



#Church2B

Lovers! We have work to do:

At the beginning of *Love in a Dangerous Time* I used the subtitle, “A conversation about communities of faith, and how we change the world.” Full disclosure: that line just popped into my head while I was building my website. It has a nice ring, don’t you think? Now, I’m thinking that it really fits what I’m trying to do with the podcast very well. Up until now, I’ve been inviting people who are doing experiments with church, some essentially makeovers – making Church more comfortable to people who find the traditional Sunday service hollow and/or tedious – and some who are working at it from a very radical perspective, like church in bars, or intentional communities, including the new monastics. I’ve also talked with some folks who are doing really great justice work, looking at the possible content of the Church that might be.

It’s clear that the standard model of (at least the American) church is crumbling to some extent. Urban churches are big empty buildings; the Catholic Church is shutting down parishes; clergy are less likely to be recognized as leaders in the community. Meanwhile, it does seem that the Black church is not crumbling, at least not as fast as the other European-originated denominations. And Southern anti-knowledge religiosity appears to be strong in its locale.

We expect our kids to go through an “atheist period,” but so many are not coming back to church when they have kids, like they used to. “Spiritual but Not Religious” (the “nones”) is the new denomination of choice. It’s fine to listen to many wise and revered teachers (the more the better) but the personal spiritual quest is very individualistic. What about building community where deep spirituality and communal hope inspires powerful action and a culture of love is incubated and supported?

Down to the Nitty Gritty

We need to be asking, “What, if any, is the particular function of religious community?” “What contribution does it make to the overall culture that we really can’t do without?” I think it’s an open question. Do we really need to have religious communities in our culture? What if we didn’t have them? Religion is less and less important in Europe and they seem to be doing ok. Maybe we need to create something new, not just revive the church. Maybe we shouldn’t even call our communities “Church.”

OK. I know some will disagree, but I see the way we have of expressing our faith (*i.e.* *Church*) as something that is anachronistic, misguided, and falling apart. Many churches are the exception to this of course. And some have so much momentum that they probably will go on for a long time. But the long term prognosis is that it’s falling apart.

What we’re missing is the open-ended, open-minded conversations that will take us as close to the roots as possible. If we want to build something new, we have to know why, and look at ways to reach the deepest goals we have. The Emergent movement has been doing this for a number of years, but that conversation seems to be somewhat stalled. If we are to continue being in the world as Christians, we have to dig into some serious issues.

Let's Talk

So now, it's time to take that conversation to a much deeper level. Starting in a couple of weeks, *Love in a Dangerous Time* will launch #Church2B, a series within a series (and a hashtag) of open conversations about the current state and the future of our communities of faith. I'll have two or three guests in each of these episodes, and we'll have no script. Every time we think we've come to a basic understanding, I'll say, "OK. So why is that important?", or "... and that's a symptom of what?" and we'll have to go one level deeper. If, in the next century, Christians will create a new way to be a Christian, we have to get very serious about what it should look like. This is important, Lovers. Not just for Christians, but for all of humanity. It's nothing short of a reformation!

We'll talk to leaders of the Emergent movement/conversation. We'll talk to church planters and wild experimenters. We'll talk to pastors trying to save their churches (and their jobs). And I'll have my thumb on the bullshit buzzer at all times, to make sure we go deeper.

Lovers at Work

And Lovers, there's a place for you in all of this. Please participate.

- To start with, you can listen to *Love in a Dangerous Time* regularly. You can subscribe on the website, to the RSS feed, or the easiest way is by subscribing on [iTunes](#) or [Stitcher](#).
- You can comment on the [LoveInADangerousTime.net](#) website after each episode.
- You can write emails, from the "contact us" page on or just send them to me at russ@LoveInADangerousTime.net. Don't be afraid to send long thoughtful writings.
- You can leave me a voicemail from any page of the website. On the right hand side of the page there's a grey bar that says "Send Voicemail." Just click it and start talking. (Of course, this only works if you have a microphone connected to your computer, or phone, or tablet – most do.)
- Post your ideas, links to articles, etc. on Twitter & Facebook. Be sure to use the hashtag, #Church2B on all of your social media posts. This will make it easier for people to join the discussion.

Give us questions to discuss. Suggest guests. Recommend books. Send a story of a breakthrough you've heard about. Tell us why the Church is really ok and we should back off. This has to be a big conversation. We need to have lots of people contribute.

So don't forget to tell your friends that this is going on and that they can listen and participate too.

In a hundred years, maybe there will be a new kind of Christianity that is less bureaucratic, more justice focused, more deeply connected to the inner life of the people, and actually calls us out of empire. Wouldn't that be great?!

Stay tuned, Lovers. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

Russ Jennings
with Rev. Steve Phelps
& Rev. Bob Brashear