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# A Way of Reaching out to the Community for a Swiss Reformed State Church

Richard Stern

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# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

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A WAY OF REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY  
FOR SWISS REFORMED STATE CHURCH

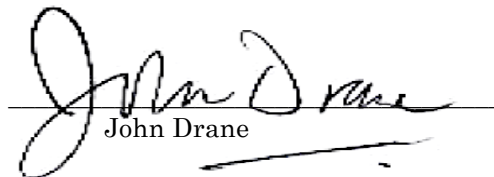
Written by

RICHARD STERN

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

  
John Drane

  
Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: June 2, 2014

A WAY OF REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY  
FOR A SWISS REFORMED STATE CHURCH

A DOCTORAL PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

RICHARD STERN  
APRIL 2014



ABSTRACT  
**A Way of Reaching out to the Community for a Swiss Reformed State Church**  
Richard Stern  
Doctor of Ministry  
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary  
2014

The Church often neglects reaching out because “mission” for her ended at the time of the apostles and has received a negative connotation. Part One of this doctoral project presents the development in one parish, as well as some of the relevant demographic realities in and around Kirchberg/BE. Cultural changes will be discussed as well, such as the change from farmer community to sleeping community, the development of a shopping mile, the distance between the people and the Church. Then, the parish of Kirchberg is presented, looking back on thirty years. Numbers show that more and more people are leaving the church; baptisms, confirmations, and the total number of members have been on the decline.

Theological reflections in Part Two will review an essay, “Reformation Views of the Church,” by Paul Basden and David S. Dockery; a book, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, by Jürgen Moltmann; and a report by the General Synod of the Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church*. The state parish system will be discussed and the relation of mission and Church is examined. Mission is shown as flowing from God and therefore essential to the Church. Mission is relational and Jesus’ life proves that reality, as evident in Matthew 16:13-20: in a heathen setting the Church is built. Finally, this section will examine what is indispensable for Jesus and therefore for the Church.

In Part Three, an art project and a theme for the year is described. Detailed planning and evaluation is set out to help the whole church and every subgroup in it to reach out into the community. All of this has started on the basis of relationships and friendships that are still growing, which should be the basis for any outreach. They point beyond, to the essence of God’s perfect relationship in the Trinity.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 300

I want to dedicate this project to my amazing wife and my two wonderful sons, who have been a support all these years of working for it and completing the doctoral project. They were willing to bear many moments of me not being around. They cheered me on and celebrated with me.

I also want to dedicate this project to the Reformed Church of Kirchberg, to whom I owe a lot. Many parishioners have supported me on the process of this project and have given me their input. Many possibilities of outreach and implementation were possible in that context.

I also dedicate this to the Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne, who gave me the possibility to take time off to write and study and who gave me the many contacts and opportunities to practically work on the subject.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to give credit for all the excellent editing work that has been done by Kristie Savage, without which this paper would have not become what it has.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the doctoral project is to develop a culture that will engage the Reformed parish of Kirchberg, Switzerland in the local community by developing a joint community and church art project. It is hoped that this project will bring both together, resulting in a church for the community and a community more aware of and participating in the church. As one of five pastors in a local parish, I am interested to see how the Reformed parish of Kirchberg can move towards becoming a church that gives itself away to the community as God freely gives himself away to humankind. The concept of the *missio Dei*, used by Lesslie Newbigin at an International Missions Conference in 1952 at Willingen, Germany and developed further later, relates the depth of who God is in his being a God who gives himself away within Trinity.<sup>1</sup> The Father gives to the Son; the Son gives to the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit gives to the Father.

The word “mission” has been avoided in the Swiss Reformed state churches because of all kinds of connotations the term tends to bring with it. Some avoid the term for political reasons, not wanting to have anything to do with any colonialist idea. Others avoid the term because nearly everyone in Switzerland is thought to be a Christian,

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of *missio Dei* is commonly used by the South African missiologist David J. Bosch in his book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). Newbigin has brought it into the discussion even much earlier. It forms the foundation for much of the missional thinking in the US and UK, and in some parts of Germany and Switzerland as well. A few examples of writers using the concept as the basis for their work are: Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Church of England Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004); Michael Girgis, *Einführung in die missionale Theologie*, <http://www.igw.edu/downloads/> (accessed October 4, 2011); and Wolfgang Huber, *EKD-Ratsvorsitzender: Mission ist nicht peinlich*, [http://www.ekd.de/aktuell\\_presse/news\\_2006\\_04\\_03\\_2\\_missionale.html](http://www.ekd.de/aktuell_presse/news_2006_04_03_2_missionale.html) (accessed October 4th, 2011). In this last source, the EKD president of the council Wolfgang Huber, which is the established Church of all of Germany, asserts in a missional conference that believers are not to be ashamed to talk about missions.

whether due to infant baptism or simply by being born in the region. With this idea there is no reason to think about mission, at least in one's own country.

My own passion for a “God, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16) has come since I attended a conference called “Manchester 83.” I first heard God's call in the context of looking at a God who is a sending God, a Jesus who is a sending Jesus, and therefore a Church that is a sending Church. The conference sermons were taken from Acts 1-4, and John Stott was the main speaker. The conference was held in Manchester in 1983. It was the first time I ever heard and clearly understood what the Good News is and what it accomplishes, as well as what consequences it has for the Christian community, for myself, and for all of life. The importance of the Holy Spirit for any kind of spreading of the gospel became obvious to me, and this kingdom perspective had to include the breadth (all people of all nations and races) and the depth (home, work, economics, politics, education, and so on) of all of life.

As mission is only slowly becoming a topic of discussion within the Swiss Reformed Church, it is hoped that the strategy presented here will help the Church to embrace the concept fully. Mission ought to be the breath of life of the Church as the people of God should reflect God himself. The Church should not be “sent” only because the Bible mandates that it be sent. Neither should mission be another activity added to everything else. Rather, the Church should be self-giving as God himself is self-giving: “God so loved the world that he gave his only son” (John 3:16). As a self-giving Church and a self-giving people, Christian communities would be full of salt and light, full of creative and beautiful ways of the people of God giving themselves away. In this way, the being of God is shown and lived, and the glory of God is evident to all.

It is hoped that the Reformed church in Kirchberg will serve as an example for other churches in the state church to follow. The strategy will involve church members' journeying with those who are far from Jesus and even further away from the Church. There are many who say that they do not need any church to have a faith. Others claim to be on a spiritual journey but would not consider attending a church. Still others do not want to pay their church taxes any longer. It is for these individuals that the strategy in this project is intended.

The first part of this project will map out the context of the church in Kirchberg. The parish of the Reformed church of Kirchberg includes nine villages; most people live in the town areas, but others live in more rural parts. Within this nine-village area, 70 percent of the population (9,000 of 12,860) belongs to the Reformed Church. The percentage jumps to over 80 percent once the members of the Roman Catholic Church are added to this number. There has been growth in the Kirchberg area over the past few years. Many apartment buildings are being built in the area, and a major shopping mile, built about fifteen years ago, has been attracting people from afar.<sup>2</sup>

The second chapter in Part One will detail the ways in which the Reformed church in Kirchberg has moved away from its own members (that is, people who are officially members of the church but who do not actually attend services) as well as others living in the area. Both groups of people have little or no contact with the church anymore. A majority of residents still pay church taxes and they are officially members, but for them the church has little or no meaning. They are customers only when they need

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<sup>2</sup> A shopping mile is a large shopping area with several stores along one road. It is called "Einkaufsmeile" (shopping mile) as it is like a mile-long street where large shopping centers are located. As this long road is parallel to the highway, it has become easily accessible by car. See Appendix 1.

the services, but they hope not to have to call upon them. They have contact with the church at baptisms, at confirmations, at funerals, and at weddings.

Programs at the church generally gather the same people, and the average age attending a Sunday service tends to be over sixty. The generation of those between twenty and forty years of age is almost entirely missing in the church context. In the past the church could expect most members to come to the church, attend programs, and in some way be involved. Today the church will have to reach out to the members as well as to nonmembers in the community. This concept of reaching out is foreign to the Reformed State Church and needs to be developed and applied. As a synod member of the Reformed Church of the Kanton of Berne and as a board member of a national forum of positive Christians within the Reformed State Church of Switzerland, I have become aware of some of the trends challenging the Church today.

The second part of this paper will engage in the biblical and theological data relevant to the challenge of developing a culture of outreach at the Reformed church of Kirchberg. Key sources will be examined, giving special attention to the works of Paul Basden and David S. Dockery, by Jürgen Moltmann, and a report by the General Synod of the Church of England titled, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*. This section will also consider ways the Church of England, the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland (EKD), and exponents of the Swiss Reformed Church are dealing with the challenges they are presented with today. The theological inquiry will examine the foundational nature of the Church in terms of *missio Dei*—God’s mission. This section will provide the need for outreach and an understanding of church as a church for the community. It will examine the possibility of

a baptismal approach to mission. This is to open the door to a fresh understanding of how the Reformed State Church can reach out.

The third part of the paper will present the strategy and goals for a culture of outreach around “church art” and the theme of the year, “love, hope, and faith.” This initiative seeks to deepen the contact between the church and the community, and it will help prioritize goals of the church’s future by being founded in mission. The purpose of this project is to walk with the whole church towards a culture of outreach. This will be achieved by a common theme of “love, hope, faith” for a year and a platform of an art project on that topic. Within the church, every subgroup will have an opportunity to develop ways to reach out. The exhibit will be open for everyone to visit. There, a first contact to a place of closeness to God can be made. There, a contact point between church and community is created.

It is hoped that the exhibit will be a “sacred space.” Churches themselves are such “sacred spaces”; often in a large, old church there is an atmosphere of awe that causes people to be quiet. Many people visit churches on their travels to different parts of the world. But as soon as they come back home there is no church they visit anymore. Instead they visit shopping malls, gyms, sports stadiums, clubs, and restaurants. Some are Trader Joe’s visitors, some are Ikea goers, some are Migros shoppers, and some are Coop shoppers.<sup>3</sup> Some go to Denner, Aldi, and Liedl (discount food shops in Switzerland), but others would never enter one of those except for very specific items.

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<sup>3</sup> Migros is an association discounter that dominates the food market in Switzerland almost without any brand names. Coop is the second largest food provider in Switzerland and has only brand products offered.

Sacred space in those contexts has brought me into contact with people at the shopping mile in Kirchberg. I have formed friendships with the owner of a furniture company and with a curator, who runs art galleries and creates all kind of arts events. My friendship with the art gallery owner sparked the idea for the project outlined in this paper. This friend was so concerned about the Kirchberg church communicating its values to the world around that he envisioned the idea of an art show around the church itself. The church building already has a lot of foot traffic, as people are often visiting the graveyard next to the church. The church council accepted the project in the fall of 2010, and it was to be realized in 2012, but for reasons that will be explained in a later chapter, the project did not take place at that time. My passion is to see the subgroups of the church rally around one topic in order to reach out, and that the community will get involved in what the church is doing. My hope is that this will be an example of reaching out for other churches to follow.

PART ONE  
MINISTRY CHALLENGE



## CHAPTER 1

### CHANGES IN THE PARISH OF KIRCHBERG

Kirchberg, which means “church mountain” in English, is a church that goes back to the tenth century. It has been built on a hill that can be seen from afar. As a community Kirchberg was given city rights but did not develop as a city; rather the area developed as a group of villages connected to each other. The church that is on the hill now was built in 1506 and tells a lot of stories of a rich past. Not only did the Reformation begin in 1528, but persecution of Anabaptists and witches was taking place as well, of which there is still some detailed account in the church archives.

The church was used for non-religious matters in addition to its regular use as a church. The church was an arm of Berne’s legal authority, and as such the court of the chancel played for a long time an important role. Official information of the state of Berne was given at the church, and a court came together to deal with juridical matters. This went on into the nineteenth century. The villages connected together were mostly rural areas. There was very little industry developing in Kirchberg itself.

For many centuries the church and the political community were closely related and had much to do with each other. It was therefore difficult to separate the parish from

the political communities. Only recently has there been a move towards the church and the state separating.

But today a change is happening whereby more and more church issues are being dealt with within the structure of the church. The pastors are employed by the state, and so in the past the state took upon itself the responsibility to look after the pastors. A regional pastor appointed by the state interviewed pastors. Recently, however, the responsibility of human resources in regards to pastors is slowly given over to the church, and the state is imparting the finances to do so. Additionally, many of the vicarages, which historically have belonged to the state, are being given over to the local parish in the state of Berne.

### **The Community of Nine Villages**

The nine villages more and more came to work together. The one parish included and still does include the nine villages as one "Reformierte Kirche Kirchberg."<sup>1</sup> For a long time the common graveyard and the big church on the hill have been a uniting factor for the region. The nine villages are even today politically independent entities. Even one of the smallest ones, with about 150 residents, has a political council of its own and they make their own local decisions. The nine villages started to work more closely together as they started a common secondary school 150 years ago in the nineteenth century. The old people's home, the secondary school, the graveyard, and the common place of transport for the goods of the farmers are the reasons why the nine communities work together. Every village sends its delegate to the association of communities to decide

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<sup>1</sup> Kirche Kirchberg (Kirchberg Church) website, [www.kirche-kirchberg.ch](http://www.kirche-kirchberg.ch) (accessed October 1, 2011).

upon the issues of the old people's home, the secondary school, the graveyard, and issues that concern the farmers in the area within a certain given framework.<sup>2</sup>

### Recent Changes

The community has generally been a farmer's community, and the farms have stayed in families for decades. Even today sometimes one gets the impression that belonging to one of the villages would mean having lived there for at least three generations. The community is changing, though. Industry has developed. More and more people have moved to Kirchberg who work in other towns. Since 1980 there has been a doubling of the population of the villages, and this population growth is comprised primarily of people who live in Kirchberg but work elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> This change to being largely a "sleeping community" has changed the shape of the villages. Many people who work outside are only home in the evenings and on weekends.

### New Gathering Places

Adults meet each other mainly through their children at school or through sports that they have in common. The bakery, the post office, the butcher, and the small general store are slowly losing importance in terms of meeting places. The small general store and the bakery have since closed. The traditional clubs, associations, and local political parties are finding it difficult to find new members. People are much more mobile and drive to centers (malls) and larger towns outside of Kirchberg to get their groceries once

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<sup>2</sup> Ann-Marie Dubler, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, s.v. "Lyssach," <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D252.php> (accessed October 11, 2011). Lyssach is the administrative district of Berne.

<sup>3</sup> Kirchberg, Switzerland Local Archives, no date. As a pastor I had the possibility to look into the local archives and see the different figures that show the growth. The farming population is decreasing and there is still a slow increase of other population.

a week. It is easier to find everything in one place rather than going to different small shops. While people used to walk from one little shop to the next in the village, they now get what they need by car.

In 1996 Ikea opened a big furniture shop near the highway Bern-Zürich on the grounds of Lyssach, one of the nine villages of the parish. This brought a big sports shop there as well as a big German media shop, Mediamarkt. Mediamarkt also brought Ochsner, a sportswear and sports shoe store, to join them in their building. Since then Conforama and Pfister, two of the biggest furniture shops in Switzerland, opened up shops there. There has been another set of shops with beds, kitchens, and golf stores in them that has opened in the same shopping mile. Even one of the larger grocery places has opened its home and hobby market there with a large food section as well. In that center are a Toys R Us and many other shops as well. People have been coming from as far away as one hundred kilometers, first for Ikea and now for all the different furniture shops. It has become a shopping mile of regional importance. In the last couple of years there has been a gallery in one of the furniture shops trying to convince people to buy art from local artists rather than buy prints from the shop to decorate their houses.

Shopping has become an event in itself; it is more than just getting what is needed. It is a place to meet, have cheap coffee or even a meal, and wander around in a vast space with a lot of possibilities to buy. Buying becomes a lifestyle more than a bare necessity. Each of the centers has its own restaurant or coffee shop to support and strengthen the event and the lifestyle of shopping. Looking at some of the big parking areas, it is as if masses of people meet, eat, buy, and shop in these centers day in and day out.

These centers have become places where people meet and spend time together as families. It is also a place where teenagers and kids “hang around.” The local clubs and the village store are less and less the meeting places for the community. The school is the first place of contact but beyond school the networks become important. With my own children, their friendships centered around their school and neighborhood when they were young; now that they have graduated from high school their friendships are based on common interests and sports. Many school friends have moved away, and they have remained friends with only a few of the neighborhood kids. Mobility has opened up local village structures and has brought about a different kind of setting.

Other changes include the influx of foreigners and people who belong to non-Protestant religions. One of the nine villages has a high percentage (around 20 percent) of people of other nationalities living there, mostly because there are low-cost apartments available for rent. People moving to the area will either come from non-Christian religious backgrounds, are Roman Catholic, or are without any confession of faith. Thus, the number of the Reformed members is decreasing slowly.

### **Beliefs and the Role of the State Church in the Community**

Believing has become a private issue in Kirchberg, but it still has a high traditional value. For today’s grandparents, the church meant something and even still means something. For today’s parents, church functions more as insurance, offering services that one would rather not ask for, as with funerals or in crisis situations. Other than that the church also offers services in baptisms, confirmations, and weddings. The parents will not necessarily show up at church but will want to have their children take

part and be confirmed. Their children will attend the church education program and confirmation class starting in the third grade. For most kids, these classes are not the most "in" thing to do once they reach seventh or eighth grade.

A helpful way of approaching the challenge faced by the Church in this time is by considering the progression of traditional knowledge developed by Anglican bishop John Finney. In a lecture given by Hans-Hermann Pompe in Berne in September 2011, Pompe cites Finney's work, which is titled in English, *To Germany with Love*. Finney interprets the growing loss of knowledge of faith and the growing alienation from church. Finney lists some basic subjects of the Christian faith that everyone who grows up in the context of a church would learn. This list is comparable to a catechetical claim of a *Volkskirche* (that is, an established church), which would include statements about: 1) the life of Jesus: who he was, what he said, and what he did; 2) the meaning of his death and resurrection; 3) the important Christian festivities: Christmas being more than ox and donkey, Good Friday being more than prohibition of dance, Easter being more than rabbits, and the same for Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and the like; 4) living worship in the context of church; and 5) Christian lifestyle: having an idea of the Ten Commandments, love of one's neighbor, worldwide justice, conservation of creation, and the like.<sup>4</sup>

Finney explains that in the first generation the parents and children go to church and know the basics. Evangelism in this context is preaching or proclaiming in church.

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Hermann Pompe, "Mission als Chance der Volkskirche," lecture given in Berne, September 10, 2011, <http://www.landeskirchenforum.ch/bericht/58>. Pompe, the lecturer, echoes what Finney says in a comparison of the Anglican Church with the German Church. See John Finney, *To Germany with Love: Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland aus der Sicht eines Anglikaners* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Aussaat, BEG-Praxis, 2011). Finney's book was originally written in English; the above referenced version is the German translation.

The next generation has parents who send their children to church but the parents do not take part any longer. All still know the important Christian statements. Evangelism in that context is preaching to large crowds and small groups. When these children grow up, in generation three, they do not send their children to church anymore. Only the adults know the Christian statements. Evangelism becomes nurture groups for those who are seeking. In generation four, no one goes to church any longer, no one knows the Christian statements, and evangelizing becomes baptismal training. Between 1980 and 2000 the population without a confession has tripled.<sup>5</sup>

The decision to leave the established Church comes from different motives. Three reasons seem to come up often: 1) church and faith has lost any relevance to life; 2) the conviction that faith is also possible without church; and 3) the economizing of church taxes.<sup>6</sup> In Kirchberg, the fact that 70 percent are still members of the Reformed Church is unique in that this is a high percentage as compared to other places in Switzerland. And yet things are changing, even in Kirchberg. According to internal counts in the parish of Kirchberg, the number of those leaving the church has doubled since 2002.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Church and the Community Have Little Common Ground**

The church and the community have little common ground anymore. In some of the nine villages it was and still is common to have a church service at major cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Schweizer Bundesamt für Statistik (Swiss department of statistics), <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/01/05/blank/key/religionen.html> (accessed September 8, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> “Kirchenaustritt: Bedingungen, Begründungen, Handlungsoptionen” (“Leaving the Church: Conditions, Reasons, Options for Action”), in *Kirche Empirisch: Ein Werkbuch (Church Empirically: A Workbook)*, ed. in German by J. Hermeling and T. Latzel (Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 95ff.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 2, last column, based upon [www.kirche-kirchberg.ch](http://www.kirche-kirchberg.ch), intranet (accessed October 17, 2011; accessible only by staff).

festivities. At some of the festivities that has been taken away from the program, as people do not want to get up any earlier or just to make an end to that tradition. For many years schools supported the use of classrooms for religious education, and connections between local clergy and teachers were close; but today that cannot necessarily be expected. A head of a school in one of the nine villages recently said to me, “The religious education the church offers is not for everybody anymore; it has lost its cultural imperative to point back to the roots and educate in that sense.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, something that was offered for all the children concerning the roots of Switzerland and Europe, and getting to know what the Bible is, was put in the category of private affairs. More and more, the church on the hill and the community around it has very little in common.

#### Reformed Church Membership

Some people call those members who are not connected with or involved in the church the “silent majority.” They still are members of the church and pay church taxes, requesting the services if necessary. But this term does not really work, in that it gives the idea that in a democratic vote a lot of people could be mobilized that are not seen regularly at church. Others call them “nominal Christians”—those who are members by having their names on a list of membership. In that sense most Christians are members of one or another church, except churches who do not have a membership policy as some of the independent churches (like Calvary Chapel). To contrast nominal Christians with those who have a statement of belief and know in their hearts to be children of God seems to be a delicate task. To do this is to make a statement regarding someone’s heart

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<sup>8</sup> Kurt Bärtschi, head of a school in Kanton, Switzerland, in a personal conversation with the author, May 2009.



convictions, which in turn involves defining more specifically what one should believe or what orthodox Christianity encompasses. Going down this road can end in splitting the Church into even smaller designations based on fine points of disagreement.

Developments in the U.S. Christian Reformed Church (hereafter, CRC) and United Reformed Church (hereafter, URC) are evidence of this. In the split between the CRC and the URC in the U.S., the Reformed statements of faith (Heidelberg Catechism, Canon of Dordt, and the Belgic Confession) were taken as the point of reference.

A definition in Wikipedia gives an idea how it can sound trying to find a so-called Christian definition for a nominal Christian: "A nominal Christian is one who says he/she is a Christian, but does not possess a trusting, faithful, dependent relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ; relationship made possible by Christ's propitiation on the cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit to those predestined by God the Father."<sup>9</sup> This kind of statement begs the question of who is going to make this determination. Even an outside confession to what is put here does not provide any idea of an inward reality. Further, this kind of approach starts with the personal and ends there. But Christianity ought to start with Christ and end there. A different way of putting it would be to speak of customers (those who do use certain services and programs of the church), followers (those who are committed to service in the church and a personal life of faith), and nominal members (those who are on the membership list and who pay taxes, but who only contact the church in the event of a funeral). The threefold distinction is another way of smoothing

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<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia, s.v. "nominal Christian," [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_is\\_a\\_nominal\\_Christian](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_a_nominal_Christian) (accessed September 29, 2011).

over the tension and polarity between various types of members, which leads to misunderstandings.

Most people belonging to the Kirchberg Reformed parish are members of the church through infant baptism, even though the numbers of baptisms in our own church have dropped from a high of 122 in 1990 to 47 in 2010. Some people are remaining members by the fact that they are born to Reformed parents, even though they themselves are not baptized. The public domains are pushing the Church back into the private sphere. The interference of only one parent has been enough for a local school leader to step back from any supporting of church activities. Those who are nonmembers play an important role in doing so.

### **Openness to Spirituality and the Institutional Church**

In general the interest in spiritual issues is still high, even though people are turning away from the Church. The quest for spirituality makes people turn to all kind of answers, but not to the established Church. In fact the church seems to be the last place people go to seek for answers on a spiritual journey. The range of spiritual and religious answers is wide and there are a lot of options to choose from. When opening the daily local newspaper one can find many offers from various spiritual backgrounds. In Western Europe, traditionally Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism are becoming more popular. The Dalai Lama is revered and the idea of reincarnation is more widely held than the ideas of eternal life or resurrection of the dead; this is the case even among members of the established Church. In an article on a website titled “Christian Reincarnation,” Dr. Jan Erik Sigdell writes, "Nach einer Umfrage der schweizerischen

Zeitung Sonntagsblick vom 16.9.2007 glauben 54 % an die Reinkarnation. Sicher ist dies keine Studie, die auf einem großen statistischen Material basiert, aber sie dürfte doch zeigen, dass die Zahl im Steigen ist."<sup>10</sup> A Gallup poll out of Princeton states that 20 percent of U.S. citizens believe in reincarnation.<sup>11</sup> The institutional Church has been slow to address the spiritually interested and offer some ways to journey with them. For a lot of these spiritual seekers, the institutional Church takes away the "life" from spirituality, restricting it to given forms instead of opening it up to the heavens and something beyond.

