

To the Ends of the Earth (and around the corner):

Missional Leadership in an Age of Secularity

By Dr. Ross Lockhart (October 2018)

“The Church...is not so much an institution as an expedition sent to the ends of the earth in Christ’s name.” Lesslie Newbigin made this bold declaration in his 1960’s work *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission*. The English born, Church of Scotland sent, Church of South India consecrated Bishop became the first Director of the World Council of Church’s Division of World Mission and Evangelism in Geneva before returning home to a secularized United Kingdom. Once repatriated, he learned to apply his missionary skill set from abroad to the very country that once sent him out to the mission field. Newbigin is a fascinating example of a missionary sent out (in a classic sense for “foreign mission”) only to return from the mission field to find an equally (if not more) pressing need for mission and evangelism – not at the ends of the earth but just around the corner. Newbigin’s story reflects the changing nature of gospel and culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as the West transitioned out of the 1500-year experiment of church privilege with state power known as Christendom. Since the early 4th Century and Roman Emperor Constantine’s embrace, or domestication, of the Christian movement the institution of the Church has been a solid partner of the culture in moral, spiritual, political and economic power.

The great unravelling of that privileged status in the West in general, and Canada in particular, has left many Christians here today feeling a bit bewildered and overwhelmed by the pace of change. Now, the church has moved from central to peripheral, from the courts of

power to the margins. Recent research by Presbyterian and United Church scholars Stuart Macdonald and Brian Clarke have narrated the steps of mainline Christian denominational decline in the final decades of the last century. In *Leaving Christianity* Macdonald and Clarke describe the contemporary context this way:

Decline in Christian affiliation, membership, and participation started in the 1960s and has picked up pace rapidly since then. This trend is likely to continue and, indeed, accelerate as an increasingly portion of the country's population – among youth especially – have never been exposed to Christianity....In short, Canadian society is entering into a new era, a post-Christian era. The end of Christendom, we will argue, occurred in the closing decades of the twentieth century, as churches lost their social power and their place in the nation's cultural fabric.¹

Noting the loss of the Baby Boomer generation, *Leaving Christianity* acknowledges that now we have Canadians who have left the church and an increasing number for whom the gospel is a strange and foreign message. Macdonald and Clarke call this the distinction between being “de-churched and non-church.” They suggest, “The de-churched are those who at some point in their lives attended church but now no longer do so. The non-church have never attended except perhaps for a funeral or wedding of a friend or relation.” To them Christianity is, in the words of the “Church of England’s report *Mission Shaped Church*, ‘an utterly foreign culture.’² Many in the mainline church remain uncomfortable with the language of “mission” and find “evangelism” even more unseemly in light of devastating colonial era mission projects that mixed Western culture, power and values with the sharing of the gospel. A particular sensitivity to the language of mission and evangelism exists in Canada in light of the Residential Schools

¹ Brian Clarke & Stuart Macdonald. *Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada since 1945*. (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queens University Press, 2017), 11.

² *Ibid.*, 171.

legacy, that had mainline churches operate boarding schools on behalf of the State for Indigenous children (forcibly removed from their homes) for the expressed purpose of “westernizing” the children. In addition to a degradation of Indigenous culture and the breaking up of family units, many children suffered psychological, physical and sexual abuse most recently brought to light in the *Commission on Residential Schools*. Mindful of this mission heritage, there is the pressing issue of the converting power of the market and secularity upon a new generation of Canadians for whom religious faith is an unknown experience. As Macdonald and Clarke conclude, “First, people are not only leaving churches; they are leaving Christianity. And many of them have no interest in returning. Second, an increasing and significant proportion of the population has never had any first-hand experience of organized religion.”³

For such a time as this, God continues to call leaders for the church to help God’s people in praise and proclamation, discipleship and devotion, service and sanctification. But congregations and denominational offices look to seminaries and ask, “What kind of leader do we need right now?” What kind of leadership is required when the mission field is no longer overseas or in urban core of our cities but in the rural and suburban contexts where once people were born nominally Christian? Newbigin’s call to join an expedition to the ends of the earth re-orientates us to the kind of leadership that is both at home in a minority status and witnesses boldly with the confidence of John Knox who once declared that with God, a person is “always in the majority.”

