

Refreshing Established Gospel Movements: How to Lead an Old Organisation with a Fresh Vision

Whilst every generation will be tempted to create new gospel movements, because they believe that established organisations and institutions have become entrenched, irrelevant or moribund, there is also a good case for renewing and refreshing existing movements. The FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches) is a family of over 520 gospel churches in the UK. It was founded over 90 years ago but was becoming culturally conservative, entrenched and ineffective. A younger generation of gospel leaders were beginning to look to join or establish new movements. Four years ago the FIEC underwent a radical transformation and is now a growing and thriving movement of churches that are working together to evangelise the UK. This workshop will share the lessons we have learnt from our experience, explain why it is vital to revitalise existing gospel movements and suggest ideas for how this can be done. If we are to reach Europe for Christ church planting needs to go hand in hand with church revitalisation, and the same is true for inter-church gospel movements. We need both refreshed movements and new movements.

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1. The Origins of the FIEC

- a) Founded 1922
- b) Independent churches
- c) United in the core doctrines of the gospel
- d) Objectives
 - i. avoiding isolation
 - ii. accrediting ministers
 - iii. providing training for leaders
 - iv. collaborative church planting
 - v. practical and legal advice
- e) Growth in the 1960-70
 - i. reaction to liberalism and ecumenism

- f) Identity and culture
- g) Structure and Leadership
 - i. President
 - ii. Council
 - iii. Annual Assembly
 - iv. Staff
- h) Funding

2. Why did the FIEC need radical change?

- a) Lack of clear purpose
- b) Small and aging churches
- c) Culturally conservative
- d) Larger churches disengaged
- e) Other gospel movements displacing
 - i. Proclamation Trust
 - ii. Gospel Partnerships

3. How was structural change accomplished?

- a) Facing up to reality
- b) Loss of major conference
- c) Financial pressures
- d) Bold leadership
- e) Engaging larger churches
- f) Consultation and persuasion

4. Key elements of structural change

- a) Streamlined governance
- b) Executive leadership

- c) Expanded Ministry Orientated Staff
- d) Establishing a Leaders Conference

5. Rebuilding a Gospel Movement

- a) Leadership
 - i. National Director
 - ii. Pastoral Director
 - iii. Training Director
 - iv. Mission Director
 - v. Practical Services Director
- b) Connecting with our history
- c) Changing the culture
- d) Shifting the center of gravity
- e) Winning the younger generation of leaders to the vision
- f) Winning over skeptical churches and leaders
- g) Achieving specific goals that advance the gospel
- h) Adopting a contemporary communications strategy

6. Progress so Far

- a) New churches joining from wide variety of backgrounds
 - i. 520 churches – 60 have joined over 4 years
 - ii. 20 or so churches have closed/left
- b) Funding from churches has doubled
- c) £750k raised to invest in training
- d) Engagement of FIEC with wider evangelicalism
- e) Cooperative relationships with other networks/movements
- f) Growing Leaders' Conference
- g) Commitment to Theological Education

7. Looking to the Future

- a) We have only begun to scratch the surface
- b) “Working together to evangelise Britain and beyond”
- c) Revitalizing small and struggling churches
- d) International equivalents of FIEC – Australia, South Africa, Europe?

8. Some Key Lessons

- a) You don't always have to re-invent the wheel – movements can be refreshed
- b) Clarity of vision and purpose is vital
- c) Leadership is key to creating the culture and facilitating change
- d) Learn from others – both their strengths, successes weaknesses and mistakes
- e) Invest for the long term not short term – we are building for future generations
- f) Accept that some will leave/complain
- g) Achieve some demonstrable benefits that are steps towards long term objectives

Suggested Readings:

On the history of the FIEC (where we have come from):

T H Bendor Samuel, *Keeping the Faith: FIEC 1922-1992*

David Fountain, *Contending for the Faith*, The Wakeman Trust

On the revitalization of the FIEC:

<http://www.john-stevens.com/2012/07/fiec-news-beginning-to-deliver.html>

<http://www.john-stevens.com/2012/03/fiec-news-our-vision-and-progress.html>

Look out for:

Stevens et al, *In_dependency*, 10ofthose 2014. A collection of essays on independent church ecclesiology and practice to be published in late 2014.