Interviews and Other Practical Research Approaches for Theology

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Abstract

This article describes four key qualitative research methods that are useful for exploring people's experiences of church life and their human research ethics implications. As was introduced in a previous Crucible article, "A Reflective Practitioner's Methodology for Emerging Church Research" (Crucible 3:2, September 2011), the author used these methods to investigate four emerging churches in Melbourne. The process of participant-observation and joining and watching a group is helpful to see firsthand how they interact and operate. In-depth interviews of pastors and key leaders with open-ended questions to guide a conversation often produce a wealth of background information and surprising insights. Focus group interviews similarly offer a large amount of data and can help participants respond to one another on issues. Case studies can bring all the data together about a group and compare it with other similar groups. These methods are valuable assets in the toolkit of a practical theologian or reflective practitioner, but they all need to be carefully engaged with attention to duty-of-care and human research ethics guidelines. This article describes these four methods, their strengths and weaknesses, the writer's experience of them and ethical guidelines for their practice, in the hope to be useful for other researchers or students wanting to use interviews and other practical research approaches for theology.

A gift of qualitative research in theology is that it encourages attentiveness to people's experience of church and faith. As a practical theologian I am committed to integrate the resources of Christian faith and bring them into conversation with challenges and dilemmas of everyday life, in the church and in the world, in order to develop appropriate Christian responses. Ray Anderson describes the task:

Practical theology is a dynamic process of reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God's purposes for humanity, carried out in light of Christian Scripture and Tradition, and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge.[1]

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[1] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis.* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

One of the most effective ways of inquiry into people's experience of "the praxis of the church in the world" is through interviews.

The simple act of a planned and focused time of sitting with a person, asking them questions, listening to their answers, following up with more questions, recording the conversation and then reflecting on its meaning can be powerfully insightful. This is why interviews are a valuable method in any social science research. Whenever I have used interviews, or their plural equivalent with focus groups, I have been pleasantly surprised at the discoveries and insights they have helped uncover.

In a previous paper, I described and evaluated the overall research methodology I used for a linked set of emerging church case studies.[2] In this paper I would like to expand further on my particular frameworks for in-depth interviews and some other methods that can helpfully surround and complement interviews: participant observation, focus groups (or group interviews) and case studies.[3] I will also describe general principles behind the ethics of human research and in particular the ethical implications of interviews.

1. Participant observation

For my research, it was helpful to precede and surround interviews with participant observation in the communities where I was interviewing. Participant observation is a method that takes the researcher into the situation to experience and observe as a participant themselves. The focus is observation, but the observation is from the perspective of participation. It is not aloof or uninvolved participation but integral to immersion in the situation. It helps the researcher see, hear and experience as participants do.[4]

> The researcher *must* get close to the people … their actions are best comprehended when observed on the spot – in the natural, ongoing environment where they live and work. The researcher … must be at the location, not only to watch but also to listen to the symbolic sounds that characterize this world. A dialogue with persons in their natural situations will reveal the nuances of meaning from which their perspectives and definitions are continually forged.[5]

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[2] Darren Cronshaw, "A Reflective Practitioner's Methodology for Emerging Church Research", *Crucible Theology and Ministry online journal* Vol.4: No.1 (2011); the research methodology for Darren Cronshaw, "The Shaping of Things Now: Mission and Innovation in Emerging Churches in Melbourne" (DTheol thesis, MCD, 2009). published as Darren Cronshaw, *The Shaping of Things Now: Emerging Church Mission and Innovation in 21st Century Melbourne* (Saarbrucken: VDM Verlag, 2009).

[3] These descriptions were in my previous paper, "A practical theology research project design", Unpublished research and theory paper for Dr Colin Hunter's course "Research Methods in Practical Theology", (Melbourne: Whitley College, 2005), and were presented to UFT Research Methods for Theology class, (14 September, 2011).

[4] Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999).

[5] L Schatzmann and A Strauss, *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973); cited in Z G Kalnins, "An Exploratory Study of the Meaning of Life as Described by Residents of a Long-Term Care Facility" (Project proposal, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, 1986), 5-6; cited in Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*.

To make the most of the opportunity of observation, the researcher systematically takes notes and records information about events and behaviour that they observe. They can begin to look out for recurring patterns and develop checklists for further observation.[6]

Participant observation has advantages as a research method and complements other methods of data collection. It helps identify questions and patterns, so that before interviews, for example, it can provide insights into the situation and afterwards it can help illuminate answers and discussions.[7] It is a means of informally checking data from other sources, and helps the researcher develop trust as an insider with access not usually possible for more traditional observers.[8] It is not feasible to understand churches or other organisations without observing their culture and activities, and not as effective to interview pastors and other participants without seeing them in their context of ministry and worship.

For my research I spent at least a month at each site to gain an in-depth understanding of the context. This gave time to start to get beneath the church's culture, to go to meetings, collect documents, observe behaviour, and to become familiar with key people and typical activities.[9] In the interests of ethical "respect for persons", I was open about my role as researcher and, though perhaps vague about the nature of what the research would find, was clear about my hope that the research would be useful and informative to participants.[10] I presented myself as a participant in worship at the churches I visited, and as a visitor or pastor who is interested in learning about and helping others learn about emerging churches and their relevance in Australia today. As a Christian, churchgoer, emerging church partner and pastor I am advantaged in knowing about church contexts,[11] and I trust my patient and respectful listening and natural curiosity helped with interpersonal relationships on which research depends. The study depends on relationships with churches and participants, and so initial contact, ongoing respect, and allowing time for trust to emerge are priorities.

Sometimes impressions and problems at this stage of research could indicate it is best to move on to another site, and if necessary I was prepared to do this.[12] Some churches I visited as potential case studies could not offer the same range of interviews and focus groups as others, and so I learned

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[6] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*.

[7] H S Becker and B Geer, "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison," in *Issues in Participant Observation: A Text and Reader*, ed. G J McCall and J L Simmons (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 326; cited in Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 137.

[8] R E Cole, "Participant Observer Research," in *Participatory Action Research*, ed. W F Whyte (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991); cited in Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 160.

[9] Cf. E H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985), 311; cited in Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 58-59.

[10] E A Brantlinger, "Knowledge, Position, and Agency: Activism and Inward Gaze as a Natural Next Step in Local Inquiry" (paper presented at the Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA, 1997); cited in Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 79-80, 106.

[11] Robson asserts that some familiarity of the phenomenon and the setting is helpful. Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 160. Others advocate lack of familiarity.

[12] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 85-87.

from these through participant-observation and initial interviews but did not proceed to the deeper levels of research and analysis as my four main case studies.

The human research ethics implications of this research will be considered below, but it is important to note that I could not collect any data, nor even approach the churches for permission to participate and observe, until I had received HREC (Human Research Ethics Committee) clearance. To ask each church for permission, I sent them a letter with an explanatory letter about the research (appendix 1) and asked them to sign a church permission form (appendix 2). These outlined the nature of my research and that I would name the churches in my research (it was difficult to describe the nature of these unique churches and expect the description could be anonymous).

