

Celebrating Diversity – not seeking uniformity

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“The Big Issue”

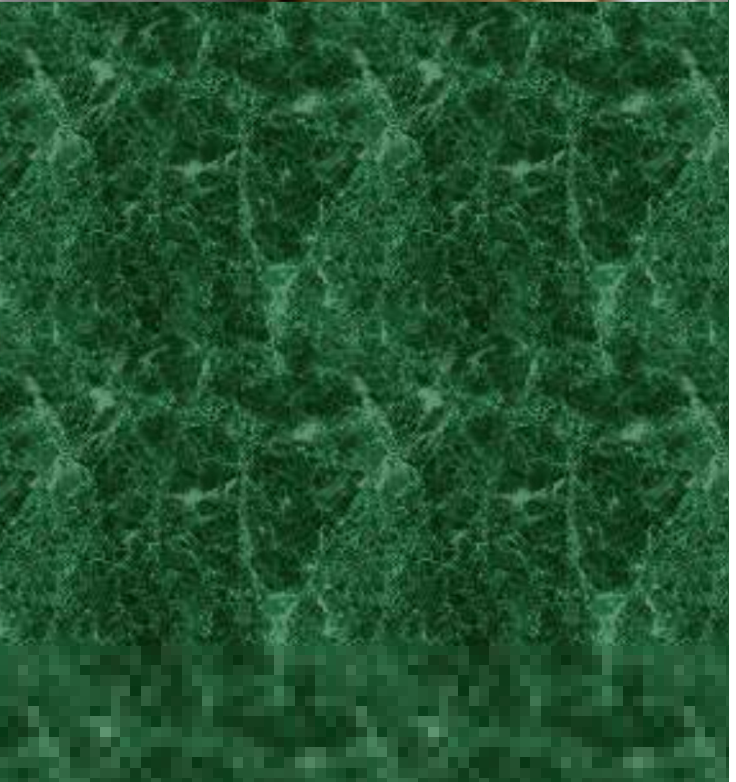
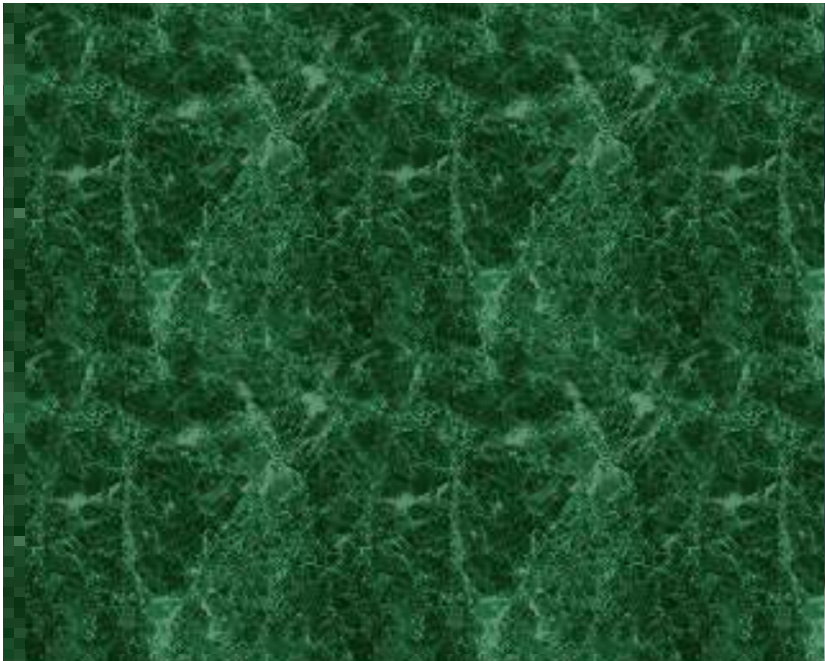
I struggle with the people who sin differently to the way I sin.....”

I could not possibly agree with you otherwise we would both be wrong!!

Its messy, and we want to get it sorted.

The local problem





What are other issues?

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Appropriate clothing
- Style of music

- What is the most important?

