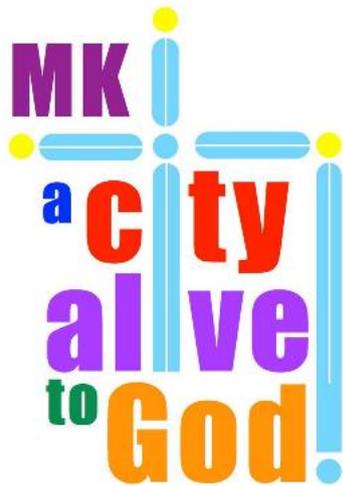




Mission Partnership Newsletter
September 2018

Dear Friends,

When we talk about the sustainability of the church, what are we trying to sustain? For me, this is the key question posed at the July Assembly. I suggested that it is something of an “onion” question whereby we need to keep peeling back the layers of our responses until we get to core motivations, the things that really matter to us. I would hope that such an exercise would take us beyond the propping up of a building or the survival of a group and



drill down to why Christian faith matters not just to us personally (that will only ever produce a self-regarding response), but why it matters full stop. At root, there must be something about God’s loving interest in the world that is absolutely essential to keep alive, to embody, to make available to others and which we long to see shape what is around us. Unless we are committed to that or something very like it above all else, I suggest that there is little point in sustaining the church. *MK: a City Alive to God* is an attempt to express precisely that for our own context. When, however, we do manage to burrow out from under the inessential trivia of church and start to recognise what we are really all about, it becomes apparent both that the church is vital and that our own personal preferences about it are very secondary indeed. We

are then released to let go of those things which simply get in the way of God’s loving interest in the world, released even to sacrifice things which we may have held onto dearly but are no longer helpful. More than that, our faith is re-energised and pointing in the right direction once again.

The Assembly was intended to initiate a conversation around sustainability and related questions such as how do we grow younger? what kind of church planting do we want to encourage? what has outlived its usefulness? Why not encourage your church or church council to give quality time to that conversation? (I have made the Assembly presentation available.) It will be challenging and require a significant degree of honesty. It may also have a lasting effect.

Every Blessing,
John

P.S. coMPass and Leading for a Change programmes available soon.