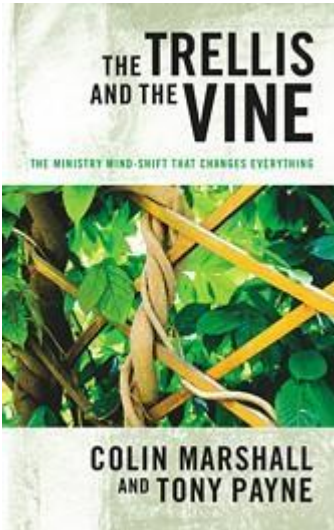


Mission Possible Ezine

March 2010

BOOKS



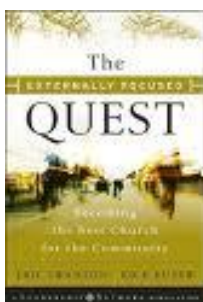
The Trellis and the Vine: the ministry mind-shift that changes everything.

from a review by [David Mathis](#): Authors Colin Marshall and Tony Payne don't leave us in the dark about their overarching metaphor. The vine of Christian ministry is people; the trellis is the various organizational structures that exist for the health of the vine. So vine work is “the work of watering and planting and helping people to grow in Christ”, while trellis work has to do with “rosters, property and building issues, committees, finances, budgets, overseeing the church office, planning and running events” (p. 9). The warning the authors offer repeatedly is that our tendency in Christian ministry is to let the trellis work take over the vine work (p. 9).

Marshall and Payne add that the habit of many churches is maintaining and improving the trellis—to the point where this sort of work ends up eclipsing vine work. But our goal should be “to grow the vine, not the trellis” (p. 14). Furthermore, since “structures don't grow ministry any more than trellises grow vines”, many of our churches need to make “a conscious shift—away from erecting and maintaining structures, and towards *growing people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ*” (p. 17).

This is a dangerous book. Experiencing this mind-shift may mean radical changes in your church (like closing down some long-beloved programmed ministry) in order to make time for discipleship: “It may mean a revolution in the way the church staff see their ministry—not as service-providers, or managers, but as trainers [disciplers]” (p. 156).

Published by [Matthias Media](#) [Unfortunately this book doesn't seem to be readily available except via the Australian publisher, or Koorong – which makes it a bit pricey in terms of postage.]



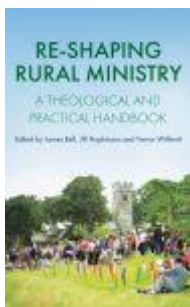
The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community, by *Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw*.

The book is not how to become the best church *in* the community but how can to become the best church *for* the community. That one little preposition determines how resources of people, finances, facility, time, prayer and technology are allocated. It's a book for anyone who is interested in living missionally. The authors work with Reggie McNeal's

understanding of "missional"—it is the people of God, partnering with God in his redemptive mission, in the world. This book gives legs to the concept of missional living.

The authors say, “we think cities may be one of the next big things that God wants his church to be thinking about. Since May 2007, more of the world’s people live in cities than in rural areas, and that probably won’t change. Churches need to figure out how to work with not just other churches, but with all domains of society to bring about spiritual and societal transformation.”

[Sarah Meyer](#) writes: *The authors have done a wonderful job of setting the stage, through examples and personal experiences, of the power to look beyond the four walls of a traditional church, to both the immediate and international community. No matter if you are currently involved in a church/ organization, or looking to broadening/altering your mind set, this book will be a good fit.*



Re-Shaping Rural Ministry: A Theological & Practical Handbook. James Bell, Jill Hopkinson, Trevor Willmott eds. 160pp.

Focused especially on the needs of people running local churches in rural areas, those preparing for rural ministry in such a context, and for those who train them, this book explores:

- Pastoral skills for rural ministry
- Leadership models and distinctive values of rural churches
- Developing lay ministry and leadership.

