instant sense that Eden team members and community members are 'other' to one another. While this difference is a positive factor in missional pastoral care, it also creates an imbalance of power in relationships. The focus of the Eden Network on marginalised communities may raise further concerns about vested interests and power dynamics in ministry among vulnerable people requiring, as SteinhoffSmith advocates, a 'political analysis of the power relations in the current practice of pastoral care' (1995, p. 141). SteinhoffSmith acknowledges the usefulness of Gerkin's model but critiques his characterisation of the *role* of care-giver as 'label[ing] people as either active care-givers or passive care-receivers'. He argues that the issues of power need to be addressed before Gerkin's model can achieve its transformative potential (SteinhoffSmith, 1995, pp. 146-147). In this regard my

research provides a robust critique of Gerkin who focuses solely on the professional 'pastor' as undertaking care (1986, pp. 100-103). Richard Osmer extends this, validating the role of lay pastoral carers by using the language of 'congregational leaders' and arguing that 'mutual guidance belongs primarily to the whole people of God and only secondarily to people set aside by this community in ordination' (2008, p. 25). But Osmer's stated audience is still those in ministry and particularly pastors (2008, p. 4) indicating that the pastoral care tradition remains primarily focused on a professionalised pastoral carer.

Missional pastoral care provides a model which is conducted in mutual relationships among lay people. I suggest that there are several factors which mitigate against injustice in missional pastoral care relationships and provide a helpful contrast with Gerkin's model. Firstly, aside from Eden team leaders who are employed and may have a qualification in youth or community work, Eden team members are not professionalised, they are volunteers with their own careers. Most, apart from a small minority of Eden team leaders, are not ordained or responsible for a congregation of Christians and most have no official title or qualification for offering pastoral care. This demonstrates that there is an important role for lay people in pastoral care relationships in which there is mutual affirmation, trust and challenge. Secondly, the experience of relocation and adjustment to a new community addresses issues of power and belonging. On their relocation Eden team members become visitors, and community members hold the power of local knowledge. Community member Paul describes the process of gaining acceptance undertaken by the Eden team members in his area:

> …years ago like another two lads… they like give 'em all names, …like a nickname each so like… every time a new one come… these two lads give 'em a name and they'd be like that's their name now… they're happy with it so it makes everybody else feel happy by calling that person that so then they feel more comfortable around them… 'cos everyone says that this is a bad place, so obviously they're not from round here they're going think "oh this is a bad place I'll try to settle in" you know… coming from smaller background challenging a bigger background.

In this interview extract Paul identifies his community as a 'bigger background' into which Eden team members came as outsiders. His story illustrates the vulnerability and openness of team members as they accepted their new names in order to become a part of their new community.

Thirdly, enabled by the non-professional role of the Eden team member and the redressing of power caused by relocation, missional pastoral care relationships are mutual. Care is both given and received by Eden team members and community members, as the dailyness of missional pastoral care enables relationships to be formed which go beyond the surface to reveal the challenges and brokenness in the lives of both parties. Eden team member Sally articulates the impact that being accepted by her new community had on her:

> ...I'm very bad at establishing new relationships because I do worry about being, you know, too overpowering... I think being intentional in trying to establish some relationships has helped me in that as well. ...I would say... how accepting people are of you... and that they were quite willing to be open and share their lives with you and I thought well it's really rubbish if we're expecting that from them but I'm not going to tell you anything about my circumstances or my situation...

SteinhoffSmith argues that the barriers between care-giver and care-receiver need to be broken down, redefining 'care' as 'the activity of a person or a community that supports the full and powerful participation in communities and societies of those who are suffering, excluded, objectified or oppressed' (1995, p. 148). His conception of care can be seen enacted in my research, advocating a broader approach than counselling, which addresses all human needs rather than simply inner or spiritual needs. He describes his vision of care as about 'mundane day to day tasks', an activity 'done with not to others. It is a relational activity' (SteinhoffSmith, 1995, pp. 149-150). Missional pastoral care with its features of difference, locality, availability, practicality, long-term commitment, consistency and love exemplifies SteinhoffSmith's conception of 'care'.

<u>Relationship as parable</u>

The constituent elements of missional pastoral care both involve and create space for the core characteristic of this model of ministry: hermeneutical play, the exchange and reconstruction of meaning-systems. Gerkin defines the role of the pastor as *parabolic* and here I use his understanding of this to give shape to the practices involved in missional pastoral care.

Gerkin draws on the work of John Dominic Crossan who describes 'Parable' as a form of language which plays the role of subverting accepted meanings in constructed worlds (Crossan, 1988, p. 42; Gerkin, 1984, p. 161). He describes the pastoral counsellor as a 'parabolic figure' following Crossan's recognition that Jesus was known among the early church as the 'Parable of God' (Crossan, 1992, p. viii). The role of the pastor therefore is to 'evoke the person's mythic narrative in order to enter it' and the process of hermeneutical play involves 'changing the mythic world from inside by means of subverting it, giving it a new twist so that a fresh possibility is opened' (Gerkin, 1984, pp. 162-169). Gerkin suggests that by taking a parabolic approach to pastoral questioning and conversation the care-seeker can be helped to find fresh ways of seeing and understanding their experiences (1984, pp. 170-176).

This understanding of parable offers a lens through which to view the practices of my participants as a coherent approach to ministry. In missional pastoral care Eden team members and community members enter into parabolic relationships, each experiencing a degree of subversion of life narratives through difference alongside loving affirmation of the self. This results in the revising of meaning-systems to acknowledge and account for the other's experience and the shared experience built through the relationship. This is the process which Gerkin hopes to achieve within the pastoral counselling conversation and which I have demonstrated can occur through a wide network of community relationships.

In this chapter I have argued that missional pastoral care is a model of mission in which regular, whole-life, local, practice-oriented interactions constitute the sharing of life between Eden teams and urban community members. The loving

affirmation of the self evident in missional pastoral care relationships indicates the intent of Eden team members and community members to be there for the good of one another and their communities. These practices include the sharing of personal stories, including narratives of faith and in the process of these interactions mutual change takes place. My conceptualisation of this ministry challenges evangelical models of missional practice, going beyond the Eden Network understanding of 'urban mission' in its emphasis on mutual meaning making. It also extends the priorities of the pastoral care tradition by acknowledging the transformative hermeneutical play of pastoral care alongside an overarching self-understanding of holistic mission whilst reframing an evangelical commitment to faith-sharing. Therefore I understand the ministry developing among Eden teams and community members as missional pastoral care. Having explored the characteristics of this model, in the next chapter I consider the outcomes of missional pastoral care revealed in the stories of my participants.

Chapter 4: *A complex good: the effectiveness of missional pastoral care*

To account for missional pastoral care as an emergent model of mission it is necessary to consider its effectiveness: what effects it has on those involved and the basis on which these effects can be considered indicators of successful (or unsuccessful) ministry. In the evangelical missional worldview, practice may be considered effective or successful if it produces expected outcomes: crisis moments of conversion, and ensuing reformation of character and lifestyle, including enculturation into Christian cultural norms. This was articulated by Eden team member James reflecting on the outcomes of mission:

> …You've got the obvious measures, you know, church attendance goes up… the main effects are whether or not they become Christians and start living that lifestyle I suppose.

This linear and progressive narrative is founded on a contested relationship to context, involving leaving behind one's old connection to the world and one's old self. Missional pastoral care by contrast, departs from the practices of the evangelical missional narrative in that it adopts a positive engagement with context. It enables a mutual process of meaning-making which avoids enculturation by affirming the self even as it challenges existing worldviews. This chapter examines the interior experience of both the emergence and practice of missional pastoral care and explores its effects in the lives of my participants. I show that it produces a *complex good* which is resonant with Grace Jantzen's conception of flourishing (1998, pp. 156-158) and which involves loss, ambiguity and limitation (Gerkin, 1984, p. 65). This outcome challenges the traditional evangelical missional narrative and the missional practices it engenders.

Unanticipated emergence in the process of the Eden Network's urban ministry

> I think for me the early days felt a little like an experiment where we didn't know what was going to happen at all, and it felt like a little bit like [I was] a crazy guy doing something a bit radical and not having clear boundaries or edges to it… (Michael, Eden team member, Manchester)

The emergence of something unexpected in the ministry of Eden teams has not been unequivocally good; it also produced destabilisation, as Michael's description indicates. The urban as a place of emergence and innovation is acknowledged by Rod Garner, who sees the urban practitioner as 'bricoleur', using whatever resources are to hand in order to create newness and solve problems in context (2004 , p. 117). This requires a 'local performative theology', involving engagement with the urban 'other' which, as Baker acknowledges, challenges identity (2009, p. 132; Strhan, 2015, pp. 43-53). In the face of this challenge Eden team members have often questioned the effectiveness of their mission, Michael continued:

> …I wouldn't have said this in the past but I think now community transformation is what we want to see. It's not just an individualistic thing… I came to [estate] thinking I would see a hundred people in our church within about three to five years. We reach towards seventy at the moment twelve years on, we are not there yet, …some of the more kind of holistic side of what God wants to do in people's lives has become more clear to me over the years… there's a naivety sometimes where in our teens and twenties we think that someone making a decision for Christ somehow fixes everything when in fact they may go back to a messed up home… to a drug habit… to all sorts of challenges…

The Eden Network responded to the emergence and uncertainty articulated by Michael by developing a corporate discourse of transformation. This enabled them to bring coherence to confusing and unanticipated experiences. Wilson describes a shift from the language of revival to that of transformation, which he claims reflects the realisation of Eden team members that: 'true incarnational living was… of higher priority than… an exciting-looking programme of service provision.' (2005, pp. 137-144). This language became definitive for the Eden Network between 2005 and 2013 with the use of the strapline: 'Transforming communities from the inside out' (Wilson, 2012, p. 53). Transformation functions for the Eden Network as a 'discourse', 'a limited set of statements' with a 'unifying rationale', and has become an interpretative framework: 'the position from which, in dialogue with tradition,

we perceive the world' (Garnett, Grimley, Harris, Whyte, & Williams, 2007, pp. 160-166).

Whilst Wilson describes this discourse in relation to Eden's method – incarnational living or service delivery – I suggest transformation language is used by the Network as a positive, catch-all language to talk about aims and outcomes while the nature of those outcomes is as yet emerging. John Swinton and Stephen Pattison claim in relation to spirituality discourse that 'thin, vague and useful' remains valid (2010, p. 226). Transformation can be seen in this way, as a pragmatic discourse which is meaningful because it is useful for the Eden Network. The pragmatic use of language is characteristic of evangelicalism; Guest identifies the way in which the diversity of evangelical perspectives, theological and ethical, are held in tension through public discourse which both affirms variety and controls public speech (2007, p. 97).

While this creates space in which to experiment and provides reassurance in uncertainty, when attention is not given to understanding the experiences that lie beneath transformation discourse it becomes unhelpful, as seen in Eden team member Sally's expression of confusion and disappointment:

> …I don't know it's a hard... I think your expectation is different isn't it, so you maybe have a hope that they're just totally going to understand everything that you're telling them and they're just going to wake up tomorrow morning and they'll be praying in tongues and laying of hands and healing people and everything like that but actually in reality my faith is just not big enough to believe for that so I'll just be happy for somebody who maybe decides not to get up in the morning and have a glass of wine for breakfast…

The use of transformation language, combined with a lack of awareness of inherited missional narratives and the failure to reflect on them in the light of urban practice has exacerbated the destabilisation felt by Eden teams in their urban ministry. Sally's hope for immediate and radical life change indicates the influence of the evangelical missional narrative which underpins her conception of

transformation, while her reflections on her experience show confusion and ambiguity framed as the need for her to have more faith. This highlights the fragility and emergent nature of missional pastoral care which is disguised by a dependence on transformation discourse.

The unanticipated nature of missional pastoral care is experienced quite differently by urban community members. Rather than the unsettling effect described by Eden team members, they talk about the surprise of discovering a different kind of relationship through their encounter with the 'other'. Community member David from Greater Manchester describes his first experience of meeting a member of the Eden team when he was eight years old and reflects on the confusion caused by that encounter. As he tells the story, he and his 'mates' had broken into the garden of what they thought was an empty house on the estate. They began to build a den when a woman came out of the house and saw them:

> …rather than doing what you'd expect someone to do and be really angry she was really calm and really happy and just supportive… we were just all interested in what they were doing and we'd go round and do loads of craft activities with them… it was really good just to have someone right within the streets we were living in who actually cared about everyone… (David)

The unexpected nature of this first meeting challenged David's expectations and opened up the possibility of newness for him; now in his early twenties he describes the Eden team as 'my second family'. The surprising acceptance experienced by community members is not only related to Eden team members but also to God:

> God came into my life just through listening in church to people's experiences and asking people how has God impacted them in their lives and it started making a change in my life. 'Cos I again had the confidence then to say "right God loves me for me". (Suzy, community member, Manchester)

In these narratives it is evident that among community members the primary effect of the emergence of this new model of mission is acceptance, understood as the

affirmation of self, from others and from God. This indicates the centrality of openness to context and to self in the missional pastoral care approach. The mixed nature of these experiences of the emergence of missional pastoral care also indicate something of its effectiveness: it is a complex good.

