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Becoming Missional: Essential Characteristics Necessary in Transitioning the Church to Engage a Postmodern Culture

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BECOMING MISSIONAL:
ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS NECESSARY IN
TRANSITIONING THE CHURCH
TO ENGAGE A POSTMODERN CULTURE

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

BY
JAMES R. ARMSTRONG

NEWBERG, OREGON

23 March 2007

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DATE: MARCH 6, 2007

TITLE:

**BECOMING MISSIONAL: ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
NECESSARY IN TRANSITIONING
THE CHURCH TO ENGAGE A POSTMODERN CULTURE**

***WE THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ
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SCOPE AND QUALITY TO COMPLETE THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN
LEADERSHIP IN THE EMERGING CULTURE DEGREE***


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ABSTRACT

The church is in transition at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Throughout western history, the church has spoken her truth and been a primary source of community, faith, and life. She now struggles to find relevance as contemporary societal currents create confusion. The result is a clash of sacred and secular as the church adapts to a postmodern world and global society.

The contemporary church may have forgotten her identity as God's people sent into the world; instead, she may have found herself a purveyor in a consumerist culture. The thesis of this paper is that the church can regain her biblical identity as a missional community and practice a faithful evangelical mission. Mission involves essential characteristics that are necessary for the church to engage the postmodern world.

Chapter 1 introduces the postmodern challenge and lays the foundation for the rest of the paper. This chapter provides demographics, definitions, and a context for understanding the uniqueness of the challenge. Chapter 2 presents foundation biblical materials about the church's mission and identity, offers scriptural evidence for God's calling, and assesses how far the contemporary church has strayed from its biblical mandate.

Chapter 3 includes material from Christian history and thought that demonstrates the church has reached cultures in the past in ways the modern church has not accomplished. Chapter 4 describes the missional evangelism models applicable in the postmodern environment and the church's response to the challenges.

Different models of leadership are presented in Chapter 5 that facilitate the transition into a missional community. Chapter 6 identifies characteristics essential for missional church evangelistic efforts in the postmodern culture that communicate the gospel in today's world. The paper's conclusion reaffirms the thesis statement and the concept that the church is sent into the world on mission and can engage the postmodern culture.

DEDICATION

To the three little people that make life meaningful:

J. Austin, Alysse McKayla, and Ashlea Grace

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This project was completed with the help of a number of people to whom I am deeply indebted.

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To my Louisiana family . . . thanks for loving me over the years and sharing your most precious gift with me. You have spiced up my life in so many ways . . . Cajun style of course.

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And finally to those that remind me what life is truly about, and in hopes you will help lead the church into the future . . . this project is dedicated to you:

J. Austin, Alysse McKayla, and Ashlea Grace

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... iii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES vii

Chapter

1. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH 1

2. SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR MISSIONAL FOUNDATION 22

3. EVANGELISM IN A MISSIONAL CHURCH CONTEXT..... 35

4. TRANSITIONING EVANGELISM:

FROM THE PAST TO POSTMODERN 46

5. LEADERSHIP EXPRESSIONS FOR A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY 77

6. ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR ENGAGING THE CULTURE 94

APPENDIX A. “The M-Tool Survey” 123

APPENDIX B. “M-Tool Research Survey of Five Global Churches”..... 133

BIBLIOLGRAPHY 156

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. ADULTS ATTENDING CHURCH RECENTLY.....	4
2. PERSONS LIKELY TO ATTEND CHURCH ON A TYPICAL WEEKEND BY AGE GROUP.....	5
3. LIKELIHOOD OF A CHURCH TO USE THE INTERNET.....	12
4. PHYSICAL APPROACH TO LEARNING STYLES OF THE POSTMODERN GENERATION.....	109

CHAPTER 1

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light.

Helen Keller

The church has lost her effectiveness in the American culture; however she can reclaim her effectiveness.¹ This paper's thesis is that the reclamation will take place when the church recaptures her missional identity and practices faithful mission. This requires that the church function as a gathering of believers on mission in the twenty-first century.

The church has forgotten her primary responsibility articulated in the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20a). She practices attractional theology and a consumerist Christianity in North America by over-emphasizing religious goods and services for members and attendees. This paper is based on the assumption that the church can transition into a missional evangelical community. While the church must become missional, she need not become postmodern or an emergent church in identity or function.

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3. Jenkins prophetically speaks to the present condition when he says, "The era of Christianity has passed within our lifetimes."

The recommendations found in this paper are not intended to make a “culture friendly” church, as some critics have discussed.² The church can, instead, continue *Semper Reformada* (always reforming) and reach full maturity as the light and salt of the earth. As a younger evangelical, the author of this paper is influenced by his generation and culture. In this paper, the author seeks to maintain the integrity of the biblical mission while respecting and cherishing tradition.³ The author of this paper, however, challenges the status quo of the church. One writer states:

Could it be the case that the evangelical church in America today has consciously or unconsciously acquiesced to certain aspects of Modern

² D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

³ Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002.) According to Webber, traditional evangelicals are defined as those who think of Christianity primarily as a rational worldview and thus appeal to evidential, foundationalist apologetics. Traditional evangelicals tend to link patriotism and Christianity. These churches tend to be rural or neighborhood churches and are pastor-centered; most programs (such as for the youth) are church-centered. Sunday school is primarily information-centered, and the worship style is traditional and restrained. Evangelism is typically in mass form (e.g., crusades), and social action is focused on political issues such as abortion and homosexuality.

Pragmatic evangelicals tend to think of Christianity as answers to life’s needs and thus their apologetics tend to emphasize experiential, personal faith as giving meaning to life. They strive for culturally-sensitive, market-driven approaches to church growth, tending toward the suburban mega church model. Leadership tends to be developed on a managerial (CEO) model, and programs (such as for the youth) tend to be outreach focused events. Sunday school tends to target generational groups and needs, and the worship style is contemporary. Evangelism focuses on bringing people into seeker-sensitive services in the church. Social action is focused on need driven support groups (divorce, drug rehab, etc.) in addition to larger political issues.

Lastly, younger evangelicals tend to think of Christianity as participation in a community of faith called out by God. Their apologetics, therefore, tend to emphasize community, with a focus on an embodied apologetic and a lived meta-narrative. Rather than combining Christianity and American patriotism or striving to be seeker-sensitive, younger evangelicals tend to emphasize the missional nature of the church, striving to be a counter-cultural community within the world. They tend to start up small churches, often in urban contexts. Their leadership approach is often team-oriented, and their programs (such as for the youth) emphasize small group Bible studies, social action, and interpersonal involvement in existing community organizations and relationships. Their approach to education is to seek out intergenerational formation in community and their worship style is often ancient/future—an attempt to integrate word and flesh, past and present, reason and senses in the life of the community. Evangelism and social action are also community-focused, working through the redemption/restoration of individuals, families, neighborhoods, and cities.

Western culture, to the detriment of the gospel? If this has happened, wouldn't it be likely that we would be largely blind to such acquiescence as long as those Modern cultural conditions went unchallenged or unchanged? Could it not also be that larger cultural shifts that lead to broad questioning of Modern assumptions could allow the church to investigate itself as well? Would not this be a potentially helpful thing for the church to do?⁴

Transformation into a missional community requires more than worship style changes or adoption of innovative church models. A missional community can rethink the nature of the church and discover ways to live out God's calling within the culture. Living out the gospel as a community of faith occurs when the community penetrates the society through authentic relationships, caring communities, and a spiritual life akin to Jesus' faith.⁵ Christ developed disciples differently from modern church methods, and He desires a church community where faith is nurtured and individuals live out their faith.⁶

The thesis of this paper is that the church can recapture its missional identity and practice an evangelical mission, and the author of this paper assumes the missional model is a solution to ineffective church practice. The church struggles to maintain relevance and is challenged by the changing, surrounding society. A great divide grows constantly in the Western world between the sacred and the secular, the people of God, and the

⁴ David M. Mills, *The Emergent Church—Another Perspective. A Critical Response to D. A. Carson's Staley Lectures* (Paper presented at Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH, 17 February 2004), 3-4.

⁵ Lois Y. Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 84-99. Barrett offers up patterns of practice that reflect these characteristics.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95-98.

culture.⁷ The church is no longer the center of the community. At one time she was a voice of authority, but due to the effects of secularism, she has lost her voice.⁸

The church's irrelevance is reflected in the fact that the church population is declining, and mainline denominations are downsizing. By 1990, denominations lost between one-fifth and one-third of their 1965 membership, and the proportion of Americans affiliated with them reached a twentieth-century low.⁹ George Barna's research firm reports the church has lost its effectiveness.¹⁰ Table 1 reports the "Percentage of adults nationwide who have attended a church service in the past seven days not including a special event such as a wedding or a funeral."

Table 1. Adults attending church recently

Percent of adults attended church in last 7 days							
1991	1992	1996	1997	2000	2001	2002	2004
49%	47%	37%	43%	40%	42%	43%	43%

Barna's data reveals fluctuations over the years, but reports a decline from the early 1990s. His research further demonstrates that Mosaics are least likely to attend church on a typical weekend (see table 2):¹¹

⁷ George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, eds., *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 84.

⁸ James V. Brownson, Inagrace T. Dietterich, Barry A. Harvey, and Charles C. West, *StormFront: The Good News of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2003), 8.

⁹ Benton Johnson, Dean R. Hoge, and Donald A. Luidens, "Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline" *First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life* 31, (March 1993): 13-18.

¹⁰ www.Barna.org/ChurchAttendance (accessed on 10 December, 2006).

¹¹ Regent University states, "Although it is difficult to identify the precise beginning and end of the Mosaic Generation, also known as the Millennial Generation, scholars generally agree that it began with those born in 1982, and has ended with those born around 2002. The Mosaic Generation is currently

Table 2. Persons likely to attend church on a typical weekend by age group

Percent likely to attend church in a typical weekend			
Elders	Baby Boomers	Baby Busters	Mosaics
54%	49%	43%	33%

Barna reports “a 92% increase in the number of unchurched Americans in the last thirteen years. In 1991, there were 39 million unchurched Americans compared with 75 million currently (2004).” He explains:

Although they comprise slightly less than half of the national population, men constitute 55% of the unchurched. (2006) The average unchurched person is 41, which is younger than the national norm of 45. (2006) One-fifth of American adults (21%) are never-married singles, whereas nearly one-half of the unchurched fit that definition (48%). (2006)¹²

The author of this paper speaks with persons not affiliated with the church and they describe the church as irrelevant, judgmental, archaic, stoical, problematic, and a crutch. It is not viewed as the light and salt of the earth; instead, the church is disregarded and judged an outdated symbol. Instead of sharing the truth within the culture, many Christians may have retreated from it in a hostile fashion. They view the culture as the enemy and do not see the church as a part of the greater community.

The average church offers promotional materials designed to help Christians connect with fellow believers, but offer little information or training on healthy

the youngest generation and has distinct characteristics that differentiate it from previous generations.” *Leadership Advance Online* VII, http://www.regent.edu/acad/sls/publications/journals/leadershipadvance/issue_7/pdf/mosaic_generation_oppel.pdf (accessed 1 March 2007).

¹² Ibid.

relationships with non-Christians.¹³ While evangelistic methods and techniques are described, few churches emphasize meaningful friendships with non-Christians as the primary evangelistic approach. The church's existing models of reaching the world are not as effective as they once were. At the same time, however, believers are called to bring a message of hope, love, and faith to a society that does not value institutional religion. The church can identify missional evangelical methods designed for effective mission in modern times. These emerging models of church-life place high priority on relationships with a clear focus on the person.¹⁴ The new Christian approach can move from "let's get them saved" to "let's join them on the journey" and serve as guides along the way.

This paper's thesis is that the church can be effective in the postmodern era when the church recaptures her missional identity and practices a faithful evangelical mission. In the postmodern culture, this method calls Christians to invite non-believers into friendships as spiritual launching points, rather than invitations to Sunday school or evangelistic events. The thesis raises a key question for Christians and churches: "How do we connect to the non-Christians in our community?" This question is central to this paper.

¹³ While many authors reviewed for this paper spoke of ways for the church to connect to the culture, serve communities, engage in justice and ethical issues, few identified specific means to train Christians in relationship building.

¹⁴ Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 59-71.

Factors that influence the Church's Effectiveness

The Decline of Church Attendance

Many observers have documented the loss of missional identity by the church including, for example Darrell Guder in his text *Missional Church : A Vision for Sending the Church in North America* outlines the fact that the church sees missions as simply a program of the church rather than its identity. While this is not evidence of a lack of missional intention by the church, it does reveal a substantial problem: the church is not growing and has lost impact on the culture. Although attendance does not prove unfaithfulness, careful attention must be given when church attendance declines. The decline is a warning sign, especially as the American population increases in total numbers.

Barna provides more important data: “Although they comprise slightly less than half of the national population, men constitute 55% of the unchurched¹⁵ The average unchurched person is 41, which is younger than the national norm of 45.¹⁶ One-fifth of American adults (21%) are never-married singles, whereas nearly one-half of the unchurched fit that definition (48%).”¹⁷ Barna confirms the church's decline, with some exceptions:

Catholicism has dropped from more than 30% adherence among self-described Christians in the early nineties—and as recently as 1997 and 1998—to just 24% in 1999. The mainline Protestant churches are still in

¹⁵ www.Barna.org

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Darrel L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 6.

slow decline, having dropped from 21% in 1990 to 17% in 1999. Compensating for these losses has been the rise in teen allegiance to charismatic and Pentecostal churches, which have nearly tripled from 4% in 1995 to 11% today. The major denominational affiliations have been static in recent years. Since the mid-nineties Baptists have stood at (17%), as have Methodists (7%), Lutherans (5%), and Presbyterians (3%).¹⁸

An interesting fact is that 88 percent of young adults call themselves Christians, but only one-quarter of self-described Christian teenagers claim to be “absolutely committed” to the Christian faith.¹⁹

Geography plays a part in the demographic study. Barna reports, “The highest concentration of unchurched adults is in the West where 43% of adults are unchurched and the Northeast (40%), compared to 28% of residents in the South and Midwest who are unchurched.”²⁰

The analysis is more dramatic based on the history of Christianity and its movement around the world. At one time Europe was the center of Christianity, and it sent missionaries all over the world. Brian McLaren describes the situation, “Once the steadfast of Christendom and the launching point for much of American Christianity, England’s church attendance is now well under 10%. Looking to Europe as a whole, one sees the sad state of affair—church attendance under 5%. There is an observable church drop-out rate of Christian young people as they leave home for college or life on their

¹⁸ www.Barna.org. 46.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

own.”²¹ America can boast its past glories in evangelism and mission work, but church attendance is now near only 40 percent of the population, and Christianity’s social impact is reduced.²² The decline in attendance reduces the church’s effectiveness.

Relational Dynamics

People join churches to experience friendships and community, and future generations may be more focused on relational issues. Barna reports, “Half of all teenagers are described by the Influencing style (I). These are ‘people people’. They tend to be animated and lively individuals, and they live for interaction with others. These are compassionate people and tend to want to help others whenever possible.”²³ Churches that stress non-relational programs may not appeal to this generation.

The next generation, while more relational, will probably be more dominant. Barna states, “One out of every four teenagers (27%) is characterized by the Dominant style (D). These are your classic, ‘type A’ leaders—problem solvers committed to making things happen and getting immediate results.”²⁴ These individuals display leadership capability, but they will not tolerate church irrelevancy because they are not submissive or long-suffering.

Blended families and multiculturalism add additional dynamics to many churches:

²¹ Brian D. McLaren, “A Radical Re-thinking of our Evangelistic Strategy: The Challenge of Evangelism in the 21st Century,” *Theology News and Notes* (Fall 2004): 4-6.

²² Ibid.

²³ George Barna, *Third Millennium Teens: Research on the Minds, Hearts, and Souls of America’s Teenagers* (Ventura, CA: The Barna Research Group, 1999), 10.

²⁴ Ibid., 10.

In 1980, three percent of all married couples of all ages were in ethnically or racially mixed marriages. By 1998, that proportion had grown to five percent and probably will approach fifteen percent by 2020. In 1998, one-fifth of all Asian-ancestry wives in the United States were married to non-Asian men. Two-thirds of all married Latinos in America in 1998 who had completed at least one year of college were married to a non-Latino. One out of eight of all American-born married blacks in 1998 with at least one year of college were married to a non-black spouse.²⁵

The nature and expression of marriage is also changing as various groups redefine family and marriage. Various pressure groups, including the President of the United States, are actively redefining or defending traditional marriage concepts.²⁶ Barna writes about the status of American families in his book, *What Americans Believe*:

The family is making a comeback. During the Seventies and Eighties, family suffered a tarnished image. And adults were less inclined than in prior decades to devote time and energy to the building of strong nuclear families. Behaviors that are now accepted as normal—divorce, co-habitation, delaying the bearing of children until older ages, spending less time in family activity—were initiated, causing quite a stir. Don't get the wrong idea. Adults today are not returning to the pre-Seventies notions of what makes a strong family. Divorce remains high, child care centers are booming, co-habitation is more prolific than ever, women are continuing to have their first child at a later age. The incidence of premarital sex has reached epidemic proportions, as has the number of births of illegitimate children.²⁷

Children ask serious questions about the purpose of life and find few answers:

“Three out of four teenagers (74%) concur that they are still trying to figure out the

²⁵ Lyle E. Schaller, *What Have We Learned: Lessons for the Church in the Twenty-First Century* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 165.

²⁶ <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/wm399.cfm> (accessed 7 March 2007).

²⁷ George Barna, *The Barna Report: What Americans Believe: An Annual Survey of Values and Religious Views in the United States* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1991), 24f.

purpose or meaning in their life.”²⁸ People seek purpose, and this may explain their relational struggles, drug problems, alcoholism, sexual dysfunction, work-a-holism, and discontent. Barna writes, “This journey [in finding purpose] is hindered by the fact that most of them- 63% admit that they do not have any comprehensive and clear ‘philosophy about life that consistently influences their lifestyle and decisions’. Everyday remains a day of discovery for them, a time to try new ideas, new behaviors and new relationships in their quest to solve the puzzle of life.”²⁹

Single parent families add another relational dynamic to the contemporary scene. “The 2000 Census reveals that the number of families headed by single mothers has risen 25% since 1990. Contributing to this figure are the high rate of divorce and out-of-wedlock births, and demographers now estimate that over 50% of children born in to 1990’s will spend at least part of their childhood in a single-parent home.”³⁰ The single parent family dynamic is another reality faced by the church, and the church’s response is critical to the church’s future.

The Challenge of New Technology

The internet and technology advances also present the church with new issues.

Barna suggests:

Teenagers are media’s best friends. We know that teens spend an average of four to six hours per day interacting with the mass media in various forms. For instance, we discovered that 94% listen to the radio, 89%

²⁸ Barna, *Third Millennium Teens*, 37.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Norris Smith, ed., *Changing U.S. Demographics* (Bronx, NY: H. W. Wilson, 2002), 177.

watch television, 91% play audio tapes or compact discs, 69% read a magazine, 52% use the internet and 58% read a book in a typical day. In addition, 79% use a computer during a typical day and most teens use the telephone for additional communication.³¹

The use of technology will probably increase in the future, and the church can adapt to this form of communication. Table 3 provides data on churches' future use of technology.³²

Table 3. Likelihood of a church to use the Internet

	The Likelihood of Using the Internet for Their Total Religious Experience	
	Within 5 years	Within 10 years
Definitely	2%	9%
Probably	14%	37%
Probably Not	36%	34%
Definitely Not	48%	10%

Vocabulary and Terminology

Non-Christian

Much debate exists over terms that describe non-followers of Christ. Some refer to them as unbelievers, non-believers, unchurched, or lost. In this work, “non-Christian” is used as a category to describe those who claim not to follow Christ.

Missional

Missional can be understood in contrast to the term attractional. Missional in this paper is defined as:

³¹ Barna, *Third Millennium Teens*, 28.

³² Ibid., 34.

An approach to Christian mission in which the church develops programs, meetings, services, or other “products” in order to attract unbelievers into the influence of the Christian community. While there is an element to which the New Testament church was attractive and enjoyed the favor of the broader community (in some contexts), we believe that the contemporary church now almost totally relies on an attractional approach to its community.³³

Missional also contrasts with the term institutional. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch write:

Historically the church has defined themselves [*sic*] in institutional terms. That is, church leaders as well as Christians in general have regarded the church as an institution to which outsiders must come in order to receive a certain product, namely, the gospel and all its associated benefits. In our view, the church should be missional rather than institutional. The Church should define itself in terms of its mission—to take the gospel to and incarnate the gospel within a specific cultural context.³⁴

This is a radical approach to understanding the church’s identity. The church will continue its institutional style, or move beyond the walls and present the gospel to the people. Frost and Hirsch write that the modern church must “base discipleship and life in our postmodern world around a vital Christology and to reframe our ecclesiology *entirely* on missional grounds.”³⁵ In a reference to The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) the organization says:

The missional church represents God in the encounter between God and human culture. It exists not because of human goals or desires, but as a result of God’s creating and saving work in the world. It is a visible manifestation of how the good news of Jesus Christ is present in human life and transforms human culture to reflect more faithfully God’s intentions for creation. It is a community that visibly and effectively

³³ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 224.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xi.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

participates in God's activity, just as Jesus indicated when he referred to it in metaphorical language as salt, yeast, and light in the world.³⁶

The missional church finds herself at a crossroads: become a true force in the twenty-first century postmodern culture, or practice fads and duplicative ministries that avoid basic issues and challenges.

Emergent Church

The term emerging can be described as trees of the rainforest. The tallest trees that are visible above the deep greenery soak up most of the sunlight, food, and water. This makes it difficult for smaller trees below the canopy of the forest to thrive. After time, whether by old age that weakens the tree or because of disease, the tree will fall and die. This allows for emergent trees to then be enriched by the sun, to grow up, rise above all others, and reach its full potential.³⁷

The term emerging church describes a movement and a cluster of churches characterized by a postmodern flavor.³⁸ The emerging church contextualizes the gospel and aligns the church mission with the activity and purpose of God in the world. The significance of the term is that it identifies many churches that represent the Kingdom of God with originality and creativity. William Easum writes:

A new form of congregational life is dragging Christians kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century. The self-understanding, focus,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ <http://pangea.tec.selu.edu/~rbradburn/Rainforest/characteristics.html> (accessed 5 March 2007).

³⁸ Dan Kimball does a great job of identifying characteristics of emerging communities with a postmodern flavor. Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

corporate culture, leadership, organizational styles, and strategies are radically different from those experienced throughout the twentieth century. The future church offers new opportunities and problems requiring a new mindset.³⁹

A commonality of emergent congregants is the attempt to connect with postmodern culture effectively. McLaren writes:

As we shall see, it is possible to have a new church that is not a new church, and an old church that is a new church. New, as we will use the term here, means new in kind, not in age. A new church is one designed for the future, reinvented and reintroduced for the other side. It is an evolving organism at the beginning (or end) of an ice age, capable of adjusting to the coming climactic and environmental upheavals.⁴⁰

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is best understood in contrast to modernism. Stanley Grenz explains:

Postmodernism refers to an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set. Postmodernity, in turn, refers to an emerging epoch, the era in which we are living, the time when the postmodern outlook increasingly shapes our society. Postmodernity is the era in which postmodern ideas, attitudes, and values reign—when postmodernism molds culture. It is the era of postmodern society.⁴¹

³⁹ William Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 16-17.

⁴⁰ Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 21.

⁴¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 12.

Community

Community describes the context of multiple relationships in the church setting and local neighborhood. In this paper, the church is an organized assembly of Christians with a stated or assumed mission. All Christians belong to the church and exist as a local body of believers.

A Post-Christian World and a Rebirth of Spirituality

The author of this paper believes the church can interact meaningfully with members of the postmodern culture in helpful and redeeming ways. A great challenge for the church in postmodern society is the realization the church does not exist in a Christian nation or world. Paul writes that the church lives in a fallen world and needs the gospel, but generations of higher church attendance created a comfortable church that allowed sub-cultures of Christianity. For decades, missionaries were sent to other parts of the world. In the present culture influenced by postmodernism, the church can be on mission and train church members to be relational missionaries.

Postmodernism's influence forces the church to examine old methods and deliveries of Christianity. Churches can be re-commissioned and members sent out to their communities as missionaries trained in language, relationships, and cultural idiosyncrasies. In this paper, the essence of the missional church involves making the gospel relevant to the part of the culture that believes the church is useless.

America is experiencing a surge to embrace spirituality, but not necessarily one defined as evangelical, pentecostal, religious, or denominational. The church can respond

to this longing for spiritual fulfillment. The answer, however, is not more institutional religions, propositions, and programs that require adherence to corporate-like rules and objectives.

Six out of ten teenagers consider themselves spiritual, regardless of religious heritage.⁴² The Barna Report reveals that nearly half of American adults are open to change in their spiritual lives.⁴³ Definitions of spiritual and spirituality are important and provide clarity:

Eight out of every nine adults (87%) is able to identify an activity that they say brings them the greatest degree of spiritual satisfaction or fulfillment. No particular activity or effort was named by more than one out of every four individuals as providing such satisfaction. The most common effort was attending church services and events, which 23% named as the most fulfilling spiritual activity in their life. Half as many (12%) indicated that spending time with their family produces the greatest sense of spiritual satisfaction, while the same proportion (12%) mentioned any of a variety of creative and leisure endeavors as their greatest source of spiritual fulfillment. Those outlets included engaging in music, art, or other creative media; participating in sports or hobbies; secluded meditation; and enjoying nature.⁴⁴

The church can respond creatively to new cultural and intellectual realities because many people living in the postmodern world seek spiritual experience. Paul used tactics designed to appeal to his audiences, and he did this when he spoke with Jews, Stoics, Epicureans, and “the men of Athens” (Acts 17:16-34). He described his tactics

⁴² Barna, *Third Millennium Teens*, 8.

⁴³ The Barna Report, *Americans Describe Sources of Spiritual Fulfillment and Frustration*, November 29, 2004, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=175> (accessed 10 December 2004).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

when he wrote: “I have become all things to men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its blessings” (1 Cor. 9:22b-23 RSV).

A Future Hope

Every generation brings its own sense of purpose and vitality to the Christian movement. For example, the builders’ generation created institutionally strong churches through its commitment, financial backing, and presence that stimulated church growth. Their Baby Boomer children, however, left the church in great numbers during a tumultuous time in America’s history. The Boomers’ era experienced the civil rights movement, Vietnam, sex, drugs, rock-n-roll, the hippie movement, and many economic and political struggles. As they settled, aged, and had children, however, they revisited the church. The Boomers were America’s largest and most vocal generation, and their impact upon church culture will remain for years.⁴⁵

Generation X’ers expressed a degree of cynicism and purposelessness, and they found little reason for church involvement.⁴⁶ They discovered family as the centerpiece of community, support, and relationship in response to their Boomer parents’ disillusionment, divorce, and distrust of authority. The X’er generation introduced a relational focus to the church and sought less programming and tradition, but they required more experience and community.

