

Missiology as a Means of Saving the Church

An Enquiry into Church Decline and the Rise of Missional Theology
through the eyes of Modern Sociology,
Jungian Psychology and Benedictine Monasticism

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Abstract

Using the South Australian Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia as its primary reference, this study explores and critiques three implicit philosophies of life and mission within the institutional Protestant church. The first philosophy is that Christian faith requires and is best expressed through regular attendance at services of worship and other activities of a denominationally recognised congregation. The second is that part of God's mission is to grow congregations numerically. The third is that God's primary vehicle for mission is the institutional church; thus, all must be done to ensure the church's long-term survival.

Using Constructive Engagement methodology, this study examines these normative philosophies from a broader perspective. This includes a sociological exploration of the institutional church's expectations concerning church attendance, church growth and survival. It further exposes these philosophies to psychology and particularly that of Carl Jung, highlighting psychological phenomena that potentially influence the church's beliefs and actions. Thirdly, it offers the perspective of Benedictine monasticism and its alternative understanding of Christian life and mission.

The study gives a brief overview of church decline, offers some reasons for it and explains how the church has responded to it in recent years. It examines the benefits and drawbacks of institutional church attendance and asks whether, in a church culture that is so communally focused, there may be a role for and call towards solitude.

The study provides a brief history and critique of the theology of the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission, two primary missional theologies within the church today. It seeks a deeper understanding of how and why they have become so popular as church attendance continues to decline and particularly examines the church's expectation of their effect in terms of church attendance, church growth and survival.

Finally, this study asks whether the church's concern for its survival through advocating church attendance and numerical church growth may be having a counterproductive effect on the church's life. It determines that vital areas of Christian life are potentially being neglected, detrimentally affecting the personal spiritual lives of church members and, consequently, diminishing the church's mission of love. It explores what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus have to say to the church regarding its desire to survive and invites the church to consider refocussing its attention away from church attendance, church growth and survival and placing it on God. This change in focus may result in a smaller church, yet one with a bigger heart; more loving, more selfless, more missional.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: Mandy Jane Harvey

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What I mean when I say ‘church’

Within this research, I mention the church in several interconnected contexts. My primary focus is the Uniting Church in Australia, a religious institution, and the Christian denomination to which I belong. More specifically, I am referring to the South Australian arm of the Uniting Church in Australia, known as the Uniting Church in South Australia (UCSA). Geographically, it is in the southern hemisphere; culturally, however, it is considered part of the ‘West.’ Therefore, I refer to it within its cultural context as part of the Western institutional Protestant church, which resides within Western Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

This research recognises that the UCSA shares its heritage with other Christian churches within Australia. It is part of a wider body of Christians who began arriving in Australia in 1788. Therefore, part of this research refers to the UCSA within this broader context of Australian Christian history and understands the Uniting Church in Australia to have become a denomination in 1977, as an amalgamation of the Congregational Union in Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.¹ It also, therefore, shares its history with these denominations.

Further, it identifies the Uniting Church in South Australia’s primary Christian heritage as rooted within Europe, specifically the United Kingdom (UK). Ultimately, the UCSA has its deepest roots in all Christian denominations, both Protestant and Catholic, and Christian peoples of no-denomination, who are also rightly part of the Church in its widest sense. This wider Church originates from and is a response to the events surrounding the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It then grew into the New Testament church which, after a time of persecution, began to thrive in the early centuries after Christ. It spread from its place of origin in Palestine

¹ Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. “*About the Uniting Church in Australia*,”. Accessed July 12, 2020, <https://assembly.uca.org.au/about/uca>.

into the areas surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. Ultimately, over the centuries, it became established throughout the world in a variety of forms.

When I refer to church decline in this research, it means the decline in church attendance within the Western institutional Protestant church (excluding the Pentecostal church)², with specific reference to the Uniting Church in South Australia.

² The Pentecostal church is one of the few areas within Protestant Christianity that is currently growing.

Background and Introduction

The genesis of this thesis are insights that came to me some fourteen years ago. I had been a regular churchgoer for twenty years and was, as many Christians are, dedicated to 'mission' and 'spreading the Gospel.' Two things then occurred to me. Firstly, most of what I had understood to be Christian mission might more accurately be described as attempts to increase church attendance to ensure the church's survival. Secondly, although the missions I had experienced over the years had value, this did not usually result in an increase in church attendance. Since then, church decline has continued unabated.³ A further insight brought me to the realisation that if I continued placing all my energy into the kind of mission that prioritises increasing congregational numbers, I would likely reach the end of my life faced with the stark reality that my energy was wasted. The prospect frightened me!

This realisation prompted a metanoia in both my theology and ministry. I sensed that the church might do well to examine whether church mission has become more focussed on survival than on being a Christ-centred outworking of the gospel. I felt there must be better ways for the church to love the world in the name of Christ than trying to increase church attendance. I pondered this so deeply that when the UCSA produced a document in 2010 entitled 'Fresh Directions'⁴, aimed at importing the Fresh Expressions movement from the UK into the South Australian context, I was extremely sceptical and uneasy about its intent. Was this just another attempt to ensure the church's survival by increasing church attendance? My concerns led me

³ In 1966, Christianity was the main religion in Australia (88%), but in 2016 only 52% of people consider themselves 'Christian' with there being a major shift from those referring to themselves as having 'no religion' (which includes those who refer to themselves as just 'spiritual') from 19% in 2006 to 30% in 2016. n.d. "2071.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016." *Australian Bureau of Statistics*. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~70>.

⁴ Rob Stoner, *Fresh Directions: Developing Mission-Shaped Church and Ministry*, (Keswick: Mediacom Education Inc, 2010)

to initiate a vibrant, and no doubt arrogant on my part, e-mail conversation with the author of the Fresh Directions document, Rev Rob Stoner, voicing my concerns.⁵

Now, at a time when the UCSA is again emphasising missional growth and church planting through the Generate 2021 Project, and more recently the Generate Presbytery, I feel a renewed sense of disquiet as to how and why the UCSA does mission. This research, therefore, explores how the UCSA conducts mission as it comes face-to-face with the decline in church attendance and an increased disinterest in Christianity. It asks to what extent the Uniting Church in South Australia's use of the missional theologies of the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission has grown in line with and considering the psychological backdrop of church decline. It critiques such assumptions as 1) the belief that institutional church congregations are God's primary vehicle for both Christian discipleship and mission, 2) the appropriateness of trying to increase the size of church congregations, and 3) the assumptions implicit in 1) and 2) that God is opposed to institutional church decline and requires that we should address it.

⁵ Rob and I have since met and had a wonderfully open and cheerful conversation about our previous e-mail conversation.

Methodology

This research borrows the philosophical methodology known as Constructive-Engagement Methodology (CEM). Bo Mao explains:

The constructive-engagement goal and methodological strategy of comparative philosophy (constructive-engagement strategy for short), briefly speaking, is to inquire into how, via reflective criticism and self-criticism, distinct modes of thinking, methodological approaches, visions, insights, substantial points of view, or conceptual and explanatory resources from different philosophical traditions and/or different styles/orientations of doing philosophy (within one tradition or from different traditions) can learn from each other and jointly contribute to our understanding and treatment of a series of issue, themes or topics of philosophical significance, which can be jointly concerned through appropriate philosophical interpretation and/or from a broader philosophical vantage point.⁶

Thus, constructive engagement is a way of opening the closed discourse of one discipline to the contributions and critique of others on an issue of common interest. In this case, it will explore the UCSA's desire to grow and its use of two forms of missiological theology as a rationale for doing so.

The first form is the *missio Dei* theology, initially introduced by Karl Barth in a paper read at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932⁷ and later developed by Karl Hartenstein.⁸ The *Missio Dei* understands mission as an action of the Triune God who calls the church to participate and thus the church is sent by the Holy Spirit. The second form is the 'Great Commission', a theology that interprets the risen Jesus' final words to his disciples in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations", as the divine mandate for church growth through evangelism.

⁶ Bo Mao, 2010. "On Constructive-Engagement Strategy of Comparative Philosophy: A Journal Theme Introduction." *Comparative Philosophy* 1 (1): 2010 1-2.

⁷ Stephen Bevans and Roger P Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 290.

⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 390.

Within CEM, there are two 'orientations' or emphases. The first is issue-engagement, which compares different sides of an issue and explores how each can contribute to and learn from the other's perspective, to potentially open up a new way of seeing or resolving a problem.⁹ The second, '*interpretation*', focuses on exploring the underlying assumptions, implications, and ideologies of a thinker's writings and line of thought, even when they may not be explicitly stated within their work, but are nevertheless implied or inferred, either intentionally or unintentionally.¹⁰

This research uses a mixture of both issue engagement and interpretation. In doing so, it employs three different disciplines as ways of widening our perspective on church mission. Firstly, sociology places the research within both Australian and wider Western culture. Secondly, the psychological lens of psychology, and particularly that of Carl Jung, examines the motivations and drives that may lie behind the church's desire to increase church attendance. Lastly, Benedictine monasticism offers a counterintuitive lens through which to view church life and mission.

⁹Bo Mao, "*On Constructive-Engagement Strategy of Comparative Philosophy*," 4

¹⁰ Mao talks about 'philosophical interpretation' as engaging with ideas and values which "might include the interpreter's elaboration of the thinker's points and their subtle implications, which might not have been explicitly considered by the thinker herself, and/or the interpreter's representation of the thinker's point in clearer and more coherent terms or in a more philosophically interesting way, which the thinker herself may or may not have actually adopted" Bo Mao, "*On Constructive-Engagement Strategy of Comparative Philosophy*," 14.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

In this chapter I will provide a brief narrative review of literature relevant to this study. It surveys literature describing and explaining the decline of Western churches. It then examines the church's response to institutional decline and the theological perspectives associated with those responses. The chapter then introduces the discourses of Jungian psychology and Benedictine monasticism as alternative ways of engaging with decline and death.

Articulating the problem

The decline in church attendance is of deep concern for the UCSA as for most Western Protestant churches. Consequently, there is an abundance of literature with regards to church growth, albeit without necessarily being specific about why growth is so high on the church's agenda. It may, for example, refer to the church as being in a "changed missionary situation"¹¹ or a "challenging context"¹² that requires it to "adopt a fully missional stance."¹³ But the Church of England's *Mission-Shaped Church* report from the UK is candid. There has been a cultural shift whereby the church's relevance has decreased, and its prominence lessened. The church in the West, which was previously able to rely on congregational numbers to reproduce themselves, has found that they are no longer doing so and is faced with the real prospect that its congregations may not survive.¹⁴ Similar stories can be heard within other Protestant churches in most of the Western world, including Australia.¹⁵

¹¹ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970) xi .

¹² Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), x.

¹³ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come*, x

¹⁴ Church of England, *Mission-shaped church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), 11.

¹⁵ Research in Australia in 2013 says that only 8% of people attended church regularly, and 47% of non-churchgoers do not attend because they consider church irrelevant to their lives. McCrindle Research, *Church Attendance in Australia*, 2013, Accessed July 2020.

<https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blogarchive/church-attendance-in-australia-infographic/> and Lisa Sampson. "Why is Generation Y Leaving Church?" *Insights: Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW & ACT*, Accessed July 2020. <https://www.insights.uca.org.au/why-is-generation-y-leaving-church/>.

Sociological Background - The Demise of Church and the Rise in Mission

Unlike within other Western countries, going to church has never been a regular activity for most Australians.¹⁶ Statistically speaking, the early 1950s saw the high point of church attendance,¹⁷ but by the 1960s and '70s attendance had declined sharply.¹⁸ It has continued to do so since the 1990s, albeit at a slower rate.¹⁹ Therefore, few belonging to the UCSA have ever known it not to be in decline, with decreasing church attendance a constant reality. According to David Bosch, during the 1950s, the word 'mission' began to receive a resurgence in interest within the Western Protestant church²⁰ - just at the time, statistics lead us to believe, church attendance was beginning to decline. In reality, the decline had been gathering in the minds of the Christian West for far longer.

It was within the Enlightenment Period of around 1720-80,²¹ when particularly virulent criticism was aimed at protestant Christianity,²² that the seeds were sown of what would later become church decline. Around that time two significant events occurred, both originating from the UK. The first, in 1788, was to begin the colonising and subjugating of the newly discovered land of Australia.²³ The second, in 1792, was aimed at shining the light of Christian faith into "the heathen darkness"²⁴ in India. It was British missionary William Carey who spearheaded modern²⁵

¹⁶ Ruth Powell, Miriam Pepper, and Sam Sterland. "NCLS study finds decline in attendance at religious services has slowed." *NCLS Research*. July 7. Accessed October 4, 2020. <http://ncls.org.au/news/religious-service-attendance>.

¹⁷ Powell, et al., "NCLS study finds decline in attendance at religious services has slowed."

¹⁸ "2071.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016." *Australian Bureau of Statistics*. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~70>.

¹⁹ Powell, et al., "NCLS study finds decline in attendance at religious services has slowed."

²⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 1.

²¹ Alister E McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, (Melbourne: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 220.

²² McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 220-221.

²³ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 263.

²⁴ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. (Ann Ireland, London, 1792). 10.

²⁵ "Although there had been other Protestant missionaries before him, particularly among the Moravians, and the Catholic church never ceased mission work, Carey is called the father of modern

Western-led Protestant missions overseas²⁶, and his mission in India was described by William Wilberforce as “one of the chief glories” of the British nation.²⁷ Yet, Carey was criticised for his actions by those who felt he should restrict his efforts to Britain, which was so in need of conversion.²⁸ Whether Carey’s decision to seek Christian converts in non-Western nations was influenced by the closed hearts of Enlightened Britain is unclear. However, seeking to influence the more open hearts of those unfamiliar with Christianity abroad was seemingly both timely and strategic. Although Carey was only directly responsible for around 700 converts in his lifetime,²⁹ Andrew Walls tells us that most Christians today are no longer Western, but primarily based within Africa, Asia and Latin America.³⁰ Christianity is flourishing beyond the West, no doubt thanks to William Carey and the many he influenced by his model of missionary endeavour.³¹

By 1914, just over a hundred years after Carey arrived in India, the Western world, including Australia, solidified further into a field for Christian mission.³² The terrible events surrounding World War I, and the reality of Christian nations fighting against each other³³ had a profound

missions because his eloquent plea, and personal example, inspired Protestants everywhere to mission endeavors”. Dan Graves, “William Carey’s Inquiry,” Christian History Institute. Accessed November 10, 2020. <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/carey>.

²⁶ Boston University School of Theology “Carey, William (1761-1834): English Baptist Bible translator, pastor, and father of the Serampore mission,”. Accessed October 14, 2020. <https://www.bu.edu/missiology/misionary-biography/c-d/carey-william-1761-1834/>.

²⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “William Carey: British Missionary,” Accessed November 15, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Carey>.

²⁸ Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*, 13.

²⁹ Christianity Today. “William Carey: Father of Modern Protestant Missions.” Accessed November 15, 2020. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/missionaries/william-carey.html>.

³⁰ Andrew F Walls, “The Great Commission 1910-2010,” in *Considering the Great Commission: Evangelism and Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit*, ed. W Stephen Gunter and Elaine A Robinson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 17.

³¹“William Carey.” In *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd ed., 297. Vol. 3. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2004. Gale eBooks. Accessed November 14, 2020.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3404701128/GVRL?u=flinders&sid=GVRL&xid=5fd2e79a>

³² Lesslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian faith and Today’s Mission*, (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963), 11

³³ “With the acknowledgment of the rise of secularism as a religion in the West, the upheavals of communism in Orthodox Russia, and the lingering memory of the blood and carnage from World War I - in which Christian nations fought against one another - the synonymous association of land with faith, of the West with Christianity, was undermined”. Mark Laing, “Missio Dei: Some Implications for Churches.” *Missiology: An International Review* XXXVII no. 1 (Jan 2009): 90.

effect on society, Christian faith³⁴ and the church.³⁵ On being interviewed by the ABC in 2014 with regards to his new book, 'The Rage Against God', British journalist Peter Hitchens states that the Great War is the most significant event since the fall of the Roman Empire in terms of human civilization and the damage that was done to it. As a result, Christianity has struggled to survive and, thus, according to Hitchens, it was the First World War that really spelled the end of Christendom, although its effects were not truly felt until after the Second World War.³⁶

For Australia, what is rather paradoxical is that although church attendance has declined, a remnant of Christianity has remained very much alive and vibrant in terms of the rituals and theology surrounding the remembrance of the War through ANZAC day. According to Northrop Frye, ANZAC day represents a kind of 'displaced Christianity' which "invokes and conveys a sense of meaning and purpose, and invites identification with something that is both wholly greater to and wholly other than ourselves."³⁷ Therefore, the self-sacrifice remembered on ANZAC Day is seen very much in parallel to the 'great-sacrifice' of Christ on the cross for the sake of humanity³⁸.

What becomes clear, then, is that although the decrease in church attendance in the West is statistically deemed post-Second World War,³⁹ the mindset behind it has been at work for far longer, spanning right back to the Enlightenment Period and perhaps intuited by William Carey

³⁴ Newbigin, *Trinitarian faith and Today's Mission*, 11

³⁵ See also Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Changed Religion Forever* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2014), 217-233 and Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 12-35

³⁶ Peter Hitchens interview by Andrew West. "The Great War: The Beginning of the End for Christianity in the West?" Australian Broadcasting Corporation. (July 2, 2014), <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/the-great-war3a-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-christianity-in-t/5566866>.

³⁷ Bradly Billings, 2015. "Is Anzac Day an Incidence of 'Displaced Christianity'?" *Pacifica* 28 no.3 (October 2015): 229

³⁸ Billings, "Is Anzac Day an Incidence of 'Displaced Christianity'?", 237

³⁹ "The decline of baptism in the post-World War II period, for example, shows that there is an institutional decline of the Church of England". *The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World: Interpretations and Responses*, edited by Paul Silas Peterson, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 4 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/flinders/detail.action?docID=5056424>.

as he sought to spread the Christian faith beyond the West. Church decline became more evident through the First World War and began to translate into a physical fall in church attendance after the Second World War. At that point, the church's interest in mission increased, as the wane in congregational numbers accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s and continued more slowly from the 1990s. Given such enculturation of decline, I shall consider how closely related what the UCSA now refers to as 'mission' is to strategies for increasing church attendance so that the church might survive.

Modern Reasons for Church Decline

Since the 1950s, the reasons for church decline have been considered numerous. Not least a cultural shift whereby the church ceased to be the source of social capital,⁴⁰ and thus the primary foci for people's spiritual lives as well as business and social networking. As focus began to shift away from church, many found Sunday morning church services no longer an important part of their lives.⁴¹ Add to this the church's belief in the negative influence of capitalism⁴², secularisation⁴³, and individualism⁴⁴ and there exist numerous sociological forces seeming to fuel the decline in church attendance.

Yet, this decline is not only due to changes in the workings of society over which the church has little control. There are issues about the church itself that are causing once-committed attendees to leave. According to Roxburgh, many from all generations have become

⁴⁰ "those tangible assets [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit" *OECD Insights: Human Capital. "What is Social Capital, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development"*. Accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>

⁴¹ Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. *OECD Insights: Human Capital*.