2. In-depth interviews

The step after and in the midst of participant observation was interviewing key leaders.

It is amazing how insightful sitting with a person can be when we ask questions and listen. Interviews were a main way of collecting data for my case studies and I was regularly surprised and impressed with the insights of people and the power of interviews to draw those insights out.

There is a continuum of how directed interviews can be. At the fixed end a researcher may use fixed questions on a standardised written survey. This is a highly structured process with set questions that are always asked in the same order. A pre-determined schedule of mainly closed-ended questions allows easy coding and comparability. It is a format a number of researchers or low-skilled data-collectors could follow for a large scale project. But it leaves less room for the informants to express what is meaningful for them.[13]

At the open end, a researcher may identify an area of interest or concern and perhaps a starting open question or two, and go where the interests of the interviewee and interviewer take the conversation.[14]

The middle ground is a semi-structured interview, which has a specific purpose and focus, and usually a generous number of guiding open-ended questions, but flexibility to explore interesting answers with new questions.[15] A semi-structured interview may get through the scheduled list of questions, but commonly goes in other directions as well.

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[13] Victor Minichiello et al., *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, Second edition ed. (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1995), 63; Robson, *Real World Research*, 227.

[14] Robson, *Real World Research*, 227.

[15] Ibid., 230-31.

What researchers call in-depth interviews are normally semi-structured or open and unstructured. They may be completely unstructured like a normal everyday conversation, with only minimal control steering the conversation to the research interests. Alternatively they may be focused or semi-structured interviews that follow an interview guide with predetermined general topics, but without a fixed order of questions.[16] Either of these methods respects how a participant frames their responses and allows the researcher engage an in-depth investigation of the interviewee's experience.

In-depth interviews involve repeated conversations between a researcher and an informant that focuses on the informant's perceptions of self, life and experience, as expressed in their own words. It is a means to gain access to the private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold, rather than imposing an assumed perception.[17] In-depth interviews are generally conversational rather than formal events with predetermined response categories. They are not highly structured, but open to be steered by the responses of the interviewee. The perspectives and frameworks of participants are valuable and useful, and it is fundamental to qualitative research to recognise this. The participant's perspectives and description of the experience should unfold as they see it, not as the researcher sees it.[18] Furthermore, in-depth interviews are suitable for eliciting information from a population and building theories more than proving hypotheses. They are exploratory and likely to surprise the researcher as compared to structured interviews which are designed to test a hypothesis.[19]

Advantages of in-depth interviews are that they obtain large amounts of data quickly, allow immediate follow up, and help the researcher understand the meaning that people hold for activities. Because interviews are face-to-face, the interviewer can read body language and non-verbal cues as well as record the verbal narrative of what is said. Potential drawbacks are that cooperation of participants is necessary, they may be unwilling or unable to explore the areas of research interest, or full answers may not be given because of lack of skill on the researcher's part or lack of honesty on theirs. Interviewing requires listening, framing and probing skills, and significant amounts of time for analysis. They are also time-consuming to begin with, usually taking time to recruit interviewees, arrange the interview time and then usually involve 30-90 minutes per interview (much less is rarely worthwhile, and anything is more is tiresome for all involved.) Used alone, they have the potential to describe participants' perspectives and interpretations, but if more objectivity is needed then triangulation and other sources are necessary.[20]

Elite interviews are with people who are considered influential, prominent, and/or well-informed in a community. Advantages of selecting 'elite' key informants for interviews are that they provide valuable

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[16] Minichiello et al., *In-Depth Interviewing*, 65.

[17] Ibid., 61, 68-69.

[18] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 108.

[19] Minichiello et al., *In-Depth Interviewing*, 75.

[20] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 110; Robson, *Real World Research*, 229-30.

information and an overall view, are familiar with legal and financial aspects of the organisation, and can comment on history, policies, and plans with insight. Possible drawbacks are that they can be difficult to access, usually rely on recommendations to give a researcher entry, and they tend to take charge when interviewed. Thus the onus on the researcher is to be well prepared with accurate conceptualisation of the issues and shrewd questions. Interviews with elites can be very productive when they explore broad themes with a high proportion of thoughtful, provocative, open-ended questions that leave room for sharing the elite interviewee's expertise and imagination.[21]

My research conducted elite interviews of one or two main pastors or leaders from each church. The interviews followed a focused or semi-structured format with an interview guide of topics and questions to explore (appendix 6). To begin with and to break the ice I would rearticulate the purpose of the research, explain the process of recording, and explain it was an open-ended flexible interview. I then started with inviting the pastor to tell me of the history and focus of the church, and how they came there. I then covered the two main research categories with questions about mission and innovation – how they understand it, what inspires them, what models they use, how they encourage it, what else they would like to do, and when they are at their best in those areas (using an appreciative inquiry framework).[22] I also asked them about their leadership style and organizational culture (how does the place tick? What could other churches learn from them?) To conclude, I asked an open question about what they would wish for their church, thanked them and gave them one last chance to add anything (If there were one other thing you would really want to tell me, what might that be?)

Where interview data was used in the thesis, participants had the opportunity to read the transcripts of the interview and were offered the chance to modify the transcript. After each interview, I was sure to remind the pastor or other interviewee of my phone number and email, and invite their contact if they think of other things they wish they had said. When I referred to interviewees in my thesis, if they were pastors (and therefore easily identifiable anyway) I referred to them by their own name (which they gave permission for in their permission forms). For other leaders or participants, I used pseudonyms, except for one participant who requested to be identified by name as a matter of principle (Deborah Storie, who was herself an MCD doctoral student but also a previous participant of one of my case studies and so her perspectives and stories were valuable and theologically insightful).

Analysis of documents is unobtrusive and can be a helpful portrayal of values and beliefs. As part of the interview, pastors were asked for church brochures, welcome packs, policy documents, statements of values and goals, and lists of sermons preached over the previous year. Content analysis of these documents helped give historical background and contextual awareness.

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[21] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 113-14, 42.

[22] Mark Lou Branson, *Memories, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004).

The interviews could have been used with an action-research agenda. If action-research was a priority, the pastors could have been co-researchers to some extent. They would then be involved in the decision-making process of what to explore.[23] This would have made open-ended interview schedules all the more important. The research would then be focused on helping pastors evaluate information, understand innovation and mission in their context, and reinvent and remissionalise church life.