⁴⁵ Linda Regensburger, *The American Family: Reflecting a Changing Nation* (Farmington Hill, MI: Gale Group, 2001), 3.

⁴⁶ They found their primary needs of community in tribalism rather than the church. See Greg Quiring’s article at <http://www.next-wave.org/jun02/failure.htm> (accessed 5 March 2007).

Many call the next generation Mosaics, and they may prove to be the church's connection to non-Christians. In *The American Family*, Linda Regensburger writes:

For those who feel more comfortable with people who are upbeat, focused, stable, and accepting of traditional behaviors, the emergence of the mosaics will be a welcome change from the quixotic, often pessimistic Busters. . . . Four out of five say they are optimistic about their future. A smaller portion says they have high hopes for their nation's future. Three out of four consider themselves to be physically attractive. Almost as many believe that other people see them as a leader. A majority claim to be very popular. More than nine out of ten teenagers describe themselves as happy. Four out of five say they are trusting in people. As a well-connected group it is not surprising to discover that only one out of every ten considers himself/herself to be lonely.⁴⁷

If older generations can capture this passionate and positive generation and help them translate it into a faith movement, it may have positive impacts on the church. Leonard Sweet, in his section on passing down faith to the next generation, quotes Rabbi Zalman Schachter's term "spiritual eldering." Sweet describes this process of harvesting one's lifetime experience and offering it to the next generation as "elder wisdom."⁴⁸

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that society is changing. The church is called to adopt new ways that engage the culture in the midst of these changes and provide positive opportunities for new gospel mission. Tom Sine in "Cease-Fire" writes, "As we welcome a new future of rich diversity, the melting pot is experiencing a meltdown. It is

⁴⁷ Barna, *Third Millennium Teens*, 5.

⁴⁸ Leonard Sweet, *Faithquakes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 163.

being replaced by the imagery of what some describe as a very rich ethnic stew . . . one speaker characterized this new multicultural society as a huge tossed salad.”⁴⁹

The statistics and demographics described in this chapter identify changes in the American culture which the church can address. These numbers shed light on the changing values within society that will have an affect on the church’s future. If the church does not address these issues in positive, redemptive ways, it may lose ground as God’s witness in the culture. Based on these challenges, this paper provides recommendations the church may adopt to be effective in the new cultural climate. The paper’s thesis is that a recovery of church effectiveness depends upon a recapturing of missional identity and the practice of a faithful evangelical mission.

Chapter 2 will present biblical evidence that missional identity is God’s intention for the church because the apostolic calling of the church is to be sent into the world. This begins in the local community and can be extended on a global scale. Missions should no longer be a church program, but rather her fundamental identity.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how Christianity has been influenced by recent missional movements. An examination of the historical influences of missiology on the present-day understanding of the church and her mission provides insight into why the missional church can be effective in postmodern culture.

Chapter 4 describes historic evangelistic practice in America and illustrates how methods and approaches have shifted in the last fifty years. Chapter 4 will demonstrate

⁴⁹ Tom Sine, *Cease-Fire: Searching for Sanity in America’s Culture War* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 93.

that the historic evangelistic programs may not be as effective as the relational, evangelical characteristics of a missional church. The chapter proposes ways the church can become missional by refocusing on how the message of faith is conveyed.

Chapter 5 takes the principles of the missional church and emerging communities, and describes essential characteristics if the church wants to become missional and regain her biblical identity. The author of this paper has developed a tool that measures how well positioned a church is to becoming missional and reaching the community. In addition, the author provides a tool which assesses to what degree a church is functioning as an apostolic community. These two tools may assist a church in the transition to missional focus.

Chapter 6 provides leadership characteristics that may be effective for a missional community. If the church must change to connect to a postmodern culture, church leadership must also change and provide direction for missional communities. The author of this paper describes concepts that may help a pastor lead a community to missional activities.

Chapter 7 will conclude this paper and offers suggestions on the application of essential practices in the local church. Based on actual survey of a local congregation, this chapter provides practical methods to implement these characteristics into a community wishing to become missional.

CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR A MISSIONAL FOUNDATION

The church faces many challenges: maintaining a legacy of church tradition, ensuring the education and discipleship of members, and proclaiming the gospel faithfully in the midst of a secular society.¹ The church maintains tradition, fails in discipling the average church member, and struggles to make its faith known to the masses. This chapter provides a biblical base for the church's chief priority: obedience to her missional calling and the practice of faithful evangelical mission. The missional calling is directed to professional clergy, evangelists, and all other Christians.

Proclaiming the good news of salvation and announcing the Kingdom of God is central to the church's missional focus. Personal salvation is the entranceway into the kingdom, and Christian maturation involves growth and development. The holistic proclamation of good news, as revealed by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 61:1-2a) and quoted by Jesus (Luke 4:17-19), involves words, action, and ministry to the poor, blind, and oppressed.

The proclamation of the gospel is central to the Kingdom of God because it reveals His activity and purposes in the world and fulfills the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). The good news of the Kingdom of God establishes an ethic of justice and care

¹ Brownson, Dietterich, Harvey, and West, *StormFront*, 105.

for the poor (Matt. 25:31-46), and personal and social peace (John 14:27). These are by-products of the salvation experience. Redeemed people reflect and embody God's kingdom culture and create an ethos of justice and right-living. This chapter describes Israel's failure as God's sent people and challenges the Christian missional community not to lose sight of the gospel message as expressed in Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The Scriptures define the Christian role as God's people sent into the world as evangelists and missionaries. Redemption is central to God's missional purposes because transformed people are saved and proclaim the kingdom's reality.

God's Redemptive Plan

The modern world lies under a pervasive sense of anguish, of being abandoned, or at least experiencing God as absent. Yet events that seem to turn our lives upside down and inside out are part of God's redemptive plan, not only for us, but for the world in which we live. God may be preparing a great awakening for the world, if God can find enough people to cooperate in this mysterious plan.²

Debate surrounds forms of worship, theology, and ministerial methodology, but the Great Commission provides irrefutable biblical support for bearing the good news message of the Kingdom of God. Churches and denominations too often argue incessantly about minor scriptural interpretations, and these arguments become distractions to their fundamental purpose in being God's sent people. Since Scripture is the authority for faith and practice, the church is called to be a disciple-making and sending community.

² Thomas Keating summarized his vision for a people of prayer with these words. http://www.coutreach.org/newsletters/prayers_for_peace.htm (accessed 5 March 2007).

The Scripture's Missional Call

While Christians trace their missional identity to the New Testament, the church's identity is also rooted in the Old Testament when God called Israel to be His people. God's call to Israel includes faithful witness to God's commands (Exod. 20:1-20), and the blessing received by Israel that affects the world (Gen. 12:1-3). The New Testament develops this calling through the *ecclesia*, or gathering of believers.³ The church is responsible for living out its missional charge (Matt. 28:16-20). Later chapters of this paper include practical suggestions for missional evangelistic activity in the postmodern world.

The overarching theme of God's historical activity is His redemptive plan for humans and the establishment of His Kingdom. Israel first carried the responsibility of being God's representatives to the world as His sent ones. God's proclamation to Abram was an invitation to join God in His redemptive mission (Gen. 17:1-5). He promised to make Abram "a great nation" and to bless Him, and He promised to bless all the earth's peoples through Abram (Gen. 22:15-18). The blessing of Abram's family was not static, but a dynamic, outward movement toward all peoples.

The call to be God's people is found in the Old and New Testaments. While not as explicit as some New Testament mandates, Old Testament exhortations abound for engagement in the eternal purposes of God. For example, the Psalmist asks for God's

³ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 240-241.

blessing so that God's salvation may be known "among all nations" and so all the peoples of the earth may praise Him (Psa. 67:1-2).

Prophetic passages convey the Lord's salvific intent for humanity. Isaiah says, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6). Jonah's story and God's command to "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come before me" (Jonah 1:2 RSV) is another example of the Old Testament mission. Jonah hesitated and God spoke again, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message I tell you" (Jonah 3:2). Jonah was sent, and he finally complied with God's directive.

In the New Testament, Gentiles respond in faith with the expectation of witnessing the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation for Jews and Gentiles in Christ Jesus. Paul makes clear that blessing is available for all, and he writes that anyone who "calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:5-12). Paul's deep concern for gospel proclamation is evident in the Roman letter. He says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Rom. 10:14 ff) The twenty-first century church can understand and embrace her evangelical role and proclaim the message of faith. The church is called

to join God's activity in the world and tell of God's rich blessings for those who respond to Christ in faith.⁴

Peter spoke of God's mission to bless all nations and told his hearers that Christ's suffering and resurrection were planned by God and foretold in the scriptures (Acts 2:14-36). In Peter's sermon at Solomon's Gate, he told his hearers that Christ intended to "restore everything" as was prophesied, and Christ's followers are heirs "of the covenant" made with Abraham (Acts 3:11-26). He said the first blessing was to turn people from their wickedness because freedom from sin was evidence of blessing.

Paul told his hearers that Jesus "redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Gal. 3:14). The blessing extended to the Gentile nations who were called as ambassadors of God's missional purposes, and the blessing Paul describes is central to the Christian identity. Paul wrote, "In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). First century Hebrew and Gentile Christians struggled to understand the position of Gentile believers who were not of Jewish lineage nor subject to the Mosaic covenant. Paul clarified the believers' role within the historical context of the nation of Israel by exhorting hearers to remember the faith of Abraham. Paul declared that "all nations" will partake of God's blessing; they will be justified by their own faith and enter into the covenantal blessing (Gal. 3:6-9).

⁴ See Walter Brueggemann, *Hope for the World: Mission in a Global Context: Papers from the Campbell Seminar* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001).

Paul identified Gentile believers as God's chosen people. The inclusion of Gentile nations within the Abrahamic covenant is fundamental to the redemptive plan of God. Israel ultimately failed as the messengers of God's salvation; therefore, God pre-ordained Gentiles to be agents of blessing as the incarnate presence of God to all nations that they may share in His blessing.⁵ Paul believed the extension of the promise to Gentiles was based on faith (Rom. 4:16-25).

God intends that all people hear the good news and enter the Kingdom. The missional responsibility for the message, therefore, was shared with the Gentiles. Paul elaborates on God's plan in the Roman letter, and he states that Israel was not rejected by God but was "a remnant" chosen "by grace" through faith (Rom. 11:5, 9:25-33). Paul teaches the Gentiles to understand their place as chosen people, elected into God's family, and grafted into the blessing. The Romans passages identify faith as the means by which a person is "grafted" into the family of God, but they also warn that those who have been included by faith are not to be "arrogant" (Rom. 11:17-30). Those newly accepted branches inherit both the blessing and responsibility as God's representatives in the world. They do not only benefit from the righteousness obtained through faith, but carry missional responsibility as messengers of God's purposes.

⁵ "Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: 'We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13: 46-48). "Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (Gal. 3: 7-8).

A Sent People

The Israelites understood themselves to be God's people, but they failed to understand the significance of their role.⁶ As members of God's priestly nation, they enjoyed the benefits of being children of God and were called to be a blessing to the world (Gen. 12:1-3). The church is also called to be a blessing and participate with Him in His redemptive activity. The transformational activity has eternal consequences because ultimately He will be worshiped by "all peoples, nations, and men of every language" (Dan. 7:13 ff).

New Testament writers reiterate Old Testament exhortations to proclaim faith in One God and draw others to faith. Christians are sent people, ambassadors for God and the gospel: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20a). Paul explains, "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal. 3:8). Abraham was a blessing because he made known his faith in God, and the Scripture helps Christians understand their vocational identity as a "blessing to the nations of the earth." The writer of 1 Peter exhorts his readers to "set apart Christ as Lord" and to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Pet. 3:5). Jesus declared that until the end of the age the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

⁶ Stephen, before his death, explained this to the High Priest in Acts 7.

The term “sent ones” is based on the Greek verb *apostello*. The word is defined as ordering “to go to a place appointed” or to “send away, dismiss,” allowing “one to depart, that he [*sic*] may be in a state of liberty;” it also means “to order one” and “to depart, send off to drive away.”⁷ The word “apostle” means “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders,” and it is related to the word *apostello*.⁸ G. Abbott-Smith says *apostello* implies to “send with a commission” and states that the general usage “suggests official or authoritative sending.”⁹ These descriptions capture the meaning of sent ones, persons who have received missional orders.

The church’s identity and function as the sent ones who represent Christ is clarified by Jesus’ declaration, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21 and 12:18). Jesus was sent by God (Matt. 26:39) with a messianic mission of divine significance and authorization. He understood the task set before Him, and He fulfilled His God-given purpose as God incarnate in every relational interaction (John 14:9).

In the gospel of John Jesus says, “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36). Jesus reveals His divine authority which is rooted in the reality that He was sent by the Father. Other passages from John’s gospel

⁷ Thayer and Smith, *The New Testament Greek Lexicon*, <http://www.searchgodsword.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=649> (accessed 11 December 2006).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1999), 54.

also assert Jesus' role as his Father's representative. The writer of John 5:37, 6:44, 6:57, 8:42, 12:49, and 17:25 reports Jesus' words: the Father "sent me."

Jesus' authority was rooted in His person and mission because He was God's incarnate Word sent by the Father to accomplish a divine mission (Luke 4:16-21). The authority of the church to join God's redemptive activity is rooted in Jesus who sent believers into the Father's missional activity. As Jesus was sent by His Father, Christians are sent into the world to represent the One who has all authority in heaven and on earth.

The church can engage in the task and mobilize God's people into mission in the world as sent people. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field" (Matt 9:37). Jesus' example confirms the church's ability to mobilize ambassadors who join in God's mission.

God provides strength for the missional task, and He understands the difficulty of moving people out of the status quo and into a hostile world. Jesus warns, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16). He also tells His disciples, "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town" (Matt. 10:14).

He called His followers to share the message rather than orchestrate a response to the message. Jesus clarified this in the parable of the wedding banquet when He said the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. Those invited to the banquet refused the servants' invitation, and some of the king's servants

were mistreated and even killed. In anger, the king destroyed the attackers and again sent out the servants. They invited all of the “good and bad” people to the feast. One man who did not don wedding garb was cast out, “where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus concluded the parable by saying, “For many are invited, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:1-14).

Jesus never swayed from His mission in spite of distractions, and He remained focused on the mission at hand. At times the crowds became overwhelming, and Jesus reminded them of His purpose, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). Jesus’ words to His disciples record that they were sent out with the same missional purpose. He “gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick,” and He instructed them to “take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic” and to stay in the same house for the duration of their stay in each town. The disciples obeyed, traveling “from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere” (Luke 9:1-6).

The preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God evidenced Christ’s purpose: the reconciliation of humanity to God and the establishment of a new age. Paul wrote, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). Christ sends Christians into the world with the ministry of

reconciliation, and Paul elaborates: “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

The nation of Israel was called to be the people of God, appointed to reveal His blessing and mission to the Gentiles. They demonstrated the presence of Yahweh in the world. The church has inherited this mandate from Israel, and the church is called and appointed to represent Jesus in the world.

The success of the church must not be measured completely by buildings or roll numbers but by its faithfulness to God's mission of redemption and reconciliation. The covenant made with Moses and the Israelites continues in Christianity's covenant with God. When His people obey God and keep His covenant, God says that “out of all nations you will be my treasured possession . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:3-6). The writer of First Peter echoes this Old Testament promise, noting that those who come to Christ are “being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood” and are called out of darkness to share in Christ's “wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The church's missional task as the “new Israel” is a continuation of Israel's task, and is the direct result of God's love and forgiveness” (Gal. 6:16, Rom. 2:28). John writes: “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen” (Rev. 1:6). Christians are called to serve as His priests, as

living evidence of reconciliation with God and the body of Christ in the world. The church is sent into the world and invites others to the divine banquet (Luke 14:15-23).

Jesus' final words to His disciples before returning to the Father summarize Christians' roles as the sent people of God. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20).

Jesus intends that church members act as ambassadors of grace and disciple-making agents in the kingdom of God. As His sent people, they are called to remember the two primary components of the great commission: evangelism and discipleship. The construction of church structures that house weekly programs is peripheral, though not necessarily a hindrance, to this central task. The author of this paper believes many churches engage in missions and evangelism through partnerships, cooperative efforts, networks, denominations, and mission sending organizations, but this activity does not capture the mandated responsibility of Christians in the world. The church can become a training ground for Christ's missionaries who are sent into the world as Christ's ambassadors.

Summary

This chapter provides a biblical basis for the church as a sending community with a mission to bless the world. Sections of the Old and New Testaments convey God's

message that the church can embrace her mission and share the good news of God's Kingdom. When Christians embrace their biblical identity, they understand the primacy of relationship with the Father and the command to share the Gospels as ambassadors of God's Kingdom as ambassadors sent out into the world. This review of Scripture supports the thesis that the church can reclaim her missional identity and practice a faithful evangelical mission. The next chapter explores the role of evangelism in the context of a missional church.

CHAPTER 3

EVANGELISM IN A MISSIONAL CHURCH CONTEXT

This chapter describes the role of evangelism within a missional church context. It discusses missiology and how missiology has caused the church to rethink her identity in a postmodern age. Understanding how missiology has impacted the self-perception of the church provides conceptual tools that enable the church to engage in the evangelistic task more effectively.

Missiological Shifts

Missiological perspectives have greatly influenced ecclesiological thinking in North America in recent years.¹ Previously, missions programs were conceptualized as merely church programs based on obedience to the Great Commission. Sincere and significant mission efforts existed in the twentieth century; missiology studies demonstrate, however, that missions are more than programs designed to help missionaries. Mission can constitute the identity and become the consuming passion of the church in every context and activity. Internationally based missionaries and missiologists have challenged the church to grapple with her apathetic view toward

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 378. In this text, Bosch lays out the paradigm shifts in theology, missiology, and ecclesiology. He specifically details the “rediscovery of the local church” as a result of these paradigm shifts.

local missions.² In acknowledging the church's failure to take the mission of God seriously within local contexts, observers have acknowledged that the church has lost influence in the culture.

David Bosch defines and describes the programmatic approach to missions which dominated ecclesial thought in the twentieth century. He writes that missions:

[R]eferred to (a) the sending of missionaries to a designated territory, (b) the activities undertaken by such missionaries, (c) the geographical area where the missionaries were active, (d) the agency which dispatched the missionaries, (e) the non-Christian world or "mission field," or (f) the center from which the missionaries operated on the "mission field."³

Many Christians and churches operate by this definition, but the global missional movement has reframed mission terms and application. Missional churches throughout the world operate with a clearer understanding of how churches can function in post-Christian environments.⁴ Missional leaders agree that all Christians and churches are called to do missions, and this is a direct result of a biblical and theological redefining of mission. Bosch offers a "theological synopsis of 'mission' as the concept has traditionally been used," noting that "it has been paraphrased as (a) propagation of faith, (b) expansion of the reign of God, (c) conversion of the heathen and, (d) the founding of new

² Ibid., 492 Bosch notes, "Missiology became the institution's 'department of foreign affairs,' dealing with the exotic but at the same time peripheral. Other theologians often regarded their missiological colleagues with aloofness, if not condescension, particularly since they frequently happened to be retired ex-missionaries who had worked in "Tahiti, Teheran, or Timbuktu."

³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 100-105. Many theologians, missiologists, and ecclesial leaders believe the so-called Age of Christendom is now over. Christianity is no longer the undisputed religious force of influence within Western contexts.

churches.”⁵ Missions was understood from an ecclesial standpoint, but missional language is now rooted theocentrically because mission is perceived as proceeding from the character and purposes of God.

The challenge is to recapture a biblical understanding of mission and realign the church’s priorities with the biblical mandate. Missionary movements have had tremendous impact on the growth of worldwide Christianity.⁶ In spite of the global growth of Christianity, the American church is being removed “from its position of dominance as it has experienced the loss not only of numbers but of power and influence within society.”⁷

Philip Jenkins suggests that the “era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning.”⁸ Jenkins summarizes the statistical trends and predicts that:

Christianity should enjoy a worldwide boom in the new century, but the vast majority of believers will be neither white nor European, nor Euro-American. According to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, some 2 billion Christians are alive today, about one-third of the planetary total. The largest single bloc, some 560 million people, is still to be found in Europe. Latin America, though, is already close behind with 480 million. Africa claims 360 million, and 313 million Asians profess Christianity. North America claims about 260 million believers. If we extrapolate these figures to the year 2025, and assume no great gains or losses through conversion, there would be around 2.6 billion Christians, of whom 633

⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 1.

⁶ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 9.

⁷ Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 1.

⁸ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 3. Jenkins quotes David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnston, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12-15. To make his case, he also references the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://censu.gov/ipc/www/idbrank.html> and the United Nations at <http://www.popin.org/>.

million would live in Africa, 640 in Latin America, and 460 million in Asia. Europe with 555 million would have slipped to third place. Africa and Latin America would be in competition for the title of most Christian continent . . . By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world's 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites. Soon the phrase "White Christian" may sound like an oxymoron.⁹

The missional movement in America is transforming churches, and the survival of the American church may hinge upon the success of the missional movement as it awakens churches to being God's ambassadors.¹⁰ There is renewed zeal for global and local evangelistic efforts and for growing the church through the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, an activity this thesis contends is central to mission. The transformational presence of the church in North America depends upon relationship-building and the missional promotion of the faith.¹¹

The Social and Cultural Impact on the Church

Modernity and secularism have contributed largely to the inhibited growth and vitality of the church.¹² Mega-populated churches in big buildings dedicated to church programs proliferate, but zeal for making a difference in the world has been replaced by religious activity and church membership.¹³ Flawed theology and a lethargic Christianity

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Hunsberger and Van Gelder, eds., *The Church between Gospel and Culture*, 134. This awakening is occurring because the church has realized that her mission must be contextual and incarnational in nature in order to remain faithful and effective.

¹¹ Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 93.

¹² Hunsberger and Van Gelder, *The Church between Gospel and Culture*, 82.

¹³ See OS Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993) for his critique and treatment of this problem.

produce a poor ecclesiastical self-understanding and a tainted worldview. In *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, Lesslie Newbigin notes:

It is often said, or implied, that the dominance of the Christian worldview in western European society was overturned by the rise of modern science, but this seems to be an oversimplification . . . the attack has its origins, far earlier than the rise of modern science, in the humanist tradition which we inherit from the classical Greek and Roman elements in our culture, and which surfaced powerfully in the Renaissance and played a part in the Reformation. . . . During the latter part of the seventeenth and through the eighteenth centuries, while ordinary churchgoers continued to live in the world of the Bible, intellectuals were more and more controlled by the humanist tradition, so that even those who sought to defend the Christian faith did so on the basis that it was “reasonable” that is to say, that it did not contradict the fundamental human assumption.¹⁴

Biblical missional self-understanding in the church has been corrupted by an overemphasis on programming.¹⁵ The church has also permitted popular culture and current philosophies to thwart the church’s purposes.¹⁶ The church has failed to acknowledge the corruptive influence of cultural and social constructs on her structure and function, and has responded to cultural moral corruption by withdrawing from the culture. Withdrawal, however, is not a biblical or practical option for the church.

The church has allowed secular and materialistic tendencies in the wider culture to affect the church’s culture. For example, the church has acquiesced to a presumption that religious beliefs are not part of public activity, and this has created a privatization of

¹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 2.

¹⁵ Brownson, Dietterich, Harvey, and West, *StormFront*, 105.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

faith.¹⁷ The missional church approach combats this compartmentalization and encourages believers to serve others in transformative relationship.¹⁸ This places emphasis on cultivating community and inviting others to experience life and faith through a community which seeks to transform the world through ethical living, responsible stewardship, humanitarian service, and by tackling issues of social justice.

George R. Hunsberfer writes: “Churches have become domesticated by contemporary western culture rather than working with a domestic missiology that can challenge this culture.”¹⁹ Hunsberger writes that the problem “lies in a lack of theological depth regarding how churches think about their identity and how they relate to the cultural context.”²⁰ He identifies the interaction between the gospel, church, and culture as the critical issue. How the church communicates and creates bridges between these three factors determines her missional effectiveness in a pluralistic, relativistic culture.

The church can adopt a missional self-understanding to connect with the post-Christian, postmodern culture. The church faces an identity issue, not a programmatic one.²¹ A missional church may engage in this dialogue more successfully and find ways to create these cultural bridges. Foundational to Hunsberger’s framework are three

¹⁷ Ibid., 6. This presumption makes faith a private matter that focuses inward, meets believer’s own needs and their own spiritual fulfillment.

¹⁸ Service is fast becoming a means for conveying the Good News and participating in the process of transformation. Rusaw and Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church*, 56.

¹⁹ Hunsberger and Van Gelder, *The Church between Gospel and Culture*, 1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The church must first grasp her identity in the context of her calling or “vocation.” Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars*, 36-38.

questions he identifies as the agenda for North American missiology: How must we grasp our identity? How must we seek the common good? And how must we tell the gospel?²²

If Hunsberger's framework is relevant for missional churches, its ministerial effectiveness should be measurable. Latourette proposes a threefold gauge that measures the expansive influence of Christianity: the spread of Christian profession in particular areas, the number and strength of new movements owing their origin to Christ, and "the effect of Christianity on mankind [*sic*] as a whole."²³ The writer of this paper believes questions that evaluate ecclesial effectiveness include: What communities in the city are impacted by the church? How are they impacted? Do people turn to God with repentant hearts? Are believers acting as salt and light in their communities?

In response to the social and cultural influences on the church, the church should revisit its missiology and evaluate ecclesiastical activities in light of missional considerations. Hunsberger warns that missions efforts should no longer be programmatic in their focus. He says missions can no longer be considered "Over there [foreign missions], helping the poor, recruiting members," even though, "these have become the operational missiologies of our churches."²⁴ He continues:

[Such ideas] are not just uninformed notions of laypeople. They are fueled and undergirded by the guidance implicit in the language of the missiological institutions and movements. The fund-raising dimensions of denominational and independent global mission agencies transmute what should be occasions for mission education in our churches into mere

²² Hunsberger and Van Gelder, *The Church between Gospel and Culture*, 1.

²³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper, 1937) 417.

