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Pastoral Care, An Effective Front Porch for the Postmodern Church

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PASTORAL CARE,
AN EFFECTIVE FRONT PORCH FOR THE POSTMODERN CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY

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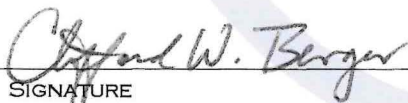
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**PASTORAL CARE,
AN EFFECTIVE FRONT PORCH
FOR THE POSTMODERN CHURCH**

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This dissertation is written in loving memory of my beloved parents, Graham Vaughan and Sara Bates Hale. They instilled endless love and timeless words of truth, preparing me for this journey called ministry. I think of them everyday and lift thanks to God for affording me the opportunity to be their son here on earth. I also want to dedicate this to my nephew, Lucas Graham Holt, who left this earth entirely too soon – his sense of humor, love and compassion are attributes that we, as a family, cherish. Lucas, we miss you and love you so.

As my youngest sister shared with me once I embraced the call into fulltime ministry, "Mark, Jesus has not promised you a quiet journey but a safe arrival." As I continue on this journey, I will keep this in my mind and heart.

Finally, I thank my beautiful and devoted wife, Tina Kirby Hale, for her constant love, support, and prayers. She embodies everything that is precious. There is an angel on earth, and I call her my wife.

Chapter 1

Abstract

For over 18 years, Disney has offered over a million alumni the opportunity to benchmark the philosophies of the Walt Disney World resort. Since I am implementing the metaphor of the front porch as an integral part of the overall care model of the church, I ask, who better implements a welcoming, front porch atmosphere than Disney? Where Disney has elevated the mouse as its icon of celebrating and welcoming, I propose that Jesus is the icon for the front porch.

Rex Miller in *The Millenium Matrix* reminds us, “That original thinking will certainly include experimenting with past mediums of expression and finding new expressions that are more than a simple patchwork of old and current.”¹ Who has more effective and newer expressions than Disney? Again, Miller reminds us,

We will develop new skills that enable us to think in multiple media, work collaboratively, organize as distributed networks, affiliate with diverse individuals of common interest, think with both sides of the brain, and define our communities more loosely but also more deliberately as intentional communities.²

As I collaborated with Disney, I walked away with information I had not previously received in conferences from church culture. I was stimulated via the resonation I experienced and recalled the business practices I had been exposed to in corporate America prior to receiving the call into ministry. It was a beautiful experience to realize that God was preparing me, years ago, for my current position. A cultural excellence from the corporate world which resulted in profit is not the norm or expected

¹ Miller, Rex, *The Millenium Matrix: Reclaiming the Past, Reframing the Future of the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004), 123.

² Ibid, 123.

in church culture. As I began to speak the language of excellence, I learned in the corporate world, one of which I was reminded at Disney, I realized that excellence is not just a business principle but should be an expected principle in the church.

This same excellence has not been observed in the pastoral care vein of many churches today. I am convinced that Pastoral Care University has made the ministry at Hillvue Heights Church stronger, deeper, and wider, as 700+ people have received and thus implemented this into Spirit-Driven Care. It is important to note that many who currently serve are the very ones who had also received ministry. “There are three characteristics—one, contagiousness; two, the fact that little causes can have big effect; and three, that change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment – are the same three principles that define how measles moves through a grade-school classroom or the flu attacks every winter.”³ This has also proven to be true in reference to the care model implemented via Pastoral Care University. Contagious? Yes. Loving? Yes. Life-transforming? Yes.

The question I want to explore is “How effective is Pastoral Care in the overall dynamic of impacting people’s lives.” In order to answer this question, I will engage the metaphor of the church as “the front porch” because I believe that it is a valid paradigm for exploring an overall model of congregational care. Furthermore, I will explore how the “front porch” metaphor holds both socio-cultural and spiritual significance for understanding how the church in America demonstrates compassion or a lack thereof to the world.

³ Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Tipping Point* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 9.

Chapter 2

Problem Story

The stories of people in times of crisis, grief, and celebration offer hope to others. As I continue to read, study, and minister to others in the name of Jesus, I expect nothing less than His healing presence to continue to dwell in and among His people. This chapter of the dissertation will take a journey of my experiences in the past four months in relationship to George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Hillvue Heights Church, and Pastoral Care University, as well as my personal development.

After a beautiful baptism during the middle of the week at a church in another town, my colleague and I were removing our waders, the pair I wore I borrowed from this church. I remarked that water was standing up to my thighs inside the waders I was wearing. He asked me why all the water was in my waders, and I realized they had dry-rotted from lack of use. According to Reggie McNeal, “Trouble is, the church is sleeping on the job. Too many of us have forgotten why we showed up for work.”¹ If there ever comes a time when we stop loving people and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them, our waders are also likely to dry-rot from lack of use.

According to Wayne E. Oates, “Pastoral care and counseling are the art of listening to the story of others with the expectation that the sacred will break through (counseling is a trialogue). Furthermore, Oates stated, “Counsel in the heart of a person is like deep waters, but a person of understanding can draw it out. Being ministers of understanding who draw out the purpose in human hearts of people and gently restore

¹ McNeal, *The Present Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 19.

them to the Lord Jesus Christ for their lives.”² The present and certainly the future of pastoral care consists of these. This mission – to Connect people to a relationship with Jesus through the cross and resurrection, community of faith, and the truth of Jesus that sets us free. These connections lead us to experience Healing, and Develop into players in God's mission.

The problem that is posed in this question, “How can Pastoral Care more effectively impact people’s lives?” will be answered by proposing a model of congregational care that is practiced at Hillvue Heights Church. In order to answer this question, I will engage the metaphor of the church as “the front porch” because I believe that it is a valid paradigm for exploring an overall model of congregational care. Furthermore, I will explore how the “front porch” metaphor holds both socio-cultural and spiritual significance for understanding how the church in America demonstrates compassion or a lack thereof to the world.

Ten years ago, Rick Warren and Bill Hybels both wrote books that chronicled the success and stories of their churches. Warren noted, “Changed lives are a church’s greatest advertisement.”³ He also said, “What really attracts large numbers of unchurched to a church is changed lives-a lot of changed lives. People want to go where lives are being changed, where hurts are being healed, and where hope is being restored.”⁴ These descriptions are the front porch activities that the Holy Spirit so powerfully embodies. Hybels writes,

What was true in 1975 is every bit as true today. People need the church-not the lifeless institution that has often passed as the church, but the true

² www.oates.org, Accessed December 9, 2004.

³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 222.

⁴ Ibid, 247.

church, the Acts 2 church. Nothing else is going to change the course of individual lives in the direction of this country. We need authentic heart change that will transform the way we operate in relationships, the way we respond to social injustice, the way we use the earth, and the way we treat the weak, the poor, and the unborn.⁵

Eight years later, even after two bestselling books that stress the necessity of seeing believers whose lives have changed, Thom Rainer reported,

The numbers are overwhelming. Nearly seven out of ten, 69%, of the U5s had a specific recollection of a negative church experience. The U5s were not alone among the unchurched in their recollection of negative church experiences. In fact, the majority of the unchurched in all categories had a negative recollection. The defining issue for the U5s, however, was the intensity of their hurt and the bitterness they still carry to this day.⁶

U5 is from a scale Thom Rainer created measuring the receptivity to the gospel of unchurched people. In a conversation with Mother Teresa, Robert Schuller asked, “Why is it that people don’t rush to connect with a God who loves them so much?” In one swift, blunt word, she answered, “Distractions.”⁷ What are the distractions? The way in which people have been excluded by the world is certainly one of these. The authentic invitation to the porch silences this distraction with a love that supercedes. Robert Schuller states, “When people sincerely seek to implant the spirit of love in the core of their spirit, they find their personalities changing for the better. They look for ways to help others. They come to respect all people: even their adversaries are treated with dignity.”⁸ Does this lead to an invitation to “the porch”? Absolutely! Additionally, Schuller’s wisdom is stated clearly, “People who refuse to compromise soon find themselves living with hardened positions, iron wills, and frozen viewpoints, thereby producing only sickness

⁵ Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1995) 16.

⁶ Thom Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door: Understanding Faith Stages as Keys to Sharing Your Faith*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 2003), 90.

⁷ Schuller, 145.

⁸ Ibid, 144.

within themselves. We need to learn the healing quality of compromise.”⁹ This is not a negative compromise but rather a positive compromise of welcoming people unlike oneself. Unity in diversity is certainly a compromise for many. Diversity is a component of the porch experience.

According Robert Schuller, “Believers around the world celebrate Easter. That’s the tomorrow God planned for his people. Tomorrow, God will work wonders among you.”¹⁰

“Love is the last word. The apostle Paul said, ‘And now abide faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love’ (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Without love, faith is unsatisfying.

Without love, hope is joyless.

Without love, ambition is hazardous.

Without love, justice is dangerous.

Without love, suffering is unbearable.

And the love of Jesus Christ is unique. It transcends human love.

It is a divine love on the highest, holiest level.

Self-centered love cries out, ‘I love you because I want you.’

Self-serving love calls out, ‘I love you because I need you.’

Self-giving love reaches out, ‘I love you because you need me.’

That’s the love that Jesus Christ inspires.”¹¹

We’ve all heard about physical dehydration and the devastation on the physical body as a result of this. Physical symptoms include a thick tongue, parched mouth, an

⁹ Ibid, 153.

¹⁰ Ibid, 15.

¹¹ Ibid, 210.

achy body, and the possibility of organs shutting down. In other words, your body will sound alarms when you're dehydrated. While the porch may at times deal with physical dehydration in meeting physical needs, the driving motivation is to quench the spiritual dehydration. How many spiritually dehydrated persons are there? If we knew, spiritual porches would be in mass production. The question to ask is, do we care?

As Max Lucado writes, "What water can do for your body, Jesus can do for your heart. Lubricate it. Aquify it. Soften what is crusty, flush what is rusty. How? Like water, Jesus goes where we can't."¹² As Christians, we're called to be couriers of living waters afforded to us via a personal relationship with Jesus. We have the truth and are called to share it with others. As Jesus stated in John 4:10, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Deprive your soul of spiritual water, and your soul will tell you. Dehydrated hearts send desperate messages. Snarling tempers. Waves of worry. Growling mastodons of guilt and fear. You think God wants you to live with these? Hopelessness. Sleeplessness. Loneliness. Resentment. Irritability. Insecurity. These are warnings. Symptoms of a dryness deep within.¹³

According to Leonard Sweet,

When people know the end of their life is near, there are eleven words they most want to hear. According to a physician who has been present at the bedsides of too many dying patients to number, these are the words they most yearn for:

- "I'll miss you."
- "Thank you."
- "I forgive you."
- "I love you."

But if they could hear only one of these statements, they would choose "I love you."¹⁴

¹² Max Lucado, *Come Thirsty* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2004), 13.

¹³ Ibid, 11.

¹⁴ Leonard Sweet, *The Three Hardest Words* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 1.

The above mentioned is certainly true, not only when one is passing from this world, but while one is walking in this world. “God so loved that He sent His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) These are all front porch activities. As I continue to explore the metaphorical meaning of the porch, it too will continue to be a place where people are told, “Welcome, I’ll miss you, thank you, I forgive you, I love you. Above all, Jesus loves you.” These words are not a mere activity, but rather a flow of the Spirit on, around, and through the porch. In other words, it’s not just a place, but a presence that permeates everything. The mere observance of the porch does not result in transformation. It’s more than being around the moment of the porch. One has to step into the moment. Bill Hybels writes concerning who can make a difference in a life.

It’s going to take a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ from your church or mine who gets alongside them at some point in their lives and says, ‘Listen. It’s pretty obvious that you didn’t get much love in the home you grew up in. But I’m here to tell you that there’s a love in heaven with your name on it.’¹⁵

Simply put, the current *modus-operandi* of pastoral care is not only not working, it is not biblical. The typical model finds the pastor doing all the care instead of equipping the saints to do the work (care). It is my prayer that Pastoral Care University become the new paradigm for how churches provide care. Pastoral Care University is a two-day seminar designed to inform, expose and initially equip lay people to administer care in a way that creates a more biblically sound portrait of a Christian community.

¹⁵ Lynne & Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 165.

Chapter 3

Proposed Pastoral Care Solution

The purpose of Pastoral Care University (PCU) is to advocate for a more substantial form of Pastoral Care that can only come about when empowered by the Holy Spirit. PCU promotes the kind of care in which the Holy Spirit inhabits and breathes through all of our healing efforts in a manner that is much like what happens in the New Testament. Our only qualification for God's grace is our emptiness, not our fullness; our undeservedness, not our deservedness.¹ "Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners." (Mark 2:17) Similarly, on a much smaller scale, Pastoral Care University is not for the hubristic heart, but rather the heart of the servant. Furthermore, Pastoral Care University is for everyone who has ever wept, hurt, and felt captive to their dolor. This directly correlates with inclusiveness, not exclusiveness.

Many people confine pastoral care by reducing it to psychoanalytic pastoral counseling or patting people on the hand during visitation, and telling them that everything will be all right. However, connection to Christ, His community and His truth along with multidimensional forms of healing, and comprehensive spiritual development continue flowing through this Spirit-driven pastoral care ministry. In other words, when fully embraced, pastoral care is nothing less than evangelistic. With this in mind, there are four components of pastoral care at Hillvue. They consist of healing, supporting, directing, and reuniting.

The purpose of developing Pastoral Care University with an emphasis placed on Spirit-Driven Care is because of the tremendous movement of the Spirit experienced

¹ Peter Kreeft. *Making Sense Out of Suffering* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1986), 16.

through that care at Hillvue each and every day in ministry. Jesus enabled me to experience this component of care and thus become a vessel for sharing His message with a multitude of people. In doing so, I will spend the rest of my earthly life scattering seeds of love, hope, peace, joy, and faith in the name of Jesus to those with whom I come in contact. Pastoral Care at Hillvue is derived from the New Testament, as the journey of connection, healing, and development continues to unfold by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit-Driven Care

The movement of the Spirit has taken a back seat to modern science. It is time for the Spirit to regain His rightful place in the front seat. It is unfortunate that today's world has lost sight of the Holy Spirit. According to the Pocket Dictionary of Theological terms, the Holy Spirit is connected with "wind" and "breath." The Spirit refers to life itself, to the life principle and above all to God as the source and giver of life.² With this in mind, the Holy Spirit must become the predominant force blowing wind and breathing life into every aspect of ministry both today and in the future. Ministries that rely solely upon the best of man's greatest scientific models (psychology, sociology, educational theory, counseling techniques, etc.) will not survive the 21st Century. Holy Spirit driven care is what brings total peace in the midst of chaos, whole health to the sick, unshakeable hope to the hopeless, and certainly new life to death. Do you see dead people walking anywhere? I certainly hope you see them, for they are everywhere. With the love and message of a Risen Savior, the sick become well and the walking dead come to life. I am referring to care that converts as opposed to care that merely enables people

² Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 109.

to cope. This difference is made possible through prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

“Prayer is the most powerful force in the universe. The results of scientific research into the medical benefits of prayer are so overpowering that physicians who don’t integrate prayer into their treatments appear almost liable to malpractice suits. As of 1998, there were eleven medical schools in the United States that offered specific courses on prayer and healing (One might be afraid to draw a comparison with divinity schools).”³

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ must be what guides pastoral care instead of traditions, theories, and trends. The Spirit of God is driving a ministry only when this is true.⁴ The church is called to be Jesus Christ focused not family owned and operated.⁵ For there to be a Spirit-driven ministry, there must first be Spirit driven leaders.⁶ If we are not driven and or controlled by the Spirit and the Word of God is not abundantly at home in us, then how can we expect our ministry purposes to be built upon God’s Word and driven by His Spirit?⁷ Spirit driven ministry starts with Spirit driven leaders who form Spirit driven purposes first for their lives and then for their ministries.⁸ Hillvue Heights Church incorporates the “Big Five” that keep you alive as implemented in the Acts 2 church. These consist of biblical teaching, fellowship, prayer, worship and service. When applied, Spirit driven ministry is fulfilled via connection, healing and development.

The secular world is saying in a loud voice, “We can take care of ourselves! We do not need God or the Church! We are in control! And if we are not, then we have to work harder to get in control. The problem is not lack of faith, but lack of competence.

³ Leonard Sweet, *11 Genetic Gateways to Spiritual Awakening* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 170.

⁴ Ben Brown, www.ifca.org/voice/00Sep-Oct

⁵ Dr. Stephen L. Ayers, (*Hillvue Heights Church, Bowling Green, Ky.*), Lake Junaluska, North Carolina Conference, March 31, 2001.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

We no longer need spiritual answers to practical questions.”⁹ This proves that now more than ever before, people are hungry and thirsty for something of which they often are unaware. Many have sought the world to ease their aches and pains. Why are they not aware? Because the “church” has been too busy being exclusive rather than being inclusive. “Reluctance to connect with people outside the church is just further evidence that the church culture in North America is a cultural phenomenon in America that is more about a particular religious culture than about Jesus or His mission.”¹⁰ Rather than merely speaking of Jesus Christ we must demonstrate the love and power of the name above all names. I do the Savior no favor by calling him “friend.” Jesus is the Master, Mentor and Maestro of my life. Jesus has too many friends, too many “believers.” Jesus does not have enough disciples.¹¹ What is so hard to understand about “Go ye therefore?” There is a tremendous contradiction between what the church conveys and what Jesus asks of us.

Often we hear about the cross. Perhaps we are too familiar with the term. But what was the cross after all? When we really understand the cross we shall see it means the breaking of the outward man.¹² Once we embrace the cross and realize the meaning behind this gift to every man, woman and child, how can one not be involved in a “Spirit Driven Ministry?” Via the operation of the cross, one learns to depend upon the cross as opposed to his or her memory. Furthermore, the cross itself is more than a doctrine. It must be put into practice and this is the core of Spirit-Driven Pastoral Care Ministry. Everything is at the foot of the cross. Death, sin and Satan are defeated! Instead of

⁹ Henri J.M. Nouwen. *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 1989), 19.

¹⁰ McNeal, 52.

¹¹ Leonard Sweet, *Learn to Dance the Soul Salsa*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) 10.

¹² Watchman Nee, *The Release of the Spirit*. (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 2000) 14.

striving to be on the winning team, by the covering of His blood, we are called to the team that has already won. Once ministry embraces this connection, healing and development will reach levels that only this faith and frame of mind can facilitate via the Holy Spirit. I'm writing and speaking of a gift that surpasses all gifts. Yet, the very giver of life is often minimized to our mere expectations.

Many who live in darkness are not seeing the hand of God. While God is working, while God is breaking, they do not recognize it as being from Him. Another great hindrance to the work of breaking the outer man is self-love. As He deals with us in response to our prayer, we should worship and say, "O Lord, if this be Thy hand, let me accept it from my heart."¹³ According to Watchman Nee, "Let us remember that one reason for all misunderstanding, all fretfulness, all discontent, is that we secretly love ourselves. Thus we plan a way whereby we can deliver ourselves. Many times problems arise due to our seeking a way of escape – an escape of working at the cross."¹⁴ In order for the Holy Spirit to fully work in and through us, we must remove ourselves and ask Jesus to lead, guide and direct us in ways that are often uncomfortable. We should never be afraid to reach out to people who are living in sin. God's message when delivered with authenticity can change anyone. In other words, it will not be the individual speaking, but the Spirit of the Father speaking through them. In Spirit Driven care this is nonnegotiable. We must allow our Spirit to be released. In doing so, Spirit must touch Spirit. Only when this is released can lives be changed by the healing presence of the Holy Spirit.

¹³ Ibid, 16.

¹⁴ Ibid, 16.

Once we desire to work effectively, we must realize that basically “it is Spirit which quickens.”¹⁵ When the Spirit is released, sinners may be born anew and saints may be established. When life is communicated through the channel of the Spirit, those who receive it are born anew. When life is supplied through the Spirit to believers, it results in their being established. Without the Spirit, there can be no new birth and no establishment.¹⁶ “Oh Beloved, when our spirit is truly released, souls will surely be saved.”¹⁷

Once Pastoral Care is Holy Spirit Driven, brokenness can shift to blessings. Spirit driven care brings a person from wallowing in the crisis to allowing Jesus Christ to embrace them. Far too often, the enemy is given ground by convincing individuals that no one has ever experienced what they are experiencing. During this time it is critical to meet people where they are and not merely tell them to call if they need something. Spirit driven care makes the call! Can this be only one person? Hardly! It involves empowering others to serve in the name of Jesus. “The gifts, talents, passions of a congregation hold great clues to the plans and purposes God has for the group. I am convinced many churches forego their best contribution to people’s lives and to the community by trying to be everything (or by trying to be someone else’s idea of church for them) rather than being who God made them to be.”¹⁸ Spirit driven ministry involves others who are called according to Jesus’ purpose.

¹⁵ Ibid, 19.

¹⁶ Ibid, 20.

¹⁷ Ibid, 55.

¹⁸ McNeal, 115.

Pastoral Care and the Biblical Witness (Biblical Model)

Not only was Paul concerned for the corporate health of the churches in his care, but he was also concerned about the well-being of individuals. People mattered to Paul: hence in Romans 16 he sends a greeting to over twenty-seven people mentioning them by name. In 1 Thessalonians 2:11 Paul declared: “We dealt with each of you like a father and his children,” implying that he had concerned himself with his converts on an individual basis. Furthermore, Paul commended pastoral care to the Thessalonians: their mutual care for one another was to take place on an individual basis (1 Thessalonians 5:11).¹⁹

Paul also encouraged his converts in general to be involved in pastoral care. Likening the church to a body, he spoke of the members having “the same care for another” (1 Corinthians 12:25), so that “if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26, Romans 12:15) Paul urged the Galatians to “bear one another’s burdens,” which in turn involved caring for those straying from the faith, restoring the backsliders. (Galatians 6:1-2) The Thessalonians were to “encourage one another and build up each other.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Indeed, Paul expected the Thessalonians to share in every aspect of pastoral care; “admonish the idlers, encourage the faith-hearted, help the weak.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Similarly, the Colossians were “to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.” (Colossians 3:16) As can be seen, there is a biblical mandate that builds a case for pastoral care being delegated to the entire community and not just those who are the paid professionals. One of the most vivid ways we can administer care in the Body of Christ is during times of grief.