Although I did not engage in action research as an overriding methodology, there were two possibilities for it. Firstly, the research could have cooperate with pastors in theological reflection. The churches were discussing afresh what community, discipleship and evangelism mean as followers of Jesus in twenty-first century Melbourne. They were redefining the essence of their faith and worship, and how to express mission with innovation. There is lots of scope for action research in this process. A second alternative research approach, using action-research, could have been to collaborate with the pastors (and churchgoers) on developing innovation and mission. We could have drafted research goals together (perhaps as a focus group of pastors), and then I as researcher (and fellow pastor and congregational partner) could have worked with each pastor in their congregation on exploring a theology and strategy of innovation and mission. In these ways, the 'subjects of inquiry' would become core learners in the process rather than merely subjects to interview to get data from.

Colin Robson offers some helpful advice on interviewing technique.[24] The aim of interviews is to get interviewees to talk honestly and openly, and so Robson says:

a. Prepare a set of questions or items (usually open-ended)
b. Use a planned sequence, usually with an introduction, warm-up, main body of questions, cooling off and closure and expression of thanks
c. Do a pilot of your questions with a small sample of interviewees, and adjust questions if needed
d. Listen more than you speak (it's about their insights not you)
e. Ask questions clearly and in non-threatening ways
f. Avoid cues that lead responses in certain directions (for example, "Why do you like this church?" or "Are you against sin?")
g. Enjoy the interview process (or at least make it look like you do)
h. Make a full record or transcript (with your written notes and/or a recording)
i. Avoid unhelpful questions, including questions that are long and complicated, double-barrelled, involving jargon or obviously leading questions

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[23] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 161.

[24] Robson, *Real World Research*, 231-33, 42.

In one sense anyone can interview people, but it takes discipline and focus to develop the craft of interviewing well, but the results are worthwhile.[25]

3. Focus groups

Focus groups are a form of interview with a group of people. They were originally developed as consumer survey and marketing tools, but have more recently been adapted for applied research. An ideal size is seven-to-ten people, though they may range from four-to-twelve. The people are usually unfamiliar to one another but at least share characteristics relevant to the study's questions. However, in my research and in most congregational studies, participants are generally known to one another. This is because they are from the same church, which is a necessary part of being able to comment on their common experience in their church community. The dynamics of a focus group require a supportive environment, focused questions, and the encouragement of discussion and expression of different opinions. Focus group methodology assumes that attitudes and ideas are not formed in a vacuum, and that group members will listen to one another and develop ideas in the conversation. Questions are simple rather than complex, and open ended to open up a group's response to an experience and range around it. The aim is to promote the expression of views by creating a supportive environment. Ideally groups will include a diversity of people, and research will utilise several different focus groups to identify trends in perceptions and opinions.[26]

Advantages of focus groups are that they are social, flexible and low cost, and offer high validity. They tend to be more relaxed than one-on-one interviews, but in common with other sorts of interviews gather large amounts of data quickly, from a wider variety of people. So they increase the sample size efficiently and without necessarily decreasing the value of the data, as people can bounce off one another with their reflections and ideas. Potential drawbacks are that they require special rooms and moderators; groups vary and are hard to assemble; they are less controlled (it is easy to lose time on irrelevancies); information is usually limited to what can be shared in a public group; and the data is more difficult to analyse because it is hard to understand its context. It is important, therefore, to stress confidentiality. It is also helpful to consider not just what is discussed but what is absent, marginalised or excluded in the discussion (that is, what is not even thought about, pushed to the margins, or which the group does not want to know about). Furthermore, groups will not necessarily yield independent responses, may be directed by a dominant group member, and participants may find the group environment inhibiting. However, these drawbacks of group interaction offer insights into the group processes that are part of emerging churches or any group anyway. The interaction of people in focus groups is helpful to analyse alongside the content of what is said.[27]

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[25] Ibid., 228.

[26] R A Kruegger, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Ssage, 1988), 18; cited in Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 115.

[27] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*; Minichiello et al., *In-Depth Interviewing*, 66.

Focus group members were invited to fill out a questionnaire survey before each of their two sessions (appendix 7). The surveys were to help ascertain distribution of beliefs and attitudes, though a survey is not adequate to discern complex relationships or issues that are not measurable through self-reporting.[28] The survey developed and used by Steve Taylor was adapted, which could potentially help with comparison between my research and his.[29] The survey was to help prime the thinking of participants and provide initial data, although as it turned out its results were limited and nowhere near as helpful as the interview and focus group transcripts. I do not think I used one piece of data from the pre-interview surveys in the final thesis.[30]

For my research, focus groups were a stratified sample including position-holders and newcomers. Participants were selected from personal contacts and the recommendation of the pastor and aimed to include a diverse range of participants. Permission letters checked and approved by HREC outlined the nature of the research and the approach of the interviews (appendix 3 and 5). As the letters explained, participants were free to respond or not, and they could withdraw their involvement at any time. The letters included the option of referral to a counsellor if the group raised sensitive matters for anyone involved. The focus groups were generally held in the church facilities. As mentioned, participants were known to one another, being from the same church, which was a necessary part of being able to comment on their common experience in their church community.

A guideline of questions and topics was be developed, building on the questionnaires, to help people articulate the kind of information the research project is seeking to address (appendix 8). Appropriate for focus groups, the questions were open-ended rather than directive, and encouraged people to share a diversity of experiences and stories. The aim was to invite them to share of their experiences and I told them I had general topics to ask about, but also welcomed other thoughts. Most churches had at least two focus groups – one focusing on mission and the other on innovation. Similar to individual interviews, I would start with a warm-up introductory question, and then go on to ask them to describe how their church understood and expressed mission, what inspired and motivated them and to what extent it was incarnational and/or attractional. I asked how they were innovative at their best, and what change management and leadership style their pastors used. The discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed by a confidential secretarial service.

Interviews and focus groups are also a valuable method for ministry in general, apart from formal research. Congregational leaders can learn a lot from inviting congregational members to reflect and respond to questions about the nature and directions, strengths and challenges of their church's mission.

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[28] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 129-31.

[29] Steve Taylor, "A New Way of Being Church: A Case Study Approach to Cityside Baptist Church as Christian Faith "Making Do" in a Postmodern World" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Otago, 2004).

[30] As discussed in my previous Crucible article: Cronshaw, "Reflective Practitioner's Methodology".

4. Case studies

Data from participant observation, in-depth interviews with pastors, and focus group interviews with church participants will be collected, together with documents and their analysis from each of the churches, to develop a linked set of case studies.