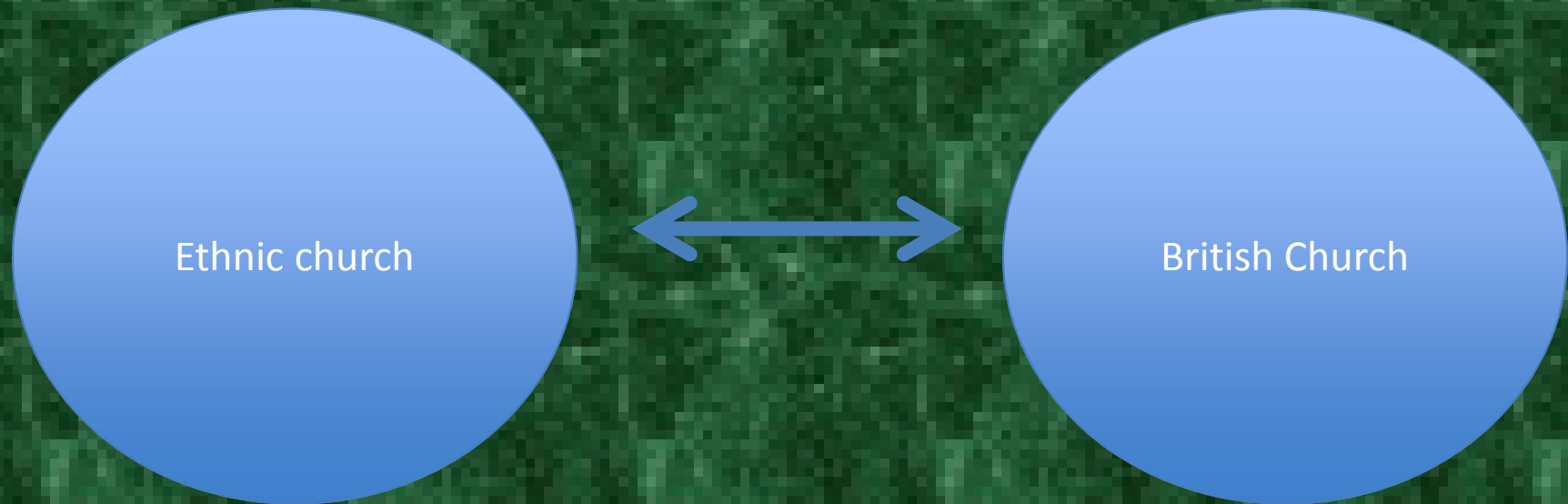
- But we are all “the other” (FB today!)



