

Hope and Wholeness

Westminster Presbyterian Church, February 2025



A Problem of Adaptation



Contextualization as Faithful Christian Practice

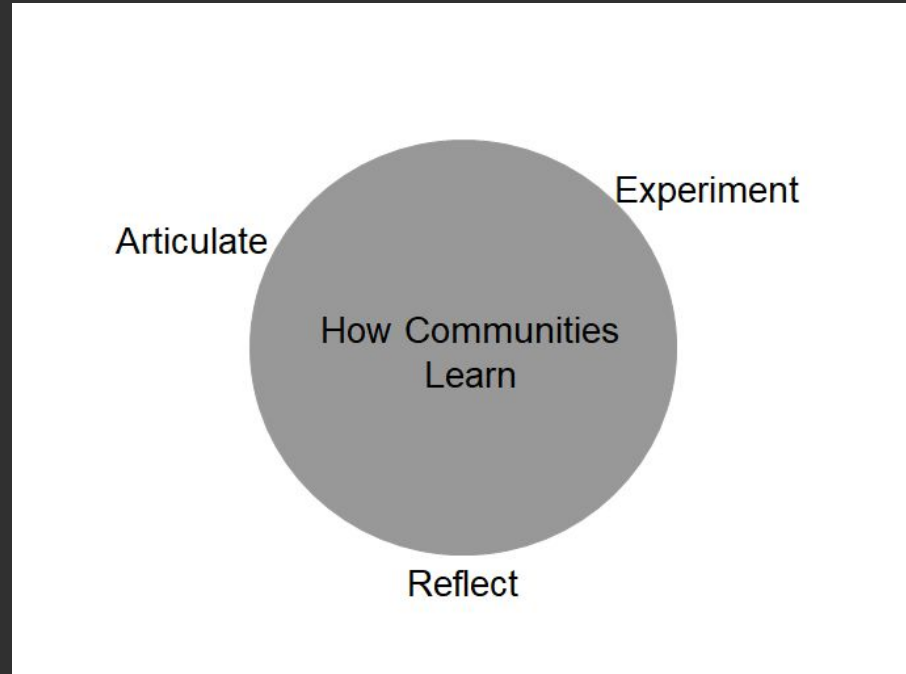
Pilgrim Principle: Christianity is universal and therefore poses a challenge to any culture or community

Indigenizing Principle: Christian diversity is the rule rather than the exception

Conversion and Culture: Christian conversion is worldly, in that it occurs within one's cultural and linguistic context.

Listening, Discernment, and Discovery: Faithful Christian practice is a kind of 'continuous conversion' (D. Guder) discerned and discovered, attentive to surprise and able to improvise *plausible* and *coherent* connections to the story of God and God's people

