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Under One Umbrella: Multiple Communities, One Church

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

UNDER ONE UMBRELLA: MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES, ONE CHURCH

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

BY
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NEWBERG, OREGON

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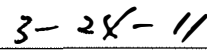
**UNDER ONE UMBRELLA:
MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES, ONE CHURCH**

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SECTION 1

ABSTRACT

It is my claim that the need for alternative communities within established church structures is not only growing, but is also paramount to the continuation of the gospel of Jesus Christ into the post-Christian, post-Modern world. These alternative communities often take the form of “emerging” worship services, Young Adult services, and “church-within-a-church” expressions of worship and community. They are seen in large, medium, and small church settings; as such, we see many of the same problems to varying degrees. The search for relevance has led us to these communities, and this author sees them as valid expressions of faith and community. I am further claiming that intrinsic within these “community relationships” is friction that often leads to challenges that, unless overcome, will not allow either community to see its full potential for the kingdom of heaven. I will explore different models of relationships, both for integration and separation, and suggest ways in which the conversations between communities can be facilitated in order to create “preemptive understanding,” which seeks in turn to allow each community a modicum of understanding and helps to create opportunities for all communities to thrive. I propose a book that will outline the challenges and look for opportunities therein. This book will address any church community that struggles with the growth of an alternative community within the more established church structure. The research will be broad enough to include churches of every size and can be seen cross-denominationally as a resource for easing the growing pains of alternative communities within already

established church structures. The goal is to provide a framework for conversations between multiple communities housed under one ecclesial umbrella.

SECTION 1:

THE PROBLEM

By intention or by evolution, churches often cater to specific communities within their local church context. These varying communities may be based around worldview, generational needs, cultural differences such as language, or worship styles. The friction that is created often leads to a desire for separation for one or both communities, the result of this being damaging to both communities. Time and time again we see a bifurcation between these communities in a local church setting. At times, these disintegrations can be healthy, (daughtering a church, sending a group to plant a church), but more often than not, there is deep pain involved in the schism. One pastor has likened it to the later growth of a Siamese twin: while the twin was not there at the birth, it has grown to be a significant part of the primary child. To separate the twin is usually a surgical process in which, often, only one of the twins really thrives, while the other is left to languish.

I believe this to be a widespread problem that is not relegated to one denomination or faith structure. Therefore, the discussion needs to grow beyond a simple “generational” context and leap into the realm of worldview and ecclesiology and even Trinitarian thought. While there will be a discussion of Post-modern vs. modern worldview, this does not create a boundary from which to work. There will be work to define at least this

portion of the conversation in terms that are general enough to be inclusive, yet specific enough to be helpful. But acquiescence to the changing worldviews present today must be recognized and discussed.

THE PRIORITY CONTEXT

I find myself as the Young Adult pastor in a traditional church. The church has 6,000 members on the records, with approximately 4,000 in attendance on any given week. We are located on the campus of Loma Linda University, A Seventh-day Adventist graduate learning institution that focuses on the health sciences. The University has approximately 4,500 students in attendance, with the majority of those being in graduate or post-graduate studies. Our pastoral staff is 14 full-time pastors; and the young adult community is about 500-600 in attendance on any given week.

When I arrived at the church there was very little in the way of relevant young adult ministry. There was a small group of people meeting each week, around 60-80 people. As growth began, we began to see the blessings of a growing ministry, as well as the pitfalls. One of the questions I asked early on to the senior, executive, and administrative pastors, who make up our leadership triumvirate, was what they thought “integration” would look like? Over the past three years, their answers have varied from blank stares, to a strong indication that there needs to be a senior pastor presence in the pulpit of the young adult ministry. It has been a long road in between.

I began this cohort in the midst of some outstanding and unprecedented growth in this ministry. The more I have read and researched, the more I am convinced that the friction that has been created in this context is by no means happening in a vacuum. If it

were, there would be no fear of fire, as fire does not exist in a vacuum. However, through reading, anecdotal research, and further study, I have come to understand that this is a widespread problem that any church that is both traditional, yet willing to invest in emerging culture (or young adults, as it is often named) will have to face.

Since beginning this process, there has been a great deal of discussion happening at the local level. These conversations, along with study, have helped to shape the following discussion of what it means to have more than one community under the same roof thrive.