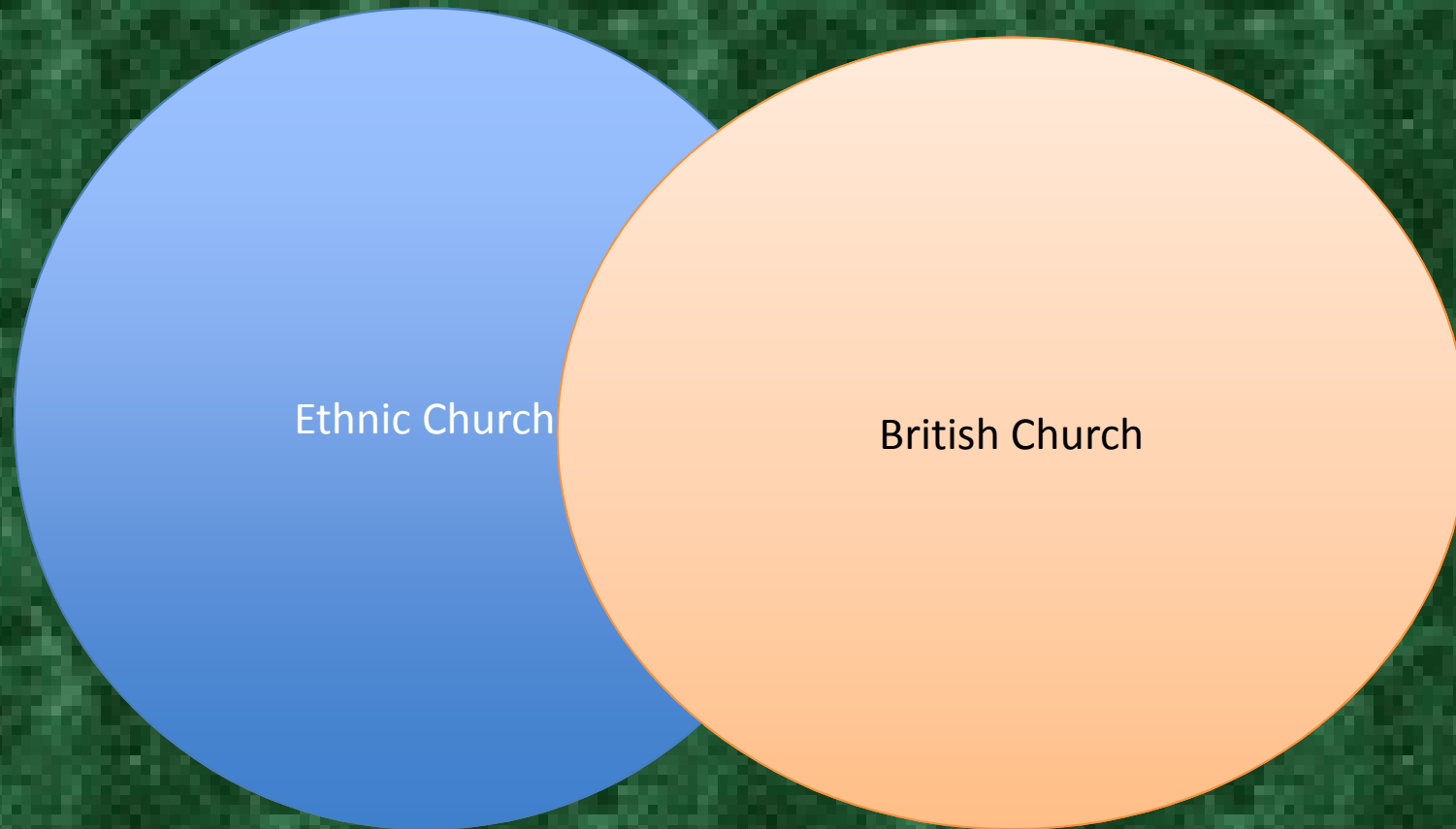
Key Text

- There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)
- So what is the issue?
- Let's just do everything together!

