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**[Models of
Missional
Engagement
in Europe]**

Models of Missional Engagement in Europe

If you are in downtown Uppsala, Sweden on a Sunday, you might come across Pannkakskyrkan (pancake church) where young people and students from local churches use pancakes to break down barriers to the Gospel. They go to a park, play games and offer pancakes to passers-by as a way of saying 'we love you'. Add a guitar and worship songs and people soon stop and listen. The opportunity of conversation and prayer may arise, and people can be invited to travel further in a journey of discovery of faith. And the idea is taking off, with groups beginning in several other Swedish towns.¹

Pannkakskyrkan is one of hundreds of ways that Christians across Europe are seeking to share the Good News of Christ. There need to be hundreds of ways because of the huge diversity of European cultures and religious understandings, as Darrell Jackson explains in 'Europe, the religious context'²:

"Within the nations of Europe, the complexity of multi-culturalism is matched by the complexity of multiple variations on a sacred-secular spectrum. Simultaneously as a continent, Europe can be described as pre-secular, secular and post-secular."

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The contexts that churches and church planting movements described in this paper are working in range from pre-modern Albanian villagers and post-communist Belarusians to businessmen in Denmark and artists in Amsterdam. Their methods of missional engagement fall into three broad categories:

1. **Attractional and engaged** – where Christians get involved with their communities and invite people to come into the church setting.

2. **Incarnational** – where Christians live and work and plant churches within particular subcultures.

3. **Kingdom Mindset** – where Christians work towards the transformation of society, regardless of church growth (although in the process the gospel is shared and people come to Christ).

1. Attractional and Engaged Models

Purely attractional churches invite people to come into the church and are dependant on the quality of their services to entice people to stay. Engaged churches on the other hand are ones where *"existing church members are encouraged, trained and equipped to engage in one or many of the contexts in which the church is set... as these relationships begin to bear fruit and the Gospel creates responses, those responding are then invited to come to the church as we do it,"*³ says Bob Hopkins of Anglican Church Planting Initiatives (www.acpi.org.uk).

When attractional church still works



Storsalen's G1 service attracts people of all ages

Inviting people to church still works for **Normisjon Storsalen** (www.storsalen.no) in Oslo, Norway, because many Norwegians are still baptised into the Lutheran church and have some knowledge of the Christian faith.

"A lot of people are familiar with church culture and if they want to have anything to do with God they would come into the church," explains their pastor. "Instead of seeing people as non-Christians when we try to reach them, we need to see them as 'dechurched' and ask 'what is our

connection with you – we are part of the same church.’ So we want to try to have services and celebrations that are relevant for our friends and many people who go to church for the first time.”

Storsalen holds four services every Sunday: the all-age G1 service in the morning, helli.da (meaning Holy Day) for teenagers in the afternoon, an early evening G2 contemporary praise and worship service, and later a more reflective service for prayer and intercession, named G3. People are also encouraged to not just attend on Sundays, but also to join small groups and get involved in fellowship and outreach.

As a large well-known parish church in the city it is natural that there will be an attractional element to church life at **St Thomas Crookes** (Sheffield, UK) (www.stthomascrookes.org). Their website openly says ‘why not join us, we would love to meet you’, and most sermon downloads include an invitation to the church. Christmas and Easter also provide opportunities for events that anyone can turn up to, such as multimedia meditations each evening during Holy Week. Sunday services however are the main time for the church to gather for worship, and they are not specifically ‘seeker’ services.

“When you come on Sunday you get what you get,” says Mick Woodhead. “We don’t do evangelistic Sundays, but we always say ‘if you want to know about Jesus, come down and talk to us’. I can think of one guy of 46 who had been to church over the years and decided to have another look; and another single man who moved to Sheffield and thought he’d give church a try – so he just turned up one Sunday.”

But while the attractional element is there, St Thomas is primarily an ‘engaged’ church. Most people coming to faith at St Thomas’ are reached through their mid-size groups known as clusters which meet in diverse communities around the city.⁴

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, inviting people into church was easy for members of **Mathews Baptist Church, Latvia** (www.matejs.lv). “Many people were interested in their spiritual roots and so came to church,” explains Pastor Peteris Eisans. “As the early 1990’s passed, attraction became a bit more difficult as you needed more quality; it still worked only if you were the best at it in your city.



Mathews Baptist Church, Latvia

“But when you are very good at attraction, the question comes ‘what is next, what hasn’t been there, what’s new’ and then there is no end in sight – you need the biggest, the brightest, the best and the newest. At some point people also get fed up with being consumers and staff might get fed up with being providers.”

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While they now hold one contemporary and two traditional Sunday services, church members are moving from a purely attractional model (which has worked well for them) to trying to engage with the community. “We have been going into a local high school to teach the pupils life skills and build relationships and at Christmas invited a local youth orchestra to hold a concert in our church. Some of the orchestra members attend our church, others do not, but all their families came and it was a point of interaction for us.”