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<sup>10</sup> "According to a survey taken by the Sunday edition of the newspaper *Blick* from September 16th 2007, 54% of the population believes in reincarnation. Even though the statistical data does not come from a broad base it shows the direction." Dr. Jan Erik Sigdell, "Wie viele Menschen im westlichen Kulturbereich glauben an die Reinkarnation?" Christian Reincarnation website, [http://www.christian-reincarnation.com/Reink Glaube.htm](http://www.christian-reincarnation.com/Reink_Glaube.htm) (accessed September 29, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> David W. Moore, "Three in Four Americans Believe in Paranormal," June 16, 2005, Gallup Poll News Service, <http://home.sandiego.edu/%7Ebaber/logic/gallup.html> (accessed September 29, 2011).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REFORMED CHURCH OF KIRCHBERG—THE LAST THIRTY YEARS

The Reformed Church of Kirchberg has a long history. The church building itself has been there since 1506, and there must have been a Christian presence since the tenth century. With its long history, to concentrate on the last thirty years seems like a very small amount of time. The reason why focusing on the very recent past is helpful is because the church has been adapting to or accommodating enormous changes during these last three decades. The last thirty years will be discussed also because of the growth in population described in Chapter 1, which brought about a doubling of the population and a move from being a farmer community towards being a sleeping community with industry and malls.

#### **Historical Milestones—Diversification**

The growth in population in the Kirchberg area has had a great impact on the church. What used to be more rural has become more city-like; what used to be done by one and then two pastors is now being done by more. The ministries in the church are being diversified because of better finances and because of rising needs. The mere numbers of Reformed members grew each year between 1980 and 2002 because of the

growing communities. A lot of families moved away from larger centers to rural areas, and as Kirchberg and its surrounding communities are beside a highway exit, it has made it a good place to commute from. In 2002, however, the population growth began to slow, and since that time church membership numbers have remained the same or even decreased.

One change brought about by the shift from rural to suburban is in the area of pastoral visitations. It is no longer possible to visit whole extended families at one time. When a pastor thirty years ago would visit a farmhouse, he would meet an entire family, including three or four generations. And if the pastor decided to use this time to also catechize, he would be speaking to a crowd. Only a few non-farming families lived in Kirchberg at that time. Often people then could be gathered as crowds. Individualization and the sleeping community have changed the landscape in that smaller families live in larger houses. Individuals choose what they want according to their individual tastes. The former pattern of church preaching and visiting is no longer serving all the people of the parish.

#### Additional Pastors and Staff

Because of the growth of the population, the church was able to have five pastors employed from the Kanton. Three of the five are full-time, one is 80 percent, and one is 50 percent. In addition to this, due to the parish contribution and the finances coming in from taxes of firms in the area, the church was able to employ a full-time youth worker and a catechist who is almost full-time. This has given the church a strong emphasis on youth work, which is a much-needed area in church life. Even though the youth

participate in confirmation, they have little connection with the church outside of that. There is little voluntary affiliation with anything that is going on at church, and for most of the young people, what is offered in terms of worship services is not for them. The church offers a small children's program, but Sunday school classes are getting smaller and smaller.

In addition to the traditionally still-mandatory religious education classes, there is now a whole range of youth programs available that can help young ones find a way towards understanding the basics of what Christianity is all about. As the confirmation classes grew to hold approximately seven classes each year, and all the other classes grew as well, it has been possible to employ a catechist. Now, however, the number of classes is decreasing (there are only five confirmation classes left) because fewer families with young children are moving into the area. This has changed the focus of the catechist a bit, and he is now more involved in general church work and adult education.

#### A New Caretaker of the Church

The atmosphere has also changed since 2003 with a new welcoming caretaker of the church. Often he is the one people meet first. The former caretaker was only supportive of traditional church activities and style, and even the smallest changes were not possible under his supervision. Candles were not seen in church and new kinds of music were not easily accepted. The new caretaker has changed the atmosphere to welcome new ways of speaking to people, new ways of building church, new music, and the use of new media.

## New Services

New worship services have also arisen. These services have application time built in and they take place in different rooms around the church. A movement known as “Thomas Messe” was an attempt to have church services that cater to families and to a younger audience. It has a modern children’s program, and the services are focused around a particular topic for each year. This movement within the Reformed Church of Kirchberg is led by a team trying to make the basis of the church service broader through participation. As the team is still very small, consisting of only five members, each of those on the team gets to prepare a service with one of the pastors a couple times a year.

A lay team has also started an evening service, with worship songs and with the possibility to respond to the sermon with an open microphone. Many other kinds of services have come about, including services using local music groups. Some of these groups are the local yodeling clubs, or local brass bands, which are still a tradition in some of the villages, or choirs. Very unique are the confirmation services in which the young ones participate, or those connected with religious education for the third grade students. There are also services linked to art, music, special topics, and the like. There are a great variety of services. Sometimes there are too many elements of the service that people want to have happen in a single service, trying to have many different people in mind.

### 2006: Five-Hundred-Year Celebration of the Current Church Building

The five-hundred-year celebration during all of 2006 was so special that it has to be mentioned. Not only was the church willing to put a lot of money into the project for

the whole year, but the event led people month by month through the history of the parish and the church since 1506 in fifty-year periods. Often there was enough local material to work with for interesting events. While recollecting the first fifty years, a theater piece of Niklaus Manuel from Berne, which was instrumental for the Reformation, was played, and the new Luther film was shown. During the year, the church portrayed history linked with the church. Some parts of the history were negative, such as the persecution of the Anabaptists and witches, while other parts were positive, such as the many people who came, prayed, worshiped, partook communion, were baptized, got married, mourned with the sick, and grieved the loss of loved ones.

### **Development of Ministries and Subgroups**

As the notion of people coming to church is coming to an end, people in the Kirchberg area today no longer look for help from the pastor when they are in need of counseling. They do not come and turn up at the pastor's study any longer, and the programs developed involve people already coming to the church. But in a generation in which people do not even come to church on Sunday, it is unlikely that they come to the church programs at any other day. Often the same people come to the various programs offered, and this tends to be a group of regular attendees. A major change from a "come" structure (that is, people coming on their own accord) to a "go" structure (that is, church people and leaders going to where people are) is needed at the Kirchberg Reformed Church.



## Decrease in Baptisms and Cancellations of Membership

General studies in Switzerland paint a negative picture of a Church getting older, smaller, and poorer. One of the main recent studies that evidence this trend is the Stolz/Ballif study, asked for by the Swiss Church Federation.<sup>1</sup> The general statement that modernization and secularization have brought about the disinterest in religion and the decrease in church membership is being strongly questioned.<sup>2</sup> The theological working group of the Reformed Church of Kanton of Berne commented on the Stolz/Ballif study: "Insbesondere die Situation in den USA, einer der am stärksten modernisierten und trotzdem hochgradig religiösen Gesellschaften, stellt eine direkte Korrelation von Modernisierung und Säkularisierung nachdrücklich in Frage. Eine neue umfangreiche Untersuchung zur Säkularisierung plädiert auch für Europa für eine wesentlich differenzierte Sichtweise."<sup>3</sup>

Yet the numbers for all of Switzerland are giving a picture of a changing Church in the future. Since 1950 there has been a general decrease of members of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jörg Stolz and Edeée Ballif, *Die Zukunft der Reformierten: Gesellschaftliche Megatrends - Kirchliche Reaktionen* (Zürich: TVZ Verlag, 2010). See also the report and proposal given at the assembly of delegates of the federation of protestant churches of Switzerland on November 18, 2010 concerning constitutional revision: Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Die Umfeldanalyse Stolz/Ballif" (aus: "Für einen Kirchenbund in guter Verfassung, Bericht und Antrag des Rates des Schweizerischen Evangelischen Kirchenbundes SEK an die Abgeordnetenversammlung vom 8.19. November 2010 betreffend Revision der Verfassung"), [http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH\\_INF\\_Umfeldanalyse-Stolz\\_2011.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH_INF_Umfeldanalyse-Stolz_2011.pdf) (accessed October 6, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Karl Gabriel, "Die Religionen bleiben," *Über den langen Abschied von der Säkularisierungsthese* (2010): 12-14.

<sup>3</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Düstere Zukunft der Reformierten? Stellungnahme des Arbeitskreises Theologie zu Stolz and Ballif, *Die Zukunft der Reformierten*," [http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH\\_Arbeitskreis\\_Stolz\\_2011.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH_Arbeitskreis_Stolz_2011.pdf) (accessed October 6, 2011). The translation is: "Especially the situation in the US, one of the most strongly modernized and yet profoundly religious societies, puts a direct correlation between modernization and secularization into question. A new comprehensive study about secularization pleads as well for Europe a much more differentiated point of view." See also: Hans Joas, *Die religiöse Lage in den USA*, in *Säkularisierung und die Weltreligionen*, ed. by Ders./Klaus Wiegandt (Frankfurt a.M. 2007), 358-375; and Charles Taylor, *Ein säkulares Zeitalter* (Frankfurt a.M. 2009).

Reformed Church. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 60 percent of the population of Switzerland belonged to a Reformed Church, while today it is barely 33 percent. This change affects most of the Kantonal churches. This development is most clearly seen in the cities of Geneva and Basel (from 1970 to 2000, Basel has lost 63 percent of its members, and Geneva has lost 62 percent) and in the larger cities (Zürich, Berne, and Lucerne). In 2006, among the churches of the Swiss federation, the number of people who left the Church was five times higher than the number of those who joined the Church. Those most likely to leave the Reformed Church are: men, younger people, people living in larger cities, people without children, those in higher-cultured classes, those in higher-income classes, and those living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Their reasons for leaving are a lack of interest in religious questions and church programs and a refusal to pay church taxes. Erosion of a sense of belonging can be seen among all members (including active members, occasional church attendees, and nominal but non-attending members). A good third of all members have already considered leaving the church,<sup>4</sup> and only 10 percent of all Reformed members go to church every Sunday, most of these being seventy years old and older. A departure from tradition is taking place.

According to the general statements of the development in the Kanton of Berne, the projection to 2030 is a linear decrease down to not less than 50 percent members of the total population of the Kanton of Berne. This is not the only way of looking at the numbers. Nothing in the numbers denies the possibility of an exponential decrease. In some of the Kantons bordering Berne this has been the case with immense financial

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<sup>4</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Düstere Zukunft der Reformierten?"

consequences. If one additionally considers the possibility of a future split of church and state, which is discussed more and more in the traditional centers of Zürich and Berne, it could mean that one would be faced with a similar situation as was found in the city Kanton of Basel City, where more than 60 percent of the members left the Church after church and state split, and the Church tax bill was coming from the Church and not automatically from the state anymore. In rural areas the changes will be slower than in cities because traditions still are more strongly held. But even in the Kirchberg parish, which is in a rural area, there is a noticeable decline. Since 2002 in Kirchberg, the number of people who leave the church doubles each year, and baptisms have gone down by half since 1980, with half of the population living in the area. Confirmations per year since then have dropped by almost half. Only funeral services per year have increased a bit since 1980. Now there are also about three or four new members each year.

### **Mission Statement and Its Relevance**

The Reformed Church of Kirchberg has the following mission statement:

Wir sind eine Kirchgemeinde, in der Menschen gemeinsam mit Gott unterwegs sind. Wir wollen mehr leben, was wir glauben, d.h. als offene Gemeinschaft im Geiste Jesu Christi Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe leben und teilen, was unser Leben bewegt.

Unsere Stärken sind eine gute Zusammenarbeit und ein vielseitiges Angebot. In Zukunft werden wir möglichst viele und verschiedene Menschen einladen, an unserem Gemeindeleben teilzunehmen. Insbesondere wollen wir der Bevölkerung in unseren Dörfern näher kommen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kirchberg Reformed Church, "Mission Statement," <http://www.kirche-kirchberg.ch/ueber-uns/allgemein/unser-leitbild/> (accessed September 30, 2012). The translation is: "We are a church community in which people journey together with God. We want to more live what we believe in terms of living as an open fellowship in the spirit of Jesus Christ faith, hope, and love, and sharing what moves our lives. Our strengths are good cooperation and a wide range of what is offered. In the future we will invite as many people as we can to participate in our community life. We want to especially get to know the people in our villages better."

The church also has a written mandate that is taken from the constitution of the Reformed Church of the Kanton of Berne:

Einen andern Grund kann niemand legen ausser dem, der gelegt ist, welcher ist Jesus Christus. 1. Korinther 3, 11

Unser Auftrag, abgeleitet von der Kirchenverfassung der evangelisch-reformierten Landeskirche des Kantons Bern:

1. Die Frohe Botschaft von Jesus Christus allen Menschen zu verkündigen.
2. Diesen Dienst zum Aufbau der Gemeinde durch innere und äussere Mission und mit weiteren Mitteln zu versehen.
3. Aufrufen der Gemeindeglieder zu Busse, Glauben, Heiligung und Teilnahme am Leben der Kirche.
4. Bezeugen des Wortes Gottes in allen Bereichen des öffentlichen Lebens, wie Staat, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur. Kämpfen gegen Unrecht sowie leibliche und geistige Not.<sup>6</sup>

The mission statement is on the homepage; it is uncertain how many members, including active members, really do know it and how much it is being applied in the church life. Coming closer to the community is mentioned as well as being an open community and sharing life together. The life lived and shining forth from the community at church is an important way to reach out to others. The church choir, the gospel choir, the different subgroups around the church, and the church coffee hour are all designed to shine forth God's presence, be as he is, sending and giving himself away to the world in some way. Both the mandate and the mission statement do not seem to influence people's mindsets or actions within the church, for in the church mostly everyone does what they

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<sup>6</sup> Kirchberg Reformed Church, "Mandate," <http://www.kirche-kirchberg.ch/ueber-uns/allgemein/unser-auftrag/> (accessed September 30, 2012). The translation is: "Another foundation no one can lay, except the one that was laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 3, 11). Our mandate derived from the church constitution of the Evangelical-Reformed Church of the Kanton of Berne.

1. To proclaim to good news of Jesus Christ to all people.
2. To fulfill this service to the building up of the community by inner and external mission and further means.
3. Calling the church-members to repentance, faith, healing and participation in the life of the church.
4. Witnessing the Word of God in every area of public life as state, society, economics, and culture. Fighting against injustice as well as against physical and spiritual need.

want to do. As long as the finances are still doing well, not much prioritizing will take place.

Mission statements are common in businesses, and they determine the way an enterprise is going. The church is not an enterprise, which is clearly stated in the mission statement and the mandate, and yet these documents will have to inform the life of the church more in the future. Interpretations of what is central to the life of the church are difficult to ascertain in an established church, and in a state church it has to take account of all members. The mandate makes clear what is to be done. Proclaiming is an important aspect in terms of reformation, proclaiming the gospel, calling everyone to repentance, faith, and sanctification. There is a need to emphasize these aspects more strongly in a world of relativism. If pastors simply proclaim whatever they would like to, adapting to what the majority of the members believe, the message of the gospel will not be heard, since many will not want to “rock the boat” too much. The church then finds itself between inclusiveness of all members (those involved as well as nominal) and exclusiveness (only gearing activities to those who are involved in church and neglecting the nominal members).

Inner and outer mission has been understood, as has been diaconal help in financing and supporting those in need in the country and outside of the country. The term “inner mission” comes out of the social involvement based on Christian foundations in the nineteenth century under Johann Hinrich Wichern in Germany. It is therefore mainly connected with diaconal work. What is called "äussere Mission" arose in a new way again with the movement of the Moravians in the seventeenth century. In that century the Reformed and the Protestants were not involved in missions at all. There is a

story about a Roman Catholic bishop asking a Reformed pastor in the seventeenth century why they were not involved in any kind missionary work. Outer missions became the part of sending out missionaries into the entire world, very often under the flag of the colonial nations. This kind of missionary activity has become very questionable in the context of the Reformed Church. This is due to the fact that it reminds people of colonialism and a sense of a top-down approach, that is, that the Christians have superior knowledge that the others need to know about, to hear, and to accept. Any mention of mission has become questionable in the church, even though, as Ralph Kunz mentions, believers no longer have the luxury of not having a missionary perspective and emphasis.<sup>7</sup> But how to bring mission and the church as we know it together is going to be a challenge for every community in the state church, and it will be an important aspect for Kirchberg, which aims to put this particular aspect of the mandate into practice.

### **The Main Ministry Goals for 2012-2013**

In 2011, the church intended to focus on organizational change. These organizational changes would have helped the church to move more easily in implementing priorities, visions, and a mission statement. After these changes were in effect, the idea was to use some of this doctoral project as a guide to determine the priorities and write down vision and mission statements with the goal of applying the priorities. This plan was made in consideration of the future, which will likely lead to a decreasing budget, and therefore it would become necessary to look at long-term

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<sup>7</sup> Ralph Kunz, "Keine Kirchenreform ohne Taufreform? Chancen und Fallstricke des tauforientierten Gemeindeaufbaus in der Postmoderne," in *Kirche in der Postmoderne*, ed. by Martin Reppenhagen and Michael Herbst (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchner Verlag, 2008), 163.

priorities now. Unfortunately, these organizational changes were rejected by the general assembly by three votes, even though the council had worked on these changes for the previous three years. Church members who have been distant from church activities were mobilized to vote against these changes. Some individuals who were against the changes went to some effort to portray those behind the changes as a “fundamentalist church council.” As a result, the church has been in some turmoil in regards to deciding its future direction.

In 2012, the church’s focus for the year was trifold—love, faith, and hope—and the whole church was to be working on an art exhibit related to the theme. This art exhibit was intended to involve participation of members of the community as well. The purpose was to see every group in the church getting involved in the mandate to reach out, the "äussere Mission." This is not a concept that is naturally on the mind of everyone in the church. Enthusiasm and willingness to share the basics of the gospel—the call for repentance, faith, and sanctification—is needed for the church to get involved in "outer mission." This concept cannot only mean sending someone somewhere far away to another country to accomplish preaching the gospel, even humbly done and without any idea of superiority. It must also include reaching out to the church’s own members and the church’s own community.

### Moving Towards a Stronger Strategic Leadership

The church must focus on its leadership. It is important to keep “diversity in unity” among the diverse theological convictions in the pastoral team, the council, and

the wider Church and mission. Currently there is a broad spectrum of theological beliefs and feelings about how to run a church.

Running Alpha courses is viewed as a program of evangelicals that is only run by those who are very much involved and engaged in the church. Those involved in Alpha courses often do not take on official positions on church boards or on the church council because they are so busy. The so-called political work on councils, commissions, and the like has traditionally been done by church members who do not attend church very often and who would not visit any Alpha course. In the Kirchberg region, serving on a church board or council would also be a way to get involved politically.

This is slowly changing, however. The theological convictions in the pastoral team in the church are quite diverse. And convictions vary too among the church council and church members. One does not really talk about it, but every now and then it comes out. It would be helpful to make the basics of one's faith something leaders and members converse about and seek to live by. Even in the pastoral team there is no discussion on issues of faith and action. In the council only strategic issues and infrastructural issues are looked at. Just making the basics of Christianity something to talk about would open windows and doors towards mission.

It is important at Kirchberg Reformed Church to make a clear statement that mission does not mean that those who share the gospel are elite or superior; rather, it is for all of those who are on a journey with Jesus, closer or further away at different seasons of their lives. It has much to do with entering together the presence of God by different entry points. As mission itself is rooted in God, it could actually be a good foundation for all that we are doing. As an established church it has been a goal to remain



diverse in all possible theological views and not become like-minded in all things, conformity of belief being more a characteristic of independent churches.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the goals of the synod council emphasize the importance of having a Reformed identity in a pluralistic society.

When things go well in a team, differences in theological understanding do not make it too difficult, but as soon as there is conflict theological differences make things more difficult. The evangelicals suddenly find themselves criticized for being too close to each other, of having camaraderie that the liberals do not have and in some ways excludes them. Suddenly it becomes a point of critique against the evangelicals that what they do is exclusive and demands being part of a “club.” The nominal members keep their distance from the church; they prefer not to have to make any decisions that have consequences for their personal beliefs. Instead they opt for an anonymous setting.

#### Alienation of Church and its Members

The membership of the Kirchberg Reformed Church varies greatly. As already shown, many are happy when things work as they always have and when services are provided when needed. The church in such a setting has a tendency to become a service church that is there to baptize, marry, confirm, and bury whenever called to do so. Religious education is still acceptable if it does not intrude too much into one’s hobbies and other activities. Church is an institution that one bears as long as it does not infringe into one's private space. Stolz and Ballif write, "Die Diagnose einer doppelten Erosion in

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<sup>8</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, “Wir erzielen Wirkung: Legislaturprogramm, 2008-2011,” [http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Downloads/Kirchenkanzlei/KomDi/KK\\_PUB\\_d\\_Legislaturprogramm\\_08-11.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Kirchenkanzlei/KomDi/KK_PUB_d_Legislaturprogramm_08-11.pdf) (accessed October 6, 2011).

der reformierten Kirche der Schweiz ist grundsätzlich unbestritten. Insbesondere dürfte zutreffen, dass viele Menschen eine stark "externalisierte" Mitgliedschaft pflegen, getreu dem Motto: Die Kirche ist für unsere Gesellschaft wichtig, nicht aber für mich."<sup>9</sup>

### Reaching Out

Some positive suggestions in reaching out include becoming an inviting church, proclaiming the love of God, testifying to the Christian faith, overcoming barriers to approaching one's neighbors, breaking out of one's milieu to approach another, being and becoming relevant, connecting faith and church, and showing how taxes help bless the people. A new Reformed identity will mean openly talking about faith and rejecting any taboos. It will presuppose that people do not have a foundation of understanding Christianity, and that there has to be training before people can even believe. People might belong but do not believe, and so a journey starts with them that leads them to get to know the basics of the faith. Part of this process is making baptism meaningful. In the future, the practice of baptism needs to be reformed. An individual might first become active in the church, then belong to the group in which he or she is active, and only then come to believe.

### Hindrances to Reaching Out

In 2001, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (hereafter, GEKE) met together in Belfast. At the plenary meeting of this group, they discussed the mission

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<sup>9</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Stellungnahme des Arbeitskreises Theologie zu Stolz and Ballif, Die Zukunft der Reformierten." Translation: "The diagnosis of a double erosion in the reformed church of Switzerland is fundamentally a given. Particularly it applies to many people, who maintain a strongly externalized membership true to the slogan: 'The church is important for our society but not for me.'"

mandate of the churches in Europe, and the group assigned a study group to look into this in detail, as a need and a problem for the protestant churches in Europe.<sup>10</sup> Even though the terms *mission* and *evangelism* are loaded negatively, the following conviction led this study group: "Wenn Mission und Evangelisation nicht Sache der ganzen Kirche ist oder wird, dann ist etwas mit dem Herzschlag der Kirche nicht in Ordnung."<sup>11</sup>

Some suggest using a different kind of terminology like "testify to our Christian faith" or "to invite to the faith in Jesus Christ" or "to proclaim the love of God to all humankind"; each of these phrases promotes the idea clearly on the one hand but offers freedom on the other hand.<sup>12</sup> According to the president of the Evangelical Church of Germany (hereafter, EKD), he is looking back to the synod of 1999 in Leipzig, where talking of God in the world was the main topic. Church without mission then became unthinkable. Yet mission, he states, has had a fate of a school child being put in the corner. This rejection, he believes, is overcome today.<sup>13</sup> The council of the Zürich church stated the following in their proposal for four-year goals: "Mission, Evangelisation und Gemeindeaufbau sind biblisch-theologische Dimensionen, die für das kirchliche Leben neu zu erschliessen und für die Arbeit in der Gemeinde fruchtbar zu machen sind. Der

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Bünker und Martin Friedrich (edited on behalf of the GEKE), *Evangelisch evangelisieren: Perspektiven für Kirchen in Europa*, (Budapest: Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE), 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 8. E. Jüngel said at the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Germany in 1999: "If mission and evangelization is not and will not be an issue of the whole church, then something is wrong with the heartbeat of the church."

<sup>12</sup> Evangelischer Gnadauer Gemeinschaftsverband e. V., "Mission: Erklärung des Evangelischen Gnadauer Gemeinschaftsverbandes, [http://www.gnadauer.de/cms/fileadmin/bilder/themen\\_texte/erklarungen/Mission\\_Stand\\_04102010.pdf](http://www.gnadauer.de/cms/fileadmin/bilder/themen_texte/erklarungen/Mission_Stand_04102010.pdf) (accessed October 12, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Mission Eine-Welt, "Christliche Mission heute," <http://www.mission-einewelt.de/index.php?id=1468> (accessed October 12, 2011).

Glaube wird von Generation zu Generation abnehmend weitergegeben. Somit stellt sich die Frage, wie Menschen auf anderen Wegen zum Glauben finden."<sup>14</sup> The members often delegate the task of helping people in need to the pastor and inner mission, even though the gospels and the book of Acts make clear that everyone is a missionary. Mission will include *martyria* (witness), *diakonia* (service), *leitourgia* (worship) and *koinonia* (fellowship).