The British Scene 1



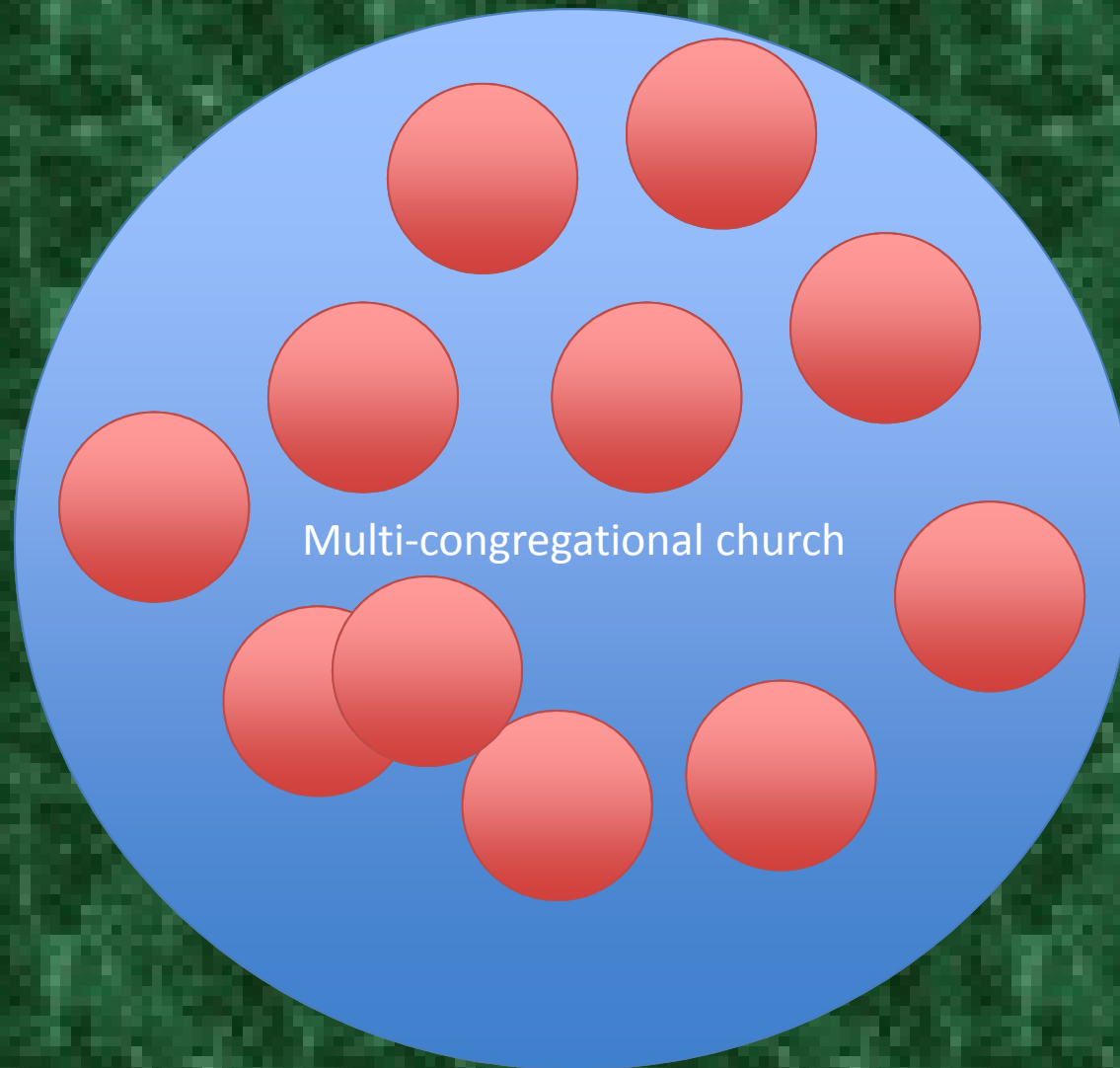
The British Scene 2



The British Scene 3

Multi-ethnic church

The British Scene 3



Observations

- Evolution verses ideology
- Plans and schemes verses a movement of God
- Migrant not reaching host population

The Norfolk Story

EMBRACING THE WORLD

A Manifesto for Building Culturally Inclusive Communities

We believe:

- 1 All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal.
- 2 God's great blessings need to be distributed equally to all people regardless of ethnic- origin or culture.
- 3 It is our duty and joy to welcome and embrace strangers, travellers, settlers and their families of all cultures into our community.
- 4 We can receive God's special blessing as we offer a true welcome, a home, material needs and care to all people.
- 5 Every person is our neighbour regardless of culture or ethnic origin, and is fully deserving of our unconditional love just as Christ commanded.
- 6 We should not be judgemental about anyone based on their appearance, ethnicity, culture and background, but to treat all people as individuals created and loved by God.
- 7 We are called to be different seeking to live according to Christ-like values, and to be salt and light to all cultures.
- 8 We believe that Jesus calls us to care for all people, but particularly to protect those who are the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

We believe that where these principles either have been, or are being, violated there needs to be repentance, and a determination to re-build bridges, as well as to stand against injustice.

4 Questions

- What are the Pastoral Issues of Diversity?
- What are the Missional Issues of Diversity?
- What are the Theological Issues of Diversity
- What are the Eschatological Issues of Diversity

and

How do we go about it?

What are the Pastoral Issues of Diversity?