SECTION 2

OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Communities continue to grow within local church contexts. This speaks to the ongoing need for change in worship expression, communication in leadership, and mission of the church. All of these things are being addressed, but often not from an established community in the church; rather, they are being addressed from the smaller, alternative communities that are growing under the same roof as the larger church. To address these issues there are a number of conversations and solutions that might be helpful.

1. *Move the alternative community out of the church.* This is a viable process to thwart much of the pain involved in integration. In this respect, a local church community needs to ask the question of whether or not it is willing to have multiple expressions of worship and community under its roof. If the answer is “no,” then steps need to be taken in order to move the existing sub-community out on their own. Some of the problems included with this approach stem from the fact the group may not be viable financially. While they may thrive under the auspices of the host-church, they may not have what it takes to make it on their own.
2. *Do not allow alternative communities to grow within the local church.* This is essentially nipping the problem at the bud. Instead of allowing a group to grow, leadership must decide if this is something they want to

have happen. If not, better no groups are allowed to grow under the roof of the church with any other identity than that of the larger congregation. Limiting expressions of worship to one central location solves a myriad of problems, and allows leadership to maintain a strong hold on what happens within the local church community.

3. *Multi-Site solutions.*¹ There are a growing number of churches that are choosing to go multi-site as an option for multiple communities.

With the growth of this iteration of church, there does not have to be a need for integration, while still creating a community based on principles that are held by the host church. The idea of multi-site churches is not only growing, but also growing rapidly, due to the use of technology.

This becomes a viable option; while not technically a church plant in the traditional sense, it allows the growing community an opportunity to grow as part of a network based around the host church and its vision and pastoral leadership.

4. *Create multiple worship expressions in the local church.* While this may seem like what the thesis of this paper is actually espousing, there are vast differences between churches with multiple expressions of worship, and churches with more than one identifiable community. In a multiple worship expression church, by and large, the voice of leadership is the

¹ “We predict that 30,000 American churches will be multi-site within the next few years, which means one or more multi-site churches will probably be in your area.” Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution : Being One Church-- in Many Locations*, The Leadership Network Innovation Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006). Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 1, Location 230-240.

same.² This creates a continuity of vision and a sense of togetherness for the communities. How a church handles discipleship, outreach, and nurture will be deeply connected through a singular point of leadership. In a multiple community church, leadership of the communities is different, although assenting to the same vision.³

² According to Don Sweeting, Pastor and Reformed Theological Seminary president, this type of iteration of worship and church is possible.

"Here's how it works. A pastor directed philosophy of worship as well as the common ministry of Word and sacrament hold these services together. There is an overriding vision with overriding values rooted in the Word and the gospel that drives everything. A desire to be both rooted and relevant gives us the ability to connect with people yet stay grounded. Our music leaders are also cross-trained team players. They truly appreciate each other and help each other. There is no elitism, but a servant heartedness that keeps them on the same page." Don Sweeting, "Two Worship Services Two Styles: One Church's Journey", The Chief End of Man Blog <http://donsweeting.wordpress.com/2010/07/02/two-worship-services-two-styles-one-church%E2%80%99s-journey/> (accessed January 2, 2011).

³ "We're not only feeding toxic tribalism; we're also saying the gospel can't successfully bring these two different groups together. It's a declaration of doubt about the unifying power of God's gospel. *Generational appeal in worship is an admission that the gospel is powerless to join together what man has separated.*" William Graham Tullian Tchividjian, "We Are One", The Gospel Coalition <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tullian/2010/08/22/we-are-one/> (accessed January 2, 2011).

The pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in his blog wrote these words on why the church had decided to no longer have multiple worship services based on genre or style of worship. These are strong words, and to be taken with a grain of salt. However, what does ring true is a desire for the unifying power of the gospel in the lives of those in the local church. How does one go about creating unity out of something that seems to be built to have a silo effect? The answer, to a point, is that worship expression is only one aspect of the church, and not the whole mark and measure of a community. Is it possible to create a sense of community outside of the worship gathering? This author would argue that it is not only possible, but also more probable that a community gathering outside of a worship service will create a broader sense of fellowship and togetherness. The worship service actually serves this process less than the majority of other opportunities a church affords its congregants.

