

Review
CHURCH NEXT:
What will the Church look like in the 21st Century
Aubrey Malphurs and Michael Mulphurs
Grand Rapids: Michigan, Kregel Publications, 2003

Reviewed By Rev. Dr. Elwin Johnson Rethinasamy
Mission Developer and Consultant, South Asian Ministries,
Atlantic District- Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, NY, USA

Published in Global Missiology, Review & Preview, April 2005, www.globalmissiology.net

This book is an inter-generational effort of father-son team. Aubrey, the father, his theological expertise and the son, Michael, his creative gift in cyber-technology are blending together to come out as a book like this on church growth and ministry. This attempt is very much appreciated.

Three parts in this book is unique in alerting the declination of American Christianity, advising alternative methodology in reaching out to America's generations and the availability of resources with special reference to the cyber-space.

“Problem” - the first part details the realistic truth of America becoming less in Christian faith. All through the chapters of this part, we can hear a wake up call for American Christendom to return to mission and evangelism. Statistical findings of Barna Research Group, Gallup organization, American Religious Identification Survey, FACT survey are consulted in this chapter as an additional documentation of declination of American Christianity.

“Solution” – the second part is dealing with generational issues, behaviors, and church culture of these generations. Chapters address some practical solutions in reaching out to the present Builder and Baby Boomer Generation, and the future generations of Buster and Bridger Generations. Every generation is very well defined by the time and space of their presence. Authors view this crucial issue on generations, and calls for a theology of change in the mission behaviors of the church. A separate chapter on postmodernism compels the reader to re-consider the approach of the church in reaching the unreached and the unchurched.

“Method” – The third part is demonstrating the viability of eMinistry and its global impact. This last part smoothly shifts from theological and sociological terminologies to technological languages and simply walk us through to briefly understand internet, its uses, how easy for a church to have a web site and some nuts and bolts. The resource appendix is a considerable resource tool for a person who is new to the internet world.

This book is written as a study guide with questions for reflections and discussions in each chapters. Sure! It's worth reading!