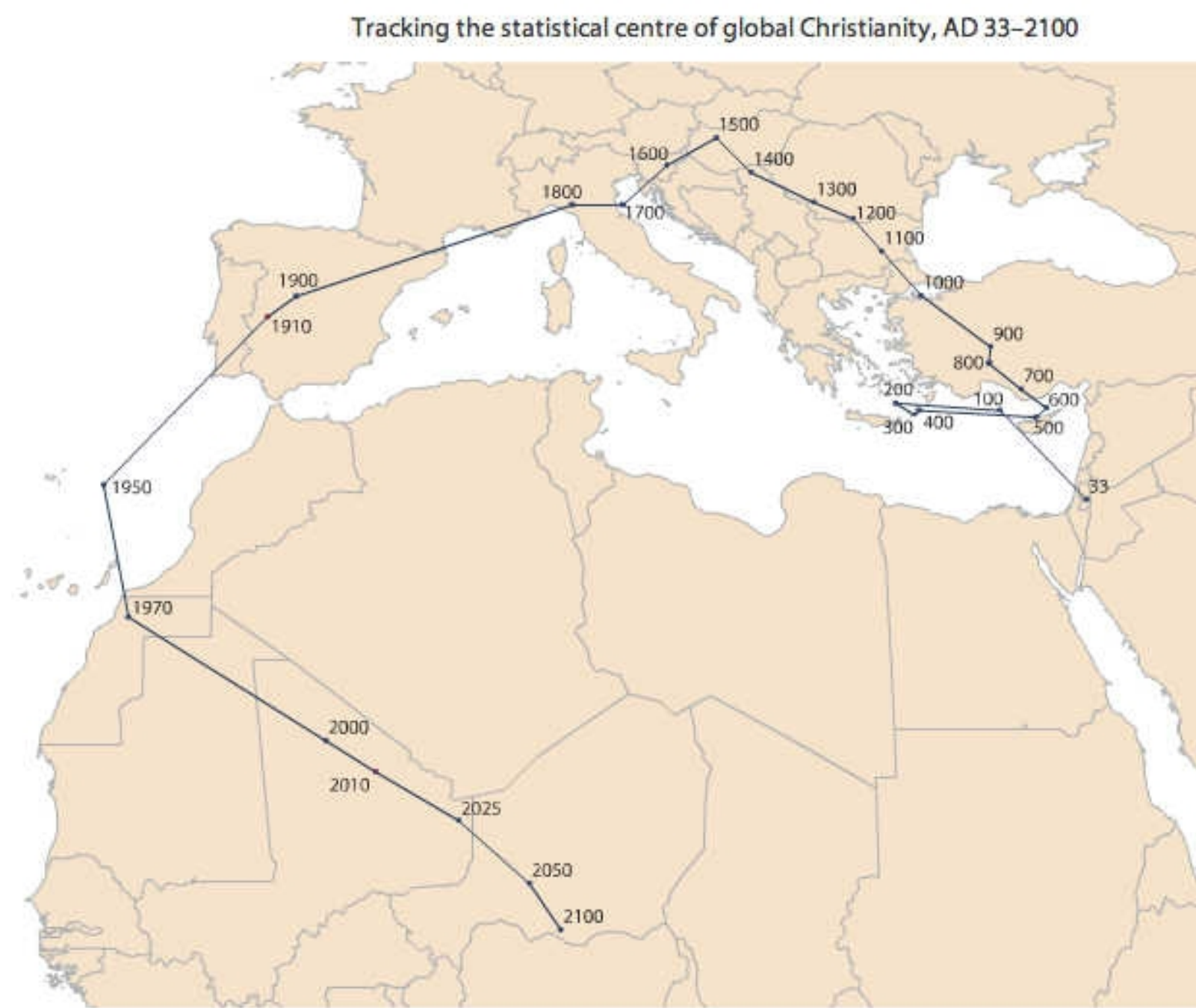




The Future of Our Faith

- Presentation by Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
- ELCA Nebraska Synod
- Kearney, Nebraska
- October 7, 2019

The most dramatic shift in the geographical center of Christianity in the world that has ever happened in history.



