

Pioneering
Biblical Perspectives



KEY QUESTIONS:

Is there such a thing as a Biblical Ecclesiology?
Are there different Biblical Ecclesiologies?
What are the implications of this for pioneering today?

If there is a Biblical ecclesiology or Biblical ecclesiologies is it (are they) a blueprint, a guide, or a source of historical information for pioneering today?

KEY QUESTIONS

How do we handle claims that a particular model of missional pioneering and ecclesiology is *the* NT model when other models are advocated with the same claim?

In what ways does Biblical ecclesiology remain the same, and in what ways does it change or develop?

KEY QUESTIONS:

What implications are there for understanding '*the* church' and '*a* church' and their relation? How is *the* church and *a* church related to pioneering? How is this worked out in the Biblical narrative?

Does missional theology and ecclesiology shape pioneering missional practice or vice versa? If it is a 'both and' are they equal in direction, priority and authority?

KEY QUESTIONS:

How and where do we begin to examine the relationship between Biblical ecclesiology and pioneering?

How do we relate the pioneering spirit and practice of pioneering, and the other ministries/callings of the church?

Ecclesiology and pioneering in Acts

- It provides a useful *overview* of the early church story and first pioneering movement
- We will engage that story by conversing with NT letters. These letters often provide the “fill in” we need to understand more fully particular stories, incidents, issues or information that must be read in parallel with the Acts narrative.

ACTS: A PIONEERING FRAMEWORK

- 1) PIONEERING MOVEMENTS**
- 2) PIONEERING CENTRES**
- 3) PIONEERING ISSUES**

***Biblical Ecclesiology
and Pioneering***

KEY MOVEMENTS

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Sending of the Pioneering Spirit

Acts of the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit continues God's purposes in history and the work of Jesus through the church

The Spirit is the anointer, catalyst, and guide of mission, and the "midwife" that births the church.

Acts 1 v 8; 2 v 1-21; 8 v 26-29; 13 v 2; 16 v 6-10

Pioneers are people called by God who are the first to see and creatively *respond to the Holy Spirit's initiatives* with those outside the church; gathering others around them as they seek to establish new contextual Christian community.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/pioneering>

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Sending of the Pioneering Church

The church is sent in the mission of God by the power of the Spirit to share the message of Jesus

The Acts narrative begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome mirroring the commissioning of the church in Acts 1 v 8

As the church moves from Jerusalem to Rome it breaks new ground as it crosses new cultures. It plants the Gospel and out of the Gospel communities are formed as people respond

The Pioneer Spirit creates, forms and mobilizes the pioneering church

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Pioneering in Jerusalem, Samaria and Judea

It is the work of the Apostles (and evangelists) that sees Pioneering take place in non Jerusalem contexts

The missionary work of Peter and Philip is perhaps the most obvious Pioneering in the early Jerusalem church (Acts 8-10). Itinerary prophets/teachers also seem to operate frequently. Pioneering in Jewish territory also occurs through severe persecution (Acts 8 v 1-4)

Pioneering is less prominent due to the forming and development of the first church in Jerusalem which developed in homes and small groups (Acts 2 v 42-47, 4 v 32-37). The Jewishness of the church is evident in form, style, worship and constitution.

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Pioneering to the ends of the earth

It is through the calling of Paul to be the “apostle to the Gentiles” that the movement of the Gospel to Rome is largely fulfilled (though this was a process that took time and required the conversion of Cornelius and the church).

The influence of Peter/James (Acts 10-11) for Gentiles to be embraced unconditionally and yet somewhat conditionally (the issues are not resolved at the Jerusalem council)

It takes the intervention of the Spirit and the endorsement of the Antiochene church to release the first missionary pair into explicit virgin Gentile territory (Acts 13)

KEY MOVEMENTS:

It is the intentional missional journeys by Paul and the pioneers (men and women) that take the Gospel to Rome via the important centres of population.

And yet Paul and his teams often spent time revisiting and staying in these churches to give pastoral support and stability. “The journeys were far from being whistle stop tours” (I. H. Marshall, *Acts*).

