

Networked church key to ministering in 21st century

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Networked church key to ministering in 21st century

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—A “networked” church is poised for ministry in the 21st century, Anna Robbins of the [London School of Theology](#) claimed.

The world is being stretched by the simultaneous emphasis on context and culture as well as belief in a worldwide bond, Robbins said.

People are connecting with people on the other side of the globe, but they also understand that, much closer to home, the culture in which a person lives shapes that individual’s life, she explained.



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by John Hall)

“On the one hand, the world is growing more and more connected, more and more homogeneous. On the other hand, the world seems to be fragmenting through a recognition of difference, a plurality, a significance of context and culture,” she said during the Ethics Without Borders conference sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas’ [Christian Life Commission](#).

Understanding or balancing the paradox between connectedness and fragmentation is becoming increasingly complex, she said.

“It’s no longer true that what must be done is evident to all, even if how it ought to be done has always been more complex,” she lamented. “We even

wonder sometimes if we're speaking the same language across diverse contexts, let alone employing the same concepts or engaging the same rationality. We're more and more the same, yet more and more wanting to stress our difference."

The church is built upon the notion of Christians with a common belief in Christ working together, making it an international network, Robbins said.

"We say, 'Jesus is Lord,' and that overcomes all of our contexts," she explained. "That overcomes all of our pluralities, and it's not just words. It's a reality. If Jesus Christ is who he is, he is Lord of all people at all time. We are one people, no matter where we find ourselves."

While the church may be built upon the notion of being a network, the connections must be developed further for it to serve as effectively as possible, Robbins said.

The lives of people within the network must impact the lives of other individuals within it, she illustrated. The plight of one group of Christians needs to affect the actions of another group.

"What difference does it matter for my church community that this church community doesn't know if they're going to be allowed to gather to worship tomorrow?" she asked. "What does it mean when I get together with my friends Sunday that a community that I have a contact with has nothing to eat tomorrow?"

"These things have to have mutually life-changing consequences. A network can do that, but only if we take more responsibility for it."

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