- Need for mother tongue
- Need for familiar practices
- Need for respect and cultural understanding
- Security in a foreign land
- Gathering and celebrating

What are the Missional Issues of Diversity?

- Understanding people and making the Gospel relevant
- What are we trying to create? Clones or disciples?
- Recognizing that all people were made in the image of God, not just people of my cultural.

What are the theological issues of Diversity

- The Bible does not seek a certain culture, it is a behavior and world view
- Our certainties are fragile, hold lightly.
- Jesus himself reached beyond cultural boundaries
- Rev 7 vision, people of all tribes

What are the eschatological issues of Diversity

- The future vision, but not yet
- Sense of a new heaven and earth
- A journey to an unknown destination

How do we go about it?

- A sense of journey
- A sense of direction
- A sense of discovery
- A celebration of equality
- A vision of the whole Kingdom of God
- A sense of equal values
- Creating an environment of discovery

Some observations

- Some issues are transitional, 2nd and 3rd generations view it differently
- It is not about them coming to our ways or us going to their ways, it is going together to a new place
- A space of celebration of diversity and not seeking uniformity

Theology, Mission and Theology
or
Having the Humility to learn from
the world church

Mission and Theology

‘Missions, by nature, is a bold, activist, imprecise, and even experimental work.

Theology, by nature, is a more precise, analytical and reflective work.

...a better conversation between the two disciplines can help invigorate both’.

Timothy C Tennent



Mission and Theology

Crossing boundaries triggers fresh theology

- Social boundaries
- Scientific boundaries
- Intellectual boundaries
- Economic boundaries

Pre-existing theology can help, but it was formulated in a different place, at a different time, for a different set of questions.

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- Economic boundaries – free trade, fair trade, globalisation

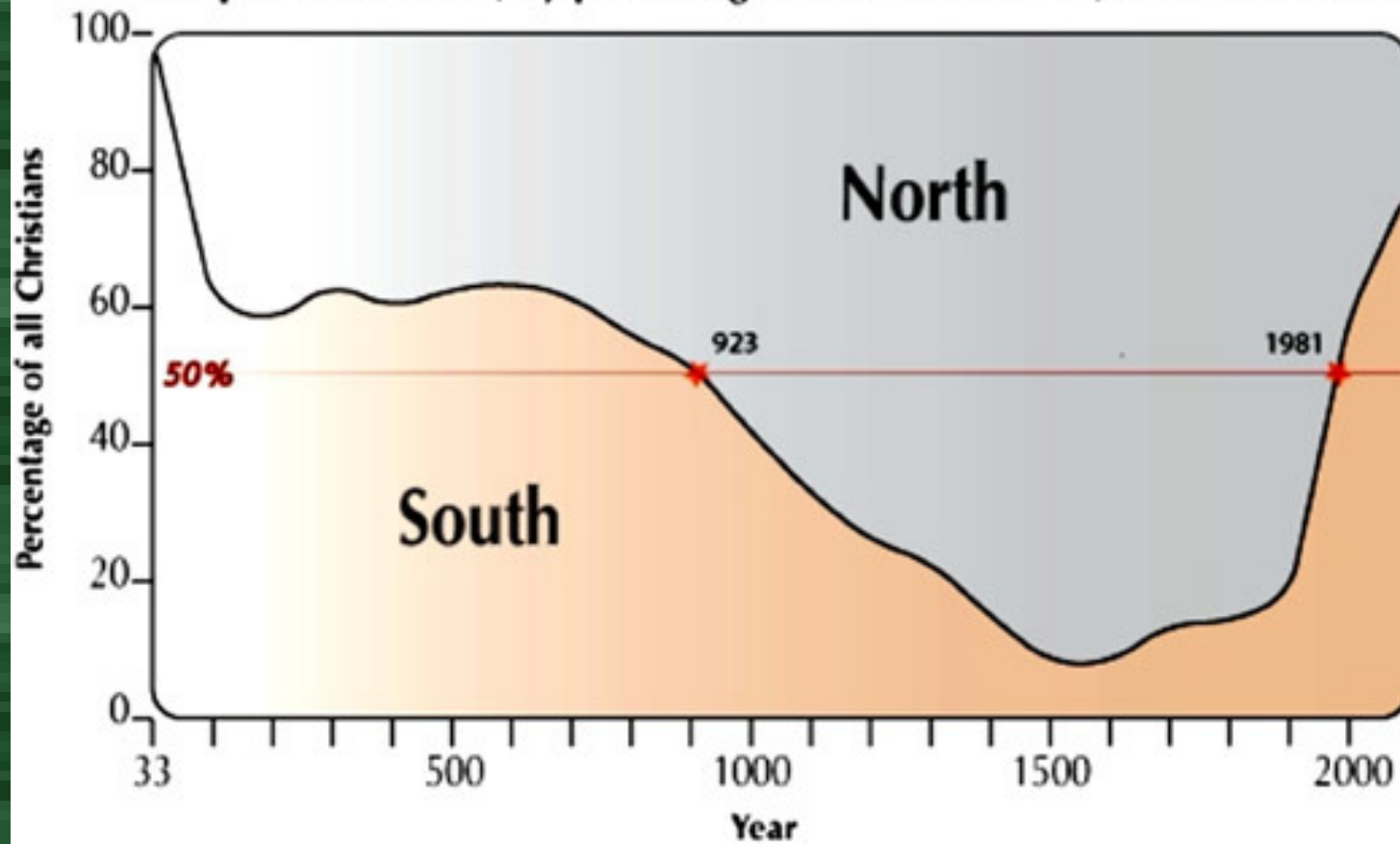
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Mission and Theology