³ *Ibid.*, 210.

Students preparing for ministry today at The Vancouver School of Theology engage head on this shift from a Christendom to a post-Christendom reality, with millennial (and younger) students having no working memory of that privileged status of the church in Canadian society. Instead, students must grapple with how to lead Christian witnessing communities that are either church plants or church revitalization projects, that take seriously the need to have a culture and process of helping secular people take steps towards faith in Jesus. To that end, near the end of the last century a group of missiologists worked on a project entitled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Published in 1998, the book was edited by Darrell Guder, now Professor Emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary and Senior Fellow in Residence at The Centre for Missional Leadership, St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver. *Missional Church* launched a new conversation on the theology and practice of mission in the West. Having coined the term "missional," scholars on the project and subsequent missiologists further developed the "missional theology conversation" that placed an emphasis upon the *Missio Dei* – the Trinitarian Mission of God and invitation for humankind to participate in the redeeming and reconciling love of Father, Son and Spirit on the journey from Creation, Covenant, Christ, Church and, one day, Consummation. Mission no longer would be seen as a department or mission of the church, but rather *the very nature* of the Triune God as revealed in Scripture.

Missional theology is often summarized as the reality that the Church does not have a mission, rather *God's mission has a Church*. The Triune God invites us as sinful and fallible creatures to come alongside and participate in the Creator's redemptive mission of empty cross and empty tomb with that simple Spirit breathed invitation, "Come and follow me." The Church

is the instrument of God's mission in the world. But too often mission and evangelism have been synonymous in the church and there *is* value in making a distinction between the two concepts.

Mission, according to David Bosch, is the wider of the two terms and involves the

*Total task that God has set the church for the salvation of the world. In its missionary involvement, the church steps out of itself, into the wider world. It crosses all kinds of frontiers and barriers: geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological. Into all these areas the church-in-mission carries the message of God's salvation. Ultimately, then, mission means being involved in the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God.*⁴

Again, by using the language of "Missional" we are leaning into the understanding that the essential vocation of the church is to be God's called and sent people in the world, trusting that God's mission has a church.⁵ Recognizing that a hard and fast definition of "missional church" is elusive, it is possible to say missional leaders seek an alternative imagination for being the church in the world where God's Spirit is at work transforming us as a community through mystery, memory and mission.⁶ With a deep trust to the witness of the Triune God, Missional Leadership recognizes that God's being and doing are one, and since God's actions always flow

⁴ David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, Paul Chilcote, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 9.

⁵ Darrell Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A vision for the sending of the church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 11. Rooted in a deep witness to the Triune God, Guder defines missional ecclesiology as biblical, historical, contextual, eschatological and possible for all disciples to practice.

⁶ Allan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What it is, why it matters, how to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 45.

from who God is as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so too should the church seek to unify its being and doing.⁷

If we understand mission to be the very nature of the Triune God and the church participates in that mission by making disciples for Christ who participate in the redemption of the whole world and the healing of the nations, then we need to be clear as well about the narrower definition of evangelism.

In making a distinction between mission and evangelism, David Bosch contends that evangelism is that dimension and activity of the church's mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Saviour, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace and justice on earth.⁸ To help us better understand what this ministry of evangelism looks like Robert Webber suggests three key marks of evangelism, "Evangelism is a process. Evangelism takes place over a period of time. Evangelism brings new believers to spiritual maturity."⁹ Perhaps to Webber's good work we could add a fourth mark – the role of the Christian community. It is primarily within the work and witness of local congregations that people are nurtured through evangelism into a lasting relationship with, and discipleship to, Jesus Christ. As Lesslie Newbigin said so beautifully, "The congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel." It is the local congregation that provides

⁷ *The New Parish*, 81. As the Parish Collective argue, "Mission cannot be conceived as a project of the church, rather, the church exists within God's reconciling mission."