A complex good

I have used Gerkin's understanding of parable to summarise the relational dynamic between my participants as it contains ideas of both loss and newness evident in the processes of missional pastoral care. In my study change happens through friction, the parabolic subversion and loss of previously held meanings and the gain of new meanings worked out in daily action, practising living and thinking differently. Here I argue that the effects of missional pastoral care include both loss and gain, new growth and ambiguity, and conceptualise this as a complex good.

Using the theology of Jürgen Moltmann alongside object relations theory, Gerkin develops his understanding of the self in history. He states that human 'identity' is conferred by our embeddedness in history, in time and in our corporate relationships. Using Moltmann, he proposes a future dimension to identity, conferred by the coming kingdom of God which he calls 'eschatological identity' (Gerkin, 1984, pp. 67, 100). This creates a 'paradoxical identity' in which each individual's personal pilgrimage is concerned with 'the self's struggle with the conferred identity of the self's historical social context and the claiming of that identity conferred upon the self by virtue of its participation in the coming kingdom' (Gerkin, 1984, p. 100). The facts of our history and present circumstances may be a source of suffering while the future dimension of identity brings hope in the 'life of the soul'. Personal change is effected for Gerkin when an individual allows the Spirit to work in restoring their eschatological identity, expressed in hope and expectation (1984, pp. 67-69). The paradoxical nature of identity is evident in missional pastoral care as it produces a complex good, containing multiple elements, some of which are experienced positively, as flourishing, and others which are experienced as loss or tension.

A kind of flourishing

In the experiences of my participants I identified five interconnecting effects of missional pastoral care which constitute a kind of flourishing. Grace Jantzen defines flourishing as 'growth and fruition from an inner creative and healthy dynamic' (1998, p. 161). This resonates with the positive aspects of the complex good: a stronger love of self, a more positive approach to life choices, an increased ability to act, increasing awareness of a good God, and mutuality. The story of Paul, a community member from Manchester, illustrates in his own words the complex good resulting from missional pastoral care:

> I'm not a Christian now but I spend a lot of me time with the Christians... I do a lot of voluntary work yeah, if I'm not in work this is where I am... I do get a lot of responsibility off 'em and obviously I appreciate that 'cos it's trust and I am a trustworthy guy... it does make you feel good because someone's trusting you with all their property and stuff like that...

> Say if I carried on on the streets... half of us probably be in jail now... but knowing these [Eden team members] and starting getting into all more activities and helping out... I see my change, ...obviously we still went back to do our own stuff while we was with them but instead of just climb one ladder causing trouble I was climbing two so I was still messing about causing trouble but also climbing the ladder to gain respect you know... 'cos I was being with them and then... things move on like so I was climbing two instead of one and obviously you only want to climb one ladder and I just jumped back on to the good ladder to go the good way.

> God in a way does help you [find] your way through everything if you think about it but I wanna see something before I believe in him... God's probably that one rung ahead of me, you know until actually something happens and I meet up with him, and until that day I'm always going to be one behind him...

> I could stay away from [the church] for a long time... but obviously if I still got to see the people because they're good friends now... obviously your

friends come and go but these people I've had for eight, nine, ten, some of them… twelve years so you build a good friendship with 'em 'cos you know they're always going to be around, so you can trust 'em…

Missional pastoral care results in *a stronger love of self*. Paul describes 'feeling good' and appreciating the trust he receives from Eden team members, and he uses this experience to confirm his sense of self as 'a trustworthy guy'. Suzy also described the way that Eden team members trusted her with responsibility and the effect of this on her self-esteem:

…it boosted my self-confidence quite a lot. Then I started caring about how I was dressed, how my hair was, then people started noticing that I was a person so I weren't getting bullied as much, and I had friends…

Suzy links the practices of Eden team members to her own increasing self-care and the resultant outcomes in her own life: overcoming bullying and making more friends. Love, in the form of affirming the self of the other, results in increased self-esteem and self-acceptance. This contrasts strongly with the ambiguous relationship to the self initiated by the evangelical missional narrative.

Building a stronger love of self contributes to the second effect, *a more positive approach to life choices both large and small*. Community member Clare from Greater Manchester articulates this connection: 'I've stopped going out as much, and I mean going out to get drunk and things like that… I didn't want to get involved in that because of what I feel… not feeling bad but feeling good about yourself'. Paul describes his life choices as climbing ladders. He articulates the way in which spending time with Eden team members provoked him, after a period of climbing two ladders, to ultimately choose the 'good ladder'. In these narratives community members can be seen to be making different life choices motivated by hope and self-care as a result of their experience of missional pastoral care.

Related to life choices, the third effect emerging in my research is *an increased ability to act*, articulated as a sense of agency. The evangelical missional narrative allows more agency for the church than for those outside the church who are primarily recipients of the agency of Christians. Counter to this, community

member participants describe new opportunities, and expectations for action resulting from missional pastoral care practices. For example, Paul's volunteering called for him to exercise agency while providing the space in which to do so. Equally, Margaret, a community member from Yorkshire, describes a recent conversation in which she took the initiative and offered to help in her community:

> …just the other week I struck up a conversation with [Eden team leader] and I said d'y'know what, I'd love to work on the Eden team at some stage… and he said "brilliant… you'll have to come on board as a volunteer".

The encouraging response of the Eden team leader to Margaret's offer demonstrates a focus on cultivating agency through practical activity which is effective in enabling positive action.

The fourth effect of missional pastoral care is *the awareness of a good God in a person's world*. Rather than the focus on conversion within the evangelical missional narrative, missional pastoral care involves a broader range of outcomes and a longer term commitment than might be expected if conversion was the primary goal, as team member Dan describes it:

> …this is one of the things that annoys me about the wing of evangelical, Pentecostal stuff which some people can take on is that are you somebody's friend? Are you gonna help them, are you gonna love them just so they make a commitment to God and if it's not working you're gonna go, or actually even if they don't make a commitment to God are you gonna love them as God loves them, are you gonna just spend time with 'em and just do what God would do for 'em anyway…

Community member Suzy was twelve when she decided 'I want to know God now' and had known the team for three years. When I interviewed her she was nineteen and the relationships had continued, developing over time. In the evangelical missional narrative, mission precedes conversion after which the convert becomes a disciple and starts to enter into mission themselves. In Suzy's case the relationships which began as mission did not end when Suzy professed Christian faith for herself, this indicates a fluidity between mission and discipleship, departing

from the evangelical missional narrative. For community member Paul, conversion to Christian faith has not been a part of his experience; he says: '…I don't wanna take that path… I don't think it'd suit me that way…'. Rather, he describes God as 'one rung ahead' of him on the ladder, helping him find his way. Consistently my participants articulated a raised awareness of God's presence, goodness and involvement in their lives.

The final aspect of this kind of flourishing is *mutuality*, the experience of undertaking life change alongside others who are also being changed. Missional pastoral care results in the creation of a community in which all participate in hermeneutical play. Paul describes the importance of his friendships with Eden team members, particularly in terms of trust and commitment: 'you know they're always going to be around'. Eden team member Sally reflected on the way that she and her husband have been changed through their experience:

> …the sense of community is fantastic… we've always had nice neighbours… so I think that's probably changed us 'cos I think we would have just come home every night and shut the door and not really thought about anybody else… we always kind of reckoned that… we would have ended up being just a little cocoon together if we hadn't been involved in these things… it sort of forces you to bring people into your home doesn't it and to really put yourself in their shoes...

Eden team member Adam recounts the effect of mutuality on him in the context of community activism as he discovered his local residents' association:

> …they're one of the best groups of people I've met because they're so desperate to see change… it just makes me excited that we're not doing this alone, we're doing this in partnership with people that live in the area already that are already making a change. So I think, you know, when I first started Eden it was like "we are the people with the answers to the change" but actually people in the community hold the answers…

Mutuality indicates the shared nature of the effects of missional pastoral care. Among my participants, both Eden team members and community members articulated stories of personal change as a result of hermeneutical play.

These five effects are resonant with theoretical understandings of flourishing, especially in the work of Grace Jantzen. John Swinton highlights the correlation between religion and wellbeing and suggests that religion can provide social support, 'a sense of belonging and self-esteem' and 'problem-focused coping' which enables an individual to 'take positive action to alter the source of stress' (2001, pp. 82-83).[22] These factors can be likened to the effects of missional pastoral care encompassing the focus on self-esteem, positive life choices and mutual relationships. Furthermore, the commonality between flourishing and the effects of missional pastoral care extends beyond these practical elements. Elaine Graham notes the use of Aristotle's term 'Eudaimonia' within theology to refer to happiness or wellbeing and the translation of the concept as 'flourishing' in the work of Elizabeth Anscombe and subsequently that of Grace Jantzen (2011, p. 227).

Jantzen argues that: '"flourishing" is the unacknowledged foundation of "salvation" in the Western theological "text"' (1998, p. 157). Her concept of flourishing as a process of thriving begins with an affirmation of the world and the self; it is embodied, derived from our 'natality', and contains a necessary interconnection to other people and to ecosystems (1998, pp. 160-165). This results in a positive anthropology, with humanity having 'natural inner capacity… being able to draw on inner resources and interconnection with one another'. Additionally flourishing requires God's immanence rather than distance as the 'divine source and ground' of all creation and as incarnate within humanity (Jantzen, 1998, p. 161).

These qualities of flourishing – affirmation of the goodness of the self, confidence in the resources and the agency of the self to grow, and interdependence – are indicative of the effects of missional pastoral care demonstrated above. They contrast with the evangelical missional narrative in which humanity is lost and God,

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[22] For further work on religion and wellbeing see Atherton, Graham and Steedman (2011) and Atherton, Baker and Reader (2011).

through the church, is intervening with his salvation plan. Jantzen also sets flourishing against an inherited theological narrative. She argues that 'salvation', the dominant metaphor of western Christianity, is problematic as it capitulates to the values of modernity perpetuating a negative anthropology, competitive individualism, a dualism which negates the body and other-worldliness which leads to privatised and depoliticised faith (1998, pp. 166-167). My analysis of the evangelical missional narrative contains similar objections to those levied by Jantzen against 'salvation'. Janzten's theological trajectory is very different to that held by my participants, being informed by a feminist perspective within the philosophy of religion rather than charismatic evangelicalism. Nevertheless, there are clear resonances between the complex good of missional pastoral care and her conception of flourishing, derived in part from a similar critique of inherited theological narratives. This demonstrates the creativity and courage in the practice of Eden team members which has allowed radically different practical and theological outcomes to emerge.

Loss and ambiguity

In Jantzen's imaginary of flourishing, death is not denied, but is accepted as a natural part of the lifecycle (1998, p. 168). Similarly, Gerkin's 'paradoxical identity' gives an account of life which involves struggle, negotiating the limitations of one's history and present while hoping in the coming kingdom of God. It follows that loss and ambiguity are among the effects of missional pastoral care, elements of the complex good; furthermore, rather than being wholly negative, they are necessary, enabling the more positive outcomes described above.

The first aspect of this ambiguity is the challenge presented by living in a marginalised urban community. Wilson describes the early years of the Eden Network in which team members were subject to vandalism, burglaries and verbal abuse (2012, pp. 73-74). Eden team member Michael describes the challenge this presented for him: '…I think that one of the things that is distinctive for me is the actual applying of loving your neighbour even when your neighbour sells drugs or steals from you…'. Michael articulates this as a challenge to his theology, how he

understands the biblical commitment to love your neighbour in the context of urban crime. Whilst the significance of crime must not be downplayed, Wilson notes that this has become much rarer in recent years (2012, p. 71), and the Eden team members among my participants did not describe any personal trauma resulting from being a victim of crime. However, Louise makes the same connection to theology in relation to distressing events in her neighbourhood which have affected her:

> …you have all the experiences that you have to deal with and you think oh my goodness what do I even see in this situation, when someone dies or gets beat up by their boyfriend and all sorts of mad stuff and you don't know what the answers are… yeah, I think my theology has changed quite a bit since coming on Eden. Say, it was a nice little pretty box all wrapped up, it's just been opened and has been a bit messy and yea, you know, not quite as compact and tight. …it can make you think "Oh right, do I believe this just because I have been told it for years and years and I've never had to question it or it's not affected me in a real way" …when it really affects you and someone that you know then… it's not quite as black and white.

This kind of experience is more common among Eden team members than directly being a victim of crime. Wilson states that Eden team members are often caught up in the 'tragedies that are all too common in the sort of communities Eden teams serve' (2012, p. 75). In these narratives Eden team members articulate the ways in which their meaning-systems were challenged as a result of their engagement with the urban 'others' in their communities. Openness to this kind of challenge is necessary if the hermeneutical play of missional pastoral care is to take place, but it is at times a difficult process in which the resultant reshaped meaning-system may be unforeseeable.

A further form of ambiguity experienced by both Eden team members and community members is the vulnerability of choosing to share yourself with another person, building new relationships and allowing others to see beneath the surface of your life. Eden team member Sally articulates her experience:

...allowing yourself to be quite vulnerable with your neighbours... actually letting them see that you have got struggles and issues... it's important that people see that it's not all rosy just because you declare you're a Christian because stuff happens doesn't it.

Helen, a community member from the North East articulates the challenge to her identity presented by her encounter with Eden team members:

...they used to talk to me and tell me that Jesus loved me and I used to think they were off their heads... but then after a while, just something inside of me just want to know more because they were just always there for me they showed me love... everybody used to say "oh once a druggie always a druggie" and that and it wasn't the case you know what I mean because... these people loved me for me, ...and they didn't... condemn me or anything for what I'd done, they just loved me and accepted me.

