



**Seers of Alternatives**

**President's Reflections**

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# Seers of Alternatives

human beings tend to hear what they want to hear, believe what they want to believe and see things as they (the people) are. People are “tribal”. People want to belong – it is human nature – and they belong to different kinds of ethnic, social and “doctrinal” clusters. People tend to like and trust people they see as their “own kind”. That is because they know where they are with them.



# Seers of Alternatives

“if you are a fish who spends his whole life in an aquarium, your worldview measures about 30 cm by 15 cm and you believe you have got things figured out. In our context the aquarium is our synagogue or community closed in with high walls. It is a carefully defined enclosure that, for our context, made perfect sense and is comfortable to believe and live our faith”. - James



# Seers of Alternatives

He warns about the great danger when everything becomes a secure “belonging” system instead of a transformational experience. People simply localise themselves inside their little world of shared culture and beliefs and there the fragile self quickly takes on some sense of identity and power. This is called *group narcissism* – which has a huge negative impact on God’s Mission. This happens when the group together agrees upon the same viewpoint where it passes for Great Truth – with capital G and T.



# Seers of Alternatives

“however much we would like everyone in the world and our church to be happy, if we feel our own happiness or convictions or way of life is threatened by a move towards the greater good, it is hard to support for the greater good. That is why, if you want a tribe or a school of thought to support your diverse interests, you need to find a way to get them to feel part of your tribe. Drama and more drama will alienate and polarise and will not work – all you end up with is “digging of heels” and self-created fragmentation”. – Paul

Furthermore, repeating the same discussion and process over and over again assuming that people will listen better and change their minds is not going to work.



# Seers of Alternatives

“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results”. – Albert’s ancestor



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“Is it possible that you as religious leaders and persons of influence who are occupied daily with “the truth about non-essentials” have missed our opportunity to be seers of alternatives? Is our fixed worldview contributing to the creation of our non-essential local-related problems? Because we refuse to be good listeners and seers of alternatives, are we simply managing our self-created problems over and above demonstrating visionary and Godly leadership? Are some of our self-created dilemmas perceptual where we become stuck, attached, fearful, over-identified with our position, needy of winning the case, or unable to entertain even the partial truth that the other opinion might be offering?”



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Did we consider that contentious operational problems are best solved not by imposing what seems to be a single point of view at the expense of all others, but by striving for a higher-order solution – a larger purpose connected with our biblical teachings, mission and existence – that integrates perspectives of all representatives from our synagogues and regions? Good leaders know that the rule of the law and obedience can inform you only about what is illegal or immoral; it cannot lead you to God, truth, goodness or beauty. Good leaders know that wisdom is “the art of possible”. The key question is no longer “How can I problem solve now, and get this off my plate? It is “how can this situation achieve good for the largest number possible and for the next generation? - Joanna





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women are disciples of Christ, were an integral part of Christ's ministry, they equally received the Holy Spirit in the upper room and have reflected their God-given spiritual gifts in life and action. - James



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“most of the time when we get into a debate relating to convictions about non-essential local matters, these tend to be about other people. And the rule is, other people do not have the same choices and experiences as you and me about how they behave. So, we cannot expect them to magic themselves into a different person or tribe or conviction because it suits you and me. With the infinite complex array of past experiences, innate character and cultural norms, unless people choose to change, it just will not happen. It requires a transformative external force to appreciate the other and recognise such inherent differences. This is where the Holy Spirit is working daily to help you and me unlearn and learn with a spirit of humility. This is an essential key for seers of alternatives”. - James



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there are two parts to every initiative: the destination, and the process you take to get there. Most people are occupied with the outcome and lose sight of the route to follow. The Bible narratives clearly show that God is as occupied with the process and sometimes it is more important than the destination since this is where growth and discipleship take place. Paul at this time shared a testimony about one of his zig-zag journeys enduring rejection and persecution where he appealed to the delegates to *rejoice always, and I again I say rejoice*. God is in charge, He is victorious, He builds His church and all for His glory. - Paul



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“Is God teaching us something important about the need for good processes bathed with prayer and humility and anointed with the Holy Spirit? Is the challenge more with our assumptions and designs of our processes? Could our drive for growth and mission activities from the Near East to Rome has become “a kilometre broad but only a centimetre deep” raising questions about global Christian identity, mission, organisation and practices?” - Paul



# Seers of Alternatives

“that we are gradually becoming a glocal (Global + Local) diverse church and we need to seek a healthy open discussion on our newly founded rich diversity on global and local, on essentials and non-essentials to ensure the fulfilment of our mission. So, what is the essence of the gospel in the context of our global and local realities, in Jerusalem, in Athens and in Rome? What are the negotiables and non-negotiables that we base our faith and practice on guided by God’s Word that ultimately will strengthen our Christian identity and mission? This careful-prayerful-intentional process needs to happen before we vote on issues at our Council”. Paul also reminded everyone that “without a local focus, global strategies remain mere talk. The mission of Jesus is a ‘neighbour mission’ – he might have thought globally in terms of saving the world, but he certainly acted locally”. - Paul



# Seers of Alternatives

“this should be nothing new for the church. Diversity was built into the church's genetic code when it was born at Pentecost – it was God’s affirmation of diversity!! We have seen that the Holy Spirit touches individuals – and cultures – differently. People's spiritual journeys are rarely the same. Therefore, we need to embrace and celebrate diversity in its various dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, education socio-economic status, age, physical abilities and religious beliefs”. – James (Chair)



# Seers of Alternatives

“In Christ Jesus we are all children of God through faith, for all of us who were baptised into Christ have clothed ourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” – James (Chair)



# Seers of Alternatives

“Building a healthy diverse church where our disciples are seers of alternatives requires that we provide opportunities for open dialogue and commend those who have the courage to discuss controversial matters, as well as having the determination to deal with them. It requires visionary leadership with intentional steps to place the topic of Diversity on top of the agenda.