Adaptation, Contextualization, and Discernment

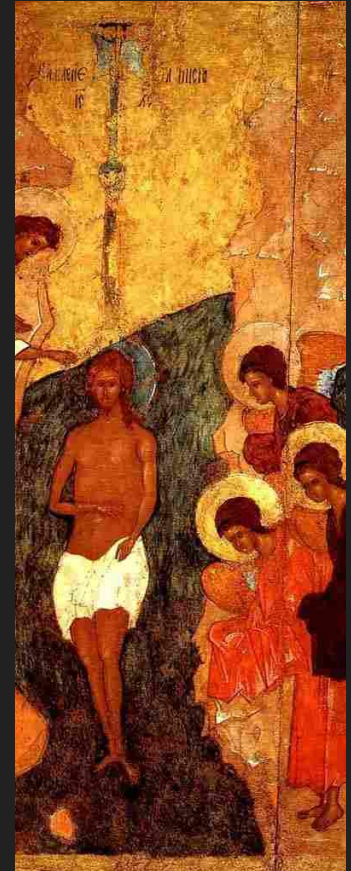




A Problem of Repentance and Reorientation

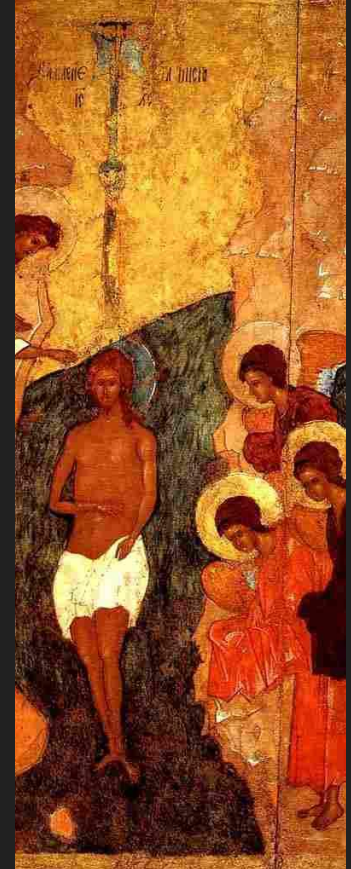


‘Repent and believe ... the good news’
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- Expectations of social reversal: ‘the last will become first’
- Characterized by *shalom* (peace, wholeness, healing, for all creation)
- Focused on the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus
- ‘Of God’: Able to be *recognized* and *received*, but not defended, extended, or created by creatures