A case study focuses in depth and detail on a phenomenon of interest and takes the reader into a setting with vividness and detail.[31] Robson defines a case study as 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.'[32] In terms of the suitability of different data-gathering methods, whereas in-depth interviews focus on individuals and explore individual lived experience, case studies focus on groups or organisations in a particular setting and explore society and culture. If experiments are useful for explanatory studies and surveys are linked particularly with descriptive studies, case studies are particularly good for exploratory research. Case studies are complex in design because they use multiple sources of data (usually interviews, observations, documentary analysis, and surveys).[33] Being relatively intensive by nature, a small number of cases are usually ideal, and small scale studies are best limited to a single simple strategy that suits the research situation and questions.[34]

A strength of case studies is their potential flexibility in allowing a looser approach to research design. Robson explains that case studies are defined solely in terms of their concentration on their specific case, in its context. They can follow a detailed pre-structured format, particularly if the aim is to confirm previous work or hypothesised relationships between variables. But they can equally be more open-ended if the aim is to explore and understand what is happening in a novel situation where there is little to guide what to look for.[35] This research has a limited time and size scale, so needs some pre-structuring. Moreover, the research is framed by innovation and mission, so some focused, pre-structured data-collection techniques are appropriate, but the case study approach still leaves room for flexibility. Potential drawbacks of case studies are that they need well trained investigators who have personal qualities such as an open and enquiring mind, good listening skills, flexibility and adaptiveness, sensitivity, and responsiveness to contrary evidence. It is no good if the researcher is simply seeking to substantiate a preconceived position and not open to contrary findings.[36]

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[31] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 158.

[32] Robson, *Real World Research*, 146.

[33] Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 61.

[34] Robson, *Real World Research*.

[35] Ibid., 148-49.

[36] Ibid., 162-63.

Case studies may be of one or more cases. One helpful model for me is Taylor's congregational case study of Cityside Baptist Church and its alternative worship style in New Zealand.[37] I may use some of his questions (and compare my research with his). However I want to do more of a comparative approach rather than a case study of one. When more than one case is called for, as in this research, different cases are best selected for balance and variety. It is not possible to study every emerging church in Melbourne, nor is it possible to study every factor of the small set of emerging churches that will be selected. Thus emerging churches will be selected that display particular approaches to innovation and mission. But even three-to-six cases will not be representative of all cases, but will reveal insights and understandings about the phenomenon of emerging churches and provide a basis for further research.

5. Human Research Ethics Clearance

A final issue to consider in this paper is Ethics of Human Research.

Most universities or colleges will have a committee or board to check and approve ethical implications of research, and ethics guidelines are available on most university websites. For example, MCD has a HREC (Human Research Ethics Committee) webpage which includes HREC Guidelines for Applicants and the related National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (NHMRC 2007) and The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.[38]

Human Research Ethics is not just about HREC forms, although they are a necessary check, and not just about getting permission to proceed, but that is the bottom line. Without HREC clearance, it is inappropriate to start research.

Justin Denholm from the Austin Hospital explains that Human Research Ethics Committees apply two major and two minor considerations to any proposal. The two major considerations are respect for persons and integrity. Respect for persons means protects the rights of people and doing research with a commitment to their interests. The most important element of this is "informed consent", that they are fully informed about what the research involves and that they give their permission to be involved. Integrity involves pursuing knowledge with good research principles and honest communication of the findings. The two minor considerations are justice and beneficience. Justice is about fairness and distributing the benefits and burdens of any research. Benevolence is about doing good, maximising the benefits and avoiding harm. Research will often involve some risks, but it is best to be aware of these and to consider how best to minimise them.[39]

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[37] Taylor, "A New Way of Being Church".

[38] http://www.mcd.edu.au/hrec

[39] Justin Denholm, "On Being an Ethical Researcher," in *Dostorates Downunder: Keys to Effective Doctoral Study in Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Carey Denholm and Terry Evans (Camberwell, VIC: ACER, 2006), 106.

This relates to all of research activity, whether or not you are experimenting with animals or interviewing people. But it is more involved when our research involves people, including if you are researching records of people's personal information or especially when interviewing people.

There are a number potential ethical problems in theology research, especially when it involves people. Colin Robson outlines ten questionable research practices from Allan Kimmel:

1. Involving people without knowledge or consent
2. Coercing participation
3. Withholding information about the nature of the research
4. Deceiving participants
5. Inducing participants to do things that diminish their self-esteem
6. Violating rights of self-determination
7. Exposing to physical or mental stress
8. Invading privacy
9. Withholding benefits from some participants (e.g. for comparison)
10. Not treating participants fairly, with consideration or respect.[40]

These are unethical practices in commonly accepted university guidelines, but in theology I consider it all the more important to be careful with good ethical practices. As people in ministry, we also need to beware of particular precautions when proposing research with children, underprivileged groups and groups that we work with.[41]

To ensure we practice ethical research, Justin Denholm suggests asking "Who will my research affect? What stakeholders are involved? How can I be most considerate towards them?" A Christian value-laden question can be helpful here, "How would God want me to treat these people?"[42]

Some of the practices that HREC forms guide researchers to ensure are covered are:

∉ Informed consent.[43] Participants need to know about the nature and extent of the research, including what it will demand of them and where results may be published, and be free not to participate. (See Appendices 1-5 below for sample letters of explanation and permission for churches and interviewees).

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[40] Allan J. Kimmel , *Ethics and values in applied social research* Vol. 12: Applied Social Research Methods Series (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1988, cited in Robson, *Real World Research*, 33.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Denholm, "On Being an Ethical Researcher," 105.

[43] Robson, *Real World Research*, 29-34.

∉ Arrange care and make counselling referrals available for people who may be disturbed the research process.

∉ Be explicit in disclosing, and careful in managing, any real or potential conflicts of interest.

∉ Ensure you can guarantee safe storage and confidentiality of research data.

∉ Make allowance for rights of access for participants to the data held about them, and offer them the chance to read and review findings reported about them.

It is appropriate to write a research proposal with these in mind and forestall any potential HREC objections.

The other ethical and integrity issue involved in any research is academic integrity including proper acknowledgment of your information. Plagiarism is using the work of others without acknowledging them, but you can also risk self-plagiarism if you draw on previously submitted or previously published work without acknowledging it.[44] My supervisor required me to check every reference in my thesis to ensure it was correct and complete, and check every sentence to ensure that any string of words from another writer was quoted in inverted commas or paraphrased in my own words. This required careful work, and when dozens of interviews are also included it is easier if proper referencing and acknowledgement is done from the beginning, which can be helped by qualitative research software like NVivo and bibliographical software like Endnote.[45]

Qualitative methods of participant-observation, in-depth interviewing, focus groups and case studies are invaluable in practical theology research, but they need to be engaged with care and with due attention to issues of duty-of-care and ethical practice.

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[44] The best guideline I have accessed is "Academic Integrity at Curtin: Staff Guidelines for Dealing with Student Plagiarism", Edited by Jonathan Yorke, Shelley Appleton, Connie Price and Kate Lowe (Bentley, WA: Curtin University Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning, 2011), accessible at http://academicintegrity.curtin.edu.au/global/staffbook.cfm
[45] See http://www.qsrinternational.com/ and www.endnote.com

Appendix 1 – Explanatory statement for churches

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Doctor of Theology research project - Explanatory Statement for churches)

To the church leadership team,

My name is Darren Cronshaw and I live at 7 Coolaroo Court, Mooroolbark. I have been a Baptist missionary and pastor and student and teacher of practical theology, and am currently a Doctor of Theology student at Whitley College (Melbourne College of Divinity), researching emerging churches. Thanks for being willing to work through this form. I am writing to introduce myself and my research and to ask you to please consider the possibility of allowing me to collect research data within your congregation.

