

Emergent Church



Emergent Church...aka Emerging and sometimes Emergence

Religious leadership must end its intellectual and imaginative failure to think through what it is doing in the light of the new emerging cosmology, which is hospitable to spirit-matter theories and mind-body experiences.
~ Leonard Sweet

The Emergent/Emerging Church movement is heading towards a crash collision with the New Age movement. In fact, it may already be happening before our very eyes. The Discernment Research Group has reached the inescapable conclusion that this is intentional and it has been planned for over a generation. ~ Sarah Leslie

Definition:

“A label that has been used to refer to a particular subset of Christians who are rethinking Christianity against the backdrop of Postmodernism.” ... “Members of the movement often place a high value on good works or social activism.” (Encyclopedia & Wikipedia)

Emergents “hold to traditional Protestant theological distinctives while rejecting the structures and styles of institutionalized Christianity.”

Emergent church leaders usually adopt the principles of social justice, liberation theology and collective salvation. Some leaders also incorporate elements of Universalism, the Seeker-Friendly Movement, and even New Age Spirituality.

Fast Facts:

Emerging Church groups contain some or all of the following elements:

- Highly creative approaches to worship and spiritual reflection. This can involve everything from the use of contemporary music and films through to liturgy or other more ancient customs. ...
- Does not like to spend money on church buildings. Prefer meeting as “house churches” or in temporary structures such as stores and warehouses.
- A flexible approach to theology whereby individual differences in belief and morality are accepted within reason.
- A more holistic approach to the role of the church in society. This can mean anything from greater emphasis on fellowship in the structure of the group to a higher degree of emphasis on social action, community building or Christian outreach.
- A desire to reanalyze the Bible against the context into which it was written...”
- A reading list that “consists primarily of Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen, N.T. Wright, Stan Grenz, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Jim Wallis, Frederick Buechner, David Bosch, John Howard Yoder, Wendell Berry, Nancy Murphy, John Franke, Walter Winks and Lesslie Newbigin (not to mention McLaren, Pagitt, Bell, etc.) and your sparring partners include D. A. Carson, John Calvin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Wayne Grudem...”
- Political concerns are “poverty, AIDS, imperialism, war-mongering, CEO salaries, consumerism, global warming, racism, and oppression and not so much abortion and gay marriage.”
- Support women in all levels of ministry including women pastors.
- Prefer theology *narrative* instead of *systematic*.

- Following Jesus is living the right way, not believing in the right things.
- Eschatology: Building the kingdom of God on earth.
- **Phrases, Terms, Practices:**
- *Postmodernism, Progressive Evangelicalism, Progressive Christianity, Social Justice Christianity... impartation, implantation, incarnation, visualization, holistic, story, linear, propositional, rational, machine, hierarchy, ancient-future, jazz, mosaic, matrix, missional, vintage, dance...*
- **Practice:**
- Lectio divina a.k.a. spiritual formation...the silence...centering, breath...but is best known as contemplative prayer. This is a growing trend in evangelical churches. The prayer ritual stems from teaching associated with Catholic mystics such as Meister Eckhart, Ignatius of Loyola, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa of Avila. CP was reintroduced by Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Henri Nouwen, William Meninger, Basil Pennington and other mystics. The aim is to achieve an [altered-state-of-consciousness](#))
- **Leaders:**
- There are the well-known emergent leaders: Brian McLaren, Phyllis Tickle, Marcus Borg, Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, Leonard Sweet, Bob Buford, Brennon Manning, Eugene Peterson, Donald Miller, Rob Bell, Erwin McManus, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Jim Willis, Tony Campolo, Richard Rhor, Andy Stanley, John Ortberg, Frank Viola, Laurie Beth Jones, Ruth Haley Barton, Shane Claiborn, Dan Kimball, Shane Hipps, Spencer Burke, Peter Rollins, Steve Chalke, Nadia Bolz-Weber, Jay Bakker and many others.
- Then there is the next generation; the up-and-coming rookies who now are the prolific young voices at leadership conferences (like Catalyst and many others), that you can't easily research because they don't have anything questionable yet attached to their bios. But make no mistake: The leaders of old have not gone away, nor has the movement died. Instead it is shifting into a new or neo mode, making the Neo-Emergent movement even more appealing to a whole new audience of young Christians. It's the same old "Hath God said" lie repackaged into a slick media marketing formula with programs helping many pastors "plug and play" with sermon topics and programs in their own churches to perpetuate the movement. Most don't even know they're doing it.