²⁴ Hunsberger and Van Gelder, *The Church between Gospel and Culture*, 4.

mission promotion designed to sustain extensive logistic superstructures. The tendency toward social-ethical preaching in our pulpits (whether emphasizing public justice or private moralities) combines with the basic (if fading) American value that every person has a right to material well-being to produce a posture of benevolence toward the poor. The American mystique of growthism makes growing the church larger an end more important than representing the gospel of the reign of God.²⁵

While credited with great Christian influence in many nations around the world, Western cultural failings, American capitalism, and Western secularism put the American church at a disadvantage. According to Newbigin, being a Christian American represents more than Jesus Christ to non-Americans because it represents a form of imperialism and Western ideas not embraced by other cultures. Newbigin writes:

We are forced to do something that the Western churches have never had to do since the days of their own birth—to discover the form and substance of a missionary church in terms that are valid in a world that has rejected the power and the influence of the Western nations. Missions will no longer work along the stream of expanding Western power. They have to learn to go against the stream. And in this situation we shall find the New Testament speaks to us much more directly than does the nineteenth century as we learn afresh what it means to bear witness to the gospel from a position not of strength but of weakness.²⁶

In order to have missional influence, Christians labor more knowledgeably within the culture of the people they hope to reach, using indigenous members, acclimating the gospel within the context of their cultural identity, and not requiring converts to be Western in their form of Christian praxis.²⁷ The result is a richer, purer, more authentic

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 5.

²⁷ Walls says Christianity must be translated, “must continuously enter into vernacular culture and interact with it, or it withers and fades.” Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 29.

expression of Christianity within an indigenous culture. Walls writes that this allows the culture to maintain its identity even with an infusion of Christian influence.²⁸

The use of the missional approach in American culture requires an appraisal of the American situation. Guder believes the United States has deep spiritual values, but traditional American styles of Christian expression may not be effective in gospel translation. Guder notes:

The United States is still, by all accounts, a very religious society. The pollsters affirm that Americans and Canadians believe in God, pray regularly, and consider themselves religious. But, they find less and less reason to express their faith by joining a Christian church. North American religiosity is changing profoundly by becoming more pluralistic, more individualistic, and more private. Religion fits into North American secularism in a remarkable synthesis that the student of religious behavior finds fascinating. But for the Christian who takes the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously, this religiosity is a weighty challenge.²⁹

The missional church may be well positioned to reach the American church-leery society.

The crisis experienced by churches may pave the way for a missional identity that meets the challenge. Guder summarizes the multi-faceted problems for the church:

[Church] crises are certainly many and complex: diminishing numbers, clergy burnout, the loss of youth, the end of denominational loyalty, biblical illiteracy, divisions in the ranks, the electronic church and its various corruptions, the irrelevance of traditional forms of worship, the loss of genuine spirituality, and widespread confusion about both the purpose and message of the church of Jesus Christ.³⁰

The author of this paper believes a relationship-oriented evangelism allows room for spiritual experience, invites multi-cultural expressions, and emphasizes living out the

²⁸ Ibid., 9-10.

²⁹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 1.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

gospel may help the church shift from a consumer-focused ministry model to a missional identity and the practice of a faithful evangelical mission. When this shift occurs, the church will successfully face the challenges posed by the postmodern world.

The church can view itself as a missionary people sent into the culture to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The missional church leads the way, and Christians and churches can adopt the missional calling and practice evangelism. Guder writes that the “missional reorientation of our theology is the result of a broad biblical and theological awakening that has begun to hear the gospel in fresh ways. God’s character and purpose as a sending or missionary God redefines our understanding of the Trinity.”³¹ Bosch adds:

Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the mission Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the father and the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another “movement:” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.³²

Summary

This chapter described the historical context of the missional church. An analysis of missiology and Western culture provides a base for reforming traditional American ecclesiology. This affirms this paper’s thesis that the church can reclaim her biblical identity as a missional community and practice a faithful evangelical mission.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

The missional church is biblical. It began with Abraham and continues through pastors and churches seeking spiritual transformation. The missional church is evangelical because it is faithful to proclamation of the gospel through relational praxis. This is congruent with the apostolic nature of the church, and it requires the church to consider itself sent into the world as ambassadors of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Mission can become central to the life and purpose of the church, and mission no longer need be reduced to a program. It becomes the identity of the church. The next chapter describes evangelism and its task in the postmodern world.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSITIONING EVANGELISM: FROM THE PAST TO POSTMODERNISM

The previous chapter provided an historical review of missional ecclesiology and discussed the role of evangelism in a missional context. This chapter describes the role of evangelism and provides theoretical and theological approaches for the task in the emerging postmodern culture.

The Great Commission challenges the church to share the gospel and make disciples, but the methods employed for this work have been critiqued and questioned historically. In response to this questioning and socio-cultural changes, the church has employed various evangelical approaches to accomplish the task. The church has presented the gospel in order to change and redeem lives, new models of evangelism were developed, and older approaches discarded. This chapter explains why some approaches are not viable, examines viable options, and presents additional historical foundations for the effective evangelism in a postmodern culture.

Evangelism through the Centuries

Over time, evangelical methods have been adapted in response to culture and the movement of the Holy Spirit. As new believers, churches, and movements appeared, the faith message of Christ was delivered around the world. The Great Commission holds every Christian generation responsible for delivering the message in relevant and

meaningful ways. The church depends upon leaders and lay members who accept the challenge of making Christ known because all people are entitled to know Christ and live in His present and future hope. Global evangelization requires the Church be faithful in her calling, mission, and communicate God's redemptive plan to the world.

In *The Canvas Cathedral*, Lewis Drummond details broad historical categories for the emergence and growth of evangelism, and he highlights the role of great Christian leaders. The six ages and their representative evangelists include:¹

1. The Apostolic Age: The Apostle Peter's mission was "filled, directed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He preached and heralded the Gospel in such a manner that communicated the entire message of Jesus Christ," and his evangelistic efforts were accomplished with "depth and biblical integrity."

2. The Age of the Church Fathers: In Augustine's theology, "God reveals himself as sovereign in all of life" including the church, especially in the evangelistic ministry. Athanasius contended that the Lord Jesus Christ "stands at the center of all authentic evangelism" and He must "be fully understood for all the entire Bible declares Him to be."

3. The Middle Ages: St. Francis of Assisi demonstrated that biblical evangelism is "expressed in a holistic manner." Savonarola contended that a "severe price, even the price of suffering and death, must be paid" for the gospel.

¹ Lewis A. Drummond, *The Canvas Cathedral: A Complete History of Evangelism from the Apostle Paul to Billy Graham* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 16.

4. The Reformation Age: Martin Luther was committed to the “reality that true evangelism emerges from the scriptures, primarily and exclusively.” Ulrich Zwingli argued that “world evangelization and defense of the gospel demands boldness on the part of those who would declare Christ.”

5. The Puritan/Pietistic Age: Richard Baxter believed that the goal of evangelism is “salvation that leads to a discipleship life of godliness and holiness.” John Wesley’s demonstrated that evangelism experiences its “greatest reaping time during the periods of great awakening.”

6. The Great Age: William Carey’s ministry established the principle that the “gospel is for all people and must be extended to the farthest reaches of the world.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon demonstrated that an “evangelism of integrity that produces lasting results places the church at the emanating center of endeavor.”

A new category may one day be created to describe the evangelistic practices of the contemporary church, which is called to mission and proclamation. The challenges the church faces are not new. The church can determine how God is moving to further His Kingdom and identify approaches that best reflect His will. The mission remains constant until Christ returns, as does the question: How can the church bring the message of hope to the world?

Evangelism in America

The late 1800s saw a renewed effort to spread the gospel as the European evangelists and America’s great preachers entered the public scene. With the arrival of

Francis Asbury, George Whitefield, and other circuit preachers, the day of open-air preaching and evangelism dawned.² The Great Awakening brought great spiritual promise to America. The church grew, but the spiritual impact did not remain constant. A spiritual awakening occurred in India through the missionary work of William Carey. Timothy George describes Carey's great ministry and shares disheartening news about the following century:

Carey's pioneering ministry in India paved the way for thousands of missionaries who spread the evangel to the far corners of the earth during the next 100 years. So successful was this effort that it seemed that the whole world might be evangelized within the foreseeable future. In 1900 when a religious journal was begun in America its optimistic founders named it "The Christian Century." As we look back from the other end of that century, however, we have reason to be less sanguine about the Christian character of our times. Despite renewed efforts to achieve "the evangelization of the world in our generation," as the great missionary statesmen John Mott put it, and not withstanding the impact of God-blessed evangelists such as D.L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham, the influences of skepticism and religious relativism continued unabated while the percentage of professing Christians shrinks with every turn of the calendar. Of the almost six billion human beings on the planet, four billion do not claim any Christian identity. Many others who are nominally Christian have no vital relationship with the church or its ministry.³

Since evangelism techniques continue to change in America, it is important to define evangelism in light of biblical truth and community relevance. As the following two definitions indicate, a modern definition of evangelism is different from a postmodern one because the latter considers the manner in which the message is

² For a historical reading of this period see Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Trust, 1842; reprinted 1997).

³ Timothy George, *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues*, ed. Thom S. Rainer (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1989), 17-18.

conveyed, not only the content of the message. J. I. Packer offers a modern definition of evangelism, which focuses on the content of the message: “To present Jesus Christ to sinful men [*sic*], in order that they may come to put their trust in God, through Him to receive Him as their saviour and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of the church.”⁴ In *Church Social Work and Evangelism as Partners*, Delos Miles offers a more comprehensive definition of evangelism as “being, doing, and telling the gospel of the Kingdom of God, in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit persons and structures may be converted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”⁵

Leonard Sweet writes about postmodernism and evangelism and suggests “Evangelism is not convincing other people to accept the propositions you believe. Evangelism is inviting other people to begin a relationship with Jesus—to go on a journey with Him and make His story their story. If the basic issue of evangelism is how we help people meet Jesus, then evangelism is not doctrinal transactions but spiritual interactions.”⁶ He continues, “Evangelism is inviting prodigals to a party. Evangelism is introducing others to a God who is waiting to welcome them home with these words, ‘everything I have is yours.’”⁷ The author of this paper adopts Sweet’s definition of missional evangelism.

⁴ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 37f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶ Leonard Sweet, *Out of the Question . . . Into the Mystery: Getting Lost in the Godlife Relationship* (Littleton, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2004), 85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

Programmatic Evangelism

With an increased emphasis on evangelism and a desire to win converts, the American church increased evangelistic programming efforts, especially in the 1950s. Through rigorous training, memorization, and organized events, Christian churches and denominations presented their understanding of the gospel. The movement was essentially designed to bring people to Christ and left little room for the development of relationships between Christians and prospective converts. Christians were trained to convert the lost, and they were not particularly encouraged to love and serve them.⁸ Some people in the wider culture and within the church perceived such evangelistic efforts as manipulative and insincere.⁹ Religion no longer appeared to focus on the lost, but stressed increased number of adherents. Baptism percentages became the benchmark for successful churches, not spiritual depth.

The Harvestime Institute presents an evangelistic model based on a Modernistic, mechanistic approach which reduces evangelism to six steps and procedures:¹⁰

1. Presence: Effective evangelism radiates Jesus' qualities through Christian character and concern. The world will be reached for Jesus through authentic Christian

⁸ Clegg and Bird evaluate the declining state of the American church and note, "The starting point for building the kind of intentional relationships that enable [the church] to make a difference is realizing" the need for the church to not only *say* that people "really do matter to God" but to change behavior that "too often denies that life-changing truth." Clegg and Bird, *Lost in America*, 37.

⁹ Clegg and Bird note that people no longer respond to the gospel by "yesteryear's appeal to guilt or duty." *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰ Harvestime International Institute, "Leaven-Like Evangelism."

presence. Believers can build relationships, identify with, and serve unbelievers because believers cannot win converts without direct contact.

2. Proclamation: Some Christians believe their presence among unbelievers fulfills the Great Commission, but the Gospel is communicated effectively through preaching, teaching, witnessing, healing, and deliverance.

3. Persuasion: Gospel proclamation begins evangelism, but it must be presented persuasively.

4. Planting: The new convert must be “planted” in a church fellowship, or a church must be “planted” among a group of new believers.

5. Perfection: Spiritual maturity is nurtured in a local church context.

6. Participation: Evangelism is complete when new believers become evangelists.

Effective Evangelical Tools for the Postmodern Era

Modernity facilitated the packaging of the faith message, and American innovation and the industrial revolution enabled the church to broadcast the gospel in clear, concise, and propositional ways.¹¹ These tools were important because they empowered the laity to share the faith. The tools simplified the gospel presentation so anyone could share it. Franklin Graham presents an important premise about evangelical methodological flexibility:

God, in his divine wisdom, nowhere in the Bible laid down one absolute method or pattern of evangelism. He has allowed a flexibility that provides ways and means of spreading the gospel which will fit the times and the

¹¹ See McRaney, Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 2-4, 129-130, for reasons to move from modern evangelistic approaches to those more effective in a postmodern context and ways it can be done.

cultures of the people. However, the methods of evangelism should always have as their goals at least the following two purposes: (a) find the best way to overcome obstacles to the gospel for the sake of the ministry and the people the evangelist is trying to reach, and (b) find the best way to convey the gospel message to that particular people.¹²

The strategies and approaches to evangelism are wide and varied. Below is a list of the more popular methods and materials used in previous decades:

1. Mass Evangelism: Large evangelistic outreach events in coliseums or tents.

The Billy Graham crusade is a good example.

http://www.billygraham.org/NYCrusade_Cover.asp

2. Personal Evangelism: The activity of sharing Christ one-to-one with people in a circle of influence: friends, family, neighbors, or acquaintances. <http://www.christian-family.net/evangelism.html>

3. Public Evangelism: A more aggressive form involving street preaching, handing out tracts, and door-to-door evangelism. <http://www.streetpreaching.com/>

4. Institutional Evangelism: Church marketing is a subtle form of evangelism. Schools, hospitals, and The Mormon Cultural Center in Oahu, Hawaii are examples of this form of evangelism. <http://www.polynesia.com>

5. Lifestyle Evangelism: A non-verbal approach built on the premise that a godly life represents Christ to others. The behavior may provide opportunity for faith sharing. <http://www.sayaword.com/rem1/approacheslstyle.htm>

¹² Thom S. Rainer, ed., *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1989), 155.

6. Team Evangelism: This method trains and prepares teams to accomplish pre-planned community outreach. <http://www.arministry.org/OH.asp#Projects>

7. Marketplace Evangelism: Bible studies at businesses, prayer centers, chaplaincy work, or worship services are included in this methodology.
<http://www.marketplaceministries.com>

8. Target Evangelism: Evangelistic efforts with groups, for example, prisoners, children, and college students. <http://www.ccci.org>

9. Saturation Evangelism: A method that saturates an area, city, or region with the gospel. For example, free copies of a religious video to every home in a region.
<http://www.jesusvideo.org/email/2003012101/index.php>

10. Media Evangelism: Media communications distribute the gospel by virtual means. For example: the Internet, books, radio, and television. <http://www.gospelcom.net>

11. Evangelism Explosion: Surveys and questions provide evangelistic opportunities. <http://www.eeinternational.org/>

12. The Four laws: An outline designed to simplify evangelistic efforts.
<http://www.greatcom.org/laws/default/howto.html>

13. The Roman Road: A method based on the book of Romans.
http://www.thegoodnews.org/CD/roman_road/roman_road.html

14. Peace With God: Written by the Billy Graham Association. A diagram-based gospel presentation used with ministries and at events.
http://www.billygraham.org/SH_StepsToPeace.asp

15. Church Planting: A method based on new-church-starts.

<http://www.acts29network.org/main.html>

These methods were popular in the twentieth century, but new methods must be adopted for the present culture. For example, the church growth movement began an era of bigger and better churches with a focus on the bottom line, while smaller churches declined. Reggie McNeal in his book, *The Present Future*, says the “emphasis on methodologies have conditioned church leaders to look for the next program, the latest ‘model,’ the latest fad in ministry programming to help ‘grow’ the church. I am constantly asked ‘What’s next?’ The focus of the church is on what it takes to succeed.”¹³ To set the record straight, McNeal suggests actual church growth was not a reality and provides these statistics:

A 2001 survey reported in the Christian Science Monitor reveals that the number of Americans who have “no religious preferences” has doubled from 1990 to 2001, reaching 14 percent of the population. George Barna reports (*State of the Church 2002*, p.17) that the unchurched population has grown from 24 to 34 percent in just one decade.¹⁴

The decline reported by McNeal may cause the church to rethink methodology and consider its target audience carefully. The church should understand the postmodern culture and construct evangelistic methods that convey the gospel message effectively. The next section includes evangelistic approaches for the postmodern culture.

¹³ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future*, 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

New Missional Approaches in a Postmodern Culture

Many previous evangelical approaches were effective in the past, but are now largely irrelevant. Relevancy is an important issue for effective gospel communication in a changing society. Churches can recognize and respond to the cultural changes taking place, or the gospel may not be heard and/or understood.

Twentieth century evangelistic methods or pre-prepared programs are not effective in a postmodern culture. Sweet asserts that relationship building is the new approach. If he is correct, and the author of this paper accepts Sweet's premise, Christians must become skilled in relationship building.

Previous methods simplified evangelistic approaches, but relational skills were neglected. By deprioritizing relationships and advocating methods that employed simplistic surveys, propositions, memorized principles, and diagrams, the gospel was reduced to an informational set communicated in the same manner to everyone. This approach was effective at one time, but it is no longer appropriate. Brad J. Kallenberg writes, "Evangelism cannot be reduced to a works-every-time technique."¹⁶

Vocational evangelists who specialize in crusades and other twentieth century techniques have retired, disappeared, and/or are simply no longer needed.¹⁶ One may ask whether vocational evangelists are still of value. Leighton Ford discusses the role of the

¹⁶ Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 125.

¹⁶ A notable exception to this generalization is the ministry of the Luis Palau Association. His upcoming crusades and associated ministries may be accessed at <http://www.palau.org>. Notably, the association's festivals consist of more than preaching. The festival scheduled for July 2007 in Omaha, Nebraska, for example, will include community project ministries, the building of a Habitat for Humanity Home, sports clinics, and health clinics. The approach is multi-faceted and involves more than evangelistic preaching by the main speakers.

“professional evangelist” in church. He believes the church has always appointed evangelists to preach, but the present era, all believers must be evangelists.¹⁷ Sweet believes the word evangelism is dated and no longer relevant to the church:

I like the word. In fact, it’s a buzzword in the business world right now: see the book (some put it on the 10 best business books of 2003) *How To Turn Your Customers into Evangelists*. See Howard Schultz (Starbucks) claim that every CEO ought to replace the word “Executive” with “Evangelist.” Lots of corporations even have job descriptions for “Evangelists.” All that said, while it may be a good name now in the corporate world, in the church it conveys almost the exact opposite of what it should convey: taking Jesus to people, telling people about Jesus. It should convey joining what Jesus is already doing, finding out what Jesus IS doing in people’s lives and in the world today . . . in short, evangelism is more about listening into speech and sight than talking into testimony; more about hearing and heeding and harnessing the Spirit than haranguing and “Let me tell you what Jesus means to me!,” more about helping release the Spirit’s convicting power than convincing anyone of anything.¹⁸

Brian McLaren believes that the term evangelism does not reflect the Scriptures’ concept of mission. Jesus told His friends to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), and this means relationships come before teaching because discipleship is relational. Jesus said, “You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants (or slaves) . . . but I have called you friends (John 15:12-17). Refocusing the church’s efforts on making disciples of Jesus may produce a new awakening in Christian

¹⁷ Leighton Ford. “From Coffeehouse to Crusade,” (seminar, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 22 September 2004).

¹⁸ Leonard Sweet, interviewed by author, 29 October 2004, Portland, OR, e-mail.

evangelism based on relationships. In order for this vision to be realized, the church must reconceptualize evangelism as engaging in spiritual friendships.¹⁹

There may be a common belief among Christians that evangelism is the responsibility of vocational ministers, and evangelism has been reduced to gospel preaching at Sunday worship. This approach to evangelism is contrary to Jesus' approach of appointing and sending disciples out to bring good news to others (Matt. 10:5-15, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 10:1-12). Believers are asked to invite their friends to church instead of cultivating relationships with non-believers that may initiate conversations and invitations to embark on relationships with Jesus. Kallenberg suggests:

We retool our evangelism according to [these] new insights. This is not intended as a rebuff against those who do evangelism in ways other than those I suggest. On the contrary, the contemporary scene is a mixed bag, and keeping in step with God's Spirit (Gal 5:25) yields a variety of modes fitting the gospel in a given context. However, I am concerned that we not overlook the need to contextualize the practice of evangelism for an increasingly postmodern world.²⁰

The message can be delivered in relational forms, and postmoderns may respond to it.

Sweet writes, "The church of Jesus Christ is now a non-western church in terms of where the energy, new life, creativity, and growth exist. In 1960, 30% of evangelical churches were in non-western nations; by 1997 that figure became 70%. The evangelical wing of the protestant movement is a global phenomenon."²¹ While American

¹⁹ Brian D. McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism As Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 61.

²⁰ Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 47.

²¹ Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 390.

Christianity struggles in a secularist culture, other nations report a rise in conversions and an increase in the number Christian churches.

The American church can learn from third-world growing Christian movements. First, American Christianity can approach her cultural surroundings and position herself to engage in mission to the United States. Second, Christianity influences cultures once understood as the “south” and “Third World” nations.²² Some congregations in these countries exhibit missional church characteristics that the American church can emulate. An example comes from “a study of the new Pentecostal churches in the barrios of Bogotá, Columbia, noting that the *Compañerismo* (fellowship) of the believers is comparable to the intimacy of a large family gathering.”²³ Emerging concepts of relational evangelism are compatible with this thinking. Jenkins adds, “The new churches are succeeding because they fulfill new social needs, and this is as true in matters of gender as of race.”²⁴

This paper’s thesis is that the church will reclaim her effectiveness when she recaptures her missional identity and practices a faithful evangelical mission. The faithful evangelical mission is relational in a postmodern America. The author of this paper believes there are three non-negotiable missional elements: missional is participation with God in His activity in the world, missional is the identity of God’s people, and part of the missional identity is that God’s people are sent into the world. The evangelistic technique

²² Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 108.

²³ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

of the missional approach is relational, which requires contact by Christians with non-Christians in personal, friendly ways that open opportunities for witness and invitation into Christ's family. McLaren and Duane Liftin admonish that "our churches should be an open community, welcoming strangers as Jesus welcomed sinners."²⁵

Sharing the gospel in a postmodern culture requires personal connections with non-Christians. This paper's thesis is based on the assumption that the most effective means for conveying the gospel message in the postmodern era is through interactive webs of relationships. As believers build and bridge relationships, they can share their faith stories. Sweet writes, "The key to evangelism is to be receivers of others—ushers to the Other, not users of the others. In receiving others, we enter into their world of abundant otherness—their experiences, their thought patterns, their stories. In using others, we treat people as objects and hope to get something out of them. (A conversion, a donation, their acquiescence to our argument)."²⁶

Christians can become better students of culture and avoid the assumption that everyone is like them. Relevance is conveyed through contemporary music and media, but it includes relational dynamics that meet people's need for purpose, relationships, spirituality, and meaning.

²⁵ Brian D. McLaren and Duane Liftin, "Emergent Evangelism," *Christianity Today*, November 2004, 42-44.

²⁶ Sweet, *Out of the Question*, 125.

Emerging Models of Missional Evangelism

This section provides specific evangelistic techniques compatible with a missional, relational approach to evangelism. Christians are beginning to express and share their faith creatively, and they earn the trust and respect of community members.²⁷ Missional evangelism may be effective in building relationships with non-Christians and opening opportunities for meaningful dialogue and conversation. Churches can discover skills and knowledge that reach their communities effectively. To develop and nurture relationships with non-Christians, church members can learn how best to express relational evangelism in their daily lives. Churches can design models that work within the context of their environment. Margaret J. Wheatley writes about indigenous models:

I don't believe that organizations are ever changed by imposing a model developed elsewhere. So little transfers to, or inspires, those trying to work at change in their own organizations. In every organization, we need to look internally, to see one another as the critical resource on this voyage of discovery. We need to learn how to engage the creativity that exists everywhere in our organization . . . If context is as crucial as the science explains, then nothing really transfers; everything is always new and different and unique to each of us. We must engage with each other, experiment to find what works for us, and support one another as the true inventors that we are.²⁸

The following sections of this chapter describe techniques that are useful in relational evangelism in a missional community.

²⁷ See Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 16-21, for examples of churches who are engaging in creative, effective, missional evangelism.

²⁸ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999), 8-9.

Storytelling

Storytelling may be the strongest movement in contemporary evangelism.

Conversations and relationships are basic in relaying the gospel in the postmodern era; therefore, sharing personal faith stories and explaining how they fit into the meta-story of faith is used by missional churches²⁹ The strength of this model is that it requires little training or expertise by the storyteller, and storytelling only requires communicating how God drew the storyteller to faith and how it has impacted the person's life. Ron Martoia described the potential of this movement in his book, *Morph!*:

Almost everything written these days mentions the role of story in the post modern world. One thing needs to be said concerning my usage of it here. Far from being merely a pop fad, Jesus used story all the time. In fact, Matthew 13:34 records that Jesus did not say anything to the crowds without using a parable. Jesus knew the power of story. We often think story is for the uneducated and more childlike in our midst and propositions are for the more intellectual. Apparently, that's not true. All of us are experts on at least one thing: our story. We know better than anyone else what has happened in our lives and how the main character in the story feels and thinks. Our story is the most compelling and persuasive thing we can give people about God's activity in the world. Furthermore, have you ever met anyone who didn't want to tell his or her story—that person's woes, pains, and one-upmanship experiences? Go to a nursing home or retirement center. You'll get the picture. Here's where we have a swinging door as Christ-followers. The ability to listen and share stories is the way people come to follow Jesus.³⁰

One reason storytelling can become a major evangelism model for the twenty-first century is that narrative has been crucial in conveying human history. People have always told stories, handing down tradition and history throughout the ages. The move away

²⁹ McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 130, advocates spiritual storytelling as an effective means of inviting postmodern unbelievers into "spiritual conversations."

