

creating communities of spiritual activism

or

if i were 26, what kind church would i plant?

slides will be available

brianmclaren.net

let's stay in touch!

convergenceleadership.org

when i was 26, i planted a church.

if i were 26 today, i would plant a church.

we need to conserve and celebrate
thriving traditional churches,
AND
we need to encourage adaptive churches,
AND
we need to innovate with creative new
faith communities.

here's why -

The population of the United States is not distributed evenly. Instead, we tend to bunch up in communities, leaving the spaces in between more sparsely inhabited. Most Americans live in or near cities; today 53 percent live in the 20 largest cities. 75 percent of all Americans live in metropolitan areas.

This map shows population density. The relative height of each major city reflects its population in 1990.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Go West. Nevada is the fastest growing state, followed by Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, and Utah.

Wyoming has the lowest population density of all states in the lower 48 with an average of five people per square mile.

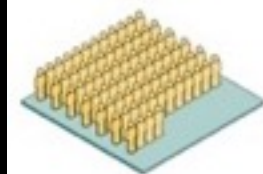
What happens in the empty spaces? Some of it is farming country. More than one quarter of America's crop land is used to grow corn. One third of what is produced is exported to other countries.

Chicago, the country's third largest city, has a population of about three million people. There are 21 states with populations smaller than this city.

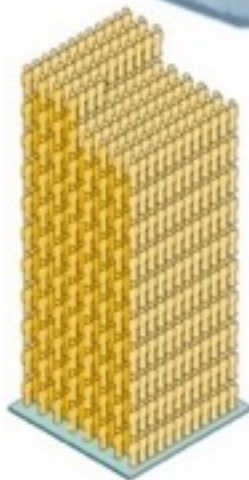
Largest metropolitan area includes New York City and portions of New Jersey and Long Island with a total population of 20 million.

Population density is highest in New York City, where there are 23,000 people per square mile.

Approximately one in nine Americans lives in the nation's most populous state—California. More than 15 million people live in the Los Angeles, Riverside, and Orange County metropolitan area.



Distributing our population evenly would put an average of 76 people per square mile.



New Jersey is the most densely populated state with an average of more than 1,000 people per square mile.



Alaska is a sparsely populated state with an average of one person per square mile.

Wet. Some states are full of water. For example, Louisiana includes more than 8,000 square miles of lakes and wetlands. That's an area bigger than Connecticut and Rhode Island combined.

Coastal areas are home to more than half the U.S. population.

Population Distribution

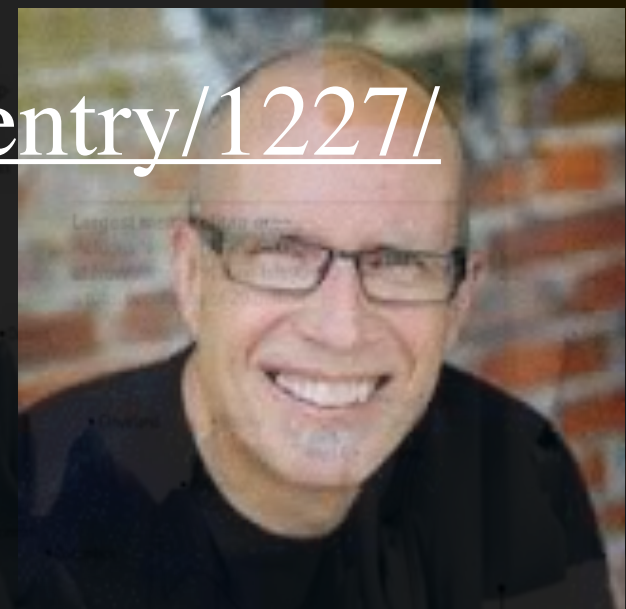
Where do we live?
Where don't we live?