⁴² Melissa Florer-Bixler, "Capitalism is Killing the Small Church". *Faith and Leadership*. Accessed February 24, 2021. <https://faithandleadership.com/melissa-florer-bixler-capitalism-killing-small-church>

⁴³ David Hilliard, "Australia: Towards Secularisation and One Step Back." In *Secularisation in the Christian Word: Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod.*, edited by Callum G Brown and Michael Snape (London & New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), 75.

⁴⁴ Andrew Suderman, "Overcoming Modernity's Individualism: Becoming a Community of Peace in the Face of Violence" *Verbum et Ecclesia* 2011: 2.

disenchanted with institutional church, believing it is no longer a place they can practice their faith. Instead, they are attending smaller, more informal gatherings.⁴⁵

Diana Butler Bass tells us that added to the church's seeming lack of relevance, some perceptions of what it means to be Christian have resulted in people in the West abandoning Christianity altogether. They may still refer to themselves as followers of Christ, but not as Christians, and they do not wish to be part of the church.⁴⁶ Thus, theology is another reason why some struggle to remain within the church or to be Christian. We discover literature that points to tension between those who wish to adhere to conservative understandings of Christianity, and those desiring to express their faith in a different way. More people are struggling to state their Christian beliefs as conventionally expected of them, wrestling with, for example, the creeds, or disagreeing with theology that asserts that Jesus is the only path to heaven.⁴⁷ Increasingly, it seems, some are unable to adhere to established teachings of the church, and many of different ages and theological biases find that Christianity, as it has traditionally been expressed, is not satisfying them as it once did. They desire to express their Christian faith in a different way.⁴⁸

As Marcus Borg writes, there is now a tension between traditional and more modern understandings of Christianity, with two distinct and conflicting paradigms causing division.⁴⁹ The first is the traditional '*belief-centred paradigm*', which claims that both Jesus and Christianity are unique and that believing in Jesus is the only way to find God, receive salvation

⁴⁵ Alan J Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 16.

⁴⁶ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity after Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*. (New York: Harper One, 2012), 20.

⁴⁷ Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 47.

⁴⁸ Brian McLaren, *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion is Seeking a Better way to be Christian*, (St Ives: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 2016), 4.

⁴⁹ Marcus Borg. 2005. "An Emerging Christian Way." In *The Emerging Christian Way: Thoughts, Stories & Wisdom for a Faith of Transformation*, ed by Michael Schwartzentruber, (Kelowna: CopperHouse, 2005), 10.

and enter heaven.⁵⁰ The second is the ‘*transformation-centred paradigm*’, which is less belief-centred and sees Christianity and discipleship to Jesus as a road to transformation, leading to God.⁵¹ More recently there is a new movement developing, known as Evolving Faith, mainly for spiritual wanderers and outcasts,⁵² and people who find themselves spiritually uncertain.⁵³

Within the Uniting Church itself, tensions exist between those with traditional views and those with a more liberal standpoint. The Propel Network exists for Christians who adhere to a historic and orthodox faith and desire to pursue the traditional mission imperative of the Great Commission.⁵⁴ On the progressive side, there is The UC Forum, which is concerned that the church has lost its ability to present the Christ story in a culturally relevant and appropriate way and challenges the church to rethink and renew how it presents the Gospel.⁵⁵

Australia has produced some cold, hard statistics showing that some traditional Christian theology has a negative impact. According to McCrindle Research undertaken in 2017, three significant issues are hindering people from engaging with Christianity: 1) The church’s perceived stance on homosexuality,⁵⁶ 2) The idea that a loving God would send people to hell,⁵⁷ and 3) Concern over the validity and reliability of the Bible.⁵⁸ Further issues include scepticism of miracles, angels, demons and resurrection; sexual abuse scandals; and the prevalence of religious wars.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ Borg, *An Emerging Christian Way*. 10.

⁵¹ Borg, *An Emerging Christian Way*. 18.

⁵² Evolving Faith. “*About Evolving Faith*.” Accessed September 16, 2020, <https://evolvingfaith.com/about>

⁵³ Evolving Faith. “*Evolving Faith*.” Accessed September 16, 2020, <https://evolvingfaith.com>

⁵⁴ Propel Network. “*About Propel Network: A New Network of Evangelical Leaders, Congregations and Agencies*”. Accessed August 1, 2020, <https://www.propelnetwork.org.au>

⁵⁵ UC Forum. “*Open Discussion on Progressive Christianity: Who are we?*”. Accessed August 1, 2020. https://ucforum.unitingchurch.org.au/?page_id=1858.

⁵⁶ McCrindle Research. “*Faith and Belief in Australia: A National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends*.” (Baulkham Hills: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd) 32.

⁵⁷ McCrindle Research, *A National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends*. 32.

⁵⁸ McCrindle Research, *A National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends*. 32.

⁵⁹ McCrindle Research, *A National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends*. 32.

However, whilst institutional Protestant Christianity as it once was has diminished and seems unlikely to return to its previous levels, this will not see the end of religion or faith.⁶⁰ Hugh Mackay says that religion is rising from a global perspective, but it is unlikely to dominate in Australia as it once did. It is more likely that new forms of faith will gradually emerge, and that spirituality of different kinds will gain modest popularity.⁶¹ Atheism is another reason for church decline⁶² but, for the most part, Protestant Christianity is being replaced by religious diversity⁶³ and an upsurge in spirituality.⁶⁴ Although Gary Bouma states as recently as 2011 that the most prominent form of Christianity in Australia is Catholicism,⁶⁵ more recently it seems the most popular form of Christianity within Australia is Pentecostalism.⁶⁶

Examining the church's response to the problem of institutional decline

Largely speaking, the primary response to the problem of church decline is for the church to do everything it can to stop it. There are big corporate organisations such as 'Exponential' that focus on "Our need for reproducing churches."⁶⁷ It offers "Premium Multiplication Resources"⁶⁸ together with on-line courses "designed to help you and your church identify, select and move forward on your pathway toward multiplication"⁶⁹, thus helping churches grow through providing courses and resources for increasing church members. Alternatively, the

⁶⁰ Hugh Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, (Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Limited, 2016), 23-49.

⁶¹ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 3 and 8.

⁶² "Though atheism has experienced a burst of popularity around the Western world that has made it seem positively fashionable, religion appears to be returning to the public conversation in ways unimaginable even twenty years ago." Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 8

⁶³ Gary Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2011), 5-21

⁶⁴ Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 5

⁶⁵ "In Australia, the new Christian normal is Catholic" Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 15

⁶⁶ "Australia's largest churches in every capital city and in the regions are all Pentecostal churches...More people are attending Pentecostal churches than any other Christian denomination, they put bums on seats." Stephen Stockwell and Ruby Jones. 2019. "How Hillsong and other Pentecostal megachurches are redefining religion in Australia." Accessed April 25, 2020: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-28/pentecostal-megachurches-are-redefining-australian-religion/11446368>.

⁶⁷ Exponential. "Exponential,". Accessed March 15, 2020, <https://exponential.org/>.

⁶⁸ Exponential, "Exponential."

⁶⁹ Exponential, "Exponential."

BARNA Group undertakes sociological research aimed at supporting church growth, with articles like "Signs of Decline & Hope within Key Metrics of Faith"⁷⁰ and "Behind the Steep Decline in Church Attendance Among Women."⁷¹

Within Australia, there is similar research undertaken by National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Research, a joint venture organisation established in the early 1990s to provide research into Australian spirituality, the health of its churches, and to encourage sustainable and effective leadership into the future.⁷² It has produced the National Church Life Survey every five years for 25 years providing church statistics and support.⁷³ McCrindle Research is another group offering, amongst other things, statistical research on cultural trends with regards to religious and spiritual beliefs within Australia.⁷⁴

The UCSA itself has been "...advocating a wholesale change in the way Christians are *doing* and *being* the church..."⁷⁵. It has undertaken two specific drives towards innovation and church growth in the last ten years, with further explorations into next steps currently underway.⁷⁶ The first attempt at church growth was the commissioning of the 'Fresh Directions' report in 2009, written with the hope of learning from the Fresh Expressions movement already prominent in the UK and aimed at introducing similar within the UCSA.⁷⁷ The second attempt was the Generate 2021 project, which led to the formation of the missionally focussed Generate

⁷⁰ Barna Group. "Signs of Decline & Hope within Key Metrics of Faith," Accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church/>.

⁷¹ Ryan Burge, "Behind the Steep Decline in Church Attendance Among Women." Barna Group, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/changes-behind-the-scenes/>.

⁷² NCLS Research. "About NCLS". Accessed August 2, 2020, <https://www.ncls.org.au/about>.

⁷³ NCLS Research "About NCLS".

⁷⁴ McCrindle Research, "Faith and Belief in Australia: A National Study on Religion, Spirituality and Worldview Trends".

⁷⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come*, I.

⁷⁶ Uniting Church in South Australia. *Strategic Plan Survey*. Accessed 10 January 2021.

<https://sa.uca.org.au/documents/strategic-plan/Strategic-Plan-Survey-Results-October-2020.pdf>

⁷⁷ Rob Stoner, *Fresh Directions*, 5.

Presbytery, tasked with “planting new congregations and regenerating existing ones.”⁷⁸ The future of the UCSA is currently again the focus of attention, with the majority of respondents to the Synod’s Strategic Planning Survey saying that “supporting the regeneration of the Church” should be the Synod’s primary objective over the next 3-5 years, citing several obstacles standing in its way.⁷⁹

A major focus over recent years has been for the Western church to reinvent its meetings⁸⁰ and put a more positive, innovation-fuelled and modern spin on them to make the church culturally inviting once again. Thus, churches market themselves, plan strategically, change their meeting styles, and offer café churches and other new initiatives. They use pleasant aesthetics such as candles to create an atmosphere and change their focus from inside to outside the church.⁸¹ Mostly, however, the concentration on institutional change is at an aesthetic level. It concerns the appearance and feel of worship; how it is presented, where it is held, and what it contains. The focus upon innovation and change is broad and creative, but there is an underlying reticence to extend this review to include doctrine or theology.⁸² Seemingly, to do so would be to undermine the nature of the Gospel.⁸³ Mackay points out that it is rather ironic that the more modern and innovative the church service, the more likely the church is to have very conservative theology.⁸⁴ Equally, those within more liberal Protestant churches tend to have a

⁷⁸ Generate Presbytery. “Generate Presbytery”. Accessed March 15, 2020, <https://generate.ucasa.org.au/>.

⁷⁹ Uniting Church in South Australia, *Strategic Plan Survey*.

⁸⁰ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 16.

⁸¹ Roxburgh, *Missional*, 21.

⁸² “Whilst we admit to being unashamedly radical (in the true sense of that word) in our re-examination of *everything* in relation to standard church practice, we are nonetheless quite deeply committed to the historic, orthodox, Christian faith. Don’t be fooled by our somewhat unorthodox approach to life, mission, and church. While we are unafraid to critique church traditions, we are devoted to the Scriptures and unmoving on the core Christian doctrines.” Frost & Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come*, ix.

⁸³ Kevin Flatt, D Millar Haskell and Stephanie Burgoyne, “Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline. In *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 2017, 83.

⁸⁴ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 38.

distaste for what they may view as capitalism and product marketing and are wary of being involved in strategies to recruit new 'customers'. Consequently, liberal churches are less likely to engage in creatively re-visioning their gatherings, even though it may result in new members.⁸⁵

What is demonstrably absent from the whole discussion (with a few notable exceptions), is any real acceptance or coming to terms with the possibility of the institutional church's death. If acknowledged at all, death is primarily seen as a metaphor for letting go of what was. The prospect that institutional church may actually cease to exist is only considered as an incentive to ensure this does not happen. For example, the Church of England blames church decline on its neglect of modern culture; thus, the reversal of decline requires repentance.⁸⁶ For Frost and Hirst, what is needed is a radical new approach that involves a fundamental re-formation of church structures.⁸⁷ According to Roxburgh, what is required is to emulate how Jesus sent seventy disciples out into the world.⁸⁸ It seems only to be John Bradbury who articulates the church's possible impending death with some acceptance.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Brian McLaren suggests that the church's concern for its survival may actually be hastening its demise.⁹⁰

The Theology behind the church's response to institutional decline

David Bosch points out that there has never been just one theology of mission within the Christian tradition.⁹¹ For the sake of our study, however, I will be exploring the two primary models of missional theology actively at work today within the Uniting Church in South Australia,

⁸⁵ Flatt et al., *Secularization and Attribution*, 83.

⁸⁶ Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 13-14.

⁸⁷ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come*, 6.

⁸⁸ Alan Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, 11.

⁸⁹ John P Bradbury, "Towards a Theology of the Death of the Church." *In Theology* 117, no 4 (July 2014): 249-255.

⁹⁰ McLaren, *The Great Spiritual Migration*, 160.

⁹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 8.

how and why these missional motifs are being used, and what significance their use may have in relation to church decline.

The first model is the *missio Dei*, a term that was originally used as a way of articulating Karl Barth's teaching regarding God's actions in the world,⁹² and towards which, in recent years, there has been a gradual but significant shift.⁹³ This form of missional thinking largely forms the basis of the Fresh Expressions movement and underlies much of the missional theology of the UCSA. As per the UCSA's Generate Presbytery, the second model is the Great Commission,⁹⁴ which refers to those final words of Jesus to his disciples, entreating them to "make disciples of all nations."⁹⁵ This generally seems to be the theology behind church planting, which Richard Hibbert says is inferred by the Great Commission⁹⁶ and, according to Bosch, is considered synonymous with converting people to Christianity so that they might be incorporated into a Christian community or church.⁹⁷

Exploring Wider Perspectives – Jungian Psychology

We will also explore our theme through the psychology of Swiss Psychologist and Psychoanalyst, Carl Jung. Born in 1875, Jung has made a major contribution within the 20th century to our understanding of psychological health, both individually and as a collective society. A younger contemporary and, at one time, close friend of Sigmund Freud,⁹⁸ it was Jung who, with Freud, developed analytical psychology, a form of psychotherapy that focuses on the role of symbols and spiritual experiences within the psyche of the individual. He also developed

⁹² Richard Hibbert, "The Place of Church Planting in Mission: Towards a Theological Framework." *In Evangelical Review of Theology* 33 no. 2 (January 2009): 316-331.

⁹³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389.

⁹⁴ Generate Presbytery. "About Us," Accessed September 9, 2020. <https://generate.ucasa.org.au/>.

⁹⁵ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-29 (NRSV.)

⁹⁶ Hibbert, *The Place of Church Planting in Mission*, 316-331.

⁹⁷ Hibbert, *The Place of Church Planting in Mission*, 316-331.

⁹⁸ Christine Doran, "Rage and Anxiety in the Split with Freud and Jung," *Humanities*: 1 no.3 (July 2017): 53.

the understanding of the unconscious psychic connection between all people, known as the 'collective unconscious' and how unconscious elements within us, both individually and collectively, influence our thoughts and behaviours within everyday life.⁹⁹ It is through Jung's work that the personality types of the 'introvert' and the 'extrovert' became understood and, after World War II, led to the development of the Myers Briggs personality test by Isobel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katherine Cook Briggs.¹⁰⁰

Jung is of particular interest because he was, rather unusually for someone within the field of psychology, a religious man who believed in God¹⁰¹ and had an awareness of the importance of the Christian religion within the psychology of Western society.¹⁰² Indeed, Jung's belief in and understanding of the psychological significance of God was one of the reasons he and Freud eventually parted company.¹⁰³

Jung's particular specialty was researching and understanding the concept of individuation,¹⁰⁴ which is the process by which a person comes to greater and deep self-knowledge. This self-knowledge leads to psychic wholeness, which Jung referred to as becoming one's true 'Self'.¹⁰⁵ This process involves integrating, as far as possible, the conscious and unconscious elements of a person's psyche. Thus, Jung was particularly interested in the significance of dreams, which he said needed to be explored in relation to an individual's current

⁹⁹ International Association for Analytical Psychology 2020. "Analytical Psychology". Accessed August 2, 2020. <https://iaap.org/jung-analytical-psychology/analytical-psychology/>.

¹⁰⁰ The Myers Briggs Foundation. "C G Jung's Theory". Accessed 3 August, 2020.

<https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/c-g-jungs-theory.htm?bhcp=1>

¹⁰¹ Swanee Hunt-Meeks, "The Anthropology of Carl Jung: The Implications for Pastoral Care," *Journal of Religion and Health* 23, no 3 (Fall 1983): 197.

¹⁰² Jung, *Dreams, Memories, Reflections*, 236.

¹⁰³ Jung, *Dreams, Memories, Reflections*, 140.

¹⁰⁴ International Association for Analytical Psychology. Accessed 2 August, 2020. <https://iaap.org/jung-analytical-psychology/analytical-psychology/>.for Analytical Psychology 2020) & Clift, *Jung and Christianity*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Journal Psyche. "The Jungian Model of the Psyche." Accessed August 3, 2020. <http://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>.

life circumstances,¹⁰⁶ and the use of active imagination which uses self-expression with the aim of integrating conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche.¹⁰⁷

For this research, I will particularly look at Jung's take on institutional Christianity, the role of personal religious experience, and his understanding of the unconscious influences that affect both individual and collective behaviours. I will thus relate them to the UCSA's concern with its decline and its desire for growth.

Exploring Wider Perspectives – Benedictine Monasticism

And finally, we will examine the monasticism developed by 6th-century monk, St Benedict of Nursia. Not much is known about St Benedict. All that we do know first-hand comes from the hagiography, the Second Dialogue of Pope St Gregory the Great,¹⁰⁸ written sometime within the 6th century, which details Benedict's life and miracles. St Benedict's own work, which he referred to as a "Little rule that we have written for beginners"¹⁰⁹ is known as the Rule of St Benedict. It is a tiny guidebook for Christian communal living and forms the basis of Benedictine monasticism throughout the Western world.

It may seem rather odd to have monasticism as part of our exploration into the life and mission of the UCSA. After all, monasticism has a reputation for being divorced from and making little contribution to society. Yet, we learn from Mark Noll that of all areas of the church, monasticism has arguably had the most substantial effect on Christian history and mission over the centuries than any other area. For Noll it is responsible for the most significant and notable applications of the gospel and Christian truths and ideals, either exercised by monks themselves

¹⁰⁶ Wallace B Clift, *Jung and Christianity: The Challenge of Reconciliation* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1982), 36.

¹⁰⁷ Darryl Sharp MA "Carl Jung Psychotherapy: What is Active Imagination?" Accessed August 23, 2020. https://www.carl-jung.net/active_imagination.html https

¹⁰⁸ Pope St Gregory the Great, *Life and Miracles of St Benedict: Book Two of the Dialogues*, (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press).

