MISSIO NEXUS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Posted on October 13, 2016 by Eddie

The trajectory of the human heart is away from the cross and towards the easier things of the Gospel.
Category: Observations

Earlier this month, I attended two mission conferences; one in the US and one in Panama. Because of time pressure, I plan to simply post the notes I took at the conferences as blog posts without much by way of comment or reflection.

It is appropriate to make a couple of disclaimers. Firstly, these brief notes may not accurately capture what the speaker said or intended to say, though they do reflect what I heard. Secondly, you shouldn't assume that I agree with everything that is in the notes - so please don't argue with me about them!

Missio Nexus is the US body which seeks to link missions agencies and churches together - an equivalent of Global Connections here in the UK. Their leadership conference in Louisville Kentucky was one of the largest mission conferences I have ever attended, with around 800 delegates. Such a large conference was able to attract some big name speakers and we even had the Getty band leading worship (and playing a couple of great folk tunes) one evening.

General Thoughts

- This is a big event; 800+ participants
- There was virtually no workshop/thinking through time
- The did build in lots of networking time and in such a large group, people felt free to miss sessions
- There was a strong focus on evangelism/proclamation but without a good balance on social action.
- Every session was sponsored by someone â€“ not sure how much they had to pay, but they got to give a little talk and show a video before the sessions â€“ this was for everything, not just plenaries.
- This was a thoroughly nice, friendly and welcoming group of people.

Notes

I generally couldnâ€™t take notes in the plenaries, because the room was darkened.

Ted Esler: State of the Union

- Have had to raise money by realigning membership structure
- Also have cut some services
- All of their online products will now be released as a podcast (though you had to pay to get recordings of the conference sessions)
- Groups around the world are collaborating; we need to identify and address the opportunities and challenges

- People join associations for the benefits they get on day one
- They stay in the associations because of meaningful engagement

David Platt (Head of IMB)

- Realised that they were overspending by tens of millions every year
- Asked people to consider their next step
    - Early retirement for some
    - Voluntary redundancy for others
    - A few staff were sacked
- Overall lost 1,400 staff and now have a balanced budget
- See the local church as the focus for mission â€“ IMB helps to facilitate them
- IMB has been a bottleneck for churches interested in mission
    - Looking for creative ways to catalyse mission
    - Globalised world gives new opportunities
    - Focussing on missionary task
        - Proclamation at the centre
    - Need to be careful about people group ideas
        - Itâ€™s ok to be monocultural in evangelism, but church should be multicultural
    - In all these changes has been careful not to denigrate the past
    - Realises that the average church member feels disconnected from global mission

World Approaches

Mike Adegbile (Nigeria)

- African churches are often the offspring of agencies
- Mission leaders are wary about the role of churches in mission
- Need the church to take a lead in mission
- Agencies want to see churches as a recruiting base and recipients of their services, rather than anything else
- Churches are establishing their own mission structures
- Western agencies are mixed â€“ some good, some bad

Wolfgang Buesing (Germany)

- Refugee situation is massive
    - Some churches saying they donâ€™t need to go overseas as the world is coming to us
- Many short termers come home and establish small one person/one church agencies

- Social action is replacing proclamation

AnonymousÂ (China)

- Chinese church structure very different to the west, makes comparisons difficult
- State sponsored churches are not open to mission
- House churches are launching into mission without decades of experience
- Some classic missions are working on mobilisation with Chinese churches
- Han Chinese missionaries going to minorities in China tend not to see language and culture learning as neccesary

Desio Carvalo (Brazil)

- Cross cultural mission exploded in 70s and 80s
- Some N American churches are doing mission without reference to the local churches
- A Few large churches are sending missionaries
- Most agencies are small

Ed Stetzer

- The language of mission Dei is relatively new to the evangelical world
- Despite this, some evangelicals are against this idea because they see it as weakening the special place of missionaries
- Lots of stats to show that evangelicalism is not in decline in the USA
- Movements and initiatives come and go, but the denominations carry on â€“ they are important in our mission
- The trajectory of the human heart is away from the cross and towards the easier things of the Gospel. People welcome us when we dig wells but resist us when we preach the Gospel. We need to value the things that culture pushes us away from