Those who shy away from evangelism list the following fears: the fear of indoctrination, the fear of taking away of people's freedom, the fear of engaging in "narrow-minded" thinking, the fear of being pulled out of one's context, the fear found in the fervor for conversions and the pressure towards decisions, and the fear of confrontation between those who have the truth and the objects of evangelism. These are some of the fears that have been confirmed and nurtured by experiences.<sup>15</sup> And yet the GEKE sees evangelism as a learning process of the whole Church in word and deed that opens humankind up to freedom in the gospel in which encounter with Jesus Christ becomes possible. According to the GEKE, the embarrassment in Europe for mission should be laid down.

Mission in the Reformed Church of Switzerland and especially in the Kanton of Berne has not been in the focus for quite a time. It is only now starting to become a topic to look at in the established Church. It was not believed that there was a need to reach out

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<sup>14</sup> Landeskirchen-Forum, "Mission neu verstehen," <http://www.landeskirchenforum.ch/kg-aeppli> (accessed October 12, 2011). Translation: "Mission, Evangelism and building up church are biblical theological dimensions that are to be opened up and made fruitful for the church. Faith is decreasingly given on from generation to generation. So the question arises: how do people find faith in other ways?"

<sup>15</sup> Bünker und Friedrich, *Evangelisch evangelisieren*, 9.

and call the “members” to repent, believe, and take part in the life of the church, as is written in the foundational sentence of the constitution of the Reformed Church of the Kanton of Berne. As long as most people were members and in that sense socialized in a Christian context, it was not viewed as necessary to reach out to them, and those who were without any church affiliation were very few. Mission also had a colonialist connotation, the negative idea that someone is telling someone else what to believe and what is true. This does not sit well in Swiss culture, where the freedom of the individual is highly regarded. Swiss people do not like to be asked what they want upon entering a store, for example; they want to look around by themselves and only approach those working there if they have questions. So mission immediately sounds like an imposition.

Mission is often combined with the term *conversion*, which itself is often understood as to bring someone around, to change someone, to convince someone of something, or to soften someone to. It can connote the idea of people being forced to believe. This has given the whole concept a negative connotation. Often people at churches say, “We do not want to convert anybody,” and they have certain negative concepts in mind. But this is a misunderstanding of mission and conversion.

Conversion simply describes the journey towards faith. Lewis Rambo describes the conversion process with seven phases.<sup>16</sup> In their article, “Wie finden Erwachsene zum Glauben?” (“How Do Adults Find Faith?”), Johannes Zimmermann and his colleagues discuss ten phases, which are summarized as follows.<sup>17</sup> The first phase is simply the

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Johannes Zimmermann, Michael Herbst, Heinzpeter Hempelmann, Matthias Clausen, Anna-Konstanze Schröder, “Wie finden Erwachsene zum Glauben?” (“How Do Adults Find Faith?”),

context of one's background. The next phase is the period of crisis that leads to searching. Rambo discusses the external ways in which people are brought to think about faith and search for answers. The next phase is the person's contact with faith and the Church, and then comes the intense interaction with faith that is necessary. The final phases are commitment and a decision; the consequences of these are that the new faith is strengthened and encouraged.<sup>18</sup>

Mission is often viewed negatively and has been historically shown in a one-sided way. Religious freedom is a companion of mission. Mission can be seen as a core term of religious freedom. It guarantees a confession of faith and the living out of one's religious convictions. There is a negative aspect to religious freedom, which is that one can choose not to be religious, not to be disturbed, and not to belong. The positive aspect of religious freedom is that one has the right to live religiously if one chooses, and that the state is not there to answer religious questions, but rather these are left to the religious communities. Then there is the right to change one's religion. And yet adults come to believe and some of them turn around in ways similar to Saul's manner of conversion on the way to Damascus in Acts 9. Turning to faith is the human reaction to the proclamation of the gospel,<sup>19</sup> and this can be understood as "conversion," being "born again," or "repentance." These ideas are much closer to the call to "repentance, faith, sanctification,

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[http://www.ichhabs.info/ressourcen/3\\_Schroeder\\_WfEzG\\_FT\\_Evangelisation2010.pdf](http://www.ichhabs.info/ressourcen/3_Schroeder_WfEzG_FT_Evangelisation2010.pdf) (accessed April 10, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Klaus Haacker, *Glaube im Neuen Testament*, in *Biblische Theologie als engagierte Exegese*, ed. by Klaus Haacker (Brockhausverlag: Wuppertal, 1993), 131.

and taking part in the life of the church,” which is exhorted in the constitution of the Reformed Church of Berne, Jura, and Solothurn.<sup>20</sup>

Under the title, “Task of the Church,” the theological working group of the Kanton of Berne wrote the following in 2010 in reaction to the Stolz/Ballif study: “Die reformierte Kirche, die sich während Jahrhunderten generativ reproduziert hat (s.o.), muss sich neu auf den Begriff der Mission besinnen und danach fragen, in welcher Weise neue Mitglieder gewonnen werden können bzw. wie die Vermittlung des Glaubens erfolgen muss in einem Umfeld, wo die christlichen Inhalte in der breiten Bevölkerung immer weniger verankert sind.”<sup>21</sup> For too long the terms mission and “Volkskirche”<sup>22</sup> (“people’s church”) have been viewed as being diametrically opposed, but they could also be seen as helpful for each other. Mission can remind the people’s church of its mandate, and the people’s church can keep mission from becoming irrelevant. Thus, “missionary people’s church” can be a fertilization of the terms. It opens up the way for a double

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<sup>20</sup> Reformierte Kirche Bern-Jura-Solothurn, “Verfassung der Evangelisch-reformierten Landeskirche des Kantons Bern,” [http://www.refbejuso.ch/uploads/tx\\_docmng/11-010\\_Kirchenverfassung\\_02.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/uploads/tx_docmng/11-010_Kirchenverfassung_02.pdf) (accessed October 10, 2011), Article 2, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, “Stellungnahme des Arbeitskreises Theologie zu Stolz and Ballif, Die Zukunft der Reformierten,” [http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH\\_Arbeitskreis\\_Stolz\\_2011.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH_Arbeitskreis_Stolz_2011.pdf) (accessed April 10, 2014). Translation: “The Reformed Church which has reproduced itself over centuries from generation to generation must in a new way rethink the term *mission* and ask in what way new members can be won in other words, how the communication of the faith can take place in an environment, in which the Christian contents are less and less rooted in the wider population.”

<sup>22</sup> “Der Begriff Volkskirche wurde zunächst von Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) geprägt, um die Leitvorstellung der Staatskirche abzulösen und die Selbstorganisation der Kirche zu betonen, die das ganze Volk umfasst. Im 19. Jahrhundert wurde er sowohl als Kirche für das Volk und im Volk wie als Kirche des Volkes verstanden. Er wurde vom nationalsozialistischen Deutschland im Sinne einer arischen, völkischen Kirche missbraucht.” Translation: “The term people’s church was first influenced by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), in order to overcome the idea of the state church and in order to emphasize self-organization of the church that encompasses the whole population. In the nineteenth century it was also understood as church for the people and among the people as well as church of the people. It was misused by national socialistic Germany in the sense of an Arian people’s church. For more details see W. Hüffmeier, ed., *Modell Volkskirche*, s. v. “Volkskirche” (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1995), 14- 39.

movement; the old possibilities of the people's church can be used in a missionary way, and they can help to work towards the future of the Church.<sup>23</sup> Here we can get an idea how in Berne, the term mission could be taken up and newly emphasized. It still remains to be seen how that is going to look in practice in the theologically diverse churches. A large enough group of active members will become essential for the survival of the Church<sup>24</sup> to inject mission and evangelization again into its veins. The theologically diverse groups are going to include mission as essential to what they do, for as Professor Ralph Kunz from Zürich states: "The Church in Europe cannot have the luxury of an ecclesiology that is missiologically lacking and a missiology that is ecclesiologically lacking."<sup>25</sup>

There is therefore nothing that hinders going forward, based upon official statements of the Church in the Kanton, from statements of prominent theologians in Switzerland and Germany, and from a common paper done on the subject by the Church of Europe, and there are truly signs of mission being included here and there. Communities are finding new ways of meeting—for example, the Northumbria community, fresh expressions of churches throughout the UK, the centers of

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<sup>23</sup> Evangelische Kirche Im Rheinland, "Missionarische Volkskirche sein," January 14, 2010, <http://www.ekir.de/www/downloads/ekir2010-04-12missionarisch-volkskirche-sein.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Die Umfeldanalyse Stolz/Ballif," [The Environment Analysis by Stolz/Ballif], [http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH\\_INF\\_Umfeldanalyse-Stolz\\_2011.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Theologie/TH_INF_Umfeldanalyse-Stolz_2011.pdf) (accessed October 10, 2011). 6. The analysis states: "Für einen Kirchenbund in guter Verfassung, Bericht und Antrag des Rates des Schweizerischen Evangelischen Kirchenbundes SEK an die Abgeordnetenversammlung vom 18.19. November 2010 betreffend Revision der Verfassung." Translation: "For a church federation in good shape, report and proposition of the council of the Swiss Evangelical Council of Churches (SEK) to the assembly of representatives of 18th and 19th of november 2010 concerning the revision of the constitution."

<sup>25</sup> Ralph Kunz, "Keine Kirchenreform ohne Taufreform? Chancen und Fallstricke des tauforientierten Gemeindeaufbaus in der Postmoderne," 163.



"development of church" and "mission in the region" in the EKD (Germany), and the research on the church done at the centre of church development since June 1, 2010 at university of Zürich.<sup>26</sup>

Yet in the Reformed Church of Kirchberg, hindrances can still be found. Instead of having a common vision of reaching out, and getting members behind what is at the heart of who God is in his being, the Church remains diversified and everyone does what is right in his or her sight. All of what is being done in the church should be faced with some tough questions about outreach. Some helpful questions would be:

Bibel wahrnehmen und vermitteln: Wie erhöht das Vorhaben die Vertrautheit mit der Bibel, und wie erweitert es den Entdeckungshorizont für biblische Bezüge?

Spiritualität entdecken und leben: Wie kann das Vorhaben für Neu-Entdeckungen von Spiritualität Raum geben und Lust machen, und wie kann es die Tiefe und Beständigkeit von Spiritualität stärken?

Gottesdienst veröffentlichen: Wie verstärkt das Vorhaben den einladenden und beteiligenden Charakter des Gottesdienstes, und wie wahrt es den Zusammenhang mit vertrauten Gottesdienst-formen?

Gemeinschaft intensivieren und offen halten: Wie sind Übergänge von einer intensiven Gemeinschaft zu einer lockeren Bindung möglich, und wie bietet eine lockere Gemeinschaft Möglichkeiten zu einer intensiveren Teilhabe?

Durch Diakonie und Seelsorge Nächstenliebe realisieren: Wie wird bei dem Vorhaben der Diakonie oder Seelsorge der Zusammenhang zur Kirche anschaulich, und wie wird die Fachlichkeit optimal verwirklicht?

Bildungsverantwortung wahrnehmen und teilen: Wie kann das Vorhaben Raum schaffen für evangelisch begründete Bildungsziele, und wie betreibt es Bildungsförderung für die gesamte Gesellschaft?

Lebenswege begleiten und deuten: Wie ist das Vorhaben geeignet, Menschen in ihrer Frage nach Gott und in ihrer Suche nach Sinn so zu begleiten, dass sie in ihrem Geschlecht, ihrer Alters- gruppe, ihrem Milieu, ihrer Frömmigkeit und ihrer Lebenslage angesprochen werden?

Öffentlich und persönlich für den Glauben werben: Wie dient das Vorhaben dazu, dass der Glaube als öffentlich und persönlich relevant

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<sup>26</sup> Center of Church development at the University of Zürich, <http://www.theologie.uzh.ch/faecher/praktisch/kirchenentwicklung.html> (accessed October 10, 2011).

wahrgenommen wird, und was macht es als zielgerichtete Werbung für den Glauben erkennbar?

Die weltweite Kirche als Bereicherung und Herausforderung annehmen: Wie kann das Vorhaben Erfahrungen aus der weltweiten Christenheit und aus anderen christlichen Gemeinschaften vor Ort aufnehmen, und in welchem Sinne kann Kirche, die missionarisch Volkskirche ist, der christlichen Verantwortung als Partnerin in der Einen Welt nachkommen?<sup>27</sup>

Mission will have to take seriously the subject of power. The idea that mission is only for the pietistic stream prevents different groups of diverse theological backgrounds from seeing it as their emphasis too. Another hindrance might be a view that everyone is saved, that is, Christ's work is for everybody, so everyone goes to heaven and therefore evangelism is not necessary. Even to say the phrase, "by grace"—coming out of a long tradition of understanding God's work of salvation as irresistible and therefore whosoever believes will be saved (Jn 3:16)—is applied to the ones to whom grace is given. Grace applies to the elect whom God chooses to be his people. If one looks at the world through this perspective, evangelism seems unnecessary. Another possible hindrance is tradition, not having had mission on the agenda for such a long time, as the Christian faith was

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<sup>27</sup> Evangelische Kirche Im Rheinland, "Missionarische Volkskirche sein," 13-19. Translation: "Perceive the Bible and give it on: How does the plan increase the familiarity with the bible and how does it expand the horizon of discovery for biblical concepts? Discover and live spirituality: How can the plan for the new-discoveries of spirituality give room and appetite, and how can it strengthen the depth and continuity of spirituality? Publish worship services: How does the plan strengthen the inviting and participative character of the worship service and how does it keep the connection to familiar worship service formats? Intensify fellowship and keep it open: How are transitions from intensive fellowship to casual liaison possible and how does a casual fellowship open up possibilities for more intensive participation? Apply loving of neighbor by diaconate work and counseling: How will the connection to the church become visible in this plan of diaconate work and counseling and how will professionalism be in an optimal way? To exercise and share the responsibility of education: How can the plan give room for educational goals that are based on the gospel and how will it encourage education for the society. Accompany and interpret life journeys: How is the plan helpful to accompany people in their quest for God and in their search for meaning so that they are addressed in their gender, age group, their milieu, their piety and their current walk of life? Promote faith publically and personally: How does the plan serve that faith is publically and personally perceived to be relevant and what does promotion reveal to the faith. Accept the worldwide church as enrichment and challenge: How can the plan adopt experiences from the worldwide Christendom and form different Christian communities and in what sense can the church, that is missionary people's church can take serious the responsibility as partner in the one world."

passed on from generation to generation. The hindrances to mission, therefore, are tradition, universalist belief, a doctrine of election and irresistible grace, and most of all a loss of the heartbeat of God in the church.

#### Need Neglected

Very often, cultural programs to educate are set against programs to awaken faith. A third way would be to do both by teaching the basics of Christianity with a call to repentance, faith, sanctification, and taking part in the life of the church. A cultural program can do that well by using the place one is going to visit. Also a program to awaken faith can be broadened to include any questions raised and by accepting openness and breadth.

It often takes many years for someone to find his or her way back to God, and helping people along this journey requires a long-term commitment and hard work. Such work ought to be a foundational commitment of the Church. Seeing people finding their way with God must be what the Church lives for.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of a literature review of several books that are relevant to the theological questions of this project. One of these questions concerns the parish system; another question considers the development of the relationship between the political community and the local parish; and finally, a third question asks why mission has not been regarded and is still not seen as a necessity within the Protestant Church of Switzerland, and in what sense different views of church have played a role in this. For the first two questions, the discussion will focus on an essay titled, “Reformation Views of the Church,” by Paul Basden and David S. Dockery; *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, by Jürgen Moltmann, a report by the General Synod of the Church of England titled, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, and *Mission-shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church*, edited by Steve Croft. For the third question regarding the lack of emphasis on mission and evangelism in Protestant Switzerland, the literature already mentioned will be discussed, including *Mission Shaped Church*, the constitution and the church-order of the

Reformed Church of the Canton of Bern, and *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* by Reggie McNeal.

### **The State Church Parish System and the Meaning of Membership**

“Reformation Views of the Church,” in *The People of God: Essays on the Believers’ Church*, Paul Basden and David S. Dockery

In their essay, “Reformation Views of the Church,” authors Paul Basden and David S. Dockery explain that there is a tension, even a contradiction, of the Reformed view of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin between infant baptism, which is a corollary to the state church, and participation at the Lord's Supper, which for them depended on personal faith. An early Lutheran expression of the church is that it was the "community of the redeemed living and dead known only to God (Ernst Christen)."<sup>1</sup> There is a remainder of the medieval system that can be seen in the state church system. In this system, "infant baptism and the state church are corollaries": they belong together.<sup>2</sup> Any view that required personal faith, for example, the Lord's Supper, stood in opposition to the ideas that everyone in a certain territory was a Christian.

The notions of baptism and the state Church are still closely related. In today's context of the Reformed state Church, for example in the canton of Berne, membership goes on from parents to the next generation, whether or not baptism takes place. Confirmation in the Canton of Berne has become the graduation from religious education

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Basden and David S. Dockery, “Reformation Views of the Church,” in *The People of God: Essays in the Believers’ Church*, ed. Paul Basden and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1991), 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

at the church, and it has no necessary connection to the content of baptism anymore. Calvin himself clung to infant baptism, and yet he required a personal response by the believer. So the signs are given by faith, and yet what that means in baptism is not spelled out in detail. The Church is where the Word of God is purely preached and where the sacraments are administered according to the institutes of Christ. Thus, there is a view on the purity of the Church and faith as essential for the sacraments, and yet baptism continued to be performed on infants. The Church in some ways remained the religious arm of the state, and in that sense the clergy have become civil servants.

*Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, edited by Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England

*Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* is a report from a working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council presented to the General Synod of the Church.<sup>3</sup> The changing context in this case is England, and the consequences of this changing context for the Church are discussed. Community is more and more determined by leisure, work, and friendship, and less by geographical location. This referring back to the issue of parish opens up the question of whether there is a need of broadening the parish structure and giving room to networking and regional approaches, which function relationally. Mixed

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<sup>3</sup> Church House Publishing, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), ix.

economy,<sup>4</sup> which will be discussed in Chapter 4, has been the response of the Church of England, including in one parish the possibility of a network church and a parish church. The report describes the current decline of social capital, the development of a consumer culture with a personalized scale, the pleasure pursuit, and the post-Christendom reality. This leads to the realization of a critical missionary situation and the question of whether the Church has responded to evolving culture.

Steven Croft, in his book, *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today's Church*, comments that helpful new language was created as “fresh expressions of church” and “the mixed economy Church,” showing the need for different kinds of church because of the changing nature of society. So fresh expressions have become central to church life in the Church of England, and structural changes have provided for creating mission communities, focusing ordained ministry for pioneers, and encouraging lay pioneers. A concise working definition of “fresh expression of church” was developed in 2006:

A fresh expression is 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The term *mixed economy* was first used by Archbishop Rowan Williams to refer to fresh expressions and “inherited” forms of church existing alongside each other, within the same denomination, in relationships of mutual respect and support.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Croft, ed., *Mission-shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today's Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 9.



Another report, titled *Breaking New Ground*, has stated that church planting is legitimate, and supplementary to the parish principle.<sup>6</sup> New communities of Christian faith are created, and the churches planted reflect God's mission. This involves transfer of people, a corporate identity and style, a clear leadership, pastoral structures, as well as an identifiable group, culture, or neighborhood. The picture of the seed is used to visualize the process of the incarnational principle that cannot rely on the tradition, but has to be open to the context.

In the report titled, *Mission Shaped Church*, the common features of the "fresh expressions" of church are described, and they include small groups for discipleship and relational mission; meeting on a day other than Sunday; network relationships; post-denominational membership, with a leader of one denomination and members of many; and the connection to one or more resourcing networks. Missionary churches assume creedal foundation and a fresh proclamation of the faith of the Scriptures. They are focused on the triune God and on the incarnational, disciple-making, transformational, and relational principle.

*Church in the Power of the Spirit*, by Jürgen Moltmann

In Jürgen Moltmann's book, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, the author states that a church should be among the people, for the people, and with the people. He questions the future of the established Church (Volkirche) and suggests a need for the

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<sup>6</sup> Church House Publishing, *Breaking New Ground* (London: Church House Publishing, 1994).

Church to free itself from the past. Moltmann sees this as a time of crisis, as well as a time of opportunity to find a new way, "an answer a man can live and die for."<sup>7</sup>

Based on Christ and with a view towards the kingdom and the "presence and power of the Holy Spirit,"<sup>8</sup> the author sees the Church as being accountable to God and to humankind as a whole. The Church will look beyond to all things in life, as believers look to Jesus Christ in all areas of life. The more the West disintegrates, the more the Church will see itself in the framework of the entire world; Moltmann explains that this is a missionary perspective. This calls for an end to Western missions and a start of multilateral world missions.

Moltmann postulates that a state church is a church without community and commitment; instead he proposes that it should be the mature and responsible congregation. Here there is a proposed liberation of the church from the state, which would give back community and commitment. This is definitely a strong criticism against the state church as it is currently experienced in the Canton of Berne. Moltmann writes,

The sacral state in which religion binds tribe or *Volk* together does not need mission. By definition, all participate in a common life reinforced by sacramental actions. In Constantinian Christianity, the means by which the sacral order was maintained and enforced were passively received, infants being baptized and the elements of the Eucharist received kneeling with bread placed in the mouth.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, the apostolic Church proclaimed the *kerygma* to elicit an active but inevitable unequal response, which divided society into the responsive and

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<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), xvii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>9</sup> See also L. Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church-State Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 94, 112, 113-118, and 148.

unresponsive.<sup>10</sup> Such proclamation implies, unlike the sacral state, that society is *composite* and does not possess a religious unanimity.<sup>11</sup>

One could well say that in some way there is no inside or outside of the Church in a state church setting. Proclamation of the gospel has remained a strong point in the Reformed Church without asking for personal commitment. So any rhetoric of “responsive and unresponsive” or “believer and unbeliever” is questioned strongly in the Reformed Church of the Canton Bern. This also has to do with the freedom that has come from the Enlightenment and that has brought this Church to lay aside the necessity of a commitment to a Confession of Faith for the members. Members are basically born from parents who have been members before. There has been no other criterion than belonging physically to a certain parish.

Now, through decrease, there are those who become members by a conscious step and some by baptism. This conscious step will bring back the question of the responsive and the unresponsive. The great Swiss theologian Karl Barth himself, astonishingly for many, moved towards Free Church convictions. He writes, “He distinguished three modes of the church, *Volkskirche*, *Freikirche* and *Bekennniskirche*, of which the first involved solidarity with the state, the second voluntary community independent of the state but not in conflict with it, and the third a threat from the state to the essential nature of the

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<sup>10</sup> See also L. Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, 16, 19, 92, and 112-14.

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, as quoted in Nigel Goring Wright, *Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church and the Social Order in the Theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jürgen Moltmann* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 12.

church.”<sup>12</sup> In Moltmann’s theology, there seem to be tendencies towards Free Church ecclesiology under missionary concerns.

One article in Herbst and Reppenhagen’s book, titled, “From Christendom to Christianity: Beyond Secularisation History,” written by Linda Woodhead is about a shift from Christendom to Christianity. It shows how the state-instituted Church becomes the established Church in a state, and then moves on to be a member church. It is an argument that shows that a voluntary principle slowly enters into Christianity. It does this by giving authority to experience and by more and more voluntary communities emphasizing freedom of choice, that is, different forms and participation in the life of a community. Value dissonance, according to the author, can be found between the inherent “non-voluntariness” of the state church setting and the “modern values” of “liberalism and individual autonomy, democracy, equality and non-discrimination.”<sup>13</sup> It can also be found between “higher” authority and submitting to the higher good, as well as the contemporary emphasis of self-development. It can also be found by different views of relationship and which are valued today. Adding something to the cultural way forward can be a way for churches to go.

There is a decrease of the established Church and an individualization taking place; many do still believe but no longer belong. The presence of the private sphere makes religion in a new way visible. Christian community that lives in the truth of God

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<sup>12</sup> Karl Barth, “Volkskirche, Freikirche, Bekenntniskirche” [“People’s Church, Free Church, Confessional Church”], in *Evangelische Theologie* 3 (1936): 411-419.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Woodhead, IV, “From Christendom to Christianity: Beyond Secularisation History,” in Reppenhagen and Herbst, *Kirche in der Postmoderne*, 106.

has room for a life of authenticity; it can become a place of freedom. God's turning to an individual can be made in, with, and under "der von ihm gestiftete(n) Sozialität" [“the connectedness that was founded by him”].<sup>14</sup> Openness to local, parochial, or network communities are asked for. Communities with profiles and milieu orientation come along with established churches. So church is to be present in the marketplace and it is to come together in the houses.