Crossing boundaries triggers fresh theology:

- Acts 15 – Jewish and Gentile Christians
- 1 Cor 11 – Gentile Christians in a Hellenistic world - head coverings!

Graph 1. Christians, by percentage in North or South, AD 33-AD 2100



Source: World Christian Database

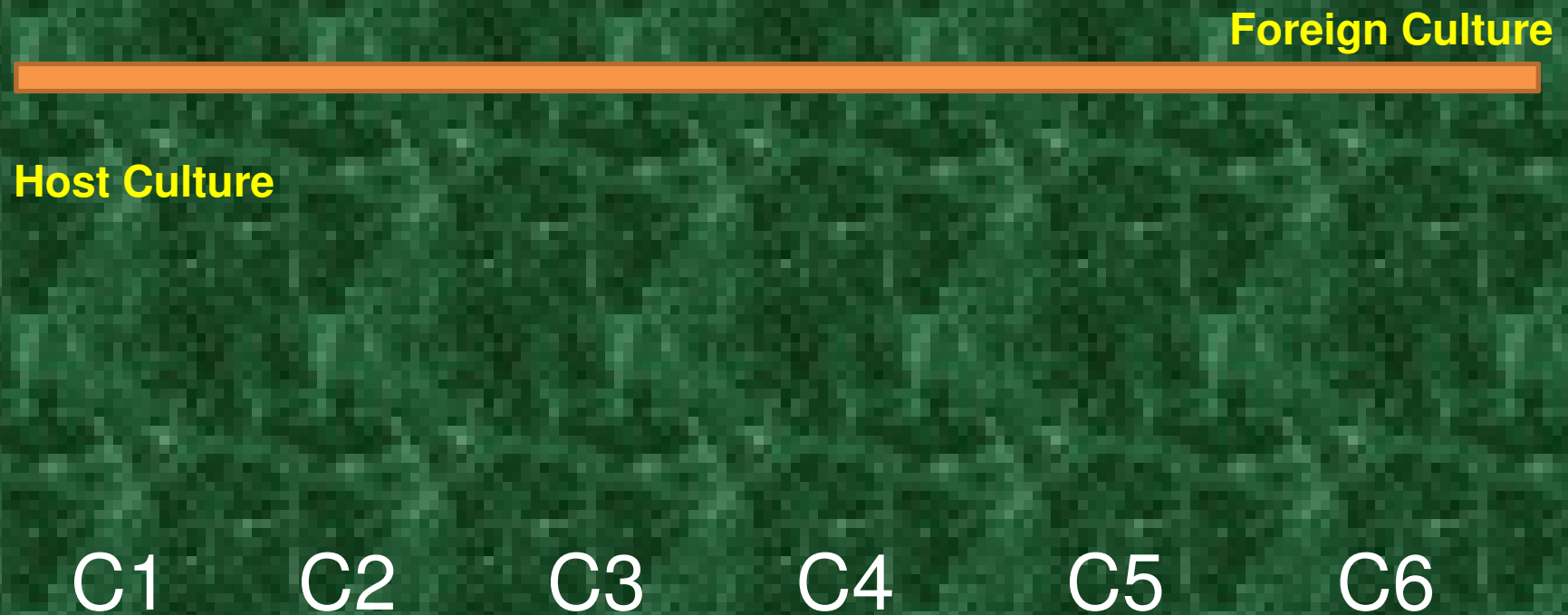
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Theology	Abstract God as Trinity, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent etc	
Atonement	Guilt and innocence “Jesus bore my guilt...” Guilt & innocence are largely internalised concepts Ransom theology Jesus paid the price – a transcendent transaction that took place somewhere	
Ecclesiology	The Church - central to God’s work - the gathered church - word and sacrament	
Christology	From above... Who is the Jesus who descended from heaven Philosophical / metaphysical	

