New Roles of the Church in Korea with the Scope of the Missional Church

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ABSTRACT—The world, especially Western society is rapidly transforming into a multicultural society through changes in various social, religious and cultural factors. Especially, in the area of religion, Christendom is no longer a predominant western mold that shapes society and the church has lost its influence. Korea is no exception. Therefore, those changes in churches call for a new trial for fulfilling its mission from God. However, since the concept of the Missional church was introduced to the world for the first time in the late 1980’s, many church leaders and theologians have studied and developed it so that the church can have bright insight for applying it to the situations that the church is facing. The missional church concept is very helpful for making a breakthrough to bind both the old and new generations under a deep and comprehensive understanding and to confirm the possibility of its application to the Korean church. Therefore, in this study, several practical pastoral ideas were suggested for the paradigm shift to develop its concept and to apply it to the present situation of the church in Korea.

Keywords: Missional Church, Christendom, Pastoral Paradigm, Postmodernism, Incarnational
I. Introduction

In their book, The Shaping of Things to Come, Frost and Hirsch (2013) defined Christendom as “the name given to the sacral culture that has dominated European society from around the seventeen century until the end of the twentieth” (p. 21). It is a period in history when the church assumed influence by its connection to temporal, secular power. Its high watermark occurred in the Middle Ages and continued beyond the Reformation well into the 1700s. Since the emergence of the Enlightenment it has been in decline, disappearing in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Fast forwarding to the present, however, Christendom is no longer the predominant western mold that shapes society. The majority of people no longer embrace Christianity as a worldview. Christendom was the cultural phenomenon that arose out of the institutionalization of Christianity (McDaniel, 2010, p. 10). As a result of Christendom’s demise, post-Christendom has emerged. The cultural shift toward post-Christendom is not an everyday, predictable, anticipated, continuous change but rather a change that has crept in and altered the core of western society. Under Christendom the “dominion or sovereignty of the Christian religion” ruled throughout the land (Hall, 1997, IX). Some theorize that the current milieu of change is as great as or greater than that of the Protestant Reformation (Wagner, 2004, p. 10).

The post-Christendom swing is more than a simple generational shift defined as one generation’s reactions and adjustment to its parent’s generational ways, values, and manners (Tickle, 2008, p. 38). The move from Christendom to post-Christendom has been a gradual move away from a culture where church was the center and its beliefs were the core of society such as education, politics, governmental policy, etc. to a culture that has systematically alienated the church of Christendom. McNeal (2007) says that post-Christendom is forcing the church to undergo its “biggest realignment” since the Reformation. The twenty-first century church is still in the process of adapting. Yet in its new paradigm, it will likely stay in a constant state of emergence. There are no single definitive terms to describe the twenty-first century church as it dawns. Phrases like “emerging,” “emergent,” “fresh expressions,” “future,” “Ancient-future,” “house,” “organic,” or “missional” are all terms used to describe the various twenty-first century expressions of the church (Murray, 2005, p. 73).

Along with recognizing the change of church environment, the terminology of missional church was introduced to the world. Since then,