Purpose
This research project is designed to gather data about innovation and mission in selected emerging churches in Melbourne. I am fascinated to explore how churches, pastors and other church participants understand, experience and express innovation and mission. I have selected a short list of emerging churches that I could study and compare. I would like to participate and observe in your church, interview the pastor(s), and interview a representative group of participants. This study will lead to a number of recommendations to help those who are leading new-style missional churches (or training or supervising them), and may offer a resource which a local church might use to increase its effectiveness. Thus participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experience and contribute to the ongoing development of innovation and mission in churches in Melbourne.

Requirements
Pastors or key informants who decide to become involved in the research project will take part in two in-depth interviews. The interviews will happen at a convenient time for them and will be between one and one-and-a-half hours duration. A third one hour session may be held if necessary.

Other church participants who decide to become involved in the research and are chosen for the research group will take part in one or two focus-group discussion sessions. They will happen after hours on a weeknight evening and/or on a weekend and will be sixty-to-ninety minutes duration. A third one hour interview session may be held if necessary with an individual for further information. Each focus group participant will have a questionnaire to complete prior to their participation in the session(s). It should take about one hour to recollect the experience and represent it in written form. The total time commitment for each focus group participant will be about one hour preparation time and between one and four hours interview time.

In the focus groups, with about seven-to-ten people from the church, the kind of questions asked for the sessions will be: "Describe your experience of new things happening in your church? What happened? How did you feel about it?" This is so that each participant can express freely the impact that the designated experience had on them. Focus groups will be asked to explore these topics and, because potentially sensitive information may be disclosed, participants will be asked to keep their contributions and discussion of other participants confidential. Interviews and group sessions will be audio-taped and then transcribed by a confidential secretarial service.

Implications
The research is part of a Doctor of Theology degree through the Melbourne College of Divinity. The research will result in a set of data that will be used in evaluating the contribution of emerging church thinking and practice. The data will be stored securely without explicit identifying labels, and stored for

five years and then destroyed. Church names will be identified but the identities of the participants (other than the pastors) will not be disclosed in the thesis or any subsequently published documents. Most of the references to the data in the thesis will be to the group process and group interpretations of the experience of emerging church dynamics, although it may be necessary to refer to some individual representations pseudonymously. The thesis that results from this work will be published in hard copy, and housed at Whitley College and with the MCD. Research findings may also be presented at conferences and published in journals and/or a book.

It is unlikely that a participant would experience an adverse reaction to any of the processes involved in the research. However, should any participant experience distress through their involvement in the research (eg. by recollecting a difficult church situation) she/he may, at any time during the research, request a personal interview with me, with a church pastor/ leader or with a counsellor who has been arranged to de-brief any unexpected reaction.

Each participant is also free, without fear of penalty, adverse consequences or harming the research process, to withdraw from active participation in the research project at any time. Any participant may also request that information arising from their participation is not used in the research project, provided they exercise this right within four weeks of completing their participation in the project.

A participant may request a copy of personal information about them which is collected in the course of the research project. Pastors and other key informants who have an in-depth interview will have the opportunity to read the transcripts of each interview in which they share, and will be offered the chance to modify the transcript.

Timetable

The research will commence in April 2006 and continue through till March 2007. The involvement of participants from any one church will involve a research period of 2-8 weeks within that time frame. I do not expect to complete processing the data and writing up the research until mid 2008, but will be happy to give interested participants progressive information from time-to-time. I would expect the dates for the interviews and focus groups for your congregation may be between _____ and _____.

Response

Please let me know whether or not your church is willing and available to participate in the research by Friday _____ . If you are prepared to be involved you will need to sign the Church Permission Form (below) and return it to me.

Further information

I would appreciate you giving time to this study which is in an area that is significant for me and I think significant for churches in Melbourne and beyond. If you have any questions, please fell free to contact me at Whitley College, 271 Royal Parade Parkville VIC 3052, phone (03) 9733 5455 or email shapingnow@optusnet.com.au. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Ross Langmead at Whitley College, Parkville VIC 3052, Phone (03) 9340 8021 or email rlangmead@whitley.unimelb.edu.au.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the MCD Administration, (03) 9853 3177. If you have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Liaison Officer, MCD Human Research and Ethics Committee: phone 03 9853 3177, e-mail hrec@mcd.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Yours sincerely

Darren Cronshaw

Appendix 2 – Church permission form

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Research project for Doctor of Theology by Darren Cronshaw)

CHURCH PERMISSION FORM

We agree for our church to take part in the above Melbourne College of Divinity research project. We have read and understood the Explanatory Statement above, which we keep for our records, and any questions we have asked have been answered to our satisfaction.

We understand that agreeing to take part means that we are willing to:

- allow the researcher to observe, participate in and take notes of the church's community life for an initial period of up to two months
- allow the researcher permission to ask the pastor(s) and selected church participants to:
  - complete questionnaires asking them about their experiences of innovation and mission in our congregation
  - participate in two in-depth interviews (for the pastors) or focus-group interviews (for others) conducted by the researcher with 4-15 people to discuss the experience of different aspects of church life
  - allow the group sessions to be audio-recorded
  - make themselves available for a further focus-group interview or individual in-depth interview should that be required.
  - participate in this program for a period of 2-8 weeks, and possible follow-up contact to clarify research findings.
  - allow the researcher to have access to their research records.
  We understand that these potential participants in the research will have the project explained to them and their own informed consent will be required.
- give permission and make available to the researcher the church's data and results from the 2006 National Church Life Survey, including on-line access.
- make available relevant organisational records and information.
- allow the researcher to make some follow-up visits for further participation and observation as the researcher analyses the data.

We understand that any information we provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual other than the pastor(s) will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. We understand that we have given approval for the name of the church community to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications.

We understand that photos will be taken and may be included in the research findings, but not photos that could identify an individual. We also understand that our participation is voluntary, that we can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that we can withdraw at any point in the project without penalty, disadvantage or adverse consequences.

We agree that information provided by participants from our church or with our permission during the project may be included in a thesis (which will be held in the Whitley College library and at the Melbourne College of Divinity), presented at conferences and published in journals or a book.