SECTION 3

THE THESIS

The clash of worldviews is not relegated to the secular realm of society. The church itself has these same issues of modern/postmodern conflict. This has created friction that often ends in the splitting of churches. I believe that there are creative and responsible ways in which multiple communities growing under one ecclesial umbrella (local church) may thrive together toward understanding, equipping, and realizing the kingdom of God. This model emphasizes a dynamic unity shared by diverse communities in the church achieved by way of directed conversations that move toward preemptive understanding in mutuality and cooperative sharing. With this process as a basis of understanding, I believe these communities may thrive together

There are four areas that must be given clear consideration. Those areas include *humility in communication, altruistic use of space and resources, respect for shared vision, and discipling connections*. These four areas create the elemental principles from which dynamic unity is achieved. Ideally, each area is dealt with *preemptively*, in order to create less friction in the relationship as the communities grow. Coming to a preemptive understanding of what is involved in communicating these principles becomes paramount to both communities thriving under the same umbrella.

Declaring Boundaries

In order to delineate the conversation, it is important to create boundaries. We will do this by speaking first to what we are not attempting to encompass in this study.

Looking at multiple community churches is very specific, albeit broad in its application. It is easy to see other iterations of church and be confused to whether or not they fit within the category this paper seeks to encompass.

NOT Multi-Site

“Among Protestant churches in the United States, well over 1,500 churches are already multi-site. One out of three churches say it is thinking about developing a new service in a new location. Seven out of the country’s ten fastest-growing churches offer worship in multiple locations, as do nine of the ten largest churches.”¹

This seems like a great many churches have opted to go for a multi-site solution to the problem of growing communities. And to be sure, this option has been quite successful in a limited sort of way. If we were to take a closer look, we would realize that the number of *churches* that meet each week in just the 100-499 in attendance range is close to 105,000.² This is not even to mention the same study that puts the churches with an average attendance 7-99 at 177,000.³ In the grand scheme of things, there are a very *few* churches that are experiencing this kind of revolution. While it may be the wave of the future, most churches are leaps and bounds from being close to going back to the future.

This work does not deal with multi-site options. Rather, it deals with multiple communities under one umbrella. In this author’s estimation, this is a much greater need

¹ Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution : Being One Church-- in Many Locations*, The Leadership Network Innovation Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006). Surratt, Ligon, and Bird. Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 186.

² "What's the Size of U.S. Churches?", Hartford Institute for Religious Research http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#numcong (accessed December 7, 2010).

³ Ibid.

that has been significantly ignored up to the present time. It is possible that there was simply no need to speak of multiple communities that are housed in one church because these communities have always been seen as subordinate to the larger community. Or perhaps, these secondary communities were seen as stopgaps until those in attendance were “grown-up” enough to take their place in the pew of the main sanctuary. However, there is a trend in regard to this thought that might be troubling to those not ready for change.⁴

NOT Church Plants

One of the other iterations that might seem to parallel multiple community churches are those groups that are brought up to be sent into the world. From inception, these churches are primed for planting their community in other soil. These communities are based on a very different set of philosophical assumptions, and therefore, do not fit the mold of multiple community churches.

The idea of being a “sending” church has often been connected to a church that sends missionaries.⁵ However, for our purposes we will define a “sending” church as a church that holds one of its elemental values to be that it was “created to give birth to other churches.”⁶ Therefore, churches that have the express agenda to “daughter” other churches do not fit the mold for this work. These churches grow specifically to send, rather than to try and find some sort of integrative strategy and relationship. This creates

⁴ See Following Chapters.

⁵ MacDonald Gordon, "The Sending Church", InterVarsity/Urbana.org <http://www.urbana.org/articles/the-sending-church-urbana-81> (accessed December 7, 2010).

⁶ J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Publishing, 2001).

a vastly different presupposition from which to grow relationships. There is no need for integration, but there maintains a need for mentoring and support. The relationship between the two communities may remain much more parent/child in focus in order to get the growth church off on their own. This has its own pitfalls, to be sure, but they are not the same pitfalls we seek to deal with in this work.

In some ways, this church is let off the hook as far as finding a need to integrate both communities into the reality of one church body. They are allowed to thrive separately, and as the finances become more and more separate, and a stronger and more dynamic identity is recognized, there are less and less reasons to integrate leadership, congregations, and vision. In fact, it is specifically for this differing vision, albeit worship styles, demographic needs, or mission, that the daughter church is grown and sent.

