

Connecting with Your Community: Learning How to Communicate the Gospel Effectively

There was a time when local churches enjoyed a positive and trusted relationship with their immediate community in many European nations. Although there were always some exceptional cases, many congregations played a significant part in shaping the community and culture in which they lived, worshipped and witnessed. However, since the last half of the 20th century that relationship of trust has broken down and it is now much harder for Christians to share their faith with a community that no longer offers trust and a ready hearing for the gospel. There is a need to create a conversation in situations where the only conversation might be “why don’t you attend our church anymore?”

Martin Robinson is Principal and Chief Executive of Springdale College: Together in Mission. Martin was born in India of missionary parents and then brought up in Scotland where his father was a church planter. When Martin was in his early twenties he trained for the ministry, and his first church was in the inner city of Birmingham. This multi-ethnic congregation was engaged in church planting, and Martin together with his wife Lynda led one of the new church plants. After thirteen years in local ministry, Martin went to work for the Bible Society in the UK in a variety of roles. In a period he was the Director of Mission and Theology. Martin has written many books on the broad theme of mission, including *Faith of the Believer* and *Invading Secular Space*. In 2002 Martin became national director of Together in Mission. In 2008 he became Principal of Springdale College. These two organizations (Together in Mission and Springdale College) became one organization in 2009 and will soon take the name ForMission.

1. The story of your local church

- a. Stories that are foundational for your church
- b. What is the foundational story of your church?
- c. What are the stories that enable you to interpret the life of your church now?

2. The story of your local community

- a. Who knows the story of your local community?
- b. Who has and who does not have power in your local community?
- c. What might God be doing in your community?

- d. Where might you sense that there are beginning points for you in the community?

3. Leadership that connects with community

- a. Leadership is always more than one
- b. Leadership reflects a range of ministry gifts
- c. Leadership equips the saints
- d. Leadership models the community it seeks to create

4. Congregational Life that connects with community

- a. Redolent of the gospel
- b. Generous / hospitable
- c. Table Talk
- d. Spiritual Practices

5. Connecting with neighbourhood

- a. We have tended to look at the church and not at the community - that needs to change

- b. Listening and looking for the presence of God

- c. Locating people of peace

- d. Identifying and responding to need

- e. Changing the conversation with missional experiment

Additional Resources

- Roxburgh, Alan, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, 2011.
- Robinson, Martin and Smith, Dwight, *Invading Secular Space: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church*, 2003.
- Roxburgh, Alan, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*