Signed on behalf of the church leadership team:

Signature _____ Date __ / __ / 2006

Name _____ Church name _____ Address

Email address

Researcher: __DARREN CRONSHAW__ Signature _____ Date __ / __ / 2006

Appendix 3 – Explanatory statement for participants

The Melbourne College of Divinity

Established by the Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910-1990
Affiliated with the University of Melbourne 1993
21 Highbury Grove s Kew s Victoria s Australia 3101
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Email: hrec@mcd.edu.au   www.mcd.unimelb.edu.au

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Doctor of Theology research project -
Explanatory Statement for participants)

Dear

My name is Darren Cronshaw and I live at 7 Coolaroo Court, Mooroolbark. I have been a Baptist missionary and pastor and student and teacher of practical theology, and am currently a Doctor of Theology student at Whitley College (Melbourne College of Divinity), researching emerging churches. Thanks for being willing to work through this form. I am writing to introduce myself and my research and to ask you to please consider the possibility of participating.

Purpose

This research project is designed to gather data about innovation and mission in selected emerging churches in Melbourne. I am fascinated to explore how churches, pastors and other church participants understand, experience and express innovation and mission. I have selected a short list of emerging churches that I could study and compare. I would like to participate and observe in your church, interview the pastor(s), and interview a representative group of participants. This study will lead to a number of recommendations to help those who are leading new-style missional churches (or training or supervising them), and may offer a resource which a local church might use to increase its effectiveness. Thus participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experience and contribute to the ongoing development of innovation and mission in churches in Melbourne.

Requirements

Pastors or key informants who decide to become involved in the research project will take part in two in-depth interviews. The interviews will happen at a convenient time for them and will be between one and one-and-a-half hours duration. A third one hour session may be held if necessary.

Other church participants who decide to become involved in the research and are chosen for the research group will take part in one or two focus-group discussion sessions. They will happen after hours on a weeknight evening and/or on a weekend and will be sixty-to-ninety minutes duration. A third optional session may be held if necessary, either with the focus group or with an individual, for a maximum of one hour. Each focus group participant will have a questionnaire to complete prior to their participation in the sessions. It should take about one hour to recollect the experience and represent it in written form. The total time commitment for each focus group participant will be about one hour preparation time and between one and four hours interview time.

In the focus groups, with about seven-to-ten people from the church, the kind of questions asked for the sessions will be: "Describe your experience of new things happening in your church? What happened? How did you feel about it?" This is so that each participant can express freely the impact that the designated experience had on them. Focus groups will be asked to explore these topics and, because potentially sensitive information may be disclosed, participants will be asked to keep their contributions and discussion of other participants confidential. Interviews and group sessions will be audio-taped and then transcribed by a confidential secretarial service.

Implications

The research is part of a Doctor of Theology degree through the Melbourne College of Divinity. The research will result in a set of data that will be used in evaluating the contribution of emerging church thinking and practice. The data will be stored securely without explicit identifying labels, and stored for

five years and then destroyed. Church names will be identified but the identities of the participants (other than the pastors) will not be disclosed in the thesis or any subsequently published documents. Most of the references to the data in the thesis will be to the group process and group interpretations of the experience of emerging church dynamics, although it may be necessary to refer to some individual representations pseudonymously. The thesis that results from this work will be published in hard copy, and housed at Whitley College and with the MCD. Research findings may also be presented at conferences and published in journals or a book.

It is unlikely that a participant would experience an adverse reaction to any of the processes involved in the research. However, should any participant experience distress through their involvement in the research (eg. by recollecting a difficult church situation) she/he may, at any time during the research, request a personal interview with me or with a church pastor/ leader to de-brief any unexpected reaction.

Each participant is also free, without fear of penalty, adverse consequences or harming the research process, to withdraw from active participation in the research project at any time. Any participant may also request that information arising from their participation is not used in the research project, provided they exercise this right within four weeks of completing their participation in the project.

The participant may request a copy of personal information about them which is collected in the course of the research project. Pastors and other key informants who have an in-depth interview will have the opportunity to read the transcripts of each of their interview in which they share, and will be offered the chance to modify the transcript.

Timetable
The research will commence in April 2006 and continue through till March 2007. The involvement of participants from any one church will involve a research period of 2-8 weeks within that time frame. I do not expect to complete processing the data and writing up the research until mid 2008, but will be happy to give interested participants progressive information from time-to-time. I would expect the dates for the interviews and focus groups for your congregation may be between _____ and _____. The dates for the focus group for your congregation are _____ and _____.

Response
Please let me know whether or not you are willing and available to participate in the research by Friday _____ . If you are prepared to be involved you will need to sign the Participant Information and Consent Form (below) and return it to me.

Further information
I would appreciate you giving time to this study which is in an area that is significant for me and I think significant for churches in Melbourne and beyond. If you have any questions, please fell free to contact me at Whitley College, 271 Royal Parade Parkville VIC 3052, phone (03) 9733 5455 or email shapingnow@optusnet.com.au. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Ross Langmead at Whitley College, Parkville VIC 3052, Phone (03) 9340 8021 or email rlangmead@whitley.unimelb.edu.au.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the MCD Administration, (03) 9853 3177. If you have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Liaison Officer, MCD Human Research and Ethics Committee: phone 03 9853 3177, e-mail hrec@mcd.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Yours sincerely

Darren Cronshaw

Appendix 4 – Participant information and consent form for pastors and key informants

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Research project for Doctor of Theology by Darren Cronshaw)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
(PASTORS AND KEY INFORMANTS)

I agree to take part in the above Melbourne College of Divinity research project. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement above, which I keep for my records, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- complete questionnaires asking me about my experiences of innovation and mission in my congregation or area of ministry
- participate in two in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher to discuss the experience of different aspects of church life
- allow the interview to be audio-recorded
- participate in this program for a period of 4-8 weeks, and possibly be contacted later to clarify research findings
- make myself available for a further interview should that be required
- allow the researcher to have access to my research records.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any other individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that I have given approval for the name of my church community and/or denomination to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications. I also understand that I as pastor may be identified by name and/or because of my role.

I understand that a copy of any transcripts of my interviews or written narratives that will be included in the thesis or publications will be provided to me to approve or modify, prior to their inclusion.

I also understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw up to any point in the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way and/or without penalizing or disadvantaging the project. I realise I may also request that information arising from my participation not be used in the research project, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research project.

I agree that information provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis (which will be held in the Whitley College library and at the Melbourne College of Divinity), presented at conferences and published in journals or a book.

Participant's name _____ Signature _____ Date __ / __ / 2006

Address

Email address

Church name

Researcher's name: _____DARREN CRONSHAW_____

Signature _____ Date __ / __ / 2006

Appendix 5 – Participant information and consent form for focus group participants

The Melbourne College of Divinity
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The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Research project for Doctor of Theology by Darren Cronshaw)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in the above Melbourne College of Divinity research project. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement above, which I keep for my records, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- complete questionnaires asking me about my experiences of innovation and mission in my congregation
- participate in one or two focus-group interviews conducted by the researcher with ideally 7-10 (but possibly 4-15) people to discuss the experience of different aspects of church life
- allow the group sessions to be audio-recorded
- make myself available for a further individual in-depth interview should that be required.
- participate in this program for a period of 1-8 weeks.
- allow the researcher to have access to my research records.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. I understand that I have given approval for the name of my church community to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications.