As Helen describes, building trust in new relationships takes time. Furthermore, the uncertainty of emerging understandings of identity and reality created through hermeneutical play are fragile, requiring gentleness and patience, as this observation from Eden team member Adam shows:

...I've seen kids I've worked with going forward for salvation I don't know how many times... it just made me think actually is this person saved because they... keep responding. ...at first I got a bit annoyed how often kids went forward... but actually for them it's them making another stand... because it's really difficult for kids in this area to be a Christian... coming from an area where your mum and dad kick you out the door at 8 o'clock in the morning and don't let you back in until 6 o'clock in the evening... so it is something they need to do again and again if not just to remind themselves what they're committed to...

Adam demonstrates the vulnerability of young community members, repeatedly reasserting a different identity in their response to Christianity. He also highlights his own discomfort with the challenges to his meaning-system concerning what 'becoming a Christian' looks like. As Berry states: 'the very act of empathy, coming

alongside another person and attempting to enter, however temporarily, their worldview and frame of reference, renders someone vulnerable' (2014, p. 209).

This self-exposure, although not a recognised feature of evangelical missional practice, can be highly valued in urban theology. Pears, writing of urban ministry, claims that it is important to bring 'one's unique self to the community or situation' making vulnerability 'a prerequisite for social transformation' (2013, pp. 106-107). While this may be true, it remains problematic as vulnerability inherently involves the loss of security and risk of harm (Herrick, 1997, p. 20). Missional pastoral care might appear too idealistic, asking too much of Christians to subject themselves to such personal vulnerability in the course of their mission. The building of personal, mutually vulnerable relationships also leaves Eden team members open to abuse from people who may have chaotic and unstable lives, as Louise put it:

> I suppose it's trying to get a balance, needing to get wisdom from God because you don't want to be too much on one side but I suppose I was always on the gullible and naïve side and this is a way I have changed really just through working with people. I've just always wanted to see the good and believe the stories and everything and… you've just got to learn the hard way really which sometimes has been quite hurtful...

Vanessa Herrick notes that within pastoral care vulnerability involves choice, the 'voluntary relinquishment of the power to protect oneself from being wounded' (1997, p. 3). This allows Eden team members some control, while the vulnerability of community members may be more urgent and immediate rather than a matter of conscious choice, indicating inequality in their relationships. Despite this the slow development of relationships of trust with Eden team members allows community members to exercise choice in their vulnerability over time.

In his analysis of disability theologies, Swinton takes a broader view, identifying vulnerability as central to the human experience. He argues that it is at the point of vulnerability that Jesus' incarnation is complete, thereby emphasising that 'vulnerability is the core of love' and that 'hospitality', receiving and welcoming vulnerability in mutual relationship, 'is a manifestation of the divine' (2011, p. 293).

Swinton proposes that due to our dependence on others for life itself, vulnerability is the real state of every person (2011, p. 292). This provides a basis from which vulnerability and support are shared in missional pastoral care, over time, and to differing degrees depending on the life circumstances of participants. The relationships built between Eden team members and community members therefore illustrate a dynamic of vulnerability and hospitality occurring in the unexpected nature of missional pastoral care and the integral role of ambiguity in effecting hermeneutical play. While this goes some way to addressing the problematic nature of relationships of care, the risk and vulnerability inherent in pastoral relationships remains, requiring skilful navigation (Berry, 2014, p. 211).

Challenges to inherited theological narratives have been painful for many Eden team members, leading to confusion and disappointment. This was frequently articulated by my participants as a sense of loss, that *not enough* was happening; Adam related this directly to his reading of the Bible: '…we should be doing more stuff out there really, if we got to grips with what the scriptures tell us then we should be seeing more stuff happen, we should be seeing more transformation'. Eden team member Michael has lived in his community for twelve years. He also reflected this sense of loss:

> …I would also say on the slightly more negative side is that I simply haven't seen enough of it yet, [I've] got this agitation to see more and a slight frustration with the status quo which I suppose I don't really ever want to lose… but I still want to be able to have that joy when it does happen.

These quotations can be seen in part as expressions of an inherited missional narrative which expects frequent conversion and quick life change. However, they are also a consequence of the long-term and processual nature of missional pastoral care in which results occur in a non-linear and incremental way.

While Eden team members, such as Michael above, express frustration at the slow, fragmentary nature of change in their communities, community members experience loss and ambiguity as the struggle for life change. Hermeneutical play opens up possibilities for new self-understanding and new ways of living, but the

process of experimenting with amended meaning-systems and integrating new ways of thinking is not easy or fast. Community member Clare's view of her current situation expresses this tension:

> ...I don't think I've completely changed to being a Christian, ...to me you can't just be one day something and one day something else, I mean it might have happened to people but personally, it's not happened to me so I'm going through like a bit of a battle so I'm not transformed at the minute...

Traumatic life events may play a significant role in inhibiting the adoption of revised meaning-systems. Helen is a community member in her late forties, a mum of three living in the North East. Her husband had left her after their conversion to Christianity and this experience of abandonment cast a shadow over her life narrative as she returned to it several times throughout our interview:

> I look back all the time and think to myself... when I come out of rehab and the years that were then, we were together and how happy it was... until he walked out and left me. It just felt as if... everything that God had give us and that we were going through together as a family... just felt as if the devil had just took it all away from me just in a split second...

Helen struggled to find coherence in the events of her life which have been so shaped by the action of someone else: '...he never ever give me no answers to why he done it'. The impact of events outside of her control led to a continual struggle to find a positive life narrative. Despite this Helen also acknowledged the role of Eden team members who provided a source of new insight, beginning to call into question the narrative of rejection caused by her marriage breakdown:

> ...I just felt that it was the Lord really just bringing me back you know, because with Christians and that across my path, and then like since then ... I've been involved with... the guys with the Eden project, doing the kids' club and that with the kids too, ...being part of the work that they done on the estate where they were cleaning everybody's houses... I just feel much

> stronger and everything now… and now I just want to like do something now d'y'know what I mean and move forward…

These stories show that ambiguity regarding the lack of or struggle for life change is part of the outworking of missional pastoral care. Gerkin acknowledges the frustration of care-seekers as they encounter the limits of their own change in the counselling process, furthermore he acknowledges the obstacles presented by traumatic experiences in a person's history. Gerkin suggests that the suffering of the not-yet-fulfilled kingdom of God is a constant feature of human existence. Therefore change will not involve a complete end to suffering (1984, p. 154), although through the participation of the Spirit *meaning* can be reshaped, allowing negative experiences to be re-understood, if not changed (Gerkin, 1984, p. 147). Gerkin also recognises the frustration which the care-giver may experience, particularly in relation to what he describes as the problem of freedom, i.e. the need for the care-seeker to begin to enact new insights in their daily life and relationships (1984, p. 69). He asserts that to avoid burnout, care-givers must 'entrust[ing] their identity and the outcomes of [their] efforts to the mysterious working out of the story of God's praxis, God's activity in and through our activity' (Gerkin, 1986, p. 71). Gerkin concludes that suffering can be understood as meaningful and lived with more positively through grasping our eschatological identity, and that a person's meaning world 'may be loosened enough to make possible a new horizon of self and world understanding' (1984, p. 154). This makes the loss and ambiguity resulting from missional pastoral care practice a necessary element of the complex good, as it indicates that meaning-systems are being challenged and subverted, allowing for new understandings of self and other, however partial, to emerge.

Implications of missional pastoral care and the complex good

The complex good of missional pastoral care with its destabilisation and surprise, flourishing and ambiguity challenges the evangelical missional narrative and its practices. Firstly, missional pastoral care suggests that an emphasis on the lostness of the world and the self is unhelpful in mission as it creates dualism between the

sacred community of faith and the sinful world. This results in mission being conceived as 'saving from' and spiritual growth as involving a rejection of the old self, whereas missional pastoral care demonstrates that an affirmation of the self and the world as good and as sites of God's presence and involvement are necessary to bring about complex good.

Secondly, the whole-life scope and hermeneutical play of missional pastoral care challenges the range of practices which can be understood as mission, critiquing the primacy of conversion in the evangelical missional narrative. The complex good articulates results of mission practice which are broader than conversion to Christian faith but which can be seen as a kind of flourishing, including, with the growing awareness of God's presence and involvement, spiritual flourishing.

Thirdly, the strongly linear trajectory of the evangelical missional narrative is shown in my research to be unrepresentative of experience. Life change unfolds in cyclical, incremental, partial and often simply messy pathways as meaning-systems are challenged and new ways of thinking and being are explored. Fourthly and relatedly, this messy process renders the traditional markers of progress or success in missional practice irrelevant. A decisive moment in which a person moves towards Christianity is shown to be a small, if visible, step in a much longer journey of reshaping meaning-systems. Therefore, a focus on decisions as markers may miss the broader picture of a person's meaning-making process. Other markers associated with evangelical missional practice such as enculturation including changes in language or lifestyle can even be destructive, reflecting a rejection of the self and an attempt to 'fit in' with what is perceived to be a more acceptable community. This chapter has shown that missional pastoral care produces a different outcome by means of a different process to that of the evangelical missional narrative and its practices. Given this departure, in my final chapter I consider to what extent missional pastoral care constitutes a charismatic evangelical Christian practice.

Chapter 5: *Missional pastoral care as charismatic evangelical practice*

> …a spirituality built around the infusion of divine reality and power into everyday experiences. (Guest, 2007, p. 109)

> …this is a bit of a Christian cliché but for me [it's] like being on a journey and the things which happen to you on your journey, for me this is my setting – so the people I come into contact with at home and work life, you have all those contributing factors and then I've got God and his Spirit and the interplay of those things. (Louise, Eden team member, Greater Manchester)

These two quotations identify the connection created between the divine and the everyday in charismatic evangelicalism, the 'interplay' in Louise's spiritual journey. They express the holistic, activist and charismatic form of evangelicalism which can be seen in the experiences of members of the Eden Network. In the previous chapter I problematised the evangelical nature of missional pastoral care, demonstrating the critical tension it creates with the evangelical missional narrative. However, while their evangelical identity may be called into question, the foundational nature of Christian faith is evident in my participant's stories of urban mission. Therefore, here I consider the Christian character of missional pastoral care and argue that it represents an innovation *within* charismatic evangelicalism, rather than a total departure from it. It extends evangelical identity in four ways: by articulating a narrative response to Bebbington's quadrilateral which nuances conversionism, activism and biblicism while questioning crucicentrism; by demonstrating distinctiveness among contemporary portrayals of evangelicalism due to a lack of concern for evangelical identity; by adopting *missio Dei* theology; and by way of a spirituality, which is defined by God's active presence in the world. I conclude the chapter by summarising the theological framework of missional pastoral care, which can provide resources toward a new evangelical missional narrative. This chapter will primarily engage with the narratives of the Eden team members among my participants as they hold the experience of journeying with their inherited evangelical identity through the emergence of missional pastoral care. In my discussion of spirituality I also include the experiences of community

members, some, but not all, identifying as Christian who have become a part of these mutual communities of care.

<u>The charismatic evangelical character of missional pastoral care</u>

Having taken a narrative approach to evangelical identity, and considered the engagement of ordinary evangelicals with their subcultural narratives I return now to Bebbington and consider what my research can offer back to his quadrilateral of evangelical priorities. Firstly, conversionism remains a priority within missional pastoral care, but understandings of the salvation appropriated by conversion have broadened beyond personal belief in Jesus to resemble Bosch's 'comprehensive salvation', which 'is as coherent, broad and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence' (2011, p. 410). Conversionism is largely expressed in terms of missional intent, as Eden team member Dan from Manchester explains:

> …it's the parable, Jesus talking about you have to be the light of the world, people have to see you, and it's just like with Eden it's just being intentional and people seeing you… doing things because of God and for God and making them question about stuff.

Whilst its aims are broader than conversion, missional pastoral care includes faith-sharing and for my participants conversion is still an anticipated outcome. Whilst Eden team members primarily refer to conversion as receiving salvation, or coming to faith in Jesus, the Eden Network's corporate discourse of transformation has allowed for conversion to be understood in practice as an aspect of the flourishing brought about by missional pastoral care. This can be likened to Warner's addition of the 'transformed life' in his revised quadrilateral (2007, pp. 17-18) and is evident in Eden team members' focus on community transformation. In missional pastoral care salvation is understood as encompassing every aspect of life: personal, social and political, while being signified by faith in Jesus.

Secondly, Bebbington's activism, 'the expression of the gospel in effort' (1989, p. 3), is reimagined in missional pastoral care as a commitment to embodied and intentional practices as central to the hermeneutical process of life change. The energy and motivation which initiated the relocation of Eden teams is a clear

example of Bebbington's concept, although in missional pastoral care the emphasis on effort has been tempered by an understanding of God's activity going before them. This has led to Eden teams acknowledging their secondary role, as Michael from Manchester states: '…well everything that matters is done by Him at the end of the day… there's no way we could have pulled this stuff off on our own'. This gives activism a different character, less prone to the 'saviour' complex, characteristic of evangelical mission (Bosch, 2011, pp. 295-296) and noted by one Eden team member as their initial expectation: 'We thought there would be this, about twelve of us originally, you know the disciples, we're going to come and we're going to transform this whole community' (Thompson, 2012, p. 52). In missional pastoral care activism remains intentional but is expressed in Eden team members' daily interactions set in the context of God's action in their lives and in the lives of their neighbours and friends.