⁸ Bosch, 17.

⁹ Robert Webber, *Ancient Future Evangelism, Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books Inc., 2003) 13.

opportunities for people to, in time, become evangelists themselves on behalf of the community of faith.

While we live and minister in a post-Christendom context today, too often we echo our Reformed ancestors' assumptions that when it comes to the gifts Christ offers his church in Ephesians 4 we too often value prophets, pastors and teachers in mainline congregations over apostles and evangelists.¹⁰ By locating our evangelism in the heart of congregational ministry, we seek to claim back the gifts of evangelism that Christ has bestowed upon his body in the world we call the church so we may reach "the full stature of Christ." Therefore, my working definition of evangelism is, *a congregational process that helps people place their trust in Jesus, and by the Spirit's power, transforms them within community into disciples of Christ who participate in God's saving mission for the world.*

This calls for the formation of Christian witnesses who are living examples of the opposite of that stereotype so readily provided by western media and Hollywood movies – brash, intolerant, arrogant and rude. Surely God calls us by our baptism to ministry, but may that witness be a gentle one in a world torn asunder by violence and greed. In reflecting on this dilemma, I shared recently with students recently in my Evangelism class at The Vancouver School of Theology a story of growing up in Manitoba where the driver's education program put 15 ½ year olds behind the wheel with an instructor – a rather bold move now that I think of it. I had a lovely teacher who had a penchant for McDonald's drive thru cuisine and a frequent craving (every single driving session in fact) for a hot fudge sundae with extra peanuts. While

¹⁰ Ephesians 4: 11-14.

dubious to this weekly ritual, she assured us that navigating a drive thru was a normal part of any driver's education and, in fact, we could possibly be tested on it one day!

To be fair, driving around the pot-holed streets of Winnipeg daily with teenagers struggling to learn how to operate an automobile must have been extremely stressful. This poor woman was entitled to whatever increased her patience – hot fudge Sundae with extra peanuts or perhaps something stronger when she got home. What I remember her for the most, however, was the lesson she taught us on gentleness. One day a high school buddy was driving especially hard, slamming on the breaks, honking the horn and so forth. The Instructor ordered him to the side of the road as the extra peanuts tumbled on the floor mats of the car. To this cram-packed car of gangly teenage boys she offered a moral lecture, as she ate her ice cream sundae, on the importance of being a gentle driver. “Boys,” she said with a chirp-like tone to her voice, sounding something like The Chicken Lady off *Kids in the Hall*, “why are people weary of buying rental cars when they come up for sale?” Silence. “Um, because they're not cool enough,” said the boy in backseat beside me after an eternity. “No,” she replied sternly, “because people are never gentle with rental cars, they treat them too roughly. Now, I will teach you how to be a gentle driver. No more slamming on breaks, cutting people off, honking of horns. *You will be gentle and the world will be better off for it.*”

You will be gentle and the world will be better off for it. Her words landed somewhere between testimony and prophecy. Gentleness, something that is available to all of us, as a gift from God, a fruit of the Spirit. Gentleness in our mission and evangelism is not something you hear much of in the church these days and yet Paul the evangelist and missionary apostle echoes the Driving Instructor's advice in Philippians 4 – “let your gentleness be evident to all.”

Gentleness in the biblical Greek has a close association with meekness, a word that has lost most, if not all of its appeal in our society. When you stand behind the hockey bench or on the sidelines of the soccer pitch coaching your kids do you shout, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” No...you shout...we’ll I won’t say what you shout. That’s because meekness is often unfairly associated with weakness. Is that also true with gentleness?

In 1 Peter 3: 15, we hear a call for testimony, a missional enactment through an evangelistic lens, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks for the hope that you is within you.” It’s like the Galilean fisherman turned Apostle is encouraging us to prepare our elevator speech for Jesus, right? When someone wants to know what makes you, you what would you say about your faith? This is particularly challenging for mainline Christians who excel at swinging a hammer or signing a petition or taking a meal to a neighbor but get a little tongue tied when it comes to talking about our faith in Jesus.