The Big Global Picture

Christianity's statistical center of gravity by 2010 had moved to a point near Timbuktu, in Mali.

Europe and North America—the global “North”—contained 80% of all Christians in 1910, and only 40% a century later.

By 1980, more Christians were living in the global South than the global North for the first time in 1000 years.

Christianity's Growth in Africa

- In 1900, 2% of the world's Christians lived in Africa
- Today, one out of four Christians is an African
- Lagos—one of ten buildings church
- Christianity grew by 50 million last year in this continent
- By 2025, in just 7 years from now, 40% of the world's Christians will be African



Christianity's Growth in Latin America

- The overall Christian population in Latin America was 550 million in 2010.
- It is projected to be at 640 million by 2025, about the same number as Christians in Africa.
- Non-Catholic expressions of Christianity are growing at three times the rate of Catholic growth.
- 80% to 90% of Protestant growth in Latin America comes from Pentecostals.



Christianity's Growth in Asia

- Christian population in Asia is about 350 million people.
- This will grow to 460 million by 2025.
- In the past century Christianity grew at twice the rate of population growth.
- Visit to Malaysia, 9% Christian and Korea, 30%; Myungsung Presby. Church





More than a Geographical Change

- Christianity has become a Non-Western Religion.
- The Future of Christianity is moving out of the Western and largely White Culture which has been its home for the past 400 years.
- Christianity is growing in non-Western, non-White cultures.
- These changes are reflected back to U.S. congregations through immigration and global inter-relationships.

What Does This Mean for U. S. Christians?

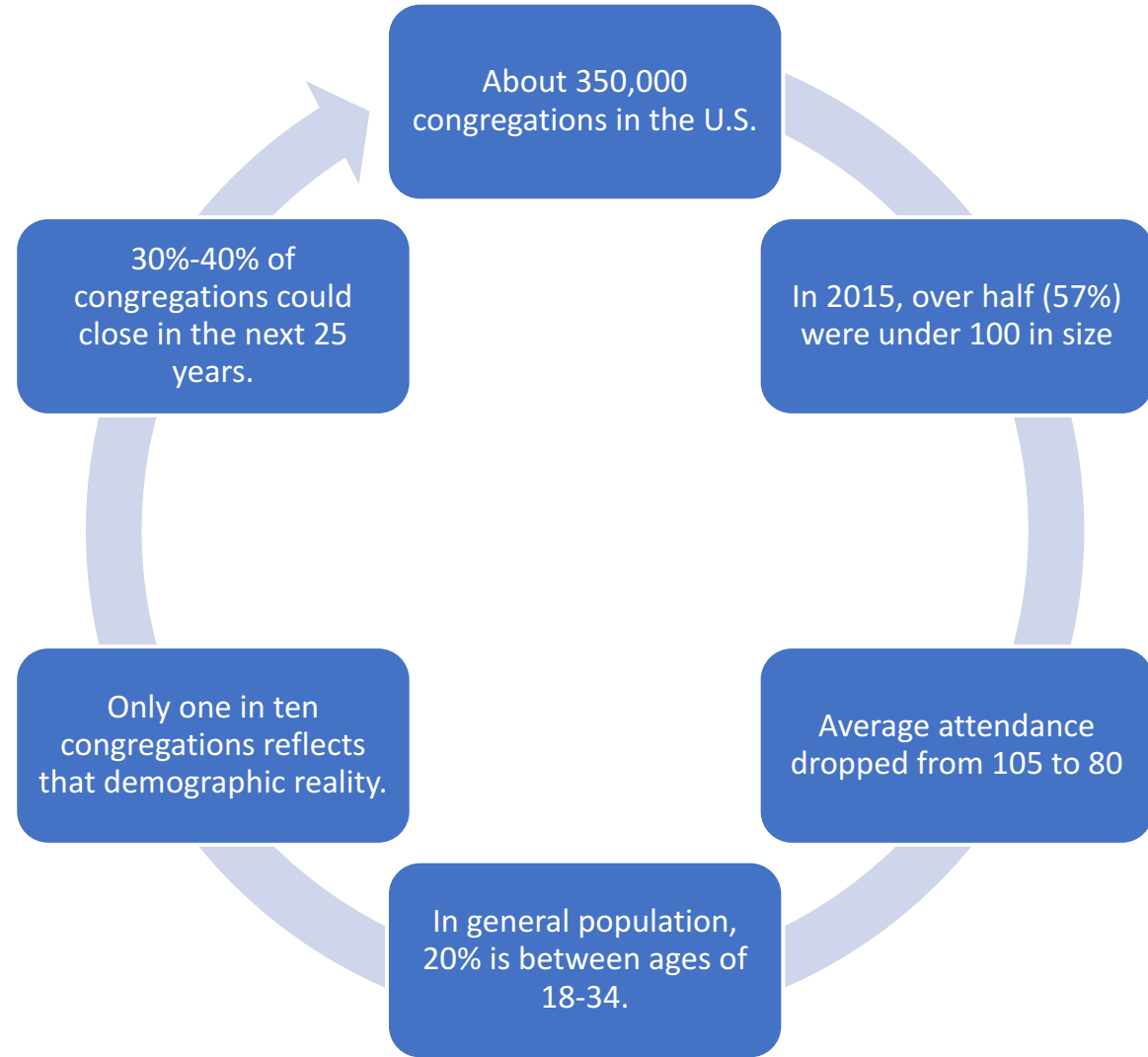
Ten Challenges are
Reshaping the Future of
Christianity in the 21st
Century