Thirdly, the Christians among my participants viewed the Bible as authoritative, in the sense that it is received as the story of origins of the relation between God and humanity. Furthermore, it is perceived as a story in which they play an ongoing part, as Eden team member Adam described:

> I love Isaiah 61, you know "the Spirit of the sovereign Lord is upon me to preach good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted and to set the captives free", yeah I just think that sums everything up. The reason we're here is because God has anointed us, we've got God's anointing, God's authority to go out into the streets to see transformation, to see broken hearts being healed and to see the captives set free…

Matthew Engelke describes the evangelical approach to the Bible thus: 'Scripture should be imbibed, embodied, lived out' (2013, p. 19); although, as Bebbington recognises, the specific relation to the Bible has changed over time and within differing threads of evangelicalism (1989, p. 12). Conservative evangelicalism is described by Smith as biblicist, in which the Bible is understood to be the sole source of revelation, having 'exclusive authority, infallibility, perspicuity, self-sufficiency, internal consistency, self-evident meaning and universal applicability'

(2012, p. viii). Eden team members' use of the Bible differs in that it reflects their charismatic spirituality in which the Holy Spirit is understood to bring revelation through the use of charismatic gifts, as well as through the Bible. Derek Tidball states that for charismatic evangelicals: 'the Bible is not seen as a past, static, truth but as a present resource' (2005, pp. 260-261). This dynamism means that the Bible is the start of an ongoing narrative, fuelled by the Holy Spirit, in which charismatic Christians play a part. I examine this participation in the authoritative sacred story of the Bible as a component of the spirituality of missional pastoral care later in this chapter.

Fourthly, just as conversionism is nuanced in missional pastoral care, so the sole focus on substitutionary atonement in Bebbington's crucicentrism is expanded, becoming a broader attention to the whole life of Jesus as a resource for ministry. Eden team member Louise describes her view of a disciple as: '…somebody who becomes more like Jesus and to be Christ-like then I would say that has been, is my journey…'. In her desire to imitate Jesus, Louise demonstrates the way in which Eden teams set Jesus' death and resurrection in the context of his life and ministry. Eden team member James from Greater Manchester expresses his conviction that in his Eden ministry he is emulating Jesus: '…it's what Christians should be doing anyway, should be engaging with communities and moving to places where actually society's forgotten them, Jesus came for the sinners…'. This broadening of crucicentrism can be seen as a consequence of an emphasis on incarnation, which creates the theological foundation for the whole-life nature of missional pastoral care and the setting of conversion within a framework of broader life change. The mixed practices and theologies of Eden teams problematise Bebbington's crucicentrism, indicating that an evangelical worldview can accommodate incarnation alongside conversionism and a focus on Jesus' death and resurrection.

My research offers a narrative account of evangelical identity derived from the lived experience of ordinary evangelicals. It resonates with Bebbington's quadrilateral, but by demonstrating the narrative worldview created by evangelical priorities and the ways in which evangelicals critically engage with it, the categories of conversionism, activism and biblicism are nuanced and crucicentrism is set within a

broader context. This indicates the complex and evolving nature of evangelical identity as noted by Strhan (2015, p. 4) and calls for more detailed examination of the evangelical character of missional pastoral care.

From protecting identity to aligning with the incoming kingdom of God

Contemporary evangelicalism can be defined by the tension between a need to resist the world and a degree of cultural accommodation (Smith, 2000, pp. 157-159; Strhan, 2015, p. 17). In missional pastoral care these themes are expressed in terms of aligning with the activity of God in the world, resulting in a distinctive evangelical identity.

In studies of contemporary evangelicalism, resistance and accommodation are primarily understood as bound up with a concern to maintain evangelical identity. Strhan articulates the 'struggle for coherence' experienced by conservative evangelicals seeking to navigate the conflicting subjectivities of being 'aliens and strangers' in the worldly city and citizens of the heavenly city (2015, p. 4). This is both an individual, internal struggle expressed in responses to personal moral issues and a social, cultural struggle. Strhan describes the negative evangelical perception of cities as spaces of 'moral disorder' while acknowledging that they are also considered to be places of opportunity, particularly for conversion, leading to the growth of evangelicalism in capitalist, industrialised cities (2015, pp. 31-33). Evangelical identity has also accommodated the individualism, intellectualism and globalisation of middle-class, Western late modernity (Guest, 2007, pp. 74, 202-3). Despite, and perhaps because of, such accommodation evangelicals maintain a concern for 'policing their own boundaries' (Guest, 2007, p. 53). This may be directed inwards toward the Christian tradition as well as outwards towards a lost world. For example, Bielo's 'emerging evangelicals' constitute a critique of North American conservative evangelicalism in their 'aversion of dogmatic certainty; suspicion of epistemological clarity; [and] dethroning of doctrinal belief as the key signifier of Christian identity' (2011, pp. 197-198), while maintaining their identity as missionaries in a post-Christian culture (2011, pp. 132-136). Evangelicals experience their Christian distinctiveness to be under threat from a polluting

culture, making the defence of this distinctiveness in the self and in the church, a central activity.

Resistance and accommodation are central to my model of missional pastoral care, although they are directed differently. Missional pastoral care involves an embrace of context, that of the world and the self. This may be understood as a form of accommodation, involving seeking out and aligning with the good, that which reflects the character or activity of God in a community, person or situation. Eden team member Adam articulated his awareness of the goodness in his community: '…it's not just people moving into the area that wanna change the area, there are people dotted around the streets that have the same heart as us…'. His use of the language of 'heart' expresses Adam's deep connection with others in his community.

Resistance to contemporary culture is seen in the explicit rejection of destructive behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, violence, and gossip among my participants. Eden team member Dan describes this countercultural stance:

> They [the young people he befriended] knew certain morals... so they knew… you don't believe in stuff like swearing and slagging people off and gossiping about people and all that stuff, but they… knew that we accepted and cared about 'em but that we've got different… beliefs.

Eden team member Michael illustrates the way that teams seek to resist destructive behaviours as he described a recent conversation with a recovering alcoholic man in his community:

> …he said he doesn't think he would have been alive if we hadn't been around when he was at the bottom of his pit of drinking and seemed completely without hope, and he says that what he needed was friends to pick him up, not to treat him like a project, but friends who would pick him up and try and help him to keep going with his life and not to give up, and to work towards quitting drinking…

There is also a resistance towards excessive consumerism, unjust trading practices, poverty, injustice and environmental issues, both within their own communities and further afield. Eden Network positions itself as a countercultural mission movement using the language of becoming 'downwardly mobile' to describe the decisions of Eden team members to live in areas that are considered undesirable and focus their lives on coming alongside the poor rather than their own advancement (Wilson, 2012, p. 26). Given this rhetoric it is perhaps unsurprising that Eden team members are aware of and passionate about issues of social justice. James describes his involvement in Eden as: '…dedication to a group in society that society's happy to forget about…'. Eden team members most frequently use the language of transformation to describe the overcoming of what is destructive and the strengthening of the good. However, James indicates the connection in his thinking to the kingdom of God: '…the whole Bible is about transformation isn't it, it's about God calling his people to live differently, it's about God calling his people to put him first… building God's kingdom'. By conceiving his task as 'building God's kingdom' James points towards the way that a theology of the kingdom provides a different focus for his resistance and accommodation.

Bielo identifies evangelical kingdom theologies as a 'central part of the cultural logic of being missional', expressed as a desire to 'show people the kingdom', by which he understands his informants to mean to lead people to conversion (2011, p. 140). Counter to the dominance of a future-oriented kingdom theology which replaces the lost world in the evangelical missional narrative, Bielo finds that among emerging evangelicals 'the kingdom as now, not yet' is the most common, although not only, position (2011, p. 143). It is also the approach identified by Cartledge as typical of charismatic evangelicalism (2004, p. 186). Referring to Jon Bialecki's work, Bielo characterises this type of kingdom theology as the belief that the kingdom of God began to come into the world in the life and ministry of Jesus and will be fulfilled at an unknown future point when Jesus returns to the earth. This leads to a focus on the in-breaking of the kingdom in the present with an awareness that this will only be partial. While Bialecki claims this reduces the space for human agency and can lead to limited social and political engagement as Christians assume their

action can never be fully successful (2009, pp. 114-115), Bielo counters that in the experience of his informants he saw considerable social engagement, framed by the language of 'revealing' and 'modelling' the kingdom. Therefore he argues that this conception of the kingdom of God can be a motivation for direct action, although he acknowledges that the orientation of this action will be toward modelling the kingdom characterised by hope rather than expectation that the kingdom will be realised (2011, pp. 143-148).

I suggest that an evangelical theology of the kingdom as now and not yet is used in missional pastoral care as an expression of opposition to certain behaviours and aspects of culture with a positive intention to build on and with the good in others and in their communities. It would seem that Eden teams are concerned with a theology of the incoming kingdom of God rather than protecting or defining their Christian identity. Eden team member Hannah from Yorkshire describes the culture of an Eden team:

> …it's not like an organisational focus… the team is made up of a huge mix of people who come from a lot of different backgrounds and it reminds me of being on a mission campus rather than… being in a church so while you've got obstacles to overcome from that situation 'cos you've got a lot of things you think slightly differently about, it's again as a team your focus is towards the youth and not towards your theological bias, which is quite interesting.

In her description of team dynamics Hannah makes a distinction between church, in which the focus is organisational and theological biases matter, and a mission campus, in which individual and organisational biases need to be negotiated but the priority of mission overrides them. This way of thinking about her involvement in Eden, which does include membership of a local church, makes identity issues secondary to the impulse of mission. Equally Eden team members do not feel a need to protect their identity from the influence of non-Christians in the community, as Louise expressed: '…I've learned things and I really love them, like [local friend], not like your middle-classy friends but I would enjoy her company more to be honest…'. In terms of community activism Adam's reference to those

with the 'same heart' in his community above demonstrates an openness to partnership. Such openness is also evident in Pears' analysis of convictional communities, in which he identifies the relinquishing of control and the right to name initiatives in community engagement as a feature of an incarnational approach (2013, p. 104). My participants see the good they seek to build up not in terms of what they bring to the community but rather in identifying the goodness already present in the community. This approach acknowledges the initiative of God in the world and therefore prioritises aligning with and participating in his activity while resisting what is destructive of this incoming kingdom. Such a confident outward orientation is both enabled and underpinned by an adoption of *'missio Dei'* as a theological framework and by a spirituality defined by the presence of God in daily life.

Missional pastoral care as an expression of the *missio Dei*

David Bosch traces the history of '*missio Dei*' as a missiological concept, noting its emergence in the 1930s as Karl Barth and others asserted that mission is first and foremost the activity of God. Bosch summarises the development of this idea throughout the twentieth century, particularly the clarity it gained as an evolution of the classical doctrine of *missio Dei* in 1952: Not only does the Father send the Son and the Father and Son send the Spirit but the Father, Son and Holy Spirit send the church into the world (Bosch, 2011, p. 399). This continued to shape missiological thinking, producing the understanding that 'mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God'. The task of the church was perceived as finding ways to participate in the activity of God in mission. Bosch notes that this new thinking was embraced by Christians across the denominations including many evangelicals (2011, pp. 399-400). He recounts that by the 1970s *missio Dei* had become a broad and inclusive conception of mission with the activity of God including 'all people in all aspects of their existence' and understood to happen through the Spirit at work in human history, not just through the activity of the church. Bosch notes that some went beyond Barth's original intention, combining this with modernist ideas of 'human progress' and claiming that there was no role for the church in mission, as God in human history would 'articulate

114

himself' (2011, pp. 401-402). While rejecting this distortion Bosch retains the language of *missio Dei* in his 'emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm', defining it as: 'God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world and in which the church is privileged to participate' (2011, p. 10).

The concept of *missio Dei* was popularised in the work of Anglican missionary and Bishop John V. Taylor in *The Go-Between God* published in 1972. He argued that the Holy Spirit had previously been ignored in mission, leading to the kind of activism which is focused only on the agency and obligation of the Christian with an 'it all depends on me' attitude (1972, p. 3). Rather, Taylor sets out a missiology based on the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world working in three specific ways: to enable numinous experiences of awareness of an 'other' or of a 'greater whole'; to enable and require people to make personal and responsible choices and to call out of people 'self-oblation and sacrifice' (1972, p. 39).

Within evangelicalism this trend towards recognising God's positive activity in the world has been expressed in a variety of ways. For example, George Bailey seeks to articulate an evangelical contextual theology, predicated on the Methodist idea of prevenient grace. He claims that sanctification cannot mean being cut off from the world as the Spirit is at work in the world bringing about salvation; rather it must involve 'the transformation of our relation to contextual experience'. He concludes that: 'the way we perceive the context within which we seek to exercise righteousness and true holiness is transformed by the renewal of the Holy Spirit'. It is through increased understanding that we are transformed in relationship to others and to the world. Bailey's use of prevenient grace as a framework enables a similar acknowledgement of God's activity in the world, albeit with the focus on conviction and salvation, although it does allow him to go so far as to propose that non-Christians are enabled to resist sin through the work of the Spirit (2010, pp. 66-70).

