**Inherited Mission and Emerging Mission: Challenges for Churches in the 21st Century**

*(Rev Prince Devanandan – President, Methodist Church of New Zealand)*

**Introduction Prince –** Our focus now is on Mission. The Mission we are talking about is, God’s mission. Not our own or of the Church. The mission of God, *mission Dei,*

How have discerned the Mission of God in the places where we are stationed, called to serve?

**Viv asks**: What do we mean by mission? I spent several summers helping on a beach mission, praying that the children and young people who came would make a commitment to Christ. In the 1970s, our Methodist church in Tauranga held a mission and we hoped that people would join our church.  
But I am not sure if that is how we look at mission in the 21st century?

**Prince:**

How we have discerned the Mission of God in the places where we are stationed, called to serve?

**Have a conversation with your neighbour [2 to 3 minutes]**

Any reflections to share?

**The mission we are engaged is an “inherited mission.”**

When we focus on mission, there are two types we got to be aware of. One is the “inherited mission” ; and the other is the “emerging mission”.

The inherited mission is what we inherited from the missioneries who introduced Christianity to our ancestors. The model of mission had church planting as the ultimate goal. It was a mission of the church that crossed oceans to establish the model or a replica of the mother church very often from England. The question now is, have we moved from this inherited mission of the 18th century or are we trying that same old model in the 21st century.

**Have a conversation: Does the inherited model works in our context in the 21st Century? [2 to 3 minutes]**

What are the words we would use today to describe our work as Christians in today‘s society? They could be   
 – witness, social justice, political action.

Ask people to “brain storm” for other words instead of “mission”.

**The deeper question:** what IS mission?

“Buzz” in pairs about what mission – what are we expected to do/be/say? Transformation – personal, ecclesiastical, societal?

How much can we keep of inherited mission?

Is it necessary to keep the inherited mission model?

**The need is for a shift to emerging mission –**

The moment we step out of our worship, we encounter the real world. It is where power and profit have become spiritual drivers. Marginalisation and privatisation of faith has become the norm in many churches. God’s blessings are counted with wealth and material. People are treated as commodities and bought for in cheap labour market. Those who gain by such actions are looked upon as the blessed ones. The church is expected to sanction this drive.

“When the pasor is not blessed materially, when the pastor lacks the wealth, how can he bring about blessings to others in the church?” – (An Anglican member and a relative of mine asked)

This is the kind of teaching sweeping through the churches. Amidst this kind of faith, how do we engage in God’s mission? How do we do what God wants us to do?

The task before us is to dicern the right from the wrong, power from the powerless, centre and the margin, rich and the poor, and above all between the empire and the kingdom of God. If we are able to do that we will then discern where God wants us to serve. I find the Wesleyan heritage engaged in this exercise. John Wesley opting for a Christlike ministry made the church to exclude him, just as Jesus was excluded by the religious aristocrats of his time.

I see it as a conflict between the inherited mission of the hierarchy and the emergent mission in Jesus’ time. So it happened during the ministry of john Wesley. And now we are faced with a similar challenge.

**Discernment is inevitable to engage in God’s mission.**

Some Scriptures to explore, stories, examples of mission to consider. Ephesians 1: 17 – 22.

Collin Cowan in his address “Mission of the Church” explained the passage:

“Discernment is using the “eyes of the heart” to see beyond the surface; to understand what God’s requirement of us is in the particularity of the soical and political context in which we find ourselves; and to be “enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which he has called you.”

According to Luke Timothy Johnson, decision-making within the church ought to be grounded in the spiritual discipline of discernment, where both the individual and the community of faith turn to God, using scritpure as an instrument to draw insights. [Scripture and Discernement: Decision-making in the Church, *Abingdon Press 1996*]

Where do we want to leave this? With some questions or action to follow up ourselves

To engage in God’s mission, our strategy ought to be

* Help congregations to be attuned to what is going on outside the walls of the worship building
* Building missional congregations – every parish to become a mission
* Help members of the congregations to experience worship as an act of submission to God of life, not to the god of mammon
* To go out into the field to fulfill what God requires of the community of faith and individuals

**We will never change the world by   
going to church.  
We will only change it by   
being the church**.

END.