



Central Baptist Church

Conference 09

Edging in.....Mission
from the Margins.

Conference Report
Analysis and Feedback



Contents

1. Introduction by the Lead Pastor
2. Summary of the Conference
 - Decisions.
 - Main issues raised.
 - What happens next?

1. Introduction.

The purpose of this report is to clarify what happened at our Church Conference back in May and to plot the way forward. The key component of our Conference was the adoption of the three 'Aims' (Christ-centred, Communal, Creative) as outlined in the 'Edging in....Mission from the Margins' booklet of which more will be said later.

Although our main purpose was the adoption of the 'Aims', there was also an opportunity for the wider church family to pray and talk together about what we do and the way in which we do it. The Baptist concept of the church meeting is one in which God's people come together to seek, in prayer and in fellowship, 'the mind of Christ'. What a joy it was for us to see this happening in our Conference. At times during the day we were elated, sometimes challenged, at other times we laughed together. Such is the nature of Christian fellowship.

During the day the significant contributions of the various groups and individuals were recorded and have now been compiled into a more comprehensive report (available on request) that will provide a reference for us in years to come. Having adopted the three 'Aims', our plan is to come back to each individual 'Aim' over the next three years. This will allow us to assess where we are as a church in these particular areas and to pray and think strategically about where the Spirit of God would lead us.

We have already seen real progress this past year in the provision of 'The Link' which will give us an added dimension to what we can do in years to come. We have also seen the beginning of new ministries like the Welcome Team, Prayer Team, Christianity Explored, the Marriage Course, the revamping of the website, and the prospect of the Discipleship Course starting in early 2010.

Lastly, I want to thank all those who contributed to make the day such a success. There are too many people to mention individually. The 16th of May 2009 was – and will yet prove to be – a significant day for our church family at 'Central'. Please continue to pray that the Lord would keep us united and focused on the things that matter to God.

Yours in 'Him'

Jim.
(Lead Pastor)



2. Summary of the Conference.

In the booklet that everybody received at the start of the conference the introduction stated:

Our aim during this time together is quite simple. It is to exalt the Lord in examining what we do as a church and the way in which we do it. We will be looking at the three aims that form the core of the 'Edging in...' publication and proposing that we adopt these aims as a church.

On reflection we can testify to the fact that the time spent together was a time of great blessing for all who were there, and that throughout the day the Lord was exalted in all that was said and done. The key objectives set for the day were satisfied, and the progress made encouraging.

The key objective of the Conference was to consider the adoption of the three aims outlined in the booklet "Edging in ... Mission from the Margins". Each aim was the focus of one of the sessions of the conference. After group and plenary discussion it was agreed that:

Central Baptist Church adopts the 3 aims of being;

- **Christ-centred** in a lost culture, believing that Jesus Christ is the only hope for a lost and hurting world. Believing that relationship with God is possible through faith in Christ because of his death on the cross (bearing our failure) and his resurrection (bringing us eternal life)
- **Communal** in a lonely culture, holding that wherever the Holy Spirit is at work he will draw his people together into a loving and healthy church family.
- **Creative** in a rapidly changing culture, working to respond creatively (because God is creative) in supporting Christians in their callings and in reaching out in mission to our city and beyond.

as detailed in the "Edging in ... Mission from the Margins" booklet.



Main Issues Raised

The other objective of the conference was to examine what we do as a church and the way in which we do it. These were explored in three sessions which challenged us to consider how well our church life and ministries reflected the aims within “Edging in ...” The comments made in regard to the current strengths and weaknesses of the church when compared to the challenges and expectations within the booklet were recorded and will provide a reference resource for the years to follow. There were, however, a number of points raised either in the open session or during the group discussions that resonated with many of those present.

Christ-Centred.

In this section we addressed questions like “What does a Christ-centred church look like? Sound like? Feel like?” “Is a Christ-centred community easy to be part of?” “Is there anything that you strongly agreed or disagreed with in the Christ-centred chapter of “Edging in...Mission from the Margins”?” We also faced questions like “Can you think of examples where CBC acts in a Christ-centred manner, and what benefits do these bring?” And “Can you think of examples where CBC does not display being Christ-centred, and how could these be addressed?”

