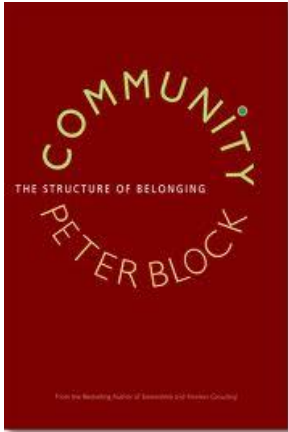


Mission Possible Ezine
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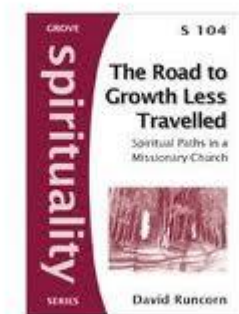
BOOKS



Community: the structure of belonging, by [Peter Block](#).

“Modern society is plagued by fragmentation. The various sectors of our communities—businesses, schools, social service organizations, churches, government—do not work together. They exist in their own worlds. As do so many individual citizens, who long for connection but end up marginalized, their gifts overlooked, their potential contributions lost. This disconnection and detachment makes it hard if not impossible to envision a common future and work towards it together. We know what healthy communities look like—there are many success stories out there, and they’ve been described in detail. What Block provides in this inspiring new book is an exploration of the exact way community can emerge from fragmentation: How is community built? How does the transformation occur? What fundamental shifts are involved? He explores a way of thinking about our places that creates an opening for authentic communities to exist and details what each of us can do to make that happen.” *[From the book’s blurb.]*

*Peter Block is a proponent of [servant leadership](#), a concept initiated by [Robert Greenleaf](#). Block has a newer book out: **The Abundant Community**.*



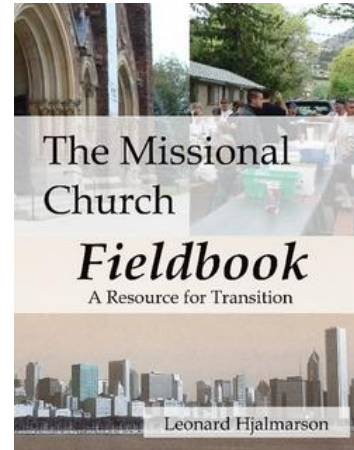
The Road to Growth Less Travelled: Spiritual Paths in a Missionary Church, by **David Runcorn**.

This is one of a wide-ranging series of booklets (all 27 pg long) from Grove Books. Part of what Runcorn is saying is that we need to be careful to challenge rather than mirror our culture, and that our very ‘irrelevance’ to the society at large may be one of our strengths. He also explores why so many people are drifting away from churches, while still ostensibly remaining Christian. At one point he quotes Douglas John Hall: ‘**the church of Christendom**, so often growing in the wake of national, expansionist interests, missed [the sense of loss in the Christian life].’ ‘Christendom tried to be great, large, magnificent. It thought *itself* the object of God’s expansive grace. It forgot the meaning of its election to worldly responsibility. Today we are constrained by the Spirit to rediscover the possibilities of littleness.’

Paul Fromont has written four brief posts on the Prodigal Kiwi blog discussing some of the book's points, [starting here](#).

The Missional Church Fieldbook, by Leonard Hjalmarson.

Hjalmarson writes: “About a year and a half ago I started thinking about a resource for existing groups and churches to begin equipping people for mission. I wanted something that was kingdom centred, theologically sound, incorporated a rhythm of practice, and was focused around both mission and community – discipleship on the road. I wanted it accessible, but challenging.



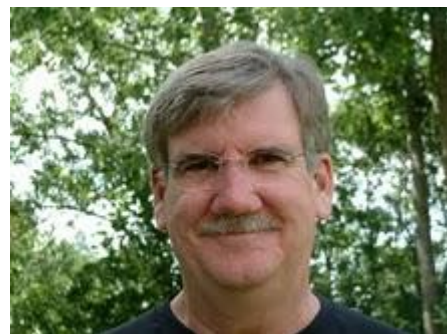
I wanted rhythm to be central to the design – what we establish as shared rhythm forms not just our spirits but our bodies, and if we neglect the latter we simply revert to established patterns. So I built the curriculum around seven weeks and seven days – a 49 day experience. Then I started adding appendices – so that reference to old and established, tried and trusted patterns would also be available: The Office, Lectio Divina, instructions for exegeting a neighbourhood, and more. Finally, I invited two experienced practitioners to have a look and offer feedback. Mark Anderson of YFC and Phil Wagler of “Kingdom Culture” were really helpful.