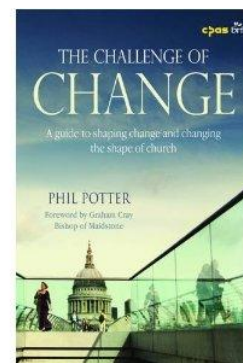
This practical and theological guide to rural ministry comes from the Arthur Rank Centre, the national resource and training centre for rural churches of all denominations. It runs courses and conferences in rural ministry and this practical book has emerged from its many areas of expertise and experience. Focused especially on the needs of those - lay and ordained - who already help to run local churches in rural areas, those preparing for ministry in such a context, and for those who provide pre- and post-ordination training, this welcome volume explores: pastoral skills for rural ministry, leadership models for rural contexts, multi-church ministry, developing lay ministry and leadership, the distinctive values of rural churches, vocational pathways for rural ministry, whether mission be explicit or implicit, and appropriate continuing ministerial education for rural contexts. Illustrated with real life examples and supported by theological reflection throughout, this will be essential reading for engaged in rural ministry.

Published Canterbury Press Nov 2009

The Challenge of Change: a practical guide to shaping change and changing the shape of the church, by **Philip Potter.**

The following review comes from Amazon.co.uk and is by [P E Berry](#)

I'm an Anglican Vicar with over 15 years of experience in three different parishes/teams and I have to say that Phil Potter's book is probably one of the most important and influential I've read in the whole of that time. Thoroughly grounded on Phil's experience over many years, it is not



triumphant about achievements (as so many tend to be) but, rather, incredibly honest and realistic, both about his early days at St. Mark's, Haydock and how he guided this church along the often painful road of change. It's well grounded in a Biblical understanding of what it means to be God's people and also extremely practical in applying those all-important foundational principles on which to help build a healthy approach to change. This book has really 'spoken' into my current situation, so much so that I've bought it for the staff team and will be using it as a basis for a PCC vision day. I don't think I exaggerate when I tell people that it has transformed my ministry. Highly recommended.

(The book comes from an Anglican perspective but can be applied well beyond that. There are challenging exercises at the end of each chapter.)

Published by the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) 2009

Don't forget to try out the [Book Depository](#) if you're having trouble ordering books within NZ. **Free postage from the UK, *and* discounts as well. (I don't get any kickbacks for recommending them!)**

INNOVATIVE

One Plus One is a long-established family relationships counselling service in the UK. [It's now on the web](#) and offers resources, information and help to those in this area of need.

However, there's another side to the site, one that's more innovative and which is helping a great number of couples to come to terms with difficulties in the marriage or relationship. This side is called [The Couple Connection](#), and it consists of three primary areas: *Check it out*, *Talk it out* and *Work it out*.

The first area is open to all readers and begins the process of assisting with the relationship by asking a number of basic questions to ascertain where the reader is at. It also warns when the site *won't* be of help and where professional assistance will be needed.

The second section is for people to write something about their relationship: how they're feeling, what's troubling them, whether their partner is being unfaithful and a good deal more. Other readers can comment on these, and there are always a number of trained counsellors reading through these postings to supply more specific help.

Finally there is the *Work it out* section. This is a completely private area for each reader, and acts as a place where the writer can post all manner of feelings, rubbish, junk, stuff that's hurting them, that's bugging them and much more. It's a place of catharsis, and many readers say that as they go back and read through this material, they begin to see what the real issues are, and can begin to act on them rather than on the peripheral stuff.

In one way the site is similar to the old 'chat over the fence' approach that probably saved far more marriages than we'll ever know. But by bringing anonymity into the mix, and providing hundreds of other people to offer supportive advice, this makes innovative use of the technology now available.