Members of the **Good News and New Land Church** in Belarus use creative ways to spend time with non-Christians, such as MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) type events, a culinary club and ministry to orphanages. They also teach English, at times with a Bible study attached so that “through giving people what they want, we can teach them what they need.” Church members have found that God then often brings a crisis or event into people’s lives, creating questions and the opportunity to share faith. But decisions to follow Christ are usually made within the context of a church service.

“Our people are excited about the church and like to bring people to the church or small group,” explains their pastor. The services are usually around two hours, with time for drama, music, testimonies and one or two messages. People in Belarus are very sceptical; their understanding of religion comes through knowing the Orthodox Church. In Communist times Baptist and Pentecostal churches were stigmatised, so it is very important for us now to have a Sunday service where you look like an official type of church – it helps people feel more secure.”

In Bulgaria, the New Wave events help answer the needs of a post-modern generation. Although these concerts began for Christian young people, they now have a strong evangelistic edge to them, as Peicho Muhtarov of the **Bulgarian Bible League** explains:

“In Bulgaria we have very good praise and worship teams. Give young people their music and they will stay in one place for twelve hours just to listen and be part of it. We started with less than 100 people, and now we gather between 900 and 2500 people during the Spring and Autumn Waves to praise, pray and share the prophetic things and miracles that happen. Unbelieving friends come along too - we have even had a whole class from a school attend - and you see people becoming Christians.”

Peicho says the postmodern culture in Bulgaria creates more opportunities for Christians to share their faith. “We are coming out of communism to a place where everybody believes what they like. They are spiritually seeking - there are very few atheists and most people have a sense of this great power that is somewhere and is controlling things.”

Attractional events within the context of ongoing relationship

Teams from the **Message Trust** (Manchester, UK) (www.message.org.uk) live incarnationally in some of the most deprived parts areas of the city. “But just because we are incarnational in the community, it doesn’t mean we have thrown events out of the window,” says their chief executive, Andy Hawthorne.

“We believe there is a power in proclaiming the Gospel and providing the opportunity to respond, whether in the context of a formal church meeting or in a deliberately organised youth context,” explains Andy. “We understand that in the parables of Jesus there was the yeast in the dough, which is the invisible incarnational aspect of the kingdom – but there was also the lamp on the stand – so there is a wow factor to the kingdom as well. And Jesus always used those things together.”

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Concerts in schools and at youth events by the Message’s bands create this ‘wow’ factor. In 2008 alone there will be 50 high school concerts with the potential of reaching 20,000 young people. Andy says that the events typically act as a ‘maternity ward’. “We have had a long, intensive labour process with these kids, and often at the event there is a moment of delivery. But there has to be parenting afterwards. Over the last few years we have moved from a model of decision-

making to one of disciple-making so that we help bring the young people through to maturity.”



The Message Trust's bands hold concerts for local schools in Manchester

St Andrews Chorleywood (UK) (www.st-andrews.org.uk) also find centralised attractional events provide crisis moments, allowing people contacted through their mid-sized communities (MSCs) to feel 'I need to make a decision on this'.

“The whole point is to have something very accessible with not a lot of religious language but very clear in its intention to bring the gospel in an engaging way,” says associate vicar Andrew Williams. “That way our MSC guys who are meeting people out on the field can say ‘there’s this really great event on Sunday night in our church, why not come along.’” But, he adds, the wonderful thing is that people make a decision for Christ with their friends around them who love them and who take them back to their MSC and continue on the discipleship process.

Andrew says that involvement in MSCs have made their members more likely to invite people to the central event. “It is OK laying on these evangelistic events, but it is pointless if the church is not actually inviting people because they have no sense of ownership. You get a whole bunch of Christians who are wonderfully entertained by the event, but nothing is actually happening. And it is not because these events aren’t good; it is because we haven’t invited anyone. The MSCs have empowered people with a sense of ownership and belonging out there in the

field. If in the course of the church’s diary we can have central events that assist in bringing people to faith then we will.”

Alpha as a ‘front door’

St Andrews Chorleywood, along with many other groups described in this paper, uses Alpha as a tool for missional engagement. This ten-week course began in the late 1970’s at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in London, UK (www.htb.org.uk) It was first used to disciple new Christians who needed to grasp the foundational aspects of their faith. Now over 10 million not-yet and new Christians in over 160 countries worldwide have attended an Alpha course, as an opportunity to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed and informal way. Session usually begin with a meal or refreshments and include a talk and a time for discussion.

HTB encourages groups using Alpha to keep the essential ingredients, but to make it relevant to their contexts wherever they are. In Sweden this is easy, says Torbjorn Larspers of EFS (www.efs.nu), “because having a cup of coffee and spending time together (fika) is an important part of Swedish culture!”



Over 10 million people world-wide have attended Alpha courses

“Alpha has been a very important tool for us,” he says. “For example a church in Lund was restarted six years ago and it has worked very hard at Alpha and seeker services. We tend to use illustrations from our own lives in the Alpha talks, but we don’t change any of the structure.”

At HTB itself, Alpha International’s executive director Tricia Neill sees the

course as the ‘front door to the church.’ “We run three courses a year at HTB, with 400-500 people on each course,” she explains. “The participants’ average age is 27, and while many are young professionals, more and more people have addictive lifestyles. We are also combining with other churches to run a student Alpha course for 18-22 year olds in a nightclub in London.”