¹⁹ All scriptures used are from the NIV.

The Bible gives memorable images of grief, from Job sitting in ashes to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, rejected even as He bears the grief of others. The English word “grief” translates several Hebrew and Greek words and today refers primarily to mental suffering. But in scriptural usage, it encompasses both physical and emotional pain, in keeping with the Hebrew idea of human being’s essential unity. Grief may come in response to sorrow over personal (Psalms 51:1-4) or corporate sin as a reaction to individual (Psalms 35:45) sin or group (Job 30:25) suffering. It has both dramatic internal and external expressions. Vivid biblical pictures of men and women overtaken by grief reveal its nature and poignancy.²⁰

In grief Job rends his mantle and shaves his head on hearing that all his sons and daughters are dead. (Job 1:20) He sits down among the ashes, his body afflicted with sores. His friends find him almost unrecognizable, and in sympathy they also rend their mantles and sprinkle dust on their heads. (Job 2:12) David reveals his grief in words and action. He tells how it takes over his life: “My eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.” (Psalms 31:9)²¹

According to Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., grief is an emotional suffering caused by death or another form of bereavement. Grief involves a sequence of thoughts and feelings that follow the loss and accompany mourning. Grief is a process and as a result, it is not a specific emotion like fear or sadness, but indeed is a constellation of a variety of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Grief is the internal meaning given to the external

²⁰ Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman, 351.

²¹ Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman, 352.

event.²² According to Webster, grief is defined as mental pain on account of present or past trouble; that which causes sorrow or sadness.

The church can be a tremendous resource for those who are grieving. In light of my own journey, I know this experientially. My own experiences with loss and how the presence of Holy Spirit empowered the lives of faithful followers of Jesus to minister to me are perhaps the most definitive reasons I am so passionate about pastoral care.

Personal Journey

The phone rang at 4:00 a.m. on May 8, 1991. It was my youngest sister sharing in a sad voice, “Mark, Daddy is in the hospital.” Arriving at the hospital at 6:00 a.m., I saw my mother’s face full of anguish and worry. I had never seen her this way. I hugged her and for the first time in my life, our roles now reversed. I was to be strong for her and take care of her during this time. When I asked to see Daddy, Mom replied, “Don’t stay too long. He needs his strength.”

Upon entering Daddy’s room, I was startled by his frail appearance – so much deterioration in five days! He smiled upon seeing me and replied, “You’re missing work. How long are you going to be here?” I replied, “Daddy, as long as you need me, work can and will wait.” In the next few hours, his physical health deteriorated much faster than anyone could have imagined. I watched his steel blue eyes turn gray. He was dying right before our eyes. That evening, the entire family entered the Intensive Care Unit encircling Daddy’s bed. Looking at him, I was in disbelief. How could that have happened?

²² Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., *Death and Grief / A Guide for Clergy*. (Muncie: Accelerated Development Inc., Publishers, 1988), 1.

I said to him, “Daddy, can you hear me?” He looked right at me and nodded his head up and down. I proceeded to tell him, “Daddy, I pray that I will be the father you have been to us when I have children and the kind of husband you’ve been to our beloved mother – Oh how I love you!” He raised his head and attempted to talk but couldn’t. I replied, “Daddy, its okay.” My youngest sister replied, “Daddy, you’re going to a beautiful place.” He raised his hands and passed from this world. Without hesitation, I asked everyone to hold hands, and I prayed as Daddy’s spirit was entering Heaven – thanking God for this man who nurtured and loved us while embracing his role as a godly husband and father.

Never could I have imagined the grief that accompanies the death of a parent, my father, always so strong both physically and spiritually. I simply could not imagine not spending time with him taking rides in the truck, walking on the farm, sharing chips with him, and simply talking with one another. My father had been one of my best friends. Our time together had seemed all too short. I had attempted to appreciate him and to tell him how much I loved him, but the sad thing is we never appreciate people until they are gone.

The time had come for me to be strong for our beloved Mama. She and my dad had been married for fifty-one years and worked together every day at the family owned business. She continued to operate the business, learning to do the things Dad always did. Her attitude was inspirational. She wanted us to know that she would be all right even while grieving every morning, afternoon, and evening for her beloved Graham. I noticed a difference in Mama. She was aging. This was troublesome to me as I constantly

worried about her living alone. She continued to live each day by relying on Jesus to strengthen her in ways that only He can. What an inspiration she was and continues to be.

On March 19, 1993, at 6:30 a.m., the phone rang and it was Mama. She was calling to see how many pups my dog Porsha had. I replied, “She’s had two and still in labor, let me call you back.” Mama replied, “Don’t call me back after each one’s born like you usually do. Call me tonight at Mary Ella’s, I’ll be spending the weekend there shopping.” I responded, “I love you, Mama, be careful and have a great time. I’ll call you tonight.” She replied, “Mark, I love you, too. You have always been such a blessing to my life.” Little did I know that this would be the last time I spoke to her here on earth. Had I known this was the last time, I would have talked for hours, days, weeks, and months. However, I said everything to her by telling her that I loved her.

Each time I’m called to preach a funeral, I ask the following question. “If you were going to die and could make one phone call, who would you call, what would you say, and why haven’t you don’t that already?” Each day is a gift. To those who are dear to you, speak your love for them, and speak it once again! If you’re holding a grudge against someone, send a card, make that phone call or surprise visit. Life is too short to allow bitterness to take up valuable space in your heart.

That same day the phone rang again at 2:30 p.m. When I answered, my niece replied, “Uncle Mark, are you alone?” I responded, “What’s wrong with Mama?” I knew that something was wrong by the tone of her voice. It was then that I heard she had been in a wreck and was being flown to the University of Kentucky Medical Center. I was frantic and experiencing emotional upheaval – my worst fear was coming to fruition. Mama was now going to die! Two friends drove me to Lexington, and all the while I

prayed to God to please sustain her life. When we entered Elizabethtown, something came over me – I knew that Mama had died. I began to cry, oh so deeply. It was later that I realized that this was the time she had actually departed this world and entered Heaven. I was selfish, not wanting to let go of the people God had enabled me to have.

Goodbyes are as much a part of life as the seasons of the year. The word “goodbye” – originally “God-be-with-ye” or “Go-with-God” – was a recognition that God was a significant part of the going. When we dread or fear the journey there is strength in remembering that the One who gave and cherished life will be there to protect and console.²³

We all need to learn how to say goodbye. I was not willing to do this until I realized that it wasn’t “goodbye” but rather “see you later.” The God of strength, courage, comfort, hope, and love has been and continues to be with me.²⁴

The rain to the wind said,
“You push and I’ll pelt.”
They so smote the garden bed
That the flowers actually knelt,
And lay lodged – though not dead.
I know how the flowers felt.²⁵

Having experienced deep significant goodbyes, I “know how the flowers felt.” This occurs when life pelts you with sorrow and overwhelming emptiness, loneliness, confusion, and sadness. During these times one feels bent over, crushed, like the flowers that “lay lodged – though not dead.”

²³ Joyce Rupp, *Praying Our Goodbyes* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1988), 17.

²⁴ Ibid, 31.

²⁵ Ibid, 31.

Upon discovering the circumstances revolving around Mama's accident, I became angry! How could someone drag-race on a public highway on their lunch hour, hit someone head on, and leave the scene of the accident? Unlike Daddy's death, Mama was alone and didn't know anyone who was tending to her. Why, where, when, and who were the questions that poured out of me during this time of crisis and sorrow – unbearable grief! I can say without a doubt that grief can most definitely be counted among the great deepening experiences of life. I have now discovered that when embraced, grief is a great teacher. Little did I know that I was embarking on the stages of grief – the normal process through which most go when they face loss.

The Journey Continued (Healing)

For the first time in three years, I prayed myself to sleep one night as I asked Jesus to please help me. The following day while on my lunch break, a coworker said, "Mark, someone named Nancy has been here to see you twice." I asked what she looked like, and for the life of me, I could not place who she was. Moments later, the mystery lady named Nancy appeared. When my eyes saw her, I began to weep. Nancy was my Sunday School teacher in 6th grade at the First United Methodist Church in Russell Springs, Kentucky.

I asked, "Nancy, what are you doing here?"

Her response sent chills through my bones, as this was affirmation of an answered prayer, the very one I had lifted to the Lord the night before. "God has asked me to come see you today," she said.

The following Sunday I attended Hillvue Heights Church. I couldn't believe the number of people standing in line to enter the chapel.

I asked Nancy, "Is it like this every Sunday?"

She replied, "Four services each and every Sunday."

As we entered the chapel, people were warm and friendly. I felt great. As the praise and worship began with a song entitled, "Welcome Holy Spirit," I began to cry and didn't stop throughout the entire worship experience. I knew that I had been in the presence of God via praise and worship and the message by Dr. Steve Ayers.

Following the service, Nancy asked, "What did you think about it?"

I replied, "I can't wait to come back!" From that moment, healing took on a new dimension in my life that continues today. Pastoral Care University was birthed in my life through the miraculous healing God did in me. Little did I know that those God-touches would become the catalyst for care to literally thousands of people.

Pastoral Care and Leadership

One of the major reasons for the neglect of biblical and spiritual driven care is the lack of leadership. According to Webster, "leadership is defined as the position or guidance of a leader; the ability to lead; the leaders of a group."²⁶ According to John Maxwell,

Leadership is leadership, no matter where you go or what you do. Times, technology and cultures continue progressing. But the true principles of leadership are constant. Whether you're looking at the citizens of ancient Greece, the Hebrews in the Old Testament, the armies of the last two hundred years, the rulers of modern Europe, the pastors in local churches,

²⁶ Michael Agnes, *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1988), 814.

or the businesspeople of today's global economy, leadership principles stand the test of time. They are irrefutable.²⁷

Reggie McNeal has written that the institutionalization of the church has overridden the primary spiritual mission of the church. "That's the church's mission: to join God in His redemptive efforts to save the world. People all around us are in darkness. They are going to die unless someone finds a way to save them."²⁸ I have found in my ministry experience and through study of the church, that he is quite accurate in his assertion. We have come to agree more with the methodology of how to do church and have asked less the question of what the church means inside the context of the world.

The Bible is a book built on human experience, and the experiences of leading and following form part of the fabric of our existence. The Bible does not sketch out a theory of leadership, but it comments on leadership (both good and bad) with implication more so than by direct comment.

How could anyone speak about Christian leadership without mentioning Jesus Christ? His life, His crucifixion and His resurrection?²⁹ The only answer is: He has been with everyone during his or her life. However, we often don't rely upon His comfort during times of sorrow. Leadership is influence – nothing more; nothing less. A leadership proverb – He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk. Leadership is the ability to obtain followers.³⁰ Who has done this more or better than Jesus Christ? Former President Ronald Reagan made this observation about

²⁷ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), XX.

²⁸ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 19.

²⁹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Double Day Publisher, 1972), 71.

³⁰ John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You*.(Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1993), 1.

leadership: “The best leader is not the one who does the greatest things. It’s the one that gets others to do the greatest things.”³¹

Following graduation from Western Kentucky University, I began a 12-year career as a speech and language pathologist. I was thoroughly trained to work with various clients who had a variety of communication disorders. I began to learn more and more about leadership as I assumed one leadership position after another throughout this span of time. Along with other rehabilitation specialists, we utilized an interdisciplinary team approach that brought all of our gifts together so we might better assess and meet the rehabilitation goals of our clients. Consequently, many life-changing experiences were learned within this context. To quote Daniel Webster, “If everything were taken from me with the exception of one, I would choose to keep the power of communication for by this, I would soon regain all the rest.”³² In leadership, communication is of utmost importance. What better form of communication is there than encouragement and celebration when founded on love? In the emerging culture, people are hungry and thirsty for a love that is authentic – one that can only be afforded by the love of Jesus in and through His people.

In order to reach the emerging culture, it will take multidisciplinary teams pouring their collective gifts into their churches and communities in order to reach those for whom Christ took death on a cross. According to Margaret Wheatley, “we survive only as we learn how to participate in a web of relationships.”³³ I would go a step further in this and say that with the love of Christ, we are equipped to do just that. During this

³¹ Ronald Reagan Library.

³² Daniel Webster, <http://www3.utsouthwestern.edu/parkland/pmr/speech.html>, Accessed December 10, 2004

³³ Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler Publishers, 1999), 20.

doctoral pathway, the multidisciplinary team approach has been further defined as I have embarked on this journey.

In Margaret J. Wheatley's book *Leadership and the New Science*, written from a quantum physical field perspective, she states:

I find pleasure in letting these new ideas swirl freely inside me. Like clouds, they begin as mist, then take form, then dissipate. Clouds themselves are self-organizing, taking new shape as thunderstorms, hurricanes, or rain fronts depending on changes in their environment. We are capable of similar transformations; new ideas can emerge as powerful insights if we allow them the freedom to self-organize. And there is much we can learn from clouds. They are spectacular examples of fluid and responsive systems, structured in ways we never imagined possible: "After all, how do you hold a hundred tons of water in the air with no visible means of support? You build a cloud" (Cole 1985, 38).³⁴

This wonderful metaphor resonates with me because it conveys the timeless truth found in Hebrews where the writer exclaims that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.

The Epic Story of Loving Others

Using Wheatley's metaphor, building a cloud (team) of servants to meet the needs of others in a Spirit-Driven Care Model has been and continues to be the premise of Pastoral Care University. Clouds are also a great metaphor of the trials, tribulations, and celebrations that are part of the ebb and flow of humanity. For example, thunderstorm clouds with their darkness reflect crisis, while white, billowy clouds reflect calmness and peace. According to Thoreau, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not to be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."³⁵

³⁴ Margaret Wheatley, 90.

³⁵ www.built2towin.com, Accessed September 5, 2005.

Brennan Manning writes, “To be alive is to be broken, and to be broken is to stand in need of grace.”³⁶ It is only through grace that any of us could dare to hope and in doing so we can become more like Jesus Christ. In regard to Spirit-Driven Care and Manning’s writings, one cannot help but think that in our own meager attempts to administer care to others, whether we express care or not, does not change how God demonstrates his love for us. For example, even though the Good Samaritan was considered a heretic and unqualified to serve in a religious setting along with the Chief Priests and Sanhedrin, God still used him and this could easily be considered Spirit-Driven Care.

Obviously, we are not treating a trivial evangelical matter here. Compassionate love is the axis of the Christian moral revolution. The only sign ever given by Jesus by which a disciple would be recognized. He said in John 13:34-35, ‘I give you a new commandment, love one another just as I have loved you. You also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, every one will know that you are my disciples.’³⁷

“The call of Jesus is this. Do you really accept the message that God is head over heels in love with you? I believe this question is at the core of our ability to mature and grow spiritually.”³⁸ As ministers, we must give an account of how we who are full of limited love, express the unlimited love of God through what we do. How does a minister become the gateway of that with the end result of it being Spirit-Driven Care for people? The answer is that evangelism should never be solely reduced to a telling ministry. It must also be a touching ministry. One of the best ways to illustrate the love of Jesus in a practical and accessible way is to demonstrate this through actions empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is the ministry of Spirit-Driven touches by Spirit-Driven people. It is a

³⁶ Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1990), 85.

³⁷ Ibid, 58.

³⁸ Ibid, 165.

ministry characterized more by heartfelt acts of compassion than by paying lip service to the gospel. McNeal typifies this kind of care when he writes:

Listen to the heart hopes of the people you lead. Ask them what they would like to see God do in their lives and in the lives of the church in the community. Hold conversations with people in the community. Ask them what they would like to see happen in the community, what they perceive to be the greatest needs in the area, and how a church might help.³⁹

Part of incarnating the gospel includes listening. In listening, we learn the heartbeat of those we serve and thus gain a new awareness about how we might reach them for the sake of the gospel. Apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we turn inward. The Holy Spirit moves us away from our self-absorption and gives us fresh ears for hearing what He might be saying to the church. McNeal is right when he says that, “The North American church is suffering from severe mission amnesia. It has forgotten why it exists. The church was created to be the people of God to join Him in His redemptive mission in the world.”⁴⁰ The greatest lesson of mission ministry is love.

³⁹ McNeal, 99.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 15.

Chapter 4

Thesis

At the inauguration of the church on the Day of Pentecost, care was presented as one of the characteristics of the New Testament Church. The church in 21st Century is no less responsible for such care. It is the biblical model and so needs to be driven by a care for people by the power of the Holy Spirit. The church of Jesus Christ must create invisible porches that are carried into the world so that people may experience the welcome of the Spirit, the teachings of Jesus, where they can be heard and hear truth, so they can meet the Master who reorganizes and transforms their lives. It all begins with the porch.

The biblical precedent for embracing the front porch as a model for congregational care is Solomon's Porch. Solomon's Porch was known as a colonnade on the east side of the Temple and was part of the court of Gentiles which means that it was a place accessible to all people. It was space where both Jews and Gentiles could intermingle. Furthermore, it welcomed the pilgrim and the stranger. Solomon's porch is mentioned only three times in the New Testament but on each occasion, something significant happened. In John 10:22-30, it is a place where Jesus teaches. In Acts 3 and 5, it is a place where the Apostles of Jesus perform life-giving miracles. In essence, Solomon's porch is a place where life is imparted and brokenness is mended. The teachings of Jesus were found in the physical surrounds of where different types of people were brought together. In considering and structuring the social content of the church community, one of the variables of consideration is what type of people our church's programming and structuring bring together.

Another precedent for embracing the front porch as a model for how the church demonstrates compassion is that it has been a part of both ancient and modern architecture. And as it is often the case, a civilization's architecture speaks volumes about its socio-cultural milieu. This is certainly the case when observing American civilization.

"Porches are as synonymous with American culture as apple pie.... Ironically, the very social and technological forces that made them both popular and possible were eventually responsible for their decline."¹ "Nobody thought much about the front porch when most Americans had them and used them. The great American front porch was just there, open and sociable, an unassigned part of the house that belonged to everyone and no one, a place for family and friends to pass the time."² The church, much like the porch, was designed and built for the people. It belonged to no one, but everyone was welcome.

When the church loses its vision and sense of mission, it fades, much like the front porch has in many parts of American architecture. Those churches today that have lost their vision and mission are those without a viable front porch. When a church loses the front porch is when the embalming process begins. Many churches have sought to embalm in order to preserve their traditions of not welcoming all people. In all reality, this is a notable sign of death.

The foundation of the porch in every church should be the cross. The stability of the porch is directly correlated to the pastoral and lay leadership of the church. The time is right for the church that Jesus Christ lived, was crucified and resurrected for, to reclaim

¹ Kahn, Preserving Porches as quoted on http://xroads.Virginia.edu/~CLASS/am483_97/projects/cook/first.htm, Accessed December 31, 2004.

² Rochlin, The Front Porch, in "Home, Sweet Home" as quoted on http://xroads.Virginia.edu/~CLASS/am483_97/projects/cook/first.htm, Accessed December 31, 2004.

that which it was designed and built for – the people, God’s people. Joseph R. Myers asked, “Where have the front porches gone? How can we spot them? How can we develop them in our congregations, in our human relationships, and with God?”³ A few months ago I did the weekly devotion with our staff and focused on the metaphor of the porch. I asked each of them to create an imaginary porch outside the door of their office – several shared with me later the difference the metaphor made to them. The foundations of the porches are still here, there and everywhere. It’s up to us to refurbish them by welcoming and loving people.

The porch is as authentic as the people on it. We become authentic by listening to ourselves in a way we never have before.

Begin to overhear yourself avoiding the topic, changing the subject, holding back, telling little lies (and big ones), being imprecise in your language, being uninteresting even to yourself. And at least once *today*, when something inside you says, ‘This is an opportunity to be fierce,’ stop for a moment, take a deep breath, then come out from behind yourself into the conversation and make it real.⁴

Myers asks these questions, “How do we invite strangers into the family? How can we help with the experience of belonging? How do we develop healthy community? I believe somewhere in the median spaces – somewhere on the front porch.”⁵ The front porch creates a sense of family, in that it allows each person to belong. Family starts with the identification; I can belong. I belong to this particular father and mother, or I belong to this particular group of people. It is important that the church create a sense and an identity of what it means to belong to Jesus. The church of the 20th Century has

³ Myers, Joseph R. *The Search to Belong* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 121.

⁴ Scott, Susan, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2002), 11.

⁵ Ibid., 126.

stressed an individualistic belonging to Jesus. We in the 21st Century must stress that we the people belong to Jesus.

“The tragedy of Christian ministry is that many who are in great need, many who seek an attentive ear, a word of support, a tender smile, often find their ministers distant men who do not want to burn their fingers.”⁶ This can occur when one tries to be everything to everyone and, in return, is close to no one. It takes a community of believers to fully integrate the front porch. Not one person can do this alone.

The decline of the front porch is mirrored in the decline of the care model within the church. The foundation of the front porch is conversation where people’s lives are transformed. One cannot be motivated to the porch but rather must be invited to be part of a community founded in the love of Jesus Christ. People long to be invited. We would never motivate someone to come to a party – they would more likely respond to an invitation. This rings true with community building leading to a full and abundant life.