Abstract

From an indigenous and holistic perspective, the current dominant biomedical model of health and illness has a limited view of people and their wellbeing. The present study aimed to explore Māori spiritual healers' views on healing and healing practices, and the implications of these for conceptualisations of holism, health and wellbeing. Six indigenous Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand took part in in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a Māori researcher from March to September 2007. Transcribed interviews were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis techniques. We found that Māori cultural perspectives influenced views of the mind, body, spirit and healers also identified two additional aspects as significant and fundamental to a person's health, namely whānau/whakapapa [family and genealogy] and whenua [land]. We propose a model called Te Whetu [The Star], with 5 interconnected aspects; namely, mind, body spirit, family, and land. Results are discussed in terms of the contribution of Māori knowledge to our understandings of health and wellbeing, and their implications for conceptualising holism, as well as health policy and care for Māori and other indigenous populations.

[Contents page here](#) – you have to access the Social Science & Medicine Journal to read the entire article.

G [oing on a retreat](#)
There's [an article on Rowland Croucher's site](#) regarding the retreats he does with individuals. You'd probably balk at the price of these - \$1000AU - until you noticed that he doesn't take any of this money; it's sent onto a charity that works in both Victoria, Aus. and Thailand. You might still think \$1000 is a lot of money for having six hours worth of a listening ear; it may depend on how much your spiritual health requires such an ear.

However, the price isn't really the interesting part of this article, which is divided up into several sections. Firstly, Rowland lays out an FAQ which gives answers to most of the questions you'd be likely to ask initially, and gives you an idea of the way in which the retreat is conducted. *"Usually, the retreat lasts from late afternoon (about 4.30 pm, then a couple of hours over dinner) one day, and resumes about 9.30 to about noon the following day. Bring your walking shoes!"* So it's not a long period of time, and it's definitely not silent. This is a talking/walking retreat - and you, as the retreatant, will do most of the talking. It's a spiritual health check-up, basically, which is not necessarily the same as having a spiritual advisor.



The second section of the article covers the 19 questions that might be covered during the retreat. Rowland helpfully provides these so that you can think about them yourself without necessarily visiting him. (Though obviously it would help to have someone else to think them through with.) Spending some time over a few weeks reflecting on these questions would help most people's spiritual health, I suspect, as long as they gave themselves some room to think about the 'answers.'

The third section is a moving story written by a woman who did the retreat at some point. She affirms Rowland's earlier comment that: *a lot of male problems go back to inadequate*

fathering or initiation into manhood. A lot of women's problems go back to their non-affirmation by fathers etc. There's a second 'story' [on a different link](#).

The fourth section offers a spiritual audit not necessarily covering the same ground as the 19 questions. This would also be a good thing to use in terms of setting aside some time regularly to reflect on your spiritual health.

Print the 19 questions or the spiritual audit out - and take some time to use one or the other.

The photo by [Jessica Charlesworth](#) is entitled *Two Men Walking Seriously*, a great title in view of the subject matter in this post.

MINISTRY

C[omment](#) in response to an article from an older pastor who recommends employing young staff:

Hi! I recently visited a church where the pastor had “led” for more than 10 yrs. I counted 25 in the morning worship service – I was the youngest, and I’m 74 yrs. old! No way they can attract young families – would you take your young family there? They’re resigned to the prospect of letting the church die. Their facility is quite nice though the auditorium is unfinished due to lack of money (actually, lack of ideas!) *But if they used their strength and actually aimed ministries to meet the needs of older adults, the church would grow and eventually, might attract younger folks as well.* At least that’s my take on things. Otherwise, want to buy a nice church?!

[David \[Holt\]](#), author ABCs Of Ministry. [*My italics*]



Many churches struggle between two extremes: whether to run a church on a business model, or whether to run it by relying primarily on the Holy Spirit. And there have been some great business model books that have seemed entirely applicable to the church. In an article on Christianity Today online entitled [Good to Great to Godly](#), *Mike Bonem* discusses the value of *Jim Collin’s* classic book, ‘**Good to Great**’ for churches. He notes that while it was of great value to him in his work in the business world, and still had good things to say when he moved onto a church’s staff, he also had to redefine his thinking in the light of another classic, Jim Cymbala’s *Fresh Wind, Fresh Spirit*.