The UK-wide Alpha advertising initiative every September raises awareness of the course. A 2007 MORI poll showed 23% of people knew about Alpha and linked it to Christianity, compared to 8% when the course started⁵. However most people attend following a personal invitation. Church members are also encouraged to invite friends to the church services. These, says Tricia are geared towards being accessible, with “different services at different times with different approaches to worship.”

Often the most active and passionate people are those who have just come to faith through Alpha.

“The 9am service is liturgical and formal in its structure and content, tending to attract older people. Other services are less formal but people are still seated in rows and the music is pitched in a particular way. We also have new services where people sit on beanbags, read newspapers and have bacon sandwiches. You never know what is going to happen next and they are deliberately creative. This variety of styles is an expression of the church’s need to reach out to different cultures but all under one roof.”

HTB has a strong attractational element through its services and Alpha courses. But people don’t come into the church just to be fed or stay comfortably within the church community. As Tricia says, they bring people in to send them out – and often the most active and passionate

people are those who have just come to faith through Alpha.

“People who come to the church through Alpha join a pastorate where they make friends with other Christians and are given opportunities to get involved in missional projects. The next term – four weeks after the previous course finishes – they can be a helper at an Alpha course. The term after that they can lead an Alpha course. Each pastorate sends a team to help with Alpha, and then after the course finishes they come back with new guests to the pastorate and the cycle begins again.

“The whole church is outward focused. While our dominant strategy is Alpha, we do lots of other things as well such as prisons Alpha and caring for ex-offenders and people on inner-city estates, courses on marriage, parenting, bereavement and teaching English as a second language.



HTB’s pastorates provide opportunities to engage with local communities and missional projects

Engaging with individuals

At a personal level, finding the ‘person of peace’ within a neighbourhood or group can be key to sharing the gospel. This, according to London-based Simon Kirby from **The Order of Mission** (www.missionorder.org.uk) is the “only relational model Jesus gives us.” Based on Luke 10 v 1-12, the ‘person of peace’ will be open to hearing the Good News, and will like to spend time with you building a friendship. You stay with that person, and according to verse 9, meet their needs (heal the sick) and proclaim “The kingdom of God is near you”.

So how does Simon identify a ‘person of peace’? “When you go into an area where

you don't know anyone and are literally looking for God's favour, you are effectively saying 'shalom' and asking people to make a response. Every Thursday we walk the streets and talk to the young people. They will make it very clear if they want to engage with you and if they do we hang out with them for a bit and get to know them and talk about what the future might look like for them. Others are obviously not interested, so we move on.

The person of peace is someone who is open to hearing the Good News, and who likes to spend time with you building a friendship.

"We also meet in a café once a month, so there will be other people in the café who hear the content of the service while we are doing church. Sometimes some of them want to ask us questions or talk with us afterwards." Simon adds that at other times God creates opportunities within your existing networks for people to become open to the Gospel. "For example the local barber's shop is a hub of the local community. Through a funeral opportunities have opened up to relate to the people there in a deeper way. Because we are meeting them in their own space, they talk about the issues that are affecting them and we have been able to talk about our faith on a deeper level."

In Albania, members of the **Foursquare Church of the Coming King** are equipped to share their faith through one-on-one evangelism and discipleship within their particular subcultures. "We don't believe in sharing the Gospel without sharing our lives," says their pastor Piro Papparisto. "After communism there was a big wave of street evangelism and every person in Albania probably received some kind of booklet or had somebody preach to them in the street – so at a certain point the society became closed again. We are trying to break ground through sports or cultural activities. This allows people to

get to know us in non-threatening ways, so they see 'he goes to church and he is a normal guy' and they become more interested."



Medical students in Albania visit families in villages surrounding Tirana

But it is a slow process. In the cities, Piro says the older generation is "burned out by communism and broken by poverty" so it is difficult to engage them within church life. Amongst young people the spiritual openness has quickly shifted to materialism and a post-modern culture. And the culture in surrounding villages is pre-modern, where people are bound by superstition, belief in evil spirits and magic. Piro teaches medicine at Tirana University and takes groups of medical students out to the surrounding villages. He is beginning a medical ministry in one village, and also starting a discipleship group with the help of a Christian living in the village. Through these outreaches he hopes that opportunities to share the gospel will arise and a church will be planted.

the older generation is 'burned out by communism and broken by poverty'

Making the most of natural opportunities to engage

In addition to individuals reaching individuals, many churches have found mid-size groups of between 15 and 50 people give them a natural context from which to reach the surrounding community. For example, St Andrews Chorleywood's mid-size communities

(MSCs) variously reach toddlers, children, young people, students, neighbourhoods, the deaf, homeless and recovering addicts. Associate vicar Andrew Williams says the MSCs' sense of community is one of their biggest evangelistic resources: the "goodness of being with a group of people who love you warts and all".