Understanding America

“84% of Americans now live in or around urban areas. But I’m United Methodist, so I speak out of the context of what I know best. 74% of our capital resources (that’s our buildings) are where only 16% of the American population lives. The Methodist Church flourished in the 1800’s and early 1900’s in small towns and rural areas. But now **we continue to send pastors to church buildings instead of populations.** And if we’re really going to reach people, we’re going to have to radically rethink our paradigms of what it’s going to mean to be missional.” - Rev. Mike Slaughter

More here: <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1227/interview-w-mike-slaughter>



if our mission is to people where they are
- not where they were 50, 100, or 150
years ago -
we need creative new faith communities
for new generations who live in radically
new cultural contexts,
where radically new issues must be
addressed
and new messages and methods will be
necessary.

1. I would build a church that identifies primarily as part of a larger spiritual movement.

denominational identity would be secondary.

if possible, i would have multiple affiliations.

stuck in our silos



PCUSA



UCC



UMC



Episcopal



Christian
Church DoC



ELCA

Historic Black,
Ethnic/
Immigrant,
Progressive
Roman
Catholic,
Progressive
Evangelical,
etc.

being church in these times:

complicit/compliant

walking on eggshells

holding the tension

creative resistance/spiritual activism



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ELCA



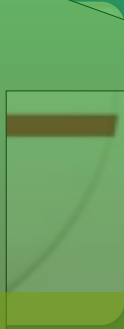
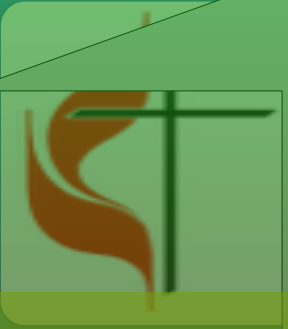
Historic Black,
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etc.

creative
resistance

holding tension

eggshell

nostalgic/regressive



creative
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holding tension

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Historic Black,
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Evangelical,

nostalgic/regressive movement

a creative, progressive movement

holding tension

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etc.

eggshell

nostalgic/regressive movement

building a movement

A CREATIVE/PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT

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2. i would make racial, class, & gender equality a priority in practice

- among leaders
- among members
- among partners

3. i would be clear and overt about our mission, our purpose, and our theology.

mission: to invite people to grow as life-long, love-driven spiritual activists who follow the life and teachings of Jesus.

spiritual activists - disciples, learners who are trained to become practitioners, recruiters, and trainers for their movement.

purpose: to contribute to a multi-faith,
multi-sector, multi-generational spiritual
movement for justice, joy, and peace.

theology:
a biblically rooted, Christ-centered, love-
driven eco-theology of liberation,
dedicated to a just, generous, and
regenerative world for everyone.

4. i would convene the community around ...

A. the story of Jesus and the kingdom/culture/
ecosystem of God

B. a set of practices

C. a carefully chosen set of saints, elders, and
proteges

D. a vision of the future

What story? Which Jesus?

Jesus as a Jewish prophet

Jesus as a gift to the world

Jesus as a radical spiritual teacher of a
nonviolent way of life/way of love

Jesus as the icon of self-giving love

Jesus as the risen Christ who invites us
to be filled with the Spirit of God and live
by his way.

What practices?

constant: practicing the presence of God, abiding in love, walking in the Spirit

daily: reflection & prayer

weekly: gathering

quarterly: retreat or project

annual: camp, festival, conference, or service experience

pivotal: rites of passage

What saints, elders, proteges?





what vision of the future?

- justice and peace for all, no exceptions
 - a regenerative relationship with the earth
- all races, religions, and nations living as good neighbors
 - creatively facing and collaboratively solving problems

5. i would develop multiple circles of
belonging

- a Sunday morning gathering
- home-based, pub-based, hiking-based, retreat-based, etc. communities
- online communities

6. i would define and ask for commitment

- to our ethos (mission, purpose, practices, etc.)
- to our community/region
- to our financial stability
- to our traditions/structures/governance, including conflict resolution (articulated in a members' handbook)

7. i would carefully curate our spirit or vibe

- website
- liturgy/music
- clothing
- communications
- art

8. i would have a multifaceted, internet-based communication plan.

9. i would implement a three- and seven-year go/no-go plan.

10. i would plan to multiply.