This is an excellent article discussing the implications of taking the innumerable business models and adapting them for the church.



**Some people dream of success,
while others wake up and
work hard at it. Anon**

MISSION

What a Mission Consultant Can do for You.

Duncan Macleod wrote this on his blog back in early April. Much of what he says applies to roles of both the National Mission Enabler, and the [Regional Mission Advisor](#).

Consulting is mostly, I believe, about listening and looking. I like [Fuzz and Carolyn Kitto's](#) suggestion that consulting is lending people your ears and eyes, not the other way around. It's about finding clues about what's happening behind the scenes, under the surface, in the past, present and future. Effective consulting in my line of work requires me to develop an intuitive and thorough understanding of human dynamics, sociology and emotional systems. I've learned where to find clues about community trends, looking for hard data (facts and figures) as well as soft data (human stories).

Consulting needs to be empowering. It is tempting to just tell people what to do. "Follow these instructions and you'll be right". However I'd rather be coaching local leaders to develop their capacity to discern direction and lead a community into the future. This is "power with" rather than "power over". I've found this complicated when I've had the capacity to say yes or no to funding. I

"By nature we have no defect that could not become a strength; no strength that could not become a defect." Goethe

do come across ministers whose strengths are in pastoral care and conscientious living, but struggle with how to develop fresh thinking (creativity) and action (innovation). Often, not always, there are people around with drive and creativity who can share in the process. I say "not always", as people with "get up and go" tend to "get up and go" elsewhere when they're not given room to move and make things happen.

Read the rest on Duncan's Blog, [Postkiwi Duncan Macleod](#)

Seth Godin's piece (which doesn't have a typo in the title) says more than first appears.

"I quilt"

When you've had enough, can't tolerate your job any longer and are ready to quit, perhaps you could try one last thing.

Quilt instead.

You've got nothing to lose, right? I mean, you're going to quit anyway, so what's the worst that could happen to you?

So quilt. Spend hours every day integrating the people you work with into a cohesive group. Weave in your customers as well. Take every scrap, even the people you don't like, and sew them together. Spend far less time than you should on the 'real' work and instead focus on creating genuine connections with the people you work with. Including your boss. After all, once you quit, you're never going to see them again anyway, right? Might as well give it a try.

Careful... it might change everything.

We like to say, "As difficult as it is to learn to surf, it is far easier to catch a wave than to cause a wave." We are surprised at the size of this swell we are riding. This is a total God thing of putting churches back into the community where the church is at its best—sharing good news and living out good deeds. We are just very grateful for the opportunity to help spread the news of what God is doing and what He wants to do.

from an interview with Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw.

STATS

One of the things I deal with a lot in my job as Research and Resource Assistant is stats, and what they tell us. They tell us a good deal, but not everything, and it's always worth bearing in mind – as the post below notes - that an average is just that, not the whole explanation.

A warning about averages: from [Seth Godin](#).

The typical American buys precisely one book a year.

Ouch.

Of course, this isn't true, because when it comes to books, there is no typical American.

There are a lot of Americans who buy zero books for pleasure each year. And then there are people like me who buy 400.

The average is irrelevant.

When you can't figure out the best way to treat all your customers, the best way to price things, the best thing to offer, realize that the problem is almost always this: you're trying to treat everyone the same. Don't. Break them into groups with similar attributes, and suddenly the path becomes a lot more clear.

Just a question – how might this apply to your congregation?

"Take risks: if you win, you will be happy; if you lose, you will be wise." – Anon



Photo by [ObviousMan](#)

A pretty sure method of losing friends is to strive to improve them. Do all your uplift work with your enemies. – Crane

Check out the [National Mission Blog](#) for other resources, books and information.