Their heart was to be Jesus in the community and bring the gospel to these people

Over time, an MSC's ministry can develop and grow as they seize the opportunities presented by the context. Open Door MSC met in a local school, where a children's football club was also held at the same time. The MSC members gave tea and coffee to the parents watching their children play football, which was very much appreciated. Then they noticed that there were a lot of brothers and sisters who weren't playing football, just standing around, so they invited them to the MSC kid's club they ran each Sunday, telling the parents "it is a Christian club, but lots of fun." Again this initiative was very well received by the parents. The school head-teacher heard about the kids club and contacted the MSC, asking if they could run an after-school club on week-days. The school was happy for the club to have a Christian emphasis – even though the children came from many different ethnic backgrounds. When one of the leaders was ill with shingles, the children prayed to Jesus for healing – and she was. Most recently another school has approached the MSC to ask if they could run an afterschool club there as well.

"Their heart initially was to be Jesus in the community and bring the gospel to these people," says Andrew. "They arrived knowing the Lord's heart for the community and looked for the strategic opportunities, and the Lord continues to open doors for them on the ground."

Normisjon Storsalen in Oslo, Norway has also begun to engage with the community

around them through mid-size groups involved with the church. Several of the groups are involved with various sub-cultures, such as skaters, business people or the elderly, while others are involved with prison visiting and 'mercy work'. But the church provides youth work teams for neighbouring Lutheran churches, creating opportunities to share the Gospel with teenagers through confirmation classes.

"Between 50% and 90% of all kids get confirmed in the Lutheran church," says their pastor. "We provide courses in four churches and so we are reaching between two and three hundred young people – many are coming to know Christ and this is developing really fast."

In Stuttgart, Germany, **EJW (Evangelisches Jugendwerk im Württemberg)** (www.ejwue.de) is also in contact with many young people through bands and choirs, youth groups and schools work, confirmation classes and summer camps. They are the official youth work organisation of the Lutheran church and as such have an 'open door' to share the Gospel.



EJW's vision is to build bridges into youth culture

"Normally it is a process – you must build relationship and gain the right to be heard," says Reinhold Krebs. "If you trust each other young people will take seriously what you say. We introduce Christ through Bible studies and devotions, and a lot of young people come to Christ through camps in the summer. We have two big 'open doors' at the minute. One is the confirmation year where in one diocese maybe we will have 700 or 800 young people attending a

confirmation camp. The other is six to eight month youth work training programme in schools, training young people who want to be youth leaders. It includes biblical teaching, and we get a lot of young people who don't have any other contact with church."

Reinhold is aware that EJW's model has been 'come to us' but his vision is to build bridges into different youth cultures, including urban hip-hop or underprivileged groups. The organisation has also begun youth services across the region, with 210 groups meeting weekly, fortnightly or monthly, with some of these groups becoming churches in their own right.

Just as Storsalen and EJW are making the most of opportunities presented to them through youth work, **AAVM** (www.valgmenighed.dk) in Århus, Denmark is capitalising on the growing interest in Gospel choirs in the country to engage with people who wouldn't ordinarily attend church. The choir, explains senior pastor Keld Dahlmann, is part of a national movement of white Danish middle class people singing African-American tunes. Although the choirs are not considered religious in any way, they are singing Gospel. Of the seventy-strong AAVM choir, only around seven are members of the church. In the future Keld envisions opportunity for follow up – possibly with services using gospel style music and communion mid-week.



AAVM's gospel choir attracts many people who would not attend church services

From engaged to incarnational

For Svein Hoysaeter, pastor of **Normisjon Norkirken** (www.norkirken.no) in Bergen, Norway, up to 30% of the young people could be reached through their predominately attractional model of missional engagement. "We did church quite well I think, with nice bands, a good way of communicating and small groups. But it seemed like hardly anyone was concerned with the other 70% of young people and no-one was being missional in society."

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Norkirken's mid-sized 'housechurches' now reach a variety of groups, including families, new-agers, hill-walkers and foreign students. They also do youth work in state churches, and spend time with young people on the margins in a downtown shopping mall.

"The further you go out into a culture that is different from church culture, the more it is about mission, not about coming back," says Svein. "For instance with the people working with homeless and addicts in the shopping mall it is easy to say we will reach people who don't go to church. The challenge for us is to be incarnational – where we can identify with these people without losing our identity as Christians."

Halvor Lindal from **IMI Kirken** (Stavanger, Norway) (www.imikirken.no) explains how they are moving to a more incarnational approach through mid-size communities:

"We ask people where are you naturally living your life, what are your natural relationships with non-Christians, where do you love to go and enjoy being with people? After all, Jesus went to parties and engaged with the culture and people already there."

Halvor is aware a variety of groups will be reached in this way. “Some go to their workplaces and the neighbourhood they are already in, while others will feel called out into other cultures, for example Muslims. That is the balance of the Kingdom of God in our church. The clusters will be the place where people can be invited into, but we are wanting to help our people discover ‘how can I give the Gospel in a good way and live in a natural way alongside people?’ It’s not a project, it is life.”

our ultimate goal is to bring the church out to them and start a new church

Even within a predominantly Christian area, where many people have a church background or a Christian worldview, churches such as **IMF Bryne**, Bryne, Norway (www.saron.no/imfnormisjon) are moving away from a ‘come to us’ method of evangelism.



