



As part of the Evangelical Alliance's *Confidence in the Gospel* initiative we are hosting a series of five national consultations to wrestle with significant and timely issues relating to the gospel.

To ensure that as many people as possible can engage with this programme, the talks are being filmed and made available online.

Why not watch some of the videos, and use the questions provided, to explore these vital subjects with your small group or leadership team?

For more information, videos and resources visit eauk.org/confidence

Michael Moynagh

is an associate tutor at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, works for Fresh Expressions as director of research and editor of *Share*. He has written a number of books, including *Church For Every Context*.

Synopsis

When we talk about contextualisation, we usually do so in terms of communicating the gospel. It's about making sure we are able to communicate it in a way that our audience can understand. However, the gospel is always embodied as it is lived out in the communities that form around Jesus. Michael Moynagh argues that contextualising the Church is at least as important as contextualising the gospel. You cannot separate the two.

When we bring people the gift of the gospel, we also bring them the gift of the Church. When we do this, we cannot dictate the terms. We must allow them to receive the Church in the form the Spirit chooses. In an increasingly diverse society, the Church will increasingly look different.

This raises a key question: does anything go? Is there a danger that we contextualise so much that there is nothing distinctive yet. To ensure this doesn't happen it is important that as we contextualise the Church we operate within four boundaries.

Boundary 1: The word of God. We must contextualise under scripture and in the light of scripture.

Boundary 2: The wider Church. We must listen to how the wider Church has understood the scriptures.

Boundary 3: The mission context. We must make sure that it makes sense in the setting in which God has placed us.

Boundary 4: Shared discernment. We must make sure that we making decisions on how we should contextualise the Church as a team, not on our own.

Questions

(1) Why is it important that we contextualise the Church? Can we think of examples from our own experience when the Church has been contextualised well? And what about examples of when the Church has not been contextualised appropriately?

(2) Who are the people that our Church is 'well contextualised for' and for whom is it not well contextualised for? Are we OK with this situation or do we think we need to rethink certain aspects of our church?

(3) Identify something our church does that could be changed to better contextualise to the community we are working with. Discuss some of the possibilities of ways we could do things different, using the four boundaries to guide us.

(4) Which group of people in our community would find it very difficult to engage with Church in its current form? (Don't just think about our own church, but also other churches in the area.) What needs to happen in order to reach out to these people?