

Welcome to the conversation about our future



“Changing the culture of organizations, groups, and institutions—and even societies—is about changing the conversation...”

“For congregations that seek [authentic spiritual and institutional renewal], there are perhaps ten important conversations that they need to initiate, deepen, and sustain in their ongoing life.”

--Anthony B. Robinson

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Our session today



- Review of our committee's research (15 minutes)
- Introduction to our process and timeline (15 minutes)
- Conversation sessions (30-40 minutes)
- Regroup and report (20 minutes)

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Review of our committee's research



Decline in church membership

- Over 60% of the U.S population under the age of 25 has never been in a church, temple, or synagogue.
- The average age of members of mainline denominations is now estimated to be over 65.
- These denominations have been losing about 10% of their membership every decade for the last 30 years.

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Decline in church membership

- Even growth for Protestant evangelicals and “megachurches” is stalled as they fail to attract permanent members rather than spectators.
- The across-the-board decline showed up first in mainline churches with the lowest birth rate and highest education level.
- The fastest-growing group of Christians in the U.S. today classify themselves as “unaffiliated.”
- About 28% of Americans have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion—or no religion at all.

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Review of our committee's research, continued



But strong growth in spirituality

- About 25% of the U.S. population considers themselves “spiritual but not religious”—the fastest-growing group
- Millions of books on spirituality and religion are sold each year.
- 84% of Americans say spirituality is “very” or “somewhat” important in their daily lives.

Sources: The Center of Progressive Christianity, USA Today, Newsweek, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

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Review of our committee's research, continued



The new way forward

“The old way of organizing American religion has vanished. In the wake of the loss, however, some Christians are rebuilding spiritual community, and a new kind of Protestant church is being born.”

--Diana Butler Bass

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What do these churches have in common?

- Tradition (not traditionalism): finding “the voice of peace, justice, and beauty that emanates from the Christian soul”.
- Practice (not purity): giving people the opportunity to grow into a deeper spiritual life.
- Wisdom (not certainty): a persistent search for meaning, asking questions, seeking together.

--Diana Butler Bass

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How can we move forward into this new world?



Our task

To engage the congregation in a multi-year process to re-envision, re-focus, and restructure Orinda Community Church

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Possible outcomes: Our hopes



- A clear grasp of our calling as a congregation.
- An effective new outreach appealing to the wider community.
- A renewal and refocus of our core strengths, programs, and ministries.
- Spiritual, financial, and human resources that sustain our vision and our calling.
- A new organizational structure providing opportunities for fellowship and spiritual growth.

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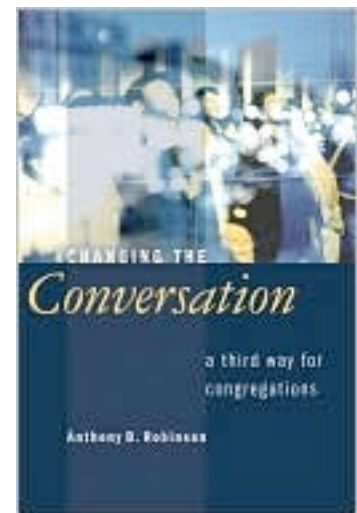
Our process



Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations,
by Anthony B. Robinson

- Teacher of congregational leadership at Emmanuel College in Toronto
- Well-known expert in congregational transformation

Following Robinson's 10 "conversations" over the course of one year in a series of sessions, beginning today



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Our process, continued



The Ten Conversations

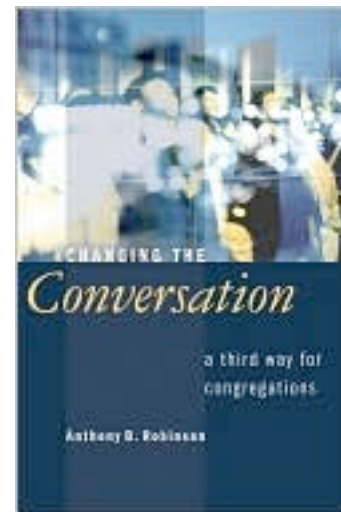
1. “It’s Not About You” (*Today*)
2. “And Yet, It Is About You” (*Sunday, July 25*)
3. “A New Heart” (*Sunday, September 19*)
4. “Why Are We Here” *and*
5. “Write the Vision” (*Friday-Saturday, October 16-17*)
6. “Who Shall Lead Them?” *and*
7. “Let’s Get (Less) Organized” (*Sunday, Nov. 14*)
8. “The Church and the Public Square” (*Sunday, Feb. 6*)
9. “Death and Resurrection” (*Sunday, March 27*)
10. “Where Do We Go From Here?” (*Saturday, May 14, Yosemite*)

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Conversation One: It's Not About You



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A Sea Change



*“Nothing of him doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich an strange”*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

“Much of the time it can seem that the church we love is merely fading away, but those of us who cling to the promise of the Resurrection already know that God has a way of taking the raw stuff of decay, and even of death, and fashioning it into something ‘rich and strange’. This God is not finished yet. And so, I believe, neither is the church.”

Martin Copenhaver, *Good News in Exile*

“A sea change is going on now in American religion. And just as neither you nor I cause the tides to ebb or flow, this is not really about you or me or us.”