¹⁰⁹ Benedict of. *The Rule of St Benedict in English*. Edited by Timothy Fry. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981), RB 73:8.

or those heavily inspired by them.¹¹⁰ Its influence is equally obvious amongst most early Christian theologians.¹¹¹ Further, as we consider church decline, Phyllis Tickle tells that when it has been on the verge of collapse—historically around every 500 years¹¹²—it has been monasticism in its many forms that has been instrumental in saving the church from permanent demise through ushering it into regeneration¹¹³.

Benedictine monasticism, which almost died out within 200 years of Benedict,¹¹⁴ has existed on the fringes of the Western church throughout the ages. From around the 9th century, it spread rapidly for some 500 years.¹¹⁵ By the 1500s Benedictine monasteries dominated Europe.¹¹⁶ During the English Reformation, however, King Henry VIII dismantled hundreds of monasteries with the Dissolution of Monasteries Act in 1536. By 1540, monasteries were disappearing at a rate of 50 per month.¹¹⁷ Thus, Benedictine monasticism ended in Britain before being restored in 1895 with the founding of Caldey Abbey.¹¹⁸

In more recent years, traditional monastic vocations have declined. Still, perhaps surprisingly, monasticism has seen a resurgence outside of monasteries through ordinary folk wishing to grow their spiritual lives within the context of everyday life. Many of these are becoming formally associated with monasteries as an Oblate, Franciscan Tertiary or a Lay Cistercian.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁰ Mark Noll, *Turning Points* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1997), 84 in Gary Stuckey, *Finding Your Inner Monk*, (Doctoral Thesis, Adelaide College of Divinity, 2015), 10.

¹¹¹ McGrath, *Historical Theology*, 96.

¹¹² Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 16.

¹¹³ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 21-31.

¹¹⁴ E-mail conversation with Gary Stuckey, October 2020.

¹¹⁵ David Robinson, *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way*, (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2010), 8.

¹¹⁶ Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Ben Johnson, "Dissolution of the Monasteries." Historic UK: The History and Heritage Accommodation Guide. Accessed August 6, 2020. <https://historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Dissolution-of-the-Monasteries/>.

¹¹⁸ Derek Vidler, "The Benedictine Heritage", in the Oblate Handbook., edited by Gervase Holdaway OSB (Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2008), 26 and 29 in Stuckey, *Finding Your Inner Monk*, 51.

¹¹⁹ Gary Stuckey, *Finding Your Inner Monk*, 1.

This study will explore what Benedictine monasticism, with its emphasis on connection with God through solitude and silence, may have to say to the UCSA today as the church considers its decline.

Chapter 2 - The Role of Church Attendance

Within many Western churches today what it means to be *'missional'* usually includes the understanding that it results in people attending church.¹²⁰ A relationship with Jesus is part of this, but growth in church attendance is both assumed and expected. For missiologist Donald McGavran, to grow the church is an act of faithfulness with social action only a secondary consideration. God's primary desire is that people walk through the doors of the church.¹²¹ Within the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia, meeting together regularly is considered paramount; serving as the primary basis for Bible study, celebrating the sacraments and supporting each other in love whilst seeking to offer service to the world through mission.¹²² But why is it the church gives such high priority to meeting together? Part of the answer lies in what the church believes itself to be.

Most churches, including the UCSA, see themselves as a direct descendant of the New Testament church, which is referred to in the original Greek as ἐκκλησία (ekklesia). Ecclesia¹²³ is the earliest form of Christian community, which developed after the resurrection of Jesus, as detailed within the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul and other parts of the New Testament. Therefore, the UCSA, as do most other institutional churches, takes as its example the gatherings of the New Testament 'Ecclesia'. The Apostle Paul speaks of the

¹²⁰ "16. We believe that through faith in Christ we are united with all other believers in Christ's Body – the Church – and that this finds expression through our participation in a local church" "Statement of Beliefs," Generate Presbytery. Accessed September 14, 2020, <https://generate.ucasa.org.au/welcome/#aboutUs>.

¹²¹ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 15.

¹²² "its members meet regularly to hear God's Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to build one another up in love, to share in the wider responsibilities of the Church, and to serve the world". "Basis of Union 1992 Edition, Uniting Church in Australia, 27.

¹²³ Ecclesia is the English transliteration of the Greek.

interconnectedness of Jesus' followers and refers to them as the 'the body of Christ'¹²⁴, and the book of Hebrews encourages believers not to give up meeting together, as some already had.¹²⁵

However, not everyone is comfortable that today's institutional church represents a modern-day equivalent to 'ecclesia'. For example, de Beer says that if we look to the three kinds of modern literature that explore the Institutional church's resemblance (or not) to 'ecclesia'¹²⁶, in most cases, literature suggests that little real commonality exists.¹²⁷ Church communities that *do* resemble 'ecclesia' tend to be faith communities or "free churches", which are usually not regarded by the institutional church as churches at all.¹²⁸ Thus, de Beer presents the possibility that the institutional church and 'ecclesia' may be different entities that have travelled in parallel over the centuries but are not the same.¹²⁹

None-the-less, modern institutional churches expect the regular church attendance of their members. Let us, therefore, explore the UCSA's expectations of church attendance more broadly, through the lenses of modern sociology, the in-depth psychology of Carl Jung, and lastly the ancient perspective of Benedictine monasticism.

What we learn sociologically is that the average Christian church in Australia expects its members to meet together at least weekly, with levels of commitment and intensity far higher than any other Australian institution; a level of expectation, according to sociologist Gary

¹²⁴ "Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many" and "If we were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body." 1 Cor 12:19-20 NRSV

¹²⁵ "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching". Heb 10:24-25 NRSV

¹²⁶ These three types of literature being those whereby "The ἐκκλησία in the New Testament is discussed and called the "Church" without any real connection to modern day churches." Secondly "Attributes of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament are used to evaluate and criticize the modern church" and thirdly "The modern church is discussed without a real connection to the ἐκκλησία in the New Testament". Jan de Beer, "The Implications of Ecclesiology's Understanding of Church and ἐκκλησία for the Current Missiology," *Missionalia. Southern African Journal of Missiology* 46 no.1 (August 2018): 76.

¹²⁷ de Beer "The Implications," 80.

¹²⁸ de Beer "The Implications," 73.

¹²⁹ de Beer "The Implications," 81.

Bouma, unlikely to be met.¹³⁰ However, for those who do attend church regularly, many find it brings a sense of belonging and acceptance, with positive attributes that may outweigh some of what may be considered the more negative aspects of institutional church.¹³¹ Church attendance benefits mental health far more than belonging to a political or community group,¹³² and studies suggest that regular churchgoers may live up to 33% longer than those who are not.¹³³ Although, interestingly, some research suggests that these benefits do not outweigh the psychological benefits of personal spiritual practice away from corporate church attendance.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, other positives include good pastoral care,¹³⁵ the sense that the church offers moral guidance and support,¹³⁶ peaceful spaces for meditation and reflection,¹³⁷ architecturally beautiful buildings, and church music or liturgical wordings and prayer.¹³⁸

However, the converse is also true. Some have found meeting at church unhelpful, boring or irrelevant.¹³⁹ There are stories of people feeling rejected or excluded.¹⁴⁰ The church's treatment of women is considered by many as out-dated,¹⁴¹ and some have lost respect for it due to sexual scandals.¹⁴²

¹³⁰ Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 35-36.

¹³¹ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 53-54.

¹³² Ben Spencer, "How Going to Church can Stave Off Depression," *Daily Mail*, August 5, 2015, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3185571/How-going-church-mosque-stave-depression-Study-finds-people-join-religious-community-better-mental-health-join-groups.html>

¹³³ Julie Zauzmer, 2016. "Another Possible Benefit of Going to Church: A 33 percent Chance of Living Longer." *The Washington Post*, 17 May 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/05/16/another-possible-benefit-of-going-to-worship-services-a-33-percent-chance-of-living-longer/>.

¹³⁴ Cassandra Vieten PhD, David Lukoff PhD, "Spiritual and Religious Competencies in Psychology" (Research accepted and under review with *American Psychologist*, 2021): 9.

¹³⁵ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 57.

¹³⁶ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 59.

¹³⁷ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 60.

¹³⁸ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 60.

¹³⁹ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 60.

¹⁴⁰ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 78-79.

¹⁴¹ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 82.

¹⁴² Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 85.

It is noteworthy, that those who have stopped attending church are not generally “unbelievers and scoffers”¹⁴³ but have withdrawn due to disillusionment. Many continue to live a deeply committed Christian life without any affiliation to a church or faith community, bringing into question whether church attendance is an essential aspect of what it means to be Christian after all.¹⁴⁴

Church Attendance from a Jungian Perspective

To examine church attendance from a psychological perspective, this thesis now considers the work of Carl Jung, a deeply religious man¹⁴⁵ who considered himself a Christian¹⁴⁶ but was, for many reasons, wary of institutional Church. For Jung, the divine aim of life is the development of consciousness.¹⁴⁷ He asserts that most of us live life at a largely unconscious level, ruled by psychological forces which, if we remain unaware, govern our behaviour. Although Jung recognised there might be situations where only a large institutional body like the church could have enough influence to make a societal difference,¹⁴⁸ he disliked the church because he felt that meeting in groups discourages consciousness because of the tendency for the individuals within them to function as a collective entity.¹⁴⁹ The larger the group, the bigger the problem.¹⁵⁰ As an extreme example of reduced consciousness brought about through the involvement in

¹⁴³ de Beer, *The Implications*, 81.

¹⁴⁴ de Beer, *The Implications*, 81.

¹⁴⁵ “In an excellent filmed interview, *Face to Face* (in which the interviewer asks all the questions you want to ask), done by the BBC about two years before Jung’s death, John Freeman asked Jung the question – did he believe in God? Jung asked, “Now?” (having recounted earlier his Christian upbringing as the son of a Swiss Reform pastor). When Freeman indicated his question referred to his present beliefs, Jung Replied, “Difficult to answer (pause); I don’t need to believe, I know.” Wallace Clift, *Jung and Christianity: The Challenge of Reconciliation*, (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1982), 3.

¹⁴⁶ C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 13 Jung, C.G. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. (London: Flamingo, 1983), 13.

¹⁴⁷ Clift, *Jung and Christianity*, 117.

¹⁴⁸ Clift, *Jung and Christianity*, 117.

¹⁴⁹ This was only one of his reasons for disliking it. One additional reason was that Jung’s father was a minister and he was disturbed at what a negative effect being a minister had on his father’s life. Clift, *Jung and Christianity*, 115.

¹⁵⁰ C G Jung, *The Undiscovered Self: Learning, Culture, Neuroscience* 1958, 10.

groups, one only needs to look, according to Jung, at the effects of the ‘mass-mindedness’ prevalent in Nazi Germany.¹⁵¹ The journey towards consciousness, which Jung called ‘individuation’—not to be confused with individualism—includes becoming increasingly autonomous and guided by the inner ‘self’. For Jung, associating with groups hinders the individuation process and our psychological growth.¹⁵²

Although Jung recognised religion at the individual level is necessary to counterbalance mass-mindedness, he felt that institutional church, due to its use of creeds and the insufficient promotion of individual religious experience, tended towards ‘group-think’.¹⁵³ For Jung, society was the sum of individuals, and change could only be accomplished by transforming the individuals who make up society,¹⁵⁴ demonstrated by both Jesus and Paul, who forged their own paths, whilst disregarding others’ opinions.¹⁵⁵

Walter Wink, citing the work of Jung,¹⁵⁶ develops this argument using the New Testament language of “Principalities and Powers”¹⁵⁷ spoken of in Ephesians 6 of the New Testament, which he believed were tangible spiritual realities.¹⁵⁸ For Wink, these dark forces are real and dynamic,

¹⁵¹ Cliff, *Jung & Christianity*, 118.

¹⁵² “The bigger the crowd the more negligible the individual becomes” C G Jung, *The Undiscovered Self: Learning, Culture, Neuroscience* 1958, 10.

¹⁵³ Cliff, *Jung & Christianity*, 119.

¹⁵⁴ Cliff, *Jung & Christianity*, 117.

¹⁵⁵ Did Christ, perchance, call his disciples to him at a mass meeting? Did the feeding of the five thousand bring him any followers who did not afterwards cry with the rest ‘Crucify him!’ with the rest, when even the rock named Peter showed signs of wavering? And are not Jesus and Paul prototypes of those who, trusting their own inner experience, have gone their own individual ways, disregarding public opinion?” (C. G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self: Learning, Culture, Neuroscience* 2015), 40-41

¹⁵⁶ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 6.

¹⁵⁷ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” Eph 6:12, NRSV.

running rife within government systems, corporate entities and institutions, including religious ones,¹⁵⁹ causing damage if left unaddressed.¹⁶⁰

Whilst Jung believed individual transformation is the key to societal change, Wink insists that individual change, although necessary, does not automatically bring about collective transformation, because it ignores the cosmic nature of the dark forces that lie behind corporate evil.¹⁶¹ It is not enough, for example, to provide food for starving people, yet not address the system responsible for people being hungry in the first place. For Wink, the institutions of the church are part of the solution, with a unique role in uncovering the nature and effects of corporate evil, and leading society to new life undominated by these malevolent cosmic forces. Of course, this assumes that the church is aware of and willing to address its own capability for corporate evil.¹⁶²

What we learn then is that if we include sociology and Jungian psychology within our discussion, the benefits of meeting together as Christian community are not clear cut. Sociologically, church attendance can be highly beneficial, with psychological and spiritual advantages. These advantages, however, do not outweigh the psychological advantages of personal spiritual practice away from church attendance. Further for some, meeting at church has caused damage. Within Australian culture, the institutional church has extremely high expectations in terms of frequency and intensity of meeting together and is likely to be disappointed. We recognise that the church as a body of believers can be a vehicle for tremendous societal good. Without self-awareness, however, meeting together in groups can lead to “mass-mindedness”, causing large-scale damage.

¹⁵⁹ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 78.

¹⁶⁰ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 6.

¹⁶¹ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 77.

¹⁶² Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 164.

To end our discussion let us now turn to the monastic perspective of 6th century monk, St Benedict.

Church Attendance from a Benedictine Perspective

For Benedict, communal prayer was of paramount importance. It involved meeting together as a community seven times a day to pray the Divine Office.¹⁶³ Benedict spends Chapters 8 to 20 of his Rule of detailing how these are to be said and when.¹⁶⁴ For those within the community who were working in the fields or doing other tasks whereby they could not meet communally, because the prayers were memorised, they were expected to say them where they were. There was also a substantial amount of time per day (around 3 or 4 hours) set aside for 'prayerful reading'¹⁶⁵, which we now know as the meditative reading of Scripture called 'Lectio Divina.'¹⁶⁶ This is a very personal practice, but due to illiteracy was initially exercised communally, but over the centuries has developed into an individual practice away from corporate gatherings.¹⁶⁷ This prayer and reflection was undergirded by manual labour geared towards the upkeep and self-sustenance of the monastery and the support of surrounding communities. *Ora et labora*, "work and prayer", is a Benedictine motto; thus, monastic life carefully balanced prayer with work, rest and study, all entirely aimed at fostering relationship with God.¹⁶⁸

What we notice then is that prayer within Benedictine life was not an adjunct which involved meeting together once a week at church. Prayer was wholly integrated into everyday life; an essential part of each day, aimed at directing every moment of a monk's life towards God, its ultimate purpose that monks should, according to St Paul 'pray without ceasing' (1 Th 5:17).¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ This was a form of prayer which involved the reciting of the Old Testament Psalms and is sometimes known as the Daily Office or the Liturgy of the Hours.

¹⁶⁴ Gary Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: Benedictine Prayer*, (Adelaide: Unpublished, 2015), 34.

¹⁶⁵ RB 48:1.

¹⁶⁶ RB 48:14-15.

¹⁶⁷ Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: Benedictine Prayer*, 45.

¹⁶⁸ Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: Benedictine Prayer*, 34.

¹⁶⁹ Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: Benedictine Prayer*, 37.

The Role of the Hermit

But to end our study on church attendance and the importance of meeting in community, let us consider another element of monastic life which provides a counterintuitive understanding of the Christian faith. To do so, we must explore the two positive types of monks Benedict saw within his communities.¹⁷⁰ Firstly, Benedict refers to the cenobites: "...those who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule."¹⁷¹ These were the committed community members, "the strong kind"¹⁷² It was for them that Benedict wrote his Rule, a guide for living as a community in the presence of God. Living in community was essential for cenobites; Benedict's Rule provides meticulous detail on how cenobites should live wholesomely in community under the guidance of God.

The other type of monk Benedict refers to, however is one who does not meet within community. This monk is known as an 'anchorite', or more colloquially, a 'hermit.' Anchorites were mature members of a community who, having received much guidance and support from other members, were ultimately called to a solitary life. They would enter the 'desert' and battle with the devil and their interior selves in solitude.¹⁷³ It must be understood that this was not considered a higher calling and anchorites were not superior or special. Their call was simply a different way of living the Christian life, which required that the monk be alone. Having lived a Christian life to maturity within community, they were to be self-reliant and, with the help of God, to engage in spiritual and psychological battle with the vices of body and their inner selves¹⁷⁴ aided by regular spiritual practice.

¹⁷⁰ The other two, sarabaites and gyrovagues were considered to have a negative impact on community life. RB 1:6-11.

¹⁷¹ RB 1:1.

¹⁷² RB 1:13.

¹⁷³ RB 2:3-5.

¹⁷⁴ RB 2:5.

Self-reliance is not something that is taught or encouraged within the UCSA. Quite the opposite. We are unequivocally taught that we need to meet in community regularly. Yet, here we have the anchorites, from one of the earliest and most enduring forms of Christianity, who were expected to be self-reliant enough to embark on their spiritual lives alone; a call that was considered both genuine, and as positive and fruitful as that of the cenobite. Further, it is important to understand that to be an anchorite was not about escapism, nor was the solitary life undertaken due to a dislike of or an inability to be part of a community,¹⁷⁵ as this ancient story from the Desert Mothers and Fathers illustrates:

There was once a brother in a monastery who had a rather turbulent temperament; he often became angry. So he said to himself, “I will go live on my own. If I have nothing to do with anyone else, I shall live in peace and my passions will be soothed.” Off he went to live in solitude in a cave. One day when he had filled a jug with water, he put it on the ground and it tipped over. So he picked it up again and filled it again – and again it tipped over. He filled it a third time, put it down and over it went again. He was furious: he grabbed the jug and smashed it. Then he came to his senses and realized that he had been tricked by the devil. He said, “Since I have been defeated, even in solitude, I’d better go back to the monastery. Conflict is to be met everywhere, but so is patience and so is the help of God.” So he got up and went where he came from.¹⁷⁶

Hence, a monk who is truly called to the solitary life does not do so to avoid his or her vices as they will inevitably follow. For Benedict, the call to be an anchorite requires that one has already “come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time”¹⁷⁷ and has learned to be a healthy and wholesome member of the community. Therefore, a genuine call to solitude is not born from the desire to avoid the trials and tribulations of community living. It is born, so Cistercian monk Thomas Merton tells us, from the desire for God¹⁷⁸ but leads to love of others.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Philip Lawrence OSB, 2020. “Chapter 1: The Kind of Monks.” *Monastery of Christ in the Desert*. Accessed August 23, 2020. <https://christdesert.org/prayer/rule-of-st-benedict/chapter-1-the-kinds-of-monks/>.