While prevenient grace is one possible route towards an affirmation of context within evangelical theology, others, particularly within the Emerging and missional

church movement studied by Bielo, have drawn more explicitly on the idea of the *missio Dei*. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch state that they seek to recover the '*missio Dei* – the redemptive mission of God to the whole world through the work of his Messiah' for the contemporary church (2013, p. 30). They acknowledge that mission is the 'very heartbeat and work of God' (Frost & Hirsch, 2013, p. 34) and in describing an example of a missional church they write: 'they make the assumption that God is already present and already touching people's lives' (2013, p. 41). This shift toward *missio Dei* theology within evangelical missiology has begun to influence the thinking of the Eden Network throughout the past ten years, shaping the development of missional pastoral care.

In the seven years between Wilson's two publications *missio Dei* was adopted as a theological emphasis within the Eden Network, fuelled by and informing the practice of Eden teams. In Wilson's 2005 book *Eden: Called to the Streets*, he draws on Frost and Hirsch in relation to models of church, but there is little reference to ideas resonant of *missio Dei*. But by 2012, in *Concrete Faith* Wilson explicitly refers to *missio Dei*, describing it as: 'the branch of theology that traces the initiative for mission back to the Trinity: God's inner life of love is overflowing toward the world, and he invites us to participate in what he's already doing' (2012, p. 137). This appropriation of the *missio Dei* concerns the nature of church as essentially missional reflecting the influence of the missional church movement and that of David Bosch whom Wilson quotes as an introduction to a chapter on the development of new Eden teams:

> There is a church because there is a mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love towards people, since God is a fountain of sending love. David Bosch. (as cited in Wilson, 2012, p. 89)

This use of Bosch indicates Wilson's awareness of the activity of God in the world aside from the activity of the church. In a discussion of relocation he writes: 'We invariably find that God has been working by his Spirit preparing the heart of a key local resident long before we ever arrived' (2012, p. 123). In 2005 *missio Dei* did not feature in the theological framework of Eden teams, but by 2012 it is central, based

on the experiences of team members discovering God already at work in their communities.

The Eden team members among my participants did not explicitly use the language of *missio Dei*. However, their assumptions were that God the Holy Spirit is at work in their communities outside of their efforts. Louise referred to a woman from her estate seeking her out to ask about church: '…obviously God was doing something in her, his Spirit was moving in [name]…'. The adoption of *missio Dei* language by leaders such as Wilson within the Eden Network has given a theological rationale for the urban experience of Eden teams, underpinning their affirmation of the world and the self as sites of God's activity. This has enabled the distinctive character of missional pastoral care to emerge and frames the sense in which missional pastoral care is mission, activity which is understood to enact the mission of God.

Bosch uses *missio Dei* to develop his missiology as the 'church-in-mission' (2011, p. 13). He sees mission primarily as the activity of God in the world in which the church participates, acting to address 'injustice, oppression, poverty, discrimination and violence.' (Bosch, 2011, p. 11). For Bosch the 'missionary task is as broad as the whole of human life', and it is false to 'divorce the spiritual or the personal sphere from the material and the social' (2011, p. 10). This mission necessarily includes evangelism, a proclamation of salvation and call to conversion for those who don't believe (2011, p. 11).

Missional pastoral care has more in common with Bosch's formulation than with the conventional evangelical missional narrative. Eden team member Michael offers his thoughts on the outcomes he would like to see in his community, demonstrating the shifts within his own thinking to a missiology more reflective of Bosch:

> I supposed the first one has to be getting saved but other things spring to mind things like healings, just realising that people are loved by God, answered prayer, I wouldn't have said this in the past but I think now community transformation is what we want to see.

Bosch's model also emphasises an orientation toward the kingdom of God rather than toward the church (2011, p. 387). *Missio Dei* takes the focus away from the activity and structures of the church and places it on the activity of God in the world. Additionally it places the initiative and activism of Christians relative to the initiative and activity of God who goes before. These features of *missio Dei* missiology can help explain the relative lack of concern for identity in missional pastoral care. The priority given by Eden teams to the kingdom of God, conceived as aligning themselves with the good activity of God in the world, above a concern for their own Christian distinctiveness, is therefore a consequence of a *missio Dei* theology in which God is at work in his world and the task of Christians is not to defend or protect a fragile identity but to join God in his transformative task.

This use of *missio Dei* theology in missional pastoral care might lead some to argue that in their affirmation of the world Eden teams are conflating human efforts with God's initiative, a resurgence of the idea of 'progress'. The urban context of missional pastoral care prevents this extreme optimism as the systemic injustice and brokenness of human society is evident daily in the lives of those in marginalised communities. Remaining rooted in urban experience maintains the balance of aligning with God's work in the world while resisting that which is destructive of the coming kingdom.

Taking into account the commonalities between Bosch's missiology and missional pastoral care I would nevertheless assert that missional pastoral care is not simply a practical application of Bosch's missiology. In its attention to the mutual remaking of meaning-systems it goes beyond Bosch's expectations for missional practice, exploring a place for pastoral care in mission. I will consider the connection between mission and pastoral care further in my conclusion, but here I turn to the charismatic evangelical spirituality which has developed among my research participants.

A sustaining spirituality

Commentators on evangelicalism note the dynamic and affective nature of the tradition which requires that the evangelical Christian engages with their faith in

the issues and tasks of everyday life. Ian Randall defines evangelical spirituality as encompassing lived experience: 'concerned with the conjunction of theology, communion with God and practical Christianity' (1999, p. 2). I use spirituality to describe the everyday practices and theological convictions that frame the experience of missional pastoral care and facilitate its meaning-making processes. Eden team member Michael referred to a conversation with an old friend as significant in his own spiritual journey. He told his friend about all that he had been doing in his community, having been on the Eden team for a number of years:

> …and he just listened and was very interested but then he just said to me "and how is your relationship with Jesus doing?" and it was a bit like phew, I knew exactly what he was saying because you cannot continue to just give out and give out without also having that ongoing kind of intimate relationship with God.

Michael went on to explain the way he now thinks about his spirituality as comprising both mission and prayerfulness. He described an initiative his team did in their community saying: '…that came from just a prayerful heart so, you know, [prayer] inspires mission and mission drives us back to prayer and in it we have got to be growing as disciples…'. Michael's reflections indicate that a form of spirituality has developed alongside missional pastoral care which sustains its practices. This spirituality is defined by the presence, goodness and involvement of God and combines three related elements: a particular relation to experience created by the interplay of charismatic evangelicalism and *missio Dei* theology; engagement with the Bible as a meaning-making authority; and a dynamism which anticipates that something will happen.

Defined by the presence and involvement of a good God

The spirituality of Eden teams is defined by the conviction that God is involved in their daily lives and the communities in which they live. Team member Adam articulated it this way:

> …there isn't one situation that's going on that God doesn't know about or God can't sort out, and it's just having, you know, when you're faced with a

situation it's having the faith that God is above it and that God can work us through the situation to see things change and to see things transform.

Adam's explanation shows how his spirituality helps him navigate the vulnerability produced by missional pastoral care. His belief in the presence and assistance of God enables Adam to retain hope and expectation for change. This connection between God's presence and the potential for change is also picked up by Eden team member Hannah who said: '...there's no way we would be here if it wasn't for God and there's no way that anybody on the estate would be transformed at all really...'. Community members, such as sixteen-year-old Jack, also demonstrated this awareness:

> I think that the way I've learnt about God, he's there and every aspect of your life that changes it's got God somewhere in there, even if it's you learning about God or God changing you, it's got God in there somewhere whether you realise it or not.

To community member Kevin, God was present as a listener, he described the way in which his spirituality was developing in prayer:

> ...you know you can pray to God and, God'll take your problems, all day long... anytime I've got like, problems or issues I just pray about it and after I prayed about it you know it feels like another weight lifted off my shoulders...

For community members as well as Eden team members involved in missional pastoral care, God is present and active impacting everyday life.

The defining role of God's active presence in the spirituality of missional pastoral care can be seen as typical of charismatic evangelicalism (Cartledge, 2004, p. 180). It may also be possible to say that this charismatic predisposition made the adoption of *missio Dei* theology more likely. Wilson not only acknowledges that God goes before Eden teams in their communities, he also stresses the importance of prayer and discernment in identifying where God is at work (2012, p. 123). Charismatic listening to the Holy Spirit in prayer and *missio Dei* theology come together in the understanding of the Eden Network to enable mission. Therefore,

missio Dei provides a framework for Eden team members to interpret their daily engagement with God by the Holy Spirit, perceiving God at work and seeing the values of the kingdom of God expressed in their urban communities.

Experience as a spiritual resource

A sacramental view of experience has emerged in missional pastoral care as a result of the combination of a charismatic expectation of God's involvement and a *missio Dei* conviction that God is at work in the world asking us to join him in his mission. Religious experience within evangelicalism is understood primarily in terms of conversion and subsequent life change (Bebbington, 1989, p. 20; Luhrmann, 2004, pp. 519-520). The expectation of tangible and transformative conversion validates experience as a site of God's action, although the relation of evangelicals to experience is also conflicted (Strhan, 2013, pp. 234-235). The scientific materialism of the Enlightenment turned attention toward material and phenomenological evidence as a part of articulating faith, while also bringing a rational and cerebral approach (Bebbington, 1989, p. 57; Bosch, 2011, p. 275). Later influences from Romanticism prioritised intuition and feeling, bringing a supernatural element to evangelicalism which was contested across the tradition (Bebbington, 1989, p. 81). These twin threads of rational empiricism, in which experience is seen as evidence for faith but only where it aligns with a conservative reading of the Bible; and intuitive supernaturalism, which looks for God's activity in emotive, internal and external experiences, pervade contemporary evangelicalism, broadly mapping onto Warner's categorisation of biblicist-crucicentrist and conversionist-activist evangelicals (2007, p. 20). Falling into the conversionist-activist category, evangelicals embracing the charismatic movement from the mid-twentieth century continued the intuitive supernatural trend, developing a 'subjective life' spirituality which 'celebrates personal experience as a site of spiritual significance' (Guest, 2007, p. 105).

My participants exemplify this use of experience in their spirituality. Eden team members in particular described the ways in which God, through their experience

of living in an urban community, had changed them. Eden team member Sally has been in her community in Greater Manchester for ten years:

> I think I would say that I'm a lot more understanding of the situations that people find themselves in… God's just really enabled me to see that there's so many complexities to life that mean that people find themselves in these situations and actually you just need to get alongside them and just understand that and then find a way to help them to help themselves rather than just being impatient… So I think God's really softened me around the edges with that.

Both personally and in ministry, Eden team members have allowed their experiences, understood as the activity of God, to generate insight, including theological insight. Hannah describes the evolving nature of her theology:

> I think one key thing that has changed is the way that I think about the gospel actually, it's evolving still. …there's a traditional church way of preaching the gospel, that you have to acknowledge that you're a sinner and that you repent and that you come to God and you believe and then you're baptised… while that's true I think that round here it's very interesting that there's a lot of people who are in certain lifestyle habits… I don't say this lightly… But not necessarily of their own volition… they really don't know anything else or they've not seen anything else modelled, and they've got very low self-esteem some of them, and to come along and say that you're a sinner isn't necessarily the most helpful to them, so instead of really looking at the behaviours and trying to say look, this is how God wants you to behave, I'm slowly thinking about some of the ways other people do it and it's basically showing God's love and his acceptance and that he is for them first and realising that Jesus really does love the sinner.

Hannah's account indicates the extent to which experience is allowed to shape belief. This is an extension of the role of experience in missional pastoral care practice in which making and re-making meaning-systems takes place through actions and practice: the experiences of daily life. Crites argues that experience is

always expressed in narrative form as we recollect our memories and in the process reorder them into a coherent story (1971, pp. 299-300). Due to this narrative quality, Crites concludes that experience has the potential to undermine previously held sacred stories, he says: 'a conversion or a social revolution that actually transforms consciousness requires a traumatic change in a man's [sic] story' (1971, pp. 304-307). It follows that experience in missional pastoral care is a source of meaning, contributing to the shaping and re-shaping of life narratives.

There is however, complexity in the spirituality of Eden team members. Michael describes a conversation he had with another Eden team member who articulated the changes they had seen in their theology:

> ...of course we grow as Christians and we are challenged by what we experience and what we see and there will be some shifts along the way... [but] I think it can send somebody down the road towards... some kind of error if we start sort of muddying it by thinking that our own or their experience is somehow that deep that they change everything, they don't, they just don't.

This demonstrates the tentative nature of missional pastoral care. Michael acknowledges a degree of learning from experience although he has also placed limitations on what experience can bring. While this new spirituality is emerging and complex, it is evident that for the majority of my participants, experience is not only significant as a spiritual resource but also authoritative in that it is perceived as encounter with the active presence of God in the world. Experience has become sacramental, a locus of meeting with God. This compliments the contextual approach of urban theologians such as Green, who proposes his 'urban sacramentalism' as the way in which his Christian theology and his urban experience combine to enable a richer encounter with God (2009, p. 161).