³⁰ Ron Martoia, *Morph: The Texture of Leadership For Tomorrow's Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2003), 34.

from telling stories occurred following the invention of the printing press, and the audible word is less emphasized in the age of computer communications. There is, however, a renewed resurgence in the art of storytelling in the contemporary culture. Many view modernity as a hindrance to storytelling, but “Bible translation stimulated the indigenous narrative tradition by introducing stories of the Bible and stimulating the storytelling predisposition of the oral tradition,” and it can do the same in the postmodern culture.³¹

The emerging church can embrace storytelling as a form of evangelism because storytelling draws an audience and is easily transferred. People do not need to be taught their own stories because they know them well. The art of sharing the gospel through storytelling allows Christians to attach their own story onto God’s story of redemption and personal transformation. Sweet writes, “Evangelism is the practice of out-narrating the world by telling a much better story, a story that can win the hearts and minds of the world’s peoples, a story of love, harmony, and peace. People are being seduced by the wrong stories, partly because we do not know how to tell the truth, the Whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth.”³² Storytelling is an effective tool in a missional community practicing a faithful evangelistic mission.

Missional Social Action

Successful evangelism in the postmodern era can be practiced as Christians live out the truth through acts of service and community assistance efforts. These actions help

³¹ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 109.

³² Sweet, *Out of the Question*, 85.

launch an era of credibility, thrust the church into the community, and draw Christians out of their institutional isolation. When members interact with non-Christians, meet needs, and show compassion, they share the message of hope. In the postmodern culture, Christians can engage in pro-human activities intended to share light and salt in their communities. These actions place renewed emphases on the biblical mandates to offer a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus, to love others, and do good (Matt. 25:31-46).

Social missions will be played out creatively through each body of believers and will be indigenous to their own community. The church can be an instrument of love and grace within its community, and Miles describes how social missions is divided into areas of purpose:

Two terms which are frequently used in speaking about church social work are social ministry and social action. Social ministry is feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and the prisoners. In other words, social ministry is doing such deeds of love and mercy as those mentioned four times in the judgment of the nations scene in Matthew 25:31-46. Christian social action, on the other hand, involved self-conscious attempts to change sinful social structures. Social action includes deeds of love and justice on behalf of society's outcasts and under classes. Such action may range all the way from passing a resolution to participating in an armed revolution, although many Christians will draw a line before the use of violence, and some before the breaking of any laws.³³

While Miles uses the term ministry, the term is connected most appropriately with what takes place inside the church, while mission work refers to activity outside the church. Miles also states that social involvement and social responsibility are synonymous with

³³ Delos Miles, *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues*, ed. Thom S. Rainier (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1989), 55.

social action and social work.³⁴ He writes that involvement and responsibility can be applied both individually and corporately; therefore, they may be applied in four functions that are missional:

1. Social Action: The church should act justly and protect those who cannot protect themselves. Additionally, it must combat those systems, institutions, and structures within humanity that are harmful, oppressive, or abusive. For example, the church may cooperate with agencies to protect and care for victims of genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan.

2. Social Work: The church should meet the needs of the poor, widowed, sick, and needy because Jesus gave the church clear instructions regarding its responsibility in this matter. For example, a church may launch a food pantry to feed families or build a shelter to house homeless people.

3. Social Involvement: The church may take an active part in the community and maintain a voice in the affairs of society, neighborhoods, and organizations. For example, the church may partner with local school clubs, sports teams, and civic organizations to bring positive change into the lives of children, families, and the community.

4. Social Responsibility: The church member bears individual responsibility to abide by the laws of the community, participate in caring for public spaces, commit time and resources to projects and initiatives that improve a community. For example, church members and churches may adopt a highway, participate in park clean-up days, and start neighborhood watch groups.

³⁴ Ibid.

While missional, evangelical living establishes credibility for sharing the gospel message in postmodern society, the church can also proclaim the gospel through social work programs. Missional activity and evangelism form a unity and are not antagonistic or at-odds. In *Evangelism in the 21st Century*, Franklin Graham's contributing chapter warns, "The Bible teaches God is conscious and concerned for all human needs—the physical as well as the spiritual. We must, however, recognize that meeting the physical and emotional needs of people must ultimately be a means to an end—namely, meeting the spiritual needs of humanity around the world."³⁵

Missional evangelism is about sharing the message of Jesus through social action. This approach to evangelism requires less information and more transformation, less knowledge and more relationship because missional evangelism is concerned with the person rather than propositional truths. It requires more servants and fewer spectators, more laborers and less church, more giving and less receiving, more participative action and generosity, and less consumerism. McLaren states, "Rather than measuring a church by its attendance, we will measure it by its deployment. One of the greatest enemies of evangelism is the church as fortress or social club; it sucks Christianity out of their neighborhoods, clubs, workplaces, schools, and other social networks and isolates them in a religious ghetto."³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 166.

³⁶ McLaren, "Emergent Evangelism,"

Community Modeling

Jesus said His disciples are known by their love for each other (John 13:34-35), and the church's love for each other is a test for the validity of the church's message. People consider the source of a message before accepting it as truth;³⁷ thus, members of the postmodern culture may watch Christians and determine whether their faith message is true. Believers can accomplish this witness by showing Jesus in their midst by rejecting division, judgmental attitudes, and general meanness. Kallenberg writes:

The world will not be able to evaluate the claims of the gospel unless they understand clearly what is the nature of the community that speaks these claims. The gospel will remain a mystery to the surrounding culture unless the church lives out the gospel in the form of its life together. It is the pattern of a believing community's relationships that embodies the story of Jesus in concrete terms that outsiders can comprehend.³⁸

The church community should be a safe place for spiritual seekers and people on journeys, even if they have not arrived at faith. McLaren says the church should welcome “spiritual questions, doubts and frustrations.”³⁹ The community of faith can be an authentic environment where people seek God, grow, and know Him more fully. Disciples become disciplers who help others on their journey. McLaren writes, “The church is not a place one attends but a community to which one belongs. The community

³⁷ McRaney, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 131, says believers “can no longer easily present a message of Christ with credibility and believability to [a postmodern] audience without living out the message in front of them.”

³⁸ Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 50.

³⁹ McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 44.

shares in mission and spiritual practice. It is rooted in common story whose emphasis is on the continuing work here and now, always drawing from our past.”⁴⁰

Relational Evangelism

Relationships within the community of believers model authentic faith, and individual relationships with non-Christians are the key to evangelizing the postmodern culture; the faith can be conveyed in loving friendships that are full of grace, truth, and intentionality. Previous evangelistic efforts aimed at conversion rather than the person, and this left little room for prospective believers to process the faith through thoughtful conversation. Believers attempted to convince people of the truth through formulas and propositions, not through influential relationships.

McLaren says, “Evangelism should be about relationships not arguments. Can you see how ‘trying to convert’ someone is inconsistent with a relationship? It is wrestling, not dancing; an argument, not conversing; win-lose, not win-win; sale and conquest, not friendship.”⁴¹ Missional evangelism begins with personal relationship, which provides the forum for faith conversation.

Using Spiritual Gifts

As previously indicated in this paper, not all Christians have the spiritual gift of evangelism. Only 9 percent of pastors and 2 percent of lay people say they are gifted

⁴⁰ McLaren, “Emergent Evangelism,” 42-44.

⁴¹ McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 29.

evangelically, and most do not believe themselves adequately trained in evangelism.⁴²

Leaders may help Christians realize their natural talents and specific spiritual gifts, and translate them into missional activities.

For example, one member in a local church possessed a talent for automotive repair. He helped the community with this talent, and this was his expression of the spiritual gift of service. The church sponsored a community-wide car clinic for single moms and provided free preventive maintenance. The clinic was a faithful and genuinely service-oriented program that reached the community, was missional, and provided opportunities to share the faith.

Become Disciples

When considering discipleship issues, some Christians may imagine Jesus' followers walking the countryside, listening, living, and doing the will of the Messiah. Contemporary Christ followers can live similarly. Followers of Jesus can reflect the disciples' actions, be on mission, reach out to the hungry, sick, paralyzed, prostitutes, drunkards, and others. This also includes contact with less respectable community residents because mission is directed at all people. Jesus would probably not allow His Father's work to be stifled or confined by a church facility or a demanding denominational structure.

Missional evangelism is a radical shift in thinking and activity. Jesus works outside church pews and pulpits, and He draws the lost sheep. The church can work with

⁴² George Barna, *Evangelism That Works* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1995), 84.

Him through missional evangelism. McLaren writes about this lifestyle: “It means being called to live a new way of living, a way of life characterized by love for God and one’s neighbor and one’s enemies. It positions one in the world as a servant, a doer of good works, and a friend to sinners, as was our Lord.”⁴³

A Perspective for Postmodern Evangelism

Emerging missional models for evangelism can be sharpened and refined continually. This section provides ideological parameters for these emerging forms which are relational rather than creedal in their focus. This author derived the following parameters from his experience, study, and examination of church culture and from his own conviction:

The first parameter is that Scripture is the authoritative source for all things in the church. The Scripture contains the mandate to preach the gospel, and it is the compass that points to the Christ of the gospel message. Non-biblical sources are subjective and offer little accountability. Second, experience should be evaluated in relationship to Scripture, but freedom of experience is warranted if it is consistent with the teaching and ways of Christ. Third, cooperation between churches is essential in order to deliver the gospel message effectively to the global community. Fourth, discipleship must become the church’s primary focus to ensure fruitful and enduring evangelistic efforts. Fifth, every Christian must be involved in the evangelical mission so the church reflects her true identity. To accomplish this, Christians must identify their spiritual gifts and calling

⁴³ Brian D. McLaren, “A Radical Re-thinking of our Evangelistic Strategy: The Challenge of Evangelism in the 21st Century,” *Theology News and Notes*, (Fall 2004): 4-6.

as they relate to the work of missions and ministry. Sixth, less emphasis should be placed on facilities, ministry infrastructure, and programming, and more time, money, and resources invested in local communities. Seventh, and above all, evangelism is relational and not based on methods, tools, or other programmatic gospel packaging.

Though these are not the only missional evangelism parameters in a postmodern context, they offer guidelines for the task. Lewis Drummond identifies additional principles from the first ministries that emphasize the Holy Ghost's role and importance:⁴⁴

1. The Spirit of God invades all believers (Acts 2:4).
2. The Spirit of God uses believers in Christ to communicate the Gospel (Acts 2:14).
3. The Spirit of God empowers God's people for service (Acts 1:8).
4. The Spirit of God bestows gifts of ministry to God's people and enables them to serve Christ effectively (Acts 2:4, 1 Cor. 12-14).
5. The Spirit of God arouses deep and profound interest throughout the believing community (Acts 2:6, 7, 12).
6. The Spirit of God reveals the full message of Jesus (Acts 2:14-36, John 14:26).
7. The Spirit of God draws people to Christ (Acts 2:37).
8. The Spirit of God regenerates repentant believers (Acts 2:41-42).

⁴⁴ Drummond, *The Canvas Cathedral*, 25.

9. The Spirit of God bears fruit in the believers and makes them holy (Acts 2:42; Gal 5:22f).

A continued challenge for the church is the presentation of a lively relational faith while maintaining sound doctrine and biblical teaching. Sweet emphasizes harmony between theology and the praxis:

The essence of the evangelism practiced by Jesus and the disciples was not taking stands on issues of the day, or teaching propositions, but performing signs that opened the doors of the senses to experiences of the divine. The gospel is not about what Jesus stands for. The gospel is about what Jesus does. In shedding his blood, he frees us from sin and death and makes us into new people. Jesus didn't die for principles. Jesus died for people. Jesus existed for no other purpose than to deliver a message from God: That message was his death on a cursed cross and his resurrection from a sealed tomb.⁴⁵

While Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith (1 Pet. 2:4-8), many missional churches are moving away from modern theological systems and hold to a relationally Christological faith.⁴⁶ There is a danger and naivety in believing that theology is bad and relationships are good because strong, healthy relationships are central to good theology. Ernest Reisinger argues:

In considering God-centered and man-centered [*sic*] evangelism, we ask again, what is the difference? The short answer is *theology*. Immediately eyebrows go up, and we hear someone say, "we don't need any of this theology talk; just tell people about Jesus." That sounds very pious and simple, but *which* Jesus should we tell them about—the "*Jehovah's*

⁴⁵ Sweet, *Out of the Question*, 110.

⁴⁶ Neil Cole, *Organic Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005) describes his church's approach to evangelistic living. His philosophies and methods for the Church Multiplication Associates flows primarily from Jesus' life and ministry as presented in the gospels.

Witness Jesus,” the “*Mormon Jesus,*” the “*Christian Science Jesus,*” or one of a thousand other Christs on the religious market?⁴⁷

Reisinger offers important principles which highlight the difference between a God-centered and person-centered theology of evangelism.⁴⁸

1. What we believe about the condition of man [*sic*] will have a profound effect upon the message and methods we employ to rescue him.
2. What do you believe about God’s sovereign election?
3. What do you believe about the atonement of Christ?
4. What do you believe about the Holy Spirit in the application of what Christ accomplished on the cross?
5. What do you believe regarding God’s keeping power?

An Evangelical, Missional Example

God created humans in His own image (Gen. 1:26), and humanity’s creative capacity is an expression of the divine image. Culturally sensitive churches utilize a variety of creative expressions that include: art, music, drama, architecture, and storytelling to impact people in ways that propositional teaching and preaching cannot.

For example, Evergreen Community Church meets in a Portland, Oregon pub and is an interactive community seeking to convey the message of hope in creative ways. The congregation employs art, videos, music, relationships, outreach, and social justice to

⁴⁷ Ernest Reisinger, *Today’s Evangelism: Its Message and Methods* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Craig Press, 1982), 53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 54-61.

convey the gospel message.⁴⁹ Pastor Bob Hyatt explains the church's refusal to do evangelistic events. He says, "If we can't grow by people building relationships, then we don't need to grow . . . it is the community's role to do evangelism not the job of the staff . . . the answer is not an event or program, it's the same as it has always been—relationships!" He desires the church provide a safe place for non-Christians and Christians to ask questions and surface doubts. He wants the staff to serve as tour guides along the path of spiritual discussion and to model trust in the Holy Spirit for the work of transformation.⁵⁰

Change is predictable in a missional, evangelical church community. The way the church does evangelism and shares the faith requires re-examination in light of postmodern culture. Kallenberg writes:

In such an age as ours, evangelism has become a cross-cultural task. We cannot take for granted any longer the common ground Christians once shared with the Western culture. No longer is belief in God or the deity of Christ or the authority and inspiration of scripture standard. In other words, we need to do as missionaries do: become students of the host culture so we can discover how God's Spirit intends the gospel to become embodied in the new era. Missiologists call this contextualization.⁵¹

The purpose of missional evangelism models is to help people discover the life-changing message of Jesus Christ in a postmodern culture. While many challenges exist, the mission is focused, founded in God's love, and manifested in the crucified Christ. Missionary author Kenneth McElhannon suggests missionaries must "learn as much as

⁴⁹ <http://www.Evergreenlife.org> (accessed 26 February 2007).

⁵⁰ Bob Hyatt, Pastor of Evergreen Community Church, interview by author, 30 October 2004, Portland, OR.

⁵¹ Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 13.

they can about the other's language and culture, to achieve a maximum overlap in their knowledge and experience. The greater the interaction, the greater the likelihood the gospel will be transferred without distortion." He adds, "The missionaries must live in the host community, learn the vernacular language, and participate in society."⁵² The local church is the new missionary, and it is time to live the gospel in the emerging postmodern culture.

Summary

Christians are called to reach their generation for Christ, but the church cannot expect Christian tradition to draw people to Christ. Missional passion for faithful, culturally relevant evangelism is required for fulfilling the Lord's command to make disciples in a world dying of sin, starvation, and injustice. Through missional evangelism, the church can be a viable force of truth, credibility, and a voice of hope and restoration in a fallen world.

The church is faithful when it engages the postmodern culture in ways that facilitate spiritual conversations. Paul writes, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Paul does not suggest the church should adopt the world-view, life-style, or philosophy of the surrounding culture, but he encourages the church to nurture the spirituality of those coming into the faith.

⁵² Kenneth McElhannon, "Don't Give Up on the Incarnational Model" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (October 1991), <http://bgc.gospelcom.net/emis/1991/dontgiveup.htm> (accessed 10 December 2004).

The Holy Spirit has orchestrated the changes and movements in the culture and in the church for a fresh wave of faith. Friendships, stories, language, media and other unconventional, non-modern means of conveying the faith can help spread the message of Jesus to the world. The church is learning to translate the good news in ways participants in a postmodern culture can understand. This fulfilled Paul's admonition: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

CHAPTER 5

LEADERSHIP EXPRESSIONS FOR A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

Church leadership can be reshaped to transition the church from a methods-based, attractional model of evangelism to a missional model that connects with postmodern people. Leadership looks differently in a missional construct because the community of faith ministers within a new cultural context. Leaders can rethink their roles and function. This chapter offers a variety of leadership styles that are relevant and effective in a missional church context. Max Depree offers a springboard for the discussion, “Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately, in its practice.”¹

The missional church requires a different philosophy of leadership in order to operate evangelically within a missional theology and ecclesiology. To begin the new approach, leaders must not ignore the need for change. In modernity, the church confidently heralded truth from a position of authority because it was the bulwark of community, faith, and life. Now she struggles to find relevance in today’s global environment, seeks her place in an increasingly secular society, and looks for missional, evangelical expressions that invite others into the Kingdom.

¹ Max Depree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 148.

When the baby boomer generation passes away, there will be a void felt in the culture at large and the church.² Younger generations feel less need for the church of modernity.³ While a strong force of young believers exists, there will be an impact upon churches when the older generations are absent.

A movement of missional churches and communities is growing in urban and suburban centers. These communities do not long to fill pews or maintain churches; instead, they desire to see a revived spiritual-centeredness.⁴ These emerging, missional churches understand the need to revisit methodologies, ministry philosophy, and theology for the twenty-first century. The issues involve more than worship style, church models, and leadership approaches; these churches and their leaders are rethinking the very nature of church and how to live out the calling to influence the Kingdom of God within the culture.⁵

Missional churches do not aim to conquer society with the gospel. Instead, they wish to rejoin society and penetrate it deeply through authentic relationships, caring communities, and a worthwhile faith. They wish to exemplify how Jesus lived, practice missional evangelism, and are less interested in mega church methodologies. These

² Steve Gillon, *Boomer Nation: The Largest and Richest Generation Ever, and How They Changed America*, (New York: Free Press, 2004), details how the Boomer generation is the driving force in our culture today and as the generation with the highest birthrate the richest generation in our history, their departure will have an uncertain, but critical impact on American society.

³ See statistics listed in chapter 1.

⁴ See Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 119ff.

⁵ Darrell L. Guder, "Pointing Toward the Reign of God," in *Treasure in Clay Jars*, ed. Lois Y. Barrett (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 127.

churches strive to put their faith in action as individuals and as communities.⁶ They wish to see God's will be done "on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

Leadership as Relationship⁷

The leadership of the church, though still influenced by present-day business models, can emulate Jesus. His concepts of leadership and authority run counter to today's bestselling principles, as described in the gospels:

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28)

One of the primary differences between contemporary approaches to leadership is Jesus' view of relationship. Jesus continually prioritized His relationship with His Father, and He consistently provided for the cares and concerns of His followers (John 5). His style of leadership flowed through His identity as the sent one, and precedence was given to relationships.

Relational leadership is a model gleaned from Jesus' interaction with others, and He modeled leadership that promotes interpersonal care and compassion. While leadership still involves providing direction and focusing efforts, a relational model is driven by influence rather than position. Passion for service trumps power, and people

⁶ Stetzer and Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 83.

⁷ Ibid., 84-85.

take precedence over programs. The authoritarian CEO model no longer delivers appropriate results because followers no longer respond to this leadership approach.

A primary concern for relational leadership techniques is development of individuals for the purpose of accomplishing organizational objectives. The concept requires that the church lead from a community perspective, shared vision, and purpose. Instead of top-down leadership, this model uses a flat-level approach.⁸ A relational model recognizes clear positions of responsibility and accountability and is not about giving up leadership; it does invite others into leadership.

A primary task for relational leaders is to facilitate and empower the imagination and giftedness of followers.⁹ Leaders encourage partnership and create a sense of ownership and involvement in the fulfillment of vision, values, and the mission. The model is also interested in the “community as organism.”¹⁰ This perspective is different from organizing a community, which involves fitting people into prescribed roles and duties thereby limiting its members’ creativity and freedom. The leader acknowledges that the community support structure permits great ideas to emerge, and that there is greater potential among many than in only one person.

⁸ Stetzer and Putnam discuss the great value that missional leaders place on the development of disciples and leaders. *Ibid.*, 75-76.

⁹ Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp, *People of the Truth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988), 58-9.

¹⁰ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 54. Hirsch notes the fact that the movement Jesus Started was organic, unlike the church that thinks more organizationally and institutionally.

A relational model for leadership operates on the presumption that mission is a by-product of relationship and that mission is more significant than following principles or employing strategies.¹¹ Relational leadership is necessary for accomplishing God's missional purposes and for effective evangelism in a postmodern culture. While new methods and techniques drive book sales and conference attendance, many long for a deeper, more meaningful level of spirituality. Jane Hawking, wife of theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, says, "However far-reaching our intellectual achievements and however advanced our knowledge of Creation, without faith and a sense of our own spirituality there is only isolation and despair, and the human race is a lost cause."¹²

Contemporary church leaders must be more than managers and programmers; they must be relationship brokers and spiritual guides for the journey.¹³ A missional leader intent on bringing people closer to Jesus Christ understands that God exists in community, and His church can reflect the communal nature of the Godhead. The church is a living replica of this mysterious triune relationship. The church's future models, therefore, are more organic than mechanical and draw power from the presence of God rather than a recruited volunteer base or Sunday morning attendance statistic. God is not interested in the quantitative standards used by many of today's leaders to measure

¹¹ See Mark Driscoll's description of Daniel's friendship with and separation from Babylonian culture in *Radical Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 129-131.

¹² Jane Hawking, "Jane Hawking quotes," ThinkExist.com http://en.thinkexist.com/quotes/jane_hawking/ (accessed 8 January 2007).

¹³ Stetzer and Putnam, *Beaking the Missional Code*, 72ff.

success.¹⁴ Rather, He measures success based on church's depth of spirituality and personal intimacy with God and others.

Leaders across the country are being drawn to spiritual formation as the center of church mission and ministry.¹⁵ With a strong spiritual center, people are better positioned to make a difference in their communities, and they function without reliance on programs and religious activities. Leading others in their quest for spirituality does not occur because people possess educational degrees, life-experience, or even positions of influence. Henri Nouwen writes, "I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self."¹⁶

The self-denial and repudiation of status which Nouwen advocates were practiced by Jesus (Phil. 2:5-11); however, how would He be received in America today? Jesus had no seminary training, possessed no formal degrees, and His resume contained no experience in executive positions or in large mega-churches. He never published. This critique does not disrespect those achievements, but such things are not required to lead God's people. The call and giftedness of the Spirit are necessary to accomplish His will (Eph. 4":16).

¹⁴ Guder, "Pointing Toward the Reign of God," 129, and also see, Bob Roberts, Jr. *Transformation: How Global Churches Transform Lives and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 83-84.

¹⁵ Stetzer and Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 73.

¹⁶ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 17.

Contemporary missional leaders experience the supernatural presence of God and communicate their experience authentically and vulnerably to others. Their goal is to help Christians recognize their own experiences with God and see how He works through their life stories.¹⁷ The leader helps discern individual giftedness and facilitates the use of those gifts. Senator Dianne Feinstein writes, “Ninety percent of leadership is the ability to communicate something people want.”¹⁸ In the church, leaders recognize that people want to live as faithful Christ-followers.

Some pastors and Christian leaders may have forfeited their roles as prophets and priests and become administrators and strategists. The leader of the church in the postmodern context will understand the need for both, while operating from a spiritual center. Sweet writes, “We want to do for our day what our ancestors did for their day. Rather than despair and curse the darkness, they released the Christ within them (Col. 1.26), who then changed the world.”¹⁹

Leadership as Story and Image

Leaders can use the postmodern language of postmoderns. This is not acquisition of colloquialisms, but an understanding of postmodern communication mediums. This involves multi-media, experiential learning forms, various artistic expressions, and

¹⁷ Linford L. Stutzman and George R. Hunsberger, “The Public Witness of Worship,” in *Treasure in Clay Jars*, 103-4.

¹⁸ Dianne Feinstein quoted by Jordan Bonfante, “Charm Is Only Half Her Story,” *Time Magazine*, (18 June 1990).

¹⁹ Leonard Sweet, Brian D. McLaren, Jerry Haselmayer, “A” *Is For Abductive: The Language of the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 29.

missional, evangelical churches use cultural language to convey the timeless message of Jesus Christ. The message will be packaged in narratives including artistic, experiential stories of faith and life. Truth is not discovered through propositional forms but through stories told in relationships with others. Robert Webber writes:

I can remember Francis Schaeffer shouting the law of contradiction saying, “A cannot be B and B cannot be A.” For moderns like Schaeffer, knowledge had to be clear and noncontradictory, but for postmoderns, things are complex and multidimensional. But this does not mean postmoderns want to be handed a plate of relativism. Today, young people come to church because “it stands for something.” But the gospel it stands for presented as story, not a noncontradictory, rationally defended, logically consistent fact apprehended by cognitive acquiescence.²⁰

The forms in which these stories are told, heard, and experienced are changing.

People will be able to explore their faith through virtual communities and on-line experiences, and learning occurs through a community hermeneutic.²¹ People will come to understand and interpret Scripture within the context of a community more than in isolated study or quiet times. Technology assists in this endeavor, and the church will

²⁰ Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 49.

²¹ Jason Clark cites quotes on his website and states the following: “A community of people who adopt Christianity as an alternative basis for living, beyond a set of propositional beliefs, becomes a powerful apologetic in the postmodern culture. Truth is found when individuals live in an authentic life-changing community because, what brings together absolute truth and relative truth is relational truth. God sent us a person, Jesus, not a proposition.” Clark also quotes Stanley Grenz, in an interview in *Cutting Edge Magazine*, who explains this hermeneutic as: “In the postmodern context, we are moving toward the community evaluating a mosaic’s pragmatic usability. The community has tremendous power in the postmodern context. Individualism is a modernist concept. The individual in the postmodern context becomes a person-in-relationship. So it’s not like I can stand as an individual observer looking at alternate communities and subjectively determining which is right or which mosaic happens to be intellectually best. Rather, it is only as I participate in community, involved in the give-and-take of that community life, that I see what its mosaic is all about. In other words, to know Jesus, to know what christianity is really truly about, is only possible by active participation in the life of a community of believers, and not by learning propositional truths/facts about Christianity (even if we affirm there are propositional truths about Christianity). And in terms of others finding out about christianity, our best apologetic (and often our worst!), is the community that live around their faith,” <http://www.jasonclark.ws/tag/apologetic> (accessed on 1 March 2007).

learn to create its own platforms and software to share the gospel and promote spiritual formation.