Spending time with friends and building relationships is important for IMF Bryne

“Some years ago we would gather people into big services and there were a lot of non-Christians in the celebrations,” explains Thomas Rake, one of the church’s pastors. “Now we are focusing more on going out to networks of friends and staying there. Three or four of us in a housechurch go to a party and get to know people. The next step for us will be to plant a church in a new network like that. We don’t want to bring them into the church; our ultimate goal is to bring the church out to them and start a new church.”

2. Incarnational models

The type of church described by Thomas Rake could be classed as incarnational, which also falls within Bob Hopkins’ definition of emerging church – ‘Go and stay and see what emerges’⁶. The aim is not to bring people back to the central church, but instead to bring the Gospel to their subculture and form church there. In his book *The Forgotten Ways*⁷ Alan Hirsh calls this ‘mission-incarnational impulse’.

“By living incarnationally we not only model the pattern of humanity set up in [Christ’s] Incarnation but also create space for mission to take place in organic ways. In this way mission becomes something that fits seamlessly into the ordinary rhythms of life, friendships and community and is thus thoroughly contextualised.”

According to Andy Hawthorne of the Message Trust, each of their Eden teams have this incarnational ethos right at the very heart, based on John 1v14 (MSG) “the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.”

“We are holistic in nature,” says Andy. “It is not just about saving souls but about whole people and seeing their lives transformed so they can be a witness for Christ and reach their whole potential in life. It is very intentional – not just about us being a good neighbour. In a sense there is a model, even though it is contextualised in each area because the neighbourhoods have different challenges and team leaders have to work very carefully to decide what their priorities should be.”

The inner city context in which the teams work is almost medieval, adds Matt Wilson, the Message Trust’s executive director. “Everybody is related to everybody else and there are certain families who run things, so even though it is in the city there is village mentality. But it is postmodern in the sense it is relativistic. The mindset of people is ‘well

that is your opinion' and while they read their horoscopes, they may also get their children christened. A nihilistic outlook also exists – you are born, you live, you die and that is it. This fuels living solely for today with no consequences for tomorrow.”

Eden teams have five foundational ‘cornerstones’.

- An Eden team is not just a project, ultimately the aim is to establish a vibrant local church with a witness in the community,
- They are focused on the toughest neighbourhoods where there is poor education, poor health, high crime and drug abuse,
- They are about relocating and making homes in the heart of the community,
- The priority is to reach youth, as they are a key to the neighbourhood,
- Eden teams are networked together and meet regularly for mutual support.

“Young adults and families, even a grandmother, find a home right at the heart of the difficult urban areas we work in and begin to experience what the community is experiencing,” explains Andy. “When a team leader moves into an area, they spend up to a year building relationships, trying to understand the neighbourhood and its challenges and looking for the ‘person of peace’.”

They are focused on the toughest neighbourhoods where there is poor education, poor health, high crime and drug abuse

As more people join the team, relational programmes are established, such as detached youth work, sports or arts programmes, afterschool clubs or youth clubs: “anything that gives us the opportunity to know them and disclose our identity as Christians. People will very quickly ask ‘why are you here?’, because no-one ever comes to these areas by

choice. You are either born here or you are here by circumstance because you find yourself at the bottom of the pile. We can tell them we are here because although other people may have forgotten this place God hasn’t and he cares for you.”

Andy says that if they have contact with 100 people in the first six months, maybe twenty or thirty will have genuine questions and want to discover more. The second level is then to deliberately create environments in which these questions can be explored. “We are always working at a basic relational level but we are seeking to advance people up the ladder where they can begin to explore their own questions and find out what Jesus is all about.”

Church planting in subcultures

Jesus Freaks International began in Germany fifteen years ago (www.jesusfreaks.com) with the aim of being a Jesus movement who live ‘without compromise and with honesty, wanting to see society change through Jesus’ power, so Jesus will once again be the central focus.’ The movement attracts the younger generation between the age of 16 and 30, and they seek to start churches within their immediate cultures. While these may be particular social groups such as punks or skaters, it is people, not the type of group that is the starting point for mission.

“The main message is that we are really interested in people,” says Max Paans of **Jesus Freaks Holland**. (www.jesusfreaks.de) “That means we don’t try to become the same as the people we are reaching, but we do go into their culture to understand a bit of their language and behaviour. For example I can’t be a skater, but I can be me and still part of the group because I care about them and want to spend time with them.”

“When starting with new people we don’t talk about the Gospel or Jesus – instead we just want to have a relationship. We

may have a meal together and say ‘you know we are Jesus Freaks, we will be talking about Jesus but first we are going to have a meal. If you don’t want to stay after the meal that’s OK.’ Sometimes people will go out after the meal saying ‘the Jesus stuff is not for me’, but they like us as people and think it is really nice to hang out with us. Then maybe after three, four, ten or twenty times they say ‘OK I want to join the Jesus Freaks’ and we welcome them into the group.”

