

Like yeast in dough, these gradually become part of a transforming sense of community

The A B C values of a Celtic Church

Authenticity

Purity of motive. Renunciation of power. No hidden agendas, pressurised or unnatural techniques, judgemental, defensive, triumphalist, feigned or competitive attitudes. Simple life-style. Genuine, humble relationships with those around, the earth, and the one, holy catholic and apostolic Body of Christ.

Blessing

A Celtic church blesses every good thing it can lay hands on. It celebrates the glory of God at the heart of life in painting and poetry, movement and music, symbol and drama. It brings colour back into the streets. It uses oil, water, fire, earth and all its fruits. It re-kindles a Christian imagination. It embraces people of all backgrounds, offers hospitality and healing, and weaves together the God-given strands within Christianity.

Culture-friendly

A Celtic church allows Christ to emerge within the patterns of the local culture, affirming what is good and trusting Christ to purify what is false. It seeks to be grass-roots and indigenous.

To explore further see:

<https://www.aidanandhilda.org.uk/emerging-church.php>

To read

Church of the Isles: the emerging church in Britain and Ireland, a prophetic strategy for renewal

High Street Monasteries

The Transforming Church Course
each by Ray Simpson (Kevin Mayhew Ltd)

Ancient Ways for Modern Churches
by Simon Reed (BRF)

£1 *The Community of Aidan and Hilda*

Celtic Models for Modern Churches



Western culture is at a turning point. Christendom forms of church (churches organised according to the machinery and mindset of empire) are dying, but spirituality increases. Many who seek a fresh expression of church that has deep Christian roots ask 'Is there a Celtic model for modern churches?'

Early churches in Ireland were outside the Roman Empire; they reflected natural and tribal patterns and a 'peoples' monasticism'. There were two types.

A cell

A Christian dedicated to daily prayer attracted others. These cells were sometimes known as white houses. Today we might call them houses of prayer.

A hub

Tribal leaders gave lands by the strategic highways of sea and river to church planters who established communities of daily prayer, education, hospitality and land care. Peoples monastery churches served as daily prayer base, school, library, scriptorium/arts centre, drop-in, library, school, health centre. They had farms with livestock and crops, workshops such as wood, spinning and milling. They were open to the world. They offered soul friends, training, and even entertainment. Children, housewives, farm workers and visitors would wander in and out. Visitors brought news from overseas. They were villages of God. Each had its own flavour in worship and values (Rule) yet each was connected with the universal church through common practices, prayers and priests ordained in the apostolic succession.

A land of saints and scholars

The Irish thought they were on the edge of the world and could have suffered from a victim mentality. Instead they leapt at the idea that the Risen Christ invited them to build God's kingdom in their land as he had in Judea. Thus they had lists of their twelve apostles and spiritual foster mothers, and a once pagan Ireland became a land of saints and scholars.

Today's changing trends

Although our society is vastly different, changing trends again require churches that are more than single-building Sunday-only congregations.

- * A twenty four hour society calls for seven day a week churches.
- * A cafe society calls for churches that are eating places.
- * A travelling society calls for churches that provide accommodation and reconnect with the hostel movement.
- * A stressed society calls for churches that provide spaces for retreat and meditation.
- * A multi-choice society calls for churches that have a choice of styles and facilities.
- * A fragmented society calls for holistic models and whole life discipling.
- * An eco-threatened society calls for more locally sustainable communities.

Inadequate models of church

Three models of church are currently being promoted:

1. The institutional model:
the church pays a pastor to keep members happy.
This puts maintenance before God.
2. The attractional model:
the church finds out what consumers want and provides attractive programmes.
This puts recruitment before God.
3. The missional model:
New groups make disciples and multiply.
This can put the part before the whole, mission before God. Isis and Pepsi-cola have a mission. Before God sends, God is.

A Celtic Model – the heart

A fourth, Celtic model is incarnational. Christians embody and continue Christ's life and work on earth - they make community and build God's kingdom. As the heart is to a person so a Celtic church is to the community or network it serves.

It has a heart:

- for God – sustained by daily prayer;
- for others – sustained by hospitality and nurture;
- for the world – cherishing the earth and the common good.

Journey

In many churches the focus of time and energy is maintenance of a program or building. This produces overload, so that any new leads from God are blocked out. In a Celtic-style church, programs and buildings are provisional; they flow out of Spirit-led initiatives, and when that tide ebbs they are beached. A church that embraces a Celtic spirit starts its journey from where it is. It discerns which features of 'a Celtic church' it can move towards on its own or with others. Some may enrich existing services with Celtic prayer patterns. Certain congregations may introduce daily prayer, a rule of life for core members and soul friends; others may re-locate from an anachronistic building to a house of prayer.

A church with resources and a viable site may review which of these features of a village of God they can develop or (if their site is not a hub) link up with:

- Sacred or praying spaces
- Eating space
- Accommodation space
- Learning space
- Art space
- Wild space
- Conference space
- Recreation space
- Godly play space
- Eco space
- Shop space
- Workshop space
- Meditation space
- Wifi space
- Mentor space

In many places a church building of alien style is the only obvious point of access to Christianity. A Celtic church is like a wheel hub with spokes that reach into work, social, educational, health, sport, business and care networks.