I also understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw up to any point in the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way and/or without penalizing or disadvantaging the project. I realise I may also request that information arising from my participation not be used in the research project, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research project.

I agree that information provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis (which will be held in the Whitley College library and at the Melbourne College of Divinity), presented at conferences or in reports, and published in journals and/or a book, on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information about me is used.

Participant's name (BLOCK LETTERS)

Signature   _____ Date __ / __ / 2006

Address

Email address

Church name

Researcher's name: _____DARREN CRONSHAW_____

Signature   **_____** **Date __ / __ / 2006**

Appendix 6 – In-depth interview outline

These introductory remarks and guideline of questions and topics are to help people articulate the kind of information the research project is seeking to address. They are presented here as a guide to topics to talk about in a semi-structured dialogue and not as a list that have to be worked through. The first interview, at the beginning of the research period for each church, will follow these guidelines. The second interview, times towards the end of the research period for that church, will follow questions that were not answered in these guidelines and/or follow up on issues or questions that have been raised during participant-observation or focus groups.

1. **Interview objectives**

The aim of the in-depth interviews is to be introduced to the pastor(s) and the emerging church they serve and to begin to explore and understand their experience of mission and innovation.

2. **Interviewees**

One or two main pastors or key informants from each church will be interviewed.

3. **Introductory remarks**

   ∉ Purpose
   ∉ Recording and transcription details
   ∉ Mention I have some things to explore, but if there is anything else the person would like to talk about I would love to hear it.

4. **Question guide**

Questions will be open-ended rather than directed in order to encourage pastors or key leaders to share a diversity of their experiences and stories. There are six main topics I want to explore. Depending on the situation, the sort of questions that will be explored and the general order in which they might be asked is as follows:

1. What is your history and focus?
a. Tell me about the history of the church as far as you know it? And yourself and your call here?
b. How would you describe your church and its focus, values and vision? Have you got any literature, information packs, statements of vision and goals that you can share with me.

2. Tell me about how you understand and express mission?.
a. Definition: What is your understanding of mission?
b. Inspiration: What books, leaders or churches helped shape your understanding and practice of mission?
c. Activities: What does your church do or have, in terms of mission, that other churches might be able to learn from? What forms does mission take, in the lives of individuals? And through the congregation?
   a. Process: How do you teach about mission and how do you mobilise the people of your church for mission?
   b. Inspiration: How else could it be encouraged? What is your dream and vision for the mission of this church?

3. Models of mission: incarnational or attractional?
a. Some mission-shaped churches focus on an 'incarnational' approach to mission that takes the ministry to where people are, rather than seeking to attract them to 'church. To what extent can your church's mission be described as 'incarnational?'
b. And how much 'attractional' mission occurs?

4. Tell me about your innovativeness.
a. Inspiration: What books, people or messages helped shape your understanding and practice of innovation and innovative approaches to church?

b. Evidence: What innovation is your church fostering? Has there been things that are new and innovative your church has done, perhaps particularly related to its mission, that you can reflect on and tell me about. What was it and how was the change introduced and accepted? What is your experience and your church's experience of making decisions about innovation and new ideas? Tell me some specific examples.

c. Process: How is innovation cultivated in your church? How does your church deal with the management of change and encouraging people to adopt and endorse new ideas and approaches? What frameworks does your church use for presenting and managing change and championing innovative new ideas? What processes (if any) are involved? Are you satisfied with these?

d. Aspiration: How else can it be encouraged? Have you got ideas (perhaps learned from experience here) about how churches can better manage change and promote innovative new approaches to mission?

5. How would you describe your style of leadership?

6. Tell me about the culture of the church as an organisation.
a. If I was a newcomer, what would I need to know to understand how the place ticks?
b. Do you think your church, to a greater degree than others, attracts people who are innovators?
c. Does the church intentionally build a culture of change that enhances its innovativeness? How does it do this?
d. What can other churches learn from you and your church about how to lead the church through change and into innovative new approaches to church life and mission?

7. An 'anything else' question: Thanks for what you have shared. If there was one other thing you would really want to tell me, what might that be?

Close and thanks

Appendix 7 – Survey form

The Melbourne College of Divinity
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Email: hrec@mcd.edu.au   www.mcd.unimelb.edu.au

The Shaping of Things Now:
Innovation and Mission in Emerging Churches in Melbourne
(Research project for Doctor of Theology by Darren Cronshaw)

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. Thank you if you decide to participate. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and thank you for considering my request. Completing the enclosed 'Participant Information and Consent Form' and filling in the survey form is an indication of your willingness to participate and that you understand that:

1. Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary
2. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage
3. The data collected will be securely stored. The survey forms and any personal information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project except that, as required by the MCD's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage in electronic format for five years, after which it will be destroyed
4. The results of the project may be published but your anonymity will be preserved. Only churches and pastors will be referred to by their real name.

This information will be used as part of Daren Cronshaw's doctoral research, to be presented in the form of a doctoral thesis of the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). Results of this project may be published but any data included will not identify you as an individual. You will be most welcome to view the results of the project. At the conclusion of the research, I will contact you by letter, email or telephone to advise you that the thesis can be viewed at the Whitley College library or at the MCD where the thesis will be lodged.

This survey is adapted from a survey used by Steve Taylor in his research of alt.worship in New Zealand. ('A new way of being church: A case study approach to Cityside Baptist Church as Christian faith "making do" in a postmodern world'. PhD thesis. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago, 2004.)

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me at Whitley College (MCD), 271 Royal Parade Parkville VIC 3052, phone (03) 9733 5455 or email shapingnow@optusnet.com.au. You may also contact my supervisor Dr Ross Langmead, also at Whitley College or phone (03) 9340 8021 or email rlangmead@whitley.unimelb.edu.au.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Melbourne College of Divinity.

