

God @ Work:
Understanding the
Nature of God and the
Nature of God's Work
{Inspire Conference
11th October 2018

“Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places” (Eugene Peterson)
begins by discussing a sonnet written by Gerald Manly
Hopkins.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;



... like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;



**Each mortal thing does one thing and
the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one
dwells;
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and
spells,
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.**

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—

Christ—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

{ '*Gnadenstuhl*': Latin Church (Middle Ages)



{ Andrei Rublev: Orthodox Moscow (15th century).



(Re)Considering the Nature of the Trinity

Abandoning the Trinity?

the Trinity: A Four Part Harmon

Deut 6:4-5

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is **one** [The LORD our God is **one** LORD; or The LORD is our God, the LORD is **one**; or The LORD is our God, the LORD **alone**]. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength...

They exist eternally **with, for, and in** one another; yet all **retain their identities** in personal relationship with one another. They constitute a **living communion of mutual self-giving**, so that God's being is essentially **relational** and there is no **solitude or self-centredness** in the eternal Trinity; instead **holy love** is, and always has been, at the very heart of the Godhead.

Unity

Article 5.3 of *The Confession of Faith*

The Father speaks, and Christ is the Word that is spoken. **The Son** is eternally generated by the Father, Light of Light, God of God. In him the fullness of Deity dwells. Through him the Father made all things, reconciles us to the Godhead, and saves us from sin and death. **The Holy Spirit** is the Spirit of God eternally proceeding from the Father through the Son and operating in and through the Son, who sends the Spirit into the world to give life, renew, sanctify and guide.

Diversity

[t]here are **neither leaders nor followers** in the divine dance, only an eternal movement of reciprocal giving and receiving, giving again and receiving again ... The idea of Trinitarian perichoresis provides a marvelous point of entry into contemplating what it means to say that **God is alive from all eternity in love.**

The Koinonia of the

Perichoresis

Catherine LaCugna

The Father is revealed by the **Son** through the **Spirit**, and no one comes to the Father except through the Son and in the Spirit. No one comes to the **Son** and confesses him as **Lord** unless drawn by the **Father** and moved by the **Spirit**.

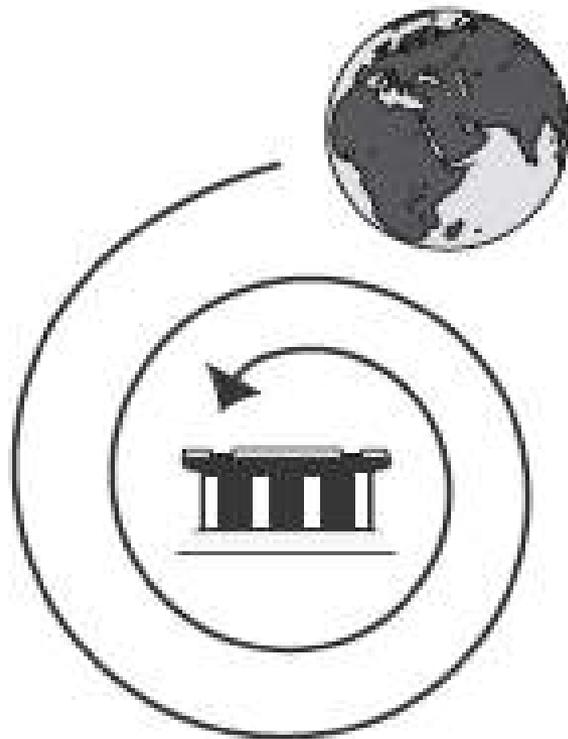
The Komnionia of the Perichoresis
Article 5.5 of the *Confession*

All outward action of the Godhead begins with the Father and proceeds through the Son in the Spirit. Though God the **Father particularly is the Creator and Sustainer** of all things, **God the Son the Revealer and Reconciler** and **God the Spirit the Giver of Life and Sanctifier**, all three share together in the creation and preservation of all things, the revelation of God's truth, the reconciliation and redemption of humankind, and the renewal and perfection of creation. **For all three are one in being, nature, will and work, the same in goodness, justice, love and mercy.**