Through their own spirituality Eden team members draw attention to the sacramental quality of experience in their communities, inviting recognition of God at work. Gerkin suggests that pastoral counselling involves both facilitation and recognition; facilitation of the hermeneutical process of evaluating and re-making

meaning, and recognition, calling the care-seeker's attention to the Spirit at work (1984, p. 71). The spirituality which sustains missional pastoral care enables this recognition, making the sharing of spiritual insight derived from experience a way in which the Christian narrative features in the activity of hermeneutical play. This differs from the emerging evangelical focus on 'revealing' the kingdom of God identified by Bielo (2011, p. 144) in that it does not serve the sole purpose of evangelism and the mutuality of relationships in missional pastoral care mean that Eden team members do not claim expert status, as one Eden team member described it: '…realising that actually sometimes you're better than me, and you really get that about God and I never really understood that before' (Thompson, 2012, p. 56). In missional pastoral care the language of 'pointing out', or 'calling attention to' more accurately describes the activity of Eden team members. Their assumption is that God is already at work, the kingdom is already coming in their community and in those around them, and so their task is simply to draw attention to this fact where it is not yet acknowledged.

A biblical hermeneutic

Eden team members have been inspired by the biblical narrative and understand particular biblical passages as applicable to their own situation. This invites consideration of what Bielo articulates as 'the relationship between biblical texts and communities of practice' (2009, p. 2) in missional pastoral care. When asked to recall passages of scripture which relate to transformation for her, Eden team member Hannah responded: 'I think the Eden Bible verses really'. Equally, Eden team member Dan said: '…there's the ones that we always put up about Eden'. Hannah and Dan were referring to Bible passages which have been used consistently by the Eden Network throughout its history and may be understood as the 'Eden canon'. The hermeneutical approach taken by the Eden Network in its canonical verses indicates a conviction that the story of God's interaction with the world begun in the Bible continues in the lives of contemporary Christians fuelled by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 37:5-6 and Isaiah 43:18-21 were influential as the idea for the Eden Network was formed among leaders of The Message Trust. As discussed in chapter 2 they articulate the assumptions which shaped the Eden model and

124

demonstrate the presence of the evangelical missional narrative. During the Network's history other biblical texts have been added to this canon, demonstrating the shifts in thought and practice at the level of corporate discourse. For example, 1 Thessalonians 2:8 has become a signifier for the practice of Eden teams, demonstrating the broadening of their task from conversion to the ministry I have described as missional pastoral care: 'Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well' (1 Thessalonians 2:8, New International Version).

The charismatic nature of the Eden Network also fuels its use of the Bible. Ezekiel 37:1-10, the story of the Valley of Dry Bones, was incorporated into the Eden canon when it was shared by an Eden team member during a worship service at a Network weekend away in 2005, representing the typically evangelical 'full sensory experience of the Word' (Engelke, 2013, p. 9). It was offered and received as the word of God to Eden teams in their current situation of urban ministry as much as a narrative from scripture. While the passage from 1 Thessalonians describes more accurately the changing shape of the Eden Network's ministry, the story of Ezekiel standing among dry bones and asking God 'can these bones live?' reflects the sense of ambiguity and loss experienced by Eden team members in their emerging missional pastoral care ministry. The passage ends with the dry bones coming to life through the combined activity of Ezekiel, who is instructed to speak to the bones, and the Holy Spirit who instructs Ezekiel and breathes on the bones, bringing them to life. This is a powerful illustration of the relationship Eden teams perceive between God, his initiative in the world and their action. God by his Spirit initiates the action in the story, with Ezekiel perceiving God's activity and participating as he is instructed. This is resonant of the *missio Dei* theology beginning to influence the Network at this time.

Bible reading in the spirituality of missional pastoral care is for action and alongside experience. Bialecki considers the 'prophetic' use of scripture in charismatic Christianity as 'dialogue', an 'intimate' exchange between the 'ultimate author and the reader' (2009, pp. 143-151). This dialectic is demonstrated in the account of Ezekiel 37 described above but it is also part of the daily lives of Eden team

members becoming a less ritualised and often incremental process. Eden team members demonstrate engagement with the Bible in the light of their experience which takes them beyond the Eden canon. Eden team member Michael explains the way his approach to the Bible has changed:

> …when I used to think about things like love your neighbour, just a simple, you know, the second greatest commandment in the Bible, I always thought of that in abstract terms because I didn't really know the people next door. …in that sense was quite a classic middle-class kid and the thing about Eden is that moving into one neighbourhood where people don't have cars and they don't commute to church and they can't drive round the country to see an extended network of friends and family easily and they are quite tied to one geography, one location, it kind of taught me that loving your neighbour is abstract but it is also literal and it is probably literal first before it is everything else. …it is so obvious [but] when you come from a background like I do you miss it…

Michael's account may be seen as the earthing of the Bible in daily life. His realisation was that the Bible contains insight and instruction concerning real, current, daily experience. This shows the way in which experience and the Bible function together as sources for theological reflection: God's active presence in experience allows for dialogue, in which different readings of the Bible come to the fore.

This is especially marked in the recurrence of one biblical text multiple times in the course of my research. Several Eden team members referred to the parable of the sower, Mark 4:1-20, as a metaphor for their mission. In this parable Jesus describes God as a sower and the gospel as seed which falls on a variety of grounds, Eden team member Dan used this passage to explain the nature of his ministry:

> …a lot of Eden projects people've made commitments and then fallen off and come back and stuff like that but… when people in the long run, they might struggle with stuff but they slowly get their head around stuff you know that they're more likely to carry on with it because they've took the

time… and it's not been a split, an instant decision and after ten minutes or so or a few days, weeks or months they go back. It's like that parable in the Bible where you sow the seeds and that's all about… people's reactions to the gospel… basic reaction that a Christian makes where the seed falls and roots grow up and not where they just have a quick reaction "that's amazing" and then go nowhere or where they just concentrate on the worries of the world or whatever and just get stressed out and just forget about God.

The picture of ministry created in this passage contrasts with the Eden canon image from Isaiah 43:19 of 'streams in the wasteland', in which God changes the situation quickly and dramatically. Theological reflection on both experience and scripture has led Eden team members to question the appropriateness of earlier elements of the Eden canon in the light of the revelation of God in their experiences and led them to draw on other resources from within the biblical narrative. This can be understood as a 'failure of meaning' in that the scripture which was initially meaningful for Eden teams has become problematic as a result of their experience (Engelke & Tomlinson, 2006, p. 1). For Engelke and Tomlinson this highlights the 'limits of meaning', acknowledging it as 'a process and potential fraught with uncertainty' rather than a 'product to be uncovered' (2006, p. 2). Bielo notes this dynamic in his analysis of evangelical group Bible study, concluding that meaning is found not in the conclusions reached but in the *process* of conversation (2008, p. 18). I extend Bielo's application of Engelke and Tomlinson beyond a specific Bible study conversation to the whole-life setting of missional pastoral care. The Bible contributes to the dialectical process of hermeneutical play in missional pastoral care as Eden team members have their meaning-systems challenged through the interaction of the Bible with their experience over time. More implicitly the biblical narrative also becomes an aspect of the parabolic encounter with community members, informing missional pastoral care relationships.

Community members also see themselves as a part of the biblical narrative, although they differ from Eden team members in that they frequently draw on future-oriented Bible passages, indicating their different experience of missional

pastoral care. While community member participants were all exposed to the Bible to some degree, even if just to its shaping role in the lives of Eden team members, they related to it from a very different starting place, especially as they varied in their degree of interest in or commitment to Christian faith. Among those who did self-identify as Christian, while some had had experiences of church attendance in the past none had engaged with the evangelical tradition either in a local church or in the wider subculture to the same degree as Eden team members. Equally they were not exposed to the Eden canon in the same way as Eden team members. Their use of the Bible demonstrates the influence of Eden team members as they also related the Bible to their own life narrative, as David, in his twenties and from Greater Manchester demonstrates: '…the whole of Psalm 139 for me as well, the fact that it says time and time again God knows you, he knows where you are, and he'll never abandon you…'.

The frequent mention of future-oriented Bible passages by community members was striking in contrast with the more immediate use of scripture by Eden team members. I suggest this is illustrative of the different responses of these two groups to missional pastoral care. Community members Helen and David both referred to this passage:

> …Jeremiah 29 verse 11 it says, "for I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future", …I used to always cry when I read it because I used to think, you know, that God has got something for me… I used to hold onto that verse… (Helen)

This future orientation among community members echoes their experience of the long-term and consistent character of missional pastoral care. It also highlights their understanding of the complex good that missional pastoral care produces, that change is ambiguous, involving loss. Helen's description of 'holding on' to verses in Jeremiah as a source of hope can be seen as an expression of her 'eschatological self' in which she holds together both the flourishing and the ongoing ambiguity resulting from missional pastoral care in an understanding of God's incoming kingdom in her life. Eden team members did not refer to passages with the same

future orientation, perhaps indicating their struggle with the long-term and ambiguous nature of their ministry. Rather, as seen in references to the parable of the sower above, they focus on the initiative of God as the sower as an explanation for the sense of *not enough* in the complex good of missional pastoral care, as Dan concludes: 'God wants to show his love and break through into people but it doesn't take ten minutes, it takes a lifetime…'. My participants interact with the Bible as an aspect of the ongoing reshaping of their meaning-systems, finding both affirmation and ambiguity in their relation with scripture. This search for meaning is consistently a part of ongoing personal communication with God, a conception of the charismatic 'presence' which enables dialogue (Bialecki, 2009, p. 154).

Something will happen

The final element of the spirituality which sustains missional pastoral care is dynamism, the conviction that *something* will happen. This may be understood as heightened expectation characteristic of late twentieth century charismatic evangelical activism (Warner, 2007, p. 41); however, the focus of activism on daily micro-practices in the context of the active presence of God gives this dynamism a different character.

Firstly, it is dynamism without necessarily knowing the outcome. The complex good of missional pastoral care has been unexpected, leading to a willingness among Eden team members to admit that they do not always know what will happen as a result of their mission. Adam described an encounter with one of the young people from their youth group and his mum who had been unable to sleep due to a fear that there was a ghost in their house:

> We don't know to this day if there was a ghost but the point is this lady and her son were petrified of being in the house on their own so we just explained a little bit about the gospel and about God and that God's more powerful than ghosts that are freaking you out, …we prayed and there wasn't any driving out of demons in the name of Jesus it was just a gentle prayer of: God, what isn't of you would you remove from the house and replace it with your peace and your love, and we saw the women a couple

of days later and she had slept every night since and she felt peaceful… So again I don't know if there were ghosts but God did something that night because something, the atmosphere in the house changed.

This is typical of the ambiguous and open-ended relationships of missional pastoral care in which significant instances occur in the context of ongoing relationships without a sense of where they might lead.

Secondly, despite the unpredictability of what may happen, as a result of a theology of God's good and active presence in the world and in them, working through the Bible and their experience, Eden team members are able to demonstrate confident expectation that God will act even when it is not foreseen or understood. Louise articulates another open-ended story which is shaped by her confidence in God:

> …like [name] who was on heroin, I have talked about God and I've prayed with her and stuff and we have had some experience of God together, but she has never fully, you know, I don't know where she is with God but she has obviously not walked into the fullness of it and we've not seen that transformation in her life but I am sure anything is possible.

Confidence in God's activism leads to team members understanding their practice as participation in God's action, their expectation that something will happen being based on the prior work of God. The resultant 'micro-practices' are also shared by community members as they take new action in the light of their raised awareness of God's presence:

> …every night before I go to sleep I pray now… I pray for certain very vulnerable people on here [the estate], there's some very vulnerable families and little kids on here and its awful… so yes it's like all of a sudden instead of the focus being on me and my children, which is my priority at the end of the day, it's widened my horizons to the larger community…
> (Margaret, community member, Yorkshire)

This dynamic spirituality contains a degree of uncertainty, is characterised by a confidence in God's active presence and is embodied in daily practices which contribute toward hermeneutical play. Among Eden team members and community

members, with varying degrees of awareness of God, daily decisions are taken to align themselves with the good, God's activity, in their lives and in their communities, trusting that in doing so something will happen. As Eden team member Sally described it: 'God is just constantly changing things isn't he. ...the journey's constantly changing, I think that's what makes it so exciting'.

The shape of this spirituality – defined by the active presence of God and characterised by dynamism, a biblical hermeneutic and the use of experience as a spiritual resource, sustains missional pastoral care practice. It contributes to the distinctive charismatic evangelical character of this model by enabling new theology and new practice in urban communities.

Moving toward a new evangelical missional narrative

My research suggests that the dominant evangelical missional narrative is not helpful to, or representative of, the urban mission practice of my participants. Instead missional pastoral care and the spirituality which has developed to sustain it represents participants' responses to their urban experience in the form of a new theological paradigm outlined in this chapter. This is rooted in their evangelical tradition but draws on the Christian tradition and scripture more broadly and is fuelled by their engagement with the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. The following summary of the theological paradigm of missional pastoral care highlights its potential to resource a new evangelical missional narrative that is representative of the lived experience of the evangelicals in my study, providing a more fitting basis for contemporary evangelical missional practice.

Rather than the lost world of the evangelical missional narrative, missional pastoral care as a model of mission is predicated on the conviction that God is at work in the world. This activity of God is expressed in the adoption of *missio Dei* theology which understands God's activity in the world to be at his own initiative, part of his own character. It is therefore not dependent on the activity of the church; rather, God's activity prefigures that of the church and God invites the church to join him in the world. This is combined with a charismatic engagement with the Holy Spirit in daily life. These two senses in which God is at work in the world have specific

implications for missional practice seen in missional pastoral care. Firstly, the activism of the church is relative to the activism of God; mission does not depend on the action of Christians. Secondly, both the world and the non-Christian self are affirmed as spheres of the activity of God. Finally, the need to protect Christian identity from the influence of the world is removed, allowing for a focus on discerning and aligning with the activity of God, his incoming kingdom.