Leadership As Interaction

Future vision is crucial to leadership. S. I. Hayakawa states, “If you see in any given situation only what everybody else can see, you can be said to be so much a representative of your culture that you are a victim of it.”²² Twenty-first century church leaders must engage the postmodern culture. Intersecting is a word intended to emphasize not the convergence but the divergence of roads leading in different directions. In the book, “*A” Is for Abductive*, the authors describe the interaction necessary to present Jesus to postmodern people:

We are making every effort to be among postmoderns. We never want to be postmodernists. Our aim is biblical integrity and cultural indignity: not a first-century church reproduced in the 21st century, but a 21st century church incarnating Jesus’ presence and biblical values, leaning forward into God’s gift of the future.²³

Leaders should not seek to adopt the values of postmodern culture or befriend it; rather, the goal is to make friends within the culture. For many Christian leaders, this intersection creates a fear of being drawn into the perils of a secular, humanistic, sinful culture. The church need not live and work in fear. She must seek first the Kingdom of God and live courageously in grace and holiness.

²² S. I. Hayakawa, “S. I. Hayakawa quotes,” ThinkExist.com http://en.thinkexist.com/quotes/s._i._hayakawa/ (accessed 8 January 2007).

²³ Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer, “*A” Is for Abductive*, 29.

Missional, evangelical living is critical for intersecting with non-Christian people, and leaders can help Christ followers live out their faith in ways that help and heal society. The church is called to bring justice to the oppressed, care for the homeless and distraught, and seek righteousness:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me." They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. (Matt. 25:34-46).

Intersecting with culture does not require adopting the habits and preferences of the culture. Scripture requires leaders to see into the hearts of street kids, gothics, and corporate executives as God does. It requires leaders recognize that God has created each soul for relationship and communion with Himself. Scripture reminds leaders they must not consider appearance. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Many

approaches to leadership and many opportunities to apply those models present themselves, and the church's mission is clear. She is called through the Great Commission to go into the world making disciples and building the Kingdom of God. Leaders can help Christians develop effective missional approaches to evangelism. Sweet provides different ways leaders may approach this constantly evolving and changing culture. He says the church may be:

1. Reactive—wait until change occurs before you deal with it; assume that while change is always occurring, the future will still be like the past; utilize crisis management.
2. Responsive—while change is occurring, get involved doing what you can; anticipate what is probable, and be proactive once you see the direction change is going.
3. Redemptive—get ahead of change and try to steer it; no one can escape the reactive and responsive, rather learn to read the handwriting on the wall, utilizing futuring and futures research as prophetic professions.²⁴

Sweet's categories consider how leaders intersect with culture, and churches in America fall within one of his three categories. Some congregations are unable to make the shift because some leaders are paralyzed by congregations with controlling tendencies who protect the institution at any cost.²⁵ Cultural combat appears to be the first reaction of many congregations.²⁶ Instead of responding to postmodern culture with shields and

²⁴ Leonard Sweet and Andy Crouch, ed., *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2003), 21.

²⁵ Guder, *Missional Church*, 46ff., discusses the complexities of the development of the North American church and the tendency to protect its established status.

²⁶ Driscoll, *Radical Reformission*, 99 and 110, points out that church people often attack one another in the various cultural wars within the church itself. He also points out that changing culture should not be the first goal of believers, but they must first bring the gospel to people so it may change their hearts.

swords, the church will have greater success as it engages the culture with love and compassion. Nouwen writes, “That is the way Jesus came to reveal God’s love. The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God’s word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love and has chosen to proclaim that love as the true source for all human life.”²⁷

Leadership as Emotion

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.(Matt. 9:35-36)

Unlike modern era generation leaders, postmodern leaders may possess a higher Emotional Intelligence (EI) than Intelligent Quotient (IQ).²⁸ Since leadership is about the art of influencing others, EI plays a more prominent role in understanding and relating to congregants. Max Depree defines leadership as “liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible.”²⁹ IQ relates to management and intelligent application, allocation of resources, and general knowledge.

²⁷ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 17.

²⁸ Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring Missional Alternatives to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 171, says of theological professors, “precisely because some faculty suffer from a lower emotional and relational intelligence, a less intuitive and practical wisdom,” they are “less effective teachers”

²⁹ Max Depree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 1.

In *From Now on with Passion*, Christine Casper contends that IQ can be elevated to some degree with enough education and discipline, but EI develops more easily and is available to the average person regardless of the ability to recite information or memorize factual data. EI teaches the student to “become aware of your emotions, master your response to them, understand what others are feeling, and how to fulfill goals and aspirations.”³⁰ EI, unlike IQ, is less about how much an individual knows and understands, and is more about helping the person become “more authentic, more comfortable, more knowledgeable, more successful, and more passionately involved in every aspect of your life.”³¹ Such abilities are essential to reaching postmoderns because postmoderns are more concerned with how others care about them than how much they know.

Leadership as Empowerment

True leadership must be for the benefit of the followers, not the enrichment of the leaders.³²

Relational leaders are journeypersons. They know the art of leading postmoderns is about joining them on a pilgrimage of service and participation, more than telling them how to go, why to go, and which way to go.³³ This approach is not about renouncing

³⁰ Christine Mockler Casper, *From Now on with Passion: A Guide to Emotional Intelligence* (Fort Bragg, CA: Cypress House, 2001), xv.

³¹ Ibid, xv.

³² A Quote by Robert Townsend.

³³ See Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) and also, Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 197.

leadership responsibility. It is about how one leads, and it is about respecting those who follow. Leaders can guard against arrogance and acknowledge they do not have all the answers to every issue. It devalues people when they are not invited to the leadership table and allowed to share their wisdom, passion, and giftedness. Sweet asserts, “To put it bluntly: the whole leadership thing is a demented concept. Leaders are not born nor made. Leaders are summoned. They are called into existence by circumstances. Those who rise to the occasion are leaders.”³⁴

Leaders can accept followers’ contributions. Depree states, “It is fundamental that leaders endorse a concept of persons. This begins with an understanding of the diversity of people gifts and talents and skills. Understanding and accepting diversity enables us to see that each of us is needed. Letting go and letting others enables the leader to begin thinking about being abandoned to the strengths of others, of admitting that we cannot know or do everything.”³⁵ The opposite mindset creates self-reliance and undervalues others’ potential contributions. This is not about getting people to work harder or smarter, and it is not about delegation of responsibility. It is about drawing leadership skills from others and sharing the leadership role and responsibility within organizations and communities.

³⁴ Leonard Sweet, *Summoned to Lead* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 12.

³⁵ Depree, *Leadership As an Art*, 9.

Vision is frequently overstated and under-used, and it can become a buzzword unless it reflects a desire to engage culture.³⁶ Many leaders believe the starting point for leadership success begins with finding the right direction, but this can lead to slogans unclarified by vision statements, mission statements, and core values. While these can and do help, they tend to place the focus on the goals rather than on people and relationships. Sweet supports this perception:

What are the most desirable characteristics for a new CEO? Is it vision? Or is it vigilance and good corporate governance? Lou Gerstner uttered a now-famous sentiment back in 1993: “The last thing IBM needs now is vision.” In one sense, the last thing the church needs is “more vision.” When Christians sing “Be Thou My Vision” we are testifying to the fact that we have all the vision we need in Jesus. Where we need help is in developing a musical ear: ears to recognize the vision that is already at work in our world, ears to hear the false notes, and ears to tune ourselves to God’s perfect Pitch, Jesus the Christ.³⁷

Missional Leadership

“Incarnational Christianity,” described by Van Rhee, captures the meaning of missional leadership. Van Rhee writes:

Incarnation means that God enables divinity to embody humanity. Christians, like Jesus, are God’s incarnations, God’s temples, tabernacling in human flesh (John 1:14; Phil. 2:3-8). Christians, spiritually transformed into the image of God, carry out God’s ministry in God’s way. Frequently incarnationalists relate to seekers from other world religions personally and empathetically (as Jesus taught Nicodemus). Sometimes, however, they declare God’s social concerns by shaking up the status quo and

³⁶ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 69-70, remind believers that vision is primarily a God-given invitation to join him where He is already working and moving.

³⁷ Sweet, *Summoned to Lead*, 14-15.

“cleaning out the temple.” The end result of incarnation in a non-Christian world is always some form of crucifixion.³⁸

This facet of leadership involves the manifestation of beliefs into action. Webber says, “Realize the old story must be lived out.”³⁹ This element of leadership involves modeling and leading the community into missional activity in the culture through acts of service, kind deeds, positive contributions, and grace-filled churches. The church can live out her values so that the culture does not see judgmental hypocrites but servants loving everyone. Webber substantiates this by writing, “Research shows that 68 percent of younger evangelicals surveyed affirmed that the best way to change the situation of our broken world is by practicing your ideals in every day life.”⁴⁰

Summary

As the church embarks on the journey in the world as partners with God’s missional plan for humankind, she must revisit her understanding of leadership. The church and the culture require new approaches to leadership. Leading the church to engage the culture requires a healthy, consistent harmony between missional presence among postmoderns and living righteously before the Lord. Between these responsibilities are leadership demands: budgets, meetings, facilities, hospitals, broken relationships, legalities, and various other realities. First and foremost, however, leaders

³⁸ Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rhee, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004).

³⁹ Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

can equip a relational army of Christians who change the world with love, hospitality, grace, and the good news of Jesus.

This is the essence of a missional community that practices a faithful evangelical mission. Through Moses' vision, Paul's passion, and the love of Jesus, God provides leaders to guide people back to Him; not to classes, or events, but into the presence of the One who named and called disciples to be His ambassadors. Leaders can lead through relationship, kindness, cooperation, wisdom, presence, and humility.

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Pet. 2:9-11)

CHAPTER 6

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR ENGAGING THE CULTURE

A new breed of churches is spreading in pockets across the globe,¹ and the growth may not be the result of an ecclesial fad or popular methodology. They develop because God's work in the lives of missionally oriented leaders produces meaningful, effective approaches to worship and ministry.² The rapid growth of these churches suggests established church models may be obsolete, but institutional churches do struggle to re-contextualize their ministries and re-imagine church structure and function in a postmodern, post-Christian society. This chapter identifies missional characteristics that may help traditional churches contextualize the gospel and connect with postmodern persons.

The current American culture is increasingly hostile towards organized, public expression of religion,³ and it is insufficient for the church to make itself more inviting or

¹ In 2005, the author interviewed churches in Australia and Great Britain and found the missional church movement strong in these regions. The following churches provided help in researching this subject: (1) Graceway Baptist Church, Ellerslie, New Zealand; email interview with Pastor Mark Barnard, 10-30 April 2005; and (2) Visions- c/o St Cuthbert's Church, Peasholme Green, York UK; email interview with Pastor Sue Wallace, 20-29 April 2005.

² Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 141-142, affirm the need to facilitate "worship that honors God and connects with community," but they caution that contemporary worship forms are not always the key. The willingness to find, try, and experience new worship styles that connect with the particular community when the existing form fails to connect well is most important

³ George Barna describes successful churches of the 1990s in *User Friendly Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991).

“user-friendly.”⁴ In response to these trends, the church must become more missional in its nature and identity. For example, McLaren argues that the church can “define—or redefine—its mission, [and though the] specific focus of the local church will vary, of course, according to their [*sic*] context and environment . . . some overriding values [will] move to the forefront of the new church’s mission: more Christians, better Christians, authentic missional community, and for the good of the world.”⁵

The characteristics discussed in this chapter may equip the church to represent the Kingdom of God more faithfully. This paper argues that the church includes “sent ones” of Christ who are commissioned to deliver God’s message of reconciliation and love. Most churches do not send their people into the world consistently and intentionally with the love of Christ.⁶ Many churches do not reflect the missional heart of God and have little understanding of their role in accomplishing God’s missional purposes. Churches may mistake missions programming and an emphasis on increased membership as evidence of missional identity. McLaren provides four questions for evaluating the missional identity of a local church:

The church’s program is the sum of its actions employed to achieve its mission. Now if in the old church we were uncertain of our mission, we had no standard by which to measure how the program was working. In

⁴ Claudia Kalb provides an example of culture’s rejection of faith in the public arena. In her *Newsweek* article, *The Critic: Religion is a Private Matter*, Kalb describes how Richard Sloan, Director of Behavioral Medicine at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, believes religion has little place in medicine and specifically the physician’s practice. (Newsweek, Inc., 2006), <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3339658> (accessed 24 January 2007).

⁵ McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 28.

⁶ Guder, *Missional Church*, 84-85, believes this mistake is rooted in a wrong perspective of the church as “vendor of religious goods and services,” which results in church members becoming distanced “from their own communal calling to be a body of people sent on a mission.”

fact, when we weren't careful, our mission unwittingly became to promote, celebrate, defend, and continue the old program, regardless of its effectiveness. In the new church, guided by our mission, we will have four simple questions by which to evaluate our program:

1. Does this help uncommitted people (including uncommitted people disguised as nominal Christians) become followers of Jesus?
2. Does this help followers of Jesus become better followers of Jesus?
3. Does this enhance the development of authentic Christian Community?
4. Does this empower, equip, [and] deploy the church for a missional identity for the good of the world?⁷

The challenge for the church is to live out its biblical mission. The missional movement is not about ministry methods and techniques, but a people sent to love the world and invite others to experience and join the reign of God. This missional, relational approach requires greater commitment and training because, as Eddie Gibbs points out:

The majority of church leaders throughout the Western world find themselves ministering in a rapidly changing cultural context that is both post-Christian and pluralistic. Consequently their outreach ministries are [more] cross-cultural as those of their more traditional missionary counterparts seeking to make Christ known in other parts of the world. Consequently they are in as much need of missionary training to venture across the street as to venture overseas.⁸

Some mission-minded Christians build and maintain relationships, and others can learn to develop friendships with non-Christians. The key to missional success is Christians who engage the culture and share their stories, and the author of this paper believes authentic relationships are natural platforms for sharing faith and spiritual stories. When believers experience the Holy Spirit's work in their lives, they share their

⁷ McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side*, 42.

⁸ Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 27.

faith more easily. A missional approach requires that Christians build relationships and join others in the spiritual journey.

The Missional Score (M-Score)

The author of this paper developed the Missional Score (M-Score) assessment tool to evaluate a church's readiness to engage postmodern culture. Although the instrument has no established, scientific validity and reliability, it provides insights for transition into a missional community. The specific characteristics chosen for the M-Score were selected from a variety of sources, including: personal experience, observation, missional church literature, churches visited by this paper's author, and mentorship by professors and advisors.

Essential Missional Characteristics

Ecclesial models are based primarily on three platforms: theology, philosophy, and methodology.⁹ The three platforms work together and create the identity and characteristics of a church community, and they describe and categorize different churches. A missional church can re-contextualize the three platforms in light of the postmodern shift in culture. This chapter describes characteristics that must be evident in missional, relational churches. The following sections provide elements essential for transition into a missional church that engages the culture and represents the Kingdom.

⁹ Bob Hyatt, interview by author, 22 March 2005, Portland, Oregon.

Missional Resurgence

The missional church uses the same essential elements overseas missionaries employ to evangelize. North American Christians can learn the cultural idioms, language, and customs of postmodern people as tools to invite people on a faith journey. This operates on the assumption that mission is the purpose of the church; mission is not another church program. All other activities and ministry flow from the church being on mission and furthering the Kingdom of God. Guder writes, “We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation.”¹⁰

The missional church is a celebratory, passionate, and communal movement.¹¹ The existing church, which is often static, stationary, and institutional, can recover its sent nature and become a missional community. John Gladwin writes about the postmodern church and believes the emerging missional church has four features:¹²

1. Focus on the journey of faith and the experience of God
2. Desire for less structure and more direct involvement by participants
3. Sense of flexibility in order and a distinct nonhierarchical culture
4. Recognition that the experience of church is about discipleship

¹⁰ Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

¹¹ Brownson, Dietterich, Harvey, and West describe the communal environment developed by Jesus in the beatitudes in *Stormfront*, 105-7 and ff.

¹² John Gladwin, *Love and Liberty: Faith and Unity in a Postmodern Age* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 209.

The church can move out from its institutional walls and into the community. Guder captures this calling when he writes:

“Mission” means “sending” and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history. God’s mission began with the call of Israel to receive God’s blessings in order to be a blessing to the nations. God’s mission unfolded in the history of God’s people across the centuries recorded in scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God’s work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected. God’s mission continued then in the sending of the Spirit to call forth and empower the church as the witness to God’s good news in Jesus Christ. It continues today in the worldwide witness of churches in every culture to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it moves toward the promised consummation of God’s salvation in the eschaton (“last” or “final day”).¹³

As the missional movement matures, church members can understand the relational concept. By way of example, churches are measuring success in ways other than quantitative analyses. They are beginning to measure effectiveness qualitatively as they send believers into the community. Kimball writes, “The emerging church must redefine how we measure success: by the characteristics of a kingdom-minded disciple of Jesus produced by the Spirit, rather than our methodologies, numbers, strategies, or the cool and innovative things we are doing.”¹⁴ Many church leaders ask the question, “How do we get bigger, rather than how do we get deeper?” Kimball provides qualitative measurement categories for the missional movement:

How should we measure success in the emerging church? By looking at what our practices produce in the called people of God as they are sent out on a mission to live as light and salt in their communities (Matt. 5:13-16). By seeing if people in our church take social justice and caring for the

¹³ Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

¹⁴ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 15.

needy seriously as part of the mission Jesus did. We must measure success by looking for the same characteristic that the Spirit of God commended in the emerging missional Thessalonian church of the first century.¹⁵

Kimball also reminds the church of its core mission described in scripture:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 29:16-20)

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good bye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57-62)

Theological Reforming

Reforming theology is an essential element and a critical ingredient in the M-Score because theology is the platform that determines the mission, focus, and personality of the church community. A church's theology is often the driving force in its doctrinal stances, polity structures, truth constructs, and worldview. The emerging missional church revisits her theology and reassesses its belief systems. Many missional leaders believe theology shaped during modernity is bound too closely with propositions

¹⁵ Ibid.

rather than relationships, and they believe theology relies too heavily on logic and reason and leaves little room for mystery and experience.¹⁶ McLaren believes the church needs to “stop thinking of theology as a matter of technical training, in which answers are already known, and rejuvenate theology through a quest for truth and beauty.”¹⁷

The missional church understands that creeds do not emphasize right living because doctrinal emphasis shifted from right acting to right thinking. This has been referred to as the distinction between orthopraxy and orthodoxy.¹⁸ Orthopraxy is an operational paradigm based on the assumption that right living provides the context for embracing right thinking. Orthodoxy assumes the opposite: if a person’s thinking is changed, then behavior will change. Many believers think correctly about Christian teaching, but their lives do not mirror their beliefs. The writer of James says, “By my works I will show you my faith [and] even the demons believe and shudder” (Jas. 2:18-19).

The church has considered herself the protector of truth, but has often neglected the mandate to live the truth.¹⁹ This statement is more applicable when truth is understood as more than doctrinal statements and creeds. This may be corrected as the

¹⁶ See Erwin McManus, *An Unstoppable Force* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001), 96, for a discussion of the development of a communal ethos. On pages 110-111, he says “For too long we have focused on making sure people believe the right things and have left their concerns alone . . . [when] it is more important to change what people care about than to change what they believe!”

¹⁷ McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 65.

¹⁸ These two elements are identified as essential to Spiritual Formation. See George Fox University’s website for their list: <http://www.georgefox.edu/seminary/formation.html> (accessed 4 March 2007).

¹⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 429.

church understands and pursues truth in relationship with Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:6-7).

McLaren explains how the church can view theology differently:

To say that the church on the other side needs a new theology is not to suggest heresy. It is simply to distinguish between the message (God’s truth, revelation, action, and expression) and theology (our task, our work, our language, our search to understand and articulate God’s message). In the old church we too often forgot that the two are different. We were aware how other people had confused the two, but seldom considered how we might have done so. In the new church we will try hard to remember that God is God and we are mere creatures, and that our attempts to understand and articulate his message and truth are always approximations.²⁰

The missional movement does not suggest traditions and theology should be discarded; rather, it intends to reconstruct and build upon them. This theological rethinking opens the church’s eyes to faith perspectives it missed or had grown stale. Guder states, “This missional reorientation of our theology is the result of a broad biblical and theological awakening that has begun to hear the gospel in fresh ways.”²¹

Values, Gospel, and Culture

Values are concepts and beliefs that drive a church’s decisions about ministry and ecclesiology, and they are an essential element in the missional church. Once a church’s values are identified, church motives can be identified. If the church holds to a value of

²⁰ McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 65.

²¹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

presence with others, the church can develop intentional opportunities designed to intersect the congregation with the community. McNeal asks, “What if every recommendation from a ministry team had to be accompanied by a list of the values it champions?”²² Values are essential elements that express the church’s identity within the culture, because values are easily observed.

The Mosaic Church in Los Angeles adopted core values of a missional community. Eric Bryant, Navigator for Mosaic, shares this explanation:

We wouldn’t describe ourselves as emergent, emerging, gen-x, or postmodern. We like to consider ourselves a church with a high view of God, a high view of people, and a high view of Scriptures. We do what we do and how we do it because we are in Los Angeles trying to reach our friends and family. We are a sixty year-old church that has seen part of our calling as creating the future to affect our city and our world. We believe mission is why the church exists; love is the context of mission; and the Scriptures are the authoritative word from God to guide us in life and ministry.

Erwin McManus describes foundational concepts as the lead pastor at Mosaic, and he illustrates Mosaic’s values with the following metaphors:

1. The Wind / Moved-Commission: *Mission is why the church exists.*
2. Water/ Drenched-Community: *Love is the context of all mission.*
3. Wood / Crafted-Connection: *Structure must always submit to spirit.*
4. Fire / Consumed-Communion: *Relevance to culture is not optional.*
5. Earth / Transformed-Character: *Creativity is the natural result of spirituality.*²³

²² McNeal, *The Present Future*, 104.

²³ McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 165-166.

Contextualization

Contextualization is an essential element in a missional, relational church and refers to the necessity of “reading the signs of the times...*in the light of the gospel*” to determine the most appropriate manner for meaningfully communicating and demonstrating the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁴ Many church leaders presume there is willingness to change methodology to fulfill the church’s purpose and mission in the world. Most churches believe choosing correct methods produces better, stronger churches, and they invest in books, conferences, and adopt current models. Guder challenges this perspective:

The basic thesis of this book [*Missional Church*] is that the answer to the crisis of the North American church will not be found at the level of method and problem solving. We share the conviction of a growing consensus of Christians in North America that the problem is much more deeply rooted. It has to do with who we are and what we are for. The real issues in the current crisis of the Christian church are spiritual and theological.²⁵

Guder suggests the church can regain her biblical identity and mission.

An essential missional element is the belief the gospel is valid for all cultures and times when it is contextualized. The missional church advocates recognize that the gospel must be clothed in time-specific cultural forms for the gospel to be communicated and understood. Frost and Hirsch provide three elements of contextualization: Communion in relationship with Christ, community in relationship with one another, and commission in

²⁴ For an in-depth review and critique of the development of contextual theologies see Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 420-32. In the same text see 428-430 for Bosch’s discussion of contextual theology as an exercise in reading the “signs of the times.”

²⁵ Guder, *Missional Church*, 3.

the world.²⁶ The missional church concept balances the equally important \ relational commitments with God, others, and the world.

Engaging the Culture

Cultural engagement is a missional essential element. Jesus' life provides compelling evidence that the church can be relevant and engage the culture without accommodating to the culture. Missional churches do not focus inwardly, but are mobilized outwardly. McManus writes, "The incarnation of Jesus Christ is God's undeniable evidence that relevance to culture is not optional. The apostolic ethos is fueled by incarnation—God shows up!"²⁷

The missional church can connect effectively with its community. The church will realize her missional purpose and vocation within her host culture and conduct ministry beneficial for the local community. McNeal describes the church's missional role in the emerging postmodern context:

I did not say we need a postmodern church, nor did I say we need for the church to pursue its understanding of the culture in order to mimic it. The last thing we need is a postmodern church. We need a church for postmodern people (like we've had a church for people in the centuries of modernity). **The reason to get in touch with the culture is not to adopt it but to engage it for the same reasons as a missionary does—in order to gain a hearing for the gospel.**²⁸

God
gospel
MC

Instead of seeing the culture as the enemy and fortifying walls to protect herself, the missional church engages the culture, shares the faith message, and penetrates the

²⁶ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 77.

²⁷ McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 176.

²⁸ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 141. Bold in the original text.

culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many Christians fear the culture will influence the church, and the fear is not unfounded, but the church can impact and influence the culture.

Spiritual Formation

Discipleship in missional churches occurs in relationships with mature believers rather than in a classroom or formal instructional setting. Spiritual formation is an essential missional element that should not be equated with offering discipleship programs in which people complete propositional workbooks, and remain unchanged by Jesus Christ. Missional church advocates understand the importance of discipleship and Christian transformation which prioritize and nurture believers' spiritual lives.

The focus of spiritual formation in a postmodern context relies heavily on spiritual directing, listening, theology, and faith praxis.²⁹ Rather than joining a class to learn about faith, believers are sent into a community and learn theology while practicing ministry and service in a cultural context. In essence, spiritual formation is caught, not taught because spiritual formation flows out of mission.

Community as God's Representatives

Community is a lead component and an essential element in missional churches. Friendships have always been a priority in the church, and authentic, forgiving

²⁹ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 76-79, say spiritual formation in missional churches involves living as Jesus lived, loving as Jesus loved, and leaving behind what Jesus left behind.

communities spur friendship to a higher level.³⁰ The community in a missional setting embodies and demonstrates God's reign, and represents His work of grace. Guder writes, "We live as the covenant community, a distinctive community spawned by God's reign to show forth its tangible character in human social form."³¹

The church is called to live as a visible reminder of the Kingdom of God, manifesting God's love to one another and the world. Authentic Christian communities live under the reign of God and have a clear understanding of what a Christians is and does. Christians are disciples and followers of Jesus sent on mission in the world. Any concept of the church which does not encompass this fundamental truth risks creation of an establishment that resembles a religious club rather than God's sent people. Roberts and Marshall ask:

Are we willing to be true disciples of Jesus Christ? While that may seem like a strange question to ask, the truth is that being a disciple has become optional in many of our churches. Perhaps so little discipleship exists in our churches because we've pursued a different course than the one God intended. In order for authentic Christian communities to exist, authentic leaders must exist to lead them.³²

The contemporary church faces the reality that people will find community somewhere. The church can be an open community that welcomes all members not just a select few who pass the religious test. The Christian community can reflect the God

³⁰ Paul's letters to the churches provide excellent examples of sincere Christian friendship, particularly Philippians 1:1-11 in which he expresses his longing for the believers' love to "abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight" so they "may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."