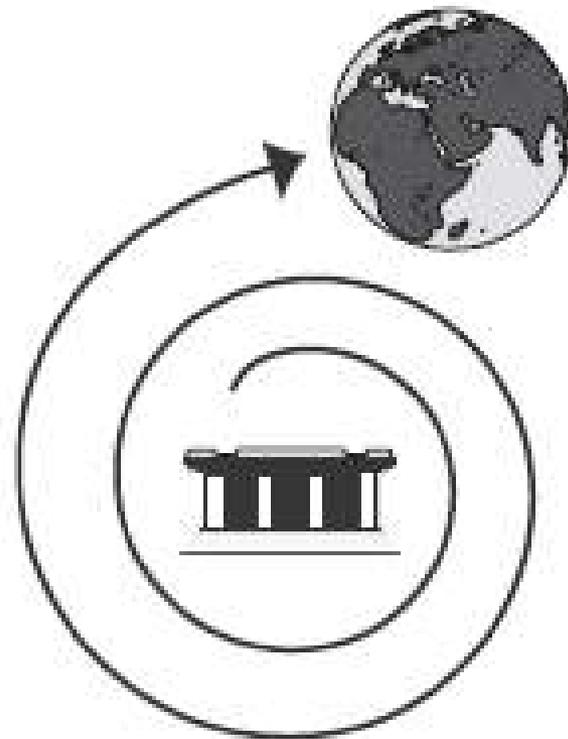
Article 5.4 of the *Confession*

Transcendence

	Centripetal movement: from periphery to centre	Centrifugal movement: from centre to periphery
One ... but three	Unity	Diversity
Three .. . but one	Koinonia / Perichoresis	Transcendence



An Attractive Force
"Come to the Blessing"
Centripetal Force



An Expansive Force
"Go to the Nations"
Centrifugal Force

Figure 1 Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces

“The key to the relation between the universal and the particular is God’s way of election. The one (or the few) is chosen for the sake of the many; the particular is chosen for the sake of the universal.”

Newbigin, *“The Open Secret”* (1995)

The Community of the Trinity and Election

“... Election not simply to privilege but to responsibility. God’s people have constantly forgotten that fact both under the old covenant and under the new and have therefore brought the whole idea of divine election into disrepute.”

Newbigin “*A Faith for this One World*” (1961)

The Community of the Trinity and Election

“In the new image, mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God ... Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission ... There is church because there is mission, not vice versa ... To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”

The Trinity and The Mission (1991):
of God

“[T]he work of God through which everything that He has in mind for man’s salvation – the complete fullness of His Kingdom of redemption – is offered to me through those whom He has sent, so that men, freed from sin and removed from the other kingdom, can again fully come into His fellowship.”

Hedlund (1991):

The Trinity and The Mission of God

“The guiding theme is the notion of missio Dei: God is a missionary God, the church is mission, and the church has no mission but the “mission of God.” Another way of saying this is that there is a church because of the missio Dei, which draws the church into God's missional work of redemption. In the words of David Bosch, “Missio Dei enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people.”

**The Trinity and The Mission
of God**

McKnight (2008)

The church, as that Kingdom community and agent of social transformation, continues to be governed, guided by and determined by the reality of the reign of God, the Kingdom-among-us.

**The Link Between God's Mission
and the Kingdom of God**

“... [T]here is a society in which the life of the crucified and risen Jesus lives on and his mission continues, not only as the proclamation of the kingdom, but as the presence of the kingdom in the form of death and resurrection ... The presence of the kingdom, hidden and revealed in the cross of Jesus, is carried through history hidden and revealed in the life of the community which bears in its life the dying and rising of Jesus.”

Newbigin (1995):

