

Apostolic Ministry

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It has been our privilege over the last year to welcome Rob and Marion White into the church family here in South Manchester.

- ◆ Because of what they actually carry, because of their heart for God and His people, because of their commitment and their experience they have strengthened the life of the church in many ways.
- ◆ It has been a privilege to try and be some kind of support for their wider ministry which fits with our sense of call to be an apostolic base that sends people out to build and plant churches.
- ◆ Whilst we are clear about the family of churches that we are rooted into, we know we are always richer by genuinely connecting with those from other streams.

It was therefore great for me to have the opportunity to spend just over 24 hours with the Mainstream leadership team in their prayer and fasting time. As the junior member of our, rather grandly named, European Apostolic Team, it was fascinating to sit with a different team. The guys were gracious in the way they received and welcomed me into the mix – by the end of our time I felt I had a better understanding of some of the things Rob is involved in and felt strengthened through catching some of the vision and conviction of the team. It was then suggested that I might write a few observations about the apostolic ministry from within our family of churches.

When I was 23 I led a small group of people to plant a church in Caernarfon in North Wales. We started with plenty of ideas and enthusiasm and by the grace of God despite our many mistakes, the church began to grow. However, it was not long before I realised that without some help from outside we were in danger of not really developing in the way we should. In particular, I felt my own personal need for accountability and care, I recognised that there were some things that we were not seeing clearly because we were too close to the situation and, that there were times when we were in danger of becoming too parochial. It was at this time that through friendship we began to connect closely to the Salt & Light family of churches and determined to give as much room as possible to the 5-fold ministry gifts: they helped us to lay foundations that were lasting, face issues that needed confronting and helped me recognise my own weaknesses as well as strengths.

Now, as I find myself being received to work apostolically into a few churches in Wales and the North West, I value even more those that we received into the church in Wales, and continue to receive into the church here in Manchester.

One of my observations would be that for apostolic ministry to be effective it must be received properly. Practically that involves a few things:

1. A genuine hearing – while it must be weighed by the eldership team, we must assume most input will be a gift from God.
2. A genuine honouring – verbally within the church and financially.

3. A genuine serving – every leader that receives someone apostolically into their church should look to serve and sow into their wider ministry.
4. A genuine accountability – readiness to open every area of one's life and church.
5. A genuine flexibility – a readiness not just to receive people into our church when we want them, but press into them and what they may facilitate on a wider scale.

As a team at the moment there are a few things we are wrestling with, in particular:

1. Maintenance vs. multiplication – we know that apostolic ministry should not just be 'servicing' churches that are already in existence but pioneering new ones. We need to be developing new apostolic ministry and to be sure that we are putting the right DNA into each church, so that it sees beyond itself and has the ability to reproduce.
2. Individual vs. team – more and more we are trying to work in teams into various settings and at the same time involve the five-fold ministry gifts at the right time. We challenge one another regularly about the importance of the apostle and prophet working together.

I have not got the space to unpack this fully but suffice to say, we are on a journey with lots to learn!

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