³¹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 103.

³² Wes Roberts and Glenn Marshall, *Reclaiming God's Original Intent for the Church* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2004), 15.

whom it serves, follow the teachings of Christ, emulate the patterns of his ethical life, and obey His commandments. In the book *Community 101*, Bilezekian reminds believers:

When he ordained his followers to be salt and light in this world, Christ expected the fellowship they would form to become a distinctive community that would serve as a model for the world. This would require that Christians be different not only in their individual lifestyles but also in the way they related to each other. Therefore, Jesus expressly and severely forbade his followers to structure their communities according to the patterns of this world.³³

Experiential

The missional church is experiential. Postmoderns yearn for a participatory faith experience, which makes making experiential worship and faith experiences essential elements for missional churches in the contemporary context.³⁴ The hunger for hands-on, tangible spirituality is one reason for the emphasis on mystery. People seek worshipful, participatory access to God that permits entrance into the spiritual mystery of the Godhead rather than cognitive engagement with the facts of faith. People seek faith experience, not just understanding, and they want to feel rather than only comprehend the Spirit of God.

Experiential worship facilitates better understanding of and engagement with the Christian faith. Education experts have demonstrated higher transfers of learning through

³³ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 49.

³⁴ Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 117ff., says congregant participation is an essential worship element.

experiential environments.³⁵ Experiential faith produced increases in interest among charismatics as a result of worship interactivity and mystery.³⁶

Kimball states, “Worshipping God together in community should be a participatory and experiential event. Participation and experience are very important to people in emerging generations, in all areas of life.”³⁷ Pastors serving postmoderns can employ participatory acts of worship that reinforce preached truths. The experiential possibilities here are numerous and require ingenuity and creativity.

Servanthood

Servanthood is an essential element in missional ethos. Jesus ushered in the reign of God, and He demonstrated the values associated with the Kingdom. He cared for the poor and oppressed, loved the unlovable and outcasts, cared for sinners and lepers, and loved and served people. Guder writes:

The design for the [missional] pattern is Jesus himself. Throughout his earthly ministry we sense the heartbeat of his action: compassionate response to human need. He was predisposed to be interrupted, even from his focal task of preaching, whenever hunger, sickness, demonic oppression, the grip of sin, social ostracism, or death crossed his path (Mark 1.35-45).³⁸

³⁵ The National Training Laboratory in their graph “Effective Learning: % of knowledge retained after completion” (Bethel, Maine) states students retained 75% more through a hands-on approach, [http://www.brandeis.edu/experientiallearning/History of E-L.doc](http://www.brandeis.edu/experientiallearning/History%20of%20E-L.doc) (accessed 4 March 2007).

³⁶ Leonard Sweet, “Leadership in Emerging Culture,” (lecture, Fox University, Portland, OR, April 2005).

³⁷ Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, 137.

³⁸ Guder, *Missional Church*, 105.

Following Christ's example, the missional church can embrace a service-oriented faith as a central identity. The church is called to live out the ideals and beliefs it teaches. Since the church was introduced with Christ's coming, the church is obligated to represent the Kingdom in the passionate way Christ presented it.

Multi-Sensory

The missional church in a postmodern context can use multi-sensory and multi-level approaches to faith communication and spiritual formation. Missional leaders will vary learning styles as they teach and lead, incorporating elements that engage the five senses. For example, laughter is effective in story and truth-telling. Members of the postmodern generation are accustomed to learning through telecommunications, multi-tasking, 3-D imagery, animation, video edits, and special effects.

Some churches realize the wider culture is becoming image-driven.³⁹ Some question the long-term effects on the social well-being of a culture that no longer leans dependent on the written word, but images are the cognitive driving force in contemporary America.⁴⁰ The following table displays how members of the current culture learn.⁴¹

Table 4. Physical approach to learning styles of the postmodern generation

³⁹ In his EPIC concept, Leonard Sweet reveals "Image-Driven" describes the culture and its use of images/video/art as an essential component to communicating to postmoderns. "Leadership in Emerging Culture."

⁴⁰ Walter Ong, "Maranatha: Death and Life in the Text of the Book," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45 (1977): 419-499.

⁴¹ Michigan State University Virtual University Design and Technology, "Learning Styles," http://vudat.msu.edu/learning_styles/ (accessed 23 January 2007).

	Characteristic	Learn by	Usually enjoy	Instructors should use for emphasis	Instructor should use for reinforcement	Action words
Visual (about 65% of the population)	Visual learners need to see what they are learning	Watching	Reading	Charts, bold colors/patterns, outlines	Writing notes, concept maps, graphics	See, look, draw
Auditory (about 30% of the population)	Auditory learners need to hear when they are learning	Listening	Discussing	Key ideas through voice inflections, tones	Speaking aloud	Hear, say, speak
Kinesthetic (about 5% of the population)	Kinesthetic learners need to move around while learning	Doing	Being physically involved	Analogies, anecdotes, examples	Writing on flip charts and simulating tasks	Feel, do, demonstrate

Structural Fluidity

Traditional church models and structures are changing as a missional mindset shapes leaders.⁴² The models are more functional and flexible, and they are essential elements in missional churches. From facility spaces to job titles, congregations adapt to changing community needs. If the church does not make structural shifts aligned with its missional identity, the church will not connect effectively with the culture.⁴³ Ecclesial leaders can adjust structures, align the structures with the community, and respond flexibly to community needs.

Gibbs writes in *Church Next* that “Denominations that are monochrome in ethos and cookie-cutter in their approach to organizing existing churches and establishing new ones emaciate the gospel. Even within the most monolithic of church structures there is more variety than would appear from official pronouncements or from the ill-informed

⁴² Guder, *Missional Church*, 234-26.

⁴³ Ibid., 238-40. Guder warns, “Business as usual will not work if our local congregations are to become missional,” 240.

outsider's perspective."⁴⁴ Membership requirements are a challenge to contemporary churches. Some churches no longer require a formal membership, but require only baptism and a commitment to the churches' values, identity, and community.⁴⁵ Some believers do not see the benefit of formal membership in a local church.

Retooling and restructuring traditional, beloved institutions can be challenging. Pastors realize institutional church frameworks are difficult to change, and inertia effects every aspect of church operations and techniques. Guder suggests, "The church is an organization that has structures, continuity, and identifiable functions. A missional ecclesiology will always include organizational forms, but one should not see these as the essence of the church. Organization needs to serve, not determine the nature of the church with its duality of being both divine and human."⁴⁶

Relational Ethos

Ethos is "the disposition, character, or fundamental values peculiar to a specific person, people, culture, or movement."⁴⁷ The relational ethos in missional church refers to an emphasis on relationship as an essential element within the church community. This value can permeate every program area and influence the entire congregation because relationship is the driving force of ministry and missions in the postmodern church

⁴⁴ Gibbs, *Church Next*, 67.

⁴⁵ Some pastors say followship of Christ within a faith community requires a great deal more than formal membership. See McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 204-205.

⁴⁶ Guder, *Missional Church*, 222.

⁴⁷ *Yahoo Dictionary*, [on-line], s.v. "ethos," <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry?id=e0230200> (accessed 23 April 2005).

culture. This missional characteristic is challenging because traditional programs and methods are more static, measurable, and manageable than relationships. Relationships are measured qualitatively, not quantitatively, and relationships are fluid and changing. A missional community bases its identity on its relationship with the Triune God, and this facilitates the community's interaction with those outside the faith. Biblically, the church is a living metaphor of the spiritual relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:23). The body of Christ is the physical assembly of believers united under Jesus Christ. What the church says and does facilitates or hinders her relationship with the Father and those invited into a spiritual journey.

Transformational Learning Communities

Rather than conveying only information, the missional church ministering among postmoderns includes the essential application element into the learning experience.

McNeal writes:

The effectiveness of most educational “experiences” has little to do with the student; it is mostly about the teachers’ communication abilities as evidenced by students’ test scores. We cannot afford this teacher-centrism in a church mission to help people grow. The issue has to be whether any life transformation is occurring; more specifically, disciples need to have a sense that they are growing spiritually by giving evidence of personal development. This means learners making personal investments, interacting with other learners, being open to coaching and accountability, and being able to “participate” in their own life learning.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ McNeal, *The Present Future*, 88-89.

Applied learning takes place most effectively in community where participants experience what is taught, and where learning is actualized and understood.⁴⁹ Learning communities in a missional context exist within the mission field. For example, learning communities exist virtually, on-line, in churches that become local seminaries, in large and small group settings, and in the global arena.

A Missional-Relational Hermeneutic

The interpretation and application of Scripture reflect the interpreter's own life-narrative and social context.⁵⁰ In missional contexts, biblical interpretation is not an isolated individual exercise as took place in modern cultures. The missional, relational community interprets scripture in the context of its own spiritual community context and dynamic. A relational hermeneutic creates an environment that facilitates the understanding and application of scripture within the community context. This does not negate, but rather includes the voices of tradition and ageless counsel. The reasoning behind this hermeneutic is that Truth, Christ is not simply propositional thoughts but a person and relationship (John 14:6). Since Truth is Christ, then Truth is best understood, learned, and experienced in relationship.

This approach does not negate traditional interpretive methods which are critical for understanding the Scripture; however, the support and aid of the community at large

⁴⁹ Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, 119, emphasizes that people want to "minister to the hearts and needs of others as well as to the heart of God," which allows worship participants to apply their spiritual learning.

⁵⁰ Bible readers' own presuppositions and cultural influences affect their interpretation of scripture.

closes the hermeneutical gap. Since understanding of the revelation of God is every Christian's responsibility, a relational hermeneutic is necessary to engage Christians in study of the Word.⁵¹ This approach guards against heresy and false doctrine, but also involves all believers in the transformational process produced by relational discipleship.

Multi-Cultural

The missional church will become more diverse as the United States' population grows through immigration. Reflecting this diversity, the church can develop ministries and missions that bridge gaps between different cultures, ethnic groups, and racial lines. By creating a loving community that honors and respects immigrants' cultural traditions, the church can facilitate the absorption of indigenous groups and provide cross-over opportunities that enrich the community.

Churches that remain undiversified may miss the beauty and diversity God created among His people. Gibbs writes:

In a postmodern world, diversity is celebrated. This should not come as a threat to biblically informed Christians. Because creativity and variety are characteristics of the world that God created and that he saw was very good. The world is a riot of colors, forms, shapes, and textures. The church, described as "the body of Christ," is an organic miracle of diversity expressed in a unity of purpose.⁵²

The multicultural missional church embraces the essential element of diversity as a resource for mission.

⁵¹ Also referred to as a community hermeneutic that implies one interprets scripture within the context of other Christians.

⁵² Gibbs, *Church Next*, 67.

Generational Crossover

Ministries targeting age groups and life situations are not new to the church, but an added missional feature is an essential synthesis of these ministries within the life of the community. The traditional church model segregates populations of the faith community into affinity groups based on age, marital status, number of dependents, interests, and other features. The missional church facilitates relationships between these groups and provides opportunities for relationships that promote growth and understanding.⁵³ In the missional model, older generations pass down their faith, wisdom, and experiences to younger generations. This takes place as missional leaders establish intentional mentorship programs that are more conversational and adoptive than classroom settings and which focus more on experience than knowledge. Young people need knowledge, but knowledge is best acquired within the safe, familiar context of an established relationship.

Apostolic Leadership

Guder believes missional leaders can understand their role as equippers of a sent community. Missional leaders see themselves as fellow journeypersons who send and accompany the apostolic community on behalf of God's reign.⁵⁴ The apostolic community demonstrates his love through community, service, and message. As facilitators and equippers of the sent community, leaders act as guides and coaches who

⁵³ Driscoll, *The Radical Reformation*, 127-129.

⁵⁴ Guder, *Missional Church*, 110.

create the opportunities, training, and environments for the faithful church to engage the community.

Leadership encourages believers to continue Christ's mission. They confront the powers and dominions of the earth, give thirsty humanity a cup of cool water, and offer an alternative culture to the world.⁵⁵ Guder writes, "the church is apostolic not just because it represents the apostles' teaching, but because it re-presents Christ."⁵⁶

Contextual-Communication

Missional churches employ effective technology in worship and ministry and will develop new technologies and support systems that connect relationships and community. The church needs to play catch up with systems developed by secular sources. Websites provide means to help communities grow, and blogs have created on-line virtual communities. These communities open portals of information and interaction, and they help the church realize its mission. West Winds Community Church uses technology and create space for spiritual experience. Pastor David McDonald developed a web-based prayer experience called Prayground that provides a virtual prayer community, and website visitors can choose among three ethos styles: urban, sun, and water.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15, 110.

⁵⁶ Guder, *Missional Church*, 83.

⁵⁷ David McDonald, "Prayground," <http://www.communityw.com/PrayGround/default.html#>, (accessed 23 January 2007).

Kingdom Messengers

The church can incarnate and embody the love and grace of God through a variety of means; however, the church has the Great Commission responsibility to communicate a clear, uncompromising message that leads to salvation. The message encompasses more than a plan to escape hell and get to heaven. People need to hear about the current and future reality of the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom Jesus made available through His life, ministry, and death.

The Kingdom may be experienced in the community of faith when the community demonstrates and practices healing, forgiveness, and love of others; therefore, verbal proclamation, coupled with authentic Christian living, announces an invitation to the world to be a part of God's Kingdom.⁵⁸ People may enter into His grace and work, become new creatures, live under His reign when God's will is done "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The believers also wait for the fulfillment of His Kingdom yet to come. As Guder suggests:

Announcing the reign of God comes as a spontaneous expression of gratitude, humility, and joy when it comes in the context of being the forgiven community that embodies the divine reign and signals its character in actions of compassion, justice, and peace . . . Proclamation is inevitable if our being and doing signify anything at all about the presence of God's reign. I find being the church, the world sees God's reign, and by our doing justice, the world tastes its gracious effect, the call to all on the earth to receive and acknowledge that reign begs to be expressed. That is why Jesus said it is necessary that his followers preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to all the nations, so that all nations may hear (Luke 24:47; cf. Rom. 10:14-17).⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Brownson, Dietterich, Harvey, and West, *Stormfront*, 117.

⁵⁹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 107.

Incarnational Ecclesiology

People are God's primary agent for communicating the message of the gospel, and missional churches embrace this role.⁶⁰ The gospel was demonstrated perfectly and completely in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The church now bears the responsibility in the power of the Holy Spirit to be the physical manifestation of the person and work of Christ and His Kingdom. This representation can only be accomplished if collective individuals are living Christ-like lives in the presence of neighbors, co-workers, and those who have yet to trust in Him. The church demonstrates the reality of the existence of the kingdom of God, and it exemplifies "[a] fellowship of love, equality, and family bonds between believers."⁶¹ The church that impacts the culture will lead Christians to live incarnationally. This lifestyle requires them to demonstrate a life of faith in front of, and with their neighbors. The emphasis should be placed, not on church attendance, but being the church in the world. Only then does the church have an effective platform for the gospel proclamation and message to postmodern people. McLaren writes:

One of the biggest questions on my screen these days is, How does the Spirit of Jesus Christ incarnate in a postmodern world? This question very likely terrifies or infuriates some Christians because they see the traumatic implications of what I am saying. And maybe they are right: Maybe there is no way ahead. Maybe the faithful thing to do these days is to become intellectually Amish and create communities that live in the past.⁶²

⁶⁰ Romans 10:14-15 articulates the need for the lost to hear the message and the responsibility of believers to preach it.

⁶¹ Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, *A Family of Faith: An Introduction to Evangelical Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 115.

⁶² McLaren, *Church on the Other Side*, 70.

Many fear the culture will affect the church. McLaren suggests, “Perhaps some feel called to be quaint for Christ. Other Christians, however, feel that Jesus’ incarnation (an event in the past that is always contemporary and always has a claim on us as Christians) sets an example of showing up on time, of being in touch with one’s world in the present—not of it, but truly in it.”⁶³ The challenge Christians face is what it means to be courageously in the world and not of it. Instead of fearing incarnational ministry, Christians can live this identity and worldview through authentic discipleship when the believer walks in the Spirit of God. Roberts and Marshall write in *Reclaiming God’s Original Intent for the Church*:

As Christ becomes our identity, we’ll see the need to disengage from other identities of the world. We’ll begin to think instead of our Christian identity and critique of our culture from that perspective. We’ll learn to disengage from the power structures of this world in order to serve in the power of weakness. Christ’s incarnation will become our way of life. We’ll learn to break our conformity to this world and live as the aliens and strangers that we are.⁶⁴

Summary

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Rom. 10:14-15)

The most important element for effective evangelism in a postmodern culture is to live authentic faith in transferable ways. This is the best hope for others to meet Christ.

⁶³ Ibid., 130.

⁶⁴ Roberts and Marshall, *Reclaiming God’s Original Intent for the Church*, 18-19.

This chapter has described a variety of essential elements designed to make this intention a reality in a postmodern culture.

Missional church proponents realize the size of the church is less important than the actualization of its mission, which is demonstrated as believers live and witness the fundamentals of the faith in the world. The missional church equips and sends disciples out into the community and transforms the community through relation contacts. Christ Jesus establishes the Kingdom of grace when this happens. The missional church includes godly, spiritual people who love others and live for God. The missional church takes Jesus seriously:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:16-20)

Reggie McNeal encourages the church to view its efforts as similar to winning a sporting event:

Great leaders want results. Great organizations get results because they go for results and are willing to live and die by the results they identify as their benchmarks for success. Effective missional congregations are no exception. They know what constitutes success for them in God's eyes and they go after it.⁶⁵

The elements described in this chapter are essential for a missional church in a postmodern context, and they enable the church to be the instrument of God's grace in

⁶⁵McNeal, *The Present Future*, 105.

the world. Through relationships, the church can extend invitations to others to join Him at the banquet table.

The list of essential characteristics forms the relational core of a missional church. The list is not exhaustive, but articulates ingredients that the church can possess and thereby remain relevant and vital in a postmodern environment. The author of this paper offers the essential elements in support of the thesis that the church can transition from a methods-based, attractional model into a missional model of relational evangelism that connects effectively with people in a postmodern culture.

APPENDIX

THE M-SCORE

This survey consists of a battery of questions pertaining to 21 essential characteristics of missional churches. There are five questions per characteristic, valued between 1 and five points progressively. (Question one is worth 1 point and question five is worth 5 points, for example.) An explanation of the score follows the survey. Respondents are to score the question, which is most reflective of their local church.

Characteristic One: Becoming Missional

1. Our church has not changed much of how we “do” church since it was first founded.
2. We collect offerings to support missionaries overseas because missions is a worthwhile program in our church.
3. Our church could not fulfill its purpose without buildings, professionals, and budgets.
4. Building relationships, not programs, is the focus of our church’s ministry.
5. We help our community of faith see itself as the missionary sent to reveal the Kingdom of God in its own culture.

Score _____

Characteristic Two: Reforming Theology

1. My church discourages new theological ideas and any questioning of accepted teachings and doctrines.
2. My church allows its members to rethink theology in light of the contemporary culture.
3. My church holds forums in which we practice the reforming of our theology.
4. The pastors and teachers challenge our doctrinal views and force us to rethink our theology.

5. We consider our community hermeneutic to be open source, allowing our members to shape our theology.

Score _____

Characteristic Three: Values-Based Philosophy

1. Our church does not really follow a particular philosophy. We just “do” church.
2. We have plans and strategies established from contemporary conferences and methods.
3. We have a handout that describes the philosophy of our church.
4. We provide venues for our spiritual community to shape or challenge our church’s values.
5. We provide the resources and support for members to find intentional ways to live out our clearly communicated values.

Score _____

Characteristic Four: Contextualization

1. We refuse to change the way we “do” church in response to a changing culture, since that would mean selling out to the culture.
2. Our church simply does what we have always done.
3. We have started small groups, since Sunday School was no longer working.
4. We are open to new ideas and have tried new approaches to ministry.
5. Our methods are always changing, as we seek the appropriate contextualization of the Gospel.

Score _____

Characteristic Five: Engaging the Culture

1. Do people in our community see our church as vital?
2. Is our message validated by our actions in the community?

3. Do members trust one another enough to confess their sin?
4. Are members incorporated into small groups for growth and accountability?
5. Does your church prioritize members' involvement with unchurched people?

Score ____

Characteristic Six: Spiritual Worship

1. Corporate worship focuses on an audience of one.
2. We use a team of members in planning worship.
3. We challenge members to be responsible in their obedience to God.
4. Our worship is designed to use each of the five senses.
5. Our church prepares members for personal worship experiences.

Score ____

Characteristic Seven: Community as God's representatives

1. We try to live a good, moral life in front of our friends and neighbors.
2. The local community knows we are a strong church because of our excellent programs.
3. Our church believes Jesus commissioned us as a community for His mission in the world
4. Our church is a forgiving community—actively forgiving others of sin and offering grace to non-Christians.
5. The local community recognizes us as a church that lives as followers of Christ because of our love of others, our service to the poor, and because our members invite others to Jesus Christ.

Score ____

Characteristic Eight: Experiential

1. Preaching frequently offers us quick, relatively simple answers to life's issues.

2: Our church still follows a lecture or educational approach to the faith.

3: We follow a standard order of worship each week, and our people anticipate the next element every Sunday.

4: We have interactive moments during worship services.

5: Our church frequently creates alternative ways to experience God during worship times, as well as during the week. We nurture a creative environment and encourage diverse mediums for expressing faith.

Score _____

Characteristic Nine: Multi-Sensory

1. People come to our church to confirm their well-established beliefs and faith.

2. People may participate in songs and prayers during our worship time.

3. Technology is a non-negotiable in the planning of our corporate worship time.

4. Our music and preaching themes give opportunities for others to actively participate with their gifts and talents.

5. Our music selections are chosen to help people hear, feel, taste, and smell the faith, not just know about it.

Score _____

Characteristic Ten: Re-design Structure

1. We have traditional programs and organizational structure and allow for little change.

2. Our church has set structures, programs, or methods, but, we can vote to change things if necessary.

3. We give freedom for creativity within programs, but very little organizational freedom.

4. Our church structure is designed to facilitate spiritual transformation in people, not program or organizational participation.

5. Our organization is designed and built around the unique gifting of each individual. Our organization is fluid, changing to meet the needs and gifting of the community of faith and the need to contextualize the gospel in the community at large.

Score ____

Characteristic Eleven: Relational Ethos

1. Relationships are important to us. We frequently have church dinners.
2. Relationships are important to us. We have many programs to involve people.
3. Relationships are important to us. We welcome even non-believers to be a part of our community.
4. Relationships are important to us. We primarily send our people out to invite others into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
5. Relationships are important to us. We send our community out to develop friendships with non-Christians and to invite them into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Score ____

Characteristic Twelve: Transformational Learning Communities

1. We offer Sunday School classes to help people learn more about the faith.
2. We offer discipleship classes at church once per week in addition to Sunday School.
3. We have small groups in which people study the Word and learn to utilize their spiritual gifts.
4. We have an on-line chat room on our church website that offers courses on practical theology (living out the faith).
5. We offer opportunities for church members to learn about Christianity by shadowing a staff mentor who is serving others in the community.

Score ____

Characteristic Thirteen: A Missional-Relational Hermeneutic

1. Our Pastor is most qualified and trained to teach the bible, so he does the majority of the teaching in our congregation.
2. Our Sunday school or bible teacher helps us understand the bible through curriculum and conversation.
3. We have classes to learn how to study, interpret, and apply the bible as a community not just as individuals.
4. Our church studies the Scripture with the belief and recognition that they are intended for the whole community to study and interpret together.
5. Our church offers forums during worship and in small groups to discuss and interpret Scripture and its application.

Score ____

Characteristic Fourteen: Multi-Cultural

1. We think people are more comfortable in churches where the majority of people are of the same race and speak the same language.
2. We generally only reach people who are like us, socially, culturally, and economically.
3. We are pleased if people of other cultures attend our worship services.
4. We intentionally nurture a community which welcomes those of other cultural ethnicities, languages, and socio-economic station.
5. Our church has an ethnically-diverse pastoral staff and our congregation reflects that diversity.

Score ____

Characteristic Fifteen: Generational Crossover

1. Our church offers age appropriate classes, programs, and worship times.
2. Our small groups and bible studies are sub-divided by age, but our worship service is open to all ages.

3. Our church is focused on all members of the family, with the exception of senior citizens, who seem to be left out.
4. We have occasional retreats and meetings that help older and younger members of our congregation connect and learn from each other.
5. Our church has a spiritual mentorship program which pairs older believers with younger Christians for the purpose of inspiring spiritual maturity and friendship between generations of members.

Score _____

Characteristic Sixteen: Apostolic Leadership

1. Our staff's chief responsibilities are to care for church members and to facilitate the worship service each week.
2. Our pastor encourages us to discover our gifting, seek God's will for our lives, and get more involved in the church programs.
3. Our church staff exists to help our community discover our gifting, seek God's will for our lives, and to find resources, training, and support to help us further that calling.
4. My church promotes the emergence of new leadership and works to unleash the spiritual potential of every member.
5. Our Pastor and staff lead us out into our community and the world because we are a people sent to proclaim and demonstrate God's Kingdom.

Score _____

Characteristic Seventeen: Technological

1. We have a computer in the office.
2. We make good use of e-mail to stay in contact with our church members.
3. We have installed a projection system and use power point in worship.
4. We use every form of technology, including websites, computers, projection systems, print media, videos, e-mail, web forums, and text messaging to connect with our faith community and the culture.

5. We have hired a full-time or part-time technology staff member or consultant to help us connect others with Jesus through the use of technology.

Score ____

Characteristic Eighteen: Incarnational Ecclesiology

1. Our church encourages friendliness and creates a welcoming environment for outsiders.

2. We have “bring a friend day” once a year and often have outreach events so non-Christians may come and hear about Christ.

3. Our church members know people are watching us, so we try to live rightly in front of them, attending church to be a good witness.

4. Our church works to show our faith in our community so the gospel may become part of the culture and history here.

5. Our church identifies and connects with our culture/community in all ways possible without compromising the truth and integrity of the gospel.

Score ____

Characteristic Nineteen: Serving Community

1. Once a year we send people on a mission trip to a foreign country.

2. Every Thanksgiving we feed homeless people and donate money and gifts during Christmas.

3. We have a committee that plans community service projects occasionally.

4. Serving our community is one of our church’s core values, and we have intentional programs like a food pantry and counseling support.

