

“Next big idea” an old idea that looks radically different

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WACO—The “next big idea” actually is 2,000 years old, but it has “moved and morphed” into something quite different than what Americans and Europeans have known.

“The church is the next big idea—much bigger than we imagine,” said Michael Stroope, associate professor of missions at Baylor University’s Truett Theological Seminary. “But it’s not where it used to be, and it’s not where it once was.”

Stroope addressed The Next Big Idea conference, an event sponsored by [Baylor’s School of Social Work](#), [Truett Theological Seminary](#) and the [Leadership Network](#).

“We need to redraw our ecclesiastical maps,” Stroope said. About 100 years ago, 81 percent of the Christian church was of Anglo-Saxon heritage. Now, 60 percent of the global church is African, Asian or Latin American, he noted.

David Garland (center), dean of Truett Theological Seminary and Baylor University’s interim president, and Mike Stroope, associate professor of Christian missions at Truett, visit with participants at The Next Big Idea Conference. (BAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY/Robert Rogers)

The growth center of Christianity has moved to the developing world,

Stroope said. In Africa, people are turning to faith in Christ at a rate of 23,000 a day, and in Latin America and Asia, churches are “bursting at the seams,” he reported.

“The church is more diverse than what we think,” he added. “The church is more dynamic and vibrant than we think.”

Unlike the missionary movement of the last couple of centuries, Christianity today is spreading due largely to migration—often forced migration due to war and poverty, he observed.

“Migration is the new mission. Refugees are carrying the gospel with them,” he said.

Christians in the United States can learn important lessons from their brothers and sisters in the developing world, but it requires a shift from a mindset of Christendom, colonialism and “the church as corporation,” Stroope insisted.

“Instead, we must move toward the church as cruciform—living toward the cross, giving ourselves away,” he said. “We must move from benevolence to brotherhood and sisterhood, from security to risk and from our rights to what is right.”

Stroope urged what he called “transmergence”—a coined term he defines as “crossing over to another who is radically different in a way that is transformational to both parties.”