**Jesus and the Kingdom of
God in First Century
Palestine**

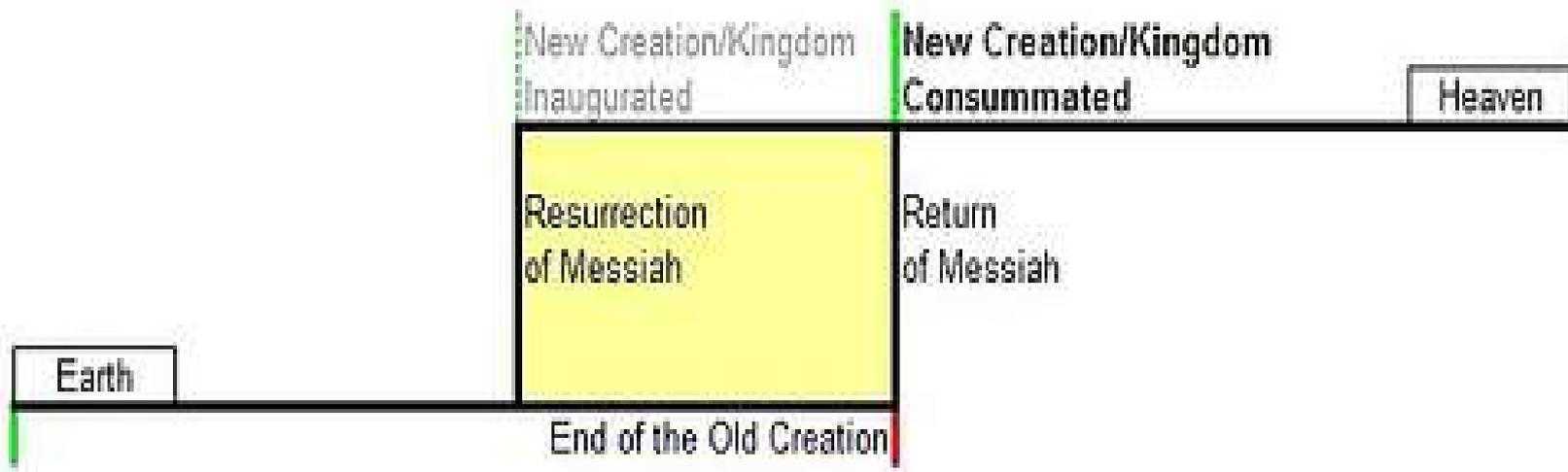
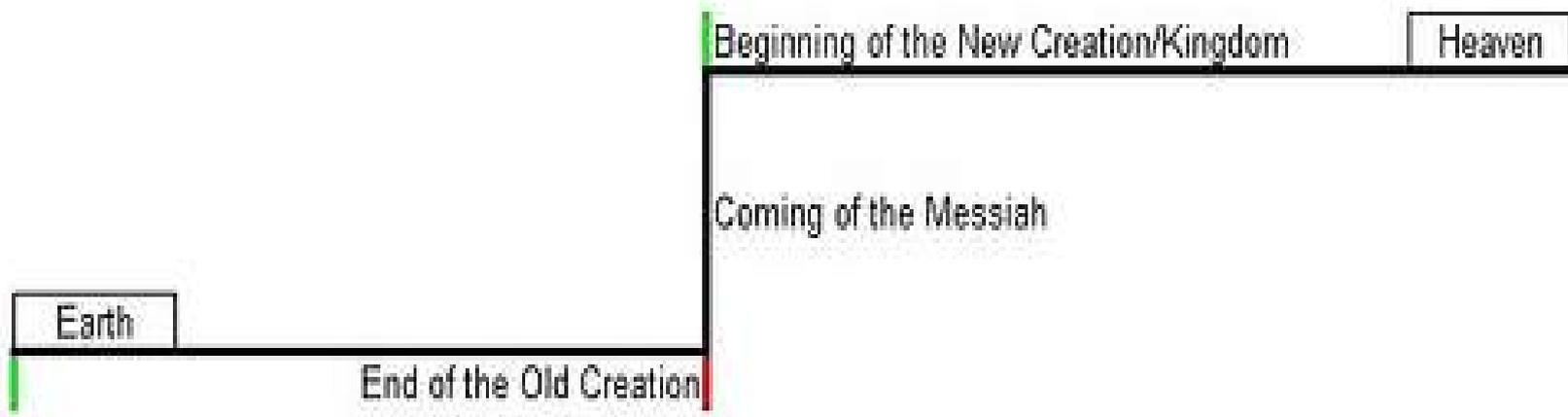
“... the Church is a foretaste, and that means it will be different from the world, that the reality which we celebrate, which we share, which we rejoice in in our worship is a reality which the world treats as an illusion... It can also be an instrument through which God’s will for justice and peace and freedom is done in the world. ... The Church is a sign of the Kingdom, pointing people to a reality which is beyond what they can see.”