The main message is that we are really interested in people

Florian Bärtsch of **c|movement** in Zurich Switzerland (www.cmovement.net) agrees that building relationships is a key way to reach subcultures. “I don’t know of any group in Europe who is successful in reaching unreached groups without connecting through friendship,” he says.

According to Florian, it takes several years to form real fellowship out of a group of independent people in a church service setting where everybody sits beside another person and looks to the front. In addition, within Swiss society it is almost harder to make the decision to go to church than to become a Christian, so it makes sense to start churches within existing networks. c|movement’s strategy therefore is to win groups rather than individuals, and form churches within these groups.

“The strength of our model is that when we can implement the gospel into a group they have already got fellowship and leaders – so we just share the gospel with these people and their life,” says Florian.

Currently c|movement’s teams are intentionally spending more time with unbelievers, in an effort to make the most of every opportunity to build relationships with ‘people of peace’ who will provide the key to reaching a group. And building relationships can happen in natural ways, as one of the team members explains:

“A few weeks ago we spent the afternoon as a team in a park in the middle of a new housing area. I met a man who told me he was opening restaurant there. I was so delighted that somebody was planning to open a meeting place right beside the park. I told him I was a pastor and that I often pray to God that he might bless businesses and rooms and people, and I would be happy to bless the restaurant before he opens it. He promised to think about it, but I didn’t get any response. But since then we’ve been there many times and I’ve got to know his wife and family, and it is very easy to speak to him about the Christian faith. During the summer we will spend more time there praying and holding creative open-air services, barbeques, Sunday schools and games. It’s our desire that not only this couple but many people from this contact will come to Christ.”

One of the creative ways members of **Zolder50** (Amsterdam, Netherlands) (www.amsterdam50.nl) are building relationships is by handing out flyers in the street offering help and a listening ear. “Mostly people invited us in for coffee and wanted to get to know us,” says Eric Asp, one of Zolder50’s leaders. “They are lonely people. Then a woman got in touch with us a few weeks ago and asked for help painting her house, so we kind of built a relationship with her there.”

Church members have also made connections with Amsterdam’s thriving arts scene. Many cafes have open mike nights where anyone including Christians, can perform their songs. For one group this ended up having surprising results!

“One night we ended up in a squat through someone we met at an open mike night, and a whole new vision came out of that. Some of us go into this group and build relationships with them in order to bless them and share Christ with them. It would be difficult for us to say to these guys ‘come back to our community, so we

want to see if a seedling church can start in their context.”

Incarnational clusters

Some mid-size groups in several churches have become more incarnational, almost transitioning to being churches in their own right. Mick Woodhead from St Thomas Crookes in Sheffield calls these ‘dispersed clusters’.

“Dispersed cluster leaders go and start something where the people are,’ explains Mick. ‘Our student ministry is gathered and dispersed – a lot of it takes place in cafes amongst young people who wouldn’t come to the central church. A new cluster has also started with the elderly, with a monthly Sunday service and a mid-week meeting that includes prayer, praise and worship.”



‘Open mike’ nights at Amsterdam’s cafes provide Zolder50 with opportunities to get to know people (photo credit: Eric Asp)

Another cluster is running an Alpha course with 70 Slovakian refugees, and Mick feels there is potential for a church to begin within the Slovak community. “The approach is to throw some seed and see if it takes root, leave it and start trimming it when you know what it is. You don’t know if it’s going to work when you throw the seed, then you come back and it is very exciting because you see green shoots and then you come back again and all of a sudden there is half a field and you have to think about how you are going to harvest it. With the Slovakian group, we need to pray that someone within the group gets converted who speaks English and can lead the group. We will do more

evangelistic work with them and see what plants up.”

Clusters at Sheffield’s **St Thomas Philadelphia**, (www.stthomaschurch.org.uk) also operate in several different ways, ranging from attractional to engaged and incarnational. Senior leader Paul Maconochie has observed they fall loosely into the five-fold ministry categories of apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching.

Apostolic: fairly attractional and fast growing with gifted leaders, based around a community doing natural community activities, for example a meal, but probably with bits of teaching and worship.

Prophetic: based around a community of Christians living a very radical Christian lifestyle in a very visible way in a secular environment. A good example of this type of cluster are the STOMP children’s work and FORGE youth work teams operating in five very deprived parts of Sheffield. The core of each team lives in the area they work in and every child who attends is visited weekly by a member of a team.

Evangelistic: this is the newest and most experimental type of cluster. Groups of two or three people go door knocking looking for the ‘person of peace’ in that area. When they find that person who is open to the Gospel they build a relationship with them. Paul says they have seen a very significant work of God amongst an immigrant community using this model.

Teaching: these are teams of ten to fifteen people sent out from the church to other local churches who are struggling and about to close. The aim is to serve and teach the church community how to worship, pray and witness.

Pastoral: the aim is to build a strong long-term community that both Christians and non-Christians feel welcomed into and at the same time transform and affect the wider community that group is in. For

example, a goal might be to enable everyone in their street to know each others names by the end of six-months. This model recognises that community transformation as a completely valid goal of the gospel, and as such could be classed as 'Kingdom Mindset'.

