

## How Leadership Network created the "Emerging Church"

(courtesy of Discernment Research Group)

There are many interconnections between Bob Buford of the Leadership Network, Rick Warren of "purpose-driven" fame, and Brian McLaren of the "Emerging Church." On the website <http://www.anewkindofchristian.com/archives/000226.html>, "The website for A New Kind of Christian, Brian McLaren answers the question, "How did Emergent start?"

"1. Emergent grew out of the Young Leader Networks, which was launched in the mid-90's by Leadership Network, a Dallas-based foundation. Doug Pagitt, Chris Seay, Andrew Jones, Brad Smith, and others were involved before I was, and they did a great job of setting a tone and direction for the emergent conversation."

In order to understand the significance of this answer, a bit of background information might be helpful. This is a movement that is bringing in new doctrines and new church structures, particularly targeted at a younger generation of Christians. Berit Kjos, writing about Brian McLaren, notes the connection between McLaren and Rick Warren and comments on the methods of changing doctrine:

"While many pastors and church leaders have written books that describe this spiritual transformation, the message of Pastor Brian McLaren carries more weight since he is an acknowledged leader in this movement. Some of his articles are posted at <http://www.pastors.com/>, a website founded by Pastor Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*. McLaren's book, *A New Kind of Christian*, is written as a semi-fictional dialogue, so that readers can experience the thrill of questioning old truths and discovering new truth through the dialectic process. . . . [T]he introduction touts the postmodern worldview while raising doubts about Biblical faith . . . . "

[<http://www.crossroad.to/News/Church/Klenck2.html>]

Robert Klenck, in an excellent and comprehensive article at <http://www.crossroad.to/Excerpts/church/new-kind-christian.htm> entitled "What's Wrong With the 21st Century Church?" writes about the purpose of the Emerging Church:

"The Mission of the Leadership Network is to 'Accelerate the emergence of the 21st-century church,' and that the (emerging) 'paradigm (of the 21st century church) is **not centered in theology**, but rather it is focused on structure, organization, and the **transition** from an institutionally based church to a mission-driven church.' [emphasis added]

"The Young Leader Networks, affiliated with the Leadership Network, under the heading 'People We Connect' state that they connect 'Theologians who **construct new theologies** that emerge out of practice.' and that 'We need your help to move to this “**new age**” of ministry built upon various experiences and expressions (emphasis added).' 'Our vision is to contextualize our message...by narrative preaching opposed to propositional. ... within the framework of **relationship**. We prefer the mediums of art, expression, and experience opposed to a 95-point sermon used by generations before us to communicate **truth**.'" [emphasis added]

[A more comprehensive history and explanation of Bob Buford and the Leadership Network is found in Robert Klenck's report, "How Diaprax Manifests Itself in the Church (Growth Movement)," available in a booklet published by the Institution for Authority Research's "Readings in the Dialectic" (e-mail [iardeangotcher@yahoo.com](mailto:iardeangotcher@yahoo.com) for information on how to purchase this excellent report). For more information on the Leadership Network and Rick Warren, see "The Shepherding Movement Comes of Age," at [http://www.discernment-ministries.org/NLjanfeb\\_2003.htm](http://www.discernment-ministries.org/NLjanfeb_2003.htm) and "The Pied Pipers of Purpose," [http://www.discernment-ministries.org/Purpose\\_Driven.pdf](http://www.discernment-ministries.org/Purpose_Driven.pdf).]

### "What Is Emerging?"

In an article with this title, Chuck Smith, Jr. wrote in April 28, 2005, under a section entitled "Rewind to the 1970s" that Leadership Network had a direct role in setting up the Emergent Church:

"As far back as 1970, Larry Richards was calling for *A New Face for the Church* and in 1975 Howard Snyder pointed out *The Problem with Wineskins*. The student revolution of the 1960s marked the beginning of change in western society, and prescient believers were already discovering that the church would have to alter some of its structures in order to recast biblical community in the new world, still forming. The recommended changes of the '60s, however, had more to do with tweaking existing

structures rather than calling the entire structure, right down to its foundation, into question.

