



RBC CONNECT GROUP STUDY FOR WEEK 23/8/20

BUV Flourishing Churches Devotions

Congregational Character Part 4 - Innovation

by Christine Wanstall

I wonder sometimes if it can be hard to decide to be innovative. Do you just wake up in the morning and think "Today I am going to innovate"? Or is innovation an expression of our natural personality, so there are some people who are naturally innovative and some who are not?

Developing this article has been an interesting process of unpacking what it means to innovate. We would probably all agree that for a church to flourish we need to innovate, to try new ways of being church, but this can be hard when it seems to disrupt the settled rhythm and cherished traditions of our church life. So, let's explore some key questions that I have about innovation and how it relates to church life. I figure if I have these questions, then some of you will have them as well.

The word innovation means the act of creating a new method, idea or product or improving something that already exists. It has been defined as 'change that adds value'. It is generally agreed that in a changing world, businesses can only survive by continually innovating. This happens by improving what they already have and finding new products or markets in which to grow. Apple is a classic success story of constantly innovating and improving their own product.

Innovation is not a new concept to God. The biblical narrative commences with an act of innovation "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen 1:1). The gospels remind us that "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made....But new wine is for fresh wineskins." (Mark 2:21-22). Our Christian life begins with a new birth (Jn 3:3) and our daily walk with Jesus is an ongoing process of innovation as the Holy Spirit improves us each day as we grow as disciples of Jesus (2Cor 3:18).

When we consider innovation in our church life, it seems that this becomes more complicated as we find tension between people who want to pioneer new things

and people who prefer to keep things the way they are. We seem to see innovation as disruptive and chaotic but it doesn't have to be that way. Innovation is actually about inviting our creative God to continue to renew His church. Jesus reminds us that He will build his church (Matt 16:18) and therefore we just need to be willing to cooperate with God in how He wants to do that.

Innovation does need us to be open to new ideas. Our faith and hope in God help us with this. Be encouraged that God is creative and has innovative ways for His church to flourish. As disciples of Jesus, we need to be willing to try new things and risk failure as we follow his leading into innovation.

Our current restrictions have forced us to be innovative and we have many stories of how God has met us in our need. We can take courage and confidence from this in this unusual situation so that when we return to more 'normal' life we can continue to explore different ways of being church.

Let us press into God and allow Him to innovate in our lives and the life of our church.

1. For personal reflection:

- How does God want to renovate my heart today?
- What are the areas of my life that God wants to improve?
- How can I engage with God as He leads me through this process of change?

2. Reflect on our church:

- What have been the major innovations in Church history?
- Discuss examples of innovation from the history of Rosanna Baptist Church. How did these innovations impact the Church and/or the wider community? What lessons were learned that might be useful to us now?
- Is innovation a gift that only some people have or can we all participate in the process?
- What limits innovation and growth in a Church? How can we best overcome such limitations?
- What do you think that God is calling us to change or include in the life/activity of the Church?

3. Engage with new material or methods of being church:

- Are there innovations being implemented by other churches that you see as having value to Rosanna? You may wish to do some research on this by reading written material or looking at web sites.