Here are some of the responses;

1. People spoke of CBC as being welcoming, warm, friendly, accepting, supportive. Every group started here and we should recognise its importance.
2. Some felt that we should be more sincere and open in our dealings with each other, be it in terms of friendships, or challenging each other.
3. Our demeanour is important – being joyous, alive!
4. That being ‘Christ Centred’ involved selflessness and compassion.
5. Christ Centred worship/preaching are essential as core components of church life.
6. Diversity – encouraging and embracing diversity that exists, ages, not being too worried about what people wear etc.
7. Being Christ centred touched upon the pastoral and other well organised ministries of the church. Youth and children’s work, elderly visits, student ministry, night club outreach, crisis support (meals etc).
8. More “inconsistent” elements considered less ‘Christ-centred’ as a whole by the church were things like Prayer Meetings, Home Fellowships, etc.
9. A lot of points raised dealt with the existence of cliques, the willingness or otherwise of people to talk to others and create friendships.
10. Integrating people into church ministries – making them feel a part of the fellowship was identified as an area that needs attention.
11. Reaching out more and building bridges into Dundee was also mentioned.

The foregoing is a brief summary of the main recorded comments in this section. The focus of next years Conference (DV) will be ‘Christ Centred’ and will seek to address in practical ways some of the issues raised.



Communal

In this session we faced questions like “Why do you think that community matters to God?”, “How easy do you think it is for new people to break in to the Central family?”, “How might we make it easier?”, Imagine that you are a new person coming to ‘Central’ for the first time. What things would be a help? What things might be a barrier?” “How might we best use ‘The Link’ to foster more of a communal church?” “How are our Home Groups doing?” “Do we need to refresh them in some way?” and “Any other ideas to encourage fellowship?”

Some of the responses were;

1. Because God is love we cannot be solitary Christians as this does not demonstrate God’s love in action. God exists in Trinity – and we are created for community
2. Jesus mixed with all people – large groups small groups
3. It is about reaching out, supporting, encouraging, acceptance and providing security.
4. The Bible uses phrases like bride/body etc that signify community.
5. Christians must be the visible manifestation of God – together we can point to Christ and gain strength from each other.
6. It is not just visitors who need to be reached out to. We need “in-reach” as there are people in the church who are unattached.
7. There was an acceptance that the Home Fellowships need some refreshing.

How might we best use ‘The Link’ to foster more of a communal church?

- Open through the week – but we would need volunteers to help staff the ministries.
- Open ALL Sunday
- Fellowship shared on a Sunday evening – have a meal instead of an evening service

We are already in the process of addressing some of the issues raised in this section. However, these were some of the key responses and we will come back to these – God willing – in the May 2011 Conference.



Creative

This part of the Conference involved less group work and more personal reflection. Participants were encouraged to find some 'space' and pray and reflect upon the questions and challenges posed by the Conference notes in two areas.

Creative Help. We were encouraged to think through some of the pressures on each of the age groups (teens, singles, young marrieds, seniors etc). Having identified the pressures – we asked - how might the church support?

Creative Evangelism.

At this point we broke out of the groups and found some 'space' on our own to think about the connections we have;

- Where we work.
- Where we live.
- Where we play.
- Our families.
- Divine appointments.

We asked ourselves “What is the Lord saying to us about these opportunities?”

In seeking to discern what the Lord has for you to do, consider the following;

- What am I passionate about?
- What am I good at?
- What might God be saying through my passion and gifting?
- Do I have the grace and humility to allow my ideas/leading to be tested in community?

Here are some of the creative ideas/comments that we could return to;

TEENS

- Provide mentoring /pastoral support.
- Provide training for parents to educate them on the pressures our young people face.
- Organise “Study Camps” around exam times – set study times – set programme.

SINGLES

- Not invisible – involve and include in events.
- Avoid pressure to find a partner.

YOUNG COUPLES

- Do not overburden in the Church
- Allow time for each other

SENIORS

- Worries: Health, Loneliness, ...
- Involve the young people in visiting the older people



GENERAL POINTS:

- Music nights
- Training for evangelism
- We need to be proactive – acting with grace and humility
- We need to give our lives “unreservedly” - as an offering / a sacrifice.

What happens next?

The saying goes, ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day’ and ‘Central’ will always be - this side of heaven - *work in progress!* But having committed ourselves to these aims our main challenge is to glorify God in being Christ-centred, Communal and Creative with the gifts he has given.

Our prayerful intention would be to come back to each of our three aims over the next three years. To seek to build up and bless the work of Christ in ‘Central’ as we give of ourselves in our time, talents and treasure. Paul said to the Corinthians “Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.” (1 Cor 14) This pleases the Lord.

Church family, we can pray and plan, and it is right that we do so, but it is only the Lord who can give the increase. Pray that He will – to the glory of his Name.

Shalom,

Jim.

