

Excerpted from: <http://web.archive.org/web/20010305171934/http://www.marshill.fm/who/faq.htm>

1. How did Mars Hill Fellowship originate?

It began with a discussion among myself and some of the leaders in my college ministry at Antioch Bible Church in 1996. The discussion was largely had with **Mike Gunn** and **Lief Moi**, who are now elders at Mars Hill. That discussion turned into a Bible study, which turned into a core group, which turned into Mars Hill. Our original desire was for a church focused on immersing itself with the gospel in the emerging postmodern world and upcoming generations.

2. What was your motivation to pastor such an exciting type of church?

We strongly felt called to the city of Seattle, especially near the University of Washington (our college ministry had been centered in the suburbs where the church was, though I was living in the city near the UW). As I looked up the information, I discovered that Washington was one of the least churching states, Seattle was it's least churching city, and people under 30 (especially men) were the least of the least churching. So, we decided to take some risks and rethink ministry foundations in light of the new world which had overtaken the old. Also, overriding all of the statistical information was a deep sense of God's call to do this work by faith since we were uncertain exactly what would happen or how things would go.

3. How does the postmodern church differentiate itself from the traditional church? Your doctrinal statement seems to match the traditional church. What is the difference in your approach to ministry?

Christianity never changes its core beliefs from age to age. The issue is simply one of contextualization as each time and place needs to have the gospel spoken and embodied in such a way as to connect with the world. If modernity was a demon, and postmodernity cast it out, then we should seek the presence of the gospel, or expect seven more demons to take it's place. In this way, a church must be missional and seek to make the gospel its central focus and contextualization its secondary focus. So, to do ministry in a postmodern world is not to fully embrace or fight postmodernity, but rather to seek the windfalls and pitfalls it provides for the gospel.

4. To what would you attribute the expedient leadership training and mentorship which has led to Mars Hill launching churches at a rate approximating once a year?

All is grace. God has been kind to provide us with very strong and gifted elders and church members. God has also been kind to link us with groups like the [Acts 29 Network](#) to aid in the planting of churches. Ron Wheeler, pastor at The Gathering, was brought through a connection I made with his parents. Bill Keogh, pastor at Harbor Fellowship, was an old friend from my days as a college pastor. Rick McKinley, a potential planter in Portland, was a college friend of our associate pastor Eric Brown. We have been fortunate to come alongside church planters that God has already begun raising up. Their churches are their labors and we are privileged to stand with and for them. **Our current plan is to continue training people from within, hiring from within, and running a service specifically tailored for emerging leaders to preach, lead worship, administrate etc., to best prepare them for planting.** This will be run in conjunction with our intern program, and partnerships with Cascade Bible College and Reformed Theological Seminary.

5. How essential have partnerships and support been in the launching of church plants?

The postmodern world is also a post-denominational network. **Gone are the days of central national hierarchy and franchise looking ministries.** Instead, the trend will be local, connected churches from various traditions bringing their gift to the larger body and celebrating the other gifts that are brought to the party. In this way, partnerships will be formed among a wide variety of people and structures who share a common heart and ministry philosophy regarding postmodern missions. For us, this has meant the wonderful opportunity to work with brothers and sisters in Christ from across the globe through networking organizations like the Leadership Network and [Acts 29 Network](#).

6. What advice do you have for current Youth Pastors?

Quit your job and plant a church.

7. How did you preach Romans without the deductive expository method?

Romans has long been seen as a theological statement/ treatise. As such, the focus has been for some commentators to focus on either chapters 1-9, or 1-11, with a negligence of 12-16. I believe it was wrongly viewed this way because of the influence the reformation had on the book. Since the reformation was an in-house debate among church people about the exact nature of the gospel, Romans was seen as a statement against Pelagianism/ Arminianism. But, while I do hold to a reformed view of the gospel and election, I do not see this as the primary issue in the book of Romans. Paul was not a detached theologian, but a church planter who saw theology as the framework for missiology. As such, I view Romans as a missiological text. Romans 1-8 addresses what the gospel is to those with varying degrees of revelation. Romans 9-11 deals with issues of contextualization in relation to Jews and Gentiles and introduces the centrality of election, revealing that God is first missionary seeking worshippers. Romans 12 addresses how the missiological call of the gospel must drive the worship and service of the local church. Romans 13 addresses how the gospel in its holistic sense also drives the social engagement of the church with the political and secular world. Romans 14-15 addresses how the gospel must be missiologically contextualized within a global world. Romans 16 demonstrates how the gospel lives within individual people within the church community as they become the sent people of God on mission with, and as, the gospel.

8. What does "narrative style" mean-- as it applies to preaching God's word to a postmodern generation?

Modern preaching tended to come to the scriptures seeking detached propositional truth statements to be lifted from their context, universally explained, and then reconnected to daily life through application and illustration. Obviously very Greek in its orientation, recent scholarship has tended to favor more Hebrew forms of instruction such as *midrash* and narrative. Narrative teaching is gaining popularity because it recognizes more fully the original context into which a revelation was given, and strongly interacts with what the original people and circumstances were, then moves to see the present as not an application, but rather an extension of the biblical story all connected to the gospel/ meta-narrative. An older book on this is "The Homiletical Plot" by Lowry.

9. How do you intend to balance your preaching between narrative and non-narrative, since approximately 25% of the Bible is the latter?

Another good work which argues that teaching/ preaching should be driven not merely by the propositional content, but also the artistic form of a section of text, is "Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible" by Long. In this way we see the Scriptures as a higher authority, as such things as modern inerrancy have, recognizing that not merely the truth statements, but also the literary forms are inspired and say something by their form. In this way we also see humans' lives past and present as stories woven within the grand narrative of God.