### **Mission, *Missio Dei*, and the Church**

In his book, *The Transfiguration of Mission*, William Shenk writes, “The Reformers were diverted from mission for reasons intrinsic to their ecclesiology. The Reformation churches were institutional with an inward focus and an emphasis on control.”<sup>15</sup> Wright explains, “The state fulfilled the evangelistic imperative by coercion.”<sup>16</sup> This shows that the perspective of the Church directly influences one’s ecclesiology and understanding of mission and evangelism. Working in the Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne, one notices people’s reservation when the word “mission” is mentioned. This has to do with people’s understanding of church, as already discussed, but it also has to do with a view that has been influenced by colonialism. One example of this shift is found in the well known Basel Mission, now called Mission21,

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<sup>14</sup> Johannes Zimmermann, “Being Connected: Sozialität und Individualität in der christlichen Gemeinde,” in Reppenhausen and Herbst, *Kirche in der Postmoderne*, 152.

<sup>15</sup> W. R. Shenk, ed., *The Transfiguration of Mission: Biblical, Theological and Historical Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 12. See also: D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 245-6.

<sup>16</sup> Wright, *Disavowing Constantine*, 12.

which was one of the far-reaching missions organizations of the nineteenth century, but has moved strongly towards development and away from evangelism.<sup>17</sup>

According to Moltmann, the theology of justification of sinners in the core of Protestant belief has kept the Protestant Church away from pursuing mission.<sup>18</sup> For some Protestants, mission has “happened once and for all.”<sup>19</sup> From this particular perspective, the mission mandate as found at the end of Mark and Matthew ended with the time of the apostles. Protestant churches today exhibit teaching and proclaiming, but there is less often a call to missions. Via infant baptism, the Church reproduces itself in a Christian society. Proclamation and teaching in the Church presupposes a residue of a Christian society. The more that disappears, though, there will have to be some kind of outreach into the community added to proclamation. During the Enlightenment, as pietism considered the heart of the individual, there was a move towards missions; an ecumenical dimension, a universality of the kingdom, and a lay apostleship arose.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of “*missio Dei* and its connection to ecclesiology was a pivotal insight that Barth offered 1932 upon the stage of contemporary ecclesiology.”<sup>21</sup> Barth

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<sup>17</sup> From the portrait of the organization Mission21: “In rund 90 Projekten stehen Armutsbekämpfung, Bildungsarbeit, Gesundheitsprojekte, Friedensarbeit und Frauenförderung im Mittelpunkt.” (“In about 90 projects poverty reduction, projects of health, work of peace, and fostering women are in the center.”) <http://www.mission-21.org/ueber-uns/portraet-der-organisation/> (accessed September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

<sup>18</sup> Moltmann, *The Church*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Haynes, “Jürgen Moltann’s Missiological Outlook” (paper submitted to Paideia Student Spring Conference 2006, Dallas Baptist Seminary, 2006), 3; [http://www.academia.edu/326587/Moltmanns\\_Missiological\\_Outlook](http://www.academia.edu/326587/Moltmanns_Missiological_Outlook) (accessed August 29, 2013).

based mission on a theology of the Trinity. In 1933, Karl Hartenstein took up mission as a theological problem and talked about God doing mission and engaging people in it; this idea is based on a theology of the Trinity and eschatology. During the International Missions Council (IMR) at Willingen in 1952, God was brought in as the subject of mission.<sup>22</sup>

For Moltmann, it is clear that the Church does not have a mission, but that the mission of Christ creates its own Church. It opens up the Church to the world around; it opens up the parochial system; and it liberates the Church into the ecumenical setting. The Church is freed to celebrate with God, man, and nature in a relational universe, starting with Christ and ending with God's glory. This relational aspect of the Church is an important part of Moltmann's perspective on the Church. The Church will get down to earth historically and get involved with its surroundings, including politics. God is the sending Father as well as the sending Son, so God the Trinity within himself is sending in the power of the Holy Spirit. The understanding Moltmann brings to the *missio Dei* is one that is strongly influenced by liberation theology and a Marxist outlook on how the future of the kingdom of God would come into the present, as well as the Church's role in such events. There is arguably a lack of sin and atonement in this concept of mission as it tends to put the emphasis on the exodus story and liberation, and it views the world from an eschatological perspective.

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<sup>22</sup> Theologie Examen website, "Mission im Zweiten Examen" ["Mission in the Second Exam"], [http://www.theologie-examen.de/index\\_zweites\\_examen.htm](http://www.theologie-examen.de/index_zweites_examen.htm), Mission im zweiten Examen (accessed April 1, 2014).

In the Reformed statements of faith, there is not any statement on mission. Proclamation, as one can find in the constitutions of the established Church, is not enough. There is a missionary dimension of the Church, according to Moltmann, in the sense of liberating "the people for the exodus in the name of the coming kingdom."<sup>23</sup> This calls the Church to be self-giving, and to be there for others, which results in being with and for others. Moltmann then goes on to say that the Church is present where Christ is present, as with the poor, for example. Mission is not only awakening faith, but it is also changing the atmosphere of life towards "a spirit of hope, love and responsibility for the world."<sup>24</sup>

Church is to become the place where dialogue on faith takes place. But perhaps this is not all the Church is to be. Church ought to offer more than a dialogue; it ought to offer an invitation to believe and trust in God. For national churches, infant baptism is a foundation. For many children in Swiss villages, church is viewed as necessary for confirmation; but for adults it has become a private issue. For Moltmann, baptism is not necessary for salvation. It is a sign of starting out in faith, and the Lord's Supper is a sign of being on the way to overcoming the division between Sunday and the workweek. Tension arises between prayer and earthiness, contemplation and political struggles, transcendental religion and the religion of solidarity.

The report *Mission Shaped Church* describes the theology of the missionary Church as relational and communal, as the triune God is. It is a sending Church, as God

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 152.



has sent his Son. It is incarnational, as is the work of Christ. It is spiritual, as is faithfulness and being in continuity with the apostolic faith. It is contextualizing, as Christ is with every culture. It is reproducing, as the Church is to be. The Church is to be one by baptism in all its diversity, holy and set apart for God's missionary purpose in history, and catholic with a universal scope and apostolic. The health of a local church shows itself in an "up" dimension in worship, an "in" dimension of relationship, an "out" dimension of apostolicity, and an "of" dimension of the wider Church.

The "out" dimension is the missionary dimension that is carefully described in the report with five values: "a missionary church is focused on God the Trinity"<sup>25</sup> by sharing in the divine mission; "a missionary church is incarnational"<sup>26</sup> in the sense of responsiveness to the Spirit's activity in the community; "a missionary church is transformational"<sup>27</sup> in the sense that the goal of the kingdom of God is to bring change to the community; "a missionary church makes disciples,"<sup>28</sup> that is calling people actively to believe; and "a missionary church is relational,"<sup>29</sup> which expresses welcome and hospitality. This view of the report can help the Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne to include the "out" dimension more fully, to be connected to its past, to be in touch with God who is a sending God, and through whom the Church is sent into the world, and to see beyond the local community.

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<sup>25</sup> Church House Publishing, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Mission in today's Reformed Church has to come out of a deep understanding of who God is, a theology of the Trinity. God in himself gives himself away in love. God the Father gives himself away to God the Son, and God the Son does the same to God the Holy Spirit, who in turn does the same to God the Father. So God within himself is love; he is relational and personal. Out of his love God has created, and therefore his relationship to humankind is one of love even though humankind has turned away from God. God has created out of love, and out of love he gives his Son so that those who have gone astray might have life. So God within himself is a sending God, a God who sends himself to the other. Mission can therefore never be just a program, and it cannot be development aid alone. Rather, mission is connected to the essence of who God is, and therefore who the Church is to be.

The Church, therefore, is mission; it does not do mission. Sending out missionaries is not a program point that says something about mission. The Church is an ambassador of the love of God, and by its unity among each other the world will believe. The Christian cannot be other than a missionary, an ambassador of God's love in this world, one who totally naturally lives a life that speaks of a God of life and shares that with others. The God of life is a statement of life against any darkness, and therefore the Christian life has to be full of celebration of festivities. The Roman Catholics have in some ways taken that much more for granted, and have therefore declared a decade of evangelism and are trying to bring the Christian life into the culture.

If one takes the "in-up-out-of" view of the church, one can first see the need in the Reformed Church in the Canton of Berne to build local and/or regional worship places,

places of celebration to God and outpouring of people's response to the love of God. Then there is a need to build relationships in such a way that people can tell by the love amongst each other that Jesus is Lord, where these relationships set people free enough to build networks of relationships outside of the "church club." Here now the "out" comes in and the need of apostolic ministries, ways in which people are reached with the gospel, members and nonmembers alike. The "out" perspective should help the church to screen its ministries with the question of whether they are being done for community, for those on members' lists or for those who seek a service, or for the growing number of those without any denominational affiliation. A missionary church theology has to be developed in in the Reformed Church in the Canton of Berne that is missionary, relational, and communal. By being focused on God the Trinity, sharing in the divine mission, it must be incarnational and responsive to the Spirit's activity in the community. This means that the Church is present in the community, finding out what is and what could be a blessing for the community and following through with whatever the Spirit shows.

This immediately causes the Church to call upon its people to make disciples. Church is a relational place because God is relational, and therefore hospitality plays an important role. In his book, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*, Reggie McNeal sees the "need to recapture the mission of the church"<sup>30</sup> as a redemptive

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<sup>30</sup> Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003), 12.

agent to the world to “partner with him in his redemptive mission in the world.”<sup>31</sup> This broadens one’s view from the Church to the kingdom of God. This moves one’s perspective from church growth to transformation of a community. Only this will lead the Church from a “come” structure, or a “consumer church,”<sup>32</sup> to a “go” structure and towards “community transformation.”<sup>33</sup> This view also cautions one from seeing this as a diversion of resources from keeping things going even better at church. Believers should participate and engage in people’s lives to serve, listen to, befriend, and converse with them. Members are not to become church workers, and life does not revolve around church, but they are to become “God's priests in the world,”<sup>34</sup> missionaries who are relevant to the culture.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 48.

## CHAPTER 4

### REFLECTION ON THE CHURCH – RELATED TO MISSION

If mission is bound together to who God is in himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then the Church is to partner in God's redemptive work and to be the light to the world. In his chapter titled, "What Is the Essence of the Church?" Martyn Atkins contends that the Church becomes the chosen partner of the Trinity in God's mission.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the Church has come out of God's mission to the world. Through his love, God creates a people who are called out to gather together and to stand before him. These people are sent to represent him in this world and to be light bearers. The people of God show in their unity that Jesus is God (John 17). The World Council of Churches also proclaims, "It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin and purpose."<sup>2</sup>

If one looks at the covenant of God with his people throughout the Old and New Testaments, one can see that first the people of the Old Testament, the people of Israel,

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<sup>1</sup> Martyn Atkins, "What Is the Essence of the Church?" in Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 16ff.

<sup>2</sup> Oikoumene, World Council of Churches, "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes," September 5, 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes> (accessed January 29, 2014), 9. This treatise was accepted in September 2012 and was presented at the 10th assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, Korea in October/November 2013.

were to be God's people in the sense that they were holy and a sign to the nations, pointing to God. God's presence with them as the Shekinah glory in the fire by night and the cloud by day led them through the desert. The presence of God was with them in the tent of meeting, whenever they camped, and on the Ark of the Covenant. The presence of God was with them later in the temple. The people were to be God's representatives to the nations so that they would believe. That is also why Joshua prays, "What will the Canaanites do to us and what will be of your great name, oh God?" (Joshua 7:6-9). Readers find this kind of prayer more often in the Bible, for example, in Psalm 25:11, in Daniel 9:18, and in Exodus 32:12.

And yet the people of God and their kings often went astray. In the covenant that God made with Abraham, God promises on himself; it is as if God provided a way in case his covenant people would not keep the covenant. In the midst of all this, the people of God in the Old Testament remained the representatives of God. The exile was the consequence of disobedience to God. The land was lost, there was no king in the line of David anymore, and worst of all, there was no central place of worship at the temple in Jerusalem anymore. In the Old Testament, as in the New Testament, the people of God were to represent him so that the nations would believe. God's presence in fullness can be found in Jesus Christ (John 1), who dwelled among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

There is a transition from the Old to the New Testament. In the New Testament there is an explosion from one nation to all nations, and a group of people is called by Jesus to represent God to the world, Jews and Gentiles alike. The hoped for result is that the world will believe. At Pentecost, thousands are added and the Church is founded.

There is an active outreach going on as one can see in Paul's mission journeys. It is as if every barrier that held back the nation of Israel from spreading the news about God comes into a new phase. With Jesus and after Pentecost, this news goes out to the ends of the world.

From the beginning in the Old Testament, the essence of representing who God is and bearing God's presence is instilled in God's people. This ideology of being sent continues to develop in the New Testament, as Jesus explains that his gospel is to be taken to the entire world. Being sent means shining forth God's light and bringing salvation in the most holistic sense of the word, which includes the love of God in preaching unto salvation, feeding the hungry, working towards peace, and fighting for justice, among other activities.

The Church has a servant role as a congregation of men and women who believe the gospel and live by it. Jesus formed community, and that community is one of praise. In his book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Lesslie Newbigin refers to the distinction between truth and suspicion, which means that when a community lives by truth, true freedom and dignity are found and thanksgiving is shown. This community is one of deep involvement in the concerns of its neighborhood, one of prepared priesthood in the world, one of mutual responsibility and of hope.<sup>3</sup> This means, writes Newbigin, that there is no neutral truth and that there is a need for commitment to truth. Newbigin explains that faith cannot just be subjective, accommodating to the new pagan society; instead, it has to

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<sup>3</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, jointly with Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1989), 222-33.

move into the public sphere. Church is and remains in partnership with God in his love for the world; God has decided to work through and with the Church. J. C. Hoekendijk has stated, in contradiction to Newbigin, that God works in the world apart from the Christian Church.<sup>4</sup> If that is the case the Church is only as function needed but has no identity within itself. This debate about a functional understanding of the Church comes down to the question whether the Church has an entity within itself or is only defined by a function. Hoekendijk sees the Church as agent of God's mission to the world and it is asked to join that mission. God's mission for him therefore happens without the Church. Mission becomes the work of shalomizing, bringing wholeness to the world. In that sense any work for justice is God's mission and to be a Christian or not is not essential. This view tends to be a Universalist view.

Newbigin's sees the coming about of the Church through God's mission in the world and it is the way God has chosen to transform society. Newbigin sees the servant role of the Church as the only answer and the hermeneutic of the gospel. For him Jesus formed a community of praise against suspicion; a community of truth, rehearsing and remembering the true story, a community that is deeply involved in the concerns of its neighborhood, preparing a priesthood in the world.<sup>5</sup>

I see the need to have the whole world in view and not just the Church and become so much Church oriented that the concerns of this world do not come into play. In

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<sup>4</sup> J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 41, Issue 3 (July 1952): 324-36.

<sup>5</sup> L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, jointly with Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1989), 222-33.



that sense the Church is God's mission to the world and the way, which God works into the world. God gave himself out of love to the world. The Church has come out of his sending and as God has sent so the Church is sent into the world to be lightbearers, to bring the gospel into all of life.

Now wherever love is lived it is an expression of God's love in the sense that God rules the world and lets evil not take over. The Church has a distinguished role in spreading and living God's love in this world and becomes thus sent by God representing him.

Newbigin's understanding of the Church should wake up the Swiss Reformed Church and encourage it to move forward with God in his mission to demonstrate his love to the world, taking away any fear of taking positions. One can hear the Apostle Paul's words shining through: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16). One must consider whether the democratic structures of the state church system in Switzerland, and especially in the canton of Berne, make it difficult for believers to take a stand for the mission of God. One wonders whether the Church in this setting will always in some ways acquiesce to the values of the society in general.

### **The Church after the Reformation**

Soon after the Reformation, church and state became closely connected again. The connection was made even during the Reformation, considering the influence of the prince and the king for the spread of the Reformation around Luther. Structures that had

started with bishoprics in the first centuries became kingdoms, covering structures of parishes in the Middle Ages. Infant baptism and the state Church became “the norm” under Zwingli and other reformers.<sup>6</sup> Whatever confession the prince/princess, king, or ruling body had was the confession of his or her people. On one hand, there was a renewal going on, in the sense of the state being interested that the Bible was preached and that the pastors were living holy lives. On the other hand, everyone in a country or in a particular region was baptized and therefore was a Christian. How much that has become a tradition followed over the course of the years is not clear; it was surely often not an individual choice that brought people into the fellowship of the church. The state wanted the Reformation to take over and bring about a renewal of Christian faith and life in the Church of the state. The Christian faith was then handed on from generation to generation. Again and again there have been renewal movements within the Church that called the people to commitment and to renew the baptismal vows.

### **Ulrich Zwingli: Introduction of the State Church Model with the Parish System**

Zwingli very strongly believed that the local community was to be the governing community in issues related to the church, and he even gave the local political government a definitive role in that. For Zwingli in Zürich, the final ecclesiastical authority was in the hands of the local community of believers, and this was for him exercised by the civil government. Zwingli identified the local church with the total community. For him the state church held society together, and infant baptism was a

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<sup>6</sup> Basden and Dockery, “Reformation Views of the Church,” 210.

symbol of entrance into what he called a new community. Separation of church and state could, according to Zwingli, lead to anarchy.<sup>7</sup> In the traditional Reformed Kantons in Switzerland, the Reformed Church is in a very particular way closely connected to the state. Most of these churches, such as the ones in Zürich, Berne-Jura-Solothurn, Geneva, Basel city, and Neuchatel, originated in the time of the Reformation by the decisions of republican states behind whom the people stood. The state wanted reformation and the people supported it. The pastors were to bring correction to the state and the state to the pastors, as was set out in writing in 1532 in the *Bernese Synodus*.<sup>8</sup> In the cantons of Geneva (since 1907) and Neuchatel (since 1941), there has been a clear split between church and state. In the canton of Basel city, the Reformed church is regulated by public law, but it has to bring in its own finances. In all the other cantons, the tax office brings in the taxes for the church.

The church and state was an early reality for the Reformed Church in Switzerland. This included a parochial system, which was already in place before the time of the Reformation, which is an organizational principle dividing geographic entities into areas called “parishes.” These parishes were called pastoral communities, and were intended to provide national and statewide provision for their members.<sup>9</sup> Each parish had at least one pastor; larger parishes had more than one pastor.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The full title is *Berner Synodus: Ordnung wie sich die Prediger zu Statt und Land Bern, in Leer und Leben, Halten Sollen, Mit Wyterem Bericht zu Christo, und den Sakramenten*.

<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia.com, s. v. “parochial prinzip,” <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parochialprinzip> (accessed October 5, 2011).

## **State and Church with Parallel Structures**

In Switzerland, all church issues are dealt with on a cantonal (state) basis and not on a national basis. There is a loose connection on a national level called the covenant of Swiss churches. The basis for the relationship between state and church varies from canton to canton considerably. In some states the pastors are paid by the state, and in others, state and church are fully separated. The tendency is towards giving autonomy to the established churches by keeping their status as governed by public law. This gives the church a structure according to the political communities, with similar democratic procedures being adopted. Twice a year, the general assembly, which could be all nine thousand members of the parish but in reality it is just a handful of people, comes together to vote for the budget, to accept the accounts, and to vote for pastors, council members, and larger decisive changes in the church, especially those that have an effect on finances and on the organizational structure. The council has the oversight of the church, and together with the pastors they lead the ministry of the church. Yet the workers at the church report back to the different commissions headed by one of the council members. Very often the pastoral team is built up of "one among equals," so there is no senior pastor; instead, there is a flat structure as there is general suspicion regarding any possible hierarchical setup. There is even an official place in the canton of Berne called the department of community order, which looks at changes to the organizational statement

of the local parish as well as local communities so that it is within the approved democratic structures for public legal bodies.

### **Baptism as Membership, Automatic Membership to All of the Family**

By infant baptism, the people have become and are members of the Reformed Church. Actually, by being born into a Reformed family, infants are already members whether or not they are baptized; they are put on the state's records for claiming church taxes when being an adult. When they are older, after having gone through religious education at the church, they will be confirmed. Baptism is a prerequisite to confirmation, unless there are pastoral reasons, but confirmation has become only the graduation of religious education classes.<sup>10</sup> Confirmation is to be celebrated with a worship service that shows that God in Jesus Christ made a covenant with all people and invites them to be his disciples, to have communion with him, and to be coworkers in his Church.<sup>11</sup>

Many parents still send their children to religious education classes; the children are coming in their free time and there is a lot of competition with sports and other activities. A reform of baptism might need to take place: parents could be given the option of taking the baptismal vow seriously, in which case they would go through baptismal training and then follow up in more detail. Baptism might not be a prerequisite anymore to confirmation, or if it is then baptismal training will have to lead to it to understand the basics of the Christian faith; this then should become voluntary. No

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<sup>10</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Kirchenordnung des Evangelisch-reformierten Synodalverbandes Bern-Jura-Solothurn," vol. 11 (revised in September 1990 and November 2010), [http://www.refbejuso.ch/uploads/tx\\_docmng/11-020\\_KiO.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/uploads/tx_docmng/11-020_KiO.pdf) (accessed October 13, 2011), Article 62ff.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Article 62.

confirmation of any person should be required; this should be a voluntary decision. This would mean that there would be two parallel paths: the old way with religious education leading to confirmation, and the new way with a lot more baptismal training and hopefully voluntary statements of faith.

The Church is beginning to format the gospel for a modern culture. The challenge has become the loss of any conceivable thoughtful position at all. In this context, truth is difficult to communicate; it comes into conflict with tolerant society, which will not do with any claim for truth at all. Faith in a multi-religious and multi-cultural world looks different, and one wonders how meaning and truth can be brought out in a positive way. Herbst and Reppenhagen suggest participating in life and communicating the only true Jesus, with whom even Nietzsche was fascinated. Sharing truth through Jesus results in a church that gives up its modern self, that is where the people are, and that is merciful. Such a church has God's perspective, and is not a weak and doubting church.

Ralph Kunz, professor of practical theology at the University of Zurich, explains that mission has become a trend even though it still triggers all kinds of reactions. The Church has to find an intrinsic purpose after the end of a state church rule, and after church and religion are dissolving in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Membership and participation in the community (Gemeinde) is taken apart, and that has to do with the practice of infant baptism.

In two major studies in Switzerland, named respectively, "Jeder ein Sonderfall" ("Everyone a Special Case")<sup>12</sup> and "Die zwei Gesichter der Religion" ("The Two Faces of Religion"),<sup>13</sup> nominal members, customers, and adherers/followers are the most common types of church members. Mission becomes a solution for the established Church to remain diversified in membership. But there are two camps, according to Kunz: first, the liberal and culturally Protestant theologian, who sees evangelism as a possibility but not as a necessity, and second, the more pietistic revivalist who sees the community church as an institutional framework for a missionary-directed church. Here Ralph Kunz clearly states that European ecclesiology cannot afford the luxury of an ecclesiology that remains missiologically wanting and a missions theology that is naive in its ecclesiology. He writes, "Die Organisation macht attraktive Angebote und die Institution schafft Räume der Beheimatung. Mission hingegen ist Bewegung und Leidenschaft für die Sache Jesu. Um für sie zu werben, braucht es Anhänger, bewegte und begeisterte Menschen, die sich einsetzen."<sup>14</sup> Taking membership and participation apart only works when it is connected with missions, and when people are invited, moved, and reached. Different kinds of church types become possible within one organization. According to Kunz, infant baptism

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<sup>12</sup> Alfred Dubach, "Bindungsfähigkeit der Kirchen," in *Jede(r) ein Sonderfall? Religion in der Schweiz Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativbefragung*, ed. by Alfred Dubach and Roland Campiche (Zürich: NZN Buchverlag AG, 1993), 159-65.

<sup>13</sup> Roland J. Campiche, *Die zwei Gesichter der Religion: Faszination und Entzauberung* (Zürich: TVZ Verlag, 2004) 159-65.

<sup>14</sup> The translation is: "Organizations make attractive offers and institutions create spaces of home, but mission is movement and passion for the cause of Jesus. In order to attract them it will need followers, moved and enthusiastic people, who get involved." Ralph Kunz, "Keine Kirchenreform ohne Taufreform? Chancen und Fallstricke des tauforientierten Gemeindeaufbaus in der Postmoderne," in Reppenhausen and Herbst, *Kirche in der Postmoderne*, 168.

demands that the parents prepare the child for the confirmation of the baptism, and it asks the church to do everything to give that faith space. Infant baptism cannot become an automatic practice; otherwise confirmation loses its basis. For Kunz, baptism becomes the spiritual center, involving confession of faith in public and the personal experience of growing in one's faith.