“Tony the Beat Poet says the words alone, lonely, and loneliness are three of the most powerful words in the English language. Those words say that we are human; they are like the words hunger and thirst. But they are not words about the body, they are words about the soul.”⁷ When fully embraced, “the porch” feeds the hunger and quenches the thirst by the power of loving in the name of Jesus. According to Donald Miller, “If loving other people is a bit of heaven then certainly isolation is a bit of hell, and to that degree, here on earth, we decide in which state we would like to live.”⁸ Furthermore, we have a message that lives inside of us that brings hope to everyone with whom we come in contact. Our spiritual porches can only be as big as our hearts are. “Like the human

⁶ Nouwen, Henri J.M., *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 71.

⁷ Miller, Donald, *Blue Like Jazz*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 2003), 152.

⁸ Ibid, 173.

heart muscle that pumps blood to enliven the limbs and organs, the spiritual heart nourishes beliefs and behavior. What you give your heart to reveals more of who you are than what you profess to believe and practice.”⁹

The Meaning of the Porch

According to Webster, a porch is “a covered entrance to a building, usually projecting from the wall and having a separate roof... an open or enclosed gallery or room on the outside of a building... a portico.”¹⁰ When the word “porch” comes to my mind, I have a splendid visual of the side and front porch of my childhood home where people throughout the neighborhood gathered for conversation, observed croquet, cheered during Red Rover, Red Rover and gathered lightning bugs during summer months. I fondly remember sharing Frito corn chips, pimento cheese sandwiches, Little Debbie cakes and Cokes with my friends on the porch. Milk was delivered by “Borden Dairy” to the front porch each and every week. The daily paper landed on the front porch every morning by way of a swift arm and a keen eye from the window of a car. The front porch is where applause was lifted as I learned to ride my gold bike with the cream banana seat in the front yard without training wheels. It was the porch where my first dog Lady returned after being shot by a local farmer. She knew the porch was a safe place. According to Donald Miller, “Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself. It is as if they are showing you the way.”¹¹ I, too, returned to the porch many times following bicycle wrecks where scrapes and bruises were soothed by the loving hands of my beloved mother. The side porch or breeze way was an

⁹ Laird, Rebecca & Christensen, Michael J., *The Heart of Henri Nouwen* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 11-12.

¹⁰ Webster, *New World College Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan General Reference, 1999), 1120-1121.

¹¹ Miller, p. IX.

without fail, regardless of the temperature and/or season, people are drawn to the porch for conversation, prayer, and celebration. It is a place of comfort and healing because of the Lord we serve. We hear countless times throughout the year that once a person enters our home, they experience a peace that transcends their understanding.

Not long ago, a couple of musicians who visited our church stopped by the house for a time of fellowship. Spontaneously, one began playing a banjo, and the other a guitar. They began playing hymns that I well remember singing in the First United Methodist Church in Russell Springs, Kentucky. Without reserve, everyone in the home came from the kitchen, dining room, family room, living room, and began singing in unison in this worshipful moment. I shared with our brothers and sisters in Christ of my certainty concerning the early life of this home built in 1923, that those who passed on before us inhabited this home while lifting praises to the Lord from that porch.

At the conclusion of every pastoral care gathering in our home the last Tuesday of every month, we close with prayer and communion. “Nothing is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope. ‘In community we say: Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs – but we do not have to live it alone. We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate the truth that the wounds of our individual lives, which seem intolerable when lived alone, become sources of healing when we live them as part of fellowship of mutual care.’”¹³ This teaching leads to healing. These times of fellowship are healing via the awesome presence of Jesus. How beautiful. How true.

¹³ Nouwen, Henri J.M., *Can You Drink From This Cup?* (Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001), 57.

“It is essential in our culture for churches to provide a space that develops front porch experiences. Both the architecture of our buildings and the framework of our programs can provide these spaces. Offering opportunities where people can connect and grow socially helps provide this experience. Many congregations offer these kinds of ‘get togethers.’ However, most of them have some sort of relational string attached to them.”¹⁴

The primary technological change that spurred the developing abandonment of the front porch was the proliferation of the American automobile. The growing numbers of automobiles in America, its expansional use by different classes, and its growing use as a means of transportation flooded the American streets and roadways with cars. As a result, the front porch was no longer an idyllic setting where one could relax and commune with nature, for the exhaust fumes and the noise of a steady stream of cars and trucks had rendered it inhospitable and unhealthy. As a result, the automobile-dependent suburbs did not feature front porches, due to the omnipresence of the automobile. Thus, as technology has helped to develop the front porch, by the mid-20th Century it was leading to its decline. By the 1960s, the front porch had disappeared in the new architectural forms and houses sweeping the country.”¹⁵

While an architectural shift affected the porch in homes, a spiritual shift occurred, dismantling the porch of the church that welcomed, loved, and celebrated with people. The Acts 2 church had an “open porch” feel that led to a community that to this day is still referred to as one of health, healing, and promise.

Whereas porches used to welcome everyone and churches were called to welcome everyone, the steps were removed, obstructing entrance to all people unless they were all alike; not embracing unity in diversity. Nouwen states, “Both self rejection and arrogance pull us out of the common reality of existence and make a gentle community of

¹⁴ McNeal, Reggie, *The Search to Belong* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 132.

¹⁵ http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CLASS/am483_97/projects/cook/decline.htm.

people extremely difficult, if not impossible to attain.¹⁶ According to Gottman, “contempt is closely related to disgust, and what disgust and contempt are about is completely rejecting and excluding someone from the community.”¹⁷ “Self rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the scared voice that calls us the ‘Beloved.’ Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.”¹⁸ The porch of many churches, instead of being an arena of welcoming, loving, and encouraging, was replaced with a tollbooth. And so it goes, “If you can’t afford it, you’re not welcome. If you don’t look like us, you’re not welcome. If you don’t dress like us, you’re not welcome. If you’re divorced, you’re not welcome. If you’re an addict, you’re not welcome. If you don’t smell like us, you’re not welcome. If you don’t live where we live, you’re not welcome. If you don’t work where we work, you’re not welcome. If you don’t sing songs like we sing them, you’re not welcome.” The porch became a place of denial instead of a place of acceptance. This is the price we pay for many of the benefits of the locked door.¹⁹ I’m not sure we always respect the mysteries of the locked door and the dangers.²⁰ According to Wendy Levinson, “the surgeons who had never been sued spent more than three minutes longer with each patient than those who had been sued did (18.3 minutes versus 15 minutes).²¹ I’m certain that the more time we spend welcoming and loving people the church as whole will be healthier. After all the patients who received 3.3 minutes longer with their physicians experienced a “front porch” moment. According to Donald Miller, “Nothing is going to change in the Congo until you and I

¹⁶ Nouwen, Henri, J.M. *The Life of the Beloved*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 28.

¹⁷ Gladwell, Malcolm, *Blink* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 33.

¹⁸ Nouwen, Henri J.M., *Life of the Beloved*, 28.

¹⁹ Gladwell, 70.

²⁰ Ibid, 71.

²¹ Ibid, 41.

figure out what is wrong with the person in the mirror.”²² The famed architect Mies van der Rohe made famous the wise expression “God is in the detail.”²³ The detail of loving and welcoming people. A detail? YES! Why are the details not tended to? The truth of the matter is this...we can all make a difference. Let it begin with you. Let it begin with me. This is indicative of many churches – nothing is going to change until they look in the mirror. Why do we succumb to not welcoming and engaging people? We have forgotten about the porch. “I believe that the greatest trick of the devil is not to get us into some sort of evil, but rather have us wasting time.”²⁴ How many churches wasted time by not caring for the porch, and thus losing touch with people?

According to Leonard Sweet, “The Psalmist hints that God can smell a proud person from a long ways away: The proud he knows from afar.” (Ps. 138:6) Isaiah says explicitly that there is a stench or a stink to a proud person.²⁵ The dust is pride and arrogance on the porch that needs to be swept away. Possibly, God’s distaste for the sin of pride and arrogance is that it dismisses to accept as Jesus accepts. Is it possible for different spirits to have different odors? Can’t you smell in someone the aroma of arrogance and pride? What about the aroma of humility and obedience”? People can sense whether they are welcome. People can sense if they’re accepted. People can sense love. Senses will either be a community builder or vice versa.

In 1873, a Belgian Catholic priest named Joseph Damien De Veuster was sent to minister to lepers on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. He arrived in high spirits, hoping to build a friendship with each of the lepers. People shunned him, however, at every turn. He built a chapel, began worship services, poured his heart out to the lepers, but all seemed futile. No one responded to his ministry and after twelve years of struggling, Father

²² Miller, 23.

²³ Schuller Robert H., *Don't Throw Away Tomorrow* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005), 42.

²⁴ Miller, p. 13.

²⁵ Sweet, Dr. Leonard, *Soul Café* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 1198, 118.

Damien decided to leave. As he stood in dejection on the dock waiting to board the ship, he looked down at the hands he was wringing and noticed some mysterious white spots on them. Feeling some numbness, he knew immediately what was happening – he had contracted leprosy!

Father Damien returned to the leper colony and to his work. Word spread quickly and within hours, hundreds gathered outside his hut, fully identifying with his plight. A bigger surprise came the following Sunday. When he arrived at the chapel, he found it full! Father Damien began to preach from the empathy of love rather than the distance of theology and ideas, and his ministry became enormously successful.

Those who receive your love today will be much more interested in hearing about your faith tomorrow.”²⁶

Once, Father Damien began to minister from the chambers of his heart (the front porch) was opened and thus, the multitudes came to hear the good news that the message of Jesus Christ has to offer. How many have been touched? Jesus in heaven only knows. One thing is for certain, each and every heart that was touched lives!

All passions are powerfully important, and all passions will be shaped, one way or another, by values.²⁷ Values will certainly shape “the porch” as well. Communication is certainly a value that enhances or erodes the porch. According to Robert H. Schuller, “Communication is made up of four elements: substance, style, strategy, and spirit. Spirit may contradict or compliment, but it certainly overrides substance, style or strategy.”²⁸ A spirit driven porch will override substance, style and strategy as well! A neat porch without a welcoming experience will never embrace God’s people.

According to Jack Hayford, “we are blinded by pain; glare; monotony; theory and darkness.”²⁹ These are some of the very destructive elements that have led to the dismantling of the “front porch” to churches. Additionally, Hayford conveyed, “vision is

²⁶ _____, *God’s Little Devotional Book* (Tulsa: Honor Books, Inc., 1995), 49.

²⁷ Schuller, 59.

²⁸ Ibid, 143.

²⁹ Schuller, Robert H., Institute for Successful Leadership conference, January 2005.

worth retaining, and we must learn that which obstructs our vision.”³⁰ Opposition to diversity definitely obstructs vision. According to Robert H. Schuller, “History is always shaped by one person with a vision.”³¹

According to Dr. Leonard Sweet, “there are thresholds leaders need to help people cross and venture beyond. When crossing one of these thresholds, we quote these words spoken by the one who holds the keys to life and death: ‘See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.’ The door is open. The tomb is empty. The stone has been rolled away.”³²

This is a great metaphor, one that should resonate with every believer in Christ as they welcome people. This answers what kind of porch Jesus built when He hung on the cross for us. I wonder if there’s a porch outside the gates of heaven. One could well imagine that there would be porches in heaven. Heaven is one big porch of welcoming, one expansive porch filled with love, hope, peace, joy, faith, and acceptance.

According to Dr. Stephen L. Ayers, “Acts 2 is the chemical code that makes the church what it is; fall in love with Jesus and love what He loves, the church is a living organism...” Pentecost initiates the spiritual construction of the porch.³³ The first DNA/construction strand of the porch, without exception, is a welcome by the power of the Holy Spirit. The second strand is love, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The third strand is listening by the power of the Holy Spirit. The fourth strand is celebrating, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The fifth strand is empowering others, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Schuller, 25.

³² https://webct.georgefox.edu/LEC3MOD2/archives/misc/sweet_thresholds.htm, Accessed April 18, 2005.

³³ Ayers, Dr. Stephen L, “The Beginning DNA of the Church,” Conference handout, November 2000.

The following personal stories are direct reflections of the DNA/construction strands mentioned above. According to Donald Miller, “I know a little of why there is blood in my body, pumping life into my limbs and thought into my brain. I am wanted by God.”³⁴ This is so true for each and every person that we welcome and love in the name of Jesus. “Without exception, these DNA strands, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, radically change the lives of those who are welcomed and loved on the spiritual porch of the church. Miller also states, ‘We learn that we are loveable or unlovable from other people,’ Paul says, ‘That is why God tells us so many times to love each other.’”³⁵ “A smile is the beginning of peace.”³⁶ “As ministers, our greatest temptation is toward too many words.”³⁷ Open arms with eyes that listen speak volumes. Robert H. Schuller states; “I want to share the Good News that puts happy tears in the eye and fresh dreams in the spirit.”³⁸

According to the Strength Finders test offered by the Gallup organization, the following strengths emerged in the evaluation process: strong **Belief** theme, showcasing certain core values that are endearing; **Relator**, described as one’s attitude toward relationships; **Maximizer**, one with excellence not average as a measure; **Woo**, winning others over, meeting new people, and getting others to like you; **Communication**, explaining, describing, hosting, speaking in public, writing, and bringing images to ideas, examples, and metaphors. All these strengths have been and will continue to be energized in the continued definition and refining process of implementing Pastoral Care

³⁴ Miller, Donald, 100.

³⁵ Ibid, 147.

³⁶ Schuller, 140.

³⁷ Nouwen, Henri J.M. *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine Book, 1981), 48.

³⁸ Ibid, 141.

University.³⁹ These are crucial in the continued development of the “spiritual front porch.”

Too many porches are purpose driven as opposed to Spirit driven. Every element of ministry must encompass the Cross and Resurrection. The Bible is a series of face to face experiences with the living God. Often times one has a tendency to either listen to or run away from. Both of these result in meeting and being met by God. Are these a part of Spirit-driven care? Absolutely! Does Spirit-driven care, only occur within the walls of the church? Absolutely not! The following pastoral care journey that Jesus Christ enabled me to experience reflects Spirit-driven care.

“Emotional wellness is the reward when we live in the environment of an honorable moral conscience. We are optimistic. We welcome visitors. The sound of the doorbell gives us joy. We are excited when the telephone rings.”⁴⁰ What are the potential rewards? “A sign over the old tailors bench reads: “measure three times but cut only once.”⁴¹

The following acronym highlights the five elements that depict the flow of the porch.

P	Presence
O	Outreach
R	Relational
C	Community
H	Healing

³⁹ www.strengthfinder.com, Accessed May 30, 2003.

⁴⁰ Schuller, 96.

⁴¹ Ibid, 103.

All elements of the porch represent hydration for the dehydrated. Every living, breathing person longs for presence, outreach, relations, community, and healing. And, this is the result of the fact that God has "... set eternity in the hearts of men ..."⁴²

According to S. L. Parker, "At 211°, water is hot. At 212°, it boils. And with boiling water, comes steam. And with steam, you can power a train."⁴³ These five elements are the difference between the 211° porch and that of a 212° porch. The extra degree is the Holy Spirit, who alone has the power to truly transform and change a life. The porch, therefore, is not so much a place, but rather a presence. A presence that is Spirit-Driven.

Acronym of PORCH

Presence

Presence denotes the intentionality of the porch, which exists whether others embrace it or not. As the porch is a ministering agent during times of trial and crisis, the recipients of ministry are likely to eventually embrace the porch and become active participants of it. Rob Bell writes, "You rarely defend a trampoline. You invite people to jump on it with you... You rarely defend the things you love. You enjoy them and tell others about them and invite others to enjoy them with you."⁴⁴ Much like the porch.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God

⁴² Ecclesiastes 3:11.

⁴³ S. L. Parker, *212°: The Extra Degree* (Dallas: WALK THE TALK Company, 2005), 13-14.

⁴⁴ Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 27.

and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.⁴⁵

The Acts 2 church invited and celebrated others, and the Lord blessed them.

Mark Dever says Christians should live attractive lives when he writes,

“Christians also accomplish their mission by living attractive lives of caring for one another. The first Christians were rightly known for their regular fellowship of breaking bread together, living and sharing everything in common, giving to one another as each had need, and eating with ‘glad and sincere hearts.’”⁴⁶ Once again, from the establishment of the church, care was crucial to their mission.

Outreach

The outreach element of the porch is simply that – reaching out. We reach out by meeting people where they are and inviting them to be who Christ wants them to be. As Rob Bell writes,

I often meet people who are waiting to follow God until they have all their questions answered. They will be waiting for a long time, because if we knew everything, we’d be... God. ... So the invitation to jump is an invitation to follow Jesus with all of our doubts and questions right there with us.⁴⁷

The mandate that Christ gave the church in Matthew 28 was to “go.” This is the ideal that we take the porch to others. For example, on Monday, April 17, 2006, Hillvue Heights Church took food to the postal workers and stamps to those waiting in line at the local post office for tax day. After encountering this kindness and realizing that we were followers of Jesus, some requested prayer, which was reminiscent of Jesus’ saying, that when we had done this to the least of these, we had done it to Him. As several we met

⁴⁵ Acts 2:42-47, (all scriptures NIV).

⁴⁶ Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005), 137.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 28.

came to the post office with troubled hearts and dehydrated spirits, they left with more than a stamp. They left with the hope and the love of Christ.

On Christmas Day 2004 and 2005, Pastor Jamie Ward, several Pastoral Care University graduates, and I experienced the unique opportunity of sharing the love of Christ with a restaurant full of people. This began as we announced that we would pay for everyone's meal and shared a corporate prayer.

God inhabits the tiny seed, empowers the tiny deed. He cures the common life by giving no common life, by offering no common gifts. Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can. Don't discount the smallness of your deeds.⁴⁸

While people were eating, we ventured from table to table and communed with those sitting there. One gentleman in particular was on his way to Florida and shared that it was his first Christmas without his wife. With tears streaming down his cheeks, we were able to pray with him and remind him that God loved him. Others began bringing us money, asking us to bless others who would be coming in. "I'm convinced being generous is a better way to live."⁴⁹ We also had the privilege of praying with two ladies who shared that it was their first Christmas without their mother. Was such an unlikely place as Waffle House transformed into a porch? Absolutely! We were visible representatives of an invisible God.

Another example of outreach is the quarterly Single Mothers free Oil Change and Car Wash at Hillvue Heights Church. Pastor Jamie Ward, my colleague and brother in Christ, oversees and implements this much-needed and celebrated outreach ministry in the community of Bowling Green, Kentucky. To date, over 1,000 single moms have not

⁴⁸ Max Lucado, *Cure for the Common Life* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2005), 117.

⁴⁹ Bell, 20.

only received a much-needed oil change and car wash, but their children have been the recipients of free haircuts, clothing, and coupons for local restaurants. Some of the mothers during this outreach received new tires, brakes, and related car parts. Not only have they been spared from physical injury, but some have received eternal life as they experienced salvation in a parking lot that became a porch of welcoming, loving, and celebrating, thus continuing the mandate that God gave the church to, “defend the cause of the fatherless.”⁵⁰ Mere words cannot describe the faces of those mothers and children as they leave with smiles the size of a watermelon slice.

Another form of outreach is when food is taken to surgery waiting rooms at the local hospitals here in Bowling Green, Kentucky. I have discovered on more than one occasion that this act of kindness creates a porch where bread is broken, prayers are lifted, and therefore, hearts sing. Many families do not feel comfortable leaving the surgery waiting rooms, because the waiting room phone is their lifeline to their loved ones in surgery. Matthew 25:35 confirms this. “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

Relational

The relational element of the porch acknowledges that every person has significant meaning in the eyes of God. “The whole sweep of the history of redemption as recorded in scripture tells of God’s endeavors to obtain the salvation of individual human beings.”⁵¹ The relational element is hand-to-hand, feet-to-feet, ear-to-ear, and heart-to-heart. Many times, meeting a need opens the door for the relational. Care has a pulse of

⁵⁰ Deuteronomy 10:18.

⁵¹ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 137.

welcoming and meeting the needs of others via a tender ear, an open hand, and a willing heart. In care, we wisely use our power of choice.

Choose to love ... rather than hate.

Choose to laugh ... rather than cry.

Choose to create ... rather than destroy.

Choose to persevere ... rather than quit.

Choose to praise ... rather than gossip.

Choose to heal ... rather than wound.

Choose to give ... rather than steal.

Choose to act ... rather than procrastinate.

Choose to grow ... rather than rot.

Choose to pray ... rather than curse.

Choose to live ... rather than die.⁵²

“Religion that our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”(James 1:27)

Another biblical example comes from Jesus Himself in His encounter with the Samaritan woman.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our

⁵² Og Mandino, *The Greatest Miracle in the World*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 113.

father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”⁵³

According to Leonard Sweet, “And the absolute of love is a verb, not a noun: it’s a relationship.”⁵⁴ The woman at the well discovered that this relationship was unlike other relationships that had been a noun, not a verb. The well became a porch of redemption. The spiritual dehydration she arrived with was quenched as she departed hydrated via Jesus, the living water offered to the world, inclusion vs. exclusion.

Community

The community element of the porch ... is that it is a place for all people. The porch belongs to no one, but everyone is welcome. According to Lucado,

All ages are welcome. Both genders invited. No race excluded. Scoundrels. Scamps. Rascals and rubes. All welcome. You don’t have to be rich to drink, religious to drink, successful to drink; you simply need to follow the instructions on what – or better, *who* to drink. Him. In order for Jesus to do what water does, you must let Him penetrate your heart. Deep, deep inside.⁵⁵

The porch? A place for hydration, much like the encounter the Samaritan woman had at the well. Rivers of living water.

