



LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY AND THE WORK OF GOD.

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Two wise and experienced ministers reflect with Alan Roxburgh on how they discern the call of God in this video conversation. Sally Mann^[1] and Tim Dickau^[2] have already shared their stories within this journal. Both are ministers of churches which have developed extensive social programmes in areas of deprivation, in East London and Vancouver. Ensuring that these social programmes, and their charitable organisations, remain integrated with the worshipping community is an issue for both churches. Sally and Tim describe the different ways they have found to tell the stories of the wider vision across their whole community and to keep relationally connected. Both have a concept of 'permeable church', or for Sally, 'blurry edge church'. The church needs to influence without becoming

controlling. Sally comments that the work of community transformation is spiritual as well as social and economic. It will falter without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the energy of motivated Jesus followers.

Video time to 16 min

For Tim a posture of listening and discernment begins with a set of practices, and it is these, which help hold the church together when beliefs may be very diverse. Sally has encouraged contemplative prayer practices in her church. Sermons and liturgies emerge from prayer and shared, outward facing spaces like the Food Bank community meal. In this and other contexts prayer and prayerful ritual is shared alongside food distribution and benefit advice. Sally describes the practice of writing and burning 'regrets' to create ash for prayer on Ash Wednesday.

Video time 16 min to 23 min.

In this section of the video Alan asks Sally and Tim to press into their experiences of listening to God's action and call within their neighbourhoods. Sally describes something of her own journey into contemplative prayer and resting in the presence of God. Tim explains how his church has integrated silence and listening into their services and meetings. He has an expectation that the discipline of this listening practice will ready the church community to hear the voice of God as cultural outsiders in a profoundly post-Christian neighbourhood.

Video time 23 min to 29 min.

Tim's church has a practice of interviewing church members as part of worship, exploring with them how they are working out the gospel in their everyday lives. For both Tim and Sally it is important to acknowledge the messy and uncertain improvisation involved in participating with God in the kingdom. Multiple connections and relationships help. Both ministers share and learn in diverse contexts, both within the church and outside. In fact for Sally's church, interaction with at least two community groups is a required part of sermon preparation, 'cooking a sermon'. Tim and Sally explain that they are profoundly rooted in their communities, and live openly, with mutuality (and laughter!) among their neighbours. This openness can be exposing, as Tim describes. The kingdom is revealed, not through a spurious ministerial professionalism, but from the reality, in Christ, of human vulnerability.

Video time 29 min to 44 min.

In this segment Alan asks Sally and Tim to describe explicitly what they are hearing from God within their neighbourhoods. For Sally there is a challenging invitation, for an activist church, to explore encounter with God in quietness. There is also a call to pursue shared living. Tim reflects on their learning through a transgender woman, now part of the church, who arrived searching for a purpose, intrigued by the quality of church life and relationships. She has pressed them on transgender issues, it hasn't been easy. But for Tim she is emblematic of the many people in their community who are hungry for meaning, reaching for transcendence. It is important to be in these conversations and not to slide into mere management technique and productivity. And yet, as Alan concludes, many leaders under pressure in their churches, find it impossible to lay aside their strategies and targets and give priority to listening. In contrast Sally and Tim have responded to an invitation to go slow, deeper, to attend, to be

present, and the kingdom 'keeps turning up'.
Video time 44 min to 54 min.

[1] Sally Mann, "A Deeply Rooted Community in Bonny Downs," *Journal of Missional Practice* no.7, (Spring 2016). <http://journalofmissionalpractice.com/category/issue-7/> See also the "Beyond the Billboard" conversations between Sally Mann and Alan Roxburgh, *Journal of Missional Practice* no.9, (Autumn 2017). <http://journalofmissionalpractice.com/category/issue-9/>

[2] Tim Dickau, "Housing and Shalom in the New Commons," *Journal of Missional Practice* no.8 (Winter 2017). <http://journalofmissionalpractice.com/housing-and-shalom/>