1 Peter 3 says that we need to be ready with an answer, our elevator speech for Jesus, when our life as followers of the risen Christ demands a testimony. It’s an invitation to practice articulating why we do what we do and love what we love about Jesus, the church and world. But note, that little piece at the end of the passage from 1 Peter 3: 15, “but do this with gentleness and respect.” I love that part. It feels ideally suited for Christian witness in the post-Christendom West. We are to bear witness to the confession of our faith that Jesus is Lord and not Caesar, our mortgage, our reputation, or whatever else you’d like to add in place of Christ’s Lordship. But how we do so is with gentleness and respect for others. In other words, knowing who we love and what we believe has to be combined with how we live – with gentleness and

reverence. That's how we live, that's how we share our testimony about Jesus. It's as if Peter is saying, "I will teach you how to be gentle and the whole world will be better off for it."

Every now and then you get a chance to witness this gentle testimony and love in action. I recall a flight from Los Angeles to Seattle, where I watched with interest as a large, rough looking biker dude settled into the row in front of me by the window while a neatly dressed businessman in a suit took his seat beside the guy. I assumed the business guy would plug into electronics and keep a safe distance from the rough looking fellow next to him. In fact, the opposite happened. I heard the business man ask a few polite questions like, "were you down here on business or pleasure." The biker dude responded, "my mom is really sick and I was spending time with her and my stupid sister." They sat in silence for a moment. "That must be really hard caring for your mom," replied the business guy. I eavesdropped on this evolving conversation as our airplane took off and climbed to 30,000 feet. The rough looking man in the window seat no longer gave short, clipped answers but now was fully engaged in conversation with the businessman. After 15 minutes came a new question. "What do you think about spirituality, would you consider yourself a spiritual person?" asked the businessman. "I guess I believe in God," replied the man in the window seat, "but I haven't been in a church in years." "I wonder if that might help right now," replied the man as their conversation took a turn towards Jesus. After a few minutes the businessman said, "Well, I've got to get a little work done here," reaching for his laptop, "but if it's okay I'll pray for you and I actually have a little book with me that might be helpful, something written by the pastor of my home church called Rick Warren." As he handed a spare copy of the *Purpose Driven Life* to the

man beside me I thought, “I’ve just been witness to such a beautiful, gentle evangelistic moments I can remember.”

Now, I know the typical mainline thing here to do is for eye rolls to happen at the mention of a mega-church pastor from the United States. Instead, I sat there and wondered, “What kind of community helps shape a disciple to so beautifully, respectfully and gently engage relationally with another hurting human being and offer them the hope of the gospel?” Before we judge or dismiss that encounter, I wonder how our own local churches are equipping people for their witness in the community in the midst of one’s every day, ordinary routines? Watching this businessman reach out in such a gentle and loving way to a stranger made me think that maybe my driver’s education instructor was more of a theologian than I realized, “You will be gentle and the whole world will be better for it.”

From Megachurch to the Vatican, Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, that local churches are full of missionary disciples acting as evangelizers and therefore should never look like “someone who has just come back from a funeral” but rather Christian communities must recover and deepen that

delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ”¹¹

Pope Francis’ challenge of our witness in the broader community invites our conversation on evangelism and mission deeper into the area of missional leadership. Missional leadership

¹¹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 10.

takes seriously the Triune God's active present in the world playing out in God's story of redemption between Christ and Consummation. Missional Leaders are trained to exegete both the Scriptures and the communities God calls them to serve. This dual focus on text and context, gospel and culture, is important given the shifting sands of ministry within our North American landscape and especially here on the west coast and throughout Cascadia.