Nearly everyone, regardless of who they are or where they have been, have searched for community. The church of Jesus Christ should be the one place where community is exemplified in and through both visible and invisible porches. Bilezikian writes,

Our mourning is for the closeness that was ours by right of creation.
Our grief is for the gift lost in the turmoil of rebellion. And now,

⁵³ John 4:7-14.

⁵⁴ Leonard Sweet, George Fox University Web CT chat, February 8, 2006.

⁵⁵ Lucado, 14.

whenever there is hope, our hope is for paradise regained, for human destiny remade in the redemptive restoration of community, the only certainty of oneness for here and for eternity.⁵⁶

Stanley Grenz writes, “The community of love which the church is called to be is no ordinary reality ... our fellowship is nothing less than our common participation in the divine communion between the Father and the Son, mediated by the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁷

Furthermore, as written in *The Leadership Baton*, “if the church is at its core a closely knit community of love, a less than perfect community of forgiven sinners, what does this mean for leadership development? We need leaders who embody what the church is.”⁵⁸

Additionally, we need leaders who embody what a porch is, that leads directly into the church. Why settle for anything less than genuine community?

“Those who are in love with community, destroy community; those who love people, build community ... Jesus’ relationships with people and with culture were marked by tenderness, patience, and understanding.”⁵⁹

Healing

The healing element of the porch ... It is **unanimous**. All people are in need of some form of healing. Christians are called to be agents of the healing presence of Christ. Can the porch be a place of healing? Absolutely!

There is Healing for You Today:

- God’s eye is not hazy that it cannot see.
- God’s ear is not heavy that it cannot hear.
- God’s hand is not hampered that it cannot save.

⁵⁶ Bilezikian, 16.

⁵⁷ Stanley Grenz, *The Leadership Baton* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 90.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Leonard Sweet, *The Three Hardest Words* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 142, 163.

- God's heart is not hardened that it cannot heal.⁶⁰

Healing is an attribute of community, because it is an attribute of God. The Psalmist reminds us, "Heal me for I have sinned against you ... And healing all your diseases ... And He heals the broken-hearted."⁶¹

According to Leonard Sweet, "God did not redeem us intellectually but relationally. God comes to us through relationships."⁶²

God's plan for healing often comes by what has been referred to as "The Titus Touch." But God, who comforts, the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6). Who is this Titus who helps heal Paul of his depression? Titus was a gentile Christian of Greek origin who became Paul's trusted coworker. Furthermore, when trouble surfaced in the church in Corinth, Paul sends Titus who demonstrates his pastoral skills by resolving difficulties... We all need Tituses in our lives. We all need to be Tituses to others. Have people allowed you to "Titus Touch" them? Have you allowed people to "Titus Touch" you? The bottom line is, will we receive the "Titus Touch" from others – even from such unlikely sources as a child, coworker or enemy?⁶³

When Jesus sent out the Twelve, He gave specific instructions, part of which included "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."⁶⁴ The implication is that not only is God interested in our sin sickness, which results in salvation, but He is also interested in our having abundant life on earth. Healing and cleansing are integral to abundant life. This is why the porch is a healing agent.

⁶⁰ Leonard Sweet, *The Jesus Prescription for a Healthy Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 12.

⁶¹ Psalm 41:4, 103:3, 147:3.

⁶² Sweet, 33.

⁶³ Ibid, 43.

⁶⁴ Matthew 10:8.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”⁶⁵ That is why we as Christians are called to be couriers of compassion.

A story that encapsulates all five elements of the porch is as follows. My wife and I heard about a lady, from a friend at church, who lives in Jasper, Tennessee named Patricia who raises Standard Poodles. Following several conversations via the phone, she set a date and time for us to come and meet with her for an interview as prospective buyers for one of her puppies. The moment we met her, my heart became heavy, as I sensed pain, rejection, and disillusionment in and through her eyes. There was a vein of distrust that readily flowed through her that exemplified dehydration. However, she became a different person when she spoke about her dogs. She conveyed how much they meant to her, how much they had given to her. In other words, her love for them was unconditional. Unfortunately, the puppy we wanted to bring home, she could not part with.

As conversation would have it, she asked what we did vocationally. When I shared with her that I was a pastor, she was surprised and stated, “But, you are so nice.” Rob Bell writes, “I’m convinced having compassion is a better way to live.”⁶⁶ This caught me off-guard. It was foreign to her, because I was compassionate and sensed and thus felt her pain. “We must become aware of our tendency to draw circles. What do I mean? People tend to draw circles around people who are acceptable to them and exclude

⁶⁵ Matthew 5:4.

⁶⁶ Bell, 20.

people from their circles who are unacceptable. Having the mind of Christ means that our circles should exclude no one and include everyone.”⁶⁷

It was then that she began to share with me how mean “church people” had been to her. It was then that the door opened to share biblical truth with her. I asked her, “Patricia, have you ever asked Jesus into your heart?” She was very uncomfortable and replied, “No.” At that moment, she cried. Tina and I knelt with Patricia as she confessed her sin and asked Christ to enter her life. She had experienced salvation, a guaranteed form of healing, cleansing, renewal, and hydration at its maximum. How beautiful!

As we departed, I shared with her, “You know, this had more to do than us just talking about a puppy.” Since that time, we have remained in contact with Patricia, and have purchased not one, not two, but three Standard Poodles from our friend and sister in Christ.

⁶⁷ Tommy Barnett, *Multiplication*, (Lake Mary, Florida: Creation House, 1997), 145.

Chapter 5

The Project – Pastoral Care University Website

My primary task in ministry is devoted to creating a community of caregivers in the life of the church. There is a tremendous need within the Body of Christ for those who can competently administer care in its various forms. Obviously, this cannot be the function of one person within the context of medium to larger churches. Instead, it must become the heartbeat of many within the community of faith. Therefore, Pastoral Care University will continue in its development of a training seminar designed to equip people for the purpose of administering compassionate and competent care within the Body of Christ and the community at large. The Pastoral Care University website will be a pathway to introduce Pastoral Care University to people attending Hillvue Heights Church as well as other congregations across the globe.

Theologically, the focus of the PCU seminar is oriented toward helping people understand that all caring acts of compassion are a function of the indwelling Holy Spirit. When care is administered in the name of Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit released from within us creating caring moments in which the grace of God becomes more evident. Furthermore, PCU teaches participants that pastoral care is the very experience of the community of Christ and can no longer be seen as a department of the church or a ministry specialization reserved solely for clergy. The metaphor of the porch, loving and welcoming people in the name of Jesus, is the foundation to all of this.

With the increasing information available via the Internet highway, John Wilkins from www.GlobalLiveInc.com per my outline, vision and input designed a webpage at www.pastoralcareuniversity.com. The home page of this website is a picture of a front

porch. I desire to constantly reinforce the metaphor of the front porch as a vehicle for pastoral care. The porch to my childhood home was always a place of welcome and celebration. Now that my wife and I have a historic home with a large front porch, it has been and continues to be a place of conversation leading to transformation as we welcome and love people in the name of Jesus. With this in mind, the vision of www.pastoralcareuniversity.com is designed to help people discover more detailed direction for how we can love and care for people, all in the name of Jesus. The website offers clear pathways regarding information and registration for upcoming Pastoral Care University seminars, through the message board on website. The trinity of the porch story, if you will, includes the expressive personal story, the receptor of the story, and Jesus' shaping story.

www.pastoralcareuniversity.com/forum provides information on how to learn more about Spirit-Driven Care. This includes a schedule of conferences available, an opportunity to register online, and general information allowing one to know more about Pastoral Care University seminars. The goal is for people to be able to taste, see, feel, and hear the aroma of care by logging on to this interactive website, which is present to answer questions and to stimulate interest in Spirit-Driven Care. The next Pastoral Care University will be at Hillvue Heights Church in Bowling Green, Kentucky on Saturday, September 15 and Sunday, September 16, 2007. The deadline for registration will be August 30. The fee is \$25 and includes breakfast on Saturday, lunch on Sunday, training materials, sweatshirt, diploma, and graduation picture.

Rationale for the Website

The Pastoral Care University website is the most efficient, broad-sweeping mode of introducing people and churches to Pastoral Care University. Thus, its primary function is one of marketing. With a desire to minister to the larger community of faith in this information age, the Internet is the largest resource for people and churches looking for any kind of information. The PCU website will accomplish this goal.

The PCU website is not a substitute for PCU; it is a precursor to the seminar itself. The website becomes a porch to invite others to become a part of Pastoral Care University. While the website would make known the heart and passion of Spirit-Driven Care, it will only be a prelude to the two-day seminar.

General Website Information about Pastoral Care University

The website will introduce those researching pastoral care on the internet as well as those who are given the website information in promotional material to Pastoral Care University. The following areas covered in Pastoral Care University.

- Hospital ministry
- Nursing home ministry
- Grief care
- Chuckwagon gang (meals delivered to the home following surgery, birth of child, grief, etc.)
- Divorce care
- Benevolence, including financial assistance and job placement.

When people access www.pastoralcareuniversity.com, they will have the opportunity to learn more about each of these areas of pastoral care. There will be quotes about Pastoral Care available on the website. There will be opportunities to write testimonies about care received and care implemented. Video testimonies are already implemented on the website, and several others are utilized during the seminar. Additionally, several testimonies have been written in reference to care given and or received. There will be a recommendation section that highlights reading for those interested in learning more about pastoral care. There will be photos available to witness care in action in addition to videos of care in motion. There will also be a link for the Pastoral Care University store, where people can purchase sweatshirts, magnets, caps, and DVDs.

The Pastoral Care University Seminars

As previously stated, during this transition into a postmodern era, the metaphor describing the church should be that of the caring community. This is why the porch is the central image of Pastoral Care University. One distinct shift occurring in this era is a movement away from the consumer friendly paradigm, church as a product, to a more indigenous expression of community with plenty of local flavor. This promotes a form of community where its essence is care expressed in tangible acts of thorough compassion, a much-needed difference. Thus, the kind of community I envision is one that leads people to understand how Christ himself cared for others and encouraged his followers to be a caring community. Following Christ is a relationship, and in our relationship with him,

caring for one another and our city must not be reduced to a consumer friendly production.

As Pastoral Care University continues to develop, it will equip people with the tools and skills necessary for becoming more relational in their care and understanding the church as a relational community. Care is no longer a department of the church. It is no longer a ministry specialization. Care is the very experience of the community of Christ. When that is the case, we move away from a gospel that is presented toward a gospel that is experienced by way of competent, compassionate, and Christ-centered care.

I would like to assist other congregations in imagining (which I believe is a neglected power for seeing a broader horizon of possibilities) how they too might elevate the overall care model of the church. The utilization of the PCU website would allow other congregations to see second-hand a Spirit-Driven Care model. This is done via links such as testimonies, videos, and product information offered on the website. In other words, I would like to encourage churches to adopt a Spirit-Driven Care model – one that empowers unique people to do ministry in the most effective ways within their context.

With this in mind, I envision two goals for “Spirit Driven” care through PCU. The first goal would be increasing the amount of people equipped for service and making the most of their areas of giftedness to further promote and/or enhance the wellness of congregations and their communities as a whole, empowering others to serve in the name of Jesus. The second goal would be more in-depth teaching, illustrating that the Kingdom of God is manifested more completely when we extend competent, compassionate, and Christ-centered care, both to one another and to the world.

The two-day training in Pastoral Care University will result in releasing the laity to minister and thus creating a more biblically sound portrait of Christian community. The focus is oriented toward Spirit-Driven Care, meaning that it is motivated by the indwelling Holy Spirit and can never be reduced to the compassion of one human extended to another. Rather, it is God's compassion that moves us to care for others and permeates all of our endeavors. Through Pastoral Care University, people will discover more detailed directions for how we can love and care for people in the name of Jesus.

The first goal is to expose people of the church to the care needs, to share that they are a part of addressing these needs, and to share this with the broader community and congregations. The second goal is to equip the saints with the skilled tools and training that allows them to be a part of the care ministry of the church and to continuously involve and equip by providing clear pathways of involvement via teams. The third goal is to allow some indication to the church that its ministers who are caring for people have an idea of how to bring effective ministry via the Body of Christ.

Pastoral Care University is a dialogical experience. During both sessions, participants are strongly encouraged to ask questions that facilitate group discussion. This creates an atmosphere where people are comfortable sharing intimate details of both their past and current experiences with family and friends in the midst of crisis and in need of pastoral care. Appendix 4 details the schedule for Pastoral Care University.

Evaluation of the Pastoral Care University Seminars

At the conclusion of each session of Pastoral Care University, evaluation forms are dispersed and collected. This data is then compiled to further fine-tune the strengths

and/or weaknesses of this learning experience. This particular evaluation continues to be a wonderful tool that assists in the refining process. From the website, some of the results of the evaluations and comments made about Pastoral Care University will be made available. Additionally, a link will be available for people to post future comments.

Pastoral Care University continues to promote the equipping and empowering of the saints to fulfill the Great Commission by encouraging great compassion guided by the Holy Spirit. This promotes the kind of unity in the Body of Christ best exemplified when all God's people come together caring for one another in times of crisis and celebrating with one another in joyous times.

Discipleship via Pastoral Care University

As far as the visible Christian institutions of our day are concerned, discipleship clearly is optional . . . Churches are filled with "undisciplined disciples," as Jess Moody has called them.¹ The question to ask is, "Have we yet decided to follow Christ?"

The first goal that Jesus set forth for the early church was to use his all-encompassing power and authority to make disciples – this brings full-fledged attention to the Great Commission.

If we desire to become like Christ, our lives will be obvious to every thoughtful person around us, as well to ourselves. With this in mind, discipleship can be made concrete by loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, walking the second mile with an oppressor – in general, living out the gracious inward transformations of faith, hope, and love... Non-discipleship costs abiding peace. In other words, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring. The cross-shaped yoke of Christ is after all an instrument of liberation and power to those who live in it with him and learn the meekness and lowliness of heart that brings rest to the soul. The correct perspective is to see following Christ not only

¹ Willard, Dallas, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understand How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991)

as the necessity it is, but as fulfillment of the highest human possibilities and as life on the highest plane.²

If there is one thing about Jesus on which historians are now agreed, it is that he was a healer. His power flowed from a superabundance of health. Jesus' teachings are a prescribed health regimen. The Sermon on the Mount is the world's best prescription for a healthy lifestyle. The church is not intended to be an infirmary for sick people, but a health club and wellness center where people come to get well and stay strong so that they can take on the powers and principalities of the world.³

Most have not thought of denying God as bad for your health. With this in mind, the first undisputed mention of disease in the Bible consists of the following words: "I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:26).

Genuine/authentic health and healing include restored relationships with Jesus Christ, with one another (family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc.), and certainly with ourselves. How can we not pray for the sick? If we, as Christians don't take a whole in-depth view of the person, then who will? According to Leonard Sweet, "God did not redeem us intellectually but relationally. God comes to us through relationships."⁴

One of the goals of Pastoral Care University is to equip people to be couriers of "the Titus Touch."

God's plan for healing often comes by what has been referred to as the "The Titus Touch." But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus: (2 Corinthians 7:6). Who is this Titus who helps heal Paul of his depression? Titus was a gentile Christian of Greek origin who became Paul's trusted co-worker. Furthermore, when trouble surfaced in the church in Corinth, Paul sends Titus who demonstrates his pastoral skills by resolving difficulties... We all need Tituses in our lives. We all need to be Tituses to others. Have people allowed you to "Titus Touch" them? Have you allowed people to "Titus Touch" you? The bottom line is, will we receive the "Titus Touch" from others – even from such unlikely sources as a child, coworker or enemy?⁵

² Ibid, 16.

³ Ibid, 10.

⁴ Leonard Sweet, *The Jesus Prescription for a Healthy Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 33.

⁵ Ibid, 43.

The following are four goals within Pastoral Care University:

1. **EXPOSE** – People to ministry opportunities (the Possibilities of the Kingdom). Personally and publicly let people know God’s passion in ministry and not just our own personal passions. In other words, help people find God’s passion in what they are passionate about. Expose the Kingdom of God to people.
2. **INVITE** – People to participate and “buy into” the dream. The task is to invite people into Jesus through our ministry, not to invite them into us.
3. **EMPOWER** – Players by giving instructions to accomplish the possibilities of ministry (What, Where, When, Why, and How). Get the right people, in the right place, at the right time. Prayer is needed in doing this. Ask Jesus the “Wh” questions, which Jesus will answer in prayer. Give people gentle correction for the course of the vision. Get people into the wind of the Spirit – not create the wind. We are not saviors, we are Pastors.
4. **CELEBRATE** – With people. Celebrate the small and large victories of each player and groups of players as they play.⁶

The connection to the PCU website is that the expose, invite and celebrate elements previously mentioned are all utilized. For example, the website provides nuggets of what PCU is about an informal orientation via video. The website itself provides contact information in reference to dates and times of upcoming PCU conferences. Finally, the PCU website celebrates what God is doing through pastoral care via written testimonies as well as video testimonies.

Pastoral Care University Training

I specifically desired and, better yet, felt led to develop a vein of Pastoral Care entitled Pastoral Care University. I am convinced that this has made the ministry stronger, deeper, and wider, as 700 people have received and thus implemented this into

⁶ Dr. Stephen L. Ayers, Hillvue Heights Church Leadership Meeting, © December 1, 2004.

Spirit-Driven Care. It is important to note that many who currently serve are the very ones who were ministered to.

“There are three characteristics—one, contagiousness; two, the fact that little causes can have big effects; and three, that change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment – are the same three principles that define how measles moves through a grade-school classroom or the flu attacks every winter.”⁷ This has also proven to be true in reference to the care model implemented via Pastoral Care University. Contagious? Yes. Loving? Yes. Life-transforming? Yes.

As Pastoral Care continues by the guidance of the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the stories of restoration will live and be retold for generations to come. As a result, teams of servants currently minister in benevolence, nursing homes, hospitals, prayer chain, home meals (Chuck Wagon Gang), greeters, stewards, and Second Seasons, Hillvue’s senior adult ministry. As the leader of this group, it is critical that the authenticity in which I’ve led continue to unfold before their eyes.

I truly resonated with the book *Moneyball* by Michael Lewis, who says, just calling oneself a team doesn’t make one a team. Lewis also shares that many of the players thought not to be players become essential to winning championships. *Moneyball* gives us a great metaphor of a team concept for the church. If we watch Jesus closely, it was not the elite resumes He chose nor those who produced highly successful lives, but those who were willing to listen, to take the challenge, to plunge into the risk, and to form something, and to be formed by something they had never experienced. Therefore, Pastoral Care University becomes a great place for many different kinds of

⁷ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 9.

people to serve. The Pastoral Care team is very diverse, but unified as a team, together accomplishing what one person alone cannot do.

For the team approach to continue, I have and will continue to cast before them the metaphor of the front porch. Pastoral Care University will continue to build the front porch with a solid foundation of love with columns of prayer, peace, joy, and faith; welcoming, loving, and encouraging those who enter. “The future belongs to those who prepare for it, not those who plan for it.”⁸ Pastoral Care University becomes the method by which people are equipped to minister to the needs of others, filling their buckets, if you will.

Everyone has an invisible bucket. We are at our best when our buckets are overflowing and at our worst when they are empty. Everyone also has an invisible dipper. In each interaction, we can use our dipper either to fill or to dip from others’ buckets. Whenever we choose to fill others’ buckets, we in turn fill our own.⁹

The front/wraparound porch is a place where buckets are called to be filled, where people are cared about and thus believed in. A poem from Mother Teresa captures what Pastoral Care University longs to impart.

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”¹⁰

⁸ McNeal, 119.

⁹ Tom Rath & Donald O. Clifton, *How Full Is Your Bucket: Positive Strategies for Work and Life* (New York: Gallup Press, 2004), 25.

¹⁰ Mother Teresa, 87-88.

Chapter 6

Project Specification

The homepage of the Pastoral Care University website needs to clearly identify what PCU is and why the site exists. Therefore, it will prominently display the following:

- Site ID: Pastoral Care University
- Tag line: the porch
- Welcome blurb: Welcome to Pastoral Care University. This website will introduce you to PCU, allow you to purchase merchandise, and offer you a fresh perspective on what a caring Christian community can be.

Primary Objective

The primary objective of the website is to create easier pathways to participate in Pastoral Care University. Therefore, I have the following goals:

Goal One: To create and maintain an interactive website that easily allows people to learn about Pastoral Care University and how they may participate.

Goal Two: Develop and Test Website for Usability

This site is designed and constructed on an individual basis of needs in a caring community.

1. I selected www.godaddy.com, as my web hosting service and purchased the following domain:
<http://www.pastoralcareuniversity.com>.
2. I, along with GlobalLive Inc., developed a website and test for its usability and fluidity by GlobalLive inc. and their employees.

- Selected John Wilkins of GlobalLive inc. for web design.
- Had meeting with web designer with the vision of the website.