The churches are pioneered in different contexts and cultures but have similarities of process in their founding and development (Moynagh, *Church for every Context*)

KEY MOVEMENTS:

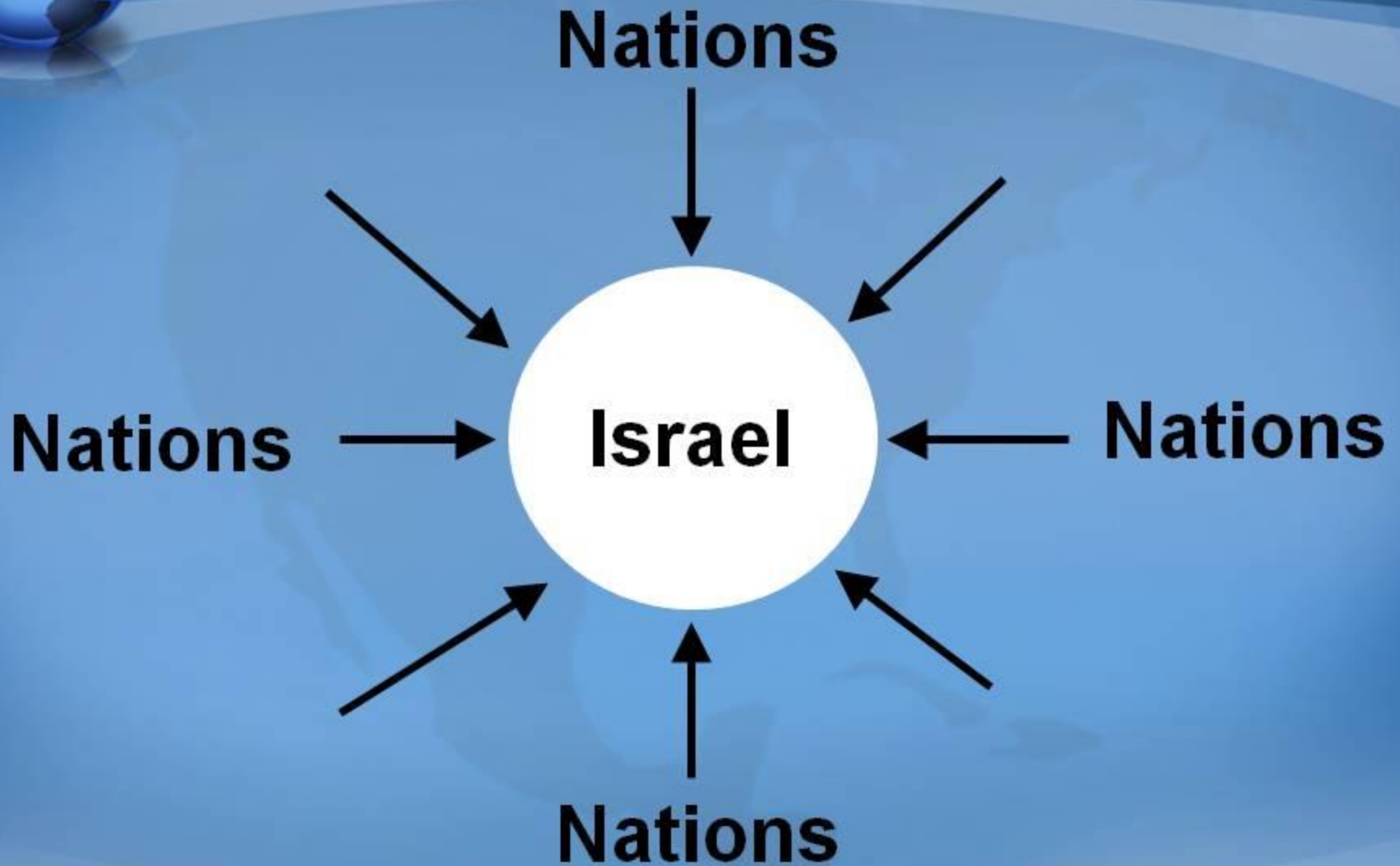
Movement from centripetal to centrifugal

Centripetal- proceeding or acting in a direction *toward a center* or axis (primary OT model)

Centrifugal- proceeding or acting in a direction *away from a center* or axis (primary NT model)