Today, many within church and academy take for granted the dramatic impact of post-enlightenment secularity in the west.¹² Secularism, that philosophical and political ideology that strives to remove religious symbols, beliefs and influence from public life, has indeed permeated North American culture seeing that all the world religions have an equal place – at the back of the bus.¹³ Charles Taylor notes that in the west, “the shift to secularity...consists...of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.”¹⁴

Ministerial leadership in this new culture of “the Secular Age” must pay close attention to the intersection of life and faith, gospel and culture as we move from older generations with Christian memory to those who now know little or nothing of the faith tradition once dominant

¹² In his masterful work, *A Secular Age*, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor works through the impact of secularity comparing western life in 1500 to 2000. Taylor explores secularity's impact in public spaces, decline in religious belief and practice, and the conditions of belief.

¹³ In his excellent work *Faith and the Public Square* former Archbishop of Canterbury makes the helpful distinction between procedural and programmatic secularism. Procedural secularism, the kind that I refer to above, is secularism that gives equal voices to all manner of religious and political thought. Programmatic secularism attempts to eliminate religious voices from the public realm and for that Williams charges liberal modernity with being a fixed concept that approaches a new “pseudo-religion.”

¹⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2007), 3.

in the West. I was reminded of this reality recently while sitting in church on the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus.

It was Maundy Thursday and I was nestled into a pew as my 5-year-old daughter drove her Transformer toy all over the hymnbooks and caused general mayhem before the program started. I was in church on Maundy Thursday *but not* for worship. I sat in St. Anselm's Anglican Church on the UBC campus waiting for the performance of my 13-year-old daughter and others who had participated all week in a UBC drama camp. Now, the camp simply rented space at the local Anglican church - nothing more, nothing less. And as I waited for the performance to begin I did what I usually do in public spaces, I eavesdropped shamelessly.

The family in the pew behind me, eager to see their own daughter/granddaughter perform, shared this little gem of a conversation with me:

Boomer Grandfather (roughly late 60s): "Wow, I can't believe I didn't get hit by lightning coming into this place. (his wife cackles loudly) Who knows, maybe I'll still burst into flames at some point...."

Adult Gen X Daughter (mid 40s) in a more reflective tone: "Dad, didn't we used to go to church like at Christmas and Easter and stuff? I seem to remember being in a church like this when I was little - is that right?"

Boomer Grandfather: "Well, yeah, that was a long time ago and I can't remember the last time I was in a church. Most of us figured out that you don't need to come to a place like this to be a good person."

Adult Gen X Daughter: "Well Dad, do you know what your granddaughter said when I dropped her off here at camp on the first day? She said, 'Mum, what is this place? I've never

been inside a place like this before? What do they do here?' The woman paused and continued in a quieter voice, 'It was weird - I didn't know what to say. And I felt ashamed.'

This fascinating cross-generational witness of the end of Christendom was interrupted by the millennial aged drama camp instructor who welcomed us to the performance and noted (in usual west coast fashion) that we were meeting on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musquem peoples. No word was given, of course, that we were also meeting in a sacred space of Christian worship.

I left that lovely drama performance during Holy Week thinking about another dramatic event that we re-enact every Sunday proclaiming God's victory over sin and death through the empty cross and empty tomb. How are we equipping missionary disciples to witness to the wonder of our Easter Faith in a world caught in Holy Week and who don't even know it? What might mission and evangelism look like to:

Boomers - so many of whom walked from the church and retain only a disfigured Sunday School memory of the Christian faith.

Gen Xers - the first generation "raised without religion" according to Vancouver author Douglas Copeland, and yet many of us in this generation retain some structural memory of Christendom through school and society.

Millennials - raised with more secular/civic religion beliefs like environmentalism and respect for ancient cultures (Indigenous, etc) - all good of course - but tricky to

witness to with no Christian memory.

Generation Y - even further along the secularity path, now open to hearing about Christianity without the baggage that their Boomer grandparents often attach to the faith.

How might those of us whose lives have been marked, blessed and changed for good by the gospel of Jesus Christ speak and act in order to bear witness to the One whose selfless death and spectacular resurrection adopted us into the inner life of God: Father, Son and Spirit?

