



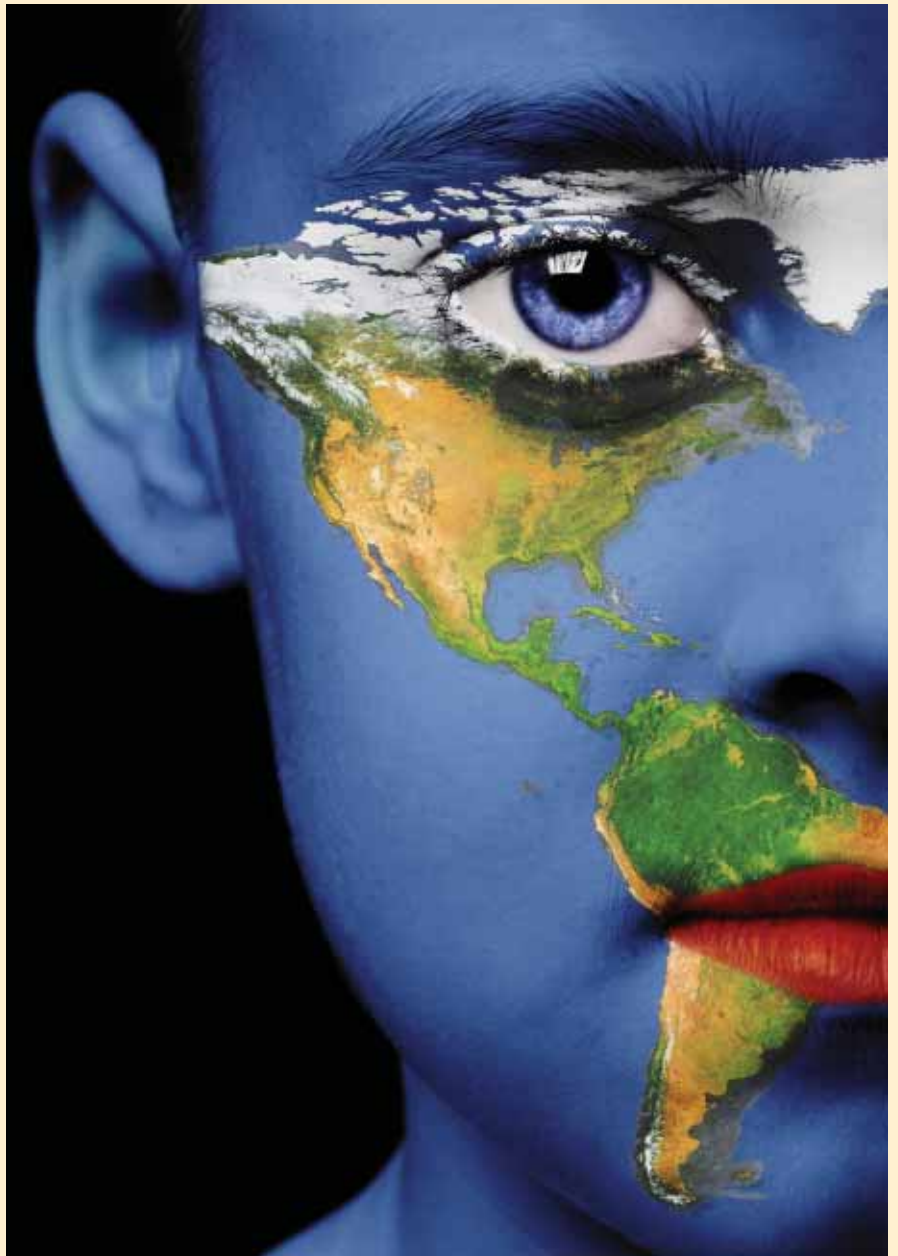
The Shape of Church to Come

What will the church look like in a few years...10 years...30 years? What does it look like now? Even trying to describe the current “church look” may be somewhat of a challenge. Currently, even though the view is direct and clear, it may be difficult to describe what one sees. I am sure many people will have different opinions. If it is difficult to describe it in the present, while we can see her, how much more difficult will it be to guess what she will look like in the future?

Describing what church looks like has nothing to do with church buildings. The church is not the building; the church is the people. So what are we church people up to? Or, what are we church people not up to?

There is a major movement in church today to become more evangelistic. To me that is an interesting thought because the very foundation of the essence of church is living out the Great Commission which is evangelism. So are we saying the church has moved away from her primary mission of evangelism and that the church movement is trying to move her back to what her major thrust should be? I think that would be a correct assumption. To say the church is not evangelistic is a statement that points its finger at the church member and says, “You, as an individual, are not evangelistic.”

The general tool for assessing the church’s



current lack of evangelism is the national baptism rate. The rate is not increasing, as it should, given the continued increase in the population. The trend seems to be a gradual decrease in total baptisms from one year to the next. More and more churches are seeing their number of baptisms decrease each year. Furthermore, an analysis of those baptized would reveal most of our baptisms are biological as opposed to baptizing the lost and un-churched in our community.

As we look to the future, I see the primary focus of the church as winning the church field to Christ. I believe the evangelistic thrust today will lead pastors to disciple their church members to begin to see themselves as missionaries living in the U.S. Church members will learn how to share their stories with their neighbors. Pastors will teach them how to weave spiritual thoughts into conversation with their un-churched neighbor. They will learn how to be a good neighbor and how to look for ways to minister to and meet the needs of the people God has placed right there, where they live and work.

As we move forward in time, we will realize more than ever, that indeed the church is not a building, the church is you and I, living our lives for Christ each day in our own personal mission field. Evangelism will become more and more who we are and what we do everyday. Evangelism will become a natural habit we will do every day, without even thinking. It will become our primary focus in life as we seek to usher in the Kingdom and bring honor and glory to God. Evangelism, the shape of church to come. ♦

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