

US Pastor who 'mixes the profane with the scared' to make UK tour and is keynote speaker at London Men's Conference

By a correspondent

A highly controversial US pastor from Seattle, Mark Driscoll, is to tour England in May and will be the keynote speaker at the annual 'London Men's Convention' on 7 May, which is expected to attract over 4,000 male Christian leaders, many of them on the so-called 'evangelical wing' of the Church of England. Driscoll claims that his church-planting ministry derives from Acts 29. The Evangelical Alliance is promoting what they call an 'Acts 29 Bootcamp' (cost £29) on methods of church planting, in Birmingham, on 5 and 6 May; Driscoll is one of the key speakers. He will also lead a one-day 'Good Book Course' conference (cost £25) at Dundonald Church, Wimbledon, pastored by Richard Coekin. Coekin is also 'Senior Pastor' of the 'Co-Mission Initiative', which backs the invitation to Driscoll to speak at the Men's Convention.

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Driscoll is Pastor of Mars Hill Church, Seattle, which in 11 years has grown from a small church to one with 6,000 members. He is a firm supporter of US preacher Rick Warren, author of 'The Purpose-Driven Church'. Driscoll's critics

point to his frequent use of coarse, vulgar and frankly lewd language in some of his sermons and writings. Numerous examples have been cited, nearly all of them too lewd and graphic to quote in this newspaper. An 11-page briefing paper by Cathy Mickels, co-author of 'Spiritual Junk Food: The Dumbing Down of Christian Youth', sent to Christian leaders on 12 January this year, documents the sad procession of gross statements by Driscoll.

Referring to Driscoll's popular book, 'Confessions of a Reformation Rev', US Pastor John MacArthur said: "There are statements in his book that are extremely sexually explicit, unnecessary, and with purely gratuitous humour at the very basest level". Driscoll openly credits a notoriously foul-mouthed stand-up comedian, Chris Rock, with 'teaching me to preach'. His latest book is titled: 'Porn-Again Christian'.

Driscoll's church website has two separate articles full of highly explicit sexual advice for Christian couples. Dr Judith Reisman, having reviewed this material, commented: "This is worse than tragic. I don't know if it is worse to think that

these are phoney church sites put out by pornographers, or that they are real church sites put out by pornified churches. Words cannot describe the ignorance, arrogance and flagrant homoeroticism of these sites".

Dr E S Williams, author of 'The dark side of Christian Counselling' and 'Christ or Therapy', told *British Church News-paper*: "To summarise, Driscoll mixes the profane with the sacred".

Richard Perkins, a close associate of Coekin who once worked alongside him at Dundonald Church, and now pastors Christ Church, Balham, is Senior Pastor with Co-Mission, one of the main supporters of Driscoll's visit. In his 'the urban pastor' blog, he enthusiastically welcomed Driscoll's tour, commenting:

"Stephen Fletcher, the omnicompetent administrator of the London Men's Convention, must have whooped in celebration in learning that Driscoll would be the keynote speaker and playing live in the Royal Albert Hall at this year's London Men's Convention.

"Some don't approve of his risqué, unconventional and abrasive style, but here's a Reformed guy, preaching the gospel, stimulating

ministry and mission, especially amongst the emerging generation. It would be hard to overstate his influence on the evangelical scene over the last five years. I was gripped by his books. The speaker line-up is fantastic. Driscoll should be electric".