¹⁷⁶ Valters Paintner, *Desert Fathers and Mothers*, Christine Valters Paintner PhD, *Desert Fathers and Mothers: Early Christian Wisdom Sayings*. (Stockton: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2012). 25.

¹⁷⁷ RB 1:2.

¹⁷⁸ Peter France, *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude*, (Auckland: Pimlico, 1996), 182.

¹⁷⁹ France, *Hermits*, 188.

And, according to Joan Chittister, from learning the lessons of community living; patience, wisdom and unselfishness, solitude becomes fruit for ourselves and for others.¹⁸⁰

This brings a different perspective on what it means to be Christian community, in that whilst meeting together is important for many, for others it may play a less important role. Indeed, for some it may not mean meeting together at all. Yet hermits are still considered part of the community. That is not to suggest that meeting is not important—and for most of us, it is likely to be psychologically essential. For a few, though, there is a genuine call to a more solitary life that needs to be honoured. The call to solitude, therefore, is an ancient one and is seen throughout the ages in people of different religious traditions and people of none. The two ways of being, the draw towards sociability and the draw towards solitude, have always lived in parallel.¹⁸¹

Indeed, it has been seen that those called to solitude often have particular gifts to offer the wider church and the world, including a depth of insight into the nature of human society.¹⁸² Sometimes, it is those who struggle to fully achieve solitude who provide the world with the most profound insights.¹⁸³ Thomas Merton is an example of someone torn between his call to solitude and his sociable, extroverted nature. He was denied the solitary life for 22 years by his Abbot¹⁸⁴ but, through Merton and others like him, many since have learned the value of contemplative solitude and how it can lead to a life dedicated to the service of others. Monastics and other contemplatives often spend their lives alternating between solitude and social action.

¹⁸⁰ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of St Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*, (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 78.

¹⁸¹ France, *Hermits*, viii.

¹⁸² France, *Hermits*, xiv.

¹⁸³ France, *Hermits*, xv.

¹⁸⁴ France, *Hermits*, xv.

Indeed, for Franciscan Father Richard Rohr, a contemplative life must necessarily lead to action of some kind.¹⁸⁵

And, as we return to psychology for a moment, we note that the 'monk' is a universal archetype; an element of our psychological personality or 'instinct',¹⁸⁶ which is apparent, to a greater or lesser extent, in all of us. As Panikkar points out, "Not everybody can or should enter a monastery, but everyone has a monastic dimension that ought to be cultivated."¹⁸⁷ It seems that the monk within us is one element we would do well to recognise and nurture in our desire for a deeper spiritual life.

To summarise then, for Benedict, spiritual practice based around silence and solitude was entwined within all areas of everyday life. It was not compartmentalised into church attendance. There are some in our modern times living a meaningful and deeply committed Christian life without attending church as we understand it at all. For many of us, spiritual community of some kind will be an important part of our journey, but for others, there is a genuine call to a more solitary spiritual life. Although the call of the true 'hermit' is rare, within each of us is the archetype of 'monk', whereby to a greater or lesser extent, we would all benefit from some intentional times of solitude as part of our spiritual practice to grapple with our inner world.

Institutional church attendance then is just one way, and certainly not the only or indeed the best way of engaging with the Christian life. Church attendance can be deeply beneficial but without self-awareness it can also be damaging. And for some, it is possible to enjoy a rich and meaningful spiritual life without traditional church attendance.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Rohr OFM, "Action and Contemplation Part 1: Our Foundational Commitment." Center for Action and Contemplation. Accessed August 23, 2020, <https://cac.org/our-foundational-commitment-2020-01-015/>.

¹⁸⁶ Later, with increasing experience and on the basis of more reliable knowledge, I recognised them as forms of instinct, as archetypes" Jung, *Dreams, Memories, Reflections*, London, Flamingo 1983, pg 185

¹⁸⁷ Raimundo Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (New York: Seabury Press 1982), 11 in Stuckey *Finding Your Inner Monk*, 74.

Having reflected upon the role of church attendance, the focus on mission by the UCSA will now be explored.

Chapter 3 – The Role of Mission

Over the last 100 years or more, there has been a major shift in missional culture in the West. Kirsteen Kim notes this by comparing the differences between two Edinburgh World Missionary Conferences, the first in 1910, the second in 2010. The first mission had a ‘Kingdom’ focus; its ‘home’ was in the West, and it focussed on Christianising non-Western nations, assuming the racial superiority of the West.¹⁸⁸ By 2010, the conference had shifted to a ‘Spirit’ focus and, with the *missio Dei* as its underlying theology, had a more unassuming nature. It no longer recognised Christianity as God’s final means of revelation, but as one of many faiths, with the church sensitive to its need to respect and work with other traditions instead of dominating them.¹⁸⁹

In the 18th and 19th centuries, mission was concerned with converting non-Christian nations overseas to Western Christianity. Today, however, there are more Christians in the non-Western world than there are in the West.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the mission of the UCSA is now largely focussed within South Australia and much less overseas.

Tensions within Christian Theology

As the focus of mission has shifted so, too, has Christian theology.¹⁹¹ Many beliefs previously considered fundamental to the Christian faith are now questioned, causing tension within the church.¹⁹² Today, as church decline continues, some feel we are possibly emerging from a Constantinian form of church,¹⁹³ and will, therefore, no longer have the favour of the state.¹⁹⁴ This may result in the church following in the steps of emergent Christians by questioning the

¹⁸⁸ Kirsteen Kim “Edinburgh 1910 to 2010: From Kingdom to Spirit in “Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, 2010, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Kim, *Edinburgh 1910 to 2010*, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God; Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006, 43.

¹⁹¹ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 209.

¹⁹² See the Literature Review and the major shift in theology as mentioned by Marcus Borg.

¹⁹³ Email conversation with Gary Stuckey, October 10, 2020 and Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 161.

¹⁹⁴ Noting that within Australia Christianity has never been the ‘state religion’ as has been the case within other Western countries.

foundational assumptions of Christian faith and doctrine, many of which became codified from the time of Constantine.¹⁹⁵ Phyllis Tickle explains that Christianity has gone through significant theological shifts over the centuries. And those adhering to traditional Christianity tend to see any shift as a threat; thus, they react to and resist change by attempting to re-exert their authority.¹⁹⁶ This reaction is not necessarily a bad thing, says Tickle, because it serves as 'ballast' in rough seas, and enables paradigm shifts to succeed by preventing them from happening too fast.¹⁹⁷

Bouma explains that in sociological terms, these attempts at re-exertion of authority by declining religious groups often involve them becoming noisy and demanding as they assert themselves as divinely elected and the sole foundation of what is good and wholesome within society.¹⁹⁸ Usually, says Bouma, they have an agenda, whereby certain areas of or groups within society are loudly criticised as contrary to their religious views. Examples include opposition to same-sex marriage, abortion, euthanasia, or gambling.¹⁹⁹ These sociological tendencies must be kept in mind when considering mission as it is currently expressed within the UCSA.

The Appropriateness of Ensuring Church Survival

As already discussed, church mission today has become focussed on home territory within Australia, and much of it relates to reversing the decline in church attendance. However, before we consider the UCSA's specific theologies of mission, let us reflect upon whether it is, in fact, appropriate for the UCSA to be concerned with church decline as part of its mission.

It is the author's own experience that within church congregations, the majority says that everything must be done to reverse church decline and ensure survival. This is evidenced by the

¹⁹⁵ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 161-162.

¹⁹⁶ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 136.

¹⁹⁷ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 138-139.

¹⁹⁸ Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 28-29.

¹⁹⁹ Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 28-29.

recent responses to the UCSA’s strategic planning survey, whereby the opinion of nearly 66% of respondents was that the majority of the UC Synod’s financial resources should be dedicated to “resourcing the mission of the church”²⁰⁰, and its primary objective “supporting the regeneration of the church”.²⁰¹ Institutionally speaking, this is reasonable as the church is responsible for offering its congregations worship services. It is also responsible for its employees and others within its care. In effect, the modern institutional church is a business,²⁰² and it is simply part of the church’s duty of care to try as best it can to sustain itself for the sake of its employees and its mission. In this sense, ensuring church survival is important; admirable even. As Richard Rohr points out, it is crucial to recognise that these business principles and institutional requirements are necessary for enabling the church as an ego-oriented organisation to function well and with integrity. However, says Rohr, it is necessary to see the difference between the needs of the ego – the part of our personality that thrives on structure and rules and is essential in our earlier years for healthy psychological growth – and the deeper needs of the soul that lie beneath the ego, requiring a ‘Gospel’ freshness that lies beyond the structures of religion.²⁰³ It is equally part of the institutional church’s duty of care to admit when its course has run and to manage this as sensitively as possible.

²⁰⁰ Uniting Church of South Australia Synod, *Strategic Plan Survey*, 6.

²⁰¹ Uniting Church of South Australia Synod, *Strategic Plan Survey*, 20.

²⁰² Whilst we might balk at the idea of the Uniting Church in South Australia being a business, one only need look at the nature of the Uniting Church in South Australia’s current Leadership training to see the reality of its business-oriented workings, “Christian Leadership focuses on leadership styles, and explores strategic planning, putting plans into action and methods of evaluation. Leadership and Organisational Culture examines leadership in volunteer-intensive, non-profit organisations, such as churches. It provides strategies in developing and maintaining working relationships and emotionally healthy organisations. Advanced Christian Leadership focuses on change management, and how to lead, motivate and manage change in complex organisations” “Uniting Leaders Plus.” *unitingcollege.edu.au*. Accessed September 21st, 2020. <https://unitingcollege.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Uniting-Leaders-Plus-1-1.pdf>.

²⁰³ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward; A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 137-138.

The question arises, then, has the institution of the church, including the Uniting Church lost something in its efforts to endure? Bosch says that one of the failings of the early church was that it ceased to be a movement and instead became an institution.²⁰⁴ This was viewed by some as a blow to the integrity of the church, leading to a self-serving, overly wealthy and decadent church that grew to have less and less in common with the early New Testament church that preceded it.²⁰⁵ Tickle also points out that to become an institution, and thus socially and culturally acceptable, is potentially one of the most destructive things that can happen to a faith.²⁰⁶

Indeed, it was the perceived downturn in the morality of the 4th-century church, institutionalised through Constantine, that saw the fledgling Christian monastic movement expand. Some removed themselves from society to become the desert mothers and fathers, retreating into the deserts of Syria, Palestine and Egypt in search of a deeper, more authentic Christianity²⁰⁷ which foresaw the emergence of Christian cenobitic (communal) monasticism. This has existed on the fringes of the institutional church throughout history, representing, according to sixth century monk John Cassian, one form of New Testament church.²⁰⁸

Bosch admits, however, that it is a sociological law that for a movement to survive long term it must become institutionalised. Failure to do so means that the movement will, in time, necessarily disintegrate.²⁰⁹ Ironically, however, there is a cost attached to this survival; the

²⁰⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 50.

²⁰⁵ "Once Christianity became legal, those who retreated to the desert were part of what was called "white martyrdom" – a movement in conscious resistance to the co-opting of Christian values as a way to hold up a power system" Valters Paintner PhD, *Desert Fathers and Mothers*, xv

²⁰⁶ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 161.

²⁰⁷ Valters Paintner, *Desert Fathers and Mothers*, xv.

²⁰⁸ "The cenobitic life took its rise at the time of the apostolic preaching. It was all there in that crowd of believers at Jerusalem, as described thus in the Acts of the Apostles: 'There was one heart and one mind among the crowd of believers, nor did anyone claim as his own whatever it was that he possessed, but all things were held in common among them (Acts 4:32).'" Cassian *The Conferences*, Translated by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 18:5.

²⁰⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 52.

movement will likely lose much of what made it so compelling in the first place.²¹⁰ The longevity of the institutionalised church requires business structures, codes of conduct, and regulations the presence of these may well dilute its spiritual vitality and effectiveness.

Ultimately then, the church is in a potentially irreconcilable position. As an *institution*, it has a responsibility to try to survive for the sake of those who rely upon it. In doing so, however, it potentially undermines its own integrity. As a *church*, the decline in church attendance could be a signal that institutional church death is imminent. Perhaps it should be accepted as a necessary road towards new life as per the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This we will discuss in more detail later.

In light of this, let us now consider mission in the context of the UCSA, and its two current missiological perspectives, noting that there is some overlap between the two. The first is the *missio Dei*, which is, on the whole, the missional theology that undergirds the Uniting Church's 2009/2010 explorations into Fresh Expressions of church and continues to be the primary theological focus today. The second is the 'Great Commission', the missional focus adopted by the Generate 2021 Project and more recently by the Uniting Church's Generate Presbytery.²¹¹

The Missio Dei

Simply put, the *missio Dei* as a theology asserts that mission is not something the church does, but something God does *through* the church because mission originates from the very nature of God. God is a missionary God, and thus the church's mission is a necessary extension and result of God the Father sending the Son, who sends the Holy Spirit, who sends the church out into the world.²¹² It is the church's participation in the spreading of God's love.²¹³ As

²¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 53.

²¹¹ Generate Presbytery "Generate Presbytery" <https://generate.ucasa.org.au/>.

²¹² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

²¹³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

theology, the *missio Dei* is a relatively new idea. It was originally conceptualised by Karl Barth during an address at the Brandenburg Mission Conference in 1932²¹⁴ and became more fully articulated by Karl Hartenstein.²¹⁵ Barth linked the mission of the church with the actions of the Triune God for the first time.²¹⁶ As a communal venture that theology brings under the judgment and direction of God,²¹⁷ Barth places the task of mission squarely at the feet of the church²¹⁸ but does not define at this time what he means by 'church'. Clarification subsequently comes during the Tambaram meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1938, where it is stated: "The Church is the Body of Christ and the blessed company of all faithful people, whether in heaven or on earth, the communion of saints."²¹⁹ We learn that this means the *institutional* church because being a Christian "demands"²²⁰ engagement with and participation in "one of those concrete bodies in which and through which the Universal Church of Christ, the world-wide company of His followers, is seeking to find expression."²²¹ Further, according to the International Missionary Council, it is *only* through the institutional 'Church' that the Gospel is transmitted to all people and creatures through the generations.²²² It is to be rooted within the local church or congregation;²²³ a sentiment famously echoed years later by Bill Hybels who said, "The local church is the hope of the world". According to the *missio Dei*, then, the institutional church is necessary for 'God's mission'.

²¹⁴ Michael W Stroope, *Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition* (London: Apollos, 2017), 16.

²¹⁵ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 16

²¹⁶ "Must not the most faithful, the most convinced missionary think seriously about the fact that the concept of 'missio' in the ancient church was a term from the doctrine of the Trinity, the designation of the divine self sending, the sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit into the world?" Karl Barth, *Theology and Mission in the Present Situation 1932* (currently unpublished), 13.

²¹⁷ Karl Barth, *Theology and Mission in the Present Situation 1932*, 4.

²¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Theology and Mission in the Present Situation 1932*, 1.

²¹⁹ International Missionary Council. *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram*, (London: International Missionary Council, 1938), 26

²²⁰ International Missionary Council 1938, 28.

²²¹ International Missionary Council 1938, 28.

²²² International Missionary Council 1938, 31.

²²³ International Missionary Council 1938, 31.

Over the next twenty years, the *missio Dei* began to develop, arguably beyond Barth's original intentions,²²⁴ and was more fully articulated during the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952,²²⁵ albeit without the phrase *missio Dei* at this point. By the end of 1965, which saw the publication of Georg Vicedem's book *The Mission of God* and the meeting of the Second Vatican Council,²²⁶ the *missio Dei* was embraced by most Christian groups and denominations, including Protestants, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and some within the Roman Catholic Church.²²⁷ By the early twenty-first century, it was also adopted by the UCSA within its Basis of Union.

As Christendom crumbled under heavy societal criticism, so both Newbigin and Flett tell us, the church began to reframe its theology of mission to be "of the whole people of God to the whole world"²²⁸. Hence, the *missio Dei* motif was originally developed for three reasons. Firstly, it was intended to distance the church from colonialism, whilst justifying the act of mission itself.²²⁹ Secondly, by defining mission as something a missionary God does through the church²³⁰, it aimed to free the church from 'ecclesiocentrism'; the belief that mission is something the church chooses to do in order to expand.²³¹ Thirdly, it was designed to "prevent the Church from becoming secularised."²³²

Yet, as the theology of *missio Dei* expanded, so too did God's perceived concerns. By the 1970s, God's focus through the *missio Dei* grew to include ecology and the damage we are

²²⁴ John G Flett. *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2010), 11-12.

²²⁵ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 16.

²²⁶ C J Niemandt, "Together Towards New Life for Missiology? Mission and Missiology in the Light of the World Council of Churches 2013 Policy Statement", 2015, in *Acta Theologica* 35, no. 2 (October 2016): 86.

²²⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390-391.

²²⁸ Newbigin, *Trinitarian Faith and Today's Mission*, 12 & Flett, *The Witness of God*, 4-5.

²²⁹ Flett, *The Witness of God*, 4-5.

²³⁰ Flett, *The Witness of God*, 4-5.

²³¹ "The church sends the church's missionaries to accomplish the church's mission, which is the expansion of the church and, implicitly, the achievement of the church's agenda" Greg McKinzie, "An Abbreviated Introduction to the Concept of Missio Dei," *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 1. Accessed August 29, 2020. <http://missiodeijournal.com/issues/md-1/authors/md-1-mckinzie>.

²³² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

causing our world,²³³ which was a development somewhat contrary to the original concept of the *missio Dei* of both Barth and Hartenstein.²³⁴ Over the years, it shifted even further to include God's love, care and redemptive actions towards all people and the whole of creation.²³⁵ However, this wider view of the *missio Dei* meant that it became too radical for some, with its reach larger than even the church's mission, sometimes to the point of excluding the church altogether.²³⁶ Indeed, the *missio Dei* became so flexible that it was "capable of accommodating an ever-expanding range of meanings"²³⁷. For this reason, it fell out of favour in the early 1970s to the late 1980s²³⁸.

However, since the late 1990s, the *missio Dei* has received a resurgence of interest, leading it back to its original roots whereby mission is "God's mission" via the church.²³⁹ What is noteworthy is how this recent interest aligns with the church's increased concern about its own decline.²⁴⁰ Therefore, some literature suggests that whilst church growth may not be the aim of the *missio Dei* endeavour, implicit within it is the hope that by reorienting the church's mission from bringing people into the church to sending the church out into the world (which should

²³³ InterAction Council 1990. Ecology and the Global Economy: High Level Expert Group Meeting 10-11 February 1990. Accessed 28th February 2021. <https://www.interactioncouncil.org/publications/ecology-and-global-economy>.

²³⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 392.

²³⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 391.

²³⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 392.

²³⁷ Flett, *The Witness of God*: 5.

²³⁸ Dana L Robert, "Forty Years of Mission or North American Missiology: A Brief Review" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38, no. 1 (January 2014), 3-8.