As We Seek God's Future,
and the Spirit's Leading,
U. S. Congregations Must
Respond to each of these
Challenges.

1. Revitalizing Withering Congregations



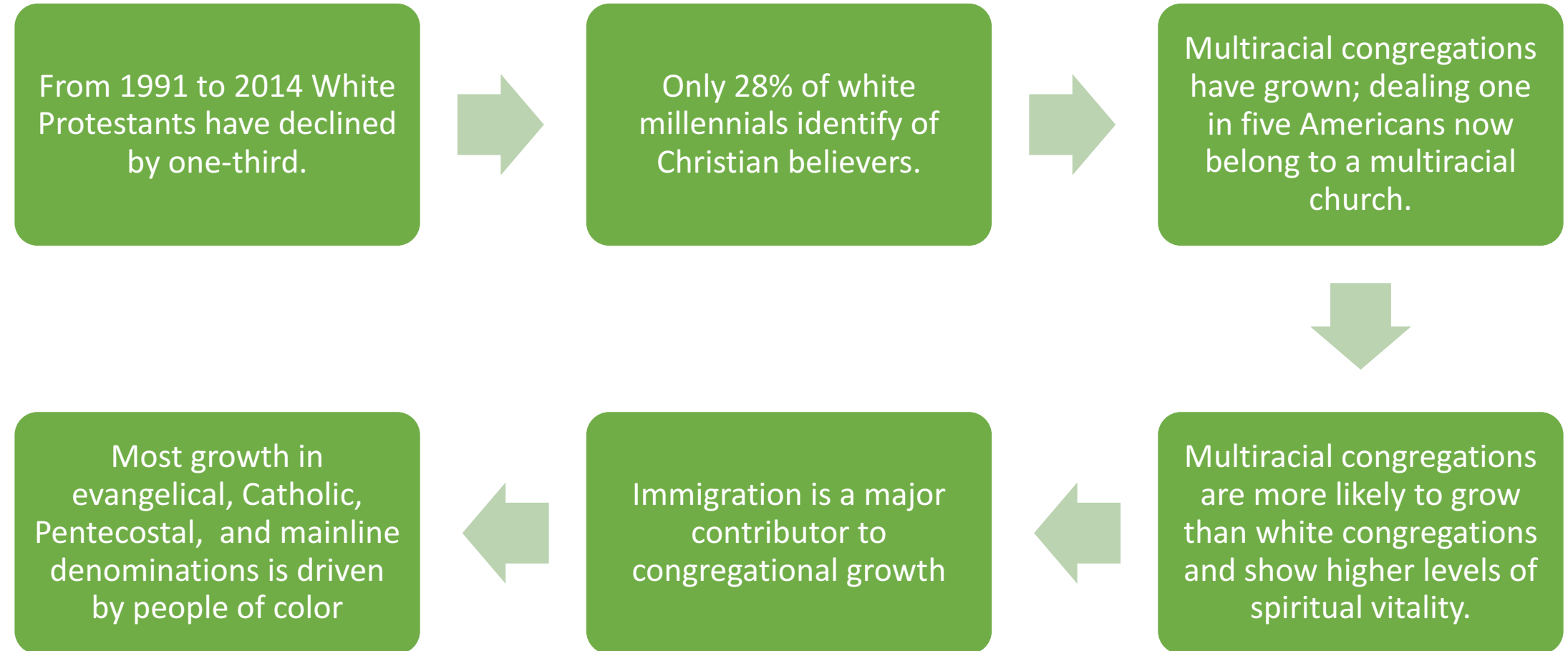
Realities Facing U.S. Congregations



2. Embracing the Color of the Future



People of Color are Providing Growth in U.S. Churches



3. Seeing the World Through Non- Western Eyes





Looking Through Different Glasses

- Individual and Community
- Rational and Supernatural Approaches to Knowledge
- Spiritual and Material

4. Perceiving the World as Sacred





Recovering a Biblical vision of the earth

Westminster Directory of Worship: “As no place is capable of holiness”