### **Membership Not Linked to a Binding Confession**

As membership is not linked to any confessional statement, what is required of someone to become a member is minimal. There are some basics in the constitution and in the church order that explain baptism, confirmation, and the like, and give a foundation for the Church. The essence of the Church and its historic roots are explained, and the mandate of the Church is described. The mandate to hand the Christian faith on to the next generation is clearly stated in article 55 of the church order.<sup>15</sup> Yet there is no common understanding of the basics of Christianity among the Reformed churches agreeing on what ought to be taught to someone wanting to join the church or even to the members as basic Christianity. Membership can be seen as cheap membership, as it is not connected to any content, commitment, and involvement any longer. Being in a generation where the parents do not know the Christian basics anymore, even if they send the children to religious education at church, they will not be able to support them at home. And in that sense, they have not been able to take their own baptismal vows seriously and put them into practice; thus, it makes little sense to ask parents to bring up

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Article 55.



the children in the Christian faith. “Basics of the Christian faith,” therefore, are left to one’s own interpretation. Basics of the Christian faith need to be brought to both members and nonmembers. It is as if everyone who has been baptized will have to at one time go through the basics of the Christian faith again. In the future, people who become members will visit baptismal classes providing the basics of Christian belief. Membership as known up to now will not be questioned but enriched by baptismal teaching offered to everyone who wants to renew their own baptism vows and give meaning to it, and support the idea of sharing the faith from generation to generation.

There is therefore a need for a worshipping *koinonia* that is based on participation in the community of faith, that is oriented “up” toward God, and that can and does celebrate together the greatness of God. There is also a need for shared relationships, being involved "in" each other’s lives and encouraging each other along in the pilgrimage with God in everyday life. There is a need to be connected to the past "of"; the church community must adopt main statements of the faith as historical foundations, like the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Heidelberg Catechism. There is a need to reach "out" and connect with the community in Berne as a message of love to the world. These “up-in-of-out” dimensions can be a measuring rod for a parish in its walk with God and its desire to be the Church of God.

The development of this type of community within the church will inevitably create tension within the broader church, including everyone who has not specifically cancelled membership. If there is a challenge for members to give a confession of heart, such as one that asks for repentance and gets involved in the church, as mentioned by

article 2<sup>2</sup> of the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the Canton of Berne, there is going to be reaction, resistance, and even upheaval. This might manifest in political ways. But to see the Church as sending love into the world is not enough; there is definitely a need for baptismal teaching reaching out to those on the member rolls. The Church must seek to overcome the tension in which there is a gap between membership and knowing the basics of the faith.

Besides looking at the model of “up-in-out-of” that was used in the report *mission shaped church* and more fully articulated in Michael Moynagh's book *Church for every Context* and also based on the Nicene creed: one - holy - catholic - apostolic. as a measuring rod for churches, one can agree with many on a “centered set” approach that helps people to focus on the one who is in the center of all things, Jesus. This term, “centered-set,” comes from Paul Hiebert’s book, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*.<sup>16</sup> The “centered set” refers to Jesus Christ of the Scriptures being at the center, and the set of people gathered around him worship, serve, and obey him. Membership would then be a question of relationship, which is a question of the heart, which will not be able to be determined from the outside. The church will then focus on people and not on programs, on relationships and not on orderliness and cleanliness. It will spend more time in prayer than in planning. According to Hiebert, spiritual leadership is necessary for that reason. Hiebert explains that there has to be some understanding about the maturity of Christians in term of the closeness to Christ. This

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<sup>16</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 127.

closeness would have to be defined around the “person of Christ and . . . our corporate theological and behavioral understanding of his teaching.”<sup>17</sup>

The idea of the centered set is helpful because most liberals and evangelicals alike will agree on the fact that Jesus is at the center. Because the focus is Jesus, members then do not feel threatened by some kind of a commitment they cannot and do not want to make. Following the “centered set” model provides many entryways towards Jesus Christ. This then is an inclusive approach. The Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne may therefore be informed by a renewed understanding of the essence of the Church:

Vielleicht ist es auch eine erneuerte Einsicht in das Wesen der Kirche. Sie steht in der langen Geschichte einer Aussendung. Der Vater hat den Sohn gesandt, der Sohn sendet seine Gemeinde. Kirche ist darum ihrem Wesen nach missionarisch. Mission ist nicht ein beliebtes Mosaiksteinchen im reichen Leben der Kirche. Mission ist nicht unter Umständen zeitweise verzichtbar. Mission ist Wesens- und Lebensmerkmal der Kirche, wenn sie Kirche Jesu Christi sein und bleiben will.<sup>18</sup>

As the church offers baptismal courses for all those who are on the membership rolls, taking them seriously and walking with them toward the center, it is hoped that they will become more interested in finding out the full meaning of their baptism. The baptismal courses would focus on John Finney’s list of basic subjects, which would be seen as Christian basics for any Christian in an established church setting. Finney’s list includes: 1) the life of Jesus: who he was, what he said, and what he did; 2) the meaning

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Herbst, *Kirche mit Mission: Beiträge zu Fragen des Gemeindeaufbaus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013), 4. The translation is: “Maybe it is also a renewed understanding of the essence of the church. She stands in a long history of mission. The father has sent the son, the son send his church. The Church is therefore essentially missionary. Mission is not a popular or unpopular small stone in a mosaic of the life of the Church. Mission is the essence and life-character of the Church, if she wants to be and remain the Church of Jesus Christ.” See also Wilhelm Richebächer, “‘*Missio Dei*’ – Kopernikanische Wende oder Irrweg?” *ZMiss* 29 (2003): 143-62.

of his death and resurrection; 3) the important Christian festivities: Christmas is more than ox and donkey, Good Friday is more than prohibition of dance, and Easter has nothing to do with rabbits; 4) living worship in the context of church; and 5) Christian lifestyle: having an idea of the Ten Commandments, of the love of one's neighbor, of worldwide justice, of conservation of creation, and the like.<sup>19</sup> These Christian basics can be embedded in a renewal of baptismal vows without questioning anyone's standing. This might have to be done in the village squares where people meet, rather than in churches, which people tend to keep away from.

In addition to the baptismal courses, another way of utilizing the idea of the centered set is to develop different groups within the community of Berne; these groups would be built upon relationships, and would not necessarily be churches themselves, but would follow the idea of Great Britain's "fresh expressions." These types of communities were provided by the parish in times of less mobility. Today, the idea of mixed economy comes into play in terms of making different network structures around relationships. These networks include people from different parishes and could potentially become churches themselves without necessarily having to be under a certain parish. It is unclear how such groups would function in such autonomy of the local church communities with only little central synod organization, as it is in the canton of Berne. This leads one to consider again the essence of the Church.<sup>20</sup> Atkins considers the following contours:

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<sup>19</sup> John Finney, *To Germany with Love: Ein anglikanischer Blick auf die deutsche und englische Kirche* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlagshaus, 2011), 42.

<sup>20</sup> Croft, *Mission-Shaped Questions* (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 16.

The essence of the Church lies in its derived nature and, more particularly, its identity as the chosen partner of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in God's mission. That is, the Church has no essence "in itself" as it were. Rather, its essence necessarily derives from the Christian Godhead. . . . To use theological shorthand, theology—read mainly through the lens of missiology—produces ecclesiology, rather than vice versa.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Atkins, "What Is the Essence of the Church?" 17.

## CHAPTER 5

### REFLECTION ON MISSION – RELATED TO THE CHURCH

This chapter focuses upon mission. It begins by relating mission to God himself, showing that mission flows from him. It will then look at what is indispensable for Jesus, and in doing so, will find direction for the reflection on mission related to the Church. Then, mission and evangelism are looked at in today's context, and the role of the individual Christian in mission is closely examined. The Reformed Church will be considered in particular, both the history of mission within the Church as well as the present and potential future of mission in the Church.

#### **The Mission of God**

The mission of God is neither the mission of the Church nor the mission of any movement or any individual Christian. "It is the mission of God. God himself has a mission. God has a purpose and goal for his whole creation," writes Christopher J. H. Wright in his book, *The Mission of God's People*.<sup>1</sup> The Apostle Paul calls this the "whole

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 24.

will [plan] of God” (Acts 20:27). This reveals where mission comes from and its scope. Mission describes God in his total being.

To put it differently, the Trinity becomes the place from which mission is to be understood. The relationship of a self-giving God, fully living within the Trinity among God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, becomes the foundation for mission. By freely and lovingly giving to each other within the Trinity, one finds the essence of what is, which is relationship. Thus, out of the love of God fully lived within the Trinity, God has created. He has created humankind in his image. Therefore relationship is central in all that one is and does. This includes one’s relationship with God, with one another, with oneself, with the creation, with one’s history, and with the nation one is placed in.

As one knows who God is by who Jesus is, one has to look at him to understand the Church and mission. And when one comes to the feet of Jesus as Mary did (Lk 10:39) or when one comes to the cross and says, as the centurion did, “Surely he was the Son of God” (Mt 27:54), one is immediately brought to the people for whom the cross is. It is for the giving of the Son by the Father for the godless and godforsaken people, so that he could become the Lord over the living and the dead: that is the mission of the crucified.<sup>2</sup> Behind this is humankind, who has abandoned God as a result of free will. Thus, the godforsaken are not godforsaken anymore because God has forsaken his Son at the cross. This is the mission of the crucified coming directly out of the self-giving love of God.

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott, Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie* (München, D: Chr. Kaiser, 1972), 228ff.

As a result, from the mission of Jesus the mission of the Church evolves. Jesus said, “As the father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21) and “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mk 16:15). There would be no Christians if someone had not stepped into the mission of Jesus. Everyone who believes owes gratitude to those who have found it important enough to give an account of their faith.

It becomes clear what mission is for in the Church. It cannot be for profit, numerical growth, giving, position and respect in society, and believers are not sent out so that it might become better in organized Christendom. Mission has to do with the love, mercy, and goodness of God to multiply among humankind. The resurrected one multiplies his own mission: “you all for all” is the missionary primal impulse. With Jesus, Christians are brought to the people that they meet in the marketplace or at work in their daily lives. With Jesus, Christians are not brought to other disciples, but together with other disciples they seek the blind, the sick, the lonely, those who believe they do not need a God, those who have made it, those who are brokenhearted, and all of those around them. And with Jesus, Christians learn to listen and do what God is doing in these places and situations. With Jesus, Christians live in relationships and get involved in people’s lives. Believers’ friendships are never disconnected from Jesus, but there is never any coercion, and Christians pray and suffer with Jesus for humankind that has abandoned him.



## Mission and the Church<sup>3</sup>

When considering the relationship between mission and the Church, one finds the following dilemma. When one starts with the Church, then the Church is the primary topic, and the desire is to keep and save the Church. When one starts with mission, then mission can take on a life of its own. The result can be a mission that seeks salvation by overpowering people. One can make the statement that whoever starts with the Church will lose mission, but whoever starts with mission will most probably find the Church. Though this is true, this doctoral project will suggest another starting point.

Therefore, neither the Church nor mission should be the first topic. The sequence should be as follows: Disciples are called to be with Jesus and to learn close to him, how mission takes place and what it is for (as well as how mission should not take place and what it is not for). Then fellowships of people are formed who share their faith in Jesus, worship God, and serve the world with their gifts. Jesus comes first, then his mission into the world, and finally the local church. In that sense, it starts with listening.

Here it is interesting to consider one of the central biblical passages on the Church, which is found in Matthew 16:13-20. There are libraries full of commentaries on this passage, and there is just one aspect that will be discussed here. According to Matthew, this occurrence is happening in Caesarea Philippi, which was in the middle of heathen land.<sup>4</sup> It is a land that worships Augustus as Son of God and Pan as God of

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<sup>3</sup> The theology of this section is based upon the work of Michael Herbst, particularly, Herbst, *Kirche mit Mission*, 18-47.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John Nolland: *The Gospel of Matthew*. in the The New International Greek New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2005), 654-83.

nature, forest, and death. It is Pan, who can bring “panic.” When Jesus here says, “On this rock I will build my church” (Mt 16:18), he stands in contrast to the gods of Caesarea Philippi, such as Pan. And when Jesus adds that the gates of hell will not prevail, he is looking to the darkest and deepest caves of the temple of Pan.<sup>5</sup>

The gates of hell will not overcome the Church. In the very face of hell, Jesus builds the Church. The church does not withdraw behind secure gates. In other words, Jesus is where the “gates of hell” are, where God’s love is not experienced, where greed and envy have become virtues that are honored. It is where children are neglected, where the poor are forsaken and the weak are pushed to the margins. He is there, where his Word is unknown and one dies in loneliness. He is there, where strong and active people long to have something for which it is worthwhile to give everything. He is where clever skeptics in the night ask for stability, when everything here seems to come to an end.

In light of this, when Christians are close to Jesus and listen to him, they may be made aware of what is important to him and what is no longer important and what can be let go, which takes courage. Therefore, missiology follows from Christology and ecclesiology follows from missiology. Thus, the Church does not exist for its own sake. Structural questions, then, must always be considered in light of the spiritual questions of the mission of the Church. This is difficult in a setting like the Canton of Berne, in which a majority vote is needed when making decisions. Yet the church must still have the courage to let go and put emphasis on experiments, expecting resistance.

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<sup>5</sup> See also: Carsten Peter Thiede, *Wer bist, Jesus? Schlaglichter auf den Mann, der in kein Schema passt* (Basel/Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 2000), 29.

The question of church and mission comes to the heart of the issue when one considers what is indispensable for the Church. Asking this question can potentially be difficult for people because it might include letting go of certain things they hold dear. When the Church in Switzerland is getting smaller, poorer, and older, then one must begin to ask what is indispensable. Certainly many will feel that church buildings, a privileged position in society, church taxes, traditions, and fully paid workers are indispensable. But in truth, none of these is indispensable. Churches must focus on what is truly indispensable, and following these will then become indispensable. Such elements are: that believers meet and listen to Jesus and pray; that they break bread; that they are there for each other and serve the poor as well as they can; that they are known as peace-bearers; and that they tell others about Jesus, baptize them, and strengthen them in discipleship (Acts 2:42; Mt 28:18-20).

Those who find what is indispensable pay a high price. Dietrich Bonhoeffer could have lived an honorable life as a professor of theology in the United States during the dangerous time of the Second World War. Yet finding the indispensable, listening to Jesus and following him, he gave everything up and was willing to be part of the resistance against Hitler. Bonhoeffer had made a similar choice earlier in his life, when he was willing to live in a difficult part of Berlin, teaching confirmands, inviting them to his residence, and providing food to them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer – Pastor, Agent, Martyrer und Prophet* (Holzgerlingen: SCM Hänssler Verlag, 2011), 166-74.

One must also consider what Jesus himself considered indispensable. The answer to that is the secret of the Christian faith. For Jesus, people are indispensable. For Jesus, humankind is his focus. God became human in order to win back humankind and provide healing. The price was high: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

A blind man wanted to come to Jesus and his coworkers thought it was a waste of time, yet when he called out, Jesus listened and turned towards him, to the indispensable one; as a result, the blind man received sight (Mk 10:46-52). Mothers wanted to bring their children to Jesus so that he would give them something, and again, those who should have known better thought it a waste of time. Jesus saw the children and became angry with those who tried to stop them; Jesus said, “Let them come to me,” and he blessed them (Mk 10:13-16). In essence, Jesus was saying, “You are indispensable, God’s eyes are on your lives.” Then again, Jesus was sitting in a noble’s house, and a woman with a dubious reputation sought him out. The pious shook their heads, and the noble found it embarrassing. But Jesus was approachable. He let the woman come close, communicating to her that she was indispensable (Mt 26:7). And again, one of the friends of Jesus opened his mouth too wide and failed Jesus, and yet he was forgiven, even at the hardest hour when Jesus was forsaken (Mk 14:66-72). Jesus gave his life for people, as people are indispensable.

For the Church, Jesus himself is indispensable, and Christians need to be close to him, to listen to him, and to follow him. This will always bring believers to what is

indispensable for Jesus himself. And to understand what is indispensable for Jesus is to learn what should be indispensable for the Church, and for each individual believer.

### **Mission and Evangelism**

There is a need to work on the theory and theology of mission and evangelism. The motto of mission on six continents is a foundational conviction of the ecumenical missions movement of the twentieth century. The western world is a mission field as well. Thus, mission science has to be reflected in practical theology in Switzerland. Terms like *dialogue*, *testimony*, *inculturation*, *contextualization*, and *living alongside* need to be closely examined. The gospel of Jesus Christ is what is proclaimed, and it is God's "yes" to humankind that has its sign in the cross and the resurrection. This immediately brings up the importance that evangelism is a wooing plea (2 Cor 5:20) and never pressing, never using any subtle means of violence.

The apostolicity of the Church reveals its commitment to mission (Jn 20:21), for which it ultimately exists. The catholicity of the church makes clear that its mission has the whole world in view, and this should never lead to intolerance or arrogance. The message of the free grace of God is to be given to all people (Declaration of Barmen Thesis VI).<sup>7</sup> This means that evangelism and mission have a central part to play in a "Volkskirche" ("a church of the people"), especially with the plurality that gives the

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<sup>7</sup> Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, "Barmer Theologische Erklärung," ["Theological Declaration of Barmen"], [http://www.ekd.de/glauben/bekenntnisse/barmer\\_theologische\\_erklaerung.html](http://www.ekd.de/glauben/bekenntnisse/barmer_theologische_erklaerung.html) (accessed April 1, 2014).

people the freedom to decide what they want, which includes a different religious orientation.

Evangelism and mission belong together, and they are important ingredients of local church work. In order to be able to live out the task of the mission of the Church, the Church is the first to whom evangelism is addressed. This is a basis from which to reach out. Only whoever experiences and affirms the joy of the gospel can with promise turn to others. By self-evangelism, it can happen that the “crisis of orientation” of the Church can be fixed and a step out of “self-secularism” can be ventured.<sup>8</sup>

A great challenge of the Volkskirche is that many members of the church do not show their belonging to the church by participation. This has to be accepted, and at the same time it is a challenge for a sensitive evangelism of the church. One has to carefully examine whether a church that has distanced itself from its members is not causing the distance. The so-called “faithful ones” who are in fact distant from the church are to be wooed but never pressed; they should be invited to become joyfully close to the church.

Mission and evangelism have to happen in ecumenical partnership. Unity as described in John 17:21 will always be a criterion of credible evangelistic testimony. If one only looks to oneself and mistrusts others, that person’s behavior harms the sake of the gospel. Conversion must not remain a foreign word. Alongside programs that give homes to children, youth, young families, and the like, there is also a need to offer programs that invite people to conversion.

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<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Huber, *Kirche der Freiheit: Perspektiven für eine Kirche des 21. Jahrhunderts*, <http://www.ekd.de/download/kirche-der-freiheit.pdf> (accessed April 1, 2014), 42.

Conversion always relates to baptism, either looking back or looking ahead. As baptism does not necessarily mean that those baptized will become regular participants at church, a call to repentance and conversion becomes necessary. Evangelism and church growth are linked together, even though what is important is healthy growth, which is not necessarily visual and measurable growth. There will be a new inculturation necessary that includes a critique of the culture of Christendom. There is a need for contextualizing the gospel to those who are being addressed. Worship services for those who are distant will become more important. Worship services should include an evangelistic dimension.

Evangelism and education are closely linked as well. Thus, basic courses on the faith will always be essential, and these basic courses should include a holistic approach in word and deed. Lay people will be encouraged to get involved, and the pastoral ministry team must support evangelistic endeavors as well. There is a need for evangelists as servants of Christ to the Church who work closely together with the local church. One has to bear the offence of evangelism because the proclamation of the crucified Christ is foolishness to some and offensive to others (1 Cor 1:23).<sup>9</sup> In his book, *The Contemporary Christian*, John Stott puts it this way: “Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For this chapter see Martin Werth, *Theologie der Evangelisation* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 2010) 389-97.

<sup>10</sup> John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1992), 335.

God intends to bless the nations through the election of Abraham, producing community that shows forth God's character in personal obedience to God. This is the starting point of God's call to Abraham in Genesis 28:19. The blessing of the nations becomes the ultimate goal of what mission is heading towards. Abraham was chosen so that a people would be committed to the Lord's ways in order to fulfill his mission of blessing the nations. According to Wright, election, ethics, and mission are closely connected.<sup>11</sup> Thus, ecclesiology and missiology are closely linked.

### **Mission and Monotheism**

In the book, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, John Dickson brings in an important and interesting connection, which he draws from a close study of Psalm 96. He writes,

The fundamental equation of mission, the driving force behind all our efforts to bring the news of the one true Lord to our friends and neighbors: If there is one Lord to whom all people belong and owe their allegiance, the people of that Lord must promote this reality everywhere. Monotheism and mission are intimately related. The existence of just one God makes our mission to the many essential.<sup>12</sup>

Monotheism, therefore, is an essential basis for mission. In his book, *Our Guilty Silence*, John Stott contends, "Without the unity of God and the uniqueness of Christ there could be no Christian mission."<sup>13</sup> In Acts Peter and John explain, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). Clearly, as Wright explains, "Jesus

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<sup>11</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 93.

<sup>12</sup> John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 31.

<sup>13</sup> John Stott, *Our Guilty Silence* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), 23.



is the only savior and Lord, or he is not. And if he is, then, with Peter and John we are called to stand up for him with total loyalty and unwavering witness."<sup>14</sup>

Postmodernity has brought a challenge on epistemology, which is how we know what we claim to know. This clearly has a direct effect on mission, because Christian mission is founded on what Christians claim to know about God, the world, and history. Mission seems impossible without "any single truth or unitive coherence."<sup>15</sup> Monotheistic claims are broadly made in the Old Testament, showing that the Lord alone is the creator (Ps 33:6-9), the ruler (Ps 33:10-11), the Judge (Ps 33:13-15), the savior (Ps 36:6; Is 45:22), and the reconciler (Ps 46:8-10). The Lord is revealer, lover, leader, and owner. Dickson writes,

So then the missionary nature of Christian monotheism does not flow from an endemic religious imperialism or military-style triumphalism (however much it may have been infected with that virus in different eras), but from the roots of our faith in Old Testament Israel and their belief in the God, the only true and living God, whose mission of love for the world had led to the election of Israel and the sending of the church. It is this God, and no other, who so determined to bless the nations that he chose Abraham. It is only this God who so loved the world that he sent his only Son. Only this God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And it is this God who has entrusted the mission and ministry of reconciliation to the people to whom Jesus said "You will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth." This is the missionary nature of biblical monotheism.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, God makes himself known in Jesus Christ. The word *kyrios* ("Lord") is used 275 times in the New Testament to refer to Jesus. Jesus is given the name above every name, which can only mean YHWH, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should

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<sup>14</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 161.

<sup>15</sup> Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 134-135.

bow, in heavens and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2: 10-11). This text is partially quoted from Isaiah 45:22, originally spoken by YHWH about himself. Jesus alone is the creator, the reconciler, and the judge. God wants to make himself known through Jesus. Monotheism leads to doxology, glorifying God, worship, and praise. The title of the book of Psalms literally means “Praises” in Hebrew. Praise is to be the final word, acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord, creator, and savior. John Piper captures the idea well: “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't.”<sup>17</sup>

#### God Sends Himself into the World: Incarnation

Jesus was sent into the world to become human in his incarnation in order to save and reconcile humankind. By Jesus’ ministry into the world, the gospel became embedded into the lives of the early Christians, and it often is mentioned in Acts that many were added to the early Church. The necessary outcome of the community, the teaching, the sharing, and the solidarity is numerical growth of the community. The incarnation of God into the world in the form of Jesus Christ provided something for people to see and understand; in doing so they could glimpse who God is, this Jesus Christ, savior, redeemer, and Lord, whom the disciples followed and who today's disciples follow, whose life becomes a model to all who follow him.

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<sup>17</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Missions: Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 15.

In the New Testament, Paul and the apostles do not offer much teaching about mission. It is to grow out of lives that are under the reign of God. The mission in the Bible comes in a wide variety of forms. It is caring for creation, blessing the nations, walking in justice and righteousness, living compassion, representing God to the world, demonstrating God's character, and, above all, knowing the living God and being uncompromisingly loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ in one's worship and witness.

### God Dwells amongst His People: Participation

John writes of the incarnation, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). The word "dwelt" can be understood as if he was "tenting" or "tabernacling" among his people, taking part in their daily lives, not distant, but close and as one of them. As Christ participates in people's lives, they too, in a mysterious way, participate in the Trinity. Jesus participated in our very human surroundings in order to become as one of us.

### Reaching to Unexpected People: the Tax-gatherers and Sinners

Dickson writes, "One of the most striking aspects of Jesus' ministry in its first-century Palestinian setting was his regular socializing with people classed 'sinners.'"<sup>18</sup> In order to be classified as a "sinner," a religious class had to exist, which made the rules and judged those to be either outside or inside the realm of what was considered pure and holy. The Pharisees and the scribes at the time of Jesus were the religious class, and

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<sup>18</sup> Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, 49.

members of these two groups classified the “unreligious” by their conduct. Their exclusiveness and the strict keeping of external Levitical observance put them in enmity with Jesus at the time, especially their additional laws and the keeping of rituals that were used as a basis for those kinds of decisions.