²³⁹ Flett, *The Witness of God*, 291.

²⁴⁰ The resurgence of interest in the *missio Dei* dates from around the late 1990s and continues. C. J. Niemandt. "Trends in Missional Ecclesiology" 2, *HTS Teologiese* 68 no. 1 (June 2012): 2. 68 no.1. The 1990s was the UK's Decade of Evangelism. Leslie, J Francis and Carol Roberts. "Growth or Decline in the Church of England during the Decade of Evangelism: Did the Churchmanship of the Bishop Matter?" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 24, no 1 (January 2009): 67. The Decade of Evangelism was then followed by the Fresh Expressions movement beginning in 2004. Fresh Expressions. "About". Accessed October, 11, 2020. <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/about>. The UCSA then hoped to translate for the Australian Context around 2010. Stoner, *Fresh Directions*.

take into account ‘cultural context’²⁴¹), church renewal²⁴² and, thus, church growth will result.²⁴³ In doing so, however, the *missio Dei* falls prey to precisely the ‘ecclesiocentrism’ it was intended to prevent.

Missio Dei and Projection

Furthermore, through this link between the *missio Dei* and the desire for church growth, there exists the possibility of projection. Projection is a very normal human tendency and is what happens, according to Jung, when we are unaware of ourselves. Rather than consciously acknowledge what lies within us, such as personality traits, views or opinions, we blindly and instinctively externalise them and ‘project’ them onto someone else or a group of people.²⁴⁴ If the institutional church’s concern for its decline is viewed in this light, it is possible that both individually and collectively, the church has projected its desire to survive onto God. For example, Jungian analyst Howard W Tyas tells us that we often unconsciously furnish God with feelings, attributes, thoughts and aspirations that, in reality, represent our own.²⁴⁵ As projection itself is neutral,²⁴⁶ these projections can be positive or negative. Thus, we believe our desires or prejudices to be of divine origin. Indeed, as Tyas tells us, many positive or negative things have been achieved as the result of projection.²⁴⁷

Projection is possible within the *missio Dei* theology for two reasons. Firstly, in the “finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in”²⁴⁸, it is all too easy to project into this our

²⁴¹ Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 7

²⁴² Niemandt, *Together Towards New Life for Missiology*, 96-98

²⁴³ Murray Olson, “Listening to God and the *missio Dei*” (Master’s Thesis., University of Divinity, 2016), 2, 6 & 7

²⁴⁴ C G Jung, “The Philosophical Tree”, in *Collected Works of C G Jung: Volume 13* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1945), 297.

²⁴⁵ Howard Tyas Jr “*All of Life is a Projection*” Lecture Notes, September 13, 2002.

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:BJwB24nBtklJ:www.jungiananalyticpraxis.com/uploads/2/1/2/4/21249684/all_of_life_is_projection_-_lecture.doc+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au

²⁴⁶ Tyas, *All of Life is a Projection*, 5.

²⁴⁷ Tyas, *All of Life is a Projection*, 5.

²⁴⁸ Niemandt, *Trends in Missional Ecclesiology*, 2.

own current missional priorities,²⁴⁹ assigning them divine approval.²⁵⁰ Secondly, the Uniting Church's desire to survive, whilst understandable in an institutional sense, may be a projection if we assume God desires that the church survives. Consider the statement "God is mission"²⁵¹, and that the *missio Dei* as theology says that the institutional church is God's essential vehicle for mission. At a time when society is losing interest in the church, the *missio Dei* theology may be, in part at least, an unconscious attempt to recruit God into proving that the institutional church is essential. In reality however, there is no evidence that God is opposed to the institutional church's decline or requires that we save it.

Further, although Flett warns of the dangers of using the *missio Dei* to stem church decline,²⁵² the theology of *missio Dei* seems to rely so heavily on the church as to suggest that without it God would struggle to function.²⁵³ Of course, the evidence shows this is simply not true. Kirsteen Kim points out that the work of the Holy Spirit is far wider than and cannot be limited to the institutional church.²⁵⁴ Within Australia, sociological data suggests that God is functioning very well both inside and outside the church; within nature, in little pockets of Christianity, other faiths, and spiritual communities that are forming and flourishing, many with no reference to institutional church at all.²⁵⁵

This thesis is not suggesting that God is not within the UCSA and its mission; there have been and continue to be wonderful things accomplished through and by the church. Rather, it is pointing out that the institutional church is but one of many vehicles through which God has

²⁴⁹ Not to mention that by doing this we are suggesting that the Holy Spirit works in some places and not in others.

²⁵⁰ "The stamp of *missio Dei* becomes certainty and proof of divine approval" Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 18.

²⁵¹ Bevans, S. & Schroeder, R. 2004. Constants in context: A theology for mission today. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. In 86 Niemandt, *Together Towards New Life for Missiology?* 86.

²⁵² Flett, *The Witness of God*, 287.

²⁵³ Darryl Guder, "Missio Dei: Integrating Theological Formation for Apostolic Vocation," (Presidential Address in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXVII, no. 1, (January 2009): 64.

²⁵⁴ Kim, *Edinburgh 1910 to 2010*, 16.

²⁵⁵ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 98 & Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 5.

expression. The simple reality is that what it means to be religious and spiritual is changing, and increasingly people are noticing and finding their spiritual nourishment outside of the institutional church.²⁵⁶ What the church tends to dismiss as ‘secularism’ is perhaps the result of people becoming spiritually better educated and more discerning about where and how to grow their spiritual lives. The institutional church no longer has a monopoly on supporting peoples’ faith journeys,²⁵⁷ and perhaps God is just fine with that.

The Great Commission

Let us now turn to the UCSA’s other missiological focus; the invocation of the Great Commission through the Generate 2021 project and latterly, the Generate Presbytery. The Great Commission refers to Jesus’ instruction to his disciples that they make disciples of all nations. Variations on this appear in all four Gospels and in Acts,²⁵⁸ the most familiar passage of which is Matthew 28:19-29. The Great Commission, whilst controversial,²⁵⁹ is often seen by Christians to encapsulate what we, through Jesus, have been commanded to do and is fundamental to many Christians’ faith. As such, the phrase is interpreted to mean spreading the Christian message and converting others to Christianity.²⁶⁰ As explained in the section on the theology behind the church’s response to institutional decline, it is the Generate Presbytery’s primary objective to “vigorously pursue the great commission”²⁶¹, which is interpreted to mean growing leaders and

²⁵⁶ Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 27-28.

²⁵⁷ Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 116.

²⁵⁸ Matthew 28:19-29, Mark 16:15, Luke: 24:44-49, John 17:20-23, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:8

²⁵⁹ “Converting others to Christianity raises a fundamental question about whether religious diversity is a reality to be celebrated or an obstacle to be overcome. Given the complex history of missionary activity, the meaning of the Great Commission will continue to be a subject of debate as Christianity confronts a rapidly changing world” Mathew Schmalz, “What is the Great Commission and why is it so controversial?” *theconversation.com*. Accessed April 18, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-great-commission-and-why-is-it-so-controversial-111138>.

²⁶⁰ Schmalz, “What is the Great Commission and why is it so controversial?”

²⁶¹ “Generate Presbytery”.

discipling them so that others will be converted to Christianity. The result of this is hoped to be the renewal of dying churches and the growth of new ones.²⁶²

Compared to the *missio Dei*, the Great Commission is a relatively old idea, but perhaps not as old as one might expect. It was first used as the primary motivational text for mission as recently as 1792, at the time of Christian missionary William Carey.²⁶³ Thus, interpreting ‘making disciples’ to mean ‘converting non-believers to Christianity’ is relatively modern. Whilst the missionary endeavours of Carey and others like him had some positives,²⁶⁴ ‘making disciples’ was mainly based around the colonial assumption that the gospel required the conversion of non-Western nations away from their own ‘inferior’ indigenous religions and beliefs, to the superior Western form of Christianity. This fact is evidenced within Carey’s work: *An enquiry into the Obligation by Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*.²⁶⁵ From a modern sociological perspective, it arrogantly assumed that Western Christianity is superior to all other religions and ways of being. Interestingly, whilst the Great Commission was initially advocated within the early development of the theology of the *missio Dei*,²⁶⁶ that missiological movement largely accepted the critique of colonialism. The theology of the *missio Dei* is now seen as ‘post-

²⁶² “Generate Presbytery”.

²⁶³ Mortimer Arias and Alan Johnson. *The Great Commission: Biblical Models for Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 16.

& Carey, *An Enquiry*, 8-9

²⁶⁴ His social work extended beyond education to urge the government to outlaw such practices as infanticide and suttee (in which Hindu widows immolated themselves on their husbands’ funeral pyres). He also encouraged the use of Indians as missionaries and led in the formation of the Agricultural Society of India in 1820. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica William Carey: British Missionary. Accessed July 16, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Carey>

²⁶⁵ Carey, *An Enquiry*, 63

²⁶⁶ Within the Tambaram International Council of Mission document of 1938 for example. *International Missionary Council*, 31.

colonial'.²⁶⁷ Therefore, many today are wary of the Great Commission because of its association with colonialism.²⁶⁸

As we explore the Great Commission more deeply, it may be surprising to discover that the term 'Great Commission', which is used as a chapter heading in some Bibles and is often used as the justification for mission by Evangelical Christians, is not a Biblical term at all. In fact, it is a parenthesis which was first placed into the King James version in the 17th century as an editorial addition and later added to the more modern New International Version in the 1970s.²⁶⁹

Roberts tells us that this editorial addition is somewhat misleading. By failing to put these words into the context of the whole of Jesus' life and mission, it implies something that was perhaps not intended; that what Jesus is saying at this point is particularly special and more important than other texts. Roberts goes on to say that if we needed to give a heading to this passage at all, it might be better to refer to it as something like the 'Last' or the 'Final' Commission.²⁷⁰

Where the term originally came from is debatable. Some scholars say the phrase was coined in the 17th century by the Lutheran nobleman and missionary Baron Justinian von Welz, who argued that it was not just Jesus' disciples who were required to 'make disciples' but every Christian²⁷¹. Thus, he began the Jesus-Loving Society to "propagate the evangelical truth in foreign lands."²⁷² William Carey makes the same assertion.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Mark Love. "Missio Dei, Trinitarian Theology, and the Question for a Post-Colonial Missiology." *In missiodeijournal.com*. Accessed August 29, 2020. <http://missiodeijournal.com/issues/md-1/authors/md-1/love>. 2010.

²⁶⁸ Darren Cronshaw, 2016. "A Commission 'Great' for Whom? Postcolonial Contrapuntal Readings of Matthew 28:18-20 and the Irony of William Carey." *Transformation* 33, no.2 (April 2016): 110.

²⁶⁹ Arias and Johnson, *The Great Commission*, 16.

²⁷⁰ Arias and Johnson, *The Great Commission*, 16.

²⁷¹ Schmalz, "What is the Great Commission"

²⁷² Stroope, *Transcending Mission*.

²⁷³ Carey, *An Enquiry*, 7-8.

The Appropriateness of the Great Commission as Missional Theology

Arias and Johnson tell us that care must be taken when using this particular passage in Matthew, to do so within the context it was intended.²⁷⁴ Without reference to the culture within which the text belongs,²⁷⁵ it can easily promote our own ideas. To the New Testament community for which the original text was written, we're told that 'making disciples', though evangelism is implied, is more about education.²⁷⁶ As monastic, Sister Miriam, tells us, the disciples were sent while apprentices themselves, to teach others; to be incarnate, to learn, embody and follow in Jesus' footsteps.²⁷⁷ Bosch tells us that in the context of Matthew's writings, it was not the intention to imply that making disciples is simply about expanding the size of church congregations.²⁷⁸ To interpret it this way diminishes it to a slogan that can potentially be used as an excuse to promote, however unconsciously, our pre-decided ideas of what this means, ultimately doing violence to the text.²⁷⁹

The UCSA's Generate Presbytery uses the Great Commission as a Biblical justification for increasing the size of its churches through conversion growth. Bosch tells us, however, that to understand it in this way is new. New Testament scholarship only began to pay any attention to interpreting it in the 1940s, and since then attention to it has increased significantly.²⁸⁰ Interestingly, this is just when the decline in church attendance is beginning to become an issue.

²⁷⁴ Arias and Johnson, *The Great Commission*, 16-17.

²⁷⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 57.

²⁷⁶ Arias and Johnson, *The Great Commission*, 19.

²⁷⁷ Sr Miriam "A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to St Matthew 28:16-20." Community of the Transfiguration, Teesdale, Unpublished.

²⁷⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 82.

²⁷⁹ Bosch, *Transformation Mission*, 57.

²⁸⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 56.

From Colonialism to Americanisation

Kirsteen Kim makes another important observation. Whilst there has been a shift away from European colonialism during the twentieth century, Kim tells us there has also been a shift towards globalisation,²⁸¹ “the movement of capital, ideas and people around the world”.²⁸² She points out, however, that globalisation may more accurately be referred to as ‘Americanisation’.²⁸³ This missional shift of the church towards American culture is no new observation. Bosch tells us it was noted as far back as the 1970s by Rosin,²⁸⁴ who calls the *missio Dei* movement a “Trojan horse through which the (unassimilated) ‘American’ vision was fetched into the well-guarded walls of the ecumenical theology of mission”.²⁸⁵ Clearly, American influence has been developing for a while.

Kim warns us that this shift from the domination system of European colonialism may easily result in a less-obvious domination, not achieved by military intervention or physical occupation, but through the Americanised influence of media, consumer goods, the entertainment industry and the internet.²⁸⁶ Within the UCSA, this shift away from UK-oriented Christianity that influenced Australia for so long, and underpinned the Fresh Expressions of church, has been noticeable over the last ten years.²⁸⁷ American voices such as Tom Bandy, Diana Butler-Bass and Tim Keller have been advocated by the UCSA Synod since 2004. In the same period the UCSA Synod actively promoted the Willow Creek “Global Leadership Summit”.²⁸⁸ The American influence also appears in the newly adopted church planting focus, firstly through the Generate 2021 Project and now the Generate Presbytery. Whilst some of the material and networks are

²⁸¹ Kim, *Edinburgh 1910 to 2010*, 17.

²⁸² Bouma, *Faithful in Diversity*, 4.

²⁸³ Kim, *Edinburgh 1910 to 2010*, 17.

²⁸⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

²⁸⁵ H H Rosin, *Missio Dei: An Examination of the Origin, Contents and Function of the Term in Protestant Missiological Discussion*. In Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 392.

²⁸⁶ Kim, *Edinburgh 1910 to 2010*, 17.

²⁸⁷ Stoner, *Fresh Directions*, 5.

²⁸⁸ Comment from Andrew Dutney, November 23, 2020.

Australian,²⁸⁹ much that is seen as primary for church planting is written or heavily influenced by white American men.²⁹⁰ And thus, the Uniting Church's missiological conversation is developing a distinctly American and male accent as is much of modern Christianity within Australia. Hillsong is perhaps the most obvious example of an Australian church that has directly taken the American mega-church model as its basis.²⁹¹

The Dangers of Missional Theology

For now, however, it seems that the UCSA is in danger in two ways. Firstly, there exists this rising tendency towards an American form of Christianity rather than developing a deeper sense of Australian spirituality. Secondly, and more insidiously, the church has proven difficulty in shifting centuries-old and deeply imbedded inclinations towards white male power and dominance. This issue has been propagated by Christian theologians spanning right back to the earliest centuries of Christian faith, resulting in generations of subjugation of both women and people of colour.²⁹² Of course, there is usually the tendency to believe highly of ourselves and consider we have outgrown this kind of behaviour. Yet, it was hardly more than a generation ago that the church in Australia was, as Denise Champion tells us, subjugating and controlling Aboriginal people by telling them they could only enter the church if they left their culture outside. Aboriginal mothers obeyed because they knew that church attendance was the only way they could ensure they were able to feed their children.²⁹³ The UCSA needs to take very great care that it does not fall back into centuries-old habits of enculturated white-male dominated behaviours.

²⁸⁹ The church planting network Geneva Push is one such Australian example. www.genevapush.com

²⁹⁰ E-mail conversation with Graeme Humphris, July 7, 2020.

²⁹¹ Geoffrey Robinson, "Why the Australian Christian Right has Weak Political Appeal," *The Conversation*, April 13, 2018. <https://theconversation.com/why-the-australian-christian-right-has-weak-political-appeal-93735>.

²⁹² Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives*, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (2014): 86.

²⁹³ Denise Champion, *Yarta Wandatha*, (Salisbury: Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, 2014), 17.

The Struggle for Identity

Perhaps then, this swing from European to American influence is a sign of the UCSA's struggle with its own identity. It is possible that the Uniting Church is being invited to find its own uniquely Australian Christian identity, relying less on external influences. For 50,000 years, true Australian culture has been Aboriginal. To avoid the Western tendency to assimilate through domination, perhaps the UCSA should follow its heart. Now might be the time to embrace the spiritual heritage of the Aboriginal peoples fully within its understanding of Christianity, through the already established Uniting Aboriginal Congress and its 1994 Covenant commitment to walk in solidarity with Australia's First People²⁹⁴. Indeed the UCSA is currently seeking to do this through the introduction of an Aboriginal Theologian in Residence at the Uniting College in 2021.²⁹⁵ Moreover, there is further opportunity to enrich what the Uniting Church is already doing through its CALD Ministry and honour the culturally and linguistically diverse nationalities that now comprise around half of modern Australian communities.²⁹⁶ This could be enhanced by some well-balanced education within the church regarding non-Christian faiths to deepen respect of religious diversity, and to counteract Australia's lack of this kind of religious education within its schools.²⁹⁷

Admirably, the Generate Presbytery hopes to work with indigenous and multicultural Australia in the future.²⁹⁸ However, it needs to take care that this push towards increasing church attendance through church planting and conversion growth is not a subtle archetypal and sociological reaction to the reality that the once white-male-dominated Western church has

²⁹⁴ Uniting Church in Australia: Assembly. "The 25th Anniversary of the Covenant". July 04, 2019. <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/3035-the-25th-anniversary-of-the-covenant>

²⁹⁵ Communication with Andrew Dutney. February 23, 2021.

²⁹⁶ The Uniting Church in Australia: Synod of South Australia "Australian Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Ministry: About CALD Ministry". Accessed March 2, 2021. <https://sa.uca.org.au/cald/>

²⁹⁷ Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 70

²⁹⁸ "There are many opportunities within the multicultural context and Congress but these have not at this stage been our focus". E-mail Conversation with Graeme Humphris, July 2020.

lost its control. This is particularly important given the General Assembly's undercurrent opposition to same-sex marriage, cited earlier by Bouma as one of the areas minority religious groups tend to object to when their authority is under threat. Further, church planting is notoriously male dominated²⁹⁹ and, psychologically speaking, the United Methodist Church would do well to ask why.