3. Designed information architecture:

Information Architecture for Website

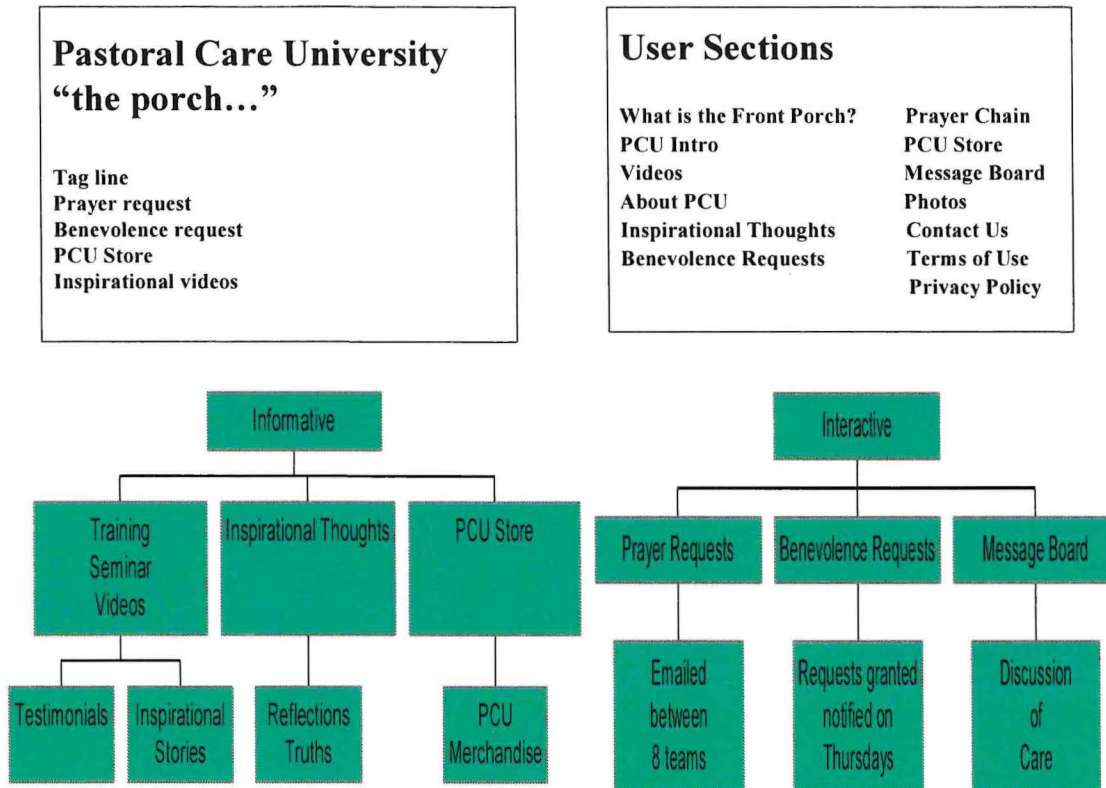


Figure 1

4. The visual images on the intro encompass all the views one would see upon approaching the porch. The colors selected were black, white, and gray with color accents throughout the website. The reasoning for this aesthetic echoes the sentiments that the porch as described throughout the project has a vintage feel.

That which was an integral part of the past in welcoming people has a place in the present of embracing the same.

- a. Header and Footer: #000000 (Black)
 - b. Menu links: #666666 (Dark Gray)
 - c. Titles and Text: #FFFFFF (White)
 - d. Background: #999999 (Light Gray)
5. Multimedia videos and graphics will be managed and hosted through a Linux server. These formats include jpeg, swf and flv because:
- Flexibility and broad range of design construction.
 - Ease of design and function ability.
 - Less bandwidth without sacrificing quality and clarity.
 - Simple to update based upon user feedback.

Goal Three: The prayer chain and benevolence links encompass what the front porch is all about, by welcoming, loving, celebrating, and accepting people.

1. Prayer requests will be checked each day and forwarded to the captain of the prayer chain. Benevolence requests will be checked each day and those who receive assistance will receive a phone call on Thursday mornings. The benevolence team meets every Wednesday at 5pm in the administrative office at Hillvue Heights Church. These links embody the never-ending nature of care. The message board is not only for PCU graduates, but the community at large in reference to dialogue on care needs.

2. The message board will be checked each day by pastoral care administrators and will be utilized as a tool for communicating with other churches in reference to care.

Further Development

Develop procedure to track success.

1. Website will have a counter behind the scenes via the control panel capable of tracking number of hits the website is receiving.
2. Website will be capable of tracking comments and monitoring them.
3. Website will demonstrate success when prayers and benevolence requests are monitored and assessed, and as many needs as possible are met.
 - a. Continue documenting testimonies and videos of caring moments in motion, e.g., hospital visits and benevolence, etc.

Audience

The targeted audiences are local and regional churches as well as members of our own congregation. This is not limited to, but will be a primary area of focus, while incorporating businesses as well. For example, McDonald's Corporation in South Central Kentucky has contacted the office in reference to training for employees and better caring for customers. In other words, care is not restricted to the church, but is needed in every pathway of life, regardless of the environment.

Project Scope and Content

Flash and PHP Environment System

Flash is user-friendly, professional in appearance, and facilitates the mechanisms of the site. John Wilkins, Web Designer for GlobalLive Inc., <http://www.globalliveinc.com>, has designed the website in conjunction with the vision of Pastoral Care University.

In reference to Jacob Nielsen's written critique dated October 29, 2000. Flash has made technological strides since he wrote this article. Flash has improved the function and ability along with user interaction. The following will dispute Nielsen's three claims:

1. Nielsen's first point is based upon guidelines he set forth in 1995.

However, in the twelve years that have passed since then, internet speeds have increased from 2400 bps to 10 million bps. This is an increase of 1,000 % This allows the average user to maximize their browsing experience with the newest technology bringing websites to life.

2. Nielsen's second point of contention about flash can be challenged by ultimate user interactivity. However, the flash capability has endless user control options – the only limit is the designers imagination.
3. Nielsen's third point of contention focuses on flash using nonstandard graphic user interface controls. Stating flash websites require scroll bar designs. No scroll bar is required for navigation on the Pastoral Care University webpage.

In reference to his latest update on June 3, 2002 – Nielsen recognizes many of the flash improvements have contradicted his previous stance.

In closing, now five years later, a majority of businesses incorporate flash in the to keep pace with current web technology.

Pros

- Highly customizable.
- Extensive functionality.
- Modification and update ease.
- Unlimited potential and capability.

Cons

- Tedious adjustments due to personal criteria.
- Every aspect must be manually produced.
- Redundant coding changes.

Global Navigations Labels

The links available on PCU Intro and PCU Videos encapsulate the training and reflect moments of ministry in all areas of care. These links will continue to expand, as stories of transformation of people's lives continue to unfold by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Samples from PCU Seminars: Videos of Caring Moments in Motion

1. "PCU Intro" Video highlights moments of teaching during Pastoral Care University and includes actual participants conveying what they've learned during this two-day seminar. This video concludes with further contact information, e.g.,

contact person and telephone number. The following are videos covering “care in motion.”

2. The video “Hydration” conveys the story of Perry Stevens, who was a youth pastor, deacon, and teacher and suffered a traumatic brain stem stroke. Perry and his wife Myra attended Pastoral Care University in 2004. It was at this time that they conveyed a need for a therapy dog. Pastoral Care University blessed Perry and his family with a Standard poodle, which is now his living assistance dog. This is an awesome example of meeting the needs of people with an authentic compassion and love, reflective of Christ.
3. “The Olympic Race” Video mirrors how crisis can buckle our knees. The church is called to help others finish the race, the race of grief, crisis, etc., with the love of Christ.
4. “The Heart That Matters Most” video represents how the heart is truly designed to be an organ of will and understanding. The time is always right to reach out to others in times of crisis and celebration.
5. “Pastoral Care Moments 1” video highlights the benevolence ministry and the healing ramifications of this.
6. “Pastoral Care Moments 2” video highlights grief, illness, and home visits.
7. “Through the Water” video mirrors the awesome power of baptism and loving others in the name of Jesus.
8. “Reflections” is a collection of quotes, available via audio.

Budget

The budget reflects initiation, website development, and maintenance. All items are annual expenditures, with the exception of the first budget line item – initial website design and construction.

Provider	Fee	Total
Initial website design and construction		\$2,000.00
Insight, Internet provider	\$40/month	\$ 480.00
Purchase domain	\$2.36/month	\$ 28.32
Hosting service by GoDaddy	\$3.19/month	\$ 38.28
Website updates	\$10.00/hour for 5 hours per month	\$ 600.00
Annual website modifications	\$50/hour for 20 hours	\$1,000.00
TOTAL ANNUAL COST		\$4,146.60

Goals and Strategies

The success of this project will be measured by the number accessing www.pastoralcareuniversity.com. The website will lead people to the seminar, but will not be the only pathway. Other means will be mailers and contacts with local and regional churches in reference to upcoming PCU seminars.

- Online registrations will be tracked by and publicly displayed in the message board footer.
- Feedback will be monitored per user request in the message board.

- All purchased items are purchased via www.PayPal.com, a user-friendly tool. PayPal then sends an email to specified email address.

Long Term Marketing Strategy

1. Networking

- Dialogue began with care leaders from Crystal Cathedral in 2006. The dialogue will continue with Crystal Cathedral and other pastors responsible for care in their congregations. A goal is to be a keynote presenter at the Care and Kindness conference at the Crystal Cathedral in 2008. As a keynote speaker, the focus will be nuggets of Pastoral Care University and the training available to churches, both on Hillvue Heights Church campus and offsite.
- Provide training for employees of South Central Kentucky McDonald's, Inc.

2. Publishing

- Present Pastoral Care University to Lifeway and Group Publishing for possible publication.

3. Pastoral Care University on the road

- Continue offering Pastoral Care University to other churches in the United States.

Chapter 7

Postscript

As the website evolved, I discovered that porches are not only made from brick and mortar but the porch of the 21st Century will also be formed with screens and keys. The porch of this project has now become a webpage that invites people in the virtual community to sit down, swing on the swing, sip the tea, smoke the cigar, and hear a grace narrative from a virtual world that speaks to the world of reality a word of grace and nurture that impacts the reality of the soul.

As this project emerged, I was focusing on my front porch at 1316 Scottsville Road, but then I realized the porch is not a place but a dynamic. I found that the porch can be created anywhere. My office has now become a porch. The pulpit is now a church. The children's classrooms have become little porches. I have now found that even the patio becomes the porch.

As I started this project, the porch was a one-dimensional function. As the project evolved, the porch of the 21st Century is multi-dimensional. It carries the narrative of reconstruction to the soul, but from many entrance points. I have discovered that the porch in the 21st Century does not carry one set of stairs to reach it. It can be found in the virtual world, the real world, and transcends all generational constructs.

The website has taken the real narrative and connected three dimensions in one location in cyber space. The words from heaven have become actual truth on a real porch, and now that same truth has conveyed itself on the virtual porch called a webpage. The Word has heard the cries of the people and become our word on the context of the porch. His word has become a part of our word and allowed our words to convey His Word, as

we welcome and celebrate people onto the porch that Jesus calls us to create, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The essence of the porch?

Anyone who knows me very well would agree that I like to be in charge of a project, and through this experience of creating the web site, I was not, due to my limited technology experience. (I had the vision and the documentation of many moments of care via video, pictures and journals. This proved to be a monumental struggle on more than one occasion. I understood seeing the backside of a mountain; time was a premium, and frustration mounted. When the latest delay occurred in the development of the website, I called John Wilkins and expressed my concern in reference to him not showing up for the past two meetings and furthermore, not calling. It was then that he shared with me the sudden passing of his mother-in-law. I began to realize that this was more than a project; I needed to become a front porch for him. It occurred to me that when we plan ministry, we often are trapped by timelines and deadlines, forgetting that ministry projects are to impact people.

He then began to share with me his upcoming divorce, concern for his daughters, and the blessing of the relationship he shared with his mother-in-law. What began as a moment of frustration, anger, panic, and disappointment resulted in a “front porch” moment of listening and praying with him. Had I been oppressive, this front porch moment would not have occurred. Everyone needs front porch moments, and once this was experienced, the project came to fruition.

Appendix 1

Stories of Healing

Emotional Healing

An example of Spirit-Driven Care is the following. I received a call from the emergency room in our local hospital that there had been an accident involving a training session with a local fire department. One of the volunteer firemen was killed while another was in critical condition. Upon arriving at the hospital, Pastor Shane Blankenship and I met the family that we did not know before this time. There were approximately 20 people with the family, and we asked if we could pray with them. They humbly said, “Yes.” As we prayed, we asked Jesus to work in and through the hands of those tending to this young man’s care and asked for healing. At the conclusion of this visit, we told them we would be back. It is customary for the Pastoral Care Team at Hillvue Heights Church to take sandwiches to families in surgery waiting rooms. This family would be no exception.

When we came back to the hospital and brought this family food, their response was, “We didn’t expect to see you.”

I asked why.

They responded, “You’re from a church, and we’re accustomed to churches not doing what they say they’re going to do.” Although they are not members of our congregation, this is irrelevant, as we are called to go ye therefore and love people.

When was the last time we “set the table” for communion with God? For communion with others? For communion with yourself? When we “set the table” for communion with God, we can count on something magical happening. In fact, whenever Christ eats with us, there is transfiguration.¹

¹ Ibid, 118-119.

We are fellow travelers who need each other. In part, this is why Christ bound us together in his church. Furthermore, we are called to make an effort to walk with each other through life's passages and encourage each other. Christ's apostle said churches should be "harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted and humble in spirit" (1Peter 3:8).²

"I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35) The question posed in Pastoral Care University is, "Won't you join us in harvesting the fields as we love and care for one another via the power of a risen Savior named Jesus Christ?"

There's love on the porch with your name on it. The question is, will you open this earthly, heavenly, and eternal gift? We've all seen, heard, and some of us have known individuals or families who suffered at the hands of Hurricane Katrina. Several survivors of Katrina migrated to Bowling Green, Kentucky in need of jobs, housing, and other forms of assistance. According to Max Lucado,

One survivor told him a riveting story. As the waters rose around his house, this New Orleanian swam out a window. With two children clinging to his back, the man found safe refuge atop the tallest building in the neighborhood. Other people joined him on the roof. Soon a small circle of people huddled together on what would be their home for three days until they were rescued.

After an hour on the building, the man realized he was on a church. He patted on the rooftop and announced to the others, "We are on holy ground." His news jogged the memory of another roof dweller. She looked around at the area, crawled over to the steeple, hugged it, and proclaimed, "My grandfather and grandmother helped build this church."³

² Charles M. Sell, *Transitions Through Adult Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 263.

³ Max Lucado, *Cure for the Common Life*, (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2005), 113-114.

I'm certain the grandparents had envisioned this place being one of worship leading to salvation. However, they couldn't have imagined that the roof of this church became a porch of safety and of refuge.

This summer, a group of graduates from Pastoral Care University will travel south to restore the front porch to Patricia's bungalow home that is rich with character.

The foundation of the porch began with our sharing a love with her that is undeniably a love from Christ. According to Eudora Welty, "One place comprehended can make us understand other places better."⁴ The porch is vast yet intimate. Come join me. Invite others to join us. His arms stretched wide, our hearts too are called to stretch wide. May the ears of our hearts continue to sprout and thus hear the needs and desires of others by the power of the Holy Spirit. Come sit for a while ... He's calling your name. He called mine, too. Thank you, Jesus. I feel as Rob Bell wrote, "God, I can't believe I get to live this life."⁵

Results of Care

Fruit from the Front Porch

On Friday, April 2, at approximately 8:00 p.m. a young man approached me at the altar and conveyed – "I'm here to make a profession of faith." I remember that his face was loaded with heavy burden in that moment. I recall listening with my eyes and the ears of my heart. Following our introductions, we knelt on the steps by the altar and Alan Mosley repented of sin, asked for forgiveness and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart. Following this spiritual healing – a glow settled on his face and the journey of Conversion, Healing and Development began. According to Malcom Gladwell, "The

⁴ Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," *Welty: Stories, Essays and Memoir*, ed. Richard Ford and Michael Kreyling (New York: Literary Classics, 1998), 792.

⁵ Bell, 36.

first task of *Blink* is to convince you of a simple fact: decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good as decisions made cautiously and deliberately.⁶ The world would have told Alan and me that we had nothing in common. However, in a setting where he was welcomed and preached the great news of Jesus, in the *Blink* of an eye a new person emerged by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Following his Friday night decision, that Easter Sunday during the 11:00 worship service, Alan Mosley entered the baptistry. I thank God for allowing me the opportunity to baptize Alan in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Once again, the glow permeated his heart, soul and mind. Sensing struggles were certain to occur – I asked him to call me if I could offer any assistance with this new walk with Jesus.

The same day, I met the Mosley family. His mother and father's faces were heavy with burden, while his younger brother was very quiet and reserved. The Holy Spirit prompted me to minister and work with this family. I would need a dialogue like never before as we came from opposite ends of the spectrum. His father attempted to look through me, his mother avoided eye contact, while his brother sat there. While reading "Blue Like Jazz" I thought of the first impression I had of the Mosley's. "And so from the beginning, the chasm that separated them from God was as deep as wealth and as wide as fashion."⁷ I prayed, "Lord work through me to help these people."

For the following two months, calls came late at night from his place of employment. Alan was enduring persecution from coworkers and family because he was no longer willing to participate in his old lifestyle of drugs. Each time he called I would simply listen, give advice and pray prior to ending our conversation or ministering via the

⁶ Gladwell, 14.

⁷ Miller, 2.

phone. From time to time, Alan would stop by my office for prayer prior to going to work. He struggled with a temper and asked how to deal with this. I suggested that he take authority over it in the name of Jesus and pray fervently. Furthermore, I gave him a copy of Ephesians 6:11-17 to keep in his truck and suggested he read this every afternoon prior to going into work. What a blessing it has been to see development take place in this young Christian's life as he began understanding the power of prayer while living in the light of Jesus that replaced the darkness he once lived in. Healing was taking place that began with the guaranteed healing – that of spiritual healing. Amends were unfolding in his life both professionally and personally.

Having recently been divorced – Alan began talking about his twin daughters, Amber and Shannon. Love filled his voice when he spoke of them – he was beginning to embrace his call as a godly father. His ex-wife was having a difficult time understanding and accepting this changed man, a man God had created and a man that Jesus was transforming. During one particular moment of ministering, I asked Alan to allow Jesus to speak through him anytime he spoke with her. This would be the most effective testimony and witness. Living it versus talking it works extremely well! I'm happy to say that their relationship is better due to Alan's desire to serve Christ on a daily basis. Further healing will continue to take place. I have suggested to him that he ask her to forgive him for any hurt or pain that she may still carry as a result of the divorce. The time is always right to ask someone to forgive you.

On May 21, at approximately 3:00 p.m., I received a call from Alan. His voice was tearful as he shared that he was in the emergency room at Greenview Hospital – his father had been drinking and taken too many pills. Without delay, I departed for the

hospital. After meeting with his family, Alan and I entered room # 7 and there was Johnny, in the bed with IVs in his arms and the smell of liquor permeating the room as he spoke. “It was like bacteria or a cancer or a trance. It wasn’t on the skin, it was in the soul.”⁸ I began talking with him (the dialogue was critical) and asked him to share his story with me. He began to communicate, trying not to cry. I replied, “Johnny it’s OK, let it out.” He responded, “tears are from the devil!” Following this, I replied, “Johnny, that is not true. Jesus wept. He has a plan for you that includes love, hope, peace, joy and faith.” Following this, his head raised and anger began seething from him. By the power and authority of the Holy Spirit, I responded to this angry spirit by saying, “Johnny in the name of Jesus Christ, I’m not afraid of you.” Alan stepped away from the bed – his eyes wide open, not knowing what to say. Later he told me, “Mark, no one has ever said that to my father.”

The walls began to melt as Johnny began sharing his life – a life of drugs, alcohol, two years of service in war and utter darkness. I prayed to Jesus as I spoke with Johnny – he was allowing communication to flow. With this in mind, I said, “Johnny, look at me.” His eyes made contact with mine – anger no longer shooting from them. Then I relayed the following. “Johnny, thanks for fighting for my rights as an American.” He began to weep, years of emptiness streaming down his face. He replied, “No one has ever thanked me for serving this country until now.” A prayer of confession unfolded and Jesus Christ entered Johnny’s wounded, busted heart. The light of Jesus had replaced the darkness. According to Leonard Sweet, “This is a one-time act; this is an on-going process. Choose to give Christ access to your heart, and stone becomes flesh. Old thoughts,

⁸ Ibid, 14.

attitudes, and concerns metamorphosize into new ones.”⁹ Alan and his father embraced as I left that room. Johnny had realized that Jesus loved him! The experience of visually seeing him become a child of God was powerful – a moment I shall never forget! Robert H. Schuller stated the following: “Yes, it is the happy tears erupting with passionate joy when your heart is moved by a tender, touching, triumphant story in the life of another human being.”¹⁰ Knowing the attending emergency room physician, I sought to find him. As always, God’s timing is perfect! As I walked into Dr. Moss, I proceeded to share with him the conversation in room # 7. Being skeptical, he advised, “Pastor Mark, talk to him again when he goes home, he may be here a couple of days.” Following our conversation he walked into room # 7. I waited patiently for his return – a smile spread across my face when he reappeared with amazement in his eyes. He had also seen the love and forgiveness on Johnny’s face and entire being. He was discharged and went home within a few hours. A Spirit- driven experience had occurred in the emergency room resulting in conversion and healing! Care that converts – thank you Jesus!

On Sunday, May 23 during the 11:00 a.m. worship service, Johnny Mosley entered the baptistry accompanied by his son Alan. Having the opportunity to baptize Alan and his father was (and continues to be) a blessed moment in ministry Jesus gave me. Prior to leaving the baptistry, Alan prayed over his father. What a blessing!

According to Donald Miller, “If we hear, in our inner ear, a voice saying we are failures, we are losers, we will never amount to anything, this is the voice of Satan trying to convince the bride that the groom does not love her. This is not the voice of God. God

⁹ Sweet, 20.

¹⁰ Schuller, 61.

woos us with kindness, He changes our character with the passion of His love.”¹¹ One Mosley at a time was experiencing the voice of a living God. How beautiful!

