

april 2010 - the dna of a movement

Having just notched up one year in my new job with Langham Preaching, I have been thinking about the ethos of the work and whether something of that ethos could spill over into New Zealand in some way. Early one morning in February in Hong Kong I scribbled down a description of my current work . which I have expanded here a little.

Langham Preaching is about preachers.

Other ministries belong within the mission of God in the world. For example, there are justice ministries, media ministries, and medical ministries. But we are committed to preachers and preaching. We believe that God wants his church to grow up. We believe that the church grows up through God's Word and that this Word comes to people, primarily, through preaching. There are other ministries of the Word but because so few people open their Bibles between Sundays, we are committed to asking the question: How can we improve the preaching?

Langham Preaching is about preachers in the majority world.

Other parts of the world are significant and challenging. For example, there is the USA and the UK, Australia and New Zealand. But we are committed to those countries where the need is greatest, where the resources are fewest, and the growth in the church is fastest. But it is often growth without depth. Under God's gracious hand, we are committed to seeing that depth develop.

Langham Preaching is about biblical preachers in the majority world.

Other legitimate types of preaching exist. For example, some of the finest sermons in history were topical and some the finest preachers were textual in their approach. But we are committed to that brand of preaching which opens a biblical passage and frees that passage to provide the shape and purpose for the sermon because the preacher remains in that passage for the duration of the sermon. Sometimes it is called expository preaching but because that phrase gets mired in unhelpful stereotypes we choose to speak simply of biblical preaching.

Langham Preaching is about training biblical preachers in the majority world.

Other approaches to equipping preachers play their role. For example, there is the teaching of homiletics in the theological college. It starts instinctively with theory and tends to be more academic, more dependent on books and notes and lecturers, and more examinable. But we are committed to an approach which complements homiletics - and often supplements it as well. We aim to be more practical, working with fewer and simpler skills practiced and modelled repeatedly, so that we build a training that is more transferable without the need for an abundance of resources.

Langham Preaching is about training in a way which builds and sustains a movement of biblical preachers in the majority world.

Other methods make their contribution. For example, there are the larger conferences where preachers are motivated to fulfil their calling. But we are committed to smaller seminars designed to spark a movement as people gather regularly between the seminars in local fellowships for encouragement and accountability. To nurture this regionalised movement the emphasis gradually slides across to the training of local facilitators/trainers. We want to see a deeper work done in a fewer amount of people. So the event which is the seminar becomes that brief moment in time when the infection is introduced, after which we pray that a benevolent virus might spread. So while participants often gather looking for an event that contains something useful for

themselves, we are even more interested in how they will scatter into a movement with something useful for others.

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Other initiatives in these under-resourced areas readily depend on continuing support and direction from overseas. For example, the superb ministries identified with people like Ravi Zacharias and Ramesh Richard, for starters. But we are committed to an outcome that is sustainable within the country and with limited resources. While in the early days of our partnerships foreign personnel and funding is prominent, as a movement in a given country develops it becomes increasingly regionalised as local facilitators working at the grassroots become the focus. Then when a movement reaches maturity, it will be identified by regular gatherings of these facilitators that are directed locally.

*Langham Preaching is about training in a way which builds and sustains an indigenous movement of biblical preachers which **changes the culture** of preaching in the majority world.*

Under God's gracious hand we are working towards changing the culture of preaching in these countries. And as that transformation in preaching takes place, we believe it can lead on to the transformation of the church. And then as the church transforms there is the expectation that there will be a transformation of the often troubled countries in which these churches are embedded. This is because biblical preaching helps the church grow up into maturity (ahh . we are back where we started!) and a mature church, living as salt and light and full of grace and truth, is the God-ordained agency for the transformation of societies.

In my first year I have spent time helping to nurture this DNA in Uganda, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

How much of all this is relevant to New Zealand and to kiwi-made preaching?

Paul Windsor