In this paradigm the Bible is a founding story in which it is possible to learn the ways that God acts in the world. It is an authoritative source for theological reflection, including the challenge to meaning-systems involved in hermeneutical play, and is read for action and alongside experience. In its stories of Jesus' life, death and resurrection the Bible provides a pattern for life in the world which the church can imitate. As the church follows Jesus it finds itself in the Bible and continues to embody the story of God which is begun in scripture. Furthermore, in missional pastoral care God, as the Holy Spirit, is encountered in people's everyday experience. Rather than limiting spiritual experience to a sign of conversion or ecstatic experiences in charismatic worship, in this paradigm ordinary life experience is sacramental, a means by which God speaks and acts. Therefore experience has a role alongside the Bible in theological reflection and as a part of meaning-making in hermeneutical play.

The conversionist salvation plan of traditional evangelicalism is reframed within missional pastoral care as mutual transformation through relationship with the 'other'. Difference is foundational to the task of meaning-making in missional pastoral care. My participants have entered into long-term and significant relationships with 'others' which are embodied in the daily interactions and micro-processes of their lives. Both parties are changed in the course of the relationship creating a kind of flourishing, which can be understood as the presence of the incoming kingdom of God. In this paradigm, missional practice is shaped by the acknowledgement of our own need for transformation alongside the desire for the transformation of others. The alignment with the kingdom of God is a process in the lives of those involved in mission as well as in those they seek to come alongside.

A new evangelical missional narrative might be further shaped by a recognisably charismatic evangelical theology of the kingdom of God as now and not yet, elevating its importance above issues of evangelical identity. The kingdom of God articulates the aim and nature of the activity and presence of God in the world and therefore the end to which missional pastoral care is oriented. While retaining this kingdom theology, the paradigm of missional pastoral care adds nuance derived from urban experience. The complex good of missional pastoral care demonstrates that the coming of the kingdom necessarily involves loss and complexity in the reshaping of meaning-systems. Furthermore, it shows the incompleteness of the kingdom of God. In the light of this fuller understanding of the ambiguity of the coming kingdom, missional pastoral care retains the conviction that by God's involvement and our cooperation something good, if incremental, messy and complex, will happen.

Missional pastoral care constitutes an innovation within contemporary charismatic evangelicalism. While retaining the core priorities of evangelicalism it nuances and extends them in response to urban experience and is characterised by a lack of concern for its own identity instead prioritising alignment with the kingdom of God in the world. As a result, I suggest that this emerging model of mission contains a theological paradigm which can resource a new evangelical missional narrative. This research has sought to identify, define and qualify missional pastoral care as the model of mission evident among Eden team members and their communities. Having developed my thesis in the preceding chapters, in my conclusion I consider the achievements and limitations of this project and the implications of missional pastoral care for evangelical identity, mission and pastoral care.

Conclusion: *Of what use is missional pastoral care?*

In this thesis I have identified the way that ideas of mission and pastoral care blend in the practices of my participants. Missiology and pastoral care as disciplines rarely interact, calling for further consideration of the relationship between them. In 2008 Pattison argued that pastoral care had become individualised, privatised, passive and problem-focused due to shifting emphases within the church from pastoral care to mission, neglecting the holistic understanding of pastoral care which, he suggests, is integral to the mission of God (2008, pp. 8-9). This was endorsed by Horder who asserted that the centrality of pastoral care in mission requires the whole Christian community becoming pastoral carers and intentionally engaging in friendship as 'an "ordinary" every day, every Christian pastoral caring' (2009, pp. 291-292). Within evangelical missiology though, pastoral care is given little attention. Debates concerning the role of social action in mission focus on establishing the holistic nature of mission (Bosch, 2011, p. 10), while in practice risk the instrumentalisation of care (Andrews, 2009, pp. 15-20). My research provides a space in which the practical relation of mission and pastoral care can be explored. In this concluding chapter I examine the significance of missional pastoral care as theory and practice, testing the concept as a contribution to debates within pastoral care, evangelical identity and missional practice.

<u>Summary</u>

This project began with a *pastoral* question set in the context of urban *mission*. My concern in approaching the research was to respond to the sense of dissonance felt by Eden team members as their experiences of mission did not match their expectations. As an insider to the Eden Network I framed my questions using the corporate discourse of transformation, seeking to discover what constituted transformation in the context of Eden's ministry and what kind of ministry best enabled this outcome. The process of hearing my participants' stories and reflecting on their experiences of undertaking and receiving ministry led me to look beyond missiology, into pastoral care, in which Charles Gerkin was also concerned with transformation and 'the problem of change' (1984, p. 34). The development of

missional pastoral care as a concept has been a direct response to the lived experience of my participants who, while understanding their activity as mission, also demonstrated the meaning-making dynamics of hermeneutical play. Reflecting on my early questions I now see them as a desire to understand the nature of the ministry occurring among Eden teams and their communities, and to examine whether and how it is effective.

This research has shown that Eden team members and community members have cultivated a mode of missional living characterised by the parabolic subversion and reconstruction of meaning-systems. The constituent elements of difference, locality, availability, practicality, long-term commitment, consistency and love give shape to the lives of Eden teams and enable the meaning-making process. This results in a complex good comprising a kind of flourishing, characterised by raised self-esteem, making more positive life choices with an increased ability to act, heightened awareness of a good God and mutuality, as well as vulnerability, ambiguity and loss. Missional pastoral care represents a new form of contemporary evangelicalism in that it prioritises aligning with the incoming kingdom of God above concern for protecting evangelical identity. I suggest that these findings make sense of the experiences of Eden teams articulating the distinctive model of mission emerging in their practice.

Evaluating the significance of missional pastoral care

Pastoral care

I have focused on Gerkin as representative of the pastoral care tradition in this research due to his influential role within the field and the distinctive elements of his pastoral care model: narrative, meaning-making and transformation. His work is reflective of the priorities and activity of Eden teams in that it outlines an intentional way to help others into life change derived from the Christian narrative and directed toward the purpose of transformation. Gerkin's hermeneutical play illuminates the stories of my participants, showing how the coming together of different worldviews in the context of affirming relationships can bring about change. My research positions pastoral care as the substance of the mission of God,

addressing three key issues within pastoral care. The centrality of meaning-making to pastoral care enables it to move beyond problem-centredness; the setting of care directly within the relationships and social forces which influence a person's life prevents pastoral care from remaining individualistic and introverted; and the integration of faith-sharing with pastoral care offers an indication of the role of pastoral concern as part of holistic mission.

Missional pastoral care suggests that the primary nature of pastoral care is meaning-making in the light of the Christian narrative. The psychotherapeutic paradigm within pastoral care is by nature problem-centred which, as Eric Stoddart argues, is inadequate as contemporary people often seek support for self-development rather than simply to resolve distress. He proposes spiritual formation as a resource for pastoral care because it focuses on the personal narrative, embedded in social structures and seeking to grow (2012, pp. 331-332). The emphasis on meaning-making and the everyday nature of missional pastoral care allows it to respond to both developmental care needs and specific problems. Challenging meaning-systems enables personal growth as well as enabling problematic meanings to be evaluated and reshaped. Such relationships are flexible depending on the situation of both parties, making them effective in promoting development in the lives of people who may not have sought specific support unless in a time of crisis – and, when difficulties occur, a relationship is already in place providing a starting point for accessing appropriate support.

The practice of missional pastoral care situates care in the midst of daily life. Individualisation and privatisation in pastoral care has been challenged to take account of the multiple social and political contexts which impact personal life narratives; resonating with Bonnie Miller-McLemore's 'living human document within the web' (2008, p. 4; Brown, 2012, p. 119). Missional pastoral care achieves this by means of regular participation in the lives of others in the community. Eden team members may accompany someone to an appointment, assist with completing benefits forms or get involved with others to campaign about a local issue. In this way care is offered as a participant, and often a co-recipient, of the social and political factors making up the web of a person's life. This research

advocates and provides a worked example of a community-based, whole-life, practice-oriented and mutual pastoral care model along the lines of that advocated by SteinhoffSmith (1995, pp. 149-150) and Horder (2009, pp. 291-292). It repositions pastoral care as a form of Christian ministry in contemporary society, moving away from a professionalised, counselling-oriented and church-based service for Christians to something much more foundational to the life and mission of the community of faith and its relation to the world.

My model demonstrates the integration of faith-sharing and pastoral care within missional pastoral activity in that life narratives, including beliefs about ultimate concerns, are shared as a part of hermeneutical play. *Missio Dei* theology asserts God's prior activity in the world which is perceived through discerning reflection on experience. The aim to align with God's activity, understood as the incoming kingdom, allows for outcomes to be understood as flourishing, rather than a narrow focus on conversion. Therefore meaning-making, undertaken in order to align more closely with the incoming kingdom of God in the world and in the self, becomes the primary focus of mission. Integrating faith-sharing and pastoral care in relationships of parabolic meaning-making prevents the categorisation of pastoral care as 'needs-meeting' or its instrumentalisation i.e. serving the end of evangelism. Rather the separation of mission and pastoral care becomes unhelpful and an understanding of pastoral care as meaning-making is shown to be the very substance of God's activity, his mission, in the Christian and the non-Christian.

This invites consideration of the place of expertise in pastoral care as my model would appear to reject the professional pastoral counsellor in favour of lay, friendship-oriented care. It is a limitation of this thesis that a fuller exploration of the different modes of pastoral care has not been undertaken, and my research does not preclude a place for professional Christian counsellors. But it makes a different point: that while expertise may be drawn on occasionally, what is needful is regular and mutual relationships in which the ongoing task of meaning-making can be worked out in daily life. While this study focuses specifically on evangelical approaches to urban communities, my work indicates that pastoral care may be being conducted in creative ways and conceptualised as mission by other missional

practitioners. This project thus invites further research into the integration of mission and pastoral care in different contexts and begins to articulate a robust conception of pastoral care as a part of the mission of God.

Evangelical identity

Narrative approaches enable the complexity of lived religious identities to critique overarching categorisations, showing how religious identities are embodied and what kinds of paradigms and practices they generate (Ganzevoort, 2011, p. 223). Missional pastoral care is the product of a narrative approach to evangelical identity. It has been developed by considering the received narratives of my participants in the light of personal stories of ministry practice from both practitioners and recipients of mission. Having demonstrated the creativity and vitality of missional pastoral care as a move beyond the evangelical missional narrative throughout my thesis, in chapter 5 I return to assert that it is an expression of charismatic evangelicalism. Given the radical potential of missional pastoral care it could be argued that acknowledging its independence from evangelicalism, rather than restating this connection, would allow this emerging model to flourish more fully. Its emphasis on incarnation, the life of Jesus and holistic salvation might indicate a leaning toward a traditional 'liberal emphasis' in urban theology (Kuhrt, 2010, p. 19). While the theological framework of missional pastoral care challenges evangelical theology in its engagement with context and the other, in many ways it can be seen as reflective of an accepted charismatic evangelical theology. To be true to the convictions of my participants, missional pastoral care as a model must be seen as broadly emphasising evangelical priorities. Nevertheless, it does challenge conceptions of evangelical identity and gives an account of four distinctive features of the evangelical identity of Eden teams in contrast with other contemporary expressions of evangelical Christianity: connection as motivation, a contextual approach, a practical theological paradigm and a kingdom identity.

Firstly, as a missional and progressive form of evangelicalism missional pastoral care may be seen as an example of Bielo's emerging evangelicalism. However, it has its

origins not in a desire for cultural critique, as is the motivation of Bielo's informants (2011, p. 197), but rather in the practice of living and participating in urban communities; for my participants the desire is for connection with the urban 'other'. Secondly given that it has arisen through an engagement with the urban, missional pastoral care might be considered an instance of evangelical urban theology. The distinctiveness of the urban context in its marginalisation, vulnerability and embodiment has created the conditions for the emergence of missional pastoral care. But rather than simply advocating a response to issues in the urban context, it adopts a positive view of the world and the self as the site of God's incoming kingdom. Therefore, as a mode of parabolic relationship, missional pastoral care can provide a framework for mission in any context, and may be more accurately described as an evangelical contextual theology which has been provoked by an engagement with the urban. Thirdly, missional pastoral care has developed a theological paradigm, through practice, which informs and sustains this ministry. Kuhrt cites the Eden Network as an example of the missional energy which enables diverse theological positions to come together in activism (2010, pp. 14-15), what might be described as a 'mission trumps all' approach. Despite this, the theological framework of missional pastoral care, including a positive view of context, *missio Dei* theology and receiving experience as sacramental indicate more than a continuation of evangelical pragmatic activism and evangelistic zeal. Equally the mutuality of missional pastoral care, the conviction that we are transformed through relationship with the other, introduces a further dimension to the theology of missional pastoral care, concerned with meaning-making and open to the kingdom of God critiquing all involved. Finally, these innovations in motivation, context and theology combine to create an expression of evangelicalism which is not defined by a concern for its own identity, opening up different perspectives on the evangelical tradition and indicating that it may be developing in new ways.