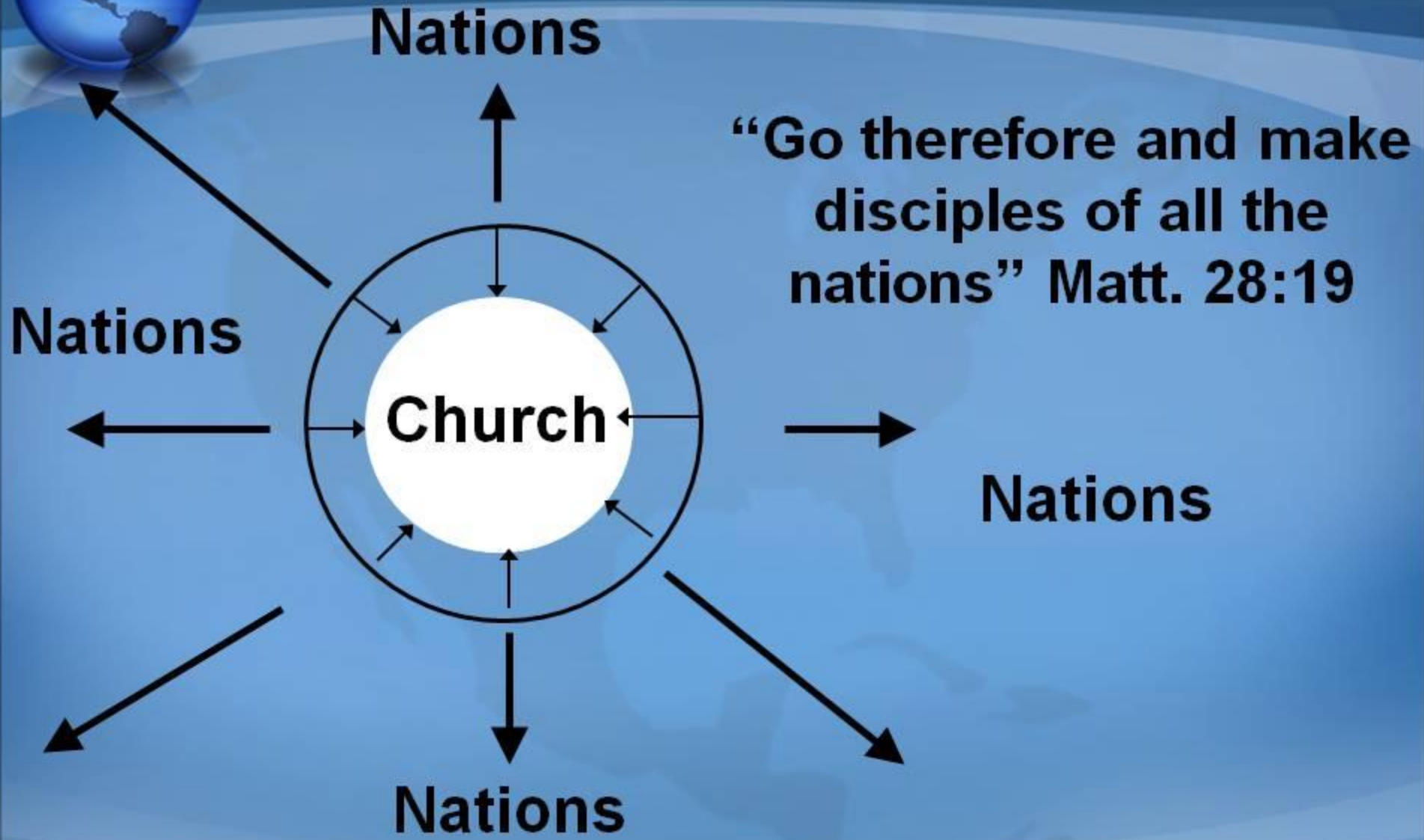


OT Missions: *Obey! Come!*



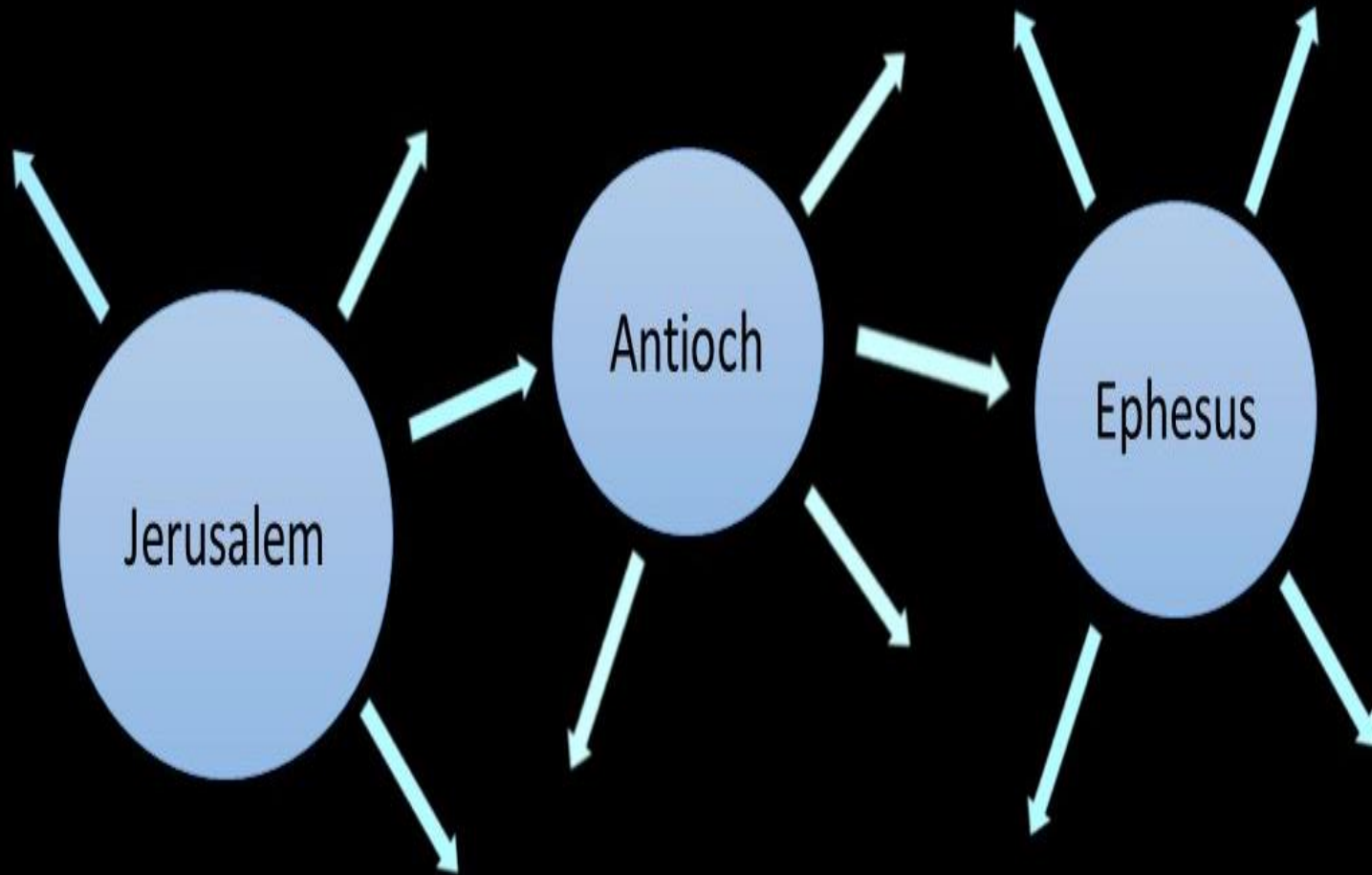


NT Missions: *Go! Preach!*



“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” Matt. 28:19

Centrifugal, Decentralized Movement of NT Mission:



KEY MOVEMENTS:

Movement to peoples, cultures and subcultures

The pioneering ministry of the church moves across all cultures (Jewish, Greek, Roman as well as the movement to the nations via the Pentecost festival revelation, see Acts 2)

The pioneering ministry of the church moves across all peoples (national and local people groups, slaves, slave-owners, rich, poor, male, female, old, young, educated, uneducated, religious, non religious etc).

Reading Acts shows the diversity of pioneer movement to cultures and peoples in ways and forms that *translate* the Gospel into contextual models (see Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*)

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Movement to the urban

The narrative of Acts and the New Testament shows the strategic aim to take the mission of Jesus to major population centres (and therefore the key trade routes in the Empire).

The Gospel is preached and churches are formed in such centres as Rome, Galatia, Colossae, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth and the letters in the NT reveal the unique issues and problems of the local church in context

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Movement from apostolic persons/teams to an apostolic church

In Acts the pioneering began with the 12 apostles and then to smaller apostolic teams but the thrust of the church as a whole, and the Pioneering work of the Spirit, was to foster an apostolic movement.

The church (and **a** church) is orientated in three equally important directions (upwards in worship/prayer, inwards in fellowship/discipleship and outwards in witness and mission).

New Testament ecclesiology reveals that all three dimensions (SHAPE of the Church) are simultaneously necessary (For example, See *3D ministries* by Mike Breen)

KEY MOVEMENTS:

Movement to primary identity “in Christ”

The struggle of the early church was to understand and determine what it meant for Gentiles to belong equally to Christ and the church.

Paul frequently addresses this issue in his NT letters advocating that the primary identity of the believer (whether male, female, Greek or Jew, slave or free) is Christ and that the walls of separation have been removed in Him. This is why Paul frequently reminds believers of who they are “in Christ” and what that means for living here and now and in the age to come.

What can we learn about Pioneering from the following NT movements?

