Justice, mission & the next generation

"Behold, I am making all things new." These are the triumphant words declared by God from His throne as He ushers in a new creation in Revelation 21:1-5. This is an incredible glimpse into the hope that we have, for a new creation where there is no more pain, suffering, crying or death.

While we look forward to the day when God's Kingdom comes in full, Jesus commissions His church to be bearers of this new creation in the here and now – as the apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians we are new creations now, the ambassadors of Christ set apart to be the examples of God's goodness, justice, mercy, love, kindness and compassion, so that a broken and fallen world might be reconciled to their creator.

Yet sometimes our tendency is to separate the telling and the doing of the Gospel, in a way that can undermine both. One is incomplete without the other – as we share about Jesus in word, we must also demonstrate His restoration in our love and care for others. God's renewing work deals with the whole of the person, and so our witness to Jesus must also be holistic.

There is a term for this in mission circles: Integral Mission.

Micah Network defines integral mission as "the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. **Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ."**

While the term may be a recent one, this missiological foundation has been present in Baptist Mission Australia's ministry since the very early days.

Rachel Stevens is Baptist Mission Australia's Next Generation Specialist. Rachel is passionate about engaging with young people as they explore who God is and who He has made them to be.

Doctors, nurses and teachers were sent to East Bengal, India and Papua New Guinea to use their professional skills alongside the sharing of the Gospel. Word and deed together.

As an organisation, this conviction of word and deed going hand in hand has only grown in recent decades. And currently we see it in the ministries of team members such as Joyce and Jean-Claude in Malawi, Jit and Jan in Thailand, and Petra and Ben in the Silk Road Area... just to name a few.

This work that lovingly responds to injustices in access to education, healthcare and more, is not just good platforms that enable the 'real' mission of evangelism, they are core to our communication of the good news of our God who desires to make all things new.

So how does this relate to the next generation? Well the research shows that justice and integral mission align with young people's response to God's mission. We see in new worldwide research produced by Barna, World Vision and others, that Christian teenagers have a heart for justice, rooted in their understanding of Scripture.

The Barna team write, "For today's teens, addressing injustice in our world is a top priority—more than any other generation Barna Group has studied to date."

78% of the more than 24,000 teens surveyed were either very motivated or somewhat motivated to do something about injustices in society. And 65% of Christian teens surveyed believed that they could make a positive difference.

As we look to raise up the next generation of go-ers and senders, it is clear that we must engage with their heart for justice. What an incredible opportunity for ministries and churches to catalyse Kingdom impact in the world!