Subject	Classical Western Theology	Non-Western Theology
Theology	Abstract God as Trinity, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent etc	Practical Is the Father of Jesus the God of Mohammed? Can Christians call God <i>Allah</i>
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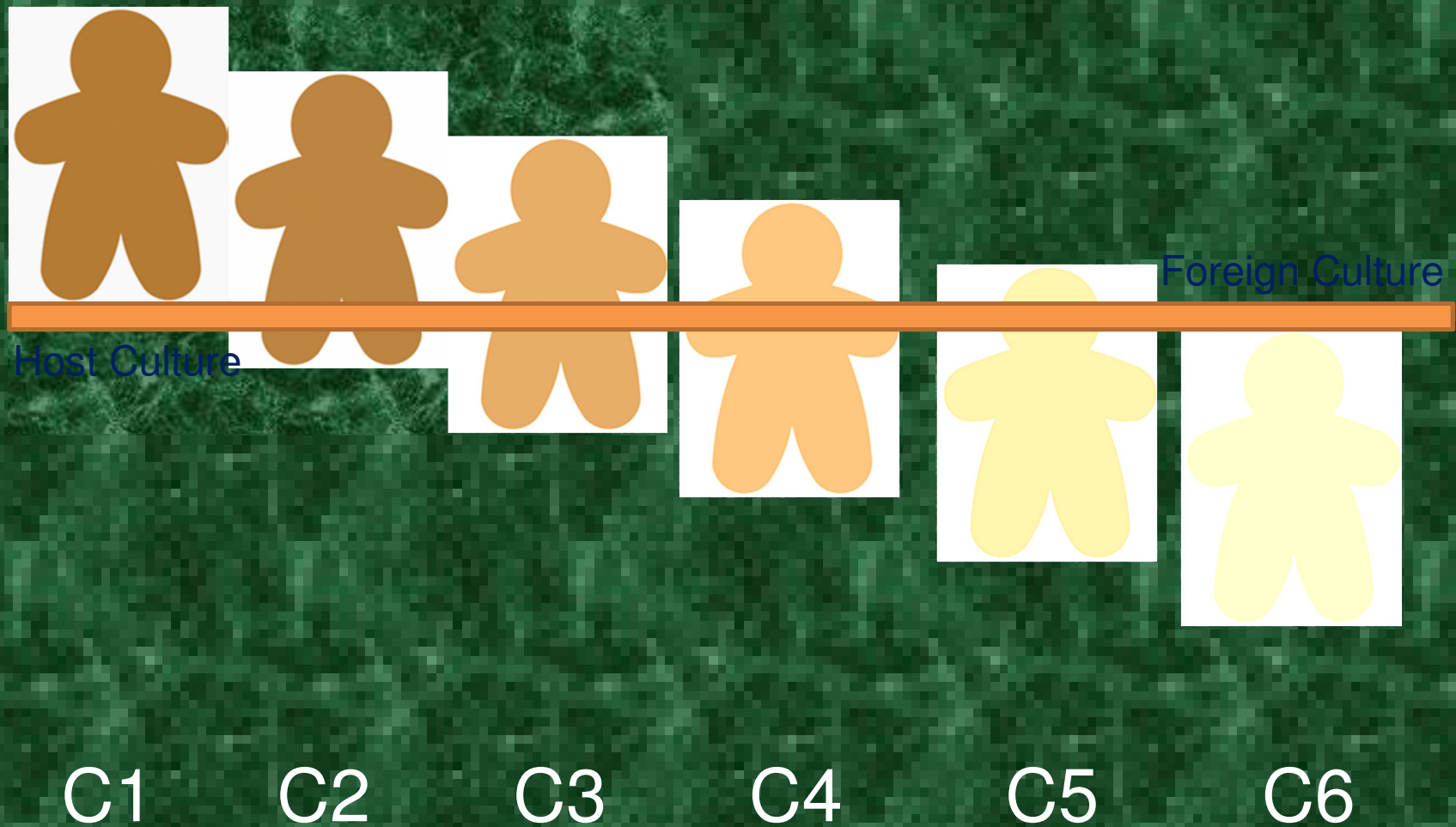
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The C1-C6 spectrum represents the degree to which a church plant is different from, or similar to, the host culture.