Tax collectors and sinners—all those who were despised by the religious hierarchy of the time—were drawn by the love of Jesus. Luke writes, "The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus. The Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man [Jesus] receives sinners and eats with them’” (Lk 15:1-2). The Pharisees and scribes—those who knew what was right, who had it all together, and who judged the others around them as the unreligious—they grumbled seeing how Jesus was the friend of sinners. In a strictly religious society, clearly the tax-collectors and sinners were the “unreligious.”<sup>19</sup> In Matthew 11:19 Jesus is even called “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners,’” merely because of his association with such people.

In Luke 19:1-7, when Jesus invites himself to the home of the archetypal sinner, the chief tax collector Zacchaeus, the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes reaches a climax. Befriending Zacchaeus and confirming that salvation had come to his home immediately brought about an uprising among the Pharisees and scribes. Zacchaeus was not only a financial mover in the area at that time; he was also deeply involved with the Roman authorities, which again was not favored by the Jewish hierarchy. Thus, a tax collector is among the unpopular. Yet Zacchaeus, writes Dickson, “is so overwhelmed by

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 49.

this strange acceptance from the one rumored to be the ‘Messiah’ that right then and there he devotes himself publicly to the path of God”<sup>20</sup>; he immediately puts wrong things right and is full of joy.

Luke 19:9-10 declares the welcoming grace of God and the mission statement of Jesus, which is that he has come “to seek and to save what was lost.” Jesus calls and there is a response. This puts into context what Jesus spoke about in Luke 15: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. In each of these cases, the hearers and readers of these parables come to understand the depth of the search for the “lost,” as well as the joy there is on earth and in heaven for the one that is found. The parable of the prodigal son also makes reference to the one that repents, turns, and walks in God's ways.

God is not a God of the few, the wise, or those who think they pursue God the way they should. Jesus’ arms are open to receive those who want to come. Readers of the Bible often have the notion that all sinners and tax collectors are drawing near to Jesus, noticing, "Jesus cares for them and has something to say to them."<sup>21</sup> But the sinners of Jesus’ day were seen as impure and were to stay away from anything that had to do with God and with those who feared him.

For the Jewish leadership, it was distasteful to sit and eat with sinners and tax collectors, or even to associate with godless people, for to do so was to become impure. But Jesus wanted to draw them to God. Jesus used the parables of “the lost” to make the point that the one sheep or the one coin lost is so precious that everything is undertaken

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>21</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: 1996), 1298.

to find that one. Upon finding what was lost, celebration takes place, and the joy of heaven and earth are unleashed for what is found or whomever “repents and believes.” The Pharisees are indirectly criticized for not being open to repentance and belief. Seeking righteousness can become a different form of legalism, in which one withdraws from others, points to oneself, and puffs oneself up, instead of reaching out as Jesus did to draw people to God. It becomes clear that in Jesus' way, evangelism is the joy of recovery, and so reaching out will include unexpected people and will cause a reaction on the part of the legalists who are witnesses.

Jesus therefore becomes friends with sinners and tax collectors, with strangers and with all those who were outcasts and whom no one wanted to have anything to do with. Jesus becomes friends with the fishermen and not with those in power. Here again, as before, Jesus models relationship: befriending people is the way Jesus approached them; they would become valuable and important to him.

### **The Missionary Gospel**

The gospel is to glorify God, and God and the angels celebrate for everyone who repents and comes to God. The gospel cannot remain untold. If humankind does not proclaim it to all people, rocks will tell the message. God will always find a way to get to those to whom the gospel is not brought. This can even include dreams and other unconventional ways. The most oft-used verses for the mission mandate are the ones at the end of each gospel.

## Good News to Disciple all Nations

The word to the disciples in Matthew 28:18 ensures that the gospel preached is much broader than just a gospel of salvation; it ensures that it is a gospel of the kingdom of God, which includes every area of life. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the father, in the name of the son and in the name of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them all things that I have taught you.” This is reminiscent of Article 2<sub>4</sub> of the constitution of the Reformed Church of the canton of Bern, which states, “Sie bezeugt, dass das Wort Gottes für alle Bereiche des öffentlichen Lebens, wie Staat und Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur gilt. Sie bekämpft daher alles Unrecht sowie jede leibliche und geistige Not und ihre Ursachen.”<sup>22</sup> If Jesus is Lord, he is Lord over all people and all of life.

## Good News to Preach to Every Individual

Acts 1:8 states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This verse describes the motto of all of Acts. The gospel was to go out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. It went out thus far, at least according to the Roman world; it went as far as Rome. The gospel is good news to be preached to every individual at every place. This could be called the breadth of the gospel mandate.

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<sup>22</sup> Reformerte Kirche Bern-Jura-Solthrun, “The Constitution of the Reformed Church of the Canton of Bern,” [http://www.refbejuso.ch/uploads/tx\\_docmngt/11-010\\_Kirchenverfassung\\_02.pdf](http://www.refbejuso.ch/uploads/tx_docmngt/11-010_Kirchenverfassung_02.pdf) (accessed October 26th), Article 2.4. The English translation is: “It [the Reformed Church] confesses that the Word of God is valid for areas of public life.”

## The Missionary Church

Despite the scholars who try to protect early Judaism and Christianity from appearing too zealous for proselytizing, Dickson shows in his work, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in Pauline Communities*, that to some degree in Judaism and to a large degree in Christianity, they were devoted to the salvation of outsiders.<sup>23</sup> By the essence of being the bride of Christ, the Church will be as Jesus is: a welcoming church and a church that reaches out to seek and save the lost. Mission must be the heartbeat of the Church, as Eberhard Jüngel stated in the Leipzig synod of the German Evangelical Church in 1999.<sup>24</sup>

In an attitude of fresh allegiance to Christ as *kyrios*, we must never hide our faith and must always be willing to answer for Christ whenever opportunity invites. Loyalty to Jesus motivates openness about him. As we saw in Chapter 1, the universal lordship of God through his Messiah (Psalm 96; Matthew 28:18-19)—*Christological monotheism*, in other words—provides the fundamental rationale and motivation for lifting our voices in his honor throughout the world.<sup>25</sup>

### Attraction by the Apostle's Favor

When reading Acts, it is striking to find out how the disciples found favor in the sight of the people (Acts 2:47, 7:10, 46). Favor in these passages comes from the Greek word *charis*, which means “grace,” used here to describe the “divine influence upon the

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<sup>23</sup> John Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in Pauline Communities* (Heidelberg: J. C. B. Mohr, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, “Referat zur Einführung in das Schwerpunktthema,” Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 4th Meeting of the 9th Synod of the EKD (7 to 12 November 1999, Leipzig), [http://www.ekd.de/synode99/referate\\_juengel.html](http://www.ekd.de/synode99/referate_juengel.html) (accessed January 28, 2013)..

<sup>25</sup> Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, 183.



heart and its reflection in the life.”<sup>26</sup> This favor resulted in the people being attracted to the disciples and their being open to what the apostles had to say. Somehow their lives and their ways were speaking a language that touched the people.

### Peter's Cross-cultural Move to the Gentiles

Acts 10 is surely one of the most unusual ways of opening the ways of God to the Gentiles. Peter is called by Cornelius to come to his house. This is peculiar, first of all, because a Jew would never enter into a house of a Gentile, much less sit and eat with a Gentile. But what is more striking is the baptism of all who are present when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. The story is preceded by a dream that Peter had in which he was asked to eat what would have been regarded as unclean food according to the Levitical rules of the Old Testament. Peter did not want to do it, and God spoke to him and made clear that if God would call something clean, Peter should not call it unclean. God helped Peter at this moment to overcome the hindrances in his mind so that when the God-fearing Gentile Cornelius invited him to come and eat with him, he was prepared to go. Peter sat with the Gentiles, ate with them, and accepted the fact that God’s Spirit was at work with them as a testimony to baptize them. Later, Peter was critiqued by the Jews and almost changed his views on the issue.

### Seeking Contact Points—Acts 17 and Other Places

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<sup>26</sup> James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Brief Dictionaries of the Hebrew and Greek Words of the Original with Reference to the English Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2009).

In his commentary on the book of Acts, John R. W. Stott writes, "When Paul walked round Athens, he did not just 'notice' the idols. The Greek verb used three times (16, 22, 23) . . . means to 'observe' or 'consider.' So he looked and looked, and thought and thought"<sup>27</sup> until he reacted to what he saw. He saw the city full of idols that were worshiped instead of the God who created heaven and earth. But going back to chapter 17 and Paul's Areopagus address, clearly Paul fully proclaimed the gospel. It was not just a message of salvation, but it included the framework of a "Creator, Sustainer" Ruler, Father and Judge."<sup>28</sup> Paul used history, nature, and the greatness of God, showing that it is to him all things are owed. The full gospel that Paul preached included "the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27, NEB). Thus, the message that Paul preached in Athens was comprehensive. He not only went into the synagogue to preach, but he went to the marketplace to debate with the Epicureans and the Stoics, the philosophers of the time in Athens. He quoted these philosophers rather than the Scriptures, and in that sense he preached without even using the Old Testament. He begins with creation and looks at the gods he sees being worshipped, and then he asks questions about a personal God and the personal universe.

Paul found contact points when preaching to the Jews in the synagogue and to the Greek Gentiles in the marketplace. It is the same gospel, and yet different in the sense that he altered his contact point depending upon his audience. With the Jews, he could heavily draw from the Old Testament and his pharisaic background, which he could not

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<sup>27</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 291.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

do among the Greek Gentiles. In Athens, he spoke of their culture, in this case, their idols, explaining that creation already provided enough reasons to worship the creator. What stirred Paul to testify and preach openly and fearlessly was God's jealousy that he seems to have felt when God's name was profaned everywhere. Paul saw the idols rather than the one and only God and Lord, and he felt holy indignation. Out of this conviction, he spoke the full gospel of Scripture without any fear.

Today, there are various places that can become the “marketplaces” of our time. They may be pubs, coffee shops, shopping malls, or other places. They may be networks, clubs, or communities that are closely linked by common interests, goals, and purpose. They may be milieus that tend to have similarities, and they could also be specific people groups among the un-churched and de-churched.

### **Missions in the Reformed Church**

When coming back to the question of mission in the Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne, Harry R. Boer makes the following statement in his book, *Pentecost and Missions*: “In the conception of the Reformers and of the majority of seventeenth-century theologians the Great Commission was binding *only* on the apostles.”<sup>29</sup> A study by Wolfgang Gröszel titled, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche im 17 Jahrhundert* [Mission and Evangelical (Protestant) Church in the Seventeenth Century] demonstrates how the Lutheran Church viewed mission in the seventeenth century. For Melancthon, Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin, the Great Commission ceased with the apostles. The gospel

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<sup>29</sup> Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 18.

would spread like ripples by preaching the Word. There was a clear missionary indifference to be found.<sup>30</sup>

Only through the work of Englishmen William Carey and Andrew Fuller in the late eighteenth century is there a renewed sense of the duty to bring the gospel to people. Through the work of the Pietists in Germany, the Methodists in the United Kingdom, and the Moravians, one finds a first wave towards mission and a change of understanding. Later this is picked up with William Carey, who inspired the London Missionary Society (founded 1795 in London) and the Basler Mission (founded 1815), which were instrumental in their mission endeavors into the world. It has been said that a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in the seventeenth century asked a Reformed pastor why the Reformed Church was not involved in missions, and there was no answer that could be given.<sup>31</sup>

The interpretation of the Pentecost event has had an impact on mission throughout the history of the Church. Some have viewed the Pentecost event as non-historical, but instead, simply an opportunity for Luke to underline the universalism of the gospel. Others have viewed it as historical to support the speaking of tongues.<sup>32</sup> The view of Pentecost as “spiritual empowerment for missionary witness”<sup>33</sup> set the Church free for the

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<sup>30</sup> Wolfgang Gröszel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche im 17 Jahrhundert* [Mission and Evangelical (Protestant) Church in the Seventeenth Century] (Gotha: Perthes Verlag, 1897).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, 50ff.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 59.

missionary mandate. It is power that was promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8, and that power is the dynamic of the life of the witnessing Church today. Boer writes,

When we discuss the relationship of Pentecost to the witnessing Church we must qualify the Church in the sharpest possible manner as being *in her nature* a witnessing community and that she is this precisely because she derives her life from the Pentecost event. Witnessing is not one among many functions or activities of the Church, it is of her essence to witness, and it is out of this witness that all her other activities take their rise.<sup>34</sup>

In that sense, the Holy Spirit is a witnessing spirit, full of love and life. The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost, contends Boer, as "the origin and the undergirding, informing and empowering principle of the missionary witness of the Church."<sup>35</sup> Pentecost was one of the first confessions that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that he gave a burden to be passed on and announced, because it implies his lordship over all.

The Church is to be outward looking. Boer writes, "It is the nature of the Church ever to be enlarging her borders, and it is the nature of the Spirit to transmit His life to ever-widening circles."<sup>36</sup> There are four dimensions that the Church should seek to engage in, according to Croft. These include: the "up" dimension, representing the glory of God as primary of all mission; the "in" dimension, emphasizing relationships; the "out" dimension, representing the community focus; and the "of" dimension, representing

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 200.

the connection of all believers throughout the Church's history.<sup>37</sup> Croft insists that all of these four elements need to be present.

### **History of Missions in the Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne**

Ökumene, Mission und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (hereafter, OeME) is the Reformed Church's organized form of ecumenical relation, mission, and development aid. On its website, OeME makes no mention of any call to repentance, or any work in the country or beyond to give that call.<sup>38</sup> There is a lot of discussion about interreligious talks, houses of religion, and ways to understand each other. But there is no talk about anything that has to do with the mission mandate. Not even on the mission 21 homepage, the organization through which the state Church works, is there anything related to mission, other than a brief mention of it in Article 2<sub>2</sub> as it relates to the Reformed Constitution of the Canton of Bern. There is a general reluctance to use the word "mission" and combine it with a call; the reluctance is to anything that rings of a colonial idea, or of an idea of proclaiming truth as if Christianity were supreme in any way.

Yet it is passion to actually call for repentance, faith, sanctification, and participation at church that was displayed by the first-century Church. And it is this same passion that will call people to be true followers, rather than simply names on a list of members or consumers of services provided by the church. Jesus and the apostles were looking for those who would be disciples and who would follow him alone.

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<sup>37</sup> Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions*, 190.

<sup>38</sup> Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, "Welweite Kirche sein," <http://www.refbejuso.ch/strukturen/oeme-migration.html> (accessed January 28, 2013).

## Recent Developments

Innere Mission (“inner mission”) was a program started in the nineteenth century by evangelists in Germany. Founded by Johann Hinrich Wichern in Wittenberg in 1848, Innere Mission, a social program of charity and Christian education, was intended to bring about a rebirth of Christianity’s brotherly love. For nominal members, though, there is no concept of missions. Äussere Mission (“outer mission”) is moving beyond to other nations with the gospel. It is a movement that started with the Moravians and then through the mission societies brought the gospel to many nations.

## Mission Is Proclamation

Proclamation, preaching, and mission are not quite the same thing. Proclaiming and preaching the Word every Sunday when no one attends to listen cannot be the intention. The rule of having the Word preached or having a worship service every Sunday for every parish presupposes that people are still coming. This presupposition cannot be expected any longer. Even though the numbers of members are still around 60 percent of the population, church attendance has dropped drastically in the last thirty years. People are not attending church any longer, and a lot of the members are closer to those who have already left the church than to those who are still in it.

The members are not attending anymore, and in many ways the church has little meaning in their lives. It might still remind them a little of tradition, but not about a call to repentance, faith, sanctification, and participating at church, as Article 2<sub>2</sub> of the constitution of the Reformed Church of the canton of Berne mentions. The Christian

heritage is fading away, and quite often this situation makes preaching very difficult. Pastors do not want to keep people away, and thus they fear mentioning the gospel at all, discussing the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, or questioning the resurrection, eternal life, or inspiration and unity of the Bible. As a result the church deals with unimportant issues, not wanting to rock the boat. Those preaching have a hard time preaching any gospel with conviction, and they hesitate to focus on the essence of what the church is about, which is, as Article 2<sub>2</sub> states, calling people to repent, believe, be sanctified, and participate at church.



PART THREE  
MINISTRY STRATEGY

## CHAPTER 6

### A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE OUTREACH AND MISSIONS FOCUS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF KIRCHBERG

Mission, as described above, is flowing from God and is rooted in the Trinity. And as has been demonstrated, God is in essence relationship. Within the Trinity there is a perfect relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Out of this perfect love, God created everything that is, including humankind. Thus, we are made as loving relational beings and are to reflect that in our lives. God has reached out to humankind already by creating in love. Thus, relationship is at the beginning and is the center of outreach. The love that was at the beginning of creation will be the love that is to flow out in relationship towards others. This love will always point back and be drawn into the love of God. It will always be a representation, by word and deed, of who God is. Thus, our love is to show by representing God in testifying to him in our words and in what we do.

The church constitution of the Reformed Church of Berne, Jura, and Solothurn states in Article 2<sup>1</sup> that the Church has received from the Lord the calling to proclaim to

all people in church and world the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> So there will always be an “out” dimension that needs to be in the fabric of every church and deeply a part of the mark of the church. Mission or outreach has to be the heartbeat of the church; a church that is following the way the Lord himself ministered will be a witnessing community.

### **Outreach Takes on a More Essential Role within the Church**

If mission and outreach are to be important dimensions, and if they are to be the heartbeat and a mark of the church, everything that is done in the church will have to be seen in this light. There will be a need to screen all that is done in church to see how much reflects that dimension, or how much reflects a desire to serve itself, such as exclusive programs, services that are intended only for certain people, whether members or nonmembers.

This focus on mission and outreach will lead the church to look closely at everything it does to see if every subgroup and every activity includes the “out” dimension. This does not mean that some of the things that a church does can have more of an emphasis on “in” and “up,” and yet looking at everything from the angle of the “out” dimension will be helpful for the state Church of Switzerland. For a long time, the state Church has existed without much thought on mission and outreach at all, being secure in its situation in the villages and providing a place for people to go, whether or not it was being used. But now the state Church is moving into a new era, so to speak, in a time in which church is not taken for granted anymore, and it is not evident that people

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<sup>1</sup> Reformierte Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, *Verfassung der Evangelisch-reformierten Landeskirche des Kantons Bern* [Constitution of the Reformed Church of the Canton of Bern], March 19, 1946 (as of April 1, 2003), 5.

have positive sentiment towards the Church. In this new era, more and more in the West are leaving the Church and are undenominational. In Berne, Basel, Zürich, and Geneva, which are grand historic places of the Reformation, fewer than 30 percent of the population was listed as members of the Reformed Church in the 2000 census. In some of these cities, the number is even fewer than 20 percent, and Geneva is down to 13.4 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Since 1999, many in Europe and around the world have taken missions and evangelism more seriously. In Budapest in 2006, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) wrote and passed a statement that discussed a distinct Protestant nature of evangelism,<sup>3</sup> thereby underlining anew the importance of evangelism in the context of missions. The statement, passed in Busan, Korea November 2013 by the Ecumenical Council of Churches on missions, has shown the importance of mission for all continents.<sup>4</sup> The West has become and is a mission field.

*Proclamation* has remained the calling of the Reformed Church in the Kanton of Berne, but *mission* and *outreach* have unfortunately become terms with negative connotations, as they have in many parts of the West. They have been mainly used for the work in non-Western countries (Africa, South America, and Asia), and still tend to evoke a colonial perspective. It is as if the one who is doing missions is coming with pride,

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, "Religion in Switzerland," [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religionen\\_in\\_der\\_Schweiz#cite\\_note-3](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religionen_in_der_Schweiz#cite_note-3) (accessed February 19, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), *Evangelisch Evangelisieren: Perspektiven für Kirchen in Europa* (Wien: Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa [GEKE], 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Oikoumene, World Council of Churches, "Together towards Life."

bringing the content of his or her culture imposing that culture on the other. Thus, this type of “superior” mindset has come under tremendous critique, even though it does not reflect the attitude of most missionaries today. Mission for the state Church in Switzerland is primarily relief and development work; it has lost any connection with evangelism and outreach. It has become only diaconate work, reflecting the love of God at work in agriculture, employment, and the like, but not in evangelism. Sometimes theological schools are still supported by the state Church under the auspices of mission.

#### Relationship as the Main Starting Point

The shopping mile became for me a place to build relationship. One way relationships started was through Rolf Walker, who plans different shows and exhibits all over Switzerland, one of which was in the restaurant of a furniture shop in the shopping mile called “Pfister.” One of the exhibits was titled, “Apple of Paradise,” so Rolf asked me if I as the local pastor would be willing to come and give a talk at the opening of the exhibit. I agreed, and my wife and I went to have a look beforehand because we could not imagine seeing good art in a furniture shop. We ended up being amazed by the quality of what was exhibited and found out that Rolf had very good contacts to famous artists. The opening was a special moment, and from then on my wife and I attended every opening of every show. In this way, we met different artists and different sponsors of the shows. We also met the manager of the furniture shop, Daniel Schmid, and Daniel and his family as well as Rolf have become close friends of ours.

The impetus for this project started with relationships that became friendships. These relationships arose around appreciating art, and the discussions eventually included broader subjects, such as God and the world. Since my wife and I met Rolf and Daniel and his wife, we have met on a regular basis for meals and on other occasions. My wife and I have been invited to birthday parties within this group, which shows how much the relationships have grown. It shows how important relationships are and that they are foundational to missions and outreach. Missions and outreach should never be a question of coercing anybody. Our friendships are for the sake of relationships and love, and in this way they are unconditional; there is no sense that our friends are seen as objects of evangelism. The relationships developed naturally, and our new friends only became aware that my wife and I were Christians because they know my profession.

Our relationship with Daniel Schmid, the manager of the furniture shop, led to a worship service that he took part in on John 1. The message was that Jesus dwells with us, and Daniel spoke during the service about the meaning of the table, around which most of our lives are taking place today. For Daniel, it was the first time apart from his own baptism that he had been in a church service. The church itself was rearranged so that there were tables in the church between the pews, and the gospel choir sang during the worship time. As it happened, a couple of years later, Daniel invited the same gospel choir to sing at the opening of the Christmas selection of his shop.

At one point I somewhat jokingly asked Rolf Walker, the one organizing the different art exhibits, if he could think of planning an art exhibit with our Church. Many months later, I received a call from him requesting a meeting with my wife and me.

When my wife and I met him, he presented to us an idea for a possible exhibit that would begin at the church and then continue in different parts of the city. We were both totally amazed, and we gave it consideration and brought it to our pastoral team. Initially, the pastoral team expressed reluctance concerning the project because it was such a new idea, and because there was quite a budget involved. Funds would be needed for sponsorship, advertising, and the creation of a catalogue.

### Bringing Together Various Groups in the Church

It would be ideal for the various groups in the church to consider how much outreach is being done through their ministries. However, since such a venture would prove to be imposing, other ideas must be considered. The idea was discussed that a common theme could be suggested for the church, and an art exhibit on that theme could bring together all the different subgroups with the people in the nine villages.

The theme selected was “love, faith, hope,” and every group was to think about how in connection with the exhibit they were to take up this theme and reach out to the people in the community. For example, there is a group of ladies in the church who come together to knit and sell what they knit for missions. This group could make a connection with other knitters in the community, and the group might be able to knit something connected to the theme. There is a well-known wool and weaving company in one of the villages, and the church knitting group could reach out to the owners of that company and its customers.

Other groups within the church could participate in their own unique ways. The church cinema could show films in the church on the theme perhaps get a local cinema involved. The house groups could study the theme and write a journal full of input on the subject. The gospel choir and the church choir could find music related to the theme, and sing not only in church but in the community as well.

### **“Love, Faith, Hope”: A Theme for 2012 as a Point of Contact to the Community**

A concept was developed for the art exhibit, and different activities around the theme of “love, faith, and hope” were considered. The exhibit provided a platform to reach out. The professional artists were given the task of painting on big “moving walls”—these were actually steel plates, each one big enough for a mural 3 meters by 2 meters (that is, 9 feet, 10 inches by 6 feet 6 inches). They could be moved with a truck from one location to another. The artists were tasked with painting something that reflected the topic of “love, faith, hope,” which summarizes one of the most beautiful love poems found in 1 Corinthians 13. The moving walls were to stand outside around the entry of the church on the church mountain and inside of the church were to be some big paintings on the walls to the same topic, while many of the church services through the year would take up that topic. The concept was called “Kirchart” (Churchart).<sup>5</sup>

“Churchart” means art in context of the Church. Churchart is to promote the dialogue between art and religion. This dialogue, in turn, advances contemporary art. It is powerful to combine art with a place where there is prayer, worship, and preaching, and

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 3.



where hope arises. Churchart wants to first realize a traveling exhibition. The topic, “faith, love, hope,” shall be taken up by painters and sculptors alike. Thus, works of art that form a diverse thought path towards the topic will be created. It is hoped that encounters will take place between the diverse people who are contributing to and viewing the exhibit, and that the dialogue will include people’s thoughts and feelings about faith, love, and hope. For that reason, a website will be developed for Churchart.