3. Kingdom Mindset

In Luke 4 v 18-19, Jesus begins his ministry proclaiming that he has been anointed to 'preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, release the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lords favour'. Over the next three years he demonstrated the coming rule of God's kingdom in practical ways through radically serving the marginalised and oppressed and many miraculous healings. Servant evangelism and power evangelism continue to be 'kingdom mindset' ways that Christians today demonstrate God's coming rule on earth.

Servant evangelism

Carlton Deal, a church planter with **Christian Associates International** (www.chrisitanassociates.org) began the 'Serve the City' project (www.servethecity.be) in Brussels years ago. An 'army of volunteers' spend a week showing kindness to people in need, such as refugees, the elderly and the disabled. "As we practically serve people in need we are demonstrating something that is true about the kingdom of God and character of God," explains Carlton. "God knows the plight of the refugee, the needs of the homeless and the hurts of the orphan. My little cup of soup isn't going to make a long term difference, but in my heart I want to connect as a believer with God and his character and kingdom and somehow demonstrate in a way they can feel that God is real and his love is real. When we communicate the Gospel we use often words, but we have other senses and it is also of value to smell the Gospel and taste and touch it."



The Serve the City project has provided a way for CAI to connect with people in all sectors of Brussels

The Serve the City project has also provided a way to connect with young Europeans who live in Brussels and want to make a difference in their society. Carlton says team members include 'strong believers, new believers, people who are taking the very first steps in the direction of faith, Muslims and secular government officials' – all able to find common ground in the concern and compassion for people in need.

***God knows the plight of the
refugee, the needs of the
homeless and the hurts of the
orphan.***

"There are plenty of people who get involved who don't know it is a Christian activity, and we are really careful not to surprise them so that their first experiences with us are exactly what they are expecting. They think they are going to paint the walls of the soup kitchen so we welcome them and say this is really worth doing, and use kingdom vocabulary without probably even talking about God or Jesus. We hope they will rub shoulders with believers in the process and that God stirs something in their hearts and at the end of the day or week we invite them back to something if they want to take it further."

It's the idea of serving that initially attracts people. "They are unlikely to come first to a worship gathering or Bible study; the chances are they will serve with us before they do anything else," says Carlton.

People who are taking a leading role in missional engagement in **Vineyard D.A.CH** (www.vineyard-dach.net) churches (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) tend to be those with a passion to reach the lost. "They want to see people saved and the justice of God being established in our time," says senior leader Marcus Hausner. "Being part of the mission of God draws them out of the security of the church to engage with others. And while building relationships is fundamental to everything they do, servant evangelism is key method of outreach for Vineyard DACH groups.

"Reaching the poor and disadvantaged and those on the fringes is a well-established priority for many of our churches. It is not evangelising or doing therapeutic stuff – just serving and showing love in practical ways. But then there is a pull effect and people start to raise questions or want to experience more."

Power evangelism

Power evangelism is also 'classic Vineyard' according to Marcus. Through inviting God to work in supernatural ways, an environment is created where people can experience the presence of God.

in the book of Acts all the guys were looking for 'people of peace' and then strategically looking for power encounters.

"This could be a corporate setting where people are praying during the ministry time for healing or deliverance. They are living out the dynamic of expecting the kingdom to come at any time. We also use it in an individual setting, for instance in a workplace or on the streets where we begin by praying for people before introducing them to the Gospel. That way we supply them with prayer then answer the questions that arise afterwards."

Members of the Order of Mission in Bristol also engage in power evangelism,

in addition to identifying the 'person of peace' in an area or network.

"As you read the gospels there is something about power encounters you can't get away from," says church plant leader Mal Calladine. "Then when you look in the book of Acts all the guys were looking for people of peace and then strategically looking for power encounters."

Mal and his team have been praying for people on the streets. "Prophetic words are part of it, but healing is where the action really is," he says. "Christians often rationalise why God can't heal them but non-Christians haven't. We see more people get healed on the street than in church."

Mal tells the story of a group who prayed for a teenager with a broken ankle. The boy felt it go back into place, then the kids around him asked us 'does God want to heal headaches as well?' They were initially quite aggressive, but became more open and warm through this encounter.

Demonstrating Kingdom Values

But a kingdom mindset isn't just about one-off encounters, it has the potential to transform society, as Anne Maclaurin, executive leader at St Thomas Philadelphia explains. "In addition to signs of the Kingdom such as healings and coming to faith, whenever the kingdom of God meets a society in power there is additional impact of influencing and transforming the lifestyles and structures of that society."

A new initiative at St Thomas', Philadelphia is enabling men and women to bring kingdom values to their workplace, where, according to Anne, people spend up to 75% of their waking hours. Her colleague, John Lovell, points out that the people best placed to reach the 97% of people in Sheffield who don't go to church, are those in the workplace. And of course people in the workplace

have contact with significant numbers of colleagues, clients, customers, contractors and others.

a kingdom mindset isn't just about one-off encounters, it has the potential to transform society

"We are working to change the mindset pervasive among church-goers that considers working for the church or a missionary society is in some way more valued by God than work in the 'secular' environment," explains Anne. "We notice that we regularly have to challenge an unhelpful, and indeed ungodly, 'sacred/secular' divide."