Over the next few months, the Mosley family experienced development. I began spending time with them in their home and vice versa. Building community is of utmost importance in the body of Christ at Hillvue. The burden was now being lifted from Alan’s mother too. God was blessing this kind sweet lady by restoring her family for her. She has been a blessing to my life. Alan’s brother was no longer quiet and reserved. The love of Jesus was truly showering each and every one of them. The light of Christ was replacing the darkness. Answered prayers were apparent in each step. “God sculpts our souls through friends in our lives. Friends afford us the chance to hear the voice of God’s encouragement, feel the warmth of God’s embrace, experience the intensity of his listening, understand the wonder of his life by receiving the love of people who, though they know us, love us anyway.”¹² I was experiencing this from Mosleys as I lead them. What a blessing!

On Sunday, June 27 following the 11:00 worship, Alan asked if I could come and pray with his ill grandfather in their home. I said, “Sure, just wait for me and I’ll follow you.” The entire pastoral staff was scheduled to meet in a couple of hours to depart for youth camp. Time was a premium as I had not yet packed. However, I haven’t been and don’t want to be too busy to rescue the perishing and care for the dying. I visited with Mr. Mosley who shared his story with me. Jesus was working as I began to share the love and forgiveness our risen Savior offers – an inheritance available to all of us by simply asking. I asked if I could pray with him along with Johnny and Alan. Following this

¹¹ Ibid, 86.

¹² McNeal, Reggie, *A Work of Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000), 127.

prayer, Mr. Mosley replied, “Come see me when you get back in town.” I responded, “I have no guarantee of the remainder of this day anymore than you or anyone else does. Furthermore, the time is always right to repent and ask for forgiveness.” He replied, “Pastor, I appreciate your time and will think about what you’ve shared with me.” “Jesus, is waiting for you to talk with him,” I replied. Mr. Mosley smiled as I left the room. Outside on the deck, Alan and I prayed for Mr. Mosley’s salvation prior to my leaving.

On June 29, I received a page from the office at church conveying a message to call the Mosley family. My heart sank when Alan answered the phone. I heard him say, “Granddaddy died this morning – his final words were ‘oh God, oh God.’ We would like for you to preach the funeral.” Following prayer via the phone – I was so thankful that I hadn’t been too busy to scatter seeds of love, hope, peace, joy and faith to a sick, hungry and thirsty man. Camps can wait when death won’t.

On July 2, God enabled me to deliver Mr. Mosley’s eulogy. Following the graveside service, I met Alan’s great-grandmother, Maude. She was heartbroken having outlived her son. Poor health prevented her from attending the funeral and graveside service. As I held her hand and prayed, I reflected on the words that my beloved mother had shared with me many years prior to her passing. “When children are young, they’re always at your feet and no matter how old they become, they’re always heavy on your heart.” Maude Mosley was at this time the epitome of these words. She too had now entered my heart.

Chris, Melody and Alisha now enter (re-enter) the picture. The events written about were a reflection of Chris’s obedience to Christ, by witnessing to a fellow co-

worker in a hostile environment. According to Robert H. Schuller, “Each person makes a difference in someone. Every positive person makes life better for those in his or her world.”¹³ This is certainly applicable to Chris as he loved Alan enough to invite to the porch/church. This family attended Mr. Mosley’s funeral.

One evening in late June, I called and invited the Gravils to our home – the visit lasted for hours. It was during this time that Chris shared with me that he had prayed that Alan would meet our lead Pastor Steve Ayers instead of me at the altar. He had boldly witnessed to Alan and feared that Alan would not like me due to my “Osmond teeth and preppy clothes.” He then admitted that he had placed God in a box and asked for forgiveness. Chris’ *blink* proved to be wrong. It is an important stone in the foundation of the porch to admit when we’re wrong. How many times have we succumbed to pride and not admitted this grave mistake? It is a healing component to each and every community.

In October I felt God was calling me to go to Alan’s place of employment following Wednesday night worship service. The Spirit calls us to unexpected places for God-expected events. I was uncomfortable going there, however, I asked Jesus for strength and He certainly did and continued to provide me with the strength that surpasses all understanding. The hostility in this place was thick, full of broken and busted rough men who have sought the world to fill their triangular shaped hearts. Initially, I received so many cold shoulders from them that I nearly got frostbitten. Some even tried to prevent me from coming there by reporting it to their supervisors. However, I didn’t go there with the Bible to preach and tell them how lost they were. They already knew that. I just wanted them to see Jesus in me as I scattered seeds of love, hope, peace, joy and faith in the name of Jesus. I’m thankful to write that three more conversions have

¹³ Schuller, 24.

taken place as a result of thinking, speaking and acting in the name of Jesus. Furthermore, Friday morning at 1:00 a.m., a Bible Study met in my office for 5 months at Hillvue for the men at Universal Cooperatives when they complete their work shift. Four attend each and every week. Other hearts are softening, ears are opening, and scales are falling from their eyes. I appreciated Alan's obedience now more than ever having observed firsthand the strongholds Satan had acquired in this place. The light of Jesus continues to penetrate the darkness – stay tuned as more conversion, healing and development will take place as a result of Spirit-driven ministry. According to Robert H. Schuller, "I see it as stress of success. Positive stress! Work! Dream! Hold on! Never give up! Keep on believing! Set goals beyond goals! Think bigger! Think longer! Practice positive faith, and be prepared to live in a world of creative, constructive, redemptive *stress*. Welcome success stress, and stay on the path called life. The inner voice is loud and clear."¹⁴ Furthermore, Schuller states, "Don't throw away tomorrow."¹⁵

On November 12 at 4:00 a.m., Pastor Steve Ayers, his son Blake and myself departed for the northwest region of Warren County to deer hunt with the Mosley family. We were embraced with hospitality from the moment we arrived. This was a special day for them as they welcomed us in their community. A component of Spirit-driven ministry involved meeting people where they are as well. Too often we expect people to come to the church. Jesus went outside the walls; why shouldn't we? Generations of Mosleys have lived, farmed and hunted deer, rabbit, and turkey on this land. This was the first deer season that Johnny and Alan were of sober body and mind. As Pastor Steve shared from

¹⁴ Schuller, 4-5.

¹⁵ Ibid, 9.

the pulpit several Sundays following, “I saw Jesus when deer hunting in the community of Hadley.” Once again, Spirit-driven ministry enables the walking dead to come to life!

Maude Mosley has been on my mind lately. I’ve been to visit her several times in the past few months. She has a wonderful porch on the side of her house. I generally will assist her into her wheelchair and stroll her to the porch. Prayer, love, listening to her life story, sharing the story of Jesus and sharing the elements of communion are the highlights of our visits with one another. She has taken care of people most of her life, now it is her time to be loved and cared for in the name of Jesus. On June 18, Maude was called home to be with her Savior Jesus and her departed loved ones. I’m thankful for the front porch that welcomed her family to the church with love, hope, peace, joy and faith. If not for this and splendid Holy Spirit, I would have never met this family. I presided over her funeral as well. We celebrated her life and her relationship with Jesus and her family. Following the funeral we gathered in her home and ventured out to the “porch” for a time of fellowship.

According to Robert H. Schuller the following is indicative of “The Church of Today and Tomorrow:”

- How can the church preach the good news of the Gospel and reach people?

We begin with the love for people. A smile is the beginning of peace. Smile power is enormous.

- Focus God’s love for persons. The message of the cross.
- Proclaim and declare the subject of sin. Repent. Sin becomes rebellion against God, for we are born without faith. According to Eric Erikson, learning to trust is a process. We are born with a negative self-image.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. How do you choke cockleburrs out? Plant alfalfa.

- Salvation. We glorify God when we become what He wants us to be. With him we discover our inner potential.
- Keep Christ at the center, beginning, and end.
- Always let God have the last word. He will have the last word, and it will be good.¹⁶

All of these are critical components of the front porch – the Mosley’s are a prime example of what welcoming and loving people in the name of Jesus will lead to. The result, households coming to know the Lord!

On a Saturday, last fall, Chris and Melody Gravit came by our home. Melody came to the “front porch” and said, “come outside, we have something to give you.” I walked out the front door and down the steps to see a large object wrapped in a tarp with a red bow in the back of Chris’s truck. “Get in the truck and open it,” they said. I remarked how the rope was tied tight and it reminded me of how my father would secure items when we delivered from the furniture store. Finally the tarp was removed and a coal stove was revealed. I asked, “where did you get this?” My niece replied, “where do you think they got it?” It was at this time I realized the Gravits had located the people who had bought Mom and Dad’s furniture store and somehow managed to buy this for me. The stove had been a fixture there for 62 years. It had been a “porch” within the community of Russell Springs during this span of time. A place where people were invited and fellowship was shared. Any one and everyone knew about the stove and the

¹⁶ Schuller Institute, January 2005.

warmth of conversation laced with love they had experienced at one time or another. I began to weep and cry as memories flooded my mind. I had often regretted not taking the stove following the death of my beloved parents when we sold M. H. Hale and Son. However, I had commissioned an artist to draw this special “coal stove porch” and it has a special place in the hallway of our home. Melody and Chris had asked about the significance of the picture several times. Where is the stove now? On the “back porch” of course where conversation and fellowship are shared with the love of Jesus. By the way, one is not motivated to the porch but simply invited. What a gift of kindness and love in the name of Jesus. I shall never forget this gesture. As I’ve shared with the Gravils, “not until you see Jesus in Heaven will you know how much this means to me. I will carry the love of Jesus to visible and invisible porches for the rest of my life. The summer and fall of 2005 will forever reverberate in my soul as two seasons of healing. Had I allowed any type of bitterness to settle on my soul, this healing of relationships would have never occurred.

Sunday, August 21, 2005 was a day God would do more than I could have possibly asked or imagined. A gentleman who had been infected with a virus against me that infiltrated a pocket of people in the congregation persecuted me for a couple of years in reference to anything and everything I did, personal and professional. To make matters worse, he served in the leadership of the church. During an outdoor gathering of leaders at a friend’s house, he refused to sit at the table with me. The dissension was thick, observed on more than one occasion by several people in leadership of the church. Once again, several observed this behavior and decided to bring it to the attention of the Lead Pastor. After this was addressed between a key leader and this man, he eventually asked

for us to have lunch together. Healing took place, which resulted in this man evaluating his walk and realizing his need for biblical baptism. The culmination of this healing resulted in his invitation for me to baptize him. During the 8:00 service as we entered into the baptistery, love was sweeping through the congregation. Many realized the significance of this baptism and responded with a standing ovation. Following the baptism, I prayed that continued healing would take place in and among people where bitterness and anger had settled. I shall never forget the power in and during this moment. The result was pleasingly believable to the visitors and members of the congregation as well. I am thankful to share that this baptism will be available as a part of my DVD/webpage information. This would be the first miracle on August 21.

The second miracle that day would involve a couple in our congregation who in 2001 made a choice to persecute me, especially the wife. I remember her rebuking me as I did the welcome in Sunday morning and Wednesday evening worship by rebuking me “in the name of Jesus.” If I walked by her, she would rebuke me with sneers, laughter, and disregard. Her contempt of and for me became a sea of distraction with one wave coming after another, crashing on the shores of my heart.

I had prayed for an opportunity to speak with her in reference to the dissension I was experiencing from her. As our Lord would have it, He provided a window of opportunity when she was visiting my neighbor. I walked over to the neighbor’s home and asked her if she would be willing to come and sit with me on the patio outside my home. She reluctantly agreed to meet with me. I began by asking her if I had done anything to offend her, since I had experienced years of persecution. I had spent hours wracking my brain as to what it could be. Was she upset that I’d bought their home? Did

she regret selling it? Was she upset that her dog got lost once they sold their home? Did it have anything to do with previous employees of the church? She answered “no” to all these questions. I then asked her to forgive me. Her next response sent a white-hot pain into my soul. She looked at me with utter disdain and said, “I have never liked you. I have asked the Lord to tell me why I don’t like you, and He won’t tell me.” I replied, “Maybe those feelings aren’t from the Lord.” I then asked if I could have her hand, and I prayed for healing for whatever had and was continuing to occur. She returned to my neighbor’s home with no reconciliation in sight. According to Robert Schuller, “When people sincerely seek to implant the spirit of love in the core of their spirit, they find their personalities changing for the better. They look for ways to help others. They come to respect all people: even adversaries are treated with dignity.”¹⁷ I pondered our conversation over and over again and experienced her outburst at yet another level of malice.

From that moment, she targeted key leadership in the church, attempting to sway their confidence and belief in me as a leader of the church, going so far as to warn the Lead Pastor of the church, my supervisor, my brother. When he asked her what it was, she replied, “I just don’t like him.” He responded, “3,000 people here love him.” Even when a pastor she liked fell out for a moral failure, she blamed me for his departure. He solidified this accusation by telling her it was my fault. Unfortunately, like a virus, several in the congregation became infected by the lies and dissension sown in and among them.

¹⁷ Robert H. Schuller, *Don't Throw Away Tomorrow: Living God's Dream for Your Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2005), 144.

I remembered the timeless advice my sister offered me in a letter, once I received the call into ministry. “Mark, Jesus has not promised you a quiet journey, but He has promised you a safe arrival.” It certainly wasn’t quiet, and on more than one occasion, I questioned this journey of ministry. The personal pain was as deep as the misrepresentation of the Body of Christ. Rex Miller writes, “The church has long been accused of talking the talk but not walking the walk. The hypocrisy they perceive in churches is among the top reasons nonbelievers and the unchurched stay home.”¹⁸

The persecution continued until August 2005 when she approached me at the altar during the 8am service. As she approached me, I thought, “Oh no, here she comes.” However, much to my surprise, she threw her arms around my neck and began begging me for forgiveness, saying she’d treated me so wrongly by trying to turn others against me and desiring to run me out of the church. She said, “The Lord has shown me the great things you have done, and I can no longer not listen to Him.”

The pain I had buried for all those years erupted as I began to sob tears of thankfulness and restoration that only the Lord could deliver. My wife Tina was afraid something was wrong because I wept so deeply and intensely. Once I told her what had happened, she responded by saying, “We have prayed for this.” According to Philip Gulley, “The prophet Isaiah talks about God making streams in the desert. Talks about how God puts things where they’ve never been before, like love where hate once reigned. Streams in the desert, Isaiah calls it. I’m here to tell you these streams are real.”¹⁹ I say this because I too experienced a stream of healing that day. According to Mother Teresa,

¹⁸ Miller, 183.

¹⁹ Gulley, Philip. *Front Porch Tales* (Sisters, Oregon: Questar Publishers, 1997), 41.

“See God’s tender concern for you and for me! He would do the same thing for each of you.”²⁰

As I reflect on 2005, I remember that had the front porch of my heart ever been dismantled, had my eyes not welcomed, had my demeanor not welcomed, these miracles would not have been possible. We ourselves are a porch of either welcoming or rejecting. Having been rejected by both these people, I made the decision, regardless of the circumstance, to continue welcoming them. In the failures of my life, Jesus continued to welcome me.

The words of Jesus, ‘Love one another as I have loved you,’ must be not only a light for us but a flame that consumes the self in us. Love, in order to survive, must be nourished by sacrifices, especially the sacrifice of self.²¹

Hillvue Heights Church is a cross-cultural experience each and every Sunday, where unity exists in the midst of diversity. There is a great deal of diversity and opposition among people, but the unifying component of it all is love and forgiveness. Without love, you cannot have a porch. Without forgiveness, you cannot have a porch, which is very much like an altar, a place where reconciliations begin through welcoming, loving, encouraging, and celebrating people.

Healing Continued

In May 2002, a 50-something African-American lady registered for Pastoral Care University. She was very withdrawn, but soaked up everything about the seminar. A few weeks following this, she felt led to join the greeter team for the 8:00 service. She began attending Pastoral Care Meetings in my home the last Tuesday of every month. I began

²⁰ Mother Teresa, *In the Heart of the World*, (New York: Fine Communications, 1997), 80.

²¹ Ibid, 48.

seeing tremendous growth in her spiritual walk. She cared for her mother, worked at Western Kentucky University full-time, and began taking classes part-time toward her bachelor degree.

In May 2005, she graduated with her bachelor degree. The Pastoral Care Team decided to honor this milestone of achievement by hosting a graduation party in her honor. The monthly Pastoral Care Meeting was the obvious choice to honor her. She arrived at the house with her daughter and grandchildren in tow with a smile as wide as the open sea. That night of celebration, she wore her cap and gown and had her picture taken with everyone at the meeting. Her sister received an invitation, but declined to celebrate this. Several months later, their mother passed away. It was at the casket where reconciliation and healing took place as the youngest sister sought forgiveness for whatever had occurred between them. I had conveyed to the youngest sister to never give up on reconciliation, that the Lord Jesus offers to us when we draw unto Him. I am thankful to report that last month, the two sisters who had been at odds for years stood side by side during communion, one holding the cup, the other the plate.

Stories of Spiritual Healing

Several months ago, I received a call from a member of our congregation whose grandfather had requested baptism. He lived in a community approximately one hour from Bowling Green, Kentucky. The family agreed to provide transportation and to secure a location for the baptism. Another pastor and I took one set of waders and traveled to Leitchfield, Kentucky. Upon arriving, we discovered that the gentleman was recovering from a stroke and unable to walk. Therefore, he was in a wheelchair, and the

church's baptistery was on the second floor with no elevator. The people at the church looked at us, wondering how this going to happen. My colleague and I both held the sides of the chair and proceeded to carry him up the steps. By this time, it was quite apparent that it would take both of us to baptize this man so we were in need of another set of waders. When I asked the pastor in charge if his church had an extra pair, he replied, "Yes, somewhere." Moments later, he brought the waders to me. My colleague wore the set of waders from Hillvue and I wore the borrowed set. Once we got the man into the baptistry, the Holy Spirit began to move as we asked him if he was a believer in Jesus Christ, if he believed that Jesus took death on the cross, arose from the grave, and was in his heart. He gestured yes to all the questions concerning baptism. Once we brought him up from the water, my colleague asked him, "Wasn't that great?" As with many stroke patients, expressive skills are delayed while receptive language skills are intact but for the first time in many months, the man answered, "I'm better than I was when I got here." All of us there wept with joy when he spoke.

The front/wraparound porch cultivates a cross-cultural environment. Many churches are homogenous, as they welcome only a select few. However, a true biblical church could be readily identifiable as cross-cultural. In other words, there is unity in diversity. An example of this is the two Jim's. Jim 1 arrived at church stoned, obviously lost, tattooed, pierced, black belt in karate, with no idea what he was looking for. Simply put, he felt hopeless. Upon being welcomed and ministered to with the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Jim 1, without realizing it, ended up at the altar. He repented of sin and asked Jesus to come into his life, was baptized, and continued to be embraced by the Body of Christ at Hillvue. Thus, the journey had begun, and since his first days in the

church, he has baptized over 100 people, many of them lost, tattooed, pierced, and feeling hopeless.

Jim 2 represented the American dream of business savvy, wise investor, financially self-made, and yet utterly lost. While he looked like he had life figured out on the outside, the inside questioned the value, purpose, and meaning of life. Simply put, he felt hopeless. His first experience was also based upon an initial invitation which resulted in a crucial question he had never answered. Where will you be 100 years from now?

As I thought about the two Jim's, I wondered in what other place could these two be welcomed, celebrated, and embraced? My mind immediately went to the gates of Disney, where each person is welcomed, celebrated, and embraced, regardless of their culture. How sad that Disney first comes to mind, rather than the church in North America. "It all began with a mouse,' Walt Disney was fond of saying of his ever-growing international entertainment conglomerate, although, in fact, Disney's own career predated Mickey's by nearly a decade."²² In the same way, the mission of Hillvue Heights predates the church's existence.

"As I argued in *life in fragments* (Polity Press, 1996), postmodern society engages its members primarily in their capacity as consumers rather than producers."²³ This is where the church would part ways with Disney. As they see people coming through the gates as consumers, Jesus' plan is to utilize people as producers of His love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. Upon finding Jesus, the two Jim's found purpose, significance, and meaning. It is hard telling how many lives they have impacted since they were welcomed. Two people from two totally different cultures were welcomed, embraced,

²² Lassell, 17.

²³ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity* (Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2000), 76.

loved, and celebrated by the same people. While this story sounds like the Disney story, it happened in the church and began on the front porch. As my mother would say, “This makes my heart sing.”

Stories of Physical Healing

The church of the 21st Century must have a moveable front porch, instead of a stationary front porch. In fact, the porch should be fluid and therefore, move into the world. For example, I was in the gym and had the opportunity to be a front porch by welcoming a young lady named Emily. This connection seemed as a casual conversation, but turned into a ministry episode of conversion and divine healing.

Over the course of several weeks, conversations continued to unfold during my daily AM visits to the gym. Emily had recently accepted an engagement ring and asked if I would be interested in performing the wedding ceremony. I responded that I would be honored to be a part of this extraordinary day in her life. However, prior to marrying couples, I require three premarital counseling sessions. She asked why it was necessary, and I explained the meaning of covenant and how couples not only make a covenant before one another, but with God. The steps leading to the porch provided this opportunity to share the Gospel message of Jesus with her and her future husband.

The outdoor wedding was, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful ceremonies that I’ve had the privilege of being a part of. The Holy Spirit was undeniably present by sweeping throughout the worshippers who had gathered to celebrate this momentous occasion in Emily and Brian’s lives. In the midst of the sweltering heat, the peace of God overrode and His abundant love was reminiscent of a spring like shower.

Following their honeymoon, Emily accepted a job with a food service company. Lo and behold, Hillvue Heights Church was one of her accounts. Therefore, Emily was in our administrative offices every week. Several months following, her husband called the office and began sharing with me how Emily had been experiencing dizziness. They opted to visit the emergency room. It was during this visit/assessment that a tumor was discovered on the base of her brain. This reminded me of how fragile life is, but also how powerful God is. God knew this before I ever met Brian and Emily. I'm thankful that He placed Emily in my path and I opted to converse with her. It is a stark reminder that the entrance to the porch manifests itself in many different places. God is always willing to present light into a person's life; yet, God uses people to present that light, so we must be always ready and always willing.