The exhibit was to start in the fall of 2012 in Kirchberg/BE, and it was hoped that it would then move to other places. Every host region would determine itself what kind of a supporting program would take place beside the exhibit, if any. An information kiosk, a website, a brochure, and a publication would accompany Churchart. Sculptures and paintings would be displayed in the church and along a path on the church property. The paintings would be murals painted on steel plates (3 meters x 2 meters). They would stand independently on pedestals or be set up inside a building.

Dr. Hans Baumann from Burgdorf, an art critic and creative artist, shared some of his thoughts on the concept of Churchart.<sup>6</sup> According to Baumann, art in former days was the possession of the nobility, the Church, and well-to-do citizens, and was therefore not publically accessible, or only in a limited way. In the second half of the eighteenth century and mainly in the nineteenth century, more and more museums were founded that were open to all who were interested. Often, these museums did not attract visitors, as they had a reputation of appealing only to an elite crowd; therefore people did not make use of them. This is why, in the second half of the last century, the idea of bringing art to

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 3.

the people came about. Many outdoor exhibits have been initiated, such as sculpture paths, whereby the work is being chosen according to artistic quality, material, and relation to the place.

Churchart is standing in this tradition, but with essential differences. First of all, with the three terms—“faith, love, hope”—a clear contentual topic is given that connects the works of art. It should lead the artist and the viewer to a deeper intellectual and emotional debate that surpasses the mere aesthetic experiences. Also new for an outdoor exhibit is the emphasis placed on painting. It is more suitable for differentiated portrayal of religious content than three-dimensional works—one can see in that a parallel to the frescos that can be seen in many churches. The artists are to be carefully chosen and would receive the definite commission only on the basis of a submitted rough copy. The path of thought on the topic “faith, love, hope” that comes into being by the art works and the added statements of the artists ought not to be a one-way road. On the website, viewers would be able to express their own thoughts and come into a dialogue amongst each other and the artists. There would be also a dialogue as the path of thought moves to different places with different confessional orientation. This would encourage encounters between people of these different places.

#### Developing a Point of Contact with the Community

The location of the church in Kirchberg is an ideal place for the exhibit. The church mountain is the only hill in this area, and it is a place from which there is an outstanding view onto every side. One can see the Alps (higher mountain range) and the

Jura mountains (lower mountain range). It is a place where visitors of the exhibit could experience the proximity between heaven and earth. God's presence can be felt, especially at "power places."<sup>7</sup> The topic is brought into this dynamic, and viewers can experience more than an encounter with the artwork and the artist; viewers can encounter the one who holds all things together, God himself.

This is how the art exhibit has the potential to provide a platform whereby people can come into touch with art, culture, and the topic of faith, love, and hope. Groups within the church as well as groups within the community can build on this platform. People of different age groups can encounter art, culture, and the topic of faith, love, and hope. Every group can find its own way to approach the topic.

It is hoped that artists and viewers alike will feel a sense of proximity to a creative spirit, the One who is present. It is hoped that they will see love in a new way, as a gift given or a suffered love or a neverending love. They may see hope in a new way, as a certain hope, an anchor that holds fast in the middle of storms, or a hope that knows a future. And they may see faith in a new way, leading to the heart of God, to the heart of the people, and to each person's own heart. The topic invites people to think about the basic questions of life. A workbook may help people to absorb the topic more deeply.

Schools may also choose to participate by viewing the exhibit, and they may profit from teaching aids or from learning how to build the project into their everyday school experience. A local webpage would be created and would be connected to the

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<sup>7</sup> "Power places" is a common phrase used to describe a place where God's presence can be experienced.

central one. This webpage would focus on the exhibit and the theme of the year, which could be used as educational tool for the schools in the nine villages and beyond. A painting competition for schoolchildren was planned as well, and it was to take up the same topic as the exhibit and the theme of the year.

The art exhibit would be a platform for bringing people to come and visit the church who would normally not turn up anywhere close to a church. The beautiful piece of land surrounding the church, with its many wonderful and old trees, attracts many people for its natural beauty. It is also the place of the graveyard for all the nine villages, which draws people to visit as well. It is likely that visitors of the graveyard would happen upon the art exhibit as well. A small portion of the exhibit would take place in the furniture shop in the shopping mile as a way of making more people aware of the exhibit taking place around the church. This would potentially mobilize people who are from many places outside of the nine villages of the parish to visit the exhibit as well.

The art exhibit would also include performances by such groups as yodeling clubs, to brass bands, and other musical groups. These groups would perform in the church and in the community, focusing their music on the topic of “love, faith, hope.” The idea was to get as many different interpretations of the topic as is possible in order to enrich the whole year and to deepen people’s views of love, faith, and hope. It was hoped that the hip hop youth, the round-about dance groups, and the different youth choirs of the church would also participate in these musical performances. A stage would be built for this purpose.

The goal was for the local political community to be closely knit to the project, and to participate in terms of content, creativity, and finances. A dispenser with a daily word related to the topic, like the daily watchwords of the Moravians, is next to the exhibit. These daily words can also be sent by mail. On different days, short devotions would be offered beside one of the works of art. From the village of Kirchberg up to the church mountain, various signs and artwork would point to the exhibit. A budget was created that included costs for conception, materials for the artists, materials for the artists' work, public relations and information, miscellaneous material, opening, and miscellaneous.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 3.

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

This chapter will show how the implementation was planned and, as far as possible, implemented. The different stages, including building awareness and trust that would then lead to a decision, has been a long journey, and it was in many ways an important lesson from which a lot could be learned. There were different stages from the initial approval of the pastoral team up to the council's decision. The working group played an important role in all of this process and was an excellent team to work with.

#### **Pilot Project: Art Exhibit and a Common Theme for the Church in 2011**

The plans for the art exhibit and the common theme for the church began in 2009. It was initially approved, but later went through two postponements. Ultimately, the art exhibit was canceled, and only the common theme for the church was upheld.

#### Information and Awareness of Pastoral Team and the Council

In 2009, the pastoral team was informed about the possibility of an art exhibit around the theme of “love, faith, hope.” A meeting was held during the summer of 2009 and the provisional concept was discussed. Before the meeting was held, written

information describing the art exhibit has been disseminated to the members of the team. At the meeting, the reaction was rather negative at first, and none of the members of the team supported the project. I was quite amazed at how negatively the idea was received, but I concluded that it had to do with the freshness and newness of it. I then asked them to think it through over the summer break.

The next step was a conversation with the president of the church council, to whom a first draft of the concept for the exhibit was presented. The president was very supportive and asked me to move forward with the plans for the exhibit and to bring it back to the team meeting after the summer break. The pastoral team came back after the summer break and started to think more positively about the idea and the possibilities it would open for them. They slowly started to support it.

With the support of the pastoral team and the president of the council, the idea was then presented to the entire church council in the fall of 2009. Again, information about the art exhibit was disseminated before the meeting. Rolf Walker, the curator, came along to this meeting and explained the concept to the council, as well as the whole team of pastors and deacons who were there. The council agreed to think through the proposal, and they decided that the council retreat would be a good time to further consider the idea. Rolf was present at this retreat as well, and the entire group—the curator, the pastoral team, and the church council—was able to brainstorm ideas together about the program that would accompany the exhibit, using the exhibit as a platform to reach out to the community and beyond.

## Approval of the Project in the Council

On the council meeting of January 20, 2010, the council of the Reformed parish of Kirchberg approved the art exhibit and the program that would accompany it with a common theme for the year. A working group was put into place which was comprised of nine members: Rolf Walker, the curator; Richard Stern, the pastor of the Kirchberg parish (also a council member); Stephan Schranz, another council member; Beat Lehmann, a member of the church with a lot of contacts into the political community who would be able to provide the set-up work needed; a finance specialist from the banking sector, as well as several other people who were involved in the political community and in economical groups.

The working group came together on a regular basis. The political community of Kirchberg also requested that a member of their community be added to the working group so that this individual could determine what finances would be given to support the project. The working group worked out a concrete implementation plan. Stephan Schranz was asked to head the group, and Richard Stern recorded the minutes. The implementation plan was written out and brought to the council for approval. This plan included a schedule, a budget, the theme for the coming year, and the coordination of the events. The proposal was presented at the council retreat on June 5, 2010 with the name, “Project 2011, Kirchberg-Kirchart,” and the theme of the year was to be “faith, love, hope.”



## Approval of the Concrete Implementation

In the council meeting on June 10, 2010, the council accepted the theme, “faith, love, hope” for the year 2011. It agreed on starting the project with setting a cap on expenses of CHF 20’000.<sup>1</sup> The initial 5000.- was designated for the preliminary project in 2010. Another 5000.- was designated for project planning part one. And 10’000.- was designated for project planning and project support both in 2011.

The council gave the working group a deadline of September 22, 2010 to find other definitively participating locations. The working group was convinced that finding these other locations would be a simple task. In case other locations were not readily willing to participate, the working group asked for CHF 5000 to cover the cost until other locations could be secured. For the account management, the working group was asked to find a solution with the finance department of the church.

The working group was tasked with making the Churchart project happen in Kirchberg, and arranging for the the specific events that would be connected to the exhibit. The working group was also tasked with coordinating the art exhibit and the related events to the theme of the year. The church council was willing to write a letter to ask other communities and parishes to join in the project. First, different places with the same name were asked to join: Kirchberg (Kanton St Gallen), Kirchberg an der Jagst (Germany) and Kirchberg in Tirol (Austria).

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<sup>1</sup> CHF refers to a Swiss franc.

### Enthusiasm of People as Main Resource

Many of the people involved would meet regularly to inspire each other and share ideas about the possible projects that would fit with the theme and the exhibit. It was hoped that each and every group in the church would have time to come up with their own ideas for implementation. Each group was to consider ways to connect with a company, certain people, or a location in the parish of Kirchberg. The idea was that through these connections, various people could view the exhibit and, in so doing, have a positive experience of church.

### First Postponement of Kirchberg Kirchart

In the council meeting August 26, 2010, the council decided to postpone the exhibit and the theme of the year to 2012. Financing would remain the same. The decision was made to use some of the money from 2011 towards preparations for what was to come in 2012, and to use the Internet to begin to publicize the exhibit.

The working group that came together on August 10, 2011 discussed the positive course of events and all of the preparations needed. It was agreed that a longer start-up time was needed for the local implementation in Kirchberg/BE connected to the other locations. It became clear that Kirchberg/BE needed time to prepare and that the other locations needed more time as well. This postponement happened to coincide with a time of difficult changes within the association of communities. For that reason, the working group, in agreement with the curator Rolf Walker, asked to postpone Kirchberg Kirchart

by one year and to start in Kirchberg in April 2012. The council agreed on postponing the exhibit and the theme of the year for 2012.

### Second Postponement

All the locations with the name Kirchberg unfortunately turned down the project, some of them after considerable talks and a process of clarification. This led to an attempt to simply call the project Kirchart (without the Kirchberg) and to find other locations. This led to another postponement for the exhibit to the fall of 2012.

After having tried in many ways to find other locations, the working group was informed that there were no other locations willing to join. This led to the idea of simply holding a small exhibit in Kirchberg/BE only. This concept focused on using pieces of art that already existed, so the project lost the creativity that would have come with producing new art and music.

Ultimately, since the vision for the project had dwindled significantly from the original plan, the working group, and later on the council, decided to forego the exhibit altogether. The working group got together one more time to actually say goodbye to the whole project. The theme of the year was kept, and was the focus of a succession of sermons and for some other events that happened in and around the church.

### Some Results and Applications

An important issue that had to take place was some kind of grieving for the loss of a vision. One had to learn to say goodbye and move on. The project would have provided an original opportunity to connect the church with the wider community, and it would

have provided avenues of outreach for every subgroup in the church. This would have been helpful for the Reformed church of the Canton of Berne, where outreach and mission are not integrated in many of the activities and ministries.

#### Common Theme for a Year

The idea of having a common theme for a year brings the different groups of the church together around a topic. It provides an opportunity for creativity for each group, as each group can decide upon its own way of taking up the topic and connecting with the community. The different groups can inspire each other to reach out, and they can start building bridges into the community that are connected with what they are already doing. Natural relationships and friendships that already exist can be strengthened and connected to what is being done, and new relationships can come about. This allows every group to think about how they reach out to the community, align with the other groups in using the same topic, and find new ways to connect. All the different expressions can be communicated to every household in the area. The individual contacts can then be strengthened, and hopefully there will be a transfer from one expression to another. It is hoped that through these relationships, people will make a connection with the church and, ultimately, with God.

For the purpose of connecting the church and the community, art can be a good means. Art has a prophetic and provocative nature, and it speaks directly so that content becomes the subject rather than form, structure, and the like. The art exhibit would have provided a perfect platform for all of this, especially as it would have drawn in many

people who do not have a natural contact with the church. It would have drawn in people who are connected to Rolf, both personally and professionally, people around the furniture shop and the shopping-mile, and people involved in clubs, associations, schools, and other organizations.

### Common Strategy for the Church

A common strategy sets a lot of energy and creativity free and builds inside as well as outside. The strategy of outreach can help to constantly remind people of the focus of the church and every subgroup. A strategy can help a church to avoid becoming ingrown; it can help people to look outside and find ways to cater to people who come in from the outside.

### Evaluation

Apart from the traveling exhibition, an original alternative should have been conceptualized from the beginning. If that had been established, the whole project would have not been dependent on other sites. As it was, the project was dependent on other sites, which needed to be willing to raise a large amount of financial support, set up an organizational committee, and be enthusiastic in making it happen. This was quite a lot to ask of the other sites.

One example of the difficulty of securing other sites took place Kirchberg an der Jagst in Germany. This location would have been a perfect place for an art exhibit with a program around it supported by the church. In a visit with the town's mayor, Rolf and I were received warmly, and we had an excellent time. He had looked closely at the

concept, but he wanted to do his own thing so that he would be popular. He wanted to involve the artists who were working at a yearly art show in town, and he did not want to incur great costs because that would not be popular for him as a mayor. Thus, after considerable talks and many conversations back and forth, it was not possible to continue with Kirchberg an der Jagst because they did not want to accept the conditions that we had stipulated. This experience should have alerted the working group to the need to change the conditions or revise the concept. An original concept just for Kirchberg/BE could have worked.

Looking back, it is certain that the financial support would have been provided, as well as the sponsors, the location would have been given for free, and a lot of the material and the work needed to set it up would have been donated. We might have had to downsize the number of murals a bit, and all the additional events would have required the support of groups outside of the church. The community, clubs, and associations, as well as the schools, would likely have joined at that time and added financial support. Rolf was very convinced that the project would succeed. I personally had some doubts, but my pastoral duties often left me with little time to consider the project's viability. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to have had a second opinion, another strong personality to look through the project and question it.

It must also be considered whether or not the time was ripe for such a project. As it turned out, the timing of the project would have coincided with political turmoil that poisoned the atmosphere in and around the church. There were also a lot of changes happening in the pastoral team that had an influence on the whole process. The unity that

had existed in the church council was questioned politically, and the pastoral team itself was not united at all. Everyone on the team was doing his or her own thing. This unifying project would only have worked if the pastoral team and the church council saw in it a higher cause, such as outreach, unity, and the gospel.

Church and art have always been in some ways connected in history. It has been the higher church hierarchy that made art possible in the churches. In today's churches, the most active and enthusiastic people in the church are not necessarily the ones who are closely connected to art. In many ways, artists have had a hard time in the Christian world; they have not been understood, welcomed, and supported. Their lives are different and so they stand out. Standing out is typically not a desired situation among Swiss people, and especially not among Christians. Standing out often does not make a lot of friends among all those who want to do all things correctly, who are following the rules, or who see themselves as the ones who are faithful.

The most positive results of the project were the connections made with Rolf and Daniel Schmid, the manager of the furniture store. We still regularly meet at the exhibits that Rolf organizes. We have gotten to know his sponsors and many famous artists, which has been a tremendous privilege. Rolf and Daniel and I have become good friends, and we still meet and have deep conversations. Even our families have become friends, which is exciting. Some of the other members of the working group have come into that network as well. Some of the people of our church go and help the furniture shop whenever there is technical help needed. Thus, this goes back to what is essential: relationship.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This doctoral project and the project described within started with relationships and have now come to a conclusion with relationships. The relationships include those with other people; the social world; the environment; the village, town, and country one has been placed into; and the history each person is part of, including one's family history and the history of the location one comes from. Another significant relationship is one's relationship with oneself. One often dialogues with oneself. This means that one actually starts to relate as soon as one starts to become; one cannot be without relating.

This doctoral project has demonstrated how much we as human beings relate to the people around us and the locations where we reside. As believers, we are called to relate with the love of God to those around us. When we make our home in a certain place and when we work in a certain setting, it will become essential how we relate to those around us. Relationships ought to be unconditional, as love is, and they will always be a gift that is experienced. Relationships that are open and genuine will lead to friendships that last for many years. The relationships will continue even if we move or change to a different place of work.

Relationships are fragile, as they very often are marked by hurts, fear, greed, hatred, or insecurity. Nevertheless, they are still the fabric of our lives and the basis of who we are. As soon we get involved in each other's lives, we cannot but be moved when our friends are moved and we cannot help but carry the burdens they are carrying. We go a mile and many more in the shoes of our friends, and this is the same way God has



befriended us in Jesus Christ. This incarnational approach is to be ours as we share each other's sufferings and the joys, as we meet in our every day lives, and as we are on the road together. Relationships are fragile in that something is running through the heart of humankind that has torn and continues to tear relationships apart. If we consider creation, fall, and redemption as a model, then truly the fall has had an effect on all relationships.

The way we deal with others in terms of war, torture, violence, and the like shows how much of what has been beautifully created has been twisted. And yet, there is more than enough proof of the beauty of relationships and therefore of creation. There is always the possibility of restoration of relationships and seeing the beauty come in again.

As we live our daily lives in our homes, our workplaces, and our places of leisure, we are in a network of relationships that can come to life by a deep appreciation of one another, the beauty that we can see in each other, and in the places we have been placed in. Even the wooden cabins in the poorest parts of Manila can become a place of contentment and happiness if those who live there can relate to one another and to the place they live.

My friends take me along on a journey to their deepest places, their abysses, their strongholds of life, their dreams, and to everything that is personal and sometimes falls apart so easily. I also take them along on my journey to my deepest places, my abysses, and my life questions and dreams. Together we are on our way to life and therefore toward God, because God is a God of life.

From a centered set perspective, we are all in some ways journeying from different distances away or towards Jesus, who is at the center of all. It is a mystery, as

we can see on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13ff). After the resurrection, these disciples were on their way home, full of disillusionment. They were talking with each other about what happened in Jerusalem with the crucifixion and the report of the empty tomb, which left them wondering. In this story, someone walked with them, asking them what they were talking about, and they told him what they had expected to happen and what actually happened. This man who came alongside them opened up to them the Old Testament, starting with Moses and the prophets, showing what was being told concerning himself. Only when he broke the bread in the home and then disappeared were their eyes opened.

This story reveals the fact that God's presence is often with us even though we do not recognize him. In the same way, we become companions to people, and through that the presence of God shines through us and can actually open the eyes of our fellow human beings. It is as if the glory of God—in the cloud, in the fire, in the tent in the Old Testament, and in the temple—can come upon us by the Holy Spirit. Through us and sometimes despite us, the Holy Spirit can reach out to those around us and open their eyes.

It is also important to note that stories about the priorities in our lives can speak loudly. The story of the rich young ruler is a story about priorities. Jesus asked this man to completely change his life, to repent and turn around based upon a change of priorities. Jesus challenged him, not to forget about money and finances, but to order his priorities anew and ask himself what is most important in his life. This story is one that can instigate dialogue around what is essential in life. In my friendship with Daniel, the

manager of the furniture shop, we have shared many such conversations over lunch. Through stories, as well as through sharing one's life, Jesus can shine through us to the people we are relating to.

Relationships open doors into the world. It has opened to us the doors to the shopping mile, to the different managers of the different shops, to the curator of a gallery, and through him to many sponsors and many other artists. These relationships have led to close relationships between my family and the families of these individuals. These relationships paved the way for conversations. These individuals have become friends, and these friendships have lasted through good times and difficult times, including times of political turmoil in the church.

These relationships go beyond the person-to-person relationships. They lead us into the heart of God and who he is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are founded in the perfect relationship, in diversity in unity, in total appreciation, in dignity, love, and total acceptance. Out of this perfect relationship, God freely created, according to the Christian understanding the heavens and the earth, a personal universe—that is, creation—in which relationship is essential.

Thus, relationship is inherent in everything that is. Everyone and everything relates to God as a reference point. Relationships with others are essential to healthy human living. Relationship with the social world and with one's environment helps us to respect the environment and consider everything with dignity. Relationship with the history that we come from in a larger sense and with our own family helps us to connect. Relationship with the country and the locality into which we have been placed helps us to

be grateful, and to absorb and appreciate the culture. From relationship as such we move to the relationship as the center of all that is.

The Church is a people called by God in relationship to him and to our neighbor, and thus the Church is thrown into the world full of relationships. These relationships lead us into every sphere of life, and this leads to the question of how much the people of the Church are willing to be present in the network of relationships within a certain place. In his book, *Missional Scorecard*, Reggie McNeal challenges the Church today.<sup>1</sup> He contends that the Church needs to ask some tough questions about its programs and whether they reach out or simply retain the status quo. First, he writes, the Church has to move from an internal to an external focus, ending the model of the local church as a social club. Second, the Church also has to move from running programs and ministries to developing people as its core activity. Finally, the Church must move from church-based leadership to community-engaged leadership.<sup>2</sup> Relationships become essential to this for McNeal, and “people development becomes the core activity of our community engagement.”<sup>3</sup>

No other activity needs to be added. A whole new list of ways to measure the outcome will be needed for keeping track of the progress in relationships outside the church, being part of the community and serving it, reading the culture, coaching lives, and having a number of “stories of external, missional experiences used in [one’s]

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<sup>1</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2009), front flap.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 110.

speaking and writing.”<sup>4</sup> In that sense, outreach will become part of the fabric of what the Church is all about. In the spirit of the *missio Dei*, flowing from God himself, God reaches out and the Church becomes part of the movement of God towards the world.

Now this is all hard work because we are asked to walk the extra mile, to put on the shoes of our companions, to become one of them as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22. We have to learn their language, become their companions, dive in fully, die to ourselves, and give ourselves for life. We become fully involved for God and for our neighbor. In all of that, we are “always ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us” (1 Pt 3:15). In reaching out there are opportunities to be in conversation with people around us.

One wonders, at this point, how evangelism fits into these relationships because any pressure or coercion cannot be part of a gospel of love. It is and will always be freely approached with the same free love that God has created. It is a love that speaks out, takes a stand, and has a profile; but it is a love that is considerate of others, that bears with others and with their decisions and their ways. This love does not come from a place of superior knowledge. Rather, this love offers something worthwhile: to fully give our lives to something meaningful, Jesus.

In evangelism, it is not ourselves that we bring but Jesus, so we can refer back to him. Evangelism helps us to formulate what we believe in such a compact way that we can share it with others. In that sense, there is a need for good theological study for

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 160.

evangelism and communication with non-believers. Testimonies of those who have found their way to Christ will be encouraging and uplifting.

Apart from the “in,” “up,” and “of” dimensions of the Church, the “out” dimension is also important. Steven Croft and the fresh expressions movement from the UK have provided this helpful tool, with which churches can take a close look at how these different dimensions are part of all that the church does. Churches must ask themselves whether they are mainly concerned about creating a church culture that satisfies their own needs, or whether they are becoming a place where people learn to look outside of the church towards the needs of others. Churches must focus on people being sent out and equipping people for such a purpose.

Relationships are today often around networks of home, work, and leisure. New forms of church can come about through these networks that have different frameworks than the parishes as they are known. In one parish, many different network churches can meet outside of the parish church itself; these small “churches” should not be forced into the parish church because they do not necessarily have anything in common with those who attend.

In our state Church, in which the gospel is handed down from generation to generation, the members can be spoken to via the children. Through religious education for the children, the parents can learn about baptism renewal for themselves, and more about what baptism actually means. This is also the case with camps, dancing groups, music groups, theatre groups, and week-long camps for kids that the church organizes. To be able to reach the parents through this way becomes an important way of reaching out.

Therefore, it cannot be, as the Reformed churches have quite often said, that mission happened once and for all at the cross, and that it ended with the apostles. Outreach has to go on.

The missionary, or missional, dimension of the Church is necessary. Thankfully, it has been discovered anew in the UK with fresh expressions, and in Germany around the general assembly in Leipzig 1999, with an important talk given by the systematic theology professor Eberhard Jüngel. Out of this the EKD has developed centers emphasizing mission, evangelism, church development, and the quality of preaching.