The Forgotten Role of Myth, Symbol and Fairy-tale

According to Jung, humanity has an enculturated and collective propensity towards generationally learned patterns of behaviour. This, says Jung, becomes manifest through the *collective unconscious*; the part of us that is unconsciously connected and subject to the influences of our collective histories.³⁰⁰ It is different from the personal unconscious, which is data that was once conscious to the individual but has been suppressed. The collective unconscious contains data that has never been conscious to the individual, but is consistent, to a greater or lesser extent, within all of us and is expressed as collective societal behaviours through archetypes.³⁰¹ Archetypes are universal behaviour patterns traditionally represented within religion, ancient myth and fairy-tale, which tell us "...the nature of the soul."³⁰² Jung tells us that because contemporary culture has lost its ability to express its collective inner life through these external symbols over the generations, it has ceased to understand that it is through them that society understands itself. Indeed, the very purpose of these symbols is to represent what happens psychically within each of us.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Sarah Swartzentruber, "7 Words of Wisdom for Female Church Planters," CBE International. December 13, 2018. <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/mutuality-blog-magazine/7-words-wisdom-women-church-planters>.

³⁰⁰ Carl Gustav Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious." In *Collected Works of C G Jung: Volume 9 Part 1* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 42.

³⁰¹ Jung, *Concept of the Collective Unconscious*, 42.

³⁰² Carl Gustav Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious." In *Collected Works Part 9* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 5.

³⁰³ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 7.

Similarly, Mackay picks up on our modern-day devaluation of symbols represented by myth which, though perhaps not literally true, have important truths to teach us. Sadly, the word 'myth' now tends to signify something that is not true, a deliberate lie or a misrepresentation.³⁰⁴ For Jung, however, these symbols represented by religions, myths and fairy-tales suggest a deeper meaning beyond the obvious, which cannot be fully explained or defined and lies beyond reason.³⁰⁵ He goes on to say that as we have lost our ability to see the purpose of symbol as a way of understanding our inner functioning, our modern culture has developed a tendency towards corporate neurosis,³⁰⁶ which has necessitated the rise of modern psychology to counteract it.³⁰⁷

For Jung, this collective neurosis is demonstrated in our propensity to repeat history by corporately falling prey to the same tricks employed by previous generations of corporate archetypes. "There is no lunacy people under the domination of an archetype will not fall a prey to"³⁰⁸ so Jung tells us. It would seem then that archetypal behaviour can lead us to irrationality. As an extreme example, Jung demonstrates how the persecution and extermination of the Jewish people exercised both within Christian and medieval history was repeated dramatically within the Nazi Germany of World War Two.³⁰⁹ Thus, when a situation occurs; for example, the historical tendency for Western white male dominance, the archetype may be activated, and a group of white males may behave corporately in a compulsive and instinctive way.³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ Mackay, *Beyond Belief*, 29

³⁰⁵ Carl Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, (London: Aldus Books Ltd, 1978), 4

³⁰⁶ Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, 5

³⁰⁷ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 7

³⁰⁸ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 48

³⁰⁹ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 848

³¹⁰ Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 848

Jung asserts that the Protestant Church is a significant example of an institution that has largely forgotten how to understand its myths and religious life symbolically³¹¹ and, instead, has insisted on rigid belief rather than learning and growing through the message of symbols.³¹² For example, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, so Rolheiser tells us, is symbolic of the road to personal inner transformation,³¹³ and yet we tend to be more concerned with whether it is literally true.

If Jung is correct, at a time when the traditionally white male-dominated Western church is under threat through church decline, it is possible that a group of seemingly liberated and enlightened white Christian males may succumb to archetypal behaviour by vying for dominance and control, albeit at an entirely unconscious and seemingly benevolent level. Equally, women may unconsciously take traditional subordinated support roles, and people of colour may be wary of leadership roles. What makes this dynamic more potent is that because we are so used to entirely normal and respectable people exercising this domination, it easily escapes our notice until much damage is done and we find ourselves wondering how it happened.³¹⁴

³¹¹ For example, the mysteries of the Virgin Birth, the Trinity and the interconnected sameness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are no longer seen symbolically. Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 8.

³¹² Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 8.

³¹³ The life, death and resurrection of Jesus symbolises "how we, after undergoing some kind of death, receive new life and new spirit" Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 1998), 145

³¹⁴ "Look at the incredible savagery going on in our so-called civilized world, all of which is derived from human beings and their mental condition! Look at the devilish means of destruction! They are invented by perfectly harmless gentlemen, reasonable, respectable citizens being all we hope to be. And when the whole thing blows up and causes an indescribable inferno of devastation, nobody seems to be responsible. It simply occurs, and yet it is all man made". But since every person is blindly convinced that he is nothing but his modest and unimportant consciousness, which neatly fulfils duties and earns a moderate living, nobody is aware that this rationally organized crowd, called a state or a nation, is run by a seemingly impersonal, imperceptibly terrific power, checked by nobody and by nothing. This ghastly power is mostly explained by fear of the neighboring nation which is supposed to be possessed by a malevolent devil. As nobody is capable of recognising how much he himself is possessed and unconscious, one simply projects one's own condition upon the neighbor, and thus it becomes a sacred duty to have the biggest guns and the most poisonous gas" Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, (Binghamton: The Vail-Bailou Press, 1938), 60.

As we consider the church's need for self-knowledge advocated by Jung, let us turn to mission as it is understood within Benedictine monasticism.

Monks, Monos and Mission

In contrast to both the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission, monastic mission is counterintuitive. It works because traditional monastics do not concern themselves with mission as we understand it but instead focus attention on God and the spiritual practices which foster their relationship with God. The mission of monastic life, then, is God.

The root of both the words monk and monastic come from the Greek words 'monachos' or 'monos' which means 'only' or 'alone'³¹⁵. Although monks are not always alone, there is only one focus to a monk's life, and that is the search for God 'alone'. To articulate what is meant by this, colloquially within monastic circles I have heard it said 'if the first thing you think about when you wake up in the morning is God, then you are a monk'.

Missionally speaking, this concentration on God leads the monk to become concerned with those things which are of concern to God, thus quite naturally leading to mission.³¹⁶ Further, this single-minded search for God influences those around it by setting a good example.³¹⁷ Monks demonstrate their love of God through a life rooted in deep prayer that powerfully draws the world towards them.³¹⁸ The monastic response to those drawn towards it is hospitality,³¹⁹ which is at the very heart of monastic spirituality and dealt with in Chapter 53 of Benedict's Rule. As Gary Stuckey tells us "There is no such thing as a monk who does not practice hospitality."³²⁰

³¹⁵ William Collinge, *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism: 2nd Edition* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press Inc 2012), 293.

³¹⁶ E-mail conversation with Gary Stuckey, October 2020.

³¹⁷ Theodore Maynard, *St Benedict and His Monks* (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1954), 140

³¹⁸ Maynard, *St Benedict and His Monks*, 151.

³¹⁹ Hospitality being in the widest sense of what that means. An open-hearted and open-handed acceptance and love of all.

³²⁰ Gary Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: The Way of Hospitality*, (Adelaide: Unpublished, 2015), 89

Those who have visited a monastery understand that the treatment of guests is paramount.³²¹ Traditionally, their welcome is so important that their arrival is the only time the Abbot is permitted to break a fast.³²² However, Benedictine hospitality is more than simply welcoming visitors into the monastery. It is a broad-reaching hospitality born of self-acceptance and leads to self-emptying and a heart-centred love and welcome of all, both inside and outside of monastic life.³²³ Thus, Monasticism is one interpretation of how to live Jesus' commands that we should "love God and love neighbour". Monks concern themselves with God, and love of neighbour through hospitality is the outcome.

For those within the UCSA who have been taught that mission must be our focus, it is hard to believe that concentrating on God could naturally lead to mission. However, Henri Nouwen writes of the renowned Benedictine monk, Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection: "The great mystery of prayer, as the life of Brother Lawrence shows, is that this single-minded concern for God does not lead us away from people but, to the contrary, closer to them"³²⁴. So, as Nouwen tells us, the single-minded search for God, if exercised well, does not lead us to become insular, but rather to a greater love of neighbour.

Hospitality for Hospitality's Sake

Particularly important to note in our exploration of hospitality is that, for the monastic, there is no expectation of anything in return.³²⁵ It is certainly not expected that guests or those who receive hospitality will become members of the monastery.

³²¹ "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me* (Matt 25:35)" RB 53:1.

³²² RB 53:10.

³²³ Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St Benedict*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 120-121.

³²⁴ Henri Nouwen, "Foreword." In *The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection*, by John J Delany, 9-12. (New York: Image Books 1977), 11.

³²⁵ In the author's experience whilst monasteries do not expect to receive anything from guests, the bringing of a gift to the monastery is appreciated and accepted with gratitude.

Traditionally monks who asked to become part of the community were kept knocking at the door for four or five days to assess their level of patience and commitment. If persistent, they were allowed to stay within the guest quarters for a few days³²⁶ before staying with other novices, under the care of a senior monk.³²⁷ What was being assessed is “...whether the novice truly seeks God and whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God,³²⁸ obedience and for trials.”³²⁹ After two months, the Rule was read and it was explained that committed monks are expected to follow this Rule or they were entirely free to leave.³³⁰ If persistent, monks remained within the novitiate for another six months before the Rule was read once more,³³¹ followed by another four months in the novitiate³³² and initiation as a member of the community. Traditionally, monks do not become a life-professed member until they have been part of the community for seven years.

For monastic communities, then, hospitality has nothing to do with the desire for and recruitment of new members. This approach is very different from the *missio Dei*, the Great Commission and our modern-day church’s use of pseudo forms of hospitality as a means for recruiting new members.³³³ We learn from Benedictine hospitality, then, that it is only true hospitality when there are no strings attached. It is quite simply an act of love that does not require or desire anything in return. It is hospitality for hospitality’s sake.³³⁴

To become part of the community is a different matter entirely, and it is not the responsibility of those who belong to seek recruits and persuade them that they also should join. For those who *do* wish to join, the community is honest in sharing what true commitment to Christ

³²⁶ RB 58:1-4.

³²⁷ RB 58: 5-6.

³²⁸ The Work of God is a phrase Benedict uses to refer to the Divine or Daily Office.

³²⁹ RB 58: 7.

³³⁰ RB 58: 9-10.

³³¹ RB 58:12.

³³² RB 58:13.

³³³ Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: The Way of Hospitality*, 91.

³³⁴ Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: The Way of Hospitality*, 91.

entails.³³⁵ It is not a decision entered on a whim and rescinded as we see fit. Nor is it an appendage to a busy routine.³³⁶ It requires a complete metanoia in terms of how and why we live our lives. It is far more than simply deciding whether to join a church or not. It requires depth and commitment that will alter our lives and our worldview forever.³³⁷ If we are honest, it is a life that is not suited to everyone. It is not surprising then that Benedict does not easily allow new members. Thus, in its scramble to gain as many church attendees as possible, this may be a message the church would do well to hear. Perhaps, as Bradbury points out, the church is meant to be small.³³⁸

The contrast between Monasticism and New Monasticism

But we need to take note of the difference between traditional monasticism and what is now termed New Monasticism. New Monasticism uses monastic principles and practices for missional goals.³³⁹ Its focus is not God, but societal change and though admirable, it is not, strictly speaking, monastic, because it makes mission its goal and not God. For traditional monastics, it is the single-minded, deeply centred focus on God that leads to mission, rather than mission being imposed by some external ideal. Mission becomes, as Frederick Buechner tells us, "the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need."³⁴⁰ But how, at a practical level, does 'the search for God alone' lead to mission?

Monastic Mission

In one sense, mission within the monastic tradition is not a concern. It is simply lived. Monasteries are established, and the monks' unique, prayerful way of life and peaceful presence

³³⁵ Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*, 249.

³³⁶ Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*, 247.

³³⁷ Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*, 247.

³³⁸ Bradbury, *Towards a Theology of the Death of the Church*, 253.

³³⁹ Julian Collette, "Something Old, Something New: In Search of the New Monasticism," *Obsculta*, *Obsculta* 4, no.1 (2011), 23.

³⁴⁰ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 119.

influence those around them. For example, a Cistercian³⁴¹ monastic community may establish itself on poor land and rehabilitate it agriculturally for the benefit of the surrounding population.³⁴² But although this is part of monastic life, it is not the focus. For St Benedict and his monks, the focus of life is ‘monos’, ‘the search for God alone’, and life is meticulously organised in pursuit of this goal.

Mission and the Need for Self-Knowledge

Further, the focus of ‘monos’ also includes being alone with oneself, meaning that a monk must face him or herself.³⁴³ In layman’s terms, this means undertaking one’s inner work that leads to transformation. As John Cassian³⁴⁴ puts it, the pursuit of God requires “...a clean or pure heart, without which it is impossible for anyone to reach our target³⁴⁵”. This is akin to the need for self-awareness advocated by Jung.

The pursuit of purity of heart is dealt with in Benedict’s chapter entitled ‘Humility’, which is the longest chapter in his Rule at 70 verses—around 8% of the total word-count.³⁴⁶ From Benedict’s perspective, humility is at the root of purity of heart, the word humility being related to the word ‘humus’, meaning ‘earth’. Thus, to be humble is to be ‘earthy’, to recognise that one comes from the earth. In short, it means to be aware of the truth of one’s origins; the recognition of our creatureliness and dependence on God.³⁴⁷ Humility is about being truthful regarding who we are. It requires growing in self-knowledge, which is not about self-admonishment but requires that we be balanced in our view of ourselves. This means becoming as deeply aware of

³⁴¹ A form of Benedictine monasticism.

³⁴² E-mail communication with Gary Stuckey, October 10, 2000.

³⁴³ “It also means one who is face to face with him/herself” Br Graeme, “*Graeme’s Talk*”, The Community of the Transfiguration, 2004.

³⁴⁴ Benedict extols to his monks ‘The Conferences’ of John Cassian in Chapter 73 of his Rule.

³⁴⁵ Cassian *Conferences* 1:4, 39.

³⁴⁶ Michael Casey, *Truthful Living: Saint Benedict’s Teaching on Humility*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), 43.

³⁴⁷ Rev Dr Gary Stuckey, *Christian Spirituality: The Way of Humility*. Lecture Notes, (Adelaide : Unpublished, 2015), 74-75.

our innate goodness as our tendency towards sin. It is not about the self-chastisement that leads to low-self-esteem. It is the road to transformation, which is ultimately a journey leading to joy and freedom. Within the Eastern Orthodox tradition, this is known as 'deification' or 'theosis',³⁴⁸ whereby we are, through the combination of divine grace and the self-knowledge that comes through undertaking our inner work, led to transform into the likeness of Christ.

Thus, monastic life includes what is sometimes referred to as 'radical self-honesty,' part of which is to share one's inner thoughts with a mature elder.³⁴⁹ The purpose is to develop true self-honesty about who we are. As one of the central resolves of the contemporary monastic community 'The Community of the Transfiguration' states: "To breathe peace into the world, first disarm your own heart."³⁵⁰ Therefore, because we are each individually part of society, societal transformation necessarily requires that we put active measures in place whereby we, personally, are transformed.

Monos as contrast to the Missio Dei and the Great Commission

So, when we compare 'Monos' with both the ideologies of the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission, we see a stark contrast in focus. For the *missio Dei*, the church's focus is not God but God's mission. God is by nature missional, so it is the church's entire purpose to engage in

³⁴⁸ "A term used in the tradition of Orthodox theology to refer to the participation of the human person in the life of God. It is also known as deification or divinization. It means "being made God" and reflects the dominant Orthodox understanding of salvation in Christ. Athanasius urged that God became man so that we might become divine. Humanity and God are understood to be infinitely distant from each other, but finite humanity and the infinite God are fully joined in Christ" Armentrout, Don S Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A-Z Glossary: Theosis." The Episcopal Church. Accessed September 3, 2020. <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/theosis>.

³⁴⁹ "The theme proposed here is the desert fathers' radical honesty about the self, and the means by which they worked towards this honesty. The principal element of that process was offering the secrets of one's heart to another person for discernment. This was typically done by a young, or at any rate novice, monk to his abba, his monastic elder. This practice of self-revelation was both the means and the fruit of the monk's growth in singleness of heart. This theme is one which is particularly interesting for modern people, presumably because it is something we would like to do ourselves but find very difficult" Columba Stewart, *The Desert Fathers on Radical Self Honesty: Monastic Matrix: A Scholarly Resource for the Study of Women's Religious Communities from 400 to 1600 CE*, 1991. Accessed September 20 2020, <http://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/commentaria/desert-fathers-radical-self-honesty>.

³⁵⁰ The Community of the Transfiguration, Resolve.

mission.³⁵¹ Equally, for the Generate Presbytery, the Great Commission means that the focus is also not God but ‘making disciples’.³⁵² While both ideals seem admirable, they are in contrast to traditional monasticism because for monasticism, the focus is God, and the desire for whom must necessarily include the pursuit of deep self-knowledge which, as demonstrated by Jung, is so absent and yet so needed within both the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission. Therefore, growing relationship with God is paramount, which means entwining Christ-centred corporate and personal spiritual practice into every aspect of life which leads to self-knowledge. When considering the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission, it would, therefore, be reasonable to ask where, within this single-minded concentration on mission is the imperative for personal spiritual practice and self-knowledge, which undergirds the ‘love of God and love of neighbour’?

Conversely, looking at traditional monasticism, one might question where, within ‘monos’, is the imperative for ‘mission’? As Michael Casey points out, a danger exists that monks can be so introspective and scrupulous³⁵³ as to become passive and, thus, unfaithful to the call to evangelise.³⁵⁴ This is indeed a concern, yet, over the centuries, as Robinson tells us, Benedictine monasteries were the catalyst for providing education in a world where only the wealthy were literate.³⁵⁵ Monasteries and cathedrals were the first to develop universities in the West.³⁵⁶ Benedictine monasticism also revolutionised healthcare through offering medical care to local people from the infirmaries contained within each monastery. Some monasteries even transitioned to become hospitals or hospices.³⁵⁷ Furthermore, Benedictine monasticism has made a huge contribution to the world of art, literature and architecture by encouraging the

³⁵¹ “The church is missionary, because it exists to be sent for God’s mission” Niemandt “Together Towards New Life for Missiology?” 88

³⁵² *Generate Presbytery*, 2020.

³⁵³ Casey, *Truthful Living*, 15.

³⁵⁴ Casey, *Truthful Living*, 15.

³⁵⁵ Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, 12.

³⁵⁶ Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, 13.

³⁵⁷ Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, 13.

work of artisans within monasteries, which provided monasteries with an income.³⁵⁸ While it is important to remember that monasticism has needed its fair share of major reform over the centuries,³⁵⁹ during the millennium in which it flourished, Benedictine monasticism made a phenomenal contribution through service to and the development of modern society.³⁶⁰ And this is in no small way consequent on the monastic imperative for deep self-knowledge.

Learning How to Die

Finally, as we conclude our discussion of mission within the UCSA and its tendency to tie mission to church survival, we note that through both the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission missiological movements the UCSA insists on clinging to life at all cost. Indeed, the longer the Uniting Church and the communities within it survive, the more successful it is considered. Longevity is a fundamental requirement for the church with regards to both Fresh Expressions³⁶¹ and the Generate Presbytery.³⁶² The idea that churches might be celebrated and supported as they reach a natural end is neither acknowledged nor encouraged.

