



The Sacred Secular: How God Is Using the World to Shape the Church

Dottie Escobedo-Frank, Rob Rynders

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Our urban cores are undergoing a renaissance. People, especially young people, are ditching the suburbs in search of more interesting and compelling ways of living. Cities now offer an escape from planned and gated communities, big box stores, and chain restaurants. Urban centers offer local, community-based coffee shops, bars, and businesses. Restaurants offer farm-to-table experiences and a place where people can meet their neighbors. Instead of going to the movie theatre on a Friday night, urbanites experience art shows and the local music scene where they engage in a more creative way of living.

The escape from suburbia, however, also includes an escape from organized religion. Today's mega-church isn't much different from the big box store experience, an experience urbanites reject. Yet, they aren't rejecting religious beliefs and have in many ways adopted new religious practices, whether they know it or not. The gathering spaces and the ways they gather may look different, however, this new urban "religion" brings with it a deep commitment to community building, sustainability, and compassion for one's neighbors - all practices and beliefs found at the core of Jesus' teachings.

Examples include:

Coffee Shop: Coffee shops are packed on Sunday mornings...many have more people in them than are in the local churches. Coffee shop gatherings are places for Bible Study, social connection, and work stations. And they are a phenomenon of 3rd space that the church has lost?

Neighborhood block parties and festivals are designed for neighbors to get to know one another: This feels like more "Christian" community.

The new "urban" bar: These bars act as gathering spaces for the community. These are more interesting and compelling places to come share a meal with neighbors, known and unknown. Gourmet food, craft beer, and interesting interiors and patios create a sense of space where one wants to spend hours building community with family and friends.

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