We will be dealing with communities that are home grown and meant to stay to help nourish the body that is already present in the local church. While to some, church planters included, this seems easier than going and starting a new group, this is actually incredibly difficult to grow and integrate into the new structure.

Not Small Groups

Small groups, cell groups, life groups, discipleship groups; all of these are NOT what we are talking about. Small groups are an integral part of any faith community⁷, or that is at least what our guilt tells us! The communities for which we undertake this work are those that have gone beyond small groups, even if that was their inception, and have

⁷ A Google search for the phrase “small groups are an integral part. . .” elicited almost 9 million hits. While small groups are not in any way the focus of the paper, it is anecdotally noted that every church I have ever worked for and every pastor that I have spoken with would love to have small groups working better, or at all, within their church. Is it possible that small groups that are effective and do more good than harm are really the exception to the rule as opposed to the rule by which we all hang our guilt?

moved into the realm of communities. Depending on the size of the larger church this can be a group of 20-600 or beyond. It is really a question of percentages, rather than being tied to a particular number.

For instance, in a church of 100 (we will use this number for easy reference), a group of 10 people will probably not tax the church's resources in a significant way; the use of space will be limited and can take place even off campus. However, if a sub-group in a church of 100 grows to be 25-30 in attendance, it has a dramatically different feel. Their need for resources, be those resources space, finances, or pastoral care, increases exponentially. There are many variables that should be acknowledged as well: the physical plant of the building is important, the amount of giving by the church, the status of its pastoral staff, (vocational, bi-vocational, etc.) the consistency of the congregation in attendance, as well as many other considerations. All of these variables adjust the breaking point for a group to be seen as a viable⁸ sub-group within the church community.

Small groups do not meet these criteria of viability, nor is their purpose one of simple numerical growth, although growth is often stated as a reason for these groups to exist. Small groups are often built for the life of the church and for a growth in faith maturity, study, and overall health of the local church body. These are achieved to various degrees depending on the relevance of curriculum, the connection of members, and the overall attitude the local church has toward small groups.

⁸ Viability of a sub-community within a church is not to be confused with the sustainability the group expresses outside of the community relationship with the larger church. It is possible that a viable sub-group within a church is not viable, either financially or ecclesiologically, outside of the larger church body, but *is* viable for its own identity within the larger church.

For our purposes, we are trying to identify groups that go beyond the small group model and move into areas of community. To that end, we must take a look at criteria for viability under the umbrella of a local church.

FOUR CRITERIA FOR VIABILITY

Now that we have spent time delineating the boundaries of the communities we are planning to discuss, we need to define and identify specific criteria to use in order to target the kind of communities that we would like to engage. At this point, we have discovered that we are not talking about multi-site churches, churches with the express goal of daughtering groups to become other churches, and small group iterations of community. While all of these are vital to the overall growth of the church in North America (the geographic location to which this work is defined), they do not fit into the discussion we have before us at present. They are all iterations of communities and churches that are meeting the needs of those who would be part of the community of Christ in its global scale.

Criteria #1

For multiple communities to thrive together, there must be a *host community* to begin with. Therefore, the first criterion for a viable sub-group is *the existence of a host-church in which it can grow*. This may seem obvious, but we should state it so as not to confuse the conversation. As well, if the host-church/community is barely surviving on its own, there will very possibly be little in the way of resources or vision, beyond simple survival. I refer back to my high school training and recall our discussion on Maslow's

Hierarchy of Needs.¹ A church that is floundering will need to make sure that it has its physiological needs met first. Translate this understanding to a church context; let's say that physiological needs (air, water, food, sleep) are translated into things such as a meeting place, funds to hire leadership, consistency in worship, and sustainability of community (or, will people walk back through the door next week?). These needs must first be met in order to begin to think of a larger picture of mission within the church.

As these needs are met, the community is better able to assess its needs and its ability to support the caring for those needs. Often, it is clear that one of the needs is an approach to ministry that takes into account new ways of being a church, new ways of worshipping, and having multiple community identities within its congregation. As it seeks to be able to support these ministries/communities, the church can actually become healthier due to the influx of people. However, there needs to be a baseline of health and stability in order for the sub-community to be supported in a way that will help them to thrive and co-exist on the same church campus.