# Seers of Alternatives

Furthermore, the good health of a diverse church is established by leaders and persons of influence who have an objective view of themselves – of who they are, who they are not and who they desire to become. And although we can assume that those of us in positions of church leadership and influence have gained a measure of understanding and competence through the years, we should rightfully acknowledge there is still much for us to unlearn and learn. Therefore, we need to approach diversity with utter humility on our knees where we become again the learners if, in fact, we are to succeed in establishing diverse congregations of faith.” - Simon



# Seers of Alternatives

“I wish to commend the apostles and elders on the way they handled the conflict with the distribution of food to the Greek widows. You listened carefully to the issue at hand and you recognised that this is a local matter to be addressed at the lowest level possible where it belongs. You appointed local people who know best about the local culture – persons of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom – to mediate in finding a solution. You also looked at your own management practices here in Jerusalem to ensure that this scenario is not repeated.



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Finally, as you dealt with this case, you did not single out a leader by making him or her a hero or a martyr but worked together in consultation with the apostles, elders and local leaders to ensure a positive outcome. I praise God for your wise leadership. This is a good example of conflict resolution in a church context. It is an inspired good church management model in building a healthy diverse community by identifying what is local and what is global, what is essential and what is non-essential. Our communities in Greece have learned and grew out of this experience – THANK YOU”. - Aquila



# Seers of Alternatives

She wondered why the delegates are spending enormous amount of time and energy on issues concerning church practice – the local non-essentials. She appealed to the listeners to go back to Jesus, the perfecter of our faith, and the Great Commission he has given to us.



# Seers of Alternatives

“there is a danger that we spend a lot of time defending the objective end of church non-essential practices and perfecting our processes to apply them and very often we neglect the subjective end – the heart end – the place where we love, respect and seek healing. This is where people are, where their heart is, where they live, and the Holy Spirit is mending and healing”. - Mary



# Seers of Alternatives

“if any of us was going to create a religion, who of us would think of creating as your religious image a naked, bleeding, wounded man? It is the most unlikely image for God; the most illogical image of Omnipotence. It must be exposing a very central issue, a very central problem for God to come into the world in this form and in this way. We believers might have now become accustomed to it, and we no longer receive the shock and the scandal of all that is saying.



# Seers of Alternatives

The image of the cross is to unite us in love and awe for God. We as broken human beings pass on our brokenness, pass on our pain. Jesus refused to pass it on. He took our sin and our pain. Christ's wounds are to convince us of the path and the prize of transformation. The focus on Christ, His teachings, His life, His death and His resurrection should be THE key global message embraced, championed, taught and lived by believers. We need to get our focus back on Jesus as the centre of our faith who provides healing, back to the love of God and His transforming message and power. I appeal to you to embrace our true Christ-like identity and message and share it with others". -  
Mary



# Seers of Alternatives

“Brothers and sisters, leading the work in Europe is a daunting task. You and I want to make a difference. To leave the “world” better than we found it. We need to spend more time to discern the forces shaping our European streets. The implications for cultural merging and diversified community are profound. Jesus built no synagogues. He was on a mission at every moment. His mission was people, wherever and whatever they were. He started with people where they were rather than where He wanted them to be”. - Paul





# Seers of Alternatives

“I envision that Europe will become a dominant force in the Christian world. The problem with today’s discussion is our assumptions where we see the future through the lens of the present. We figure today’s priorities will be just as important tomorrow. With the undue influence from the Roman entertainment culture, there is an emerging danger of breeding spectator Christians – where our churches become attractional rather than missional. Therefore, the time is right for the renewal of the idea of Christian discipleship as spelled out in the Great Commission and lived out and taught by Jesus. Missional means living out the work of Jesus in this world.



# Seers of Alternatives

It means putting our believers into action to make a difference in their streets. It also means that the main attraction is Jesus. The mission is Jesus. The gospel of Jesus is the good news that we proclaim it in everything we teach and do. Europeans won't be won over by our airtight rigid organisations, processes and reasoning in structured theological discussions. They will only be convinced by our embodiment of the teachings and the life of Christ, spoken and practiced with truth and grace". - Paul



# Seers of Alternatives

there is a lot to learn from the Jerusalem Council. It is amazing to see how the early disciples were passionate about reaching the tribes and nations in Europe. They prayed, planned and had a vision for the European continent. They also had the foresight to see through spiritual eyes the serious danger that we are facing today where church life and church mission become separated to their mutual disadvantage – they both have lost strength and vitality. Our urgent task is to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His teachings and to reconnect them by demonstrating a “missional ecclesiology”.



# Seers of Alternatives

The Great Commission is all inclusive. It is explicitly glocal, genderless, diverse, timeless and rich in beauty anointed with the authority of God and blessed with the promise that Jesus Christ will be with us.



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Our 1350 communities of disciples must be Christ-centred and modelled after its maker: Jesus.



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The church should examine what is local and what is global, what is essential and what is non-essential, in its belief and practice, to ensure relevant missional expressions of Jesus.



# Seers of Alternatives

The church should mobilise disciples and measure success not by how many it gathers in but how many it sends out.



# Seers of Alternatives

The church should also be organised around reaching its community and nations with relevant dynamical structures to deliver on the expressions of Jesus.





# Seers of Alternatives

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope”. Romans 15:4 (NIV)

