

Churches in Exile: Alternative Models of Church for Ireland in the 21st Century

Cathy Higgins



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What is the future of the churches in Ireland? The recent census in Northern Ireland confirms that fewer people are identifying with any church, whether Catholic or Protestant. Is this a sign of end times for church, or just church as we know it? Like any institution, since its 1st-century beginning, the Christian Church has undergone huge changes in self-understanding and in its various external manifestations. Change is never easy and, as the history of the Christian Church demonstrates, it can often be fraught with anxiety, and result in conflict and division. This book explores diverse models of church from the past and present that offer ethical examples of engaged faith and practice that are an antidote to the present malaise in Irish churches, currently struggling under the collapse of moral authority and belief systems. Drawing on the biblical experience and metaphor of exile as a source of inspiration and hope, this book challenges contemporary Irish churches to be a counter-cultural movement that meets the real need for more authentic expressions of faith rooted in a spirituality of justice and peace.

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