Obviously, this is a workbook/journal, but after some thought we called it a “Fieldbook.” It’s coil bound and has plenty of white space. You can order a copy from LULU.COM. I’ll make at least the introduction and first section available for [download](#) soon.”

[Lulu.com is a website where authors can ‘self-publish’; the books are still high-quality, but can only be bought on the Net from the site. Price is US\$16.95]

MINISTRY

...it might be profitable for us to consider what Christian ministry is all about. What is a minister? A minister is, quite simply, one who acts on behalf of another. We see this usage in European politics, where governments have a foreign minister or a minister of finance, for example. Such ministers represent and speak on behalf of their governments. Their authority derives from those they represent. It is not their own.



In much the same way our ministry belongs to Jesus Christ and we represent him as his ministers.

Our ministry isn't a possession that belongs to us, but a call we obey, a service we carry out for another. *From a sermon preached by Richard Floyd and reproduced on his blog, [Retired Pastor Ruminates](#)*



“...We often hear sociologists and religious pundits proclaim the woes of postmodernity. I have recently realized that my heart is hardened to such explanations. I'm convinced that the real problem is not the relativism of postmodernity. Nope, it's much simpler than that. We have a near Pagan culture today primarily because clergy have, for generations, managed clubs, not life-saving stations! Their sermons have reinforced the public's growing sense of the church's irrelevance. We have developed “club theology” that makes reverencing of the liturgical lifeboat a matter of personal and corporate piety. We have created high standards for membership which have little to do with the original values of the crude little life-saving station. We have placed burdens upon those recently rescued which we ourselves could not bear (to quote that crazy Rabbi from Nazareth). We have hired independent contractors to do the life-saving work and we wonder why the surrounding community would rather give to Episcopal Relief and Development Fund than to support their local parish!

How did we come to the place where, both here and abroad, Church has become so irrelevant that families and couples and singles of all ages and orientations are more attracted to Yoga, “Sweat your Prayers” and Reading Rooms than to the somber tones of the local cleric proclaiming the glories of years past and the moral virtues of the privileged?

Bad theology and vending machine meals, I say. First, bad theology.

For a long time we've known that conformity is the obsession of religious institutions. It is the impulse behind credal confessions and our present rites of initiation, as well as our “Holy Orders process.” Institutions lose their power (or so they believe) when they give it away. They have less authority if they make it too easy to join the ranks of the elite – the clerics and insiders that manage ritual practice...”

**The possibilities are numerous
once we decide to act and not
react.**

George Bernard Shaw

From a blog post by [Tom Brackett](#) – the whole post is worth reading; this is just a sample of his passion on the subject. Brackett is an Episcopalian.

MISSION

[Post-Churched](#)

“It has been said too often that we are now in a post-Christian world. A better phrasing would be a post-churched world. Ironically, that may be what Christ really had in mind when

he enunciated what has come to be called The Great Commission. Jesus said “go and make disciples of all nations,” not “go find a good location to start churches.” The difference is not all that subtle. As disciple-making disciples we need to be gearing our theological studies toward becoming makeover artists in redesigning our Father’s house, not plodding toward one day becoming junior partners in the management of his firm.”

Carl Raschke, “[From Church to ‘Rhizone’](#): Reconfiguring Theological Education for the Postmodern Era”

The full article can be found via the link - along with the explanation for why he coins the word, 'Rhizone'. Check out the discussion in the comments too (though the last two appear to be very obscure advertising pieces....)

It is common in church planting for N. American churches, writes David Fitch, to rush in (a) naming a main leader and (b) starting a public service (what has often been called the launch). For instance: the [Acts 29 Network](#) – a training network for planting churches – puts an unusual importance on (a) choosing a strong male leader to plant the church, and (b) the launch of a service where “the gospel” is preached clearly, contextually and authoritatively. The impression here is that the preaching itself, led by a strong male leader, is sufficient to draw the lost into the gospel.