Prioritising the incoming kingdom of God over defining and protecting a separate identity suggests that evangelicalism as a movement may be changing. Guest asserts that evangelicalism has been slowly liberalising since the 1960s, relaxing its moral and doctrinal positions on issues such as gender roles, behavioural standards,

abortion and the nature of hell. He attributes this to ecumenical engagement, the acceptance of social action alongside evangelism and an engagement with popular culture leading to acceptance of the 'social norms of tolerance' and a steady broadening beneath a more public 'oscillation between liberal progression and conservative backlash' (2007, pp. 51-52). He argues that: 'it is the visibility of resistance that sustains a sense of the set apart nature of evangelicalism' without which it risks disappearing into mainstream Christianity (Guest, 2007, p. 53). Warner notes the conflicting identities within evangelicalism and concludes that while progressive evangelicalism may merge with a broader church, conservative evangelicalism risks becoming increasingly narrow and inaccessible, shrinking in numbers in the process (2007, pp. 230-235). My research challenges these conclusions. The lack of concern for identity seen among my participants may indicate that evangelicalism is becoming less distinct as a Christian tradition. But, by reconfiguring the themes of resistance and accommodation toward aligning with the activity and presence of God in the world, missional pastoral care is not so much liberalising as redirecting its allegiance. Taking on a more reflective and less dogmatic stance of discernment and openness in its life and mission allows for a radical reshaping of both Eden teams and community members in the light of the Christian narrative. This process of seeing the kingdom come through the reshaping of meaning-systems results in a characteristically evangelical 'transformed life' (Warner, 2007, p. 18).

The evangelicalism seen in missional pastoral care is defined by an impulse of missional energy which is rooted in a confidence that God is present and active in the world and that we can participate in the ongoing biblical story of the incoming kingdom of God. The adoption of *missio Dei* theology in missional pastoral care and among evangelicals more broadly has implications for a predominantly middle-class evangelicalism. In suburban congregations comprising largely middle-class professionals it may be easy to extend the *missio Dei* to baptise the actions of the organisations and structures in which they play a part. In order to retain both the alignment with God's incoming kingdom and resistance of that which is destructive

of that kingdom it is vital that the voices of those experiencing the brokenness and injustice of social structures are heard within evangelical theology.

My research suggests that evangelicalism is continuing to renew and reconfigure its priorities in response to its social and cultural context. While Bebbington notes the reluctance of evangelicalism to recognise this reciprocal relation to context (1989, p. 271), in missional pastoral care it is seen to be acknowledged and received as a means by which God is at work. Further avenues for research into evolving evangelical identities might seek to identify other forms of evangelicalism which demonstrate the same use of kingdom theology for self-definition in order to corroborate or critique the findings of this project. This study has shown the connection between evangelical identity narratives and evangelical missiology and missional practice. Deeper consideration of the nature of this relation might also generate understanding of the dynamics created by a drive to present the gospel, which in effect means presenting 'ourselves' to the world.

Missional practice

The Eden Network continues to grow and new teams embark on the same journey of discovery that I have articulated in this research. There is also a growing desire in British Christianity, for example the Fresh Expressions movement,[23] to explore creative and new forms of being church often described as incarnational, with many more Christians encouraged to understand themselves as missionaries in their communities or networks. Into this context my research offers an account of missional practice which is marked by relationships of mutuality, the change in

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[23] Fresh Expressions is an Anglican and Methodist partnership which supports new forms of church. A fresh expression of church is defined as: 'a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples; it will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context' (Fresh Expressions, 2016). More information can be found on the Fresh Expressions website: www.freshexpressions.org.uk. For further analysis of Fresh Expressions see Grobler and Nell (2014) and Marti and Ganiel (2014).

meaning-systems of both practitioners and recipients of mission, and an expectation of both flourishing and loss as the outcomes of mission.

Missional pastoral care as a model of mission is itself risky and mixed. Throughout my analysis I have highlighted the issues of power relating to class and culture inherent in this approach. Given the emergent nature of missional pastoral care it is important to recognise that the mutuality which I have posited as central to addressing these power dynamics is not unproblematic. Due to the missional intent of Eden teams complete mutuality is, at least initially, improbable. This is evident in the journey of Eden teams from early objectification of their new community to an understanding of their shared humanity as relationships deepen. However, mutuality in missional pastoral care describes the necessity for personhood and agency from both team members and community members in the missional pastoral care relationship and makes room for agendas and mixed motivations on both sides which are navigated together, informed by the work of the Holy Spirit, as the relationship develops.

Missional pastoral care may also be seen as too demanding to be practical as a model of mission; involving exposure to the vulnerability of meaning-system change, being available to new relationships and maintaining the long-term commitment required. Given the diffuse and incremental nature of this ministry and if, as I have claimed, its outcomes are themselves a complex good including loss and ambiguity, the usefulness of this model over others which may offer a more heartening prospect might be questioned. I argue that this model is honest; in my analysis of missional pastoral care I have articulated how change happens for my participants and have offered a model of meaning-making relationship which could be conducted in a variety of contexts. Therefore I suggest that this research is useful in that the mixed nature of missional pastoral care, with its inherent risks and the example of Eden team members reflexively considering and overcoming many of these pitfalls, can be instructive for others engaging in mission.

Having taken a narrative approach, my research is able to highlight the presence of inherited missional narratives and the ways in which they impact missional practice

and expectations. This may lead to tension in that many mission-oriented churches and organisations deeply embody the evangelical missional narrative which I have problematised in this thesis. Missional pastoral care is an emerging model, and its theological paradigm is even more embryonic. This is evident among my participants, some of whom at times retain elements of the evangelical missional narrative and attempt to continue to apply it to their situation. Others reject it more strongly but do not have an alternative theological framework with which to understand their practice. This research offers my participants and others in similar situations of mission theological resources with which to understand their practice. It is a thick description which has the potential to provide points of resonance for those sensing the inadequacy of their inherited narratives and to articulate a way of life and mission which has previously been unacknowledged.

As such this account of missional pastoral care can provide guideposts for practitioners to clarify the missional task. By implementing the elements of missional pastoral care with an understanding of hermeneutical play, practitioners can enter into missional engagement with a fuller understanding of the kinds of behaviours which can enable meaning-making to take place. Transformation discourse is widely used within evangelicalism,[24] indicating the desire for accessible, and vague, ways to talk about the anticipated outcomes of missional effort which can account for diversity within the tradition. Therefore the challenges and disappointments faced by Eden teams in navigating their expectations and their experiences of mission may also be prevalent among other evangelicals relying on this discourse. My conception of the complex good can assist in shaping realistic and hopeful expectations for the outcomes of missional activity, moving beyond the language of transformation to an understanding of meaning-making in daily practice.

In this research I have enabled my community member participants to define the mission they have 'received' along with Eden team members. This is a departure

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[24] For example the Evangelical Alliance's identity statement which states: 'We believe the Church is the key to long-lasting change in our country – and that by working closely with our amazing members, we can transform our communities with the good news of Jesus' (Evangelical Alliance, 2016). See also Strhan (2015, p. 86), Bailey (2010) and Zahl (2010, p. 89).

from top-down models of mission in which practitioners are trained to implement a defined model and the recipients are largely invisible in the process. What has become evident in the experiences of Eden teams is that 'recipients' of mission are not invisible or passive. Whilst some models of mission may tend towards objectification (Rooms, 2015, p. 107), this is challenged by the experience of long-term practitioners who have to contend with the responses of so-called recipients whether they choose to or not. My research has shown that in order to engage in meaning-making a relationship must be developed which is mutual, which involves difference and which is defined by a loving affirmation of the 'other'. This suggests that models of mission which seek 'transformation' but fail to enable this kind of relationship will not significantly impact the meaning-system of the missionised other. It also indicates the importance of hearing the perspectives of 'recipients' of mission in order to understand the nature and effects of missional activity. In this conception of mission both practitioners and recipients are changed in the process of their relationships, making the categories of practitioner and recipient redundant in the building of mutual communities of care which are a foretaste of the kingdom of God.

Early work on missional pastoral care with groups of practitioners in one-off workshops has been positive, indicating that this model does have resonance beyond the Eden Network. Further research might develop this by undertaking an extended process of integrating missional pastoral care into a local church setting as a model for their community life with an evaluative framework for local church activity based on these findings. Additionally, work in other contexts, for example suburban or rural communities and areas with highly transient populations, would extend an understanding of how meaning-making relationships can be cultivated within different forms of community life.

Limiting conceptualisations

In creating this conceptualisation I began with the relational dynamics of life change and have collated the practices and convictions which underpin and perpetuate this core activity. Investigation into the work of Eden teams could have been

undertaken from a variety of different starting points. For example, I have paid little attention to the local partner church which is the immediate theological context of Eden teams, instead focusing on the subcultural narratives of evangelicalism as a tradition and the corporate narratives of the Eden Network. Further work might consider the degree to which the theological and practical innovations of Eden teams are influencing their partner churches and vice versa. As an insider to the Network and with a particular concern for personal growth I have explored in depth the personal journeys of participants and offer this particular analysis of the ministry of the Eden Network.

By conceptualising the emerging practices of the Eden Network I am speaking something into being. I risk overstating a fragile and unarticulated ministry by giving it a form. Eden team members and community members are largely unaware of the meaning-making nature of hermeneutical play in their ministry. From their perspective they are involved in mission, toward the purpose of conversion and transformation in individual lives and in communities. Therefore this project must be considered as a construction, Geertz's 'fiction' (1973, p. 15). It is limited in its scope and by its nature as a qualitative, ethnographic study and has been undeniably shaped by my standpoint and approach. However, my concern has been to give voice to the experiences and perspectives not accounted for in the inherited evangelical narratives and missional models of my participants. In missional pastoral care I have identified ordinary evangelical commitments to conversion *and* incarnational practice, clear convictions *and* tentatively evolving theological insights. I have sought to understand the complexity of practice and in doing so developing new language became the most fitting way to articulate the experiences of my participants. Terry Veling's understanding of theology as a 'way' to be followed (2005, p. 3) expresses my intention for this project. By conceptualising missional pastoral care it is not my intention to offer a complete and bounded model but rather to describe what is being lived in the practice of the participants in my study, to understand what it is that they experience together and to offer it as a window into forms of evangelical missional practice. It is my contention that missional pastoral care is a faithful conceptualisation of the experiences of Eden

team members and urban community members in which meaning-making pastoral care has been found to be at the centre of the mission of God, leading to an evolution in evangelical identity and theology. As a result it can bring further clarity to debate surrounding understandings of evangelicalism and mission both in the academy and in Christian ministry practice.

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Interviewee Participant Information Sheet: Perceptions of Transformation in Urban Communities

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is seeking to understand people's experiences of change. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this study, submitting your response after one month.

Thank you for reading this and considering participating in this research.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is designed to explore the experiences of transformation of people in urban communities and to discover how Eden has played a role in that transformation. The project is not specifically an Eden Network project i.e. it has not been initiated by Eden Network executive management. It forms a part of my Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology and therefore is an independent undertaking. The research will result in a 50,000 word thesis which I will submit to achieve my doctorate, but I hope the results will also be used to endorse and shape Eden and other similar approaches to working in urban communities.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are either a member of an Eden team, or you have met and got to know the Eden team in your community over a number of years.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this independent study. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your ongoing involvement with Eden or your engagement with Eden Network training and knowledge-gathering projects in any way.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign the consent form. This will give your consent for Anna Thompson to contact you to arrange a one-to-one interview. In this interview, lasting approximately 1 hour, I will ask you to reflect on your personal experiences of transformation. With your permission the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. The final thesis will draw together the views of all the participants and so will not focus on telling individual stories or name individuals involved. However I may contact you for permission to use a specific quote if it seems appropriate and you are free to decline any such request.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

All interviews will be conducted at the participant's chosen location. You may feel some vulnerability in sharing personal information or experiences as part of the interview. At any time you have the right to abstain both from the research project and also from particular

questions if you feel uncomfortable. Should you require additional pastoral support as a result of your participation you can contact Matt Wilson, matt.wilson@message.org.uk

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that you may welcome the opportunity to share and discuss your views and experiences. By taking part, you will also be contributing to the development of Eden's work, which will hopefully benefit all of our Eden Teams and others seeking to impact their urban communities in the future.

What if something goes wrong?

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Prof. Robert Warner,
Dean of Humanities,
University of Chester
Chester CH1 4BJ
Tel. 01244 511980

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence (but not otherwise), then you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for this.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information which could identify you collected during the course of the research will be kept securely by Anna Thompson. The final thesis will be written without using any identifying information about participants unless specific further permission is granted.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will contribute to a thesis to be submitted towards a Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology. They may also be presented and published in various ways to raise public awareness of Eden, endorse Eden and similar approaches to ministry, and contribute to understandings of urban and incarnational ministry and theology both in the academic world and in the Christian church. The final thesis will also be made available to the Eden Network. As stated, individuals who participate will not be identified except by specific permission in any subsequent presentation or publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised and funded by Anna Thompson as part of the Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Chester. All the research will be carried out by Anna and supervised by Prof. Elaine Graham, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Chester.

Who may I contact for further information?

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

Anna Thompson   *Anna.thompson@message.org.uk*   *0161 946 2346*

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Appendix B: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: <u>Perceptions of Transformation in Urban Communities</u>

Name of Researcher: Anna Thompson

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the
   participant information sheet, dated 11.1.12,
   for the above study and have had the opportunity
   to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary
   and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without
   giving any reason and without my care or legal rights
   being affected.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Parent/Guardian   Date   Signature

(where applicable)

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

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