**Jesus and the Kingdom of
God in First Century
Palestine** ^{Newbigin (1988):}

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the **First and the Last**. I am the **Living One**; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I **hold the keys of death and Hades.**”

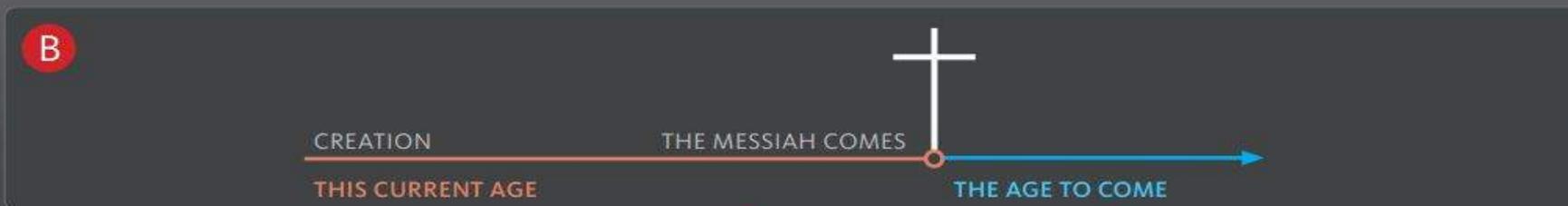
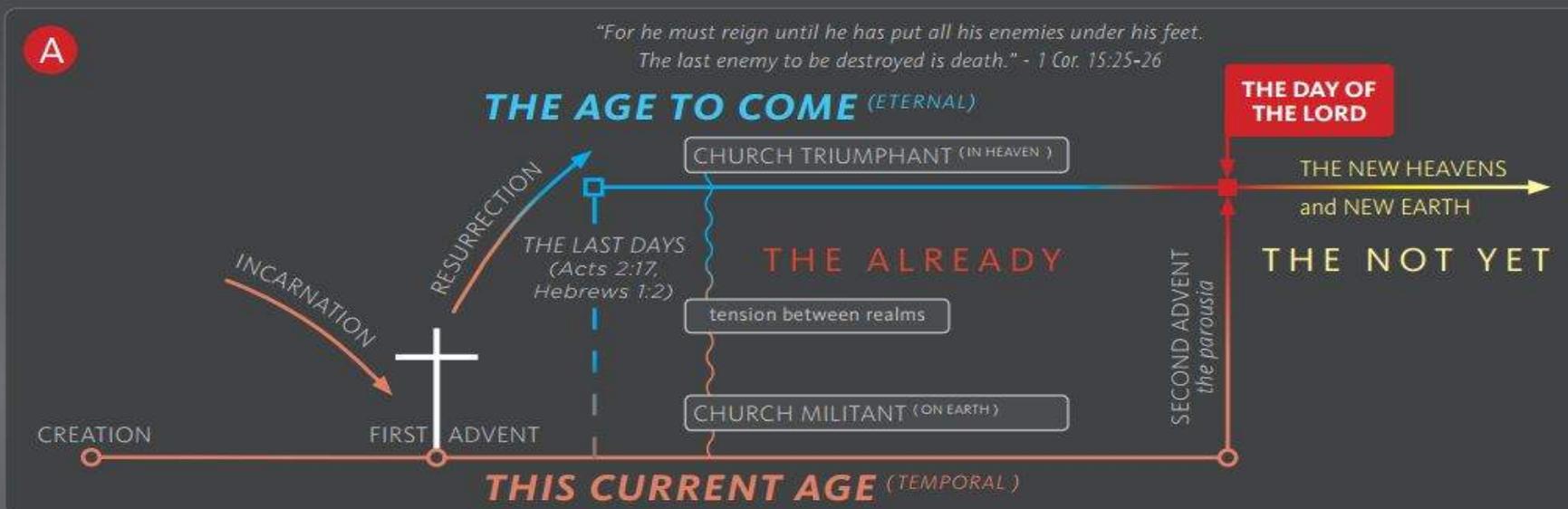
Revelation 1:17-18

²⁴
The Role of Jesus After the Ascension



TWO-AGE ESCHATOLOGY

Concepts from *The Pauline Eschatology*, by Geerhardus Vos



With progressive revelation, the coming of Christ is now understood as two advents **A**, not as one, as the saints of the OT saw **B**. There are two ages in human history: this current age and the age to come. This current age is temporal. The age to come is eternal. There is an overlap of the two ages between the two comings. While we live in this current age, we also belong to the age to come. There is a tension and even conflict between these two realms. This tension continues from the first coming until the second. It is the first coming of Christ that is definitive and conclusive, not the second. Hence, our hope is sure and certain, even though it is not seen.