Steve Taylor, however, questions the assumption that churches which do not survive long-term have failed or were not worth the effort because they did not stand the test of time.³⁶³ As Taylor points out, the first New Testament communities of the Apostle Paul in Corinth, Galatia and Philippi, have not survived long-term. Does this mean they were not successful? Taylor

³⁵⁸ Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, 12.

³⁵⁹ Monasteries, over time, tended to become very wealthy and somewhat 'lax'. The Cluny Reform beginning 909 and the Cistercian Reform beginning 1098 are examples of attempts at restoring Benedictine monasticism to its former strictness and pure form. Philip Daileader, "The Cluniac and Cistercian Reforms to Benedictine Monasticism: From the Lecture Series: The High Middle Ages" *The Great Sources Daily*, 19 May 2020, <https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/the-cluniac-and-cistercian-reforms-to-benedictine-monasticism/>.

³⁶⁰ Robinson, *Ancient Paths*, 12.

³⁶¹ "We genuinely despaired for the long-term future of some places we visited when that key leader moves on or is no longer there" and Rob Stoner, *Fresh Directions*, 53 "The evidence from our exploration of fresh expressions is that three, five or even seven years funding is insufficient to ensure long-term survival and effectiveness of most fresh expressions." Rob Stoner, *Fresh Directions*, 54

³⁶² A fundamental purpose of mission within the Generate Presbytery is "churches being renewed and growing" *Generate Presbytery*, 2020.

³⁶³ Steve Taylor, *First Expressions: Innovations and the Mission of God*, (London: SCM Press, 2019), 78.

concludes that churches are not permanent entities³⁶⁴ and questions both the belief that longevity is a sign of success and that churches are meant for perpetual survival.³⁶⁵ Could this not equally be true for the institutions of the church as a whole?

An authentic theology of Christian mission must allow for the possibility of death. For Jung, as was explained to him by Karl Rahner, it is part of the church's duty within history to follow Christ in his self-emptying until, in the last day, the work of the church is fulfilled, it becomes unnecessary, and dies.³⁶⁶ As M Scott Peck reminds us, the central message of all the great religions is "Learn how to die."³⁶⁷ At a personal level we know that Christians must "deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me"³⁶⁸, and "those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it."³⁶⁹ This also applies to the UCSA as a body of believers. Benedictine Michael Casey tells us of the necessity for Christians to regularly keep in mind the tension between life and death.³⁷⁰ He asserts that there can be no true and deep spirituality without recognising and accepting the paschal mystery.³⁷¹ This means not only accepting physical death at the end of our mortal human existence but the daily acceptance of death as a way of life, drawing us away from our attachments and self-centredness towards deepening selflessness and compassion towards others and our world. Both Buddhism and Hinduism express this need to distance ourselves from the baggage and

³⁶⁴ Taylor, *First Expressions*, 78.

³⁶⁵ Taylor, *First Expressions*, 74.

³⁶⁶ "The fundamental idea of the theologians is always this: the earthly fate of the Church as the body of Christ is modeled on the earthly fate of Christ himself. That is to say, the Church, in the course of her history, moves towards a death . . . until the last day when, after fulfilling her earthly task, she becomes 'unnecessary' and 'dies,' as indicated in Psalm 71:7: 'until the moon shall fail.' These ideas were expressed in the symbolism of Luna as the Church. Just as the kenosis of Christ was fulfilled in death . . . even so it is with the parallel kenosis of Ecclesia-Luna (the Church)." C G Jung. *Mysterium Coniunctonis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, 2nd Ed, trans. R F C Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), ff35.

³⁶⁷ Scott Peck, *Further Along the Road Less Travelled*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 68.

³⁶⁸ Luke 9:23.

³⁶⁹ Luke 9:24.

³⁷⁰ Casey, *Truthful Living*, 25

³⁷¹ Casey, *Truthful Living*, 25

impermanence of psychological attachments to the things we like or dislike.³⁷² This is done through the practice of detachment—the removal of physical or mental connections to objects, situations or relationships.³⁷³ Within the Christian monastic tradition, it is expressed as kenosis, the self-emptying exemplified by Jesus.

Moreover, it is not just the ‘letting go’ and thus “not having any physical or mental connection with the things of the world, with our own mind and body or with our achievements, qualities, fame, name, status, etc”³⁷⁴, important though that is. It includes the radical hospitality illustrated by Jesus, who was extravagantly generous in the giving of himself and the sharing of his life with those the religious authorities of the time did not consider worthy of attention.³⁷⁵ Abbot Christopher Jamison writes that there are specific prayers “for a happy death”³⁷⁶ within the Catholic tradition, and the Rule of St Benedict says “a monk must have death daily before his eyes”.³⁷⁷ This is not an appeal to live one’s life in morbid introspection. Rather, it is an invitation to recognise that by coming to terms with mortality, we are spurred on to make the most of our lives in the knowledge that time on this earth is limited and finite.³⁷⁸ Coming to a healthy acceptance of our demise can be a dynamic stimulus for the letting go of attachments that, through death, are rendered meaningless. Instead, we can move towards a more fruitful and

³⁷² Jayaram V, “Detachment for Freedom and Happiness” Hinduwebsite.com Accessed May 14, 2020. <https://www.hinduwebsite.com/divinelife/essays/detachment.asp>.

³⁷³ Jayaram V “Detachment in Worldly Living” Hinduwebsite.com Accessed May 14, 2020. <https://www.hinduwebsite.com/divinelife/essays/detachment-in-worldly-life.asp>.

³⁷⁴ Jayaram V “Detachment in Worldly Living”. <https://www.hinduwebsite.com/divinelife/essays/detachment-in-worldly-life.asp>

³⁷⁵ Cynthia Bourgeault. *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Plymouth: Cowley Publications, 2004), 86.

³⁷⁶ Abbot Christopher Jamison, *Finding Happiness: Monastic Steps for a Fulfilling Life*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 21.

³⁷⁷ Jamison, *Finding Happiness*, 23.

³⁷⁸ Jamison, *Finding Happiness*, 23.

selfless life with renewed psychological and spiritual growth.³⁷⁹ As Bradbury tells us, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus need to be a model for church life as we experience decline.³⁸⁰

The UCSA then must consider the possibility that the institutional church itself may be invited to embrace the reality that “...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies; it bears much fruit.”³⁸¹ Insisting that the UCSA must survive may be contributing to its own demise, when it may do better to let itself go for the sake of the world³⁸² and journey with Christ towards Jerusalem.³⁸³

To conclude this section, what we learn is that mission within the UCSA is not as it seems. The *missio Dei* is a new theology, which has potentially grown in popularity as an attempt to prove the essential nature of the church in a culture where church is increasingly seen as irrelevant. The Great Commission is not an age-old adage for mission, but a phrase that came into existence in the late 1700s and used to excuse the propagating of a white-European form of Christianity that subjugates those of other nations and religions. And within the last 100 years interest in both has grown seemingly to offer theological justification of the church’s desire to survive and grow.

Further, we cannot assume that it is an edict from God that the church must survive. If Jung is correct in his psychology, our belief that the institutional church is an essential vehicle for God’s mission is more likely a projection, aimed at counteracting our own fear of church death. Indeed, without adequate self-knowledge advocated by both the psychology of Jung and the monasticism of St Benedict, pushing for church survival and growth, if it has any real affect at

³⁷⁹ Peck, *Further Along the Road Less Travelled*, 68.

³⁸⁰ Bradbury, *Towards a Theology of the Death of the Church*, 251.

³⁸¹ John 12: 24 (NRSV).

³⁸² McLaren, *The Great Spiritual Migration*, 160.

³⁸³ Bradbury, *Towards a Theology of the Death of the Church*, 251.

all, may well result in the repeating of past patterns of behaviour, limiting the church's effectiveness, and diminishing its ability to love and serve the world in which it lives.

Chapter 4 - Great Omissions

Craig Mitchell, in his PhD research of 2018, partly sponsored by the Uniting Church,³⁸⁴ says that the recent challenges to the church's vitality have been accompanied by diminished investment in Christian education.³⁸⁵ Christian education, Mitchell tells us, was once a significant area of investment within Uniting Church congregations, children's and youth work, but has reduced in line with church decline in the years since the 1980s.³⁸⁶ His own role as National Director of Christian Education within the UCA ceased to exist in 2017.³⁸⁷ For Mitchell, the purpose of Christian education within congregations is to produce disciples for the sake of mission;³⁸⁸ thus, teaching and embodying the *missio Dei* within congregations creates 'missional disciples.' Mitchell believes Christian education is at the heart of discipleship, and both should be inseparable from mission.³⁸⁹

It is certainly correct that congregations lack an understanding of the *missio Dei*. Nearly 66% of respondents to the UCSA's recent Strategic Plan survey state the majority of the UC Synod's financial resources should be dedicated to "resourcing the mission of the church"³⁹⁰, and its primary objective should be "supporting the regeneration of the church".³⁹¹ Clearly, at a congregational level, mission is equated with church survival, a direct misunderstanding of the *missio Dei*.³⁹²

³⁸⁴ Craig Mitchell, "(Re)forming Christian Education in Congregations as the Praxis of Growing Disciples for a Missional Church" (PhD Thesis, Flinders University, 2018), 1.

³⁸⁵ Craig Mitchell, "(Re)forming Christian Education, 6-7.

³⁸⁶ Craig Mitchell, "(Re)forming Christian Education, 6.

³⁸⁷ Craig Mitchell, "(Re)forming Christian Education, 5.

³⁸⁸ Craig Mitchell, "(Re)forming Christian Education, iv.

³⁸⁹ Craig Mitchell, "(Re)forming Christian Education, 331.

³⁹⁰ Uniting Church of South Australia Synod, *Strategic Plan Survey*, 6.

³⁹¹ Uniting Church of South Australia Synod, *Strategic Plan Survey*, 20.

³⁹² As mentioned in Chapter 2, part of the reasons for the development of the *missio Dei* was to avoid 'ecclesiocentrism' the expansion of the church according to the church's own agenda. McKinzie, "An Abbreviated Introduction to the Concept of *Missio Dei*"

Discipleship and Mission

But, is discipleship really about mission? Dallas Willard suggests that the church's constant emphasis on service through mission hinders our devotion to Christ because it does not take our need for personal spiritual practice through silence and solitude seriously.³⁹³ Michael Stroope agrees that being overly missional, which he refers to as 'mobilisation', is the very antithesis of spiritual formation or 'discipleship'. Without it, mission becomes something imposed from outside instead of coming authentically from the deepest place within us. The result of this kind of mission means the sending out of spiritually ill-equipped people.³⁹⁴

According to Willard, although discipleship does include learning and being a student,³⁹⁵ its focus is not mission. Its purpose is not to make churches grow or succeed, or fight injustices, although these will hopefully be the result. It is about being 'disciples' or 'apprentices' of Jesus and, if we do this well, what else we do in terms of loving our neighbours, engaging in social justice or supporting our world in other ways will come from the heart in love, and of their own accord.³⁹⁶ What Willard is referring to using different words is a kin to 'monos' the single-minded focus on God, which naturally leads to mission. From this perspective, the education needed for discipleship is rather different from learning to be missional.

What we have already learned through our study is that both mission and Christian community life can be dangerous.³⁹⁷ We are susceptible to both the mass-mindedness of the collective unconscious and the projections of our own individual and corporate desires and personalities onto others and God. So, discipleship needs to contain that which counteracts the inherent hazards involved. What is needed for mission and healthy communities is self-

³⁹³ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2006), 130.

³⁹⁴ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 377.

³⁹⁵ Willard, *The Great Omission*, xii.

³⁹⁶ Willard, *The Great Omission*, xii.

³⁹⁷ See both Chapter 1 with regards to Christian Community, and Chapter 2 on Mission.

knowledge, which, according to Benedict, is gained through personal spiritual practice, including silence, solitude, taking practical steps towards gaining humility.³⁹⁸ As Carmelite mystic Teresa of Avila tells us, self-knowledge is at the very centre of the spiritual life and should never be neglected.³⁹⁹ It is furthering this self-knowledge that leads to a deeper knowledge of God. The two are inextricably entwined.⁴⁰⁰ Carl Jung equally understood that self-knowledge is needed for healthy psychological and spiritual growth,⁴⁰¹ but warns:

“People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own souls. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.”⁴⁰²

Jung was all too aware of how confronting attaining self-knowledge can be, even though ultimately it is what is needed for healthy growth. This growth requires an undergirding of regular times in solitude, which Jung also knew was of great value,⁴⁰³ spending much time alone himself. Being alone, he said, is “the highest and most decisive experience of all...”⁴⁰⁴ It is through solitude that we learn what supports us when we are unable to support ourselves, and it is only this that gives us a solid foundation.⁴⁰⁵ For Jung then, solitude became a source of psychological

³⁹⁸ See Michael Casey’s Chapter on Radical Self-Honesty. Casey, *Truthful Living*, 167-186 “Endlessly the Rule makes room for each individual to grow in holiness at his or her own speed, in his or her own way”.

³⁹⁹ St Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, ed. E Allison Peers (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2007), 22

⁴⁰⁰ John Welch O.Carm, *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung & Teresa of Avila* (New York/MahWah: Paulist Press, 1982), 75.

⁴⁰¹ “Therefore the individual who wishes to have an answer to the problem of evil, as it is posed to-day, has need, first and foremost, of self-knowledge, That is, the utmost possible knowledge of his own wholeness. He must know relentlessly how much good he can do, and what crimes he is capable of, and must beware of regarding the one as real and the other as illusion. Both are elements within his nature, and both are bound to come to light in him, should he wish-as he ought-to live without self-deception or self-illusion” Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 362.

⁴⁰² Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 99.

⁴⁰³ Sue Mehrrens, “The Value of Isolation, Loneliness and Solitude” Jungian Center for the Spiritual Sciences, accessed August 17, 2020, https://jungiancenter.org/the-value-of-isolation-loneliness-and-solitude/#_ftn1.

⁴⁰⁴ Carl Jung, *Collected Works Volume12: Psychology and Alchemy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 32.

⁴⁰⁵ Jung, *Collected Works Volume12: Psychology and Alchemy*, 32.

healing, the learnings from which he could pass on to his clients.⁴⁰⁶ As he grew old, he felt it was solitude and silence that made his life worth living.⁴⁰⁷

The First and Second Half of Life

But the need for self-knowledge needs to be balanced by a further learning from Jung. In terms of psychological and spiritual development, Jung believes that life is divided into two halves; the morning and afternoon of life.⁴⁰⁸ He claims that healthy and nourishing pursuits during the first half of life are likely to become unhealthy and damaging if continued into the second.⁴⁰⁹ For example, according to Jung, building one's ego, growing and learning through education, and pursuing a career, life partner and home are all important parts of human development in the first half of life. However, from the second half of life, our focus naturally changes and requires that we become less externally driven and more internally oriented and reflective. In short, the first half of life necessarily needs to be externally focussed and ego-driven. The second half of life needs to become more focussed upon the deeper self and the developing of the inner person.⁴¹⁰

If we apply this to the UCSA, its assertive missional goals of planting and growing churches and undertaking mission activities are congruent with those within the first half of life. They fit the spiritual and psychological development of younger people who are, quite rightly, ego-driven and dynamic. However, outwardly focussed mission will, for the most part, become less

⁴⁰⁶ Mathew Spano PhD, "The Red Book: Some Notes for the Beginner". The Jung Page: Reflections on Psychology, Culture and Life. Accessed August, 17, 2020. <https://www.cgjungpage.org/learn/articles/analytical-psychology/928-the-red-book-some-notes-for-the-beginner>.

⁴⁰⁷ Mr Purrington, "Solitude is a Source of Healing." Carl Jung Depth Psychology: Life, Work and Legacy of Carl Jung. Accessed August 17, 2020. <https://carljungdepthpsychologysite.blog/2019/10/28/loneliness-is-a-source-of-healing/#.XzncmegzblU>.

⁴⁰⁸ Rudolf Leopold Kincel, *C G Jung's Individuation Process*, (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1975), 63.

⁴⁰⁹ "What is a normal goal to a young person becomes a neurotic hindrance in old age" Carl Jung in Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward*, xiii.

⁴¹⁰ Kincel, "C G Jung's Individuation Process", 63.

important for those who have reached the second half of life, who will likely become more drawn towards more introspective and self-reflective spiritual activities.

The problem for the UCSA is that the vast majority of its members are within the second half of life,⁴¹¹ when, due to church decline, the church wishes its members to focus on mission, which is primarily a first-half-of-life activity. Therefore, encouraging people in the second half of life to be missionally and externally driven may cause them spiritual and psychological damage, as they need a more contemplative and internally focussed spiritual life. Further, the desire within older members of the Uniting Church to focus on mission is not because they feel drawn to dynamic outward focussed forms of mission, but because they want the church to survive, which is not the same thing.⁴¹² Mission for older people needs to come naturally from a deep internal place that has been stimulated and nourished by a personal spiritual life. Mission becomes less about 'doing', and more about 'being', and influence happens simply by being who we are.⁴¹³ Through this process, our older people become wise elders,⁴¹⁴ something decidedly lacking within our culture. Equally, for younger members of the Uniting Church, expecting them to engage excessively with self-reflective spiritual activities may cause them damage when their deepest need is for self-establishment and the development of the ego, which may be met through the church in overtly missional activities.

That is not to suggest that personal discipleship is only needed in the second half of life. Indeed, John Cassian tells us that wise elders do not become so automatically without practice from youth.⁴¹⁵ However, the central focus of what personal discipleship means will change as people age and grow and their spiritual and psychological needs change. Discipleship for a

⁴¹¹ If respondents to the Uniting Church Synod's Strategic Plan Survey are representative of UC Congregations, then nearly 85% of church attendees are over the age of 45, with 50% of these over the age of 65. Uniting Church Synod, *Strategic Plan Survey*, 43.

⁴¹² Look at the previously mentioned results of the Uniting Church Synod's Strategic Planning Survey.

⁴¹³ Rohr: *Falling Upward*, 123.

⁴¹⁴ Rohr: *Falling Upward*, 117-125.

⁴¹⁵ Cassian *Conferences*, 2:13.

younger person will likely be much more active and dynamic but will still need to be grounded in a personal spiritual life; there may simply be less need for silence and solitude. It is certainly true that most younger churchgoers will not be psychologically developed enough to cope with the level of spiritual practice required for deep self-knowledge. However, as one ages, the focus should necessarily shift, external mission will become less of a focus, and a more internal discipleship will be needed. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all style of spirituality, whether corporately and missionally focussed or internal and reflectively based, is not sufficient. Both are needed, some of the time.

