

A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story

Author: Michael W. Goheen
Baker Academic, 2011.
256 pages. \$26.50

The word “mission” comes from the Latin *missio* which means “to send,” as we read in John 20:21: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” In this book Vancouver professor Michael Goheen gives a biblical basis for

the Church to better understand what it means to be sent by a saving God. He points out it is the Church that is sent, not the Christian individual, though the missional call has personal implications for each churchgoer. Therefore Goheen proposes a “missional ecclesiology,” a specific way of thinking about the Church.

Right from the beginning when God calls Abraham, He has in mind a people to bless the peoples of the Earth. The missional call for Israel is to be “a light to the nations” (Isaiah 42:6). However, Israel fails. Jesus comes to regather Israel. The 12 Apostles replace the 12 tribes. The death and resurrection of Christ sets in motion a new community sent to “all the nations.” At Pentecost the Spirit is poured out on all people. The church is “eschatological Israel.”

We tend to individualize and privatize our spiritual lives after conversion. However, Goheen’s reading of Scrip-

tures indicates a corporate and communal dimension to our lives in Christ. We are saved not only from our lost state, but also to be part of God’s people. God’s people have only one purpose: to be a missional entity, a people called to shine God’s light before others.

If you are looking for a book to state the seven steps to a missional church, this is not it. Instead, Goheen narrates where the missional people of God stand in the light of God’s cosmic drama of salvation. Our part is not to manoeuvre human plans, but to join the continuing story as the sovereign God unfolds it.

—Pye Chew

Day by Day These Things We Pray: Uncovering Ancient Rhythms of Prayer

Author: Arthur Boers
Herald Press, 2010.
238 pages. \$18.50

This book was originally published as *The Rhythm of God’s Grace:*

Morning and Evening Hours of Prayer by Paraclete Press in 2003. This revised and expanded version bespeaks an evident hunger in the hearts of believers to uncover the ancient tradition of fixed-hour prayer which, the author writes, “continues to inform, inspire, and hearten believers around the world.”

A professor of leadership at Tyndale University College & Seminary in Toronto, Boers acknowledges Evangelicals shy away from anything that smacks of liturgy, including

ancient disciplines like the “daily office.” As my Pentecostal pastor parents insisted, “It makes ‘us’ too much like ‘them,’” by which they meant mainline denominations such as Anglicans.

Boers judges nobody, calmly stating that setting aside specific prayer times honours God. Fixed-hour prayer may not be for everyone, but “the cost is often its own reward.” A Scripture-filled and thoughtfully arranged ritual of prayer and worship unites believers around the world who are praying at the same time. After all, God is not a God of disorder, and “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way,” the Apostle Paul says.

Boers describes his visits to such north European Christian communities as Lindisfarne, Iona, Taizé and Northumbria that emphasize prayer, retreat and renewal. In the final chapter he details his own experiences with morning and evening prayer. “In an era of pilgrimage and seeking, when many . . . struggle with deep questions, the church

needs to provide havens of prayer and help people by creating structures and support for their spiritual life.”

This book’s usefulness is enhanced by a listing of recommended resources, along with practical tips including the structure and content of fixed-hour prayer. A final appendix explains how to prepare a hospitable space for corporate celebration. This book is compact enough to fit snugly in my shirt pocket, making it available at a moment’s notice.

—Burton K. Janes

A Second Cup of Hot Apple Cider: Words to Stimulate the Mind and Delight the Spirit

Editors: N. J. Lindquist and Wendy Elaine Nelles
That’s Life! Communications, 2011.
336 pages. \$19.99

Some books surprise you with their ability to take your breath away. This anthology is such a book: 51 short pieces – fiction, non-fiction, poetry and even a play – written by 37 members of The Word Guild, a Canadian organization of writers, editors, publishers and speakers who are Christian.

I was impressed with the honesty and transparency, especially in the true stories. We meet a host of fellow Canadians – our neighbours! – whose lives are as unpredictable as our own. A mother of young children gets a diagnosis of cancer. A 36-year-old magazine editor has a stroke. A man who is forced to take early retirement asks what’s next? A woman prays for patience and a few days later breaks her back. A man tries to surprise his wife with a five-day bathroom renovation. What binds all the pieces together is a cord of faith as we see how God is involved in the very real circumstances of life.

The book wonderfully reflects Canada’s mosaic population with pieces from First Nations to home-born Canadians to immigrants, young to old, urban to rural. Though the writing styles are varied, the book was skillfully edited to