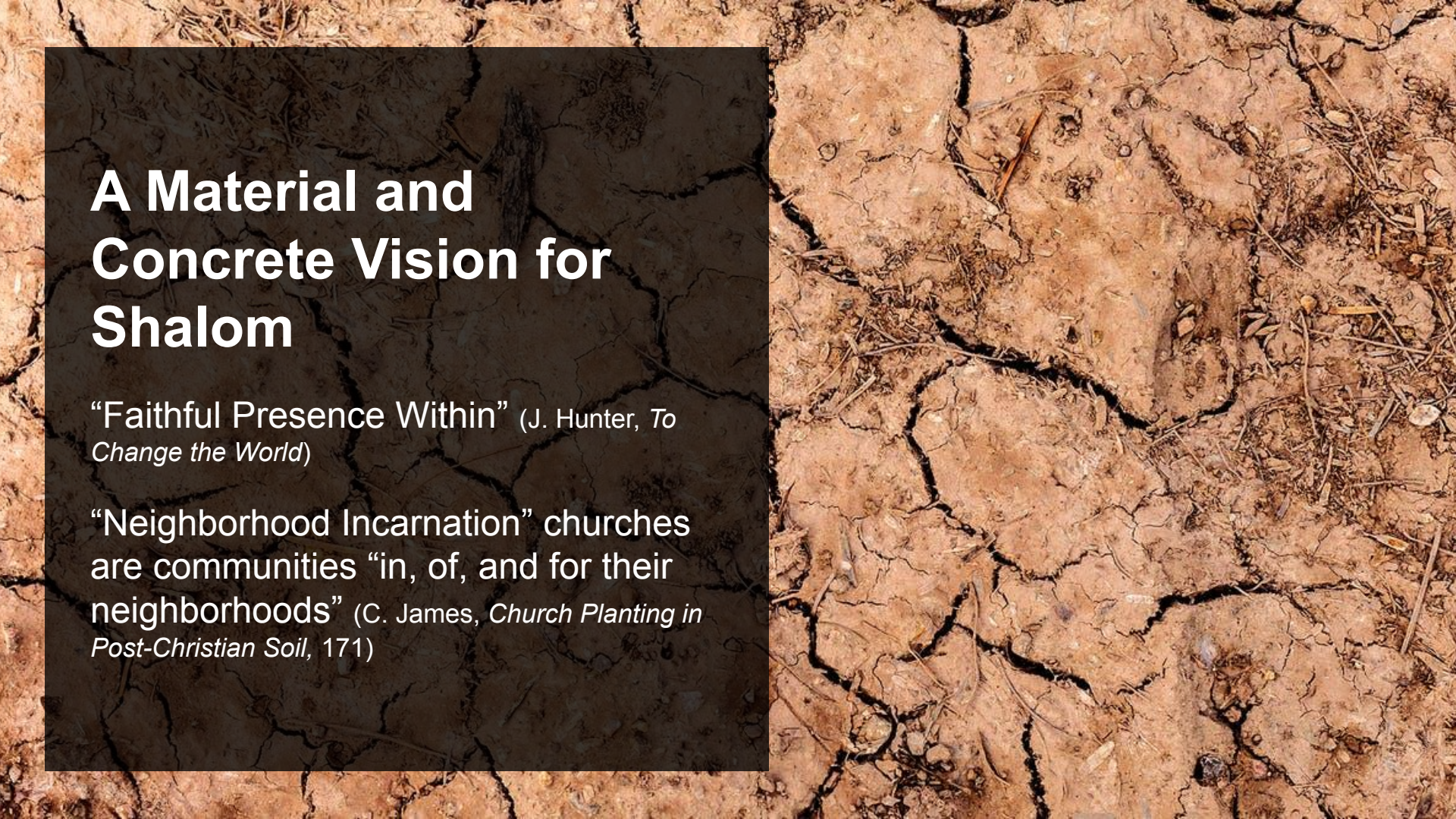


Repentance and Reorientation

- Church for Neighbors: (re)placing the congregation
- God in the Midst: Everyday Spirituality
- Cultivating Community: Practicing Hospitality
- Cultivating Ecosystems for Innovation: 'Resource' and 'Anchor' Churches



Church for Neighbors



A Material and Concrete Vision for Shalom

“Faithful Presence Within” (J. Hunter, *To Change the World*)

“Neighborhood Incarnation” churches are communities “in, of, and for their neighborhoods” (C. James, *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil*, 171)

God in the Midst:
Everyday Spirituality

“...one only learns to have faith by living in the full this-worldliness of life” (Bonhoeffer, *Letters*, 542).

“When compared to Theistic discourse, this Extra-Theistic spirituality is decidedly less prevalent, on average ... Our participants were left to their own discursive devices, and they talked about God more than sociologists might have thought and about inner enlightenment less,” (N. Ammermann, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 44).



Embracing Immanence, Encountering God

A practice is any socially meaningful activity constituted by a set of 'do's' and 'don'ts' (C. Taylor)

The congregation can be understood as a community of practice; a community organized around a set of core practices. This can take many forms: public worship, new monasticism, covenant groups, home groups, contemplative prayer, cultivation of space (labyrinth, icons)



Cultivating [alternative
economic] Community

“What is notable about Christianity as a field, what is unusual about it, is its attempt to institute a circulation of goods to be possessed by all in the same fullness of degree without diminution or loss, a distribution that in its prodigal promiscuity calls forth neither the pride of superior position nor rivalrous envy among its recipients” (K. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 25).

Almsgiving is a ‘Christian mandate’
(L.T. Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*)



Hospitality and Alternative Economics

‘Hospitality is central to the meaning of the gospel’ (C. Pohl, *Making Room*)

Communities can cultivate “an ecology where economy is imagined differently, not in terms of exploitation but rather through the idioms of participation, revelation, and repair ... [what results is] an ecology where radical forms of political economic redistribution push against current constellations of power and value and move into the natural order of things” (J. Tran, *Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism*, 194-5).



Cultivating Ecosystems for Innovation: 'Resource' and 'Anchor' Churches

Ecosystems for Innovation

‘Anchor Church: “I am deeply convinced that the larger, vibrant churches of the future, the ones that will still have buildings and paid staff, will not resemble the attractional/consumer churches of today ... they will carry a different DNA. They will be anchors for all kinds of missional communities and initiatives in theological education for lay people. There will be large worship celebrations, for sure, with great preaching and music and liturgy. But that won’t be seen as the most important thing that happens in the church. Instead, the defining characteristic of the church will be its ability to equip and deploy ordinary Christians into the world, where they will cultivate real disciples and form alternative communities that provide a foretaste of heaven” (Duggins & Heath, *Missional, Monastic, Mainline*, 45).