5. Serving people in our community is done by **most** (75%) members of our church on a **frequent** (monthly) basis.

Score ____

Characteristic Twenty: Defining Values

- 1: The bible is the only thing we use to describe our values
- 2: Our church has a mission statement that best describes what we find important
- 3: We have a printed banner of our values and remind our community what they are often
- 4: We design, plan, and engage worship & ministry that is consistent with the written values of our community
- 5: We constantly re-evaluate our values and change them if we are not living up them or our cultural context calls for an update

Score _____

Characteristic Twenty-One: Kingdom Messengers

1. Our members know they should share the gospel with others.
2. The pastor has an altar call and invites people to receive Christ, so we invite people to church, so they can hear his message of salvation and respond.
3. We have taught all of our members the Four Spiritual Laws (or another program) and we know how to pray with someone to receive Christ.
4. Since our church focuses on building relationships more than programs and church membership, we easily share the gospel with others in the context of friendly conversations.
5. Our church provides sermons, studies, and special training to help members communicate their faith through loving each other, serving others, and sharing the message of Christ through building friendships.

Score _____

Total Score: _____

Understanding the Results:

20-39: Your church is entrenched in well-established patterns and programs, and it will be difficult, though not impossible, to transition to a more missional approach to ministry. Churches scoring in this range are least positioned to connect with a postmodern culture.

40-59: Your church is generally contented with the philosophical and programmatic status quo; however, it is open to making changes to better connect with the culture, and thereby has a good chance to transition to a missional approach to ministry.

60-79: Your church already practices some missional approach to ministry and shows a strong predisposition for connection with a postmodern culture.

80 & over: Your church possesses a strong missional ethos, is intentional about reaching the postmodern culture with the good news of the Kingdom, and possesses many of the theoretical and practical tools to accomplish the task.

Appendix B:

FIVE GLOBAL CHURCH SURVEY

To help in identifying the primary characteristics of an effective missional community, it was necessary to observe various churches around the world. The intent of this project was not trying to find churches that fit the criteria of what many to believe to be an emerging or postmodern church, but rather sought after unique churches, positioned globally, that were applying ministry and mission in creative ways to reach their culture.

The following churches were interviewed and used as models for accessing characteristics and DNA of the next-generation missional church. These churches were selected to meet cross-cultural requirements and to propose that this is a global movement not just an Western-American movement. Out of literally hundreds of churches to choose from, each one of these were selected because of special reference or some unique impact in shaping the movement. All churches were interviewed through telephone and electronic means. Following are descriptions of the churches relevant to this study and a synopsis of their identity and church culture:

1. Graceway Baptist Church, New Zealand, Pastor Mark Barnard

Meeting on Sundays at 5:30 pm at Ellerslie War Memorial Hall,
138 Main Highway, Ellerslie, New Zealand

Self-Description: We are a Christian community focused on Jesus, earthed in Ellerslie. We value being creative, relevant, real, honest, relational and relaxed. Our heart is creative christian worship experiences. We hold to the wisdom of the Ancient Church and live out the faith passed on by our forebears and (as a Baptist people) we believe in a Biblically free, radical, participatory community committed to mission. As a church, our mission is to be committed to seeking ancient spiritual resources and reframing them, re-creating them to breath life in our emerging postmodern world.¹

2. Visions-- c/o St Cuthbert's Church, Peasholme Green, York UK, Pastor Sue Wallace
Part of the Church of England, with a vicar *Roger Simpson* and access to a very atmospheric old building, *St Cuthbert's Church*, bits of which date back to 687AD.

Self-Description: It's hard to describe Visions in one sentence! We are part of a movement rather loosely termed *Alternative Worship*, but the name doesn't really say enough - we mean that our response to the Divine Presence has to be born from our own experience together, as individuals and as a community, and not simply accepting whatever forms of worship are given to us. However, that is not to say we reject the past rather that we see Christian traditions as a rich field of possible resource to draw on. But we also draw on contemporary culture in finding expression for our spirituality.

¹ [on-line]; Available from http://www.graceway.org.nz/graceway_information.html (accessed 17 February 2005)

- A church for people who don't like church.
- A place that feels like home where we can talk about & experience the love of Jesus.
- A place where you can be yourself, with all your doubts, fears & messiness & people will accept you anyway.
- But we're also a bunch of Christians interested in deepening our *faith journey* through discovering and using our talents in the *visual arts, dance music, and technology*.

We hold multimedia church services every week. Our style generally consists of chilled-out dance beats, video, poetry, liturgy, story, and laid-back dance songs. Two services a month also incorporate communion, with a mellow blissful ambience. We also have mid-week social gatherings which range from meals to cinema trips, from wine tasting to chicken wire sculpture. Anyone is welcome to join in.

“Lots of people are suspicious of organised religions: we'd be perfect for them since we're developing a model of disorganised religion!”²

3. Pathways Church, Denver, CO, Pastor Ron Johnson

Self-Description: Our Mission is to help people become passionate, devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Our core purposes are Worship, Community, Faith Sharing, Serving, Growing. God's Vision for Pathways Church: We see...the city center of Denver transformed by Jesus Christ through a continuously maturing and expanding number of His followers! At Pathways, our focus is on the area of the city that has a Denver address We imagine...Followers of Jesus reproducing themselves locally, regionally and globally in culturally relevant ways...We hear...Faith conversations, testimonies of people who are growing in spiritual formation, and the sounds of holistic worship...We sense...The start of new expressions of community and new churches in Denver and around the world... We feel...People being equipped to serve others through the use of their spiritual gifts³

4. Journey Church, Mission, Texas, Lead Pastor Vidal Muniz

Self-Description: We are a community of disciples following Jesus, our only leader. We are planted in the borderland of Texas and México. Our goal is to radically impact our community and world through intentional relationships based on Biblical obedience. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus through community on Sundays @ 11:00 AM with a bi-lingual service at Sharyland Business Center located at 2400 Brock St. Suite 1 in Mission, Texas.

² [on-line]; Available from <http://www.abbess.demon.co.uk/visions/location.html> (accessed 9 April 2005).

³ [on-line]; Available from <http://www.pathwayschurch.org/pathways/> (accessed 9 April 2005).

Our community of disciples hunger for an apostolic ethos, our Baptist heritage is reinforced through genuine servanthood, community and urgency to give our lives for a dying world.

Our Mission: Biblical principles penetrate and transform culture, thus our commitment is to experience God's purposes throughout our generation by creating environments where He is more conducive to create His eschatological family. This church was included in the study for its cross cultural value. Made up of mostly Latinos, it is a wonderful example of how the missional movement is affecting other cultures.⁴

5. The Red Sea Church, Portland, Oregon, Lead Pastor Shaun Garman

Self-Description: Our theology will be conserved and our methodology will be vigorous & generous. Our theological reflections are reformed and conservative within the orthodoxy of Christianity. We believe that in a correct recognition of who God is will cause us to be repentant over the sins of our current methodologies and those of our brothers and sisters within the U.S. Our witness must be appropriately bound by the image of God in our souls that cry out Abba. The vitality of Red Sea preaching, teaching and evangelism hinge upon our theology.

Ecclesiology: Red Sea believes that our faith and the exercising of the church among social, scientific and cultural context can be relevant, attractive and available more than we have seen in the last 50 years of "being" the church here among North Portland; namely among the neighborhood of St. Johns. Obviously, it is a very intrinsic piece of our mission to be a church that allows our nature to be affected in respect to our indigenous nature. Our DNA takes greater form when we allow the creator to use the dust of the peninsula to penetrate who we are as a church that is being led by "aliens" as Isaiah 61 would say. We are truly operating within the function of a local church and must redevelop the way church inter-relates to our most secular society of Portland, Oregon. The emergent church of Red Sea will prayerfully prove to project the order, knowledge and love of the Father who is building and breathing among us.

Missiology: In pioneering a redemptive work among an untilled harvest Red Sea will continue to strive to be a church of mission and not sit in the lethargic membership funk of the greater American church. Our mission is to be an Acts 2 participatory church. Our goal to be scripture driven should make profound effects upon our mission manifestation. Choosing to rely of the centering of the Gospel and then deriving not only the actions of the Cross of Christ but the meaning will cause us to be a sacrificing church among the lost. Our agenda is to never be happy with ourself; instead choosing to be sojourners and proclaiming an abandonment to self that can only shout God's freedom.⁵

⁴ [on-line]; Available from <http://www.journeymission.com> (accessed 13 March 2005).

⁵ [on-line]; Available from <http://www.redseachurch.com/> (accessed 25 April 2005).

The Virtual Interview

The following are the results of my virtual interviews with each church. They were all asked the very same questions and their responses have not been edited for the purpose of this essay. If time allowed, it would be more advantageous to actually visit the churches to make observations. But, within this constraints of this project, the virtual interview was the next best thing. The following pages will detail the interviews questions, their responses, and a critique of the findings.

The Questions

In light of 21st Century Culture and the present postmodern-age of the church, has your church/ministry engaged in rethinking, re-examining, or re-designing how you do the following:

1. Church methodology? (How we 'do' church, ministry, missions, etc..)

Most churches excel at designing methods to approach ministry, the real question lies in the effectiveness and willingness to change these methods to fulfill the church's purpose and mission in the world.

2. Church philosophy?

This platform is really addressing the system of values by which a church lives. The 'why and what is important to us' phrase captures the philosophy of a ministry. For instance if the philosophy of a church is to be present within their community, then they will program and intentionally develop methods in which to embark on this endeavor. This is probably a crucial platform to negotiate within our culture, mainly due to the fact that our values and philosophy are easily observed.

3. Theology? (doctrinal stances, belief systems, biblical positions, i.e. women in ministry, atonement, etc..)

4. How are you moving your church from an intellectual faith to an experiential faith?

5. How do you create faith experiences? (An experiential faith that provides learning opportunities of interaction, contemplative exercises, and spiritual disciplines that help people grasp a tangible expression of faith?)

6. Would you agree that our faith isn't intellectual; it is experiential. We don't know about God, we know Him"?

7. In what ways does your church engage the culture?

8. How do you approach spiritual formation? Discipleship? And how do you measure the effectiveness of your discipleship model?

9. How do you create an environment that encourages authentic community? (How you understand authentic community will shape your answer--my framework--an open, honest, transparent community; We need to let our communities know that we are a group that welcomes all people regardless of race, culture, previous religious affiliation, socio-economic status, age or ability. Many of those people are looking for a community where they can get support for living more meaningful lives. Many people are looking for a community where they can find friendships, interesting and challenging activities, opportunities to grow and explore life at deeper levels, and opportunities to serve the wider community in a common effort with others.—a community that is living out the faith in everyday life.

10. How do you incorporate multi-sensory elements in your preaching /teaching and spiritual formation classes?

11. In light of 21st Century culture and the present postmodern-age of the church, how has your church been re-thinking, re-examining, or re-designing your understanding, structure, and approach to church/ministry leadership?

12. How has your church been re-thinking, re-examining, or re-designing church program structure or organizational model?

13. In what ways have you helped your church become a missional community? (check out http://www.theofframp.org/missional_comm.html for what I have found to be a brief definitive explanation of the difference between a missional community and a traditional one)

14. How have you created a community that has a high relational ethos? ("Ethos can be described as the distinctive character, spirit and attitudes of a people group, community, culture or era.") In the context of this interview it is the genetic code within the life of a church community--It permeates every aspect of church life, sending a clear message that at every point people and relationships are more important than programs, getting the job done or producing a professional image. See <http://www.rainbowinternational.org/articles/ethos.pdf#search='what%20is%20a%20relational%20ethos?'> for a comparison of traditional versus a relational model of ethos)

15. How do you encourage a ministry or community that produces incarnational Christians? (Incarnation is a big word for a simple concept-- God works through people. How are your people living lives that manifest Christ to their neighbors-- finding ways to identify with them, share life with them, and 'going to them' in their language and culture, (becoming one of them) while living the Christ-life and reflecting the principles of grace and love in hopes of 'naturally' sharing the gospel.

16. How do you encourage a multi-cultural community and/or is this descriptive of your church?
17. How does your church encourage cross-generational (and life-stage) relationships? How do you connect the young with the old, the single with married, etc..
18. How does your church incorporate technology to (1) advance the kingdom and (2) support the ministry/community
19. Instead of just offering classes and settings for intellectual exercises and information transferal, how do you encourage transformational learning communities? These could be, but not limited to groups that study, interact, engage, and also provide opportunities to live out their learning in controlled or real environments. (example: A course on serving and the group goes out once per week to serve the homeless at a soup kitchen.) (This example is not merely about social ministry, but transformational learning experiences)
20. How does your church engage in social issues?
21. Could you say that you attempt to apply a relational hermeneutic in your community? If so, how or in what ways?

The Responses

In light of 21st Century Culture and the present postmodern-age of the church, has your church/ministry engaged in rethinking, re-examining, or re-designing how you do the following:

1. Church Methodology?

Graceway: The main changes have been toward a more 'informal' way of doing church (philosophical)- this has led in my opinion to mainly 'aesthetic' changes rather than missional- this is a blind spot for so called emerging groups, I suspect. We have replaced Hillsong with u2 and dimmed the lights a little- but does this go far enough or ask the right questions?

Visions: One of the main reasons we started the Visions services was to rethink church methodology in the light of post-modernity.

Journey: Journey's methodology focuses on Biblical principles through servanthood, genuine and intentional healthy relationships as well as an urgency to see God at work in the midst of a Godless world. If Christ and the New Testament Church are going to be our models for methodology, then we are called not only to live like Jesus but to die like Jesus. As a church we believe and practice discipleship as a life style thus consider it as an entry point at the heart of the church.

Red Sea: Our church methodology is formed from our theology. Methodology in my eyes is a result of what you understand God has revealed to you via His word.

The way we value methodology should be a reflection of God's own method's in effectively ministering to us. So, if we are made in His image our ministry should be missional, loving, truthful, redeeming and full of community stories. The Gospel is not a method its origin isn't human. So, our methods should be eternal in origin and timeless.

Pathways: Yes, we often evaluate our methodology. Our methodology is the least critical component of our church. Our methods are determined by how our aims and the nature of our people affect our ultimate purpose. We must know our culture and our ultimate purpose before we can determine methodology.

2. Church Philosophy?

Graceway: Our values need some thought. Historically they been articulated as 'relaxed, relevant, real, relational, and creative (couldn't find another 'r') which to a large extent they have been- but we need to take our pulse and asked 'what do we value now?'

Visions: Hmm. That's a tricky one. I'm not sure we've actively formulated one. Things that are important to us though, are inclusivity, (sic) safe-space (a place lacking in prejudice, where people can be themselves, even if that place is a sad hurt confused doubting place, because then they can meet God as they are rather than having to hide behind a mask), cultural relevance, (i.e. what we do in church, the language we use, the songs we sing etc) would be used seen or sung outside at times) . Hence sometimes using secular songs or backing tracks in our services, that might be heard on the high street or on TV trailers. Plus finding ways to bring the church to the people rather than the people to church.

Journey: Journey Church creates environments where men and women can love God with their hearts. We love our neighbors by giving each other what we need instead of what we deserve. Our desire is to model, mentor and teach baptized believers to reproduce themselves through relational evangelism and discipleship.

Red Sea: Our philosophy is "organic". We don't want to create synthetic things that aren't ordained by God. Our philosophy is for our intentions to grow out of relationships. We try to set up environments that will foster relationship building. To program or aim for numbers of people or marketing results doesn't make sense for us. Our endeavors do not start with our ideas or what we want to see happen. We are trying to work where God wants us to work and to speak where He wants us to. That may turn into a "program" or a set time like a home community or it may not.

Pathways: No, we believe the philosophy of ministry for a local church is to make passionate, devoted followers of Jesus Christ and that is stated in our mission statement "Helping people become passionate, devoted followers of Christ." This has been our philosophy since our beginning ten years ago and we believe it comes from Christ's mandate. At the same time, we hold certain values that we believe attract those of postmodern mindsets. We believe in openness, authenticity, welcoming of others no matter their background, relationships, community, and being in the culture. There are certain postmodern values we will not re-think. We do not encourage religious pluralism, relativism, consumerism, or materialism.

3. Theology?

Graceway: To be honest there would be a broad theological diversity in our group and I couldn't speak for all. I like McLaren's 'generous orthodoxy' - sounds about right! (haven't read the book though). Myself- I would probably fall in the 'evangelical left' category- and perhaps many in the group may too, I'm not sure they would articulate it in that way.

Visions: Doctrinal stances vary. We have a high respect for the bible as the major way God speaks to us these days, and use it as the basis of all our service themes. As for women in ministry we'd probably think it weird even to ask the question. In our opinion its quite obvious what Jesus thought about women in ministry seeing as he appeared to them *first* post-resurrection. Atonement. Again, opinions vary. We do believe Jesus died to save us but...we've never really gotten into an academic discussion about it. A number of us are very fond of Orthodox interpretations of it. (At-one-ment)

Journey: Founded on the premise of a triune community---members of our church do not act/live out the faith on their own. We denounce individualistic and self-sufficient faith. There is no salvation outside of the community—while faith comes from a personal decision to follow Christ, to fully experience Christianity comes, like the Trinity, from experiencing spiritual community.

Red Sea: Our theology is conservative. We are reformed in many of our views. We have noticed that much of the emergent culture has become sexy, cool, different, novel, relevant, graceful and embracing for reasons not grounded in theology but rather out of methodology sometimes taught from secular ideas which are totally uninspiring. I am certainly hoping that our church attributes are not emanating from the darkness of culture. I guess I am saying our theology doesn't have the same origins as "The Apprentice" or "Meet the Barkers".

Pathways: This is an area in which we are open for discussion to a certain extent. We hold to a biblically orthodox, conservative theology. Our statement of faith is the Apostle's Creed. However, we are egalitarian in respect to our view on women in ministry and there are some that hold to the openness of God. We believe that we must be unified in the essential, core beliefs of historic Christianity but we wish to give liberty to discussions about the non-essentials.

4. How are you moving your church from an intellectual faith to an experiential faith?

Graceway: Good question. By embracing a more holistic approach to worship- not just half an hour singing- using other forms, art, liturgy etc...hopefully encourages to people to think of worship as a whole life thing rather than just a Sunday church thing.

Visions: Again, Visions was started to be more "experiential" from its outset. Its one of the things we wanted to have. Our parent church has 30 minute sermons. The congregation sit in pews. the lights are bright, there are no nice smells and, apart from the fine medieval building, not a lot to look at. Our church, when it has a standard sermon at all, keeps it to 5 minutes or so. We prefer to teach using story, biblical mediation (e.g. Ignatian), video words, symbolic prayer rituals, etc.

Journey: Only in the middle of trials true character is shown. We teach and model our people not to wait for trials, whether personal, family or corporal. We emphasize to live life with urgency and purpose through Christ. I understand my job as a lead pastor is to create environments where people can live, give and relate to Christ through a sacrificial life style. It is my responsibility to challenge our people to move beyond their comfort zone when it comes to daily relationships with God and people.

Red Sea: We aren't. We aren't in control of that. We hope that the Holy Spirit is still moving them wherever each person needs to be... Personally, I am not very intelligent myself so, I couldn't really pull off such a monumental manipulation like that.... Aren't we all experiencing something anyway? Maybe we aren't thinking intellectually about what is really happening within our experiences. Like, "was that God honoring?"...etc.

Pathways: We have five core purposes that we believe will lead to our ultimate purpose as a church. These core purposes are Faith Sharing, Worship, Serving, Community, and Growing. Therefore, we do not want anyone to get stuck in one core purpose such as Growing so that they are very literate in Christianity yet the rest of their life show no signs of the effects of a life surrendered to Christ. So, in order to foster experiential faith, we encourage people to make worship a constant activity, we encourage people to serve the church, the community, and the world, we try to find ways to develop community so that people can share their lives with each other, and we remind people to engage in faith conversations.

5. How do you create faith experiences?

Graceway: as above- emphasis on worship as whole person/life rather than a compartment.

Visions: We get a bunch of people together over a meal and the lectionary texts for that day to plan the service and see what happens. Generally what is created is something with constant chill out music in the background, mellow lighting, slides completely covering the wall that tell something of the theme of the evening, songs to sing, some kind of teaching event, some liturgical prayers that fit the theme, and a prayer ritual using something like water, clay, props, candles, rocks, bricks whatever...Plus we give some space simply to sit on a beanbag and listen to God.

Journey: Deep south Texas is made of 97% Catholic Hispanics. The blessing to be such a family oriented community can also become a curse and an obstacle to follow Jesus unless every disciple understands their role in the Kingdom of God. Catholicism among Hispanics represents life and heritage, more than a relationship with God. Family values are founded in such beliefs that when someone searches for God through any other means, that person becomes the enemy. The only way genuine disciples will make an impact in our context, it's going to be through daily interaction where their faith becomes a life style verses a Sunday event. People constantly are reminded that the very same people that may reject you for your desire to live for God it's the very same people that God wants to relate through you. Therefore, faith must be taken to a tangible level

where forgiveness and agape love become the DNA of every relationship for now on.

Red Sea: We live as Christians among a fallen world then we look for God to show up in those places. When we see God we take note and then come into community and celebrate what God is doing. We expect the Christians to bring that to their life and then the others will have a great experience seeing that honor being given to God. Yes, we do train people to fill their own spiritual tanks. We are a real boring church when it comes to providing tangible tools. We do some things but are needing to attach "symbol" better for the end user. Our best and most used tool is conversation within our communities within the greater community.

Pathways: We encourage people to become a part of a small group. Small groups do not merely focus on knowledge but have a goal to hit on all five of our core purposes. Therefore, people have the opportunity to live their faith out.

6. Would you agree that our faith isn't intellectual; it is experiential. We don't know about God, we know Him"?

Graceway: No I disagree, that is a dualistic, either or way to look at it. Faith is both intellectual and experiential, action and reflection. Can't have one without the other.

Visions: Definitely.

Journey: Only when we present ourselves real and genuine before God and our neighbors, then and only then we'll have the opportunity to know the real and genuine God. This is when we know God through God instead of knowing God through us.

Red Sea: No. I know all kinds of intellectual things about God that my pride, depravity or ignorance won't allow me to know of Him or experience with Him. It is heartbreaking but I really turn down God on His whole offer. I don't think that it is only intellectual or experiential....it's much more holistic. We are invited into a whole life that we don't fully understand or experience.

Pathways: I would probably call this relational, but, yes, it is not about knowledge.

7. In what ways does your church engage the culture?

Graceway: In one sense we do it by reflecting on using pop culture in our services and trying to grapple with current issues. This is a start, but alone is inadequate. Some how we need to move towards a deeper engagement- i.e. mission- this is what we are wrestling with at the moment.

Visions: Part of me thinks "not too well at the moment" . But we try and "Get out" from time to time. Taking the songs and videos and technology of the culture and giving it back to God, hoping that people will come and join us on our journey.

Journey: Hispanic Catholics are religious by nature. Our church does not believe on bringing people to the church on Sundays only, but instead to let the church come to the people from Monday to Friday. Our culture does not see any relationship between Sunday morning Religious experience, and Monday through

Friday routine schedules. As a church I can see how our people are being disciples by mentoring, modeling and influencing unbelievers on a daily basis with their work ethic, life style and intentional relationship building conversations.

Red Sea: We own a secular looking coffeehouse. We call it "the gospel cloaked in coffee." We hold services in a movie theater. We are out walking the streets and praying up all the possible appointment that God will let us walk into.

Pathways: The people in our church are out in the culture. We have a lot of creative people that throw great parties, plan fun adventures, are influential within their companies and feel a strong connection to the surrounding culture. Sometimes we have to remind each other that we must strive to live counter-culturally while maintaining our relationship with the culture. We do not believe there is a wall that separates sacred from secular. So, we encourage people to find God in every aspect of their lives and their environment. The redemptive stories are out there waiting to be found if we are looking for them.

8. How do you approach spiritual formation? Discipleship? And how do you measure the effectiveness of your discipleship model?

Graceway: This is an area of weakness that needs some work. We have some small groups, but they are fairly generic. Yeah, good question!

Visions: Not very well at the moment. That's one of our downfalls I think .At present it happens informally. In conversations over meals (well Jesus did it that way), in the pub after the service (which is a very important part of what we do) , and also we are in the process of forming smaller groups of around 3 people to support and help each other in prayer and discipleship,

Journey: When I first moved back to South Texas (Mission) and before we started meeting with our core group, I had the opportunity to visit several churches and examine how and what they were doing during their worship services. To my surprise, one of the churches I visited on a Sunday evening service had been, for the last six weeks, studying their church constitution and by-laws as a Bible study. I honestly felt how that church was searching for the perfect belief system in world that looks at the perfect belief system as we probably look at medieval church architecture. They possess a real beauty that should be preserved, thus not inhabited or used much anymore. Journey church looks at Christianity as a way of life or as a path of spiritual formation. The questions we constantly asked during our worship corporate services and home teams are: "How can we experience life to the maximum so God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven." We ask individuals, "If God gave you, let say, twenty-five more years to live, what kind of person will you become."

Red Sea: We have a series of discipleship classes. Our effectiveness is counted on many levels...but mostly...answered by this question: "Are you being transformed and are you transmitting that power to others?".

Pathways: We utilize small groups, adult classes, retreats, spiritual direction, liturgy and seminars. We also have several people at our church that offer one-on-one spiritual direction. The effectiveness is not always easy to measure. We hear many stories from people but the only way we attempt to quantify and qualify

data is through an all-church survey that we issue a couple times a year. We have specific desired outcomes in the area of Growing that we attempt to measure.

9. How do you create and environment that encourages authentic community?

Graceway: You tell me! Sometimes I think at one level we are an open honest, community- other times i wonder how deep we really are. Depth and community etc are such overused terms that it is hard to know if we do them justice in our praxis. I am probably painting a fairly bleak picture of our group- this is not my intention- it is just I think that alt/emerging churches are believing their own press a bit much and I feel we need to ask the hard questions- which I am doing with some pain at the moment.

Visions: Eat together. Drink together. Encourage honesty. we also from-time-to-time, meet with a group dynamics counselor, who comes occasionally and teaches us about how to be "real" without being offensive or hurting others. However we have noticed there are prices to be paid at times. When we focus more on building authentic, close, community, it makes it harder for that community to have permeable edges enough for others to easily come in. the focus shifts from outward to inward. Its constant work getting the balance right.

Journey: Throughout my years of academia, I always dreamed as a pastor having a big church or writing books for the next generation (nothing wrong with neither one of them), as I look at Jesus' legacy I can only see a community. Today my hunger is to seek a community and live by it. Journey church believes that quantity of people becomes less important than quality of relationships. Oscar Thompson's great book "Concentric Circles of Concern" is one of the first books we introduced to every new disciple at Journey Church.

