

Pastor sounds out Jesus people

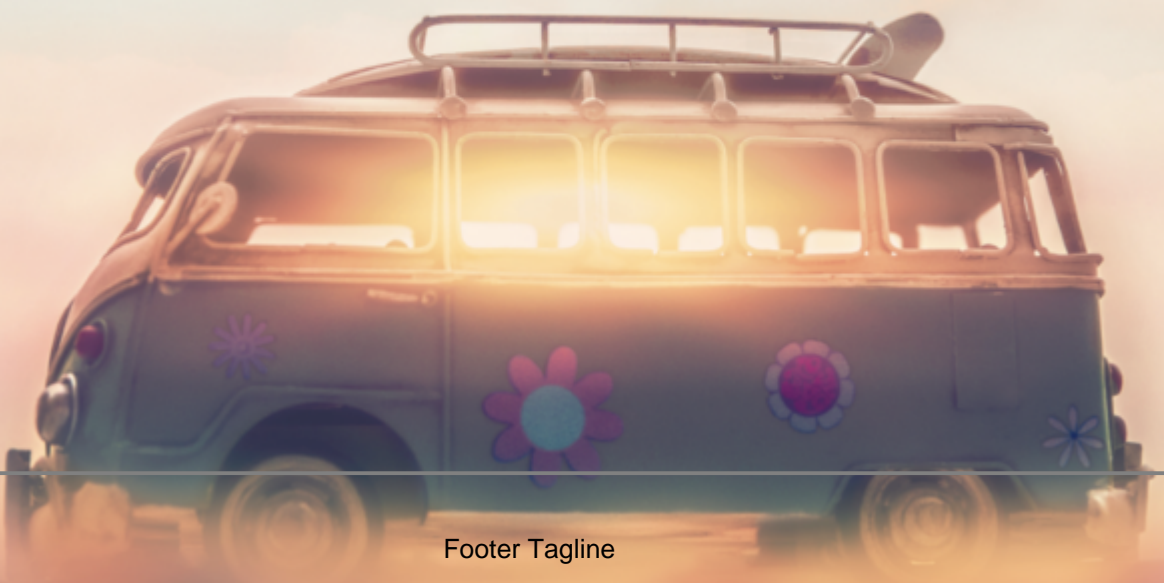
Description

MMHS resident and prog rock podcaster Revd John Simms reviews [*When Jesus Met Hippies*](#) by Andrew Whitman (Malcolm Down Publishing)

ANDREW WHITMAN

When Jesus Met Hippies

The Story and Legacy of the Jesus
People Movement in the UK



For a child of the 60s who came to faith in the 70s this book was an interesting and nostalgic read.

The author and I share a similar story raised in a churchgoing home, dabbling on the fringes of the hippy culture of the late 60s and early 70s particularly its music and drug cultures and coming to a personal faith through the ministries of those affected by the Jesus People Movement (JPM).

There was much in this volume that resonated with me and my journey

There was much in this volume that resonated with me and my journey. The book is divided into three parts. The first outlines a brief history of the JPM in the USA, tells us Whitman's personal story and outlines ten distinguishing marks of the JPM. For him these are hippy background, Jesus-focussed, Bible-centred, contemporary music, communal living, end-times orientation, street evangelism, church ambivalence, charismatic experience and literature production.

The second part by far the largest in the book takes us chronologically from late 1970 to early 1975 through a number of events and initiatives hosted by the churches in the UK, and influenced by the ethos or the personalities of the JPM.

These include the cross-carrying Arthur Blessit, rock gospel-singing [Larry Norman](#), the rise of the worship leaders [Graham Kendrick](#) and [Dave Bilborough](#), the influence of Calvary Chapel and the dangers of cultism highlighted in the Children of God sect, major initiatives like the Festival of Light and Spree 73 and the birth of Greenbelt Festival and the Vineyard fellowships among many others.

The third part explores the legacy for the contemporary church of these influences from 50 years ago.

This is a very readable book. The chapters are all around ten pages long. While there are around 30 pages of endnotes, it is anecdotal in style, as well as analytical and academic. There is much in what Whitman writes that resonates with more recent initiatives in Fresh Expressions and New Places for New People. Maybe these aren't as fresh or new as we may think?

Perhaps the message is the need for the Church to be constantly listening to the Spirit

Whitman comes at this topic from the perspective of an evangelical church pastor, and the end-times orientation of the JPM may not sit well with some (myself included). But this is an informative and at times nostalgic read. It sheds some interesting light on times when, like today, many seem disconnected from the established Christian community yet still attracted to Jesus.

Perhaps the overriding message of this book is the need for the Church to be constantly listening to what the Spirit is saying even if that looks weird and unsettling. The JPM seem to have focussed on being an incarnational movement, going to those whose natural inclination would not be to come to

them. A timely message, perhaps.

Read Revd John Simms's own story in [the latest edition of *Roof to Roots*](#)! Listen to his [Flight Of The Sky Pilot](#) music programme at <https://progzilla.com>.

Category

1. News & reviews

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