“...that before the eschatological appearance of God’s Kingdom at the end of the age, God’s Kingdom has become dynamically active among men in Jesus’ person and mission. The Kingdom in this age is not merely the abstract concept of God’s universal rule to which we must submit; it is rather a dynamic power at work among men. ... Before the apocalyptic coming of God’s kingdom and the final manifestation of his rule to bring in the new age, God has manifested his rule, his Kingdom, to bring to men in advance of the eschatological era the blessings of his redemptive reign.”

“As interpreted by Jesus himself, His total career on earth was the crisis in which the long awaited kingdom of God came upon man. The crisis began when he started his Ministry; it was complete when he returned from death. The thing had happened. They needed no longer to say, ‘The Son of man will come’; He had come; He was sitting on the throne of his glory, the invisible King of mankind. This is the faith of the New Testament.”

CH Dodd (1954:16):

- The Goal and Purpose of History Has Been Realized
- A New Age of Salvation
- Satan Decisively Defeated
- The Kingdom Creates a New Community
- *Koinonia* as the Basis of the Kingdom Community

29
Implications of the Presence of the Future

The Shape and Form of Missional Communities

“... the new world that God is creating, a world in which people from every nation and every tribe, with their cultural goods, will gather around the triune God, a world in which every tear will be wiped away and ‘pain will be no more’ (Revelation 21:3) ”

The Shape and Form of Missional Communities

“...this fellowship or community derives from the perichoretic community of God” and that “The Spirit who sanctifies creates not just individualistic Christians but a community in which love redemptively creates

The Shape and Form of Missional Communities

“The gospel restores cracked Eikons with God, with self, and with others—so that they can be missionally involved with one another in the world ... The fellowship of the Christians created a community wherein true justice was worked out, wherein healthy, loving relationships were the norm, and wherein response to the society was one of benefaction and compassion.”

A Journey into Missional Leadership: Servant Leaders

If this is something of the shape and form of missional communities, *what does it mean to be a leader in such a community?*

A Journey into Missional Leadership: Servant Leaders

Missional leadership refers to the **conversational processes** of **envisioning**, cultural and spiritual **formation**, and **structuring** within a Christian community that enable individual participants, groups, and the community as a whole to respond to challenging situations and engage in **transformative changes** that are necessary to **become** or **remain oriented** to

A Journey into Missional Leadership: Servant Leaders

“...decisions must be shared by the largest possible number of participants and that calls for a group conversation process that will involve talking with God and with one another until a decision and an action

A Journey into Missional Leadership: Servant Leaders

Missional leader: someone who is committed to seeking, along with others, to know what God is up to in our midst in order to discover what Kiefert calls our “preferred and promised future”.

A Journey into Missional Leadership: Servant Leaders

“In Matthew 12:15-21, the first evangelist is clear in presenting the ministry of Christ the Messiah as the embodiment of the suffering servant of Isaiah.”

McKnight (2007)

A Journey into Missional Leadership: Servant Leaders

Spirituality of servant leadership

- 1. Task competence + humility**
- 2. Transactional leadership + persuasion and boundary crossing**
- 3. Transforming leadership**

Christian Leaders as
Servants of Christ in 1
Cor 4:1-5

¹ This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed ...

Christian Leaders as Servants of Christ in 1 Cor 4:1-5

Leaders as Stewards

In the first place, leaders of missional faith communities are expected to be stewards. A steward is a housekeeper, a servant. In v1, Paul makes an opening statement formulated as a rhetorical question. “How should we regard our call?” The answer is “we are called as servants of Christ” - those who serve the church and the world on Christ’s behalf.