Although there is much to be thankful for in what God is doing with Acts 29, for me, this is an approach heavily dependent on the cultural conditions of Christendom. The preaching requires people already habitualized to go to church and hear a sermon. It requires people who understand the language. *It organizes the church structure toward the centre – where the single strong leader is – instead of outward where lost people are.*

It will work where there are wandering peoples who have a Christian past and/or have discontent with existing forms of church (i.e. Roman Catholic or traditional evangelical) who are easily drawn to something new and impressive. *This is not, however, a Missional strategy* because in many ways it sets the new community up to be a centralized attractional community. Its dynamic works against invading the rhythms of a context, living the gospel in ways that invade the secular spaces of the world that is living oblivious to God and His work in Christ for the world. If we would be missionaries, we need to think differently about congregational formation. [My italicizations]

Read the rest of the [blog post here](#).

[A mission question](#)

What is God saying? How will I respond? *These two questions - or one combined question, depending on your point of view - are the basis of a reasonably [long post by David Fitch](#). It isn't a post that answers the questions as such, but it's a post that gives the reader a chance to reflect on whether these two questions are the most important mission questions we can ask....or not.*

Fitch begins by looking at the way in which all churches come to a somewhat stagnating point - and even those who come to faith during that time and join the church don't quite come alive, but drift off. He says we need to keep asking ourselves what our purpose is - or rather, perhaps, what our purpose is within God's purpose. And he's not looking at this from an individual approach, but from a community (church community, that is) approach.

This is a thought-provoking article that deserves careful reading.

Many people struggle at work because they want more authority. It turns out you can get a lot done if you just take more responsibility instead. It's often offered, rarely taken - and you can get even more done if you give away credit, relentlessly.

Seth Godin [on his blog 1.9.10](#)

[Jonny Baker course](#)

Jonny Baker is a well-known blogger, and photographer (his pictures appear in [flickr.com](#)). But he's far more than that. He's a leader/pioneer in mission training in the UK, and has just developed a new approach to training pioneer/mission leaders. He and his team are using a foundation degree through [Oxford Brookes University](#) as the framework.

You can read the latest [newsletter-cum-prospectus online](#). This outlines the work required for the three-year course.



As Jonny notes, 'it's a pilot year so we'll be learning loads but it is still the real deal for those people who have signed up with us.' (Jonny doesn't like to use capital letters or much in the way of punctuation more than full stops in his blog posts, but don't let that put you off.)

He adds, 'if you are a pioneer mission leader, involved in a mission project or church planting, and yes even if you are selected as an ordained pioneer do get in contact if you're interested for next year.' The course is in modules, and you can do individual ones if you wish.

Eyes wide shut?

Jordon Cooper has recently written a blog post entitled, [Losing My Religion](#). It becomes plain from what he says that it isn't Christianity that he's losing so much as the form, the endless theological debating and a bunch of other things. The blog post is more of a thinking-out of his position than anything, and a huge concern that churches are often more like a [Kiwanis](#) service club than a community belonging to Christ - and therefore belonging to their neighbours. Here's the final paragraph, which comes after he's told us more than once just how many prostitutes, druggies, pimps, gangs and traffickers there are in his neighbourhood....



Over fifteen years ago, columnist Paul Jackson wrote in [The Star Phoenix](#) that the church had abandoned it's role of social services provider – taking care of widows and orphans – to the government during the 1960s and 70s. As the economies in North America struggled to pay for their new obligations, Jackson felt the church needed to step up again. It hasn't

happened yet. In fact most trends show churches walking more and more away from those difficult tasks and instead continuing to move to younger and younger suburban neighbourhoods and therefore away from the problems. It may be great church growth doctrine but what about the neighbourhood and that you left behind. The east side of Saskatoon has twice as many churches per person than then west side does. Guess which side of the city has the higher concentration of wealth and guess which side has the [core neighbourhoods](#) in it. I'll let you figure it out.