- From centripetal (come) to centrifugal (go)
- To peoples, cultures and subcultures
- To urban centres
- From apostolic persons/teams to an apostolic church
- To primary identity of “being in Christ”

Biblical Ecclesiology and Pioneering

KEY CENTRES

4 KEY CENTRES:

Jerusalem

Prof. F.F. Bruce, “The Church of Jerusalem,” Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal 4 (April 1964): 5-14

- The first Christian centre founded at Pentecost
- About 40 years of primary significance (HQ!)
- Dispersed by persecution prior to AD 70
- Communal character is notable
- Based on Jewish models
- Administered by apostles (developing leaders)
- Open to risk taking but sometimes cautious or even suspicious about what was happening on the margins (both people and activity)

4 KEY CENTRES:

- Embracing of the Gentiles as the result of accepting the Gospel and receiving the Spirit
- “Cultural” conditions placed on the Gentiles as a result of looking for unity and compromise
- Reluctant but eventual support of Pauline mission

4 KEY CENTRES:

3 dangers:

Danger of Cultural uniformity

Danger of Exclusivism

Danger of Legalism

Could it be likened to an Inherited church? (Ray S Anderson (in *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, BRF, 2007)

4 KEY CENTRES:

Antioch

- Pioneered by Jewish converts from Cyprus and Cyrene that had gone to Antioch and evangelised the Greeks after Stephen and others had gone to preach to the Jews only (Acts 11)
- Gentile church in a major pagan urban city
- Fruitful in mission

4 KEY CENTRES:

- It was a sending base of missions (reproducing)
- It facilitated new structures and patterns of discipleship
- Comprised of different nationalities, races and gifts (not homogeneous)
- Fostered inter-dependence with the Jerusalem church

Could it be likened to an Emerging church? (Ray S Anderson (in *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, BRF, 2007)

4 KEY CENTRES:

Ephesus

One of the largest and most impressive cities in the ancient world, a political, religious, and commercial centre in Asia Minor. Associated with the ministries of Paul, Timothy, and the apostle John, the city played a significant role in the spread of early Christianity. Ephesus and its inhabitants are mentioned more than twenty times in the New Testament (Holman Bible Dictionary Article, *Ephesus*)

4 KEY CENTRES:

- Paul stopped at Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila who remained (Apostolic Team Pioneering)
- Apollos preached in Ephesus and linked up with Priscilla/Aquila (Pioneer networking)
- Paul returned to Ephesus and spend more than two years there preaching and teaching, dealing with opposition and establishing elders (Pioneer Strengthening and raising of indigenous leaders)

4 KEY CENTRES:

- Served the interests of the general church as a base for key leadership and learning. Significant centre of doctrine
- Ephesian circular important (mystery of the church revealed)

4 KEY CENTRES:

Rome

Peter Richardson, “Augustan-Era Synagogues in Rome,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome*

- Unclear how church emerged in Rome
- Significant Jewish presence that was well organised and networked in the city
- Non apostolic Christian Jews brought Gospel to Rome (grass roots movement)
- After Jewish expulsion the church was forced to organise itself around “clusters” or “small groups” scattered across the city (missional communities)

4 KEY CENTRES:

- Largely Gentile, multicultural, of different expressions, perhaps organised around homogenous groups (Moynagh)
- Seemed to communicate well between groups and hold on to common identity and mission.
- Paul and Peter strengthen an already existing work
- Became the significant centre of Christianity in the West

**What can we learn about
pioneering today from
these four key centres?**

KEY CENTRES:

- Places of accountability
- Places of mutual support and resource
- Places of teaching and authority
- Places of unity but were culturally diverse
- Places of contextual mission
- Local centres but inter-connected
- Structured differently
- Contributed to pioneering differently
- Pioneered in different ways and directions

KEY ISSUES FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Importance of '*The Church*' and '*a Church*'
- Local Identity and Corporate Identity matter
- Unity and Diversity matter
- Independence and Interdependence are important
- Continuity and Discontinuity both occur in mission
- Kerygma and contextual transculturation of it
- Pioneering ministry was one key form of ministry but other ministries were also necessary and are related to it (APEST)

KEY ISSUES FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Different ecclesiologies and structures but a shared framework of ecclesiology (e.g. Ephesians)
- Pioneering informs ecclesiology (mission shapes church)
- Ecclesiology informs Pioneering (catholicity)
- Tensions, troubles and setbacks are part of the course of the Pioneer journey!
- Good dialogue, trust and relationships between the centre and the margins is critical

KEY ISSUES FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Pioneering and forming of church was both organic and strategic
- Sustaining and supporting Pioneers, and Pioneer churches, are both vital.
- Growing indigenous leaders is key to sustainability
- Pioneering always involves risk-taking and not every venture may be “successful” or permanent
- Pioneering is multidirectional and unpredictable
- Movements invariably take shape and form
- The Holy Spirit is the “unpredictable wild goose” and not the “tame dove” of mission (St. Patrick)

QUESTIONS