Due to the location and severity of the upcoming operation, Brian and Emily consulted with surgeons at Vanderbilt University. The morning of her surgery, several other members of the Pastoral Care Team and I drove down I-65 South and asked Jesus to use our hands, our eyes, our mouths, and our hearts to minister to Brian and Emily. Our goal was to be there, waiting for them when they arrived at the hospital. Emily and Brian's faces lit up once they saw us. Prior to her going back to pre-op, we laid hands on her and prayed for physical healing. Praise be to God that this healing was not only within His realm, but also His will. The tumor that was thought to be malignant had calcified, and therefore, not spread. I never dreamed that our initial conversations at the gym would lead to a team of people praying for healing at Vanderbilt University.

The next Pastoral Care University, Emily attended and began embracing the overall care model at Hillvue Heights Church. She participated in Pastoral Care Sunday

and even brought handkerchiefs to each member of the 240+ choir, as she was unable to sing without crying tears of joy and thanksgiving, due to the miraculous touch of Jesus in and through His children.

Never forget that the porch is not just the entrance into the church; it's the places we are everyday. Never forget that we are called to be, for someone, what Jesus has been for us, in and through others. Through Emily's membership at a gym, a God-appointed moment was seized. Thus, a healing began, even before she realized she was sick. That is the essence of a spiritual porch.

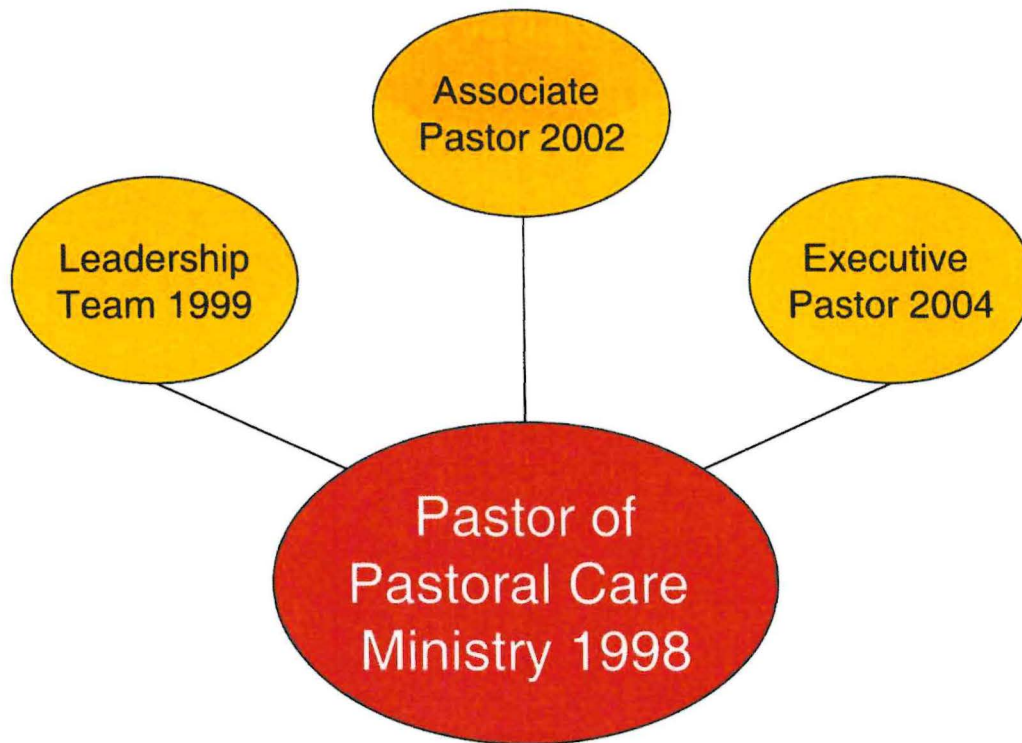
Stories of Cross Cultural Care

Implications of the cultural and spiritual significance of the front porch as a metaphor for the overall care model of the church. A classic example is Yelena Balandina, a Russian immigrant, who became a part of Hillvue Heights Church and was so touched by her front porch experience that she participated in Pastoral Care University in March 2004. The front porch experience for her embodied a welcoming spirit once she entered the Hillvue Heights campus that led to a welcoming spirit upon entering the Worship Center and a Spirit-filled worship experience. I believe that the altar at Hillvue Heights Church is, within itself, a front porch, a place that belongs to no one, but everyone is welcome. As Yelena lived the front porch, a need arose in the local Russian and Bosnian communities. Yelena immediately thought of her church and orchestrated a meeting between Pastor Steve Ayers, myself, and Pastors Paul and Sergey Barko that resulted in a fourth worship service at Hillvue Heights campus for the Russian and Bosnian immigrants, thus enlarging culturally and spiritually the front porch of Hillvue

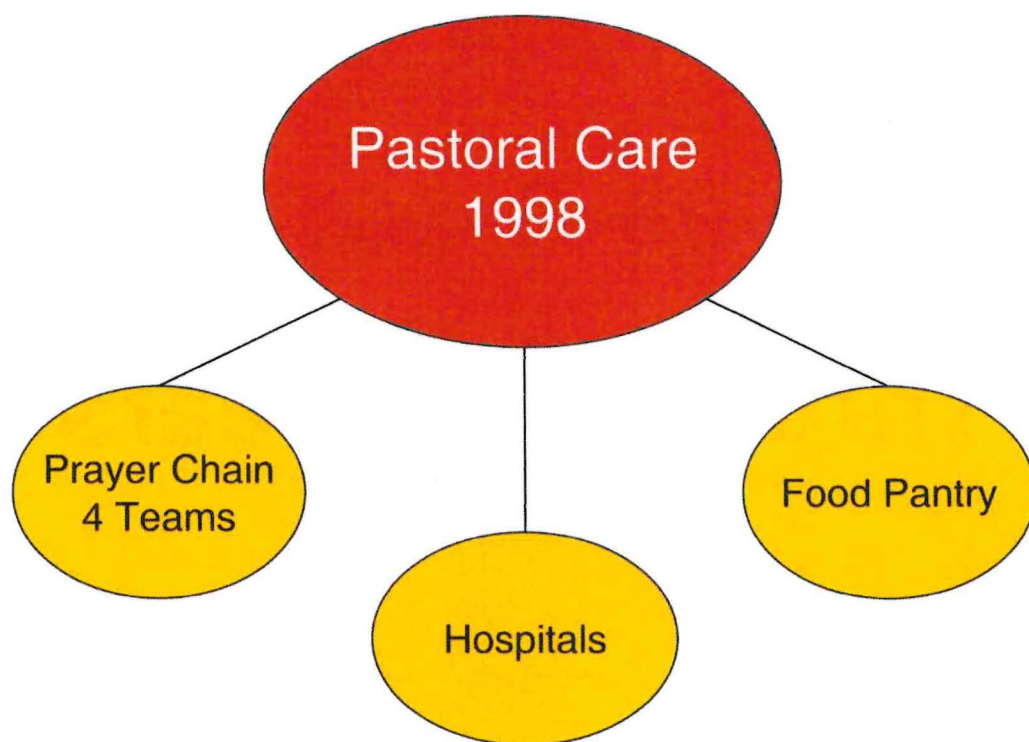
Heights Church. The service has grown from 20 to 40+ in a little over a year. In addition, people have received Jesus as their personal Savior and have taken the first step of obedience in baptism. A front porch is an integral factor toward removing barriers, thus widening the door for people of all cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and life experiences, in other words, an environment where diversity is celebrated and unity is experienced via the Holy Spirit.

Appendix 2

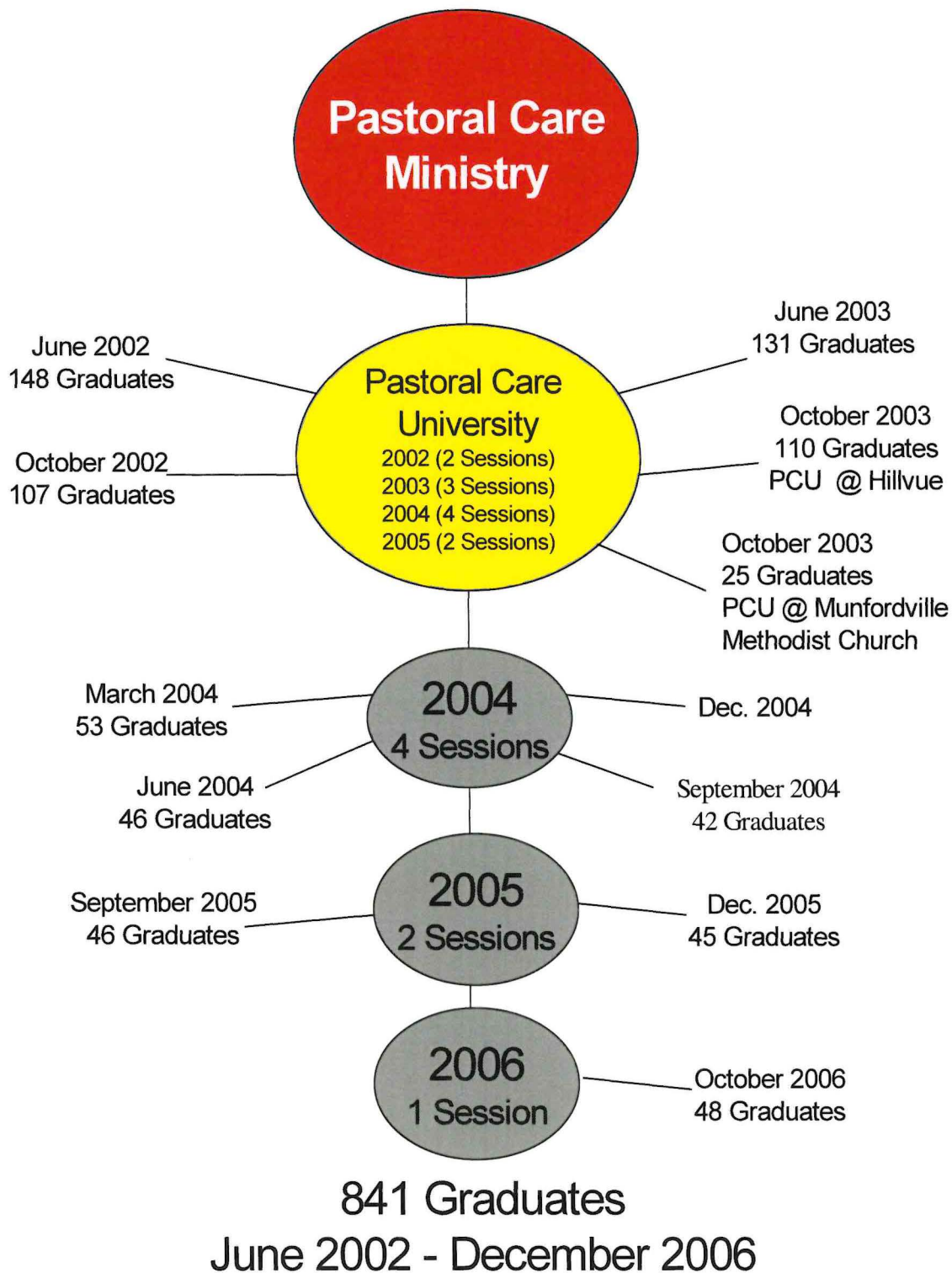
Charts



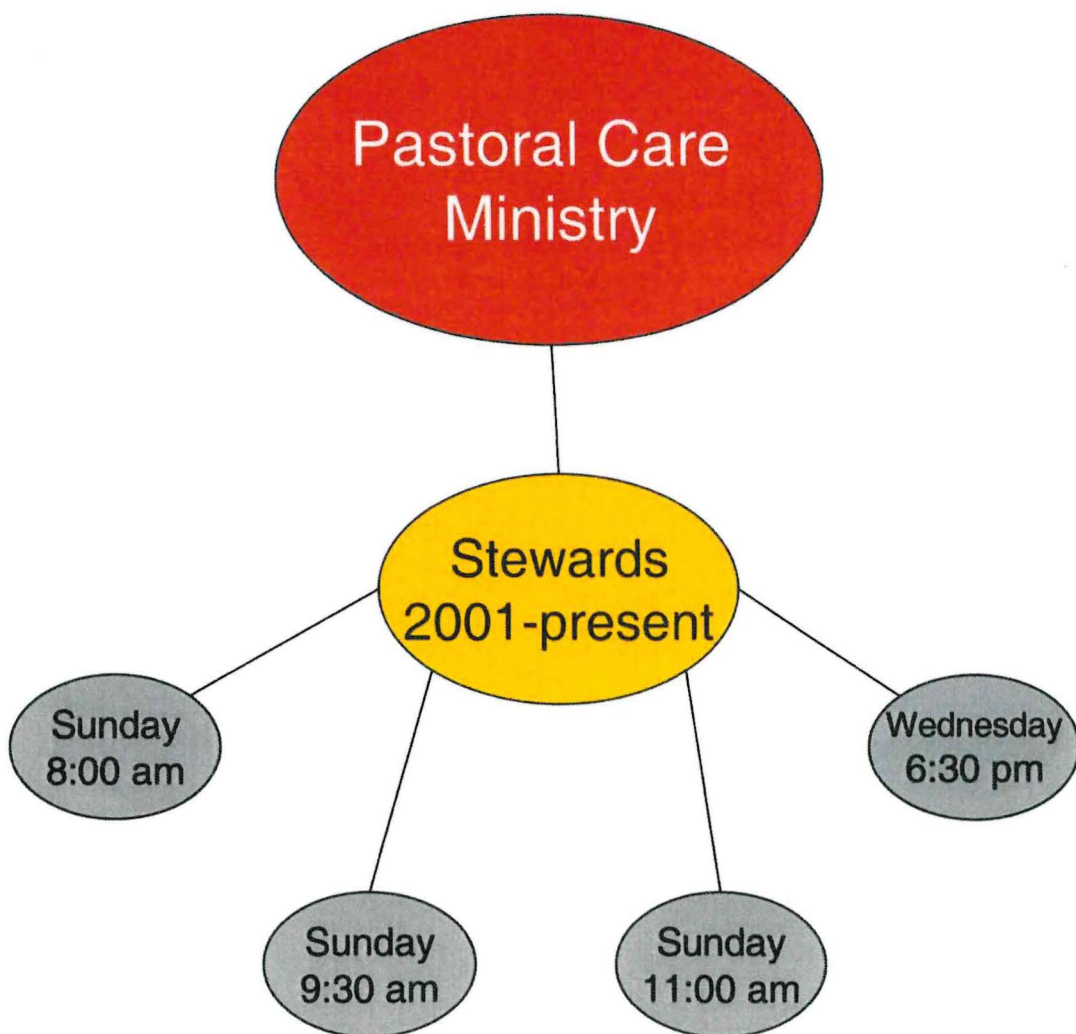
What Pastoral Care consisted of in 1998



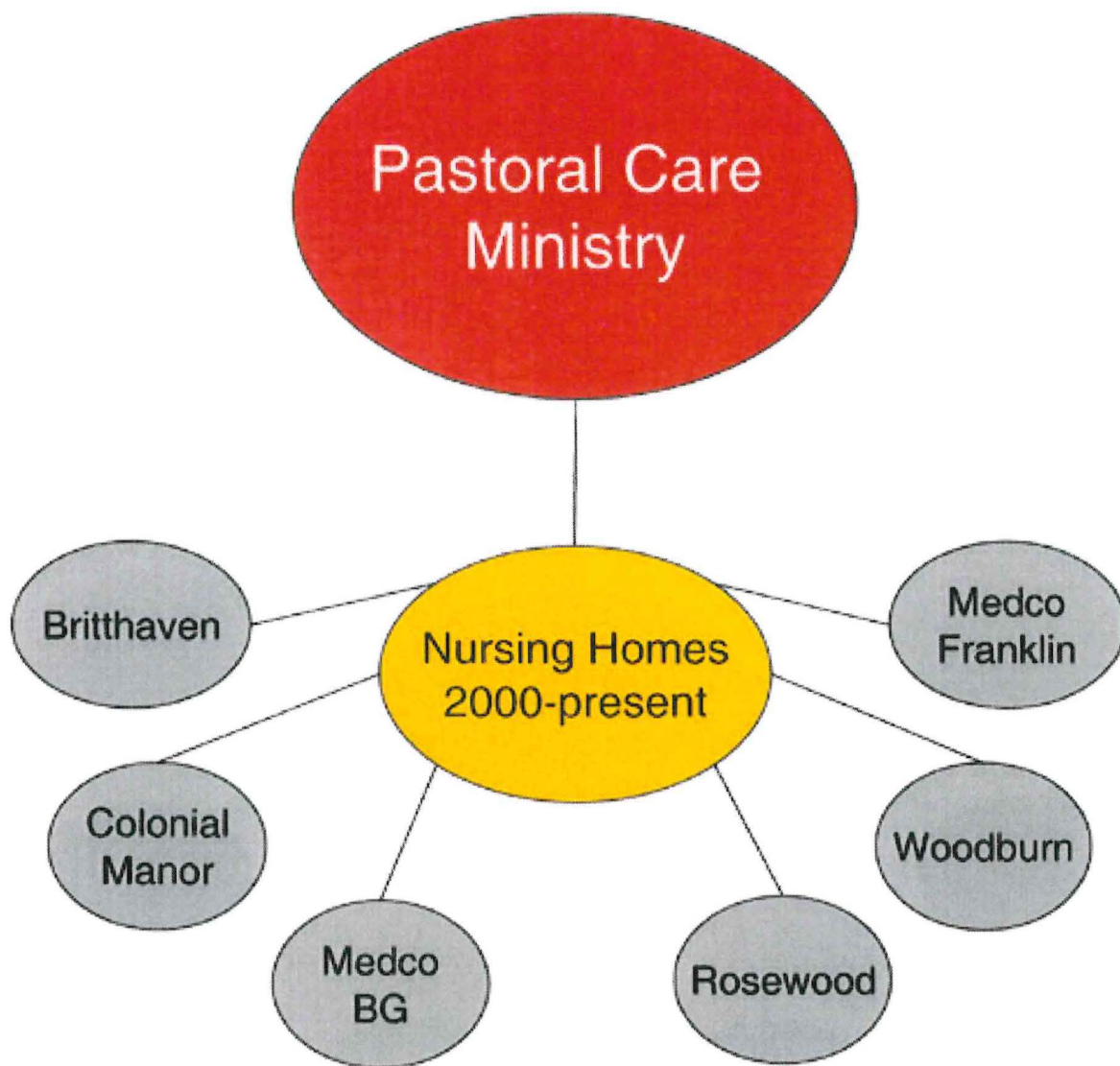
“For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry...”
Ephesians 4:12