Material world only a commodity, emptied of spiritual significance

Recovering theological roots of God’s good creation

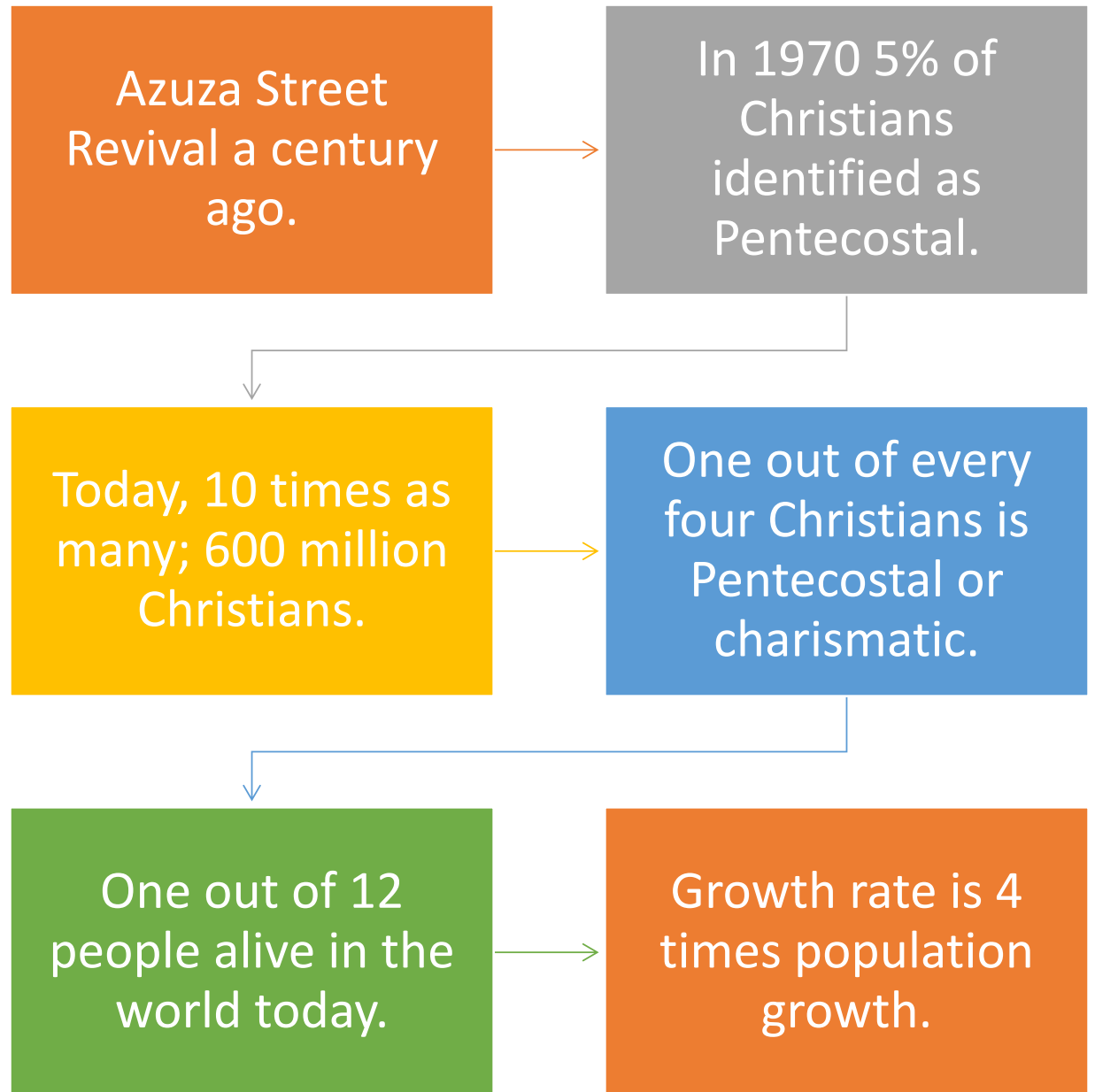
Pope Francis—“Laudato Si” Encyclical on care of creation

Larry Rasmussen (at past Academy), other gifted teachers as resources

5. Affirming Spirit Filled Communities



Growth of Pentecostalism



6. Rejecting the Heresy of Individualism



“Me for the Community or the Community for Me?”

- American “rugged individualism”
- Difference in non-Western Cultures
- Umbuntu: Doc Rivers and the 2008 Boston Celtics
- Movie—The Farewell



7. De- Americanizing the Gospel



A Global Gospel

The “Trump Effect” on worldwide Christianity

Listening to non-American voices

Deepening the formation of our faith for such a time as this

Initiatives like “Reclaiming Jesus” message to liberate gospel from American cultural captivity.

8. Defeating Divisive Culture Wars



We are taking theological and cultural differences and turning them into religious wars.



Grieving recent decision of United Methodist Church



Differences over views of human sexuality and same gender marriage will continue in the church, nationally and globally for decades.



Church must change our decision-making process to creatively hold this tension.



Must resist framing this as a North/South division. Diversity is global.