The Need for Personal Spiritual Practice as Discipleship

As has been alluded to through this thesis, regular personal formation or spiritual practice is an essential part of both psychological health and the self-knowledge necessary for healthy mission and spiritual community. Personal spiritual practise, however, seems not to be overtly encouraged within the protestant church. And yet, as we consider the missional activities of the UCSA over the last ten years, we discover that Stroope's hypothesis that formation needs to be at the very heart of the Christian life holds true.⁴¹⁶ Rob Stoner, the author of *Fresh Directions* and advocate for growing Fresh Expressions of church within South Australia, tells us that one of the outcomes of his and Rev Dr Ian Price's research into Fresh Expressions in the UK was discovering that many of the leaders interviewed were ill-equipped to support their members spiritually beyond their attendance at meetings.⁴¹⁷ In short, they did not know how to help people have a rich daily spiritual life beyond church meetings. With regards to the Generate 2021 church planting initiative, individual spiritual practice is also not emphasised. Graham Humphris, chair of the Generate Presbytery, acknowledges that whilst some daily discipleship pathways and spiritual practices were taught to church planters, starting new churches was a

⁴¹⁶ Stroope, *Transcending Mission*, 377.

⁴¹⁷ Rob Stoner, e-mail communication, July 6, 2020.

greater priority.⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, Bill Hybels, founder of American mega-church Willow Creek, admitted it had failed because although Willow Creek had supported many to find faith in Jesus, it had not taught them the personal spiritual disciplines necessary to grow their faith into maturity.⁴¹⁹

Yet, personal spiritual disciplines have been a part of the UCSA's life. In September 2005, what had formally been known as the Ministry in Christian Spirituality became the Stillpoint Faith Community.⁴²⁰ This monastically focussed, contemplative community led to the opening of the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre in 2007.⁴²¹ Stillpoint offered numerous opportunities to learn and engage with personal discipleship practices. However, although Stillpoint still exists within the UCSA, it is no longer funded, losing its paid staff and its home at the end of 2016, another form of education suffering loss as the church declines.

Transforming Isolation into Solitude

A consequence of the church's undervaluing of personal spiritual practice in favour of corporate engagement and mission is that church members have, perhaps, become too dependent on church gatherings. This has become apparent during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Although some within the UCSA have worked hard to re-frame 'isolation' as an opportunity for 'solitude'⁴²² for the most-part, churches have understandably rushed to offer on-line opportunities for their members to meet in the hope of quelling the sense of isolation and loneliness. Yet, the lesson here, as both Henri Nouwen and Richard Rohr tell us and which

⁴¹⁸ Graham Humphris, e-mail communication, July 7, 2020.

⁴¹⁹ Rob Smietana, "Willow Creek Elders and Pastor Heather Larson Resign over Bill Hybels", *Christianity Today*. August 8 2018, Accessed August 16, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/20018/august/willow-creek-bill-hybels-heather-larson-elders-resign-inves.html>.

⁴²⁰ Stuckey, *Finding Your Inner Monk*, 6.

⁴²¹ Stuckey, *Finding Your Inner Monk*, 8.

⁴²² It is the author's understanding that the Uniting Church in Glenelg is one example of a church who has worked hard to do this during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

has been known by poets and mystics of all religious traditions for many generations,⁴²³ is that the real antidote for loneliness is *not* filling the void through meeting together, but *solitude*,⁴²⁴ in solitude, one learns that we are never alone.⁴²⁵ This is true both spiritually and psychologically.⁴²⁶ It will not be the answer for everyone⁴²⁷ but, for many, it may be the spiritual lifeline their soul has been craving.⁴²⁸

The Quest for Ultimate Authority

For the church, however, we discover there is another problem. Personal discipleship practices are known to give rise to mystical experience. Over the centuries, the institutional church has tended to view these experiences with suspicion⁴²⁹ because it raises questions of ultimate authority. Inge tells us there are four possibilities in terms of the source of ultimate authority. Firstly, the belief in an infallible Church, the second an infallible book, the third human reason and the last individual inspiration.⁴³⁰ Indeed, much of our discussion concerning mission and church attendance in this time of spiritual realignment and upheaval is really about this struggle, which is causing the church tension. Indeed, Phyllis Tickle says we are currently within a time of major spiritual reconfiguration,⁴³¹ which brings to the forefront the question of where ultimate authority lies.⁴³² And there are additional modern considerations which change our perspective. Firstly, the question of where lies the source of human consciousness.⁴³³ Secondly, how do we adhere faithfully and with integrity to a chosen faith tradition in a world containing

⁴²³ Rohr, *Falling Upward*, 144.

⁴²⁴ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Glasgow, William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, 1975) 38 & Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward*, 143.

⁴²⁵ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton), 1989, 120.

⁴²⁶ Neel Burton "The Joy of Solitude." *Psychologytoday.com*, April 24, 2020. Accessed July 16, 2020. <https://psychologytoday.com/au/blog/hidden-and-seek/201711/the-joy-solitude>.

⁴²⁷ Burton "The Joy of Solitude"

⁴²⁸ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 120.

⁴²⁹ The Very Rev W R Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 17-18.

⁴³⁰ Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, 15.

⁴³¹ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 16-17 and ff60-61.

⁴³² Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 72.

⁴³³ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 73.

many religions.⁴³⁴ As we look at these concerns, we realise that missional theology within the UCSA is in danger of both naivety and cultural irrelevance. The *missio Dei*, because it tries to insist that ultimate authority lies with the church. The Great Commission, because it attempts to place ultimate authority with the Bible. Further, from a sociological perspective, Australians are switching from traditional forms of institutional religion originating from colonial Britain⁴³⁵ and actively seek forms of spirituality that involve a personal and experiential devotional life. Some are choosing American-influenced Pentecostal churches⁴³⁶ others, small informal gatherings, many of which are outside the church altogether.⁴³⁷ They may also mix and match as our increasingly multi-cultural and spiritually educated culture allows,⁴³⁸ engaging with Christian spirituality on one occasion but perhaps Buddhism or Hinduism on another.

Thus, the church's problem is that it tends towards an enculturated fear of religious diversity⁴³⁹ which, as previously mentioned, could be alleviated by some well-needed education on world faiths.⁴⁴⁰ Further, because individuals can experience God autonomously, without the influence of traditional religious rules, doctrines and scriptural interpretations, this causes the church discomfort. But the reality is that divine communication does not necessarily come within the limitations of how the church traditionally understands God to commune with people.⁴⁴¹ But encouraging personal religious experience is often seen by the church as a threat because ultimately questions both the church and the Bible's ultimate authority. Potentially this undermines the primacy of its corporate gatherings. The church is then inclined, often

⁴³⁴ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 73.

⁴³⁵ Bouma: *Australian Soul*, 67.

⁴³⁶ Bouma: *Australian Soul*, 42.

⁴³⁷ Rev Joan Wright Howie, "Faith, Religion and Spirituality in Contemporary Society." Uniting Church in Australia: Assembly. Accessed October 4, 2020. And Bouma: *Australia Soul*, 97-99, <https://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/key-papers-reports/item/146-faith-religion-and-spirituality-in-contemporary-society>.

⁴³⁸ Bouma, *Faithful in Diversity*, 27-28.

⁴³⁹ Bouma, *Faithful in Diversity*, 1-3.

⁴⁴⁰ Bouma, *Being Faithful in Diversity*, 70.

⁴⁴¹ Hayley Pangle, "Christian Mysticism as a Threat to Papal Traditions" *Grand Valley Journal of History* 1, no. 1 (February 2012):1.

mistakenly, to label the search for a personal spiritual life as individualism⁴⁴², which is not to be encouraged.⁴⁴³

On the contrary, as Elaine Heath tells us, it would be a mistake to assume that mystical experience is a selfish, individualistic pursuit. Its purpose is God's transformation of an individual, which leads outwards to the transformation of the church and the world.⁴⁴⁴ Nevertheless, over the centuries, the church has usually seen personal religious experience or mysticism, and thus monasticism, through which mysticism is often expressed within the church, as a challenge to its authority. The Middle Ages, for example, was a time when the church's strategy involved controlling its people. The medieval church took steps to quash mysticism, as it did any movement deemed a threat to papal supremacy and power.⁴⁴⁵

To its credit, however, the UCSA seems to be bucking the trend of suspicion and now offers two courses which advocate personal discipleship; the first, Christian Spirituality,⁴⁴⁶ and the other, Spirituality for 21st Century Disciples, both through the Adelaide College of Divinity. Christian Spirituality offers education on St Benedict, his Rule and associated spiritual practices. Spirituality for 21st Century Disciples offers a broader look at Christian Spirituality and its practices, including the spirituality of St Ignatius and others,⁴⁴⁷ as well as education on Aboriginal Spirituality through 'Walking on Country' and the Centre for Aboriginal Spirituality.⁴⁴⁸ Further, the Uniting College is currently developing a partnership with Tabor

⁴⁴² Suderman, *Overcoming Modernity's Individualism*, 1.

⁴⁴³ Rev Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, "The Heresy of Individualism" Banner: April 27 2020. <https://www.thebanner.org/features/2020/04/the-heresy-of-individualism>

⁴⁴⁴ Heath, Elaine Heath. *The Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach*, (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2017). ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/atflin/detail.action?docID=5215198>. Created from atflin on 2020-10-08 09:49:52.

⁴⁴⁵ Hayley Pangle, "Christian Mysticism as a Threat to Papal Traditions", 1

⁴⁴⁶ This course has been offered twice. The first in 2015, and a revised version as an intensive in 2018. Gary Stuckey, e-mail communication, September 4, 2020.

⁴⁴⁷ Adelaide College of Divinity, Unit Guide: Mins1601 Spirituality for 21st Century Disciples, 2020.

⁴⁴⁸ Communication with Andrew Dutney, November 24, 2020.

College to deliver the Graduate Diploma in Spiritual Direction. How far these will go in reaching the individual lives of people within Uniting Church congregations is unclear.

None of this is to suggest that spiritual engagement in community is not important. However, simply trying to increase church attendance fails to meet the spiritual needs of those both inside and outside the church. Indeed, the church's concern for increasing church attendance may well be one of the reasons that people are choosing not to engage. Without providing the wherewithal for individuals to grow spiritually, the church is failing to cater for an essential spiritual need. As Benedictine communities teach us, and which Esther de Waal reminds us, church community exists for the benefit of the individuals within it. Individuals were not created for the sake of the church.⁴⁴⁹

As we have already noted, spiritual community in the future is beginning to look very different from how it is currently expressed within traditional Uniting Church congregations. This means that congregations within the UCSA who prefer keeping the status quo may not survive beyond their current attendees. Rather than seeing this as a threat to be overcome, perhaps it is a message to be received, and time to simply enjoy what is, and let things take their natural course, in readiness for what comes next.

Therefore, as Willard, Jung, monks, mystics and many others over the centuries have known, taking care of our soul, for most of us, requires both communal⁴⁵⁰ and personal spiritual practice.⁴⁵¹ Jesus demonstrated that he was not always together with his disciples. He spent time alone, feeding his soul through relationship with God in solitude.⁴⁵² For Inge, corporate worship is important, but Jesus emphasises connection with God through individual prayer in solitude over and above corporate prayer by inviting us to go to our room and pray to our Father

⁴⁴⁹ Esther de Waal, *Seeking God*, 119.

⁴⁵⁰ Recognising, as per Chapter 1, that there are a rare few who are genuinely called to solitude away from corporate spiritual engagement.

⁴⁵¹ Willard, *The Great Omission*, 132.

⁴⁵² Matt 4:1-22, Matt 14:13, Matt 14:23, Matt 17: 1-9, Matt 26:36-46, Luke 6:12, Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35

in secret.⁴⁵³ Christian discipleship needs spiritual practices that include silence and solitude if we are to grow in self-knowledge and wholesomely contribute to our Christian communities and the world in which we live. The need for these will likely grow as we age. Hence, if we do not teach Christians how to develop personal spiritual practices, this lack will likely result in shallow corporate church life with few deeply wise elders, whose insights and understanding we so desperately need. As Richard Rohr warns us:-

“... we have an entire generation of educators, bishops, and political leaders who are still building their personal towers of success, and therefore have little ability to elder the young or challenge the beginners. In some ways, they are still beginners themselves. Self-knowledge is dismissed as psychology, love as “feminine softness,” ...This does not bode well for the future of any church or society.”⁴⁵⁴

It would seem then that personal discipleship is the key to both a healthy community and a personal spiritual life. The resulting self-knowledge provides what is required for the church to avoid the dangers inherent within community life and mission. Further, it is what is needed for the growth of much-needed wise elders. Additionally, to develop ways of engaging in the true hospitality that loves and spiritually supports people without the expectation of church attendance may be a valuable way for the UCSA to offer a rich and meaningful spiritual life to those who may never walk into our churches.

⁴⁵³ Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, 17.

⁴⁵⁴ Rohr, *Falling Upward*, 42-43.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

There is much to celebrate about the Uniting Church in South Australia. Its strength is its active involvement within political and social justice arenas. Its call “to engage in fearless prophetic ministry in relation to social evils which deny God’s active will for justice and peace”,⁴⁵⁵ puts it at the forefront of activism when there is political or social inequality. It advocates justice through *Uniting Justice*, engages with social care through *Uniting Communities* and supports Australians in remote outback communities through *Frontier Services*.⁴⁵⁶ The UCSA attempts to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples together in peace and reconciliation and strongly advocates for Indigenous peoples’ land rights and leadership through *the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC)*.⁴⁵⁷ It also seeks to be inclusive and accommodating of an increasingly multicultural Australia, through its *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Ministry*.⁴⁵⁸ Further, the Uniting Church in Australia is the first of the three main churches in Australia to allow its ministers and church congregations to choose whether they will marry gay people,⁴⁵⁹ according to their conscience. The Uniting Church has achieved much, and there is cause to be deeply thankful for its presence.

But Uniting Church congregations are aging, and many are closing in the light of a Christian West that is not what it was. There are sociological reasons for this. But theology is also an issue with discernible tension between what has been, what currently is and what is yet to come. This became apparent through the questioning of protestant Christianity during the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century and has grown through criticism of the church’s

⁴⁵⁵ Uniting Church in Australia Assembly. “*About the Uniting Church in Australia*”. Accessed July 12, 2020. <https://assembly.uca.org.au/about/uca>.

⁴⁵⁶ Uniting Church in Australia Assembly. “*About*”.

⁴⁵⁷ Uniting Church in Australia Assembly. “*About*”.

⁴⁵⁸ The Uniting Church in Australia. “*Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Ministry: About CALD Ministry*”. Accessed October 25, 2020. [https://sa.uca.org.au/cald/Synod of South Australia](https://sa.uca.org.au/cald/Synod%20of%20South%20Australia)

⁴⁵⁹ Robyn Whitaker, “After a long Struggle, the Uniting Church becomes the first to offer same-sex marriage”, *Theconversation.com*. Accessed July 12, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/after-a-long-struggle-the-uniting-church-becomes-the-first-to-offer-same-sex-marriage-102842>.

colonial endeavours in the early twentieth century. It intensified during the horrors of the First World War, which fuelled a further shift in societal thinking away from Christianity and the church. After World War II, this shift began to translate into physical church decline exacerbated by theological tensions. Today, there are those uncomfortable with traditional understandings of the Christian faith and wishing to engage with faith differently. Consequently, many are voting with their feet.

The result is that the institutional protestant church no longer holds primary sway over the spiritual lives of Western people. As this study has shown, religion and spirituality are alive and well but meeting together for worship and other activities within an institutional church setting is not the only or even the best way to express one's Christian faith. Nor are church congregations God's primary vehicle for reaching the world. There are certainly sociological and psychological benefits to regular church attendance, but these benefits do not outweigh those of personal spiritual practice. For some, church attendance has been a negative experience. And, as Jung's psychology demonstrates, meeting in groups without accompanying self-knowledge has the potential for damage.

There are some joining experientially charged Pentecostal churches. Others are living deeply committed Christian lives without any engagement with formal religious institutions at all. Some are opting for smaller, more intimate gatherings. Within Australia then, there are many seeking a deep spiritual life and these days are spiritually educated and confident enough to do so outside of institutional religion. Many are mixing and matching in terms of growing their spiritual lives in an increasingly multi-cultural and thus multi-faith society. What this means for UCSA congregations is that mission that expects to result in regular church attendance and church growth is unlikely to be very fruitful and they must face the reality that is the congregation is but one of many vehicles through which God touches the world. Sadly, for the church, however, it is one that continues to decline.

Equally, this study shows that in the UCSA's deep concern for its own survival, it would be a mistake to assume that God is equally troubled by it and requires that the church save itself. Potentially to do so may be nothing more than a projection onto God of the church's own desire to survive. There is no evidence that God is opposed to institutional church decline. The *missio Dei* and The Great Commission have grown as missional theologies as a response to disinterest in institutional Protestant Christianity and waning congregational numbers. Both seek, in their own way, to prove that the institutional church is God's primary vehicle for God's love within the world. This study, however, shows that this is not true. God is and always has been demonstrably manifest everywhere; within the church, and outside of it.

It is reasonable from an institutional perspective that the UCSA try to survive for the sake of those it exists to serve. However, continuing to insist that the church's mission must be based around and focus upon growing the local church congregation is unlikely to be either effective or beneficial in serving the world into the future. The stark reality is that most people are not going to attend our church gatherings, a problem exacerbated by the theological problems keeping many people away. For the church to have true and loving effectiveness into the future begs the question, "How else might we as church lovingly support peoples' journeys without expecting that they join our churches?"

And as we look to Jesus as our guide for spiritual living, we note that his overarching message to us is the need to embrace life, death, and resurrection as a model for church life. For decades now, the church has grasped at the theologies of the *missio Dei* and the Great Commission as attempts to reverse church decline with increasing strident theological insistence that the institutional church must not die. For the most part, this has been to little avail. Yet, the God of love continually encourages us to follow Jesus in his self-emptying love for the sake of the world. Self-survival was never part of Jesus' message, and by insisting that the church must live, perhaps we have unwittingly sent a message that self-interest is more important than love.

Indeed, the theology of 'monos' – the single-minded search for God, which undergirds Benedictine monasticism is just one example of a missional theology unconcerned with church survival or indeed increasing numerically, and yet results in a rich, fruitful spiritual life rooted in God's love, reaching out into the world.

Further, in its desire to survive, the church is in danger of continuing to perpetuate faith formation that is more concerned with mission than God. In doing so, it undervalues the lives of its people beyond church attendance and takes their focus away from feeding their relationship with God by insisting they instead be missional. Thankfully, the UCSA seems to be taking small steps to address this issue. Educating its people on how to grow through personal spiritual practice beyond church attendance is an imperative part of what it means to be church. Spiritual disciplines which include silence and solitude are essential to counteract the church's tendency to over-promote corporate engagement. Further they may help avoid the fall into the spiritual and psychological dangers of the collective unconscious, personal and corporate projection and spiritual shallowness that have been all too prevalent throughout church history. Personal spiritual practice leads to self-knowledge and true and deep spiritual maturity. Ultimately and paradoxically, it is this Christ-centredness, that quite naturally leads to the outworking of God's self-giving love, aimed at the transformation of each of us, the Church and all of creation.

The future of the UCSA does not lie in its continued attempts to save its own life by increasing church attendance but in the letting itself go for the sake of the world. It is time to embrace God's generous invitation to a Greater Journey beyond the church's desire to survive, towards a New Life yet to be discovered.

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