***“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so there may be
food in my house...”
Malachi 3:10***

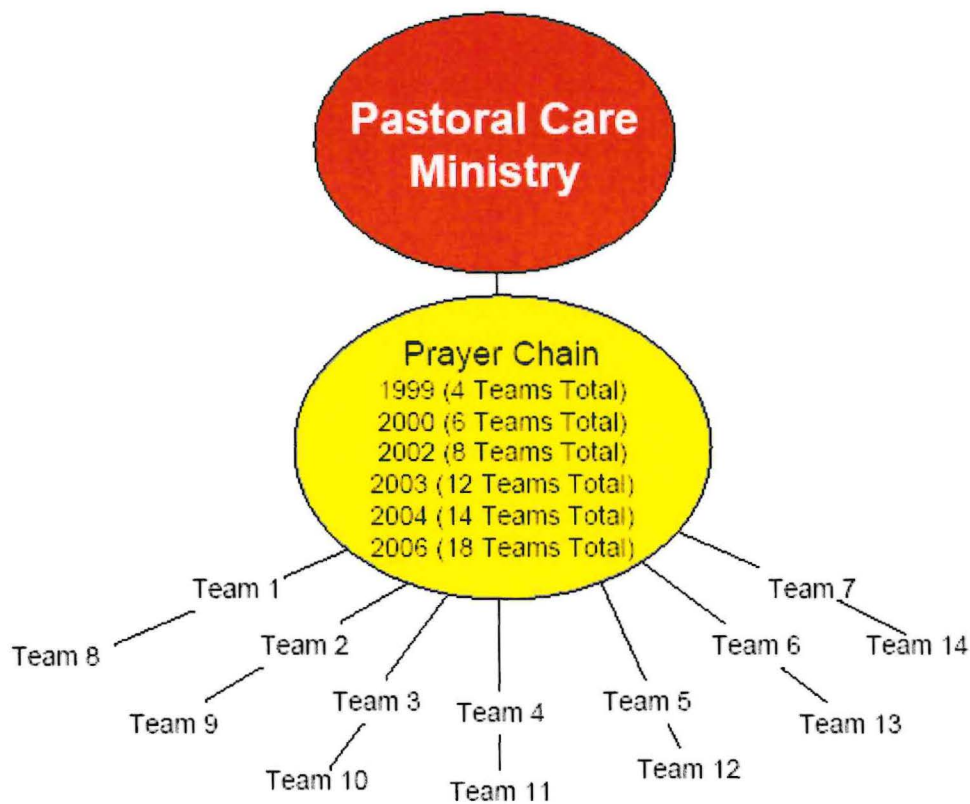


“... I was sick and you looked after me...”
Matthew 25:36



Weekly visits by Pastoral Care Team

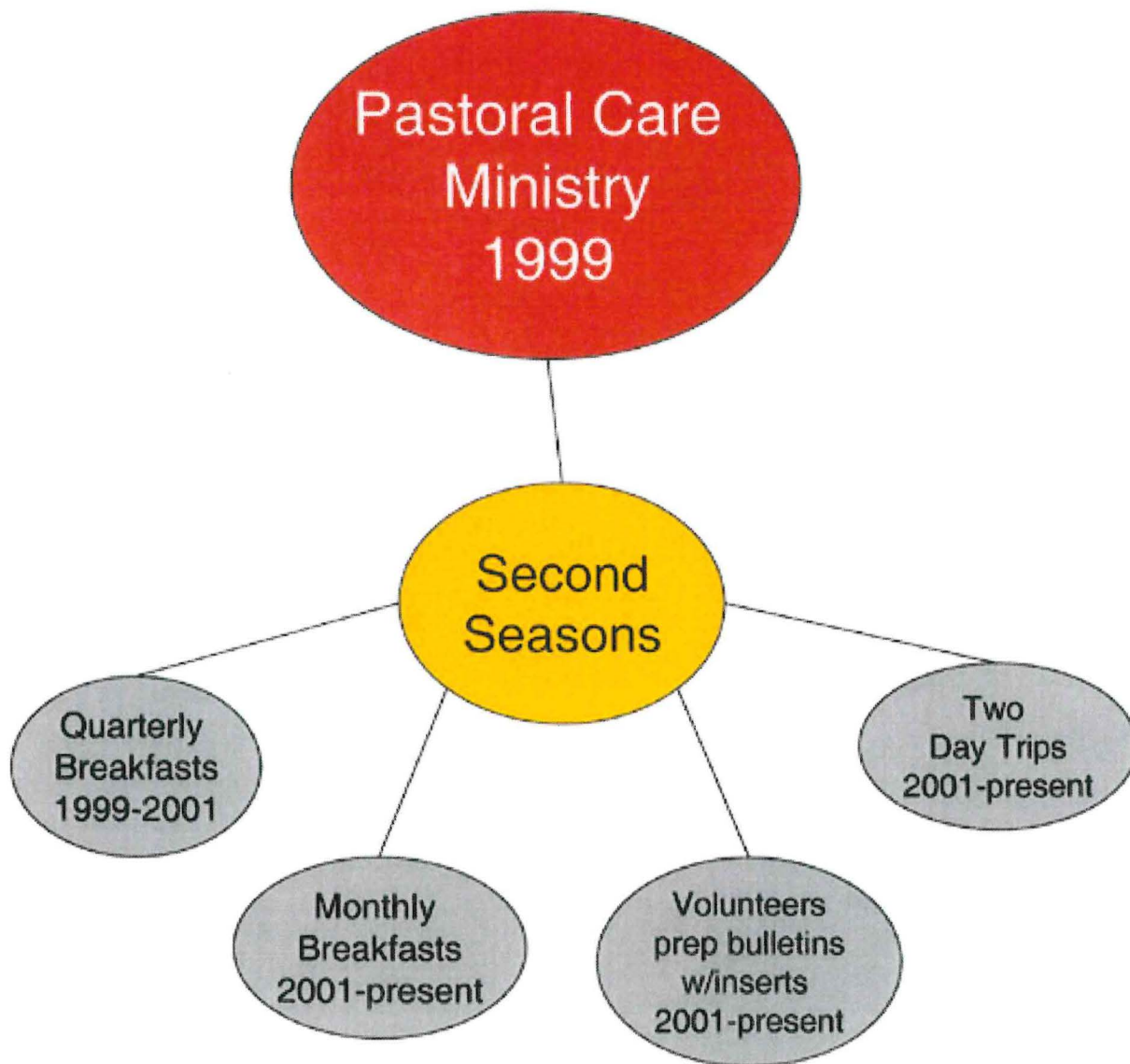
***"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."
Colossians 4:2***



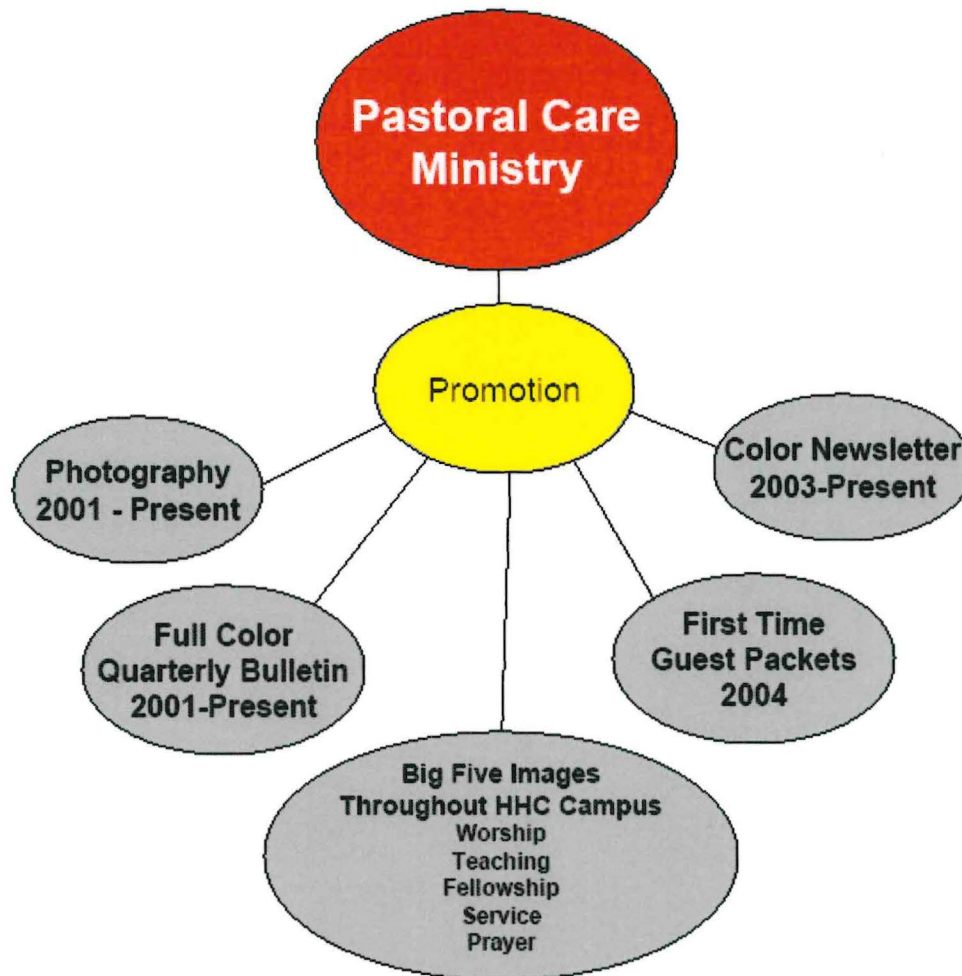
***Average 90 prayer requests per month
70 Team Members***

“Do not rebuke an older man harshly but exhort him as if he were your father... older women as mothers...”

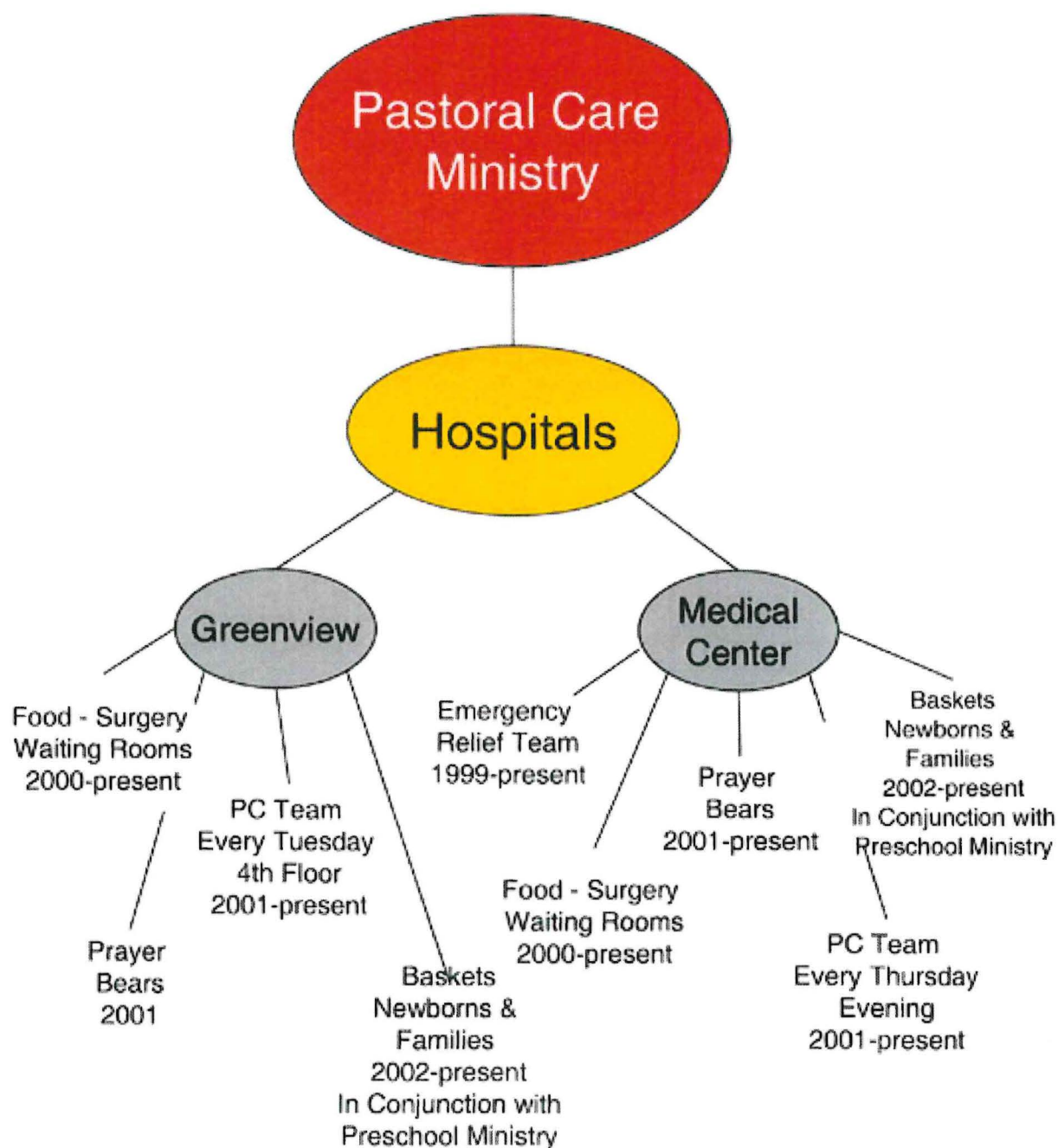
1 Timothy 5:1-2



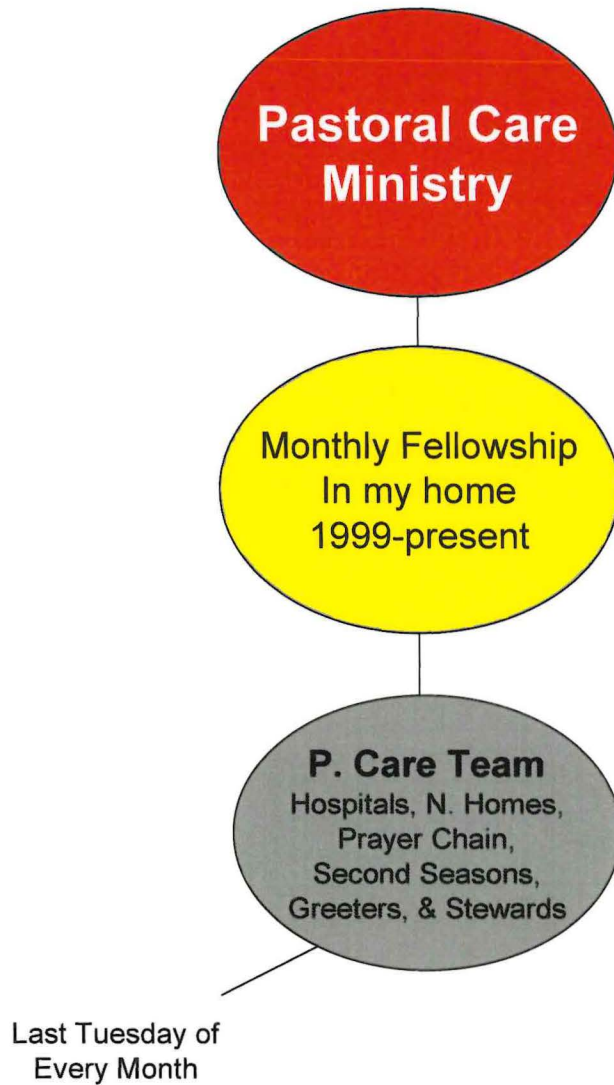
***"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."
Colossians 3:17***



***“... I was sick and you looked after me...”
Matthew 25:36***

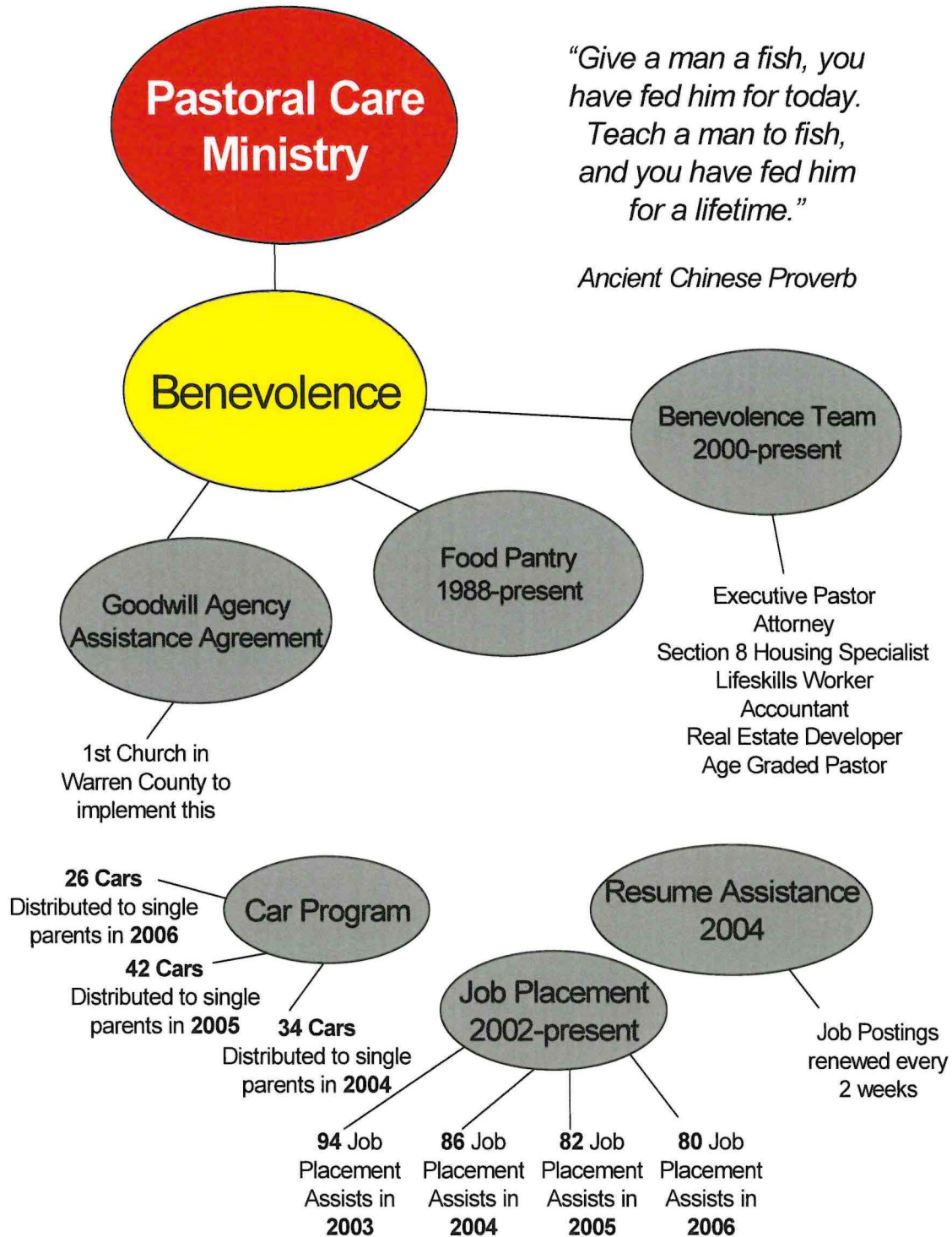


***“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
Acts 2: 42***



"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me..."

Matthew 25:35-36A



Appendix 3

Pastoral Care Reviews

“The Pastoral Care Ministry is more than just people taking care of people; it’s allowing people to realize that God will totally remake them. Pastoral Care Ministry at Hillvue Heights Church is more than a kind word. It is a kind action, it is a loving heart, and it is a response from a loving God that totally remakes our lives. Check it out, and you also will learn that caring for the community of people that God has created will bring you to a full understanding that Jesus Christ is a God that remakes our lives.”

Dr. Stephen L. Ayers

Lead Pastor

“My wife and I found Pastoral Care University to be a Biblically-based and very practical learning experience. Pastor Mark’s passion to do and to live pastoral care is infectious! The connection that he made from the beginning of the class between evangelism and pastoral care sparked a greater urgency to do care giving in the name of Jesus. Pastor Mark’s focus on recognizing the changing “landscapes” of human relationships revealed ways we can minister with grace in the midst of others’ happiness and celebration, or hurt and despair. Whether you have known Christ a short or a long time, Pastoral Care University will open your eyes to the passion of Jesus to help and to heal.”

Dr. John and Pam Hurtgen (Dr. John Hurtgen is Dean of the School of Theology at
Campbellsville University, Campbellsville, KY)
Campbellsville Baptist Church
Campbellsville, KY

“Mark, I’m really glad that we both got to attend. Harel took several notes or made
comments about how good he thought it was. He was listening very intently and I know
that he is glad to have participated. You did an outstanding job in your presentation. The
teacher in you is always present and I appreciate that. Not everyone can or needs to be
teaching!!! We are so blessed to have you as pastor.”

Judy and Harel Carrier

“Great class this weekend...on so many different levels. Thank you for your time,
willingness, and wisdom. A grateful recipient of your pastoral care gift.”

Sue Broaddus

Appendix 4

Pastoral Care University Schedule

Session 1, Saturday Session: 8:00am-12:30pm

Saturday

8:00-8:30 Breakfast and registration

- Introduction
- Review of Core Values of Hillvue Heights Church
- Pastoral Care as the front porch

The front porch to every church. We'll welcome you, love you, pray for you, celebrate with you. Hope and love extended to others all in the name of Jesus.

- Discovering the direction for loving and caring for people
- Pastoral Care – Olympic race (race metaphor video)
- When fully embraced

When fully embraced, pastoral care is an evangelistic movement. With this in mind, four components of Pastoral Care here at Hillvue consist of:

1)Healing.

2)Sustaining.

3)Guiding.

4)Reconciling.

- Paul's Model of Pastoral Care

Paul was concerned not just for the corporate health of the churches in his care, but also for the well being of individuals.

Paul commended pastoral care to the Thessalonians: their mutual care for one another was to take place on an individual basis (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Paul also encouraged his converts in general to be involved in pastoral care.

Likening the church to a body, he spoke of the members having “the same care for another” (1 Corinthians 12:25), so that “if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26 and Romans 12:15).

- Definition and (fleshing out) of Spirit-Driven Care
- Titus Touch
- Food Ministry
- Benevolence

Food

Clothing

Housing (temporary and permanent)

Utilities

Youth Service Centers

Aging Services

Counseling

Resume assistance

Job placement

Car program

- Nursing Home Ministry

What to do, what not to do

Information about the aged

Incorporating other ministries into nursing home visitation, e.g., children, junior and senior high

Session 2, Sunday Session: 12:30-5:00pm

12:30-1:00pm Lunch and registration

- Guidelines for Children Visiting in the Nursing homes
- Hospital visitation
- Later Adulthood -- Integrity vs. Despair
- DivorceCare and Six Stages of loss
- Definition of Grief
- Stages of Grief

Denial

Anger/Resentment

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

- The Bible and Grief
- How to help families experiencing grief
- Loss of parent
- Loss of spouse
- Loss of sibling

- Loss of child
- Loss of pet
- Talking with a child about death
 - Loss of family
 - Loss of pet
- Miscarriage
- Forgiveness
- Four cornerstones of Jesus' Prayer life
- Prayer Chain Ministry

Appendix 5

October 2006 Session

PCU Evaluation for October 2006

Rate the following on a scale of 1-4: Average scores

1 = No 2 = very little 3 = somewhat 4 = yes

4.0 1. Did PCU reveal to you new information about Spirit-driven care?

3.975 2. Were the presentations of the sessions clearly communicated?

3.975 3. Do you feel that the times of PCU were beneficial in your participation?

If not, what times do you think would work better?

3.975 4. Do you feel that PCU ignited a new passion for Pastoral Care?

3.925 5. Was the PowerPoint helpful in communicating the sessions?

4.0 6. Do you feel the presenter knew the subject well?

3.975 7. Would you recommend PCU for other believers?

1.15 8. Did you feel that any issues related to Pastoral Care were omitted? If so,
which ones?

3.95 9. Do you feel that PCU was worthy of your time?

4.0 10. Do you see PCU as a needed component of ministry in the Body of Christ?

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