Christian Leaders as
Servants of Christ in 1
Cor 4:1-5

¹ This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. ² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Christian Leaders as Servants of Christ in 1 Cor 4:1-5

The Requirements of Stewards

In verse 2, the question is “What then is required of the stewards?” That is, they are to “prove faithful” - be trustworthy. The test for faithfulness, for us, is whether we are administering the trust that has been placed in us by God. And faithful persons are those who continually ask the questions of faith, “What in heaven’s name is God up to?”

**Christian Leaders as
Servants of Christ in 1
Cor 4:1-5**

³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Christian Leaders as
Servants of Christ in 1
Cor 4:1-5

The Assessment of Stewards' Ministry

In the end, Paul tells us in verse 4 that even his own assessment of his ministry is not necessarily worth much. So Paul knows it doesn't matter much how highly he may assess his ministry. In the end, security in the Day of Judgment, in the day when "the Lord" (Jesus) examines him, security

**Christian Leaders as
Servants of Christ in 1
Cor 4:1-5**

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of people's hearts. At that time each will receive their praise

Christian Leaders as Servants of Christ in 1 Cor 4:1-5

The Assessment of Stewards' Ministry

“To so desist does not mean that the quality of the minister’s work will not be tested and revealed ... Instead of making such judgments now, the Corinthians must ‘wait until the Lord (Jesus) comes. For, as the rest of that verse indicates, the judgment that will accompany that ‘revelation’ (1:7) will be far more searching than any human can achieve.”

Giampa and Bosner (2010)

Christian Leaders as Servants of Christ in 1 Cor 4:1-5

The Assessment of Stewards' Ministry

“All human evaluations are premature and inconsequential in the light of this judgment, whether it be the appraisal of one’s own consciousness, of the Corinthian community, or of a human tribunal. When the Lord comes, God will inspect the steward’s fidelity, penetrating the depths of the human heart, exposing the individual’s true colors.”

Christian Leaders as Servants of Christ in 1 Cor 4:1-5

The Assessment of Stewards' Ministry

In that day our secret acts and even thoughts, will be revealed. So when it comes to the praise or otherwise of a steward's ministry, let it be done in that day, and let it be done by the Lord. It is not wise to praise either Paul or Apollos. Best to leave it to the Lord to give praise where praise is due.

“... Christians should avoid the despair of assuming failure in advance of the day of the Lord or the presumption of assuming total success in advance of it.”

Developing a Missional Community as a Community of Discernment

- **How are servant leaders to help congregations to become part of the life of the Trinity?**
- **How do they help congregations envision what God is inviting them to become involved with? How are they to facilitate change in accordance**

Developing a Missional Community as a Community of Discernment

The process

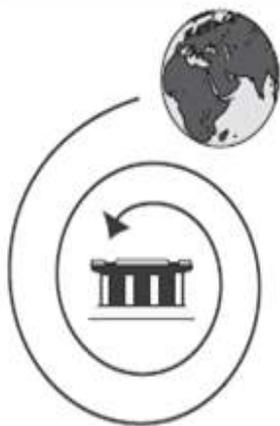
1. Intentional slowing
2. Adopting a discipline that is appropriate for that setting
3. Deep listening
4. Letting go

Simpson (2012):

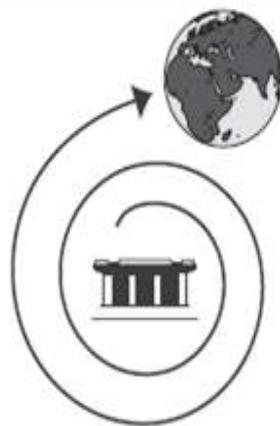
Developing a Missional Community as a Community of Discernment

5. Detecting divinity

In the fifth phase, the group waits on the Spirit to discern whether God is busy with the process of disruption or affirmation within the faith community within which the group is situated. The process of affirmation or disruption comes from the shared insights from the group's listening



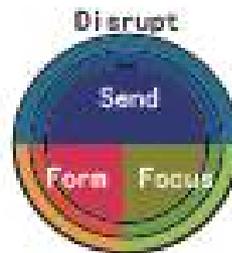
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Figure 1 Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces





Developing a Missional Community as a Community of Discernment

The Process

1. Intentional slowing
2. Adopting a discipline that is appropriate for that setting
3. Deep listening
4. Letting go
5. Detecting divinity: Affirmation / Disruption
6. Finding focus and
7. Living love

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the
soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wing

Gerald Manly Hopkins