Please tick one box per question, or write in the space provided

1. How frequently do you attend church services at this church?
●   Hardly ever
●   Less than once a month
●   Once a month
●   2-3 times a month
●   Usually every week

2. How long have you been attending church services here?
-   Less than 1 year
-   1-2 years
-   3-5 years
-   6-10 years
-   More than 11 years
-   I am visiting from another congregation
-   I am visiting and do not regularly go anywhere else

3. Do you regularly take part in any mission activities of this church
(e.g., evangelism or outreach, community service, social justice or welfare)?
-   No, we don't have such activities
-   No, I am not regularly involved
-   Yes, in evangelism or outreach
-   Yes, in community service, social justice or welfare
-   Yes, in both evangelism or outreach and community service, social justice or welfare

4. Are you regularly involved in group activities here?
-   No, we have no such groups
-   No, I am not regularly involved
-   Yes in a small prayer, discussion or Bible study group
-   Yes, in a fellowship or social group

5. Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this church?
-   Yes, a strong sense of belonging which is growing
-   Yes, about the same as last year
-   Yes, although perhaps not as strong as in the past
-   No, but I am new here
-   No, and I wish I did by now
-   No, but I am happy to stay on the fringe
-   Don't know
-   Not applicable

6. Over the last year, do you believe you have grown in your Christian faith?
-   No real growth
-   Some growth mainly through this church
-   Some growth, mainly through other groups or congregations
-   Some growth, mainly through my own private activity
-   Much growth, mainly through this church
-   Much growth, mainly through other groups or congregations
-   Much growth, mainly through my own private activity

1. What is the main reason you came to this church?
-   Worship style
-   Had friends here
-   Ethos
-   Preaching
-   Location
-   Knew Mark
-   Other (please state)

2. List your previous church/religious experience

Years (eg 1990-96)	Best label (liberal, evangelical, charismatic)	Size (<75, 75-200, >200)	Reason moved *

* Reason for move could include relocation, social needs, spiritual needs, ministry needs, theological change, church changed, other – state

9. How did your previous church experience (positive & negative) contribute to your move to this church?

10. Rate the following aspects of this church in terms of their contribution to your spirituality

Preaching ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Community ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Communion ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Worship ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Visuals ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Use of contemporary culture ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Personal participation ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Seeing others involved ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Dealing with conflict ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Prayer ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Use of liturgy ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Use of art ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Honesty ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Use of technology ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
Story telling ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know
other (please state) ☐ very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ neutral ☐ unhelpful ☐ very unhelpful ☐ don't know

1. How often do you have a sense of God's closeness during church services?
- Always
- Mostly
- Often
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever
- Never
- Don't know

2. What do you think is the purpose of this church? If possible, complete the following sentence:

I believe the church exists in order to _____.

3. What do you value about this church? If possible, complete the following sentence to explain this church and what you feel is important:

What really matters to me about this church is _____.

4. What group of people do you think the church is most focusing on. If possible, complete the following sentence to explain:

The people we are seeking to reach and influence are _____.

5. As a result of being at this church:

I feel that my faith is more integrated with my workplace
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel that my faith is more integrated with my culture
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Christian
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am willing to express in actions my Christian faith
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am willing to express in words my Christian faith.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. What is your understanding of mission? How does your church express mission?

17. To what extent is your church open to innovative and new approaches to worship and mission in your life together?

18. In what year were you born? 19__ __

19. Gender
- Male
- Female

20. What is your highest educational qualification?
- Primary
- Some secondary
- School certificate
- Sixth form certificate/UE/Bursary/Scholarship
- NZQA recognised trade certificate
- NZQA recognised diploma or equivalent
- Bachelor degree
- Post graduate degree or diploma

21. What is your present marital status?
- Never married
- Co-habiting in a de-facto relationship
- Married
- Separated, not divorced
- Divorced
- Remarried
- Widowed

22. Where were you born?
City/ area   _____   Country_____

23. Which of the following best describes your journey to church last time you attended?
- Walked
- Biked
- Public transport
- Drove 1-5 minutes
- Drove 6-10 minutes
- Drove 11-20 minutes
- Drove 21-30 minutes
- Drove >30 minutes

Appendix 8 – Focus group interview outline

These introductory remarks and guideline of topics and questions are to help people articulate the kind of information the research project is seeking to address. They are presented here as a guide for a semi-structured discussion and not as a list that have to be mechanically worked through.

1.   **Group objectives**

The aim of the focus groups as a research tool is to explore, understand and compare the experience of mission and innovation among church participants.

2.   **Group composition**

Focus-group participants will be a stratified purposeful selection of each church selected in consultation with the pastor(s) to represent a diversity of church life.

3.   **Introductory remarks**

   ∉ Purpose
   ∉ Recording and transcription details
   ∉ Request that people speak up, speak one at a time and be honest with responses
   ∉ Mention I have some general topics to explore, but if there is anything else the people would like to talk about I would love to hear it.

Questions will be open-ended rather than directed, and encourage people to share a diversity of experiences and stories. My intention with this project is to focus the research on what I believe to be the most important aspects of emerging churches; that is, *mission* and *innovation*. In general the first focus group (A.) will explore the topic of mission (with reference to innovation). The second focus group (B.) will explore innovation (with reference to mission).

4.   **Question guide**

1. For an introductory topic, around the circle, invite each person to briefly share:
a. What stands out for you in terms of how your church expresses its responsibility for mission? OR
b. Can you tell me something new and innovative your church has done, perhaps particularly related to its mission beyond the church's walls? (And how was the change introduced)?

Having listened to one another's initial responses (thanks for sharing them), let's discuss now:
A. How does your church express mission, particularly in new ways?
AND/OR
B. How does your church deal with innovation and innovative ways of expressing church, particularly with new ideas for mission?

2.   Tell me about how you understand and express mission?.
a. Definition: What is your understanding of mission?
b. Inspiration: What books, people or messages helped shape your understanding of mission?
c. Motivation: What motivates you in mission? What detract from missional activity?
d Activities: What does your church do or have, in terms of mission, that other churches might be able to learn from? What forms does mission take, in the lives of you as individuals? And through the congregation?
   a.   Aspiration: How else could it be encouraged? If your pastor or leaders asked you for your opinions and ideas on how church could better foster mission, what would you say?

3. Models of mission: incarnational or attractional?
a. Some mission-shaped churches focus on an 'incarnational' approach to mission that takes the ministry to where people are, rather than seeking to attract them to 'church. To what extent can your church's mission be described as 'incarnational?'
b. And how much 'attractional' mission occurs?

4. Tell me about your innovativeness as a church and can you tell me any examples of innovativeness your church is fostering..

a. Inspiration: What books, people or messages helped shape your understanding and practice of innovation and innovative approaches to church?

b. Evidence: Has there been things that are new and innovative your church has done that you can reflect on and tell me about. Tell me some specific examples.

c. Feelings: Describe your experience of new things happening in your church? What happened? How did you feel about it?

d. Process: How does your church deal with managing change and encouraging people to adopt and endorse new ideas and approaches? (What frameworks or processes does your church use? Are you satisfied with these?) How do you know or believe as a church that God is guiding you to do something?

e. Aspiration: How else can it be encouraged? Have you got ideas (perhaps learned here) about how churches can better manage change and promote innovativeness in mission?

5. How would you describe your pastor's style of leadership?

6. Tell me about the culture of the church as an organisation.

a. If I was a newcomer, what would I need to know to understand how the place ticks?

b. Do you think your church, to a greater degree than others, attracts people who are innovators?

c. Does the church intentionally build a culture of change that enhances its innovativeness? How does it do this?

d. What can other churches learn from you and your church about how to lead the church through change and into innovative new approaches to church life and mission?

7. Close and thanks

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