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Muslims & Jesus: The C1 – C6 Spectrum

	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>C4</i>	<i>C5</i>	<i>C6</i>
<i>Description</i>	Attend a Foreign church transplant: foreign in culture & language (eg Int'l church)	C1 but using local language, pews pulpit, hymn-translations - still very 'western'	C2 but using local cultural elements eg non-Islamic dress, musical instruments diet, art etc	C3 with some biblically acceptable Islamic practices eg washing, prayer, dress – cell group	C4 with 'Muslim for Jesus' self-identity Meet in Mosque	Secret believer – may/may not be active in religious life of Muslim community
<i>Self-perception</i>	Christian	Christian	Christian	Followers of Isa	Muslims for Jesus	Muslims for Jesus
<i>Muslim perception</i>	Christian	Christian	Christian	A kind of Christian	A strange kind of Muslim	Muslim?

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Christology	<p>From above...</p> <p>Who is the Jesus who descended from heaven</p> <p>Philosophical / metaphysical</p>	<p>From below... ?</p>

Subject	Classical Western Theology	<u>African</u> Theology
Christology	From above... Who is this Jesus who came from heaven? The Person of Christ Metaphysical - “Very God of Very God (homoousios) – Nicea “Two natures, one person” – Chalcedon	
	The west is often unaware of other traditions	
	Western missionaries saw no connection to ‘primitive’ religion To become a Christian was to step into a world of ‘spiritual amnesia’	
	Jesus as eternal Logos	
	Jesus has been made powerless	

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Christology	From above... Who is this Jesus who came from heaven? The Person of Christ Metaphysical - “Very God of Very God (homoousios) – Nicea “Two natures, one person” – Chalcedon	From below... Who is this Jesus who walks the road with us? The work of Christ Practical - He is... - God of the harvest - protector on dangerous journeys - assister to women in childbirth
	The west is often unaware of other traditions	African Theologians are encouraged to be very aware of the depositum fidei of the past
	Western missionaries saw no connection to ‘primitive’ religion To become a Christian was to step into a world of ‘spiritual amnesia’	African theologians see rich connection points with ‘primal’ religions To become a Christian is to become more fully African
	Jesus as eternal Logos	Jesus as eternal Ancestor
	Jesus has been made powerless	Jesus as healer and life-giver

Conclusions

- Diversity not uniformity but deep understanding and community
- Celebration not cloning
- Understand the missionary challenge
- Allow changing community to affect our theology, ecclesiology, missiology and pastoral responses
- It is messy, but it is gospel! Don't try and control it!