Criteria #2

Critical Mass. "Empirical researchers have often found that the size of a group is the best predictor of its level of collective action."² This speaks to the idea of critical mass. In today's vernacular, critical mass could be said to be the amount of mass which gets any particular ball rolling. For our purposes, this is less of a number and more of a feeling in a room. It is extremely difficult to put a number on a group of motivated individuals. As well, there are a great number of variables which must be taken into

¹ Abraham Maslow, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" http://www.abraham-maslow.com/m_motivation/Hierarchy_of_Needs.asp (accessed December 10, 2010).

² PE Oliver and G Marwell, "The Paradox of Group Size in Collective Action: A Theory of the Critical Mass. Ii," *American Sociological Review* (1988). Pg. 53.

consideration when deciding whether or not a group is moved toward community. These variables can include the following:

- **Size.** This is *size relative to the viable host community*.³ Ten may not be critical mass where the local church is actually 300 in attendance; but a group of 30, in that same church, can get some real traction when it comes to growth, vision and ownership.
- **Leadership.** Often, it is the leadership of a group that has a vision for community. Driven leadership is one of the crucial criteria for a group to move into the realm of community. As leadership sees the potential for growth, for kingdom involvement, and for the opportunity to find a particular identity, so goes the group.
- **Support.** Critical mass is not simply those who are inside the community, but it also speaks of those who are outside the community but are supportive of the endeavor. The host community has to be supportive in philosophy, in understanding the need for the future-community, and have a desire to see the local expression of the kingdom of God grow under their roof.
- **Identity.** For a community to be seen as something “other” than the larger worshipping community, it must have its own identity. This usually begins with a name. Beyond a name, there are other certain identifying markers of membership. These markers can be anything from a separate membership role,

³ The author hesitates to come up with any type of formula that might be seen as a rubric from which to begin a process of multiple community growth within a church. This idea of viability from numbers is so varied it is possible that the same number may be at very different realities when it comes to identity within a larger church. Because of the dynamic nature of the four identified variables (Size, Leadership, Support, Identity) it does little good to focus on numbers. There will always need to be a combination of the four that the community, both large and small, recognize are in place before the conversation might begin in earnest.

Criteria #4

Space. When discussing these criteria with others, this was the one area often questioned. It seemed, to some, to be too simple to really put it into the equation. How could something as simple as an extra room really have such an effect on the growth of a group within a church? In answer to this question is the following quote: "Space is the most fundamental barrier we all face--and the easiest to overlook."⁵ To not give people space, at least within this context, is to tell them they don't exist. Perhaps that is too strong, but at least the point is made. When a church does not make room for one of its ministries, outreaches, or communities, it is making the statement that they don't rate in the churches esteem enough to be considered "space-worthy."

If you have ever worked in a church, you know that space is one of the most sought--after commodities. There is never enough for storage, let alone for ministry space. The battles that have been fought along these lines are often epic in nature. To create a space for a new community is an often hard-fought battle that leaves many scars. If a group is thinking of growing, or is growing without guidance, it is possible that the host church may not have thought through all the implications of a thriving and growing community underneath the umbrella of the local church.

These criteria for viability--*Host Church, Critical Mass, Worship Expression, Space*--begin to create the boundaries for the discussion to follow. In the following section we will look at three models for relationships from the natural world.

⁵ Nelson Searcy, "How to Identify and Break through the Top Five Church Growth Barriers, No Matter What Your Size", Outreach Magazine
http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Top_Five_Church_Growth_Barriers/ (accessed December 20 2010).

SYMBIOSIS

In the quest for models from which to shape a design for multiple community churches, it would seem that a model from biology might take precedence. **Symbiosis**¹ is essentially the “association between two organisms.” The reader would have come in contact with this biological concept from the earliest forms of education. For our purposes, we will take a look at four different symbiotic relationships and show how they are expressed within the local church body. While this is not a research in biology, there will be but a cursory explanation of the different relationships.

Commensalism

This term, first used by PJ van Beneden in 1876,² indicates a relationship between organisms (in our case, communities) in which one of the party’s benefits, but the other is essentially unchanged. A good example of this would be silverfish and army ants. The silverfish raids with the ants and share their prey. The ants, however, are neither harmed by the presence of the silverfish, nor are they benefitted. This relationship benefits one of the parties, but does not hinder nor harm the other organism involved.

