

THE POST-COVID THEOLOGY PROJECT

Missiology Group



Missiology Questions

During a series of conversations with theologians, practitioners and churches leaders from more than 50 national Member Churches we came up with a number of important questions we felt might be good starting points as we emerge from the Covid pandemic.

Mission and changing churches

During the pandemic it is obvious some churches are dying what are we holding on to?

- What are the practices we can leave behind, what are we being called to?
- How can we be undertaker as well as midwife?
- What do we think about the relationship between mission online and embodied life?
- Does online church serve as an introduction to embodied life? Has the anonymous experience online served to begin a relationship that can be fulfilled later?
- The home church had become the main church during the pandemic. What positive lessons should be learned from that? Is there a new era of simplicity dawning? In light of that is our missiology shaping our ecclesiology?
- Is there going to be a new rise in 'micro church'? More organic and less institutional?
- The pandemic has caused a 'democratisation' of discipleship – people can access materials and teachings from virtually anywhere on the planet – how will that impact our mission?
- How do we follow up and disciple people who have accessed worship online? For some lockdown has been a revelation – how do we help people see where God is at work?
- How can we as the church be better at listening?

Mission and our vulnerable churches

- Which churches nearby can I partner with? (One church many congregations)
- How do we move from protecting our institutions to sharing resources sacrificially? How do we make a move from grasping to open-handedness?
- Do we know our neighbours?
- Can we ask for help locally?
- Is that we as the church must learn to become neighbour rather than host?
- Do we as the church need to rethink our understanding of hospitality?
- Is mission only to be carried out by the ordained?

Mission and children and young people

- How can the church offer instruction to the children, when they have been absent for such a long period of time?
- 70% of our churches don't have children – how do we change that?
- There was a sense across the denominations that young people would quickly take to online church because they represent the digital native generation. However there has been a massive drop off in connection. Young people need a far more embodied experience than we had perhaps realised? How will the church respond to this? Intergenerational church?
- So, are we a relational church? Do we offer easy ways for young people to get involved in ways that don't feel too "religious"?

Mission, death, pain and lament

- How can the church work more closely with NHS staff and offer them assistance (listening to them, support them, guide them)?
- More and more people have developed psychological problems during the lockdown. How can the churches deal with it?
- The church offered ministry in the past to all those people who were sick; even to lepers. During pandemic the church(-es) offered limited ministry to those suffering of coronavirus, for various reasons. How can we interpret that and what can we do about it? Will history judge us as having been too risk adverse? On the other hand our decision to close churches and adhere to strict protocols could be also judged as saving lives. There is a tension in these different responses.
- How are our churches helping people to process their grief?
- How can we draw on the Jewish traditions of lament?
- How can we help people understand what death is about?
- Lament is a missional tool – providing language for people. Sit in the pain without trying to fix things. This is important because of the huge death rate from Covid but also because of the burn out rate amongst clergy and other professionals. How will the church work through this?

Missio Dei and the pandemic (missio-philosophical questions to consider)

- Our churches were ‘empty’. What is the power of the “empty”? We may also refer to the empty tomb of Christ.
- We witnessed a dramatic shift in the ‘speed’ of life during the pandemic. What impact did it have on people, families, schools, business, etc? Can we learn follow the *Three Mile an Hour God* in mission and ministry?
- Our relationship to ‘place’ has been re-assessed or re-considered. Embodied presence in a particular location at a specific time has to be re-negotiated

to some extent. How will the church respond to a future that is both virtual and embodied?

- How do we help people connect with outside spaces? How do we help people foster a sense of wonder over creation? We need to move towards an embodied mission of the environment that is much more integrated that at present.

Mission and the marginalised

- The poor have been overlooked – perhaps the church needs to reassess how we become a church of the poor?
- Are we really engaging with working people and the things that matter to them?
- Are we a genuinely relational church and rooted in the place where we are located?
- Are our churches a welcoming place for people of all classes?
- How do we engage with migrant churches and the migrant communities among whom they are working? (African, Asian, Polish, Latin Americans, Irish)
- Do our churches have a middle-class problem?
- How can the church shift from relationships with the community that are not contractual but covenantal?

The following church leaders, theologians and practitioners were involved to developing these questions:

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