Anthony B. Robinson, *Changing the Conversation*

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We're Not in Kansas, Toto



The rise of Christendom

- Christianity + Dominion = Christendom, the combination of belief and power
- Began when Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire
- Rose to its fullest expression when Charlemagne divided the Holy Roman Empire into parishes that were both sacred and secular organizational units
- Christendom assumed Christianity as a birthright, synonymous with citizenship – or the result of conversion by missionaries
- The purpose of church was for believers and the purpose of mission was to gain new believers

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Effects of Christendom



- Conversion and formation* declined because a person was Christian by citizen, birth and residence. Christian faith was a social given rather than a conscious choice or commitment
- Christianity found its embodiment in *nations* rather than *congregations*
- Mission* was something done by missionaries “out there” rather than shared among all members of a congregation “right here”
- The *purpose* of a church was to provide religious services to a particular local population
- The ministry of the church belonged to *religious professionals*, whose role was comparable to that of civil servants
- Society* (culture) and *faith* (Christianity) overlapped so that being a good Christian and a good citizen were equivalent

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American Christendom



The Americas were colonized by Christendom

- Missionaries accompanied colonizing expeditions
- The conflict between Roman Catholicism & Protestantism continued into the New World
- Much of what became the US was colonized by seekers of religious freedom who incorporated their faith into the structure of communities
- The history, the culture, and even the language of the US was an expression of being a “Christian nation”
- Christianity was “inherited” - passed down through the generations
- It was common in 1960 to ask a new acquaintance, “What church do you attend?”

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Decline of American Christendom



The disestablishment of American Christendom has happened in 3 distinct phases

1. The adoption in 1789 of Bill of Rights as part of the Constitution forbade the federal government from creating or supporting a single national church
2. In the early 20th century the informal Protestant power structure was challenged by immigration to be more inclusive of Roman Catholics and Jews – the Christian nation became a Judeo-Christian Nation
3. Since the 1960's the source of moral authority has transitioned from organized religion to the autonomous individual, with a decline in church attendance, and a rise in “chosen” faith, and the path of the seeker

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Factors in the Religious Sea Change



- The gradual disestablishment of Protestant Christendom and the rise of an officially secular society
- The growth in the US of other religions and the emergence of a religiously and culturally pluralistic society
- The infusion of a consumer ethos – and with it, choice – into the area of religion and spirituality, leading to the emergence of a growing menu of spiritual choices

We are surely NOT in Kansas anymore!

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What Does This Mean to Us?



Possible changes in American church priorities

- A renewed emphasis on life change, transformation, or conversion as well as ongoing Christian formation
- A change in the primary purpose of the church
- A shift of mission from “over there” to “right here”
- No longer thinking of the church as “for us” and mission as “for others”, but understanding the church itself as a missional body for the sake of the world God created and loves
- A shift away from over-reliance on professionally trained and ordained clergy as the locus of ministry and the channel of grace

These are big changes, and we are not done yet

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Modern vs. Postmodern



Books on current religion frequently use the language of modern vs. postmodern

- Books by Anthony Robinson, Diana Butler Bass, Phyllis Tickle, Brian McLaren and others reference the significance of postmodernism
- It is an attempt to understand the changes happening all around us

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Transition of Modernity to Post-Modernity

American Christendom thrived in the period of modernity

- With modern beliefs – reason and objective rationalism
- With modern assumptions – determinism, universality and the triumph of progress
- With modern priorities – efficiency, effectiveness, results orientation
- With modern faith – the priesthood of all believers

American attitudes are becoming post-modern

- With post-modern beliefs – limits to reason, bounded rationality
- With post-modern assumptions – uncertainty, particularity, and constraints
- With post-modern priorities – inclusion, diversity, process orientation
- With post-modern faith – the spirituality of all seekers

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Examples of Modernity vs. Post-Modernity

	Pre-Modernity 500-1500 C E	Modernity 1500 CE - Now	Post-Modernity Now - ?
Communication	Spoken word and hand written text	Printing press – movable type	Radio, television, worldwide web
Economic Organization	Feudalism	Capitalism	Global trade
World View	Constant, unchanging world order, ordained by God (e.g. the divine right of kings)	Inevitability of positive progress	Inevitability of unintended consequences & limits
Intellectual Elites	Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas	Newton, Descartes, Kant	Bohr, Derrida, Foucault
Military Practices	Spear carrying infantry, archers, cavalry	Large scale engagements using firearms & artillery	Airpower, computer guided combat, the rise of terrorism
Transportation	The caravan & on foot	The sailing ship	The jet aircraft

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Why Does Any of This Matter?

OCC in 1960 vs. OCC in 2010

- The Orinda Community Church of 1960 existed in the context of a mostly “modern” community
- The Orinda Community Church of 2010 exists in the context of an ever more “post-modern” community
- The assumptions, beliefs and worldview that once served us so well now apply less and less
- The changes are not necessarily good or bad, but we need to understand them

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Questions for Conversation



1. Name one characteristic or aspect of American Christendom that you valued, the loss of which you now grieve (Anne Long)
2. Picture a spectrum with “inherited faith” at one end and “chosen faith” at the other. Where would you locate yourself on that spectrum? (Susan Russell)
3. Do a free association with the word “mission”. What words/images /people come to mind when you hear “mission”? (Bob Winbigler)
4. Name one exciting opportunity you see hidden in the death of Christendom. (Sabine Hathaway)
5. Imagine a spectrum with “modern” at one end, and “postmodern” at the other. Where would you locate yourself on the spectrum and why? (Kurt Sunderbruch)
6. Assess the balance of “head” (or reason) and “heart” (or emotion) in your congregation. Would you say that one predominates, or are they fairly evenly balanced? (David Milnes)

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