A commensal relationship is a *baseline* for what might be seen as a healthy relationship between two communities that are housed in one church setting, the hope being that the smaller group is allowed to grow, and even thrive, but has very little effect on the host-community at all. Many churches begin their multiple communities with this

¹ “Symbiosis is an association between two or more different species of organisms. The association may be permanent, the organisms never being separated, or it may be long lasting.” Surindar Paracer and Vernon Ahmadjian, *Symbiosis : An Introduction to Biological Associations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Pg. 3.

² Ibid. Pg. 6.

as the vision for ministry. There is no thought to integration, much like the army ants to the silverfish. By and large, you rarely see the army ants and the silverfish slowing their work to get to know one another. Rather, the ants continue and the silverfish is just an observer, who can, at times, benefit from the process of the ant's life.

The word *baseline* is used for this relationship in our setting simply because there might be seen a successful relationship if nothing changes in the host-community and the sub-community is allowed to thrive and to grow. And while this may seem like a perfectly fine answer to the question of growth, it does very little to build toward an integrative model of church sustenance and life. This model ignores the ideas and mandates of integration³, discipleship⁴, and dynamic unity.⁵

To simply have a community thrive, on its own, in a church with multiple communities does not truly build for the kingdom of God. Rather, it creates the “silo effect,” to borrow a marketing term.⁶ To translate the silo effect into more common words for this discipline, it would be safe to say that ministries belonging to the same church that do not have the same goals, vision, and mission will tend to work independently of one another. This creates friction. This does not create the kind of corporate identity for the community that will sustain healthy relationships. As ministries thrive essentially independent of one another, the respect for any established shared vision, whether spoken or implied, falls by the wayside. In a commensal relationship,

³ Acts 2:42-47.

⁴ Matthew 28:19, 20.

⁵ John 17:21-22.

⁶ “In marketing terminology, the silo effect occurs when a lack of communication or coordination of efforts between or within business units, departments, teams, etc. has a negative impact on overall performance in terms of meeting goals.” Susan Gunelius, “Branding and the Silo Effect”, Corporate Eye <http://www.corporate-eye.com/blog/2008/07/branding-and-the-silo-effect/> (accessed December 23, 2010).

while one community benefits, that same community, its leaders, congregants, and volunteers, establish an identity that at times appreciates the host-community, but can quickly grow to resent them as well.

This resentment stems from the perception that they need a host-community at all. As the silo community grows and becomes more viable as an entity that has grown beyond the original local church setting, it is easy for their leadership to see the grass being greener if they could simply be in charge of their own domain. To leave the host community becomes the goal at this point. The problem, herein, lies with relationship not being one of equals. This relationship is built upon commensal grounds, and therefore, if the sub-community leaves the host, it will suffer the ill-effects of no longer having the host community to support and sustain it. It may survive for a time; it might even survive in perpetuity, but not without its injuries.

The converse, while not necessarily being as ill affected (that is, the host-community) is still cognizant of the split. Unlike the ants and the silverfish, these communities do recognize the other's presence. In fact, beyond the army ants and the silverfish, these two communities cannot go their separate ways without considerable loss and the commensurate scarring that accompanies a split.

It is perhaps fair to note that the lack of effect the sub-group has on the host-community speaks of the host-community's inability to see integration as a value among its church. This, in and of itself, is a significant issue. If a host church is so self-focused that a group starting in its midst does not take considerable time, care, and resources in order to have it thrive is not really a host-church at all, but rather, a landlord. The

landlord/tenant relationship is greatly out of the scope of what this work is targeting and defining as a healthy relationship in churches that seek to have multiple communities.

*Parasitism*⁷

“You had no right to be born; for you make no use of life. Instead of living for, in, and with yourself, as a reasonable being ought, you seek only to fasten your feebleness on some other person’s strength.”⁸

The above is perhaps a dramatic definition of what a parasite is, but going beyond the clinical is at times both relevant and eye opening. When it comes to dealing with communities and their relationships, we should not forget that there is a human aspect, a more personal tone that must be taken. With that in mind, however, it is important to understand a more clinical definition of what parasitism is.

“An organism living in or on another living organism, obtaining from it part or all of its organic nutrient, and commonly exhibiting some degree of adaptive structural modification - such an organism that causes some degree of real damage to its host.”⁹

Finding a place for parasitism within the context of symbiotic relationships is often tricky. Due to the micro-predatory nature of some organisms, those of which have more than one host, they can be found in many different classifications. However, for the purposes of this paper, we will look at a parasitical community that has been brought up

⁷