

Dear Pastors, Chairs and Secretaries

Welcome to the October edition of Mission Meanderings. In this email you will find information about

1. Engaging the World in a Secular Age
2. Lunchtime Zoom Discussion on Engaging the World
3. Meet the Candidates (an invitation from Rev David Baker)
4. Suggested Administrative/Governance Tasks for September

Engaging the World in a Secular Age

Sometimes it feels as though the culture we live in has changed so much that Christians no longer have something of value to offer. Andrew Root wrestles this reality in his book *The Congregation in a Secular Age*. He delves into the challenges facing congregations as they navigate modernity's fast-paced, secular environment. Root explores how societal shifts have led to congregational despondency, particularly due to the increased speed of life and the resulting depression that often accompanies it. He asserts that this "speeding up" of time, expectations, and life itself has created an existential crisis, not just for individuals but also for congregations.

So how do we engage with this tension? Do we ignore it, 'go slow' or is there some other way to respond?

Root discusses how the ethic of authenticity — the idea that we should all be unique, self-defining individuals — can create overwhelming pressure, even in religious spaces. This can lead people to feel guilt when they fail to live up to these ideals. Historically, we might have lived with the 'should's' (obligations and duties), but now we are overwhelmed by the 'could's' (endless possibilities and options). This creates a constant sense of guilt, shame and inability to rest.

Root's invitation is to respond to this fast-paced life, with a more intentional way of living that is attuned to God's rhythms rather than giving in to the constant demands of modern society. Congregations, Root argues, are often depressed because they feel compelled to be "busy," constantly providing programs and activities in an attempt to stay relevant. However, this busyness lacks depth and can contribute to a sense of hollowness or burnout within the church community.

Engaging Congregations in a Secular Age

So how do we respond? Congregations must resist the urge to simply speed up or mimic the fast-paced culture around them. Instead, they must lean into their unique ability to offer an alternative to the relentless rush of modern life. Congregations which embrace practices that cultivate deep, meaningful

community and spiritual formation, rather than merely providing more activities, are the key.

1. **Slow Down:** Embrace slowness. Create spaces for contemplation, rest, and spiritual reflection, which offer an antidote to the busyness of modern life. This means valuing presence over productivity and depth over speed.
2. **Recover Sacred Time:** Recover a sense of sacred time. This involves reorienting the community around rhythms of worship, prayer, and fellowship that resist the frenetic pace of the secular world. By doing so, congregations can offer a different moral vision of what makes life meaningful.
3. **Intergenerational Engagement:** the importance of intergenerational ministry, not just through programs but through a deeper connection between the past, present, and future of the church, is essential. Congregations which create spaces where the wisdom of older generations is valued, but also the enthusiasm, creativity and hope of younger generations is appreciated and encouraged, can bring vitality to the life of the church.
4. **Grace and Transcendence:** Transformation does not come from the self or from faster, more efficient church programming, but from an encounter with the divine. Congregations which focus on fostering this encounter, create space for people to experience the grace of God, which comes as a gift, not as something earned through speed or busyness.

Generative Questions

1. *How can congregations today offer an alternative to the "speeding up" of modern life without becoming disconnected or irrelevant to the wider culture? What practical steps can we take to embrace slowness and deeper spiritual reflection?*
2. *What does it look like for a congregation to "recover sacred time" in a fast-paced world? How can we reorient our worship, fellowship, and personal spiritual lives to reflect God's rhythms rather than the demands of modern society?*
3. *How can we foster genuine intergenerational engagement in our congregations, creating spaces where the wisdom of older generations and the energy of younger generations both contribute to a vibrant, unified community? What barriers do we need to overcome to make this happen?*
4. *In a culture that emphasizes individualism and self-optimization, how can congregations cultivate an experience of grace and transcendence that frees people from the pressures of performance?*

How can we help individuals encounter the divine in ways that go beyond busyness or religious activity?

To read more, [download a brief summary here](#)

If you would like to discuss any of this further, I invite you to join me for a **Lunchtime Zoom Discussion: Engaging the World in a Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time against the Speed of Modern Life.**

We will talk through the above article and generative questions. **12noon Wednesday, 16 October, 2024.**

Details

Engaging the World in a Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time against the Speed of Modern Life

Topic: Lunchtime Zoom Discussion: Engaging the World in a Secular Age: Keeping Sacred Time against the Speed of Modern Life.

Time: Oct 16, 2024 12:00 PM Brisbane

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85882384859>

Meeting ID: 858 8238 4859

One tap mobile

+61370182005,,85882384859# Australia

+61731853730,,85882384859# Australia

Meet Your Candidates

The following is from Rev David Baker, General Secretary of Queensland Churches Together

Dear friends,

Churches across Queensland are working together to host "candidate forums" for their electorate in the up-coming State election.

The purpose of the candidate forums is to get the Christians of the electorate together to meet their candidates, ask them questions and hear their responses. It is not about preferring one party over another, but about giving all candidates a fair chance to hear our concerns and respond to them. It also gives the members of your church the opportunity to hear directly from the candidates on the important issues, so they can make an informed choice.

Can you please promote these events to your church over the next couple of weeks?

You can find details of your closest forums on the website below. Each forum also has links to materials to help you promote it to your church members, including PowerPoint slides, flyers, and suggested text for an announcement or newsletter.

<https://meetyourcandidates.org.au>

Suggested Administrative/Governance Tasks for October

- Check in with leadership team members: who is willing to stand for the following year
- Consider your team's need for renewal when nominating for positions – what skills are required? Do the proposed leadership team accurately reflect the culture of your congregation?
- Conduct staff reviews for paid staff
- Ensure that your Annual General Meeting and/or Annual Election Meeting are properly advertised in your congregation
- Prepare your AGM reports
- Lodge BAS return for July to September (if quarterly reporting)

Stories of Faith

We love to share stories of faith and hope from our LCAQD congregations and other agencies. Can you please help us by alerting us to relevant Facebook posts or emailing stories and photos/videos for sharing to communications@qld.lca.org.au?

Finally, the Commission for Mission welcomes opportunities to meet with leadership teams, congregations and parishes to talk about the development of mission and ministry throughout congregations and our LCAQD entities.