God's presence with the Church is echoed in John 1, where it is written that Jesus dwelled amongst his people, full of glory. His dwelling with the Church implies responsibility, but it also implies that it is he who shines through whatever we do. There cannot be an automatic membership; all people have to be reached with the gospel. In that sense, the Church has to be known within the community, and it must learn to listen to the community as a servant. As there was a missionary commitment in ancient Judaism as well as in the Pauline communities, there should be such a commitment in the Church today.

Thus, mission has to be the breath of life of every Reformed Church in the Canton of Berne. It has to become essential to the state Church (die Volkskirche/people's church). In becoming so, the Church as the people of God will reflect more of who God is.

## APPENDIX 1

### STATISTICS FOR THE PARISH OF KIRCHBERG

THE COLUMNS BELOW FROM LEFT TO RIGHT ARE:  
YEAR/WEDDINGS/BAPTISMS/FUNERALS/BECOMING A MEMBER/LEAVING THE CHURCH



#### Statistiken Kirchliche Handlungen / Kircheneintritte und –austritte

Statistics of church services / becoming a member and cancelling membership

Jahr Year	Trauungen Marriages	Taufen Baptisms	Konfirmationen Confirmations	Abdankungen Funerals	Eintritte New members	Austritte Leaving the church
1979	69	95	149	74		
1980	52	102	155	73		
1981	54	118	116	82		
1982	58	103	133	85		
1983	69	108	129	81		
1984	50	110	145	73		
1985	63	106	114	94		
1986	59	111	125	102		
1987	84	113	122	95		
1988	68	122	109	77		
1989	58	120	129	90		
1990	49	122	103	88		
1991	65	105	103	101		
1992	53	106	117	100		
1993	51	98	95	89	0	
1994	30	86	100	83	1	



1995	43	89	89	92	5	
1996	51	97	130	84	9	
1997	26	80	123	76	2	
1998	34	87	118	88	0	
1999	29	75	122	89	1	
2000	38	75	118	86	4	
2001	17	84	127	87	2	
2002	25	70	121	85	1	24
2003	27	78	103	72	1	15
2004	21	75	111	77	2	30
2005	21	53	120	84	3E2K	28
2006	15	49	121	93	2E1K	25
2007	20	58	95	80	1E	25
2008	21	63	93	83	2E2K	16
2009	15	46	96	82	2	51
2010	20	47	85	90	7	45
2011	25	45	79	79	1K	43
2012	21	67	86	86	0	44

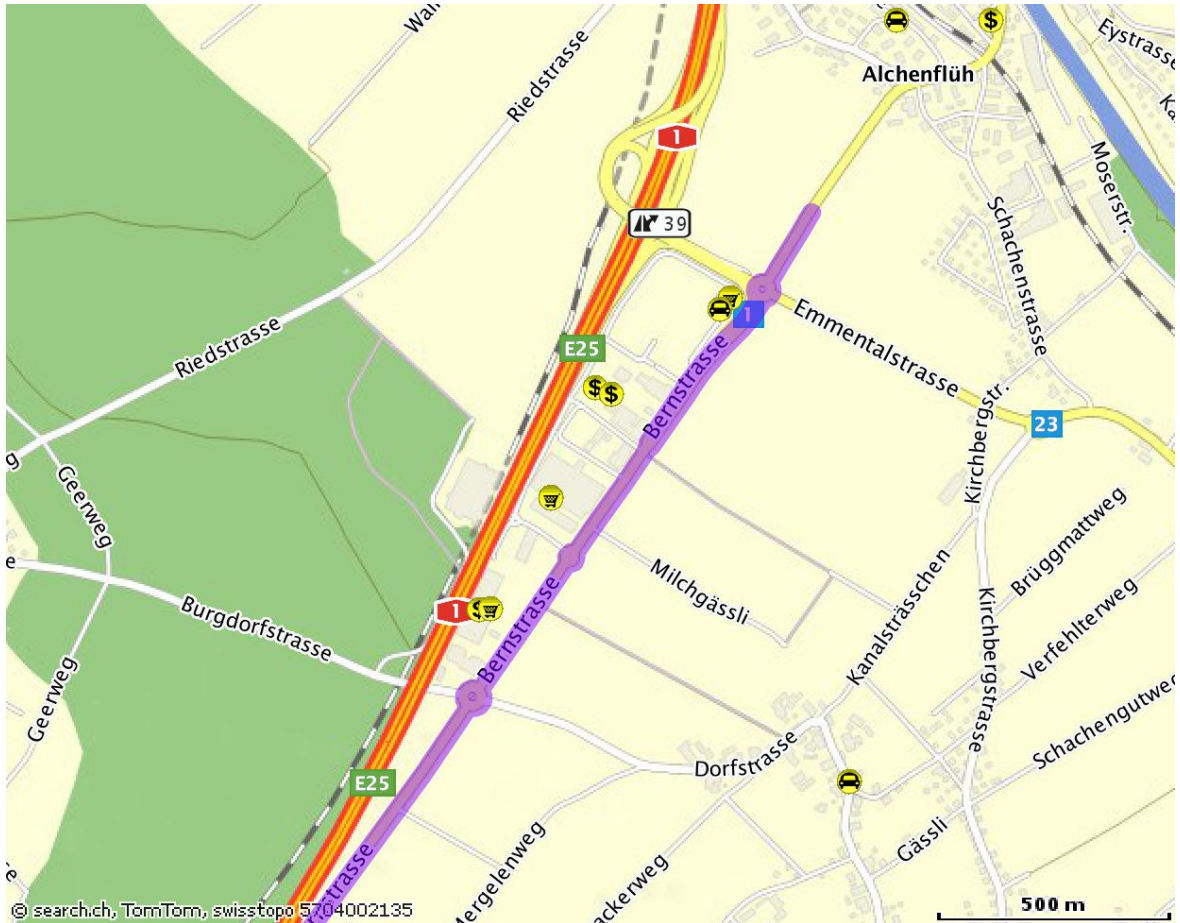
**Einwohnerzahlen Reformierte:**

**Members of the Reformed parish Kirchberg with 9 political communities**

		<b>2004</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Aefligen			796	779	779	814
Ersigen			1257	1259	1263	1274
Kernenried			384	361	356	361
Kirchberg			3796	3673	3637	3551
Lyssach			1055	1063	1063	1017
Niederösch			203	204	206	201
Oberösch			108	94	94	93
Rüdtligen-Alchenflüh			1194	1176	1129	1163
Rüti			130	135	135	128
<b>Total</b>		<b>9158</b>	<b>8923</b>	<b>8744</b>	<b>8662</b>	<b>8602</b>

## APPENDIX 2

### EINKAUFSMEILE – SHOPPING-MILE



Pfister, a Swiss furniture company, Conforama, a French furniture company, Ikea, a Swedish furniture company, Lyssach, center with coop food and hobby market and furniture, electronics, clothing etc., Media Markt, a German electronic company, Erotik Markt, Animal food, etc. shop, Blickle Markt, with kitchen shop, golf shop, baby shop, and different other shops are already there. Another big Blickle Markt will open along the Bernstrasse from the roundabout Dorfstrasse to the roundabout Emmentalstrasse.

# Kirchart



Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung: Gedanken auf dem Weg

Faith, Love, Hope: Thought on the Path

# Kirchart

**Kirchart** bedeutet Kunst im Kontext der Kirche. Die Auseinandersetzung und der Dialog zwischen Kunst und Kirche ist nicht Selbstzweck sondern Notwendigkeit. **Kirchart** dient der Förderung zeitgenössischer Kunst in der Kirche.

**Kirchart** will den Dialog zwischen Kunst und Religion fördern. Was gibt es Kraftvolleres, als die Vereinigung von Kunst mit der Aura eines Ortes, an dem gebetet, gepredigt, gesungen und gehofft wird.

Als erstes Projekt will **Kirchart** eine Wanderausstellung realisieren. Das Thema **Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung** soll von Kunstmalern und Skulpteuren aufgenommen und verarbeitet werden. So entstehen Werke, die einen vielfältigen Gedankenweg zum Thema bilden.

**Gedanken und Begegnungen** zwischen den Menschen in den Ausstellungsorten und deren Regionen sollen möglich werden. Dafür wird auch die Homepage [www.kirchart.ch](http://www.kirchart.ch) geschaffen.

Die Ausstellung startet im Herbst 2012 in Kirchberg BE und zügelt anschliessend an die anderen Orte. Jeder Ort bestimmt selbst, ob und was für ein Rahmenprogramm er zur Wanderausstellung machen will.

**Kirchart** wird vom einem Infokiosk, einer Homepage, einem Prospekt und einer Publikation begleitet.

**Skulpturen und Bilder** werden je nach Möglichkeit in der Kirche und auf einem Gedankenweg auf dem Areal der Kirche stehen.

Die **Bilder** werden als Aussenbilder auf Stahlplatten (3 x 2 m) gemalt (Pittura murale / Wandbild), die selbständig auf Sockeln stehen. Sie können aber auch im Innenraum gestellt werden.







## Kirchart

Während Jahrhunderten waren Kunstwerke im Besitz von Kirche, Adel und wohlhabenden Bürgern und damit nur beschränkt oder gar nicht öffentlich zugänglich. In der zweiten Hälfte des 18. und vor allem im 19. Jahrhundert wurden in zunehmenden Masse Museen gegründet, die zwar im Prinzip allen Interessierten offen standen, die jedoch auf viele so abweisend wirkten, dass sie vom Angebot nicht Gebrauch machten.

Deshalb kam man in der zweiten Hälfte des letzten Jahrhunderts auf die Idee, man müsste nicht die Menschen zur Kunst, sondern die Kunst zu den Menschen bringen. Es entstanden die Plastikausstellungen im Freien, die Skulpturenwege, die Bildhauersymposien, bei denen die einzelnen Arbeiten nach Kriterien wie künstlerische Qualität, Material und Ortsbezug ausgewählt wurden. Meist ergab sich jedoch zwischen ihnen kein engerer Zusammenhang.

In dieser Tradition steht das Projekt Kirchart, jedoch mit ganz wesentlichen Unterschieden. Zunächst ist mit den drei Begriffen Glaube – Liebe – Hoffnung ein klares und bedeutungsvolles inhaltliches Thema gegeben, das die Werke verbindet. Es soll Kunstschaffende wie Betrachtende zu einer vertieften gedanklichen und emotionalen Auseinandersetzung führen, die über rein ästhetische Erfahrungen hinausreicht.

Völlig neu für eine Veranstaltung im Freien ist der hohe Stellenwert, welcher der Malerei eingeräumt wird. Sie eignet sich für die differenzierte Darstellung von religiösen Inhalten besser als dreidimensionale Werke - man kann darin eine Parallele zu den Fresken sehen, die in vielen Kirchen zu sehen sind. Die Künstlerinnen und Künstler werden sorgfältig ausgewählt und erhalten den definitiven Auftrag erst aufgrund eines eingereichten Entwurfs.

Der Gedankenweg zum Thema Glaube – Liebe – Hoffnung, der durch die Kunstwerke und die beigefügten Äusserungen ihrer Urheber entsteht, soll aber



keine Einbahnstrasse sein. Auf der Homepage im Internet können Betrachterinnen und Betrachter ihre eigenen Gedanken äussern und sich so untereinander und mit den Kunstschaffenden austauschen.

Austausch geschieht aber auch dadurch, dass der Gedankenweg nacheinander in verschiedenen Orten mit unterschiedlicher konfessioneller Ausrichtung aufgebaut wird. So werden auch unmittelbare Begegnungen zwischen den Menschen aus diesen Orten entstehen.

*Dr. Hans Baumann, Burgdorf*



Mögliche Kunstschaaffende/possible artists

Gertsch Silvia





Hutter Schang (angefragt und zugesagt/asked and confirmed)



Monika Bartsch





Johannes Gervé



Lorenz Spring



Eugen Bollin





Hans Jörg Moning (angefragt und zugesagt/asked and confirmed)



Josef

Felix Müller



Bertah Shortiss



Marie-Theres Amici





Simonetta Martini



Werner Neuhaus



## **Rahmenbedingungen für Kunstschaffende**

### **Qualität**

Die Kunstschaffenden werden anhand ihrer Biographie und dem Nachweis ihres Schaffens ausgewählt und angefragt.

### **Thema**

Die Kunstwerke müssen dem Thema entsprechend aber mit künstlerischer Freiheit geschaffen werden. In Gesprächen werden der Rahmen und die Idee mit den Kunstschaffenden besprochen und festgelegt. Weil die Werke einen Gedankenweg zum Thema bilden und einem breiten Publikum gezeigt werden, äussern die Kunstschaffenden den Gedanken zu ihrem Werk kurz schriftlich.

### **Entschädigung Maler(innen)**

Es wird nach Vertragsabschluss eine Materialentschädigung von je Fr. 1500.- ausbezahlt. Die Stahlwand mit Fuss (Bildformat 300 x 200 cm) wird zur Verfügung gestellt und angeliefert. Entspricht einem Total von Fr. 3500.-

### **Entschädigung Plastiker(innen)**

Es wird nach Vertragsabschluss eine Materialentschädigung von Fr. 3500.- ausbezahlt.

### **Rechte und Pflichten**

Bilder und Plastiken bleiben im Besitz der Kunstschaffenden. Die Verkaufspreise werden individuell mit den Kunstschaffenden festgesetzt.

Von den Werken können Multiples in kleinerem Format in einer bestimmten Auflage hergestellt werden, die von den Kunstschaffenden signiert werden.

Kommt es zum Verkauf von Originalwerken oder von Multiples, erhalten die Kunstschaffenden 60 % des Verkaufspreises. Die Materialentschädigung wird berücksichtigt.

## **Kirchart: Kirchberg im Kanton Bern als Beispiel einer Umsetzung in der Gemeinde**

Von Richard Stern, Pfarrer

Unser Leben ist zur Zeit geprägt von den Meldungen über Stellenabbau, die Bankengeschichte ist noch in unseren Nacken und das Sorgenbarometer setzt Arbeitslosigkeit an oberster Stelle, gefolgt von Altersvorsorge, Gesundheitswesen, soziale Sicherheit und Ausländer. Die Sorge um den Weg mit Europa ist stark gestiegen. In all dem ist sind die Worte „Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung“ eine Stimme, die positiv in die Zukunft weisen. Der Glaube klingt an ein Urvertrauen an, welches stand hält in mitten aller Stürme, Liebe ist der Leim einer Gemeinschaft, die bei schwindendem Ressourcen aufeinander angewiesen ist. Hoffnung ist ein Anker, welcher ausgeworfen wird und auf sicheren Grund stösst und damit das Schiff unserer Gesellschaft sicher hält.

Das Thema **Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung** wurde in der Kirchgemeinde Kirchberg als Jahresthema für das Jahr 2012 gewählt, wo auch die Ausstellung stattfindet.

Menschen kommen an die Ausstellung, die an einem Kraftort rund um unsere Kirche herum, stattfindet. Der Kirchberg ist der einzige Hügel weit und breit. Da erleben die Ausstellungsbesucher und -besucherinnen sozusagen dünnere Luft oder anders ausgedrückt eine Nähe zwischen Himmel und Erde, Gottes Gegenwart ist an Kraftorten ganz besonders spürbar. Das Thema wird in diese Dynamik hineingenommen und es entsteht mehr als die Begegnung mit dem Kunstwerk und dem Künstler selber, es entsteht die Begegnung mit dem Einem, dem Ganzen, mit Gott selber.

Dadurch kann die Ausstellung eine Plattform bieten mit Kunst, Kultur und diesem Thema in Berührung zu kommen. Gruppen innerhalb der Kirchgemeinde, Anlässe der Kirchgemeinde, sowie Gruppen der politischen Gemeinde, Anlässe der politischen Gemeinde und vieler anderer Vereinen, Verbänden und Gruppierungen vor Ort können an diese Plattform anknüpfen. Dadurch können Menschen verschiedener Altersgruppen mit Kunst, Kultur und diesem Thema konfrontiert werden.

Jede Gruppe hat die Möglichkeit einen eigenen Weg zu gehen, wie sie das Thema, die Ausstellung aufnehmen will.

Plötzlich spürt man die Nähe eines kreativen Geistes, des Gegenwärtigen. Auf einmal wird Liebe eine geschenkte Liebe oder eine erlittene Liebe eine nicht aufgehörende Liebe, Liebe selbst, Hoffnung wird eine gewisse Hoffnung, ein Anker, der mitten in den Stürmen hält, eine Hoffnung die eine Zukunft kennt. Der Glaube

bekommt Füße und führt uns an das Herz Gottes und zu den Herzen der Menschen und inmitten unseres Herzens.

Das Thema lädt ein sich mit grundlegendsten Anliegen des Lebens auseinander zu setzen. Eine Vertiefung in das Thema in einem Arbeitsheft kann eine Hilfe sein für alle, die mitmachen, damit die Anlässe und auch die Kunstwerke an Tiefe gewinnen. Gerade Schulen könnten von Unterrichtshilfen profitieren und von Kontakten, wie sie das Projekt in ihren Schulalltag einbauen könnten. Liebe, Glaube, Hoffnung ist ein weites Thema und doch gibt es Inhalte, die den Bezug zu Gott aufzeigen. Liebe, Glaube und Hoffnung und das Grösste von ihnen ist die Liebe hat nicht nur eine spirituelle Bedeutung, sondern wird aktuell, da wo geteilt wird, wo die Ärmsten der Armen nicht vergessen werden, wo Andere höher geachtet werden als man selbst, da wo Innovation für den Menschen und Wirtschaft ein Segen ist und nicht Gefangenschaft, da wo jeder Mensch ernst genommen und respektiert wird, da wo trotz allem eine Zukunft sich öffnet, weil sich der Himmel öffnet.

In unserer Kirchgemeinde und in Gesprächen mit verschiedenen Gruppen vor Ort haben wir angefangen in einem Brainstorming, Ideen für Veranstaltungen entwickelt, die die Ausstellung, die ca. 3 Monate bei uns ist umrahmt.

Im Folgenden mache ich eine Auflistung von solchen Ideen, ohne diese zu werten, um zu zeigen in welcher Vielfalt das Thema und die Plattform, die Ausstellung Kirchart aufgegriffen werden kann.

Die Schüler der Schulen in der Gegend sollen die Möglichkeit erhalten sich mit Kultur auseinander zu setzen und evtl. entsteht ein Wettbewerb mit dem besten Bild dazu. Jugendliche in und ausserhalb der Kirchgemeinde können das Thema in Graffiti, Tanz, Rap aufnehmen. Jungscharen können an ihren Nachmittagen in Fotoworkshops u.a. darauf eingehen.

Reisen können zu den Künstlern gemacht werden, um damit interessierten Erwachsenen einen Einblick ins Schaffen und in das Umfeld der Künstler zu geben.

Sofort wurde auch die Idee eines gestalteten Ortes der Begegnung draussen vorgeschlagen, wo Familien und Andere verweilen können und an diesem Ort sich treffen können.

In einem Gottesdienst könnte ein Kunstwerk entstehen. Das Thema kann in all den Anlässen einer Kirchgemeinde aufgenommen werden, sei es in speziellen Gottesdiensten, im Kinderprogramm, in Gemeindeabenden, im Unterricht, in der Männer- und Frauenarbeit usw.

Es gibt zur Ausstellung ein Rahmenprogramm, eine Vernissage, eine Finissage und die Möglichkeit den Gedanken auf dem Weg selber zu folgen und über Internet daran teilzunehmen.

Musik, Kirchenchor, Gospelchor, Teen-Sing, Streetdance u.a. können das Thema aufnehmen. Eine Bühne steht bereit, wo auch lokale Gruppen auftreten können und zu diesem Thema ihre Interpretation darlegen.

Vereine vor Ort sollen mit einbezogen werden, Gewerbeverbände und die lokale politische Gemeinde soll ihren Platz haben in der Umsetzung.

Ein Dispenser mit einem täglichen Wort zum Thema soll bei der Ausstellung sein. Tägliche Worte können auch per Mail versandt werden. Tage mit Kurzandachten können angeboten werden, bei den verschiedenen Werken.

## Budget Kirchart (Entwurf/draft)

### Aufwand/Expenses

<b>Vorkosten</b>	Konzeption/concept	5 000		
	Kontakt, Besuch Ausstellungsorte	6 000		
	Kontakt, Besuch Künstler	6 000		
	Vertragsabschluss Künstler	1 000		
	Vertragsabschluss Gemeinden	1 000	Fr.	19 000
<b>Material</b>	Künstler (Metallwände, Farben)	45 500	Fr.	45 500
<b>Arbeiten</b>	Einrichtung der Ausstellungen	24 000		
	Vorarbeiten (Sockel, etc)	12 000		
	Infokiosk Ausstellung	24 000	Fr.	60 000
<b>Werbung, Information</b>	Dokumentation/Katalog	16 000		
	Einladungskarten Vernissagen	6 000		
	Plakate	5 000		
	Homepage	6 000		
	Medien	3 000	Fr.	36 000
<b>Material</b>	Schilder	2 000		
	Kleinmaterial	2 000	Fr.	4 000
<b>Anlässe</b>	Vernissagen	6 000	Fr.	6 000
<b>Varia</b>	Versicherungen	2 000		
	Transporte	24 000		
	Spesen	6 000		
	Administration, Organisation	16 000		
	Verschiedenes	6 000	Fr.	54 000
			Fr.	<b>224 000</b>

## Expenses

<b>Initial cost</b>	Concept	5 000		
	Contact, visit, exhibit venues	6 000		
	Contact, visit, artists	6 000		
	Contract with artists	1 000		
	Contracts with venues	1 000	Fr.	19000
<b>Material</b>	Artists (steel walls, colors)	45 500	Fr.	45500
<b>Works</b>	Installation of the exhibits	24 000		
	Preliminary work (pedestals, etc)	12 000		
	Infokiosk Ausstellung	24 000	Fr.	60000
<b>PR, Information</b>	Documentation/catalogue	16 000		
	Invitation cards openings	6 000		
	Poster	5 000		
	Homepage	6 000		
	Media	3 000	Fr.	36000
<b>Material</b>	Signposts	2 000		
	Little material	2 000	Fr.	4000
<b>Events</b>	Openings	6 000	Fr.	6000
<b>Vatia</b>	Insurances	2 000		
	Transport	24 000		
	Allowance	6 000		
	Administration, Organization	16 000		
	Miscellaneous	6 000	Fr.	54000
			Fr.	<b>224 000</b>

**Budget Kirchart (Entwurf/draft)**

**Ertrag/Income**

**Allgemein/General**

Verkauf Publikation/sale publication	8 000		
Provision Kunstverkauf/art sale	12 000	Fr.	20 000

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**Ausstellung/exhibit Kirchberg BE**

Kirchgemeinde/parish Kirchberg und/and Gemeinden Kirchberg u. Umgebung/political communities Kirchberg and surrounding	19 000		
Lotteriefond/lottery fund Kanton Bern	15 000	Fr.	34 000

**Ausstellung/exhibit 2 bis/to 6**

Analog Ausstellung/exhibit Kirchberg BE à	34 000	Fr.	170 000
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Fr. **224 000**





## **Begleitprogramm**

Die Begleitprogramme der sechs Gemeinden werden von den Gemeinden individuell programmiert und finanziert.

An jedem Ausstellungsort wird ein kompetentes Organisationskomitee damit beauftragt.

The program accompanying the exhibit is individually programmed and financed by every six parishes and political communities.

At every exhibit venue there will be a competent organizational committee given the mandate.

## **Ausstellungstermine/dates of exhibits (Vorschlag/proposal)**

Kirchberg Kanton Bern	Herbst/fall 2012
Ausstellung/exhibit 2	Frühjahr/spring 2013
Ausstellung/exhibit 3	Herbst/fall 2013
Ausstellung/exhibit 4	Frühjahr/spring 2014
Ausstellung/exhibit 5	Herbst/fall 2014
Ausstellung/exhibit 6	Frühjahr/spring 2015

## **Projektadressen/project adresses**

Projektleitung/Kurator  
Project manager/curator

Rolf Walker  
Haus 35, Postfach 221  
CH-4566 Halten  
+41 32 682 72 12  
+41 79 685 13 24  
rolf.walker@haus35.ch  
www.haus35.ch

Theologischer Begleiter  
theological advisor

Richard Stern  
Brunnackerstrasse 2  
CH-3421 Lyssach  
+41 34 445 05 45  
+41 79 332 87 09  
richard.stern@kirche-kirchberg.ch  
www.kirche-kirchberg.ch

Finanzverwaltung  
finances

Yvonne Liechti  
Kirchgemeinde Kirchberg  
Froberg 2  
CH-3422 Kirchberg BE  
+41 34 447 10 11  
finanzverwaltung@kirche-kirchberg.ch  
www.kirche-kirchberg.ch

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