Differences that Need Not Divide

9. Belonging Before Believing



Herding Cattle in Australia



Taize Community in France



Pilgrim's Mass Camino de Santiago



10. Saving This World



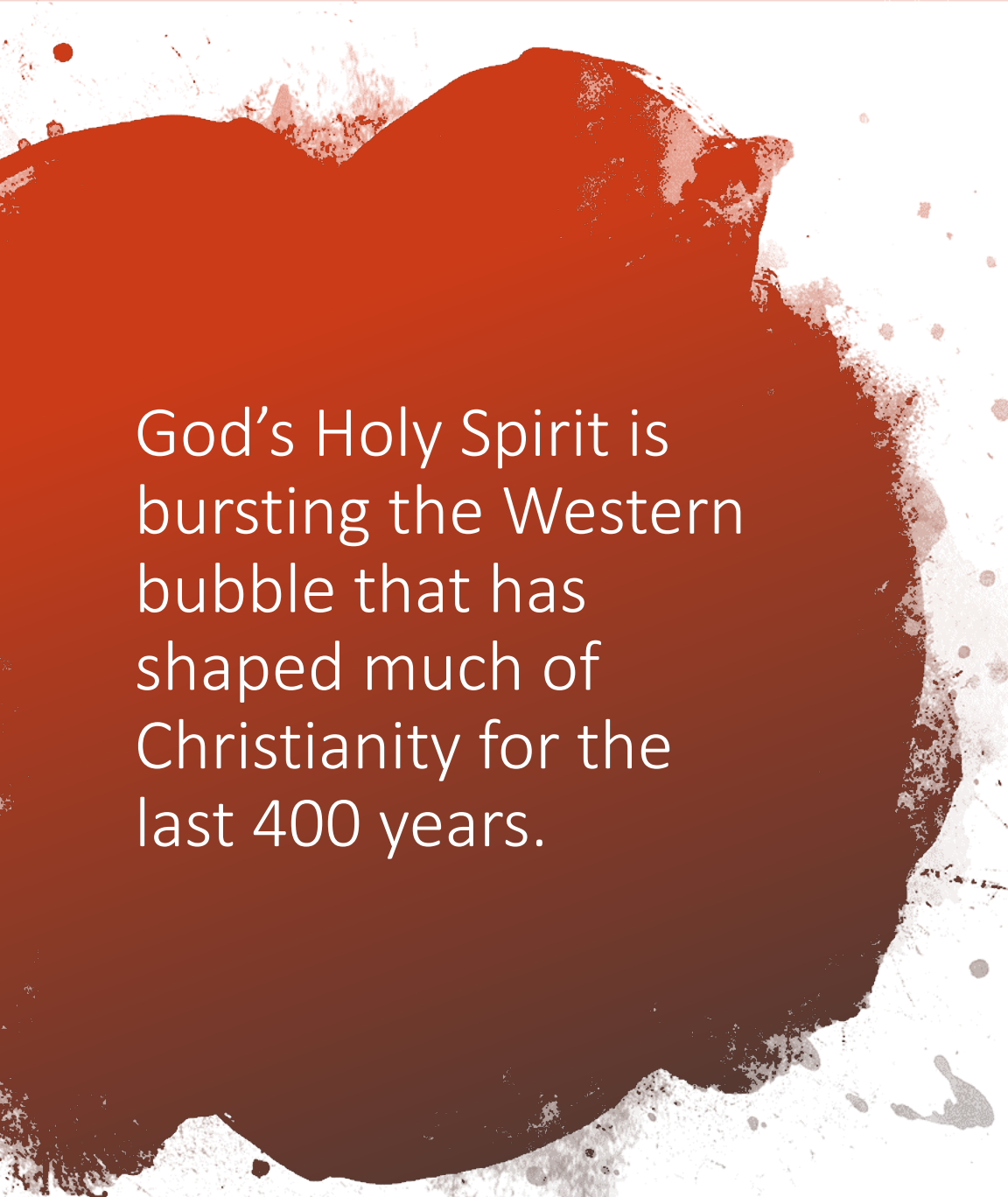
Overcoming the Great Divide

A Divided Gospel—
one of the worst
exports of the U. S.
church to the wider
Christian world.

Christian faith in the
non-Western world-
personal and social
transformation seen
as one whole.

Voices of Christians
from the global
South, once seen on
the margins, now
form the new
center.

The question
Western and non-
Western churches
can ask together:
What does God
love?



God's Holy Spirit is bursting the Western bubble that has shaped much of Christianity for the last 400 years.

- How might congregations, synods, and church-wide bodies respond to future challenges?
- How does this assist in the search to nurture vital congregations?
- What are the concrete practices that might build readiness in congregations for transformational change and growth?