10. How does Mars Hill utilize multi-media in its sermons and worship? Can a postmodern church make it in its early days if they cannot afford this equipment?

**The church can no longer afford to be in the entertainment business for both theological and financial reasons.** Technology is too progressive and too costly to chase it. For example, in downtown Seattle near our 5pm service, is the first international test market for the interactive, virtual-reality GameWorks arcade. It cost piles of millions for kids to virtually rock climb and hit baseballs, fight, and skateboard. It took Steven Spielberg and Bill Gates to fund and dream the place up. Likewise, in the University District down the street from our 7pm service, is the international headquarters for Wizards of the Coast (i.e. Magic: The Gathering etc.) and is also a phenomenally expensive technologically driven area that is so well funded that it would be impossible for a church to even dream of chasing its means of attracting young people.

The church needs to use technology where it can afford. The line between technology and humans is very blurry because we use technology so much (obvious examples include such things as pacemakers and hearing aids) that a postmodern will not be impressed by technology, but they will appreciate it. Technology is the new language of a new tribe. Any church refusing to speak that language is being racist. So, a web site that is well done is a must. So is great sound. So is some powerpoint and rear projection. These things are about all we can afford right now. Anything that enhances the worship and learning experience without becoming an idolatry is welcome, providing we can afford it. But, the costs are phenomenally expensive for a new church. **When we began we used silence, solitude, liturgy, candles and an ancient feel to give people a sense of wonder and mystery and history and transcendence.** We could only afford some sound and an overhead projector at that point. In our new location, which is much larger, we are having to use the space to go forward and backward simultaneously, blending the ancient past with the technology of the future. We'll see how it goes once we get the money for more screens and dj's etc. Likewise, the 7pm service will also use film, web surfing, dj's etc. as we can afford to add it.

11. In attempting to make ministry more down to earth, gritty and raw, what insight might you provide on how to get the ball rolling?

Everything begins in trinitarian community. The bottom line of our faith is love of God and love of neighbor. It seems like most things that have changed the world began like Jesus did, with some people gathering over a meal and trusting God to guide them together on a journey of faith into an unknown future. **The days of marketing and promoting the church are very short. Postmoderns are no longer lured or impressed by the business approach to dispensing religious goods and services that many modern, boomer, and suburban congregations have so widely embraced.** God always builds ministers before He builds ministries, and so our character, wisdom, prayer, silence, solitude, faith, love, etc. cause people to trust us, and trust those they love to join us in community.

12. Why don't you have traditional programs like Sunday School for children and adults? Why don't you meet on Sunday morning?

**Departmental churches are basically poor rip-offs of suburban malls where the entire family can walk in and consume products from a variety of stores waiting to serve them under one roof.** Likewise, in church we have a "store" for kids, moms, dads, divorcee's, teens, singles, etc. etc. Any sense of community across likeness is foreign. It really has killed the ability for shepherding through difficult life transitions because you are expected to leap into a new ministry, with a new pastor and a new community, at the most difficult transitions in your life (i.e. from jr hi to high school, high school to college, college to employment, employment to marriage, marriage to parenting, marriage to divorce etc.). Which explains why most kids bail out of church after high school, never to return. It may work in some areas and in some times, but it is in no way a biblical mandate. Likewise, **Sunday morning services are not the model of the early church.** For them, Sunday was likely a work day since Saturday was the Sabbath. So, I would presume they met before or after work on Sunday. Paul gives the freedom to reorganize worship times (Romans 14:5-6a). We no longer live in a Monday through Friday 9am - 5pm world, and **Sunday morning is tough to get to. I for one hate getting up because I like to have fun on Saturday nights doing our radio show until midnight, going to the club scene, dating my wife etc. Why would I want to get up early on Sunday morning, fight to get the kids ready, and run to church? Why not sleep in, take the day for a Sabbath with the family, go to church, then go out to dinner with other people who are at church; Christian and non, single and married, male and female, young and old? We don't run Sunday school because it forces the departmental segregation and assumes that one department can adequately build into a person. Instead, we run classes and home Bible studies on a huge variety of topics, from missiology to prayer, according to what the teachers/leaders want to do. They have the pulse of our people and we trust them.** We also do not want the church to assume the primary spiritual oversight of children when it is their parents responsibility. So, kids worship with us, and the younger ones are pulled out for a separate Bible lesson. But, they are fully involved in the church and do ministry with their families, or if they are teens without family we adopt them in.

13. Is Mars Hill affiliated with other churches? If so, in what capacity? How would Mars Hill define its philosophy of relationship and affiliation with the global church?

Each church must be local, global and historical. We help fund and plant churches around the globe with the [Acts 29 Network](#). We work nationally with hundreds of churches through the Leadership Network. Locally, we are also closely tied with a number of churches from a variety of traditions via friendship and partnership in the gospel.

14. Religion Today indicated that Mark is one of 1500 pastors with similar viewpoints that meet regionally and nationally. How might one find out more information and/ or join this group?

For a list of resources, forums, and other events go to [www.theooze.com](http://www.theooze.com).

15. What churches might you recommend in the Santa Monica UCLA area? How about the greater L.A. area? Are there any churches there willing to mentor young, ministry-minded individuals?

[www.theooze.com](http://www.theooze.com) has an extensive database of churches around the globe as well as links to their web sites.

16. What books would you recommend, specifically in regard to subjects such as multidenominationalism and bringing the gospel to a postmodern generation? What books have truly been inspiring?

[click here](#) This will take you to the Kairos page. There, click on 'Mark's Reading List.'