Into this curious cultural/social space The Vancouver School of Theology understands its calling to educate and form thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders. The church is hungry for effective and passionate leaders to lead God's people in praise and service for the world Christ died to save. Missional leaders discern, articulate and build enthusiasm alongside fellow church members to participate in what the Triune God is actively doing in the places where they live, work and play. Aubrey Malphurs defines this kind of visionary missional leader that the church needs in the post-Christendom West as a "godly servant (character) who knows and sees where he or she is going (mission and vision) and has followers (influence).¹⁵

Missional leaders do not see the world as the enemy, rather as the space that the Triune God is actively at work redeeming, reconciling and making new. As Stefan Paas notes in his excellent work *Church Planting in the Secular West*, "We may consider to what extent Christians need the world – and especially the powerful world of the secular West – to remain humble,

¹⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015) 23.

dependent on grace, and continually surprised by the extent of God's grace and love. The world is not just a dark background of our evangelistic mission; it is God's world. The church can only be the church if there remains a world outside of her, challenging her, threatening her, and sometimes welcoming her."¹⁶

Christopher James offers a helpful caution to those who would throw themselves in too quickly with the "joining God in the neighbourhood" approach to missional leadership. James writes, "Missional ecclesiologies have tended to root ecclesiality exclusively in the church's participation in the Trinitarian mission, without sufficiently considering what it might mean for the church to participate in and mirror the Trinitarian community."¹⁷ Holding in tension the economic and the imminent Trinity is not something that surfaces often in missional circles and is an important contribution to the discussion. As one who has lived his whole life in the Reformed tradition, that opening line of the Westminster Confession about "glorifying God and enjoying Him forever," is a helpful corrective to the usual "sending language" within the missional world. After all, in Luke 10 after Jesus sends the disciples out with training wheels on, he gathers them again unto himself. This classic pattern that Barth highlighted in the *Church Dogmatics* of the people of God gathered, up built and sent needs to undergird our missional practice.

To say it differently, our local Christian witnessing communities need to be a place of evidence to the transforming grace and mercy of God. How many people within our churches could articulate what Jesus has saved them from and has saved them for? Mark Labberton tells

¹⁶ Stefan Paas, *Church Planting and the Secular West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016) 119.

¹⁷ Christopher James, *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 223.

the delightful story in his book *Called* of shaking hands on a Sunday morning and meeting a newcomer who said that they were trying to figure out faith and were a little confused. The newcomer had visited a number of churches where they talked a lot about Jesus but not so much about the world. Then the newcomer noted that he worshipped in other churches that talked on and on about the world and what was wrong with it but rarely mentioned Jesus. He told Mark Labberton that at “his church” he was pleased to find a place that talked about both Jesus and the world. Mark was pleased as well to hear that! But then the newcomer asked a question that Mark found unsettling, “Pastor, if I keep coming back to this church will I meet people like Jesus?” Ouch. Mark did what many of us as pastors would do, he looked over the guy’s shoulder and hoped that this newcomer wouldn’t meet this person or that person who was known to be unkind and mean-spirited in the church. Imagine, church as a place where we met people *like* Jesus. Christopher James’ work is a helpful reminder that participating in the Trinitarian mission in the world also involves us in deep and authentic/accountable relationships of mutual, self-giving love in the local church. As James argues, “The church in a post-Christian context cannot rely on predominate culture to nurture people even halfway toward a way of life constant with the Reign of God. The church in such an environment must be, and is, a conversion community.”¹⁸

This conversion community is a community on the move as Christendom institutions crumble and Christians gather in new and innovative ways for worship and witness. As the expedition of the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, continues towards the consummation of God’s mission, the “ends of the earth” are closer than we could ever have

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

imagined, in fact, it's just around the corner from where you sit right now. Indeed, as we minister to and receive ministry from, a global and diverse Christian family that is engaged in Christian witness around the world, and in our local neighbourhood, together we are becoming the sign, foretaste and instrument of the Kingdom of God that Lesslie Newbigin once prophetically imagined, and now we live into by grace.

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