In the last few months three levels of engagement have developed. The first one is for everyone in the workplace. Inspired by a model from HTB, 'Connect: God at work' is a joint venture with St Thomas' Crookes. People in six different workplace sectors - Health, Education & Childrens' services, Business & Trade, Government, Law & Order, Retail & Service Industry, Social care/Voluntary Sector - meet for a morning of connecting and networking. The key is that people are networked in their workplaces.



St Thomas Church's is enabling people to bring kingdom values to their workplaces across Sheffield

The next level of engagement at St Thomas' Philadelphia is for people who know that their primary place of calling in this season of their lives is the workplace - they see that as their mission field. Faith@Work involves around 70 people meeting on a monthly basis to equip and encourage each other to be who they are, where they are. "We started by asking the question 'what would your workplace look like if the Kingdom of God was fully realised there?'. So far, we've asked key workplace leaders/entrepreneurs, to share their vision for what they're doing

with work. Next we're moving into fivefold ministry groups to look at how being an apostle, prophet, pastor, evangelist or teacher impacts on our working practice and relationships."

what would your workplace look like if the Kingdom of God was fully realised there

The final level of engagement is small groups of business entrepreneurs. There are two groups meeting monthly to be accountable around questions such as 'how can we be ambassadors for Christ and grow our own or our employers business' and 'how do we hold onto kingdom perspectives when we are under pressure? These are known as incubator groups and are ready to multiply.

"Our aim with these initiatives is to love and serve the city of Sheffield, impact it and change the fabric of society. We have the opportunity to identify and equip key influencers and leaders as well as supporting people in their day to day work," says Anne. "One of the men attending the Faith@Work seminars has an area of responsibility impacting 20,000 people. If there are followers of Jesus in these kinds of jobs it will make a huge difference to the extension of the kingdom in our world."

Men from AAVM in Århus, Denmark are also bringing kingdom values to the world of entrepreneurial business.

"We have been supporting these guys to help them reach out to their non-Christian contacts and bring kingdom values to their field of work," explains their pastor Keld Dahlmann. "They are also able to bring the gospel to people who would probably never take an Alpha course.

"One of our men was doing a consultancy course for several companies. At lunch-time he brought in the leader of our gospel choir to do a gospel session with the businessmen he was working with, so all the company CEO's were singing

Gospel and loving it! Afterwards they asked the gospel singer to sing for them. He sang two worship songs and I think several men cried because they were so touched by the Spirit. And this was in the midst of a totally secular set-up.”

4. In conclusion: engaging with the context

Joel Colon of **The Antioch Movement**, Ukraine, teaches potential church planters a concept called ‘The Circle of Accountability’,⁸ as one of the best ways of putting feet to principles and helping people engage realistically with an area.

“We ask the teams to pray about and define a specific geographical area, and commit to sharing the gospel with every man, woman and child at least once within that area. They find out the demographics – for instance if there is a hospital in the area, or schools with lots of young people. So you might develop a sports ministry, or a team to visit the sick – but don’t know that until you know who the people you want to reach are.”

It is all about ‘faces’.. giving people a repeated opportunity to hear the gospel and saying ‘do I see that face when I pray’

The ‘Circle of Accountability’ helps teams know where they are going and focus their prayers and resources of time, money and people in an incarnational way. And like all the methods described in this paper, at its heart is the desire to reach people with the Gospel and see their lives changed by God.

“It is all about ‘faces’,” says Joel, “giving people a repeated opportunity to hear the gospel and saying do I see their face when I pray?”

And this, says Jocken Hackstein, a church planter in Berlin with Vineyard D.A.CH, is the responsibility of every man and woman. “We have discovered that everything goes through personal relationships,” he says. “If it will not

happen through the normal Christian woman or man it will NOT happen. The first and absolute highest priority a Christian has is to be a light and witness to the lost.”

END NOTES

¹ Watch a You Tube video (in Swedish) about pannkakskyrkan at <http://uk.youtube.com/user/pannkakskyrkan>

² Europe – the religious context by Rev Darrell Jackson, Encounters mission ezine Issue 12 June 2006 Download from www.redcliffe.org/encounters

³ Bob Hopkins ‘Making sense of emerging church’ <http://www.acpi.org.uk/stories/5%20Making%20sense%20of%20emerging%20church.htm>

⁴ See ECPN concept paper 1: ‘Mid-size mission’ for more about mid-size communities

⁵ News item in Church Times newspaper 14 September 2007 www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=44431

⁶ Bob Hopkins ‘Making sense of emerging church’ <http://www.acpi.org.uk/stories/5%20Making%20sense%20of%20emerging%20church.htm>

⁷ Hirsch, Alan ‘The Forgotten Ways’ published by Brazos Press (2006) pg 135

⁸ This concept comes from material in ‘Finding God’s Purpose for the Church: Training Kit’ written by Dwight Smith and Robert Mountford see www.xpansion.org/www_xperience.html#training and download a sample lesson.

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