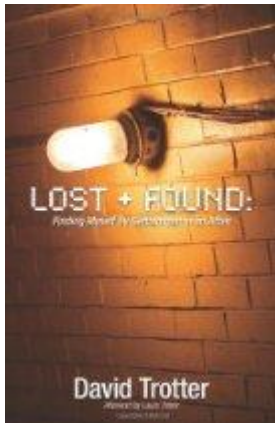
Imaginary obstacles are insurmountable. Real ones aren't. Barbara Sher

LEADERSHIP

Ministers and extra-marital affairs

One of the issues pastors/ministers/priests seem to face - perhaps even more than other men (and I focus on men purposely here) - is that of the extra-marital affair. The consequences for ministry and family can be devastating, as you'd expect.

Chad Estes has written two posts recently on the subject. In one he reviews a book by **David Trotter** called [Lost + Found: Finding Myself by Getting Lost in an Affair](#), and offers some



comments about how it can be difficult to maintain friendship with someone who's fallen in this way, but that it's necessary nevertheless. In the other post, [Why Pastors Have Affairs](#), he offers six reasons why men in these positions of responsibility have perhaps greater 'reasons' to have affairs than other men. 'Reasons' in the sense that they can *find* reasons for the affairs better than some of us.

I haven't included this in the book section, but it appears from Estes' review that the book would be worth checking out. *"David's honesty about how he got to this point in his life probably won't be too shocking, that is if you are honest yourself. If you've had an affair, thought of having an affair, or been the victim of an unfaithful spouse, you will find yourself on these pages as well."*

MENTAL HEALTH

A NZ radio programme, with the rather in-your-face title, The Nutters Club [no apostrophe included], has become one of the top-rating shows on air. It's hosted by **Mike King**, and features a variety of people talking about mental health issues, society's and their own. You can listen to previous programmes as audio on your computer, or download them as podcasts, or read the Nutters Notes blog on the [RadioLive website](#). Suicide, depression, agoraphobia are some of the topics currently featured on the site.



SOCIETY

The International Day of Older Persons was celebrated on 1st October. This day is growing in significance as the proportion of the global population aged 60 will double from 11% in 2006 to 22% by 2050 – totalling almost 2 billion.

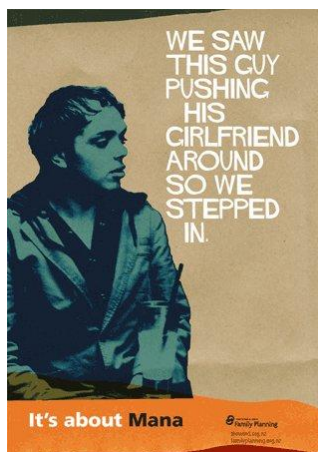
The [World Health Organisation](#) coined the term 'active ageing' to reflect the need for us all as we age to not just



to keep physically active, but to remain active in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs. In our fast ageing world, older people will increasingly play a critical role - through volunteer work, transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labour force.

WHO says to remember that ageing takes place within the context of friends, work associates, neighbours and family members. Therefore interdependence as well as intergenerational solidarity are also important tenets of active ageing.

The [head of one of New Zealand's largest Retirement Village](#) operators is calling for the day to have more prominence in New Zealand given the growing proportion of our population aged over 65. There will be over 566,000 people over 65 by 2011.



Family Planning NZ has picked up an overseas idea and made it their own (think this is called 'contextualization' – one word I've learned while working at National Mission! LOL).

They're calling the programme **It's about Mana**, and it's intended for young men – those in the later stages of schooling and beyond – with the hope that they'll question traditional male values: the idea that real men are always in control (but have uncontrollable sex drives); deserve entitlement or respect, and that women are objects, amongst other things. Holding these ideas up to the light is intended to work against relationship violence. "If young men are involved in discussions that show that most men don't use or condone violence towards women, this will make it harder for violent individuals to justify it as normal behaviour."

Read more on the [Family Planning site](#) or join the [Facebook page](#).

And more on the same topic. There's a very interesting report from the International Planned Parenthood Federation called **Men are Changing**. While personally I've had some qualms in regard to the work of the IPPF over the years, this report is essentially positive and shows that a great deal of important work is being done in regard to the way men see themselves and their relationships to women - and other men. The interesting thing about this report is the case studies for once don't come from European or North American contexts (there *is* a Canadian one) but from African, South American and Asian countries.

You can [download the pdf here](#).

Check out the [National Mission Resource Blog](#)
new posts arrive regularly during the working week.