"In the last decade of the 20th century, a small group of Christian leaders were drawn together by their mutual conviction that evangelicalism had produced a subculture that was no longer the best possible representation of Christianity. The world that had given birth to North American evangelical institutions (established basically through the 1940s to the 1960s) had disappeared by 1990. These believers realized that pushing the same methodologies (perhaps even the idea of methodology) and striving to salvage the old worldview would increasingly alienate popular culture and future generations of Christian youth.

"The group that met together to discuss these issues was fortunately blessed with astute and theologically informed thinkers like Brian McLaren and Tony Jones; ecclesiastical innovators like Todd Hunter, Chris Seay, and Brad Cecil; advocates of worship renewal like Sally Morgenthaler; and world-Christians like Andrew Jones. Scholars who had been discerning the times—Len Sweet, Stanley Grenz, N. T. Wright, Robert Webber, and Dallas Willard, to name a few—forged a biblical vocabulary that enabled the early team to converse intelligently on issues that were their passion. All of them shared two basic beliefs: western culture had radically changed since the 1950s, and the church desperately needed renovation to respond to cultural changes.

"The more the original crew talked among themselves, the more their numbers grew. In the early 1990s, **Leadership Network provided the initial platform** for them to generate more discussions and host conferences. Later they adopted the name **The TerraNova Project**, and **when Leadership Network withdrew its support, they became Emergent**, which Brian McLaren insists is a conversation rather than a movement."

[New link

<http://www.forministry.com/vsItemDisplay.dsp&objectID=A670797B-0CBE-43D1-A877B4F9EA43CC4F&method=display&templateID=C3435351-D45C-4B52-867A3F794D1CD85C>, emphasis added]

Brian McLaren confirms this history in an interview at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week846/interview.html>, July 15, 2005, in answer to the question "How did all of this get started?"

"Well, back in the early 1990s there was an organization called Leadership Network funded by an individual in Texas, and Leadership Network was bringing together the leaders of megachurches around the country. By the early and mid-'90s, they noticed, though, that the kinds of people that were coming to their events were getting a year older every year, and there wasn't a [group of] younger people filling in. They were one of the first major organizations to notice this.

"They started realizing that there was a sentence that was being said by church leaders of all denominations across the country, and that was, "You know, we don't have anybody between 18 and 35." When they started paying attention to this increased dropout rate among young adults in church attendance, that opened up a discussion in the mid-'90s about Gen X. And so they started bringing together young leaders in the Gen X category to talk about what was working in the church, what wasn't working, what was going on.

"After a couple of years some of these young Gen X guys said, 'You know, it's not really about a generation. It's really about philosophy; it's really about a cultural shift. It's not just about a style of dress, a style of music, but that there's something going on in our culture. And those of us who are younger have to grapple with this and live with this.'" The term that they were using was the shift from modern to a postmodern culture. And so what began to happen -- and as this thing had a life of its own, they said, 'If it's not just about Gen X, then we have to make sure that we get some older people who aren't just in that age frame to talk about this.'

"I had just written a book on the subject. That's how I got involved, and it turned out that there were a number of us, all simultaneously thinking we were the only one talking about it and thinking and writing about it, who all around the same time were noticing the same phenomenon. So it was a very exciting coming together of these younger leaders and some of us a little bit older, saying, 'This is our world, and this is the future. And the Christian faith and our individual churches, we've got to engage with and deal with it.'"

### **The Truth:**

Pastor Enrique Ivaldi, at [www.freewebs.com/luteranos/](http://www.freewebs.com/luteranos/) in a recent sermon

entitled "Ye are Clean, But Not All," observed:

"There is much truth in what the devil teaches. Remember, the devil is called the master deceiver in Scripture and to deceive people, you have to use truth. You cannot use all error. Nobody would be deceived if it were all error. You have to mix truth and error together and that is what the devil is a master at doing. There is much truth in what the devil teaches. In fact, there is so much truth in it that you may not be able to find anything wrong with it. In these last days that truth will be so combined with error that unless the Holy Ghost is working on your mind, you will not be able to tell the difference."

*"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3)*

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*