We constantly talk within our church that the local church is the only community builder left in town. We see our small groups gradually becoming house churches, drawing us into truer life together.

Red Sea: We live in a style that emphasizes much more "be" than "do". We are very un-agenda oriented. We want people to come and land and just take in the claims of Christian Community as illustrated in the scriptures. We invite people to accurately describe their life in four letter words and we answer them in five letter words like "grace". Our middle name is "freedom". Like James says to confess our sins to one another.

Pathways: As leaders in the church, we value authentic community and model it in our messages, our meetings, and our time with each other. We try to share our heart, our feelings, our hopes, and our doubts. We believe our lives and our stories are powerful messages. If we do not live our lives in a way that represents our faith then it is very hard for the Spirit to work through us.

10. How do you incorporate multi-sensory elements in your preaching /teaching and spiritual formation classes?

Graceway: I think I have answered this above- holistic worship, film/music/discussion etc.

Visions: Everything we do aims to be multi-sensory in some way. Whether by using the slides/video/ambient background music etc, or, in a low tech

environment, by using icons, candles, incense, etc. Its just an obvious part of how we do things, in that we don't have to struggle to incorporate it, it would be hard, I think, to strip it out.

Journey: We use graphic arts, videos, and movie clips to help us convey the message.

Red Sea: We don't focus on that at all. Sometimes we do things that will help others remember like bread and wine or water baptism. When someone takes Christ at our church they grab a "red rock" symbolizing the new life that will be built.

Pathways: Often times we incorporate a Socratic style of question and answer discussion especially in our classes but sometimes in our preaching. We want people to think and give their input. We also utilize video slides and clips where appropriate. We also desire that the space feel as intimate as possible so we will often dim the lights, display artwork of some of our in house artists, and burn a plethora of candles.

11. In light of 21st Century culture and the present postmodern-age of the church, how has your church been re-thinking, re-examining, or re-designing your understanding, structure, and approach to church/ministry leadership?

Graceway: I did an urban mission course last year- interacted with the literature of Frost & Hirsch, and also Roxburgh. I think they make some helpful suggestions in terms of moving towards a plural leadership, esp. Rox's Prophet, Priest, and Apostle idea. Our community still works under a sole pastor model, with a leadership team. It is not the best model, but it is our reality and I'm not sure how to change- esp. when you have a smallish group.

Visions: (Not answered)

Journey: Being a three month church plant gives us completely freedom to experiment and create new things constantly in our structure, approach and leadership. We are intentional to look at what God is doing in other churches without trying to be them. Cookie cutter mentality will not take us to the place God wants to take us. We constantly examine who we are, our essence and deep personalities. We understand although God is constantly transforming our lives to be like His Son, yet He wants to use us in our context and uniqueness.

We believe in designing a contributor-discipleship mentality verses a consumer mentality, beginning with our leadership. Leadership is a synonym of God's purpose fulfill in every individual's life. We tell our people that everyone is staff, and that we have lead staff for the pastoral team. We don't have a whole lot to re-think nor re-design since we have no previous context as a community of disciples. 95% of our 55-60 people who come on Sundays are completely new to their walk with God. We are simply catching God's wave and riding it along the way.

Red Sea: How about "headship"? We are currently wondering where the men of the Christian faith went? The pussy men we see are all being led around by a culture of youth and feminizers. WOW...didn't that sound so right wing! My point is that the women are being RIPPED off by the weakest men in history. Single moms, work ethics, egalitarianism and biblical ignorance is killing our families,

churches and society. Our approach has been to work on men first. Metro-sexuality is the best society can do and it's been widely accepted by the church leaders. I am clearly passionate about men regaining their testicles for the sake of all. Our society is so scared of authority and true leadership. Men have abused their role and so everyone else has grabbed for it. It's a "free for all" when it comes to who should be responsible for providing and protecting leadership to the people of our day but it isn't a "free for all" when it comes to what God is expecting of men and women.

Pathways: We hope to empower more people to lead with their strengths. We do not think the staff or elders are the only leaders so we encourage others to get involved. We also believe that the best leaders typically come from within the community since they will hold the same values and know the ethos.

12. How has your church been re-thinking, re-examining, or re-designing church program structure or organizational model?

Graceway: Not really something we/I am addressing at the moment.

Visions: (Not answered)

Journey: I previously mentioned the importance to create the environment and context where people see themselves as contributors instead of consumers to their relationship to God through Journey. When people either attend or visit our church, we don't show them what we can do for them; instead, we demonstrate the difference they make to the community when they show up. We make sure people know how much they matter and the importance to live a life of purpose and servanthood.

Red Sea: We are trying to grasp how we can raise the men to be the "overseers" and the woman to be "deaconesses" when we live in a society of consumers. We are preaching and praying that servants will come from the "what's in it for me" mentality and step forward to participate in the mission. Our organizational structure is Christ, Male Eldership, Woman Deaconess, Covenant Church Community and then unbelievers.

Pathways: We desire to be a church that reaches Denver for Christ and, yet, we desire to impact each of the communities or neighborhoods of Denver. With that in mind, we are working to be a church that meets in many neighborhoods. We are creating a multi-site model that will best work for us by leveraging our existing resources, leadership, and branding. We don't want people driving to a large building from all over the city to meet, rather, we want to be present all across the city so that community can be fostered in the existing neighborhoods.

13. In what ways have you helped your church become a missional community?

Graceway: I think in many ways we are attractional/traditional. We are currently pursuing a consultancy type process (initiated by myself) to see how this could be changed.

Visions: (Not answered)

Journey: Being a missional community is the DNA of who we are. Being missional represents obedience to God without hesitation or compromising. Being missional simply equals being who we were created to be. Journey Church looks

at the missional definition as a life style anything else represents disobedience and a life without purpose. One way to move our people in such direction is by showing God's model through the Trinity. God sets the agenda on what we are to be and do. Another way is by constantly living life with urgency and purpose in a daily basis. If God is to become a reality everyday we cannot be passive disciples that simply see people and hope that one day they'll come to our church. Instead, a missional community constantly and intentionally is creating opportunities to be the church of Christ 24/7.

Red Sea: We tell everyone to stop reading Christian books and read the Bible. We won't preach self esteem messages we just tell the truth in grace. They sooner or later find out that we aren't a church full of freeloaders.

Pathways: We try to remind people that all followers of Christ make up the church and that each of us is a priest. We also communicate that we live within God's kingdom and that it is all around us. So, we ask people to initiate faith conversations, model their faith through the actions of their lives, and bring their pre-Christian friends to church and other events that will expose them to the Christ's redemptive message. We want them to be ministers in their homes, places of work, and while participating in their hobbies.

14. How have you created a community that has a high relational ethos?

Graceway: We are fairly strong in this area. Relationship seems to be valued quite highly in our group. We have a meal before each service, have bbq's in the summer, go to the pub after church (yes the pub) it does foster relationship well. However you do get natural cliques developing- perhaps this is inevitable.

Visions: (Not answered)

Journey: We don't really have programs in the way churches know programs traditionally. We don't really have the man power to create neither compete with bigger and older churches in our city. People in the Rio Grande Valley have a unique identity, since most people aren't full Mexicans, neither full Americans. People consider themselves Texans, meaning: second, third and even fourth generation Hispanics. Although we are a three month old church, our church is made of Anglos, Mexicans, Guatemala, Filipinos and Koreans. Yet, with so much diversity people know that they were not created to simply go to heaven, but instead they were saved for a dying world. Christ did not die for them; he died for a dying world. So far, home teams have been the most effective way to built relationships within our church. After they come and join a home team, they are constantly encouraged to be Christ in their daily lives among their daily encounters through school, work, home and everything they do.

Red Sea: We biblically preach a message that says....QUIT LOOKING FOR YOURSELF IN HOME COMMUNITIES, BIBLE STUDIES, SOCIAL EVENTS, AT SCHOOL, IN YOUR HOME, IN YOUR MARRIAGE, IN THE LEADERS, IN THE WORKPLACE....STOP TRYING TO FIND YOURSELF IN ORDER TO CONNECT. Realize that you think that you are God and until you realize God created everyone and liberated everyone equally through the Gospel you will never give anyone a chance to be accepted. We tell everyone a million times over that they aren't God. It's effective.

Pathways: This is an area that we constantly try to improve upon. We believe that God is a relational God. He desires us to have a relationship with him and to have a relationship with each other. We host events so that people can come and get to know the staff and elders of our church. We also organize events that are purely social so that people can build relationships with each other. We also believe that people build relationships while serving together and while playing together. Because of this, we have several service projects every month and we also have after-hour groups that are centered around particular hobbies, such as biking, hiking, skiing, knitting, board games, etc..

15. How do you encourage a ministry or community that produces incarnational Christians?

Graceway: To be perfectly honest we are miles away from a truly incarnational expression of church. In my opinion incarnation is more than just hanging out with our neighbors. Incarnation is about identification with brokenness- esp. with the poor. If we are not in some way facing the poor or working toward solidarity with them- then we are not incarnational. Incarnation has been used to justify all sorts of mission- incarnation among the wealthy etc- leading to justified extravagance and an uncritical embrace of culture- i.e. prosperity theology. Let us ask the hard questions of mission- do we care for the poor?

Now that I've got that off my chest :) I do try and encourage a whole life faith through the ways mentioned earlier- but also through preaching- trying to challenge what it means to follow, in practice, Jesus- faith at work is a vital concept (not just evangelizing colleagues) which has had some great work done on it recently by some kiwis- I am a bit hesitant to use the 'i' word though as it gets a little blurry! So I'll stick with whole life faith.

Visions: (Not answered)

Journey: Christians do not have unbeliever friends most of the time. At Journey, we enjoy fellowshiping among ourselves, yet no fellowship takes place with Journey by itself in mind. We try for small groups to be the biggest window of connections between Journey and the community. We try to connect unchurched people through relationships during our small group time. Since discipleship is seen as a life style, people are encouraged to mentor others and influence those who need hope and purpose. We don't have an evangelism program (FAITH, EE, etc.) we don't even use the word evangelism. Instead we use the word relationships. It is through healthy relationships that God will move easier and more freely to draw people to Himself.

Red Sea: Be yourself. Know that God digs you. He really likes the way He made you. Be comfortable in your own skin. Stop comparing yourself and the way you deal with life with anyone else. God has a plan for you and it will challenge you to travel to the places that redeem the "real" you. Get ready to suffer, be persecuted and to die. Live like you will be resurrected. Live fearlessly among each other and know that the Leaders of the church will protect you from any wolf among us. Be you. Let loose. Live.

Pathways: We teach people that it is good for them to be in the culture but that they must live a life that is counter-cultural. We desire conversations to come out

of the relationships we make with people in the world because we are out there with them but are somehow different from them.

16. How do you encourage a multi-cultural community and/or is this descriptive of your church?

Graceway: um yeah... white, middle class. enough said. I struggle with this sooooo much at a gut level.

Visions: Hmm...not really descriptive of our service, but of our parent church overall, yes. Although on the whole York is a very Anglo-Saxon, homogenous town, except for the student population (which is growing quickly) . We aim to be inclusive but what actually seems to be happening within our parent church is that congregations and groups are springing up to cater for the different language groups. There is a large Chinese student population in York, now served by a Chinese service. A Polish language service is starting up soon too. There is an international student worker and an international student group. Occasionally we all try and do stuff together. I have been chatting to the international student worker about doing a multi-lingual service as a special event.

Journey: Multi-cultural experiences are a part of our daily living today in the Rio Grande Valley. Because relationships are intentional and constantly emphasize, we seek to reach a community that has no ethnical pattern. A new Chinese restaurant is in construction besides our Worship meeting place today. I had the privilege to meet its owner and chef two weeks ago. Today, we constantly talk and visit together. Our church prays that Christ may use our premature friendship to find purpose in life and to bless their new business. Thus language differences can be a challenged, yet we constantly find people connecting with each other although major cultural differences are noticeable.

Red Sea: Christ encourages us to talk/serve everyone. Sooner or later you'll end up in relationship with people of all colors. We don't target people. I don't ask anyone to be ingenious. A few years ago I saw 19 white guys circle around black guy because the speaker said to reconcile. I want us to reconcile with all things that we are in conflict not just because a speaker say to but because the Gospel sets us all free and that should motivate us to those conclusions.

Pathways: I do not believe this is descriptive of our church. We are primarily 20's & 30's, single or young families, white and urban professionals. We feel the need for people outside of these descriptors to add to our church, but feel this is the segment of the population that we best reach. Also, we are diverse economically, somewhat educationally, and very much so spiritually - referring to Hagberg, number of explorers, those who dabble with other religions, etc.

17. How does your church encourage cross-generational (and life-stage) relationships?

Graceway: In many ways we just let stuff happen- but we do try and include kids as much as possible in the service. We also have a film festival which is all ages and some adults are involved in mentoring adolescents.

Visions: Visions is quite small so getting together happens quite naturally. Within St Michaels communication and relationship building is a big problem.

The church cell-groups help, but apart from that there can be a feeling of isolation and fragmentation. One of the symptoms of growth I suppose.

Journey: We struggle in this are sometimes, yet some of these relationships take place through service during our worship experience. Some small groups are made of cross-generational relationships too, still this is a major challenge for us.

Red Sea: No. Life stage relationships only creates a tupperware church--where there is a container for everyone. I just don't think that church was meant to be sterile. It's much more messy than that...we are suppose to be mashing against each other and feeling life more vulnerably with the whole body.

Pathways: Those of older generations that are a part of Pathways, even though they are only 40's, 50's & 60's, have taken special interest in our church because they see the potential for reaching the younger generation. Because of this they lead classes and groups. They also do a great job initiating relationships with younger people by inviting them to their homes or meeting with them for coffee. Most of this is very organic.

18. How does your church incorporate technology to (1) advance the kingdom and (2) support the ministry/community

Graceway: We have a website and our last minister put together some really cool postcards as mission initiative. We use multimedia regularly in our worship.

Visions: We go out and do AV for events sometimes. Mission events. Youth events. Go out and do services or concerts outside our church building (we don't do nearly enough of this stuff at present though, but are planning to get out more within the next few months) . We are aiming to get our local church of England school at least once a term. We also do events in the Christian cafe in the high street every-so-often. Especially, on Good Friday each year.

To support the ministry/community. - all of our worship services are high on technology. Using video not just as teaching, but to accompany the liturgy. e.g. images of our 'culture" during confession, images of Washington etc during absolution. Images to complement what communion is all about during communion. Plus words that teach, help encourage too.

Journey: We have a technology guy who leads this part of ministry. I believe that images and pictures are a most in everything we do to community the message of hope today. If we settle for text only, I feel we are going to die and become irrelevant on our methodology. From internet, video projectors, movie clips, home made videos, interviews and backgrounds clips are some of the components during our corporate worship time.

Red Sea: We would like to use those tools more. We don't own our building and would love to express ourselves more in this area. Our website is useful but stale since we don't have tech. people to keep it fresh.

Pathways: We highly depend upon email and internet. The majority of our communication goes out over these two technologies. We find it is much easier (and safer for visitors) to communicate via email. When making phone calls, 80% of the time we get the person's voice mail. We utilize laptops, pda's, and cell phones so that we can be mobile and meet with people. Wireless networking is a great technology for those of us who frequent coffee shops. In our worship

services, we depend upon data projectors, laptops, sound and light boards, and wireless mics.

19. Instead of just offering classes and settings for intellectual exercises and information transferal, how do you encourage transformational learning communities

Graceway: We have not got anything along these lines at the moment.

Visions: I'm not sure we do. But then we're pretty small really....(but nor does our parent church and maybe they should.....)

Journey: This is a major transformation area in my life and ministry. I must model this area of ministry on a weekly basis by demoting from the center of public worship to joining singing, the Lord's Supper, prayer, silence, and recitation as a formative ritual. I try to do my preaching/teaching less and less a well-reasoned argument, and more and more a shared practice among preacher and hearers, in which the Word moves through us to bring life and community. I see myself as the leader of a kind of group meditation, more of a prophet, poet and priest instead of a scholar or lecturer. I want to see our weekly experiences, through corporate worship or home teams, as a group of spiritual formation.

Red Sea: We are currently trying to teach/grow/incubate more people to live out in the natural connects that they have and then to invite others into your ministry experience.

Pathways: We desire for our small groups to be transformational learning communities. We encourage the leaders to hit on all five core purposes in order to promote holistic growth within each person and in the group itself.

20. How does your church engage in social issues?

Graceway: Some people are involved with issues they feel passionate about. We discuss political social issues regularly. We even had two people vote in the US election! Lots of articles get sent around. Preaching on such issues- we have an interactive type sermon which looks at these issues bimonthly. (A later email-- my wife says i have to add something in, that i forgot to say!:-)- we have recently shifted into a lower socio economic area as our attempt to model incarnation and learn about working with the poor. We live close to some friends running a home for girls exiting prostitution/in crisis. A number in our church have been supportive of this- acknowledging the importance of such stuff, but not ready to commit to it personally- I am encouraged by this support. I may have sounded a wee bit negative in places- this reflects an internal struggle at the mo. with emerging church philosophy- i am concerned that consumer culture may be dictating things a bit much and our church comes out of this context. If you had of talked to me this time last year you may have gotten vastly different answers!)

Visions: Members from our group are involved in setting up a local credit union. We are also involved in campaigning during the Make Poverty History year. One of our members runs an internet forum for survivors of abuse to which others offer tech support. So, it is mostly individual stuff which the group helps and supports and justice stuff. Lots of us were involved in the "York against the

War" events when war was about to break in Iraq, and some members were actually coordinating the campaign.

Journey: We have about seven school teachers who are a vital part of our church life. Half of them are involved in different community events through the School district. We've started to offer some free music lessons to the community on Wednesday as well as some ESL classes for adults. I was recently invited to a community wide event to a part of the planning sessions for some yearly festivities and parades that take place at the beginning of the year.

Red Sea: Through serving food, praying at gang sites, neighborhood meetings and protesting (just kidding)

Pathways: We promote service projects that make an impact in our city. We teach people how to think in light of a kingdom, not Christendom politic.

21. Could you say that you attempt to apply a relational hermeneutic in your community? If so, how or in what ways?

Graceway: We do try an approach the scripture communal (if that is what you mean) I try and act as a facilitator- even though I speak the most! We do try and get other voices in as much as possible. We also have email conversations on the text from time to time, which I often incorporate into my sermon.

Visions: We try...By talking about "us" rather than "me" by singing about "us" rather than me when possible. The Trinity is important to us as God in relationship, and we are very fond of Rublev's visual interpretation of that as an example to us. By encouraging openness, by planning stuff corporately wherever possible, by making decisions corporately wherever possible. The downside: and the things that fight against us, are the pressures of many people's work commitments, long hours commuting etc. And the fact that those who are not pressured by heavy workloads, are suffering from depression, and sometimes find it hard just getting-up in the morning, never mind anything else.

Journey: Every Wednesday our team walks through the sermon that I will be preparing. They give input and help shape the message. But mostly our small groups engage in biblical interpretation as a community.

Red Sea: Our hermeneutical approach comes from a missiological understanding of our faith as sojourners. The father sent the son, the son sent the holy spirit and we are sent into the darkness to love, form community, worship etc...our relationships are a byproduct of the call to ministry mission. Our relationships are received and not formed from our human criteria.

Pathways: Yes. We believe that the level of intimacy we have in our community and love is the primary way people will interpret the gospel we preach.

Reflections on Responses

Theology: The responses on this one surprised me somewhat. I assumed most churches would try to align themselves with some sort of camp or segment of Christianity. But, all of them reflected some of the autonomy that comes with the new church. They were very open to dialogue and discussing doctrinal views, and while a few of them positioned themselves on the conservative side, I still sensed a willingness to work through and

continually ask ourselves if we are being faithful to our mission, theologically and biblically.

Philosophy: As each church works with describing their philosophy, this is almost always done based upon our biblical conviction and the audience we are trying to reach. Both have a cultural and theological basis for their practice. Three of the churches were tethered more along their theological views and two leaned heavily on a philosophy of connecting to non-Christians.

Methodology: Mark from Graceway made an excellent observation when he said, "this has led, in my opinion, to mainly 'aesthetic' changes rather than missional- this is a blind spot for so called emerging groups, I suspect." His thoughts were on target if the emerging or missional church fails to fulfill its mission of the church, and instead, applies creative 'window dressing' to the visible aspects of the church without ever progressing the church towards faithfulness and maturity. *The responses can be divided into three fields of methodology—a cultural approach, a theological approach, and a biblical approach.* I believe all three are valid and perhaps our goal should be to bring harmony between these. The churches in the study have given much thought and are purposeful in their efforts to maintain integrity and live out their identity as an *ecclesia* with faithfulness to God.

Experiential: The church responded in what I feel are the two ways most churches would respond to this. (Neither being necessarily right or wrong) One, we create opportunities for an experiential faith through worship and ministries (music, art, spiritual disciplines, etc.) and two, that faith cultivated and revealed through naturally created experiences, and we simply must be responsive to the *already present* activity of God. I thought Red Sea made a valuable statement when the pastor said: "Maybe we aren't thinking intellectually about what is really happening within our experiences. Like, "was that God honoring?"...etc." (I would consider this a spiritual listening philosophy.)

In creating faith experiences, Vision really captures the use of elements and brings an element of contemplative thought that are not found in traditional churches, but are beginning to make headway in the emerging/missional church. Red Sea stated a very profound insight when Pastor Shaun remarked, "We do some things but are needing to attach "symbol" better for the end user. Our best and most used tool is conversation within our communities within the greater community."

Engaging the culture: Each of the churches engage their culture in diverse way. The key here is to probably be sensitive to how God is drawing the church to interact within their specific local community and neighborhood. I thought Pathways made a great statement when Pastor Ron said, "We do not believe there is a wall that separates sacred from secular. So, we encourage people to find God in every aspect of their lives and their environment. The redemptive stories are out there waiting to be found if we are looking for them."

Spiritual Formation: Two churches reflected honesty in their desire to do a better job at this. Journey church illustrated how the traditional church has become irrelevant and often times 'preserved'. Red Sea spoke to one of our characteristics directly when he said. "Are you being transformed and are you transmitting that power to others?" Pathways had a very intentional plan to stratify and understand how to connect with their people better o this level.

Creating authentic community: Each of the five churches live out this value of

community well. Graceway reminded us we should examine whether or not we are really doing justice to our praxis. Visions gave an excellent idea when she said they, "...from-time-to-time, meet with a group dynamics counselor, who comes occasionally and teaches us about how to be "real" without being offensive or hurting others"

Multi-Sensory: All churches excelled at this are, while Red Sea introduced less media, one aspect of their sensory application was splendid, "When someone takes Christ at our church they grab a "red rock" symbolizing the new life that will be built."

Re-Imagining Leadership: All of the churches that responded have thought through their leadership approach and do so with great conviction. (Of course Red Sea shares the strongest sentiment.☺)

Re-Design Structure: Journey reminded us of one of the struggles that the church is wrestling with in today's society: "where people see themselves as contributors instead of consumers to their relationship to God through Journey". Red Sea captured this concept as well. Pathways is considering adopting the very popular multi-site model.

Becoming Missional: The four churches that responded understand the dynamics involved in being a missional church—but are very intentional in helping to shape their people to be men and women of faith, and the by-product of this will be an effective, faithful church.

Relational Ethos: Most of the respondents understood relational ethos as it related to community. They have a great focus on "how do they help build a community of Christians following God, and living in healthy relationships with others?"

Multi-cultural: Journey church is by far the best church positioned to grow a multi-cultural community. However, I sense all the churches have a grasp on what they need to do and who they need to be to reflect God's desire for diversity. Perhaps, they need to be a little more open and intentional about reaching people of diversity. I believe, without a diverse staff, you will never become diverse.

Generational: While just about every church I know struggles with this one, they all have a heart to build bridges of cross-generational community. Pathways has a great application of this concept.

Technological: All of the churches understand the importance of technology in our day. We should be using these to help us impact our community and simply as mediums to convey our message and biblical truth. Pathways reminded me that email is becoming one of the primary sources for communication and a very "safe" way to connect with new people. I am promoting the development of virtual communities when I speak to churches.

Transformational Learning Community: I am not sure this concept has really flourished among churches yet. Of course, the concept itself is fairly new and being experimented with. Most are encouraging a relational approach to sharing their faith and ministry practice, and others are using small groups as a learning community. (I believe this only works if it is more than just a social, relational meeting.)

(Added Social Issues): All churches are involved on some level with social action or services. I believe this will be a key application of the gospel among future churches. Those that do not participate to help others in our society, I feel have failed to follow Christ's example of ministry/missions.

A Relational Hermeneutic: Every one of the churches engages in this understanding of interpreting the Gospel in our church culture. It is accomplished through 1) an

understanding of the community of the Triune God and his relationship with his creation, and 2) It is a community endeavor.

Incarnational: I think Mark from Graceway makes a great statement when he says: “To be perfectly honest we are miles away from a truly incarnational expression of church. In my opinion incarnation is more than just hanging out with our neighbors. Incarnation is about identification with brokenness”. His emphasis on taking care of the poor is a reflection of Jesus’ ministry and his desire that we are here for the sick not the healthy...the unrighteous, not the righteous.

Further Reflections of the Survey

Excitement is the word that I have chosen to describe how I felt when reading the responses of these churches and incorporating their experiences and convictions within these pages; each church with its own heart, passion, and spirit for being faithful to Christ and being attendant to His Spirit’s work in their part of the world.

I was amazed to see the variance and uniqueness of these congregations. Each one, with its own personality, style, and focus, attempt to be an instrument of God’s will in their community. This uniqueness, I believe, is a hallmark of the church reaching postmoderns. The new era churches will not be cookie-cutter assemblies that simply mimic what they learned or are encouraged to be. Rather, it has been born out of the calling, vision, spiritual convictions, experiences, and doctrines of her leaders.

One concept that could sum up the intentional reworking of “how we “do” and “think” church, could be the idea of ‘Semper Reformada’. (Always Reforming) One of the impressionable thoughts that came to mind when reading these responses, was the marks of humility that pervades many of the answers. These churches are not saying that have it all together, instead they are saying that they must continue to look at their approach to ministry—in hopes of staying relevant and biblical. I wonder if we would not be struggling so much with ‘postmoderns’ and ‘emerging’ ministry if the church had been doing that all along. But it seems to have hit somewhat of a standstill in the past couple of hundred years.

I am thankful for the pastors that took the time to answer these surveys. It shows that they are interested in relationships and connecting to people more than their day planners probably allow them to. (I just hope when they get their first book deal and start speaking at conferences, they will still be accessible)

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