Working Definitions for

“Theology and Strategies for Urban Mission”

“Theology”: “Paradigms of Understanding that inform Action as to the ultimate nature, purposes and activity of God towards Creation based upon the Biblical record”. Theology itself does not save, being a “distilled” and subjective human version of the Word itself, but ought to lead people to the foot of the cross where the living Word not only redeems, and the Spirit enlightens, but also guides one through the course of life itself.

For this course, there is considerable interplay with three types of theology. First, there is a “Theology of the City”, that is, what does the Bible tell us about the City, both good and bad, but especially as we are informed about the vision of the New Jerusalem. Second, there is nuggets of insights that together compile pieces of “Theology for the City”, that is Biblical insights that are especially pertinent to the needs of the City, or help us to identify “signs of the Kingdom” in the City. Then there are various “Theologies that emerge out of the City.” Some of these represent the pathologies of the City while others express uncommon grace found in the City, that inform the larger body of believers in fresh, new ways.

“Strategies”: “Planning and Actions that result from appropriate theological understanding of ministry to the City.” In essence, “strategies” involve envisioning what God’s purpose is for our common grace Cities, and mobilizing resources, individuals, and God’s leadership to live out that vision in practical, self-sustaining, and redemptive ways.

“Urban”: “A city is an agglomerate social organism containing a population of at least 20,000 (UN definition), in a relative density that packages a critical population mass necessary for spawning a variety of value-systems, lifestyles, and power constellations. Cities are particularly receptive to, and instrumental in creating innovation and change. With this capacity for change is introduced various kinds of dysfunctional effects, including cultural, sociological, economic, psychological and spiritual.” (>a composite definition with input from 254 urban ministry leaders).

Therefore, urban is not confined to the inner city, the ghetto or the “hood” but represents the entire community as an "organism" or a "body" operating with its many systems (like the human body), such as transportation, education, social services, legal and judicial systems.

Also, many of the characteristics of the City, now are seen throughout “City Regions” that may extend the influences of the city hundreds of miles into the hinterland. A new phenomenon that is emerging is the development of “Edge Cities” often following highways and beltways around or between cities.

Though urban ministry is seen as a separate field of study by many Christian institutions, the lessons discovered may have application in many environments that are not necessarily characterized as “urban.” Indeed, in the future, there may not be "urban mission" as almost all people will be found in cities, or simulating the issues of cities.

"Ministry": “Urban ministry is the active engagement of Christians as co-regents with God in the life of the City, for the purpose of identifying, introducing, exhibiting and celebrating the Kingdom of God in all manner of spirit-enhancing forms. These forms include those of specific evangelistic intent, both individual and corporate. For example:

1. Those of **remedial intent**: that is, providing care for the needy, restoring the damaged, reconciling the divided, recycling the discarded. In short, the mission of Jesus as expressed in Luke 4:18-19 and of the Christians in Matthew 25:35-39.

2. Those of **creative intent**: that is, the building of community both as ecclesia (the Church and alternative communities, to the embellishment (beautifying, becoming holy) of life in all dimensions.

3. Those of **confrontational intent**: that is, recognizing the evil forces at work and countering them with spiritual engagement, including intercessory prayer and fasting, encounters of spiritual warfare (manifest in ‘signs and wonders’ such as exorcisms, miracles, mysticisms) and incarnational suffering.” (a composite definition with input from 254 urban ministry leaders).
Perhaps, “remedial intent” is best understood as employing that whole series of “re-” words, renewal, rehabilitative, revival, restoration, etc. Whereas “creative intent” suggests that which is new, i.e. “newel”, “vival”, not just returning people to a supposed prior healthy state, but to purposes and positions informed and ignited more by God’s future than by human past. “Confrontational intent,” then would suggest, “replacement, defeat of inimical forces, so that the power of God can be made manifest.

The program of God to redeem the world and its communities, including cities and the individuals who comprise them. Mission focuses on the agenda of the Sender- God, while “ministry” (service) focuses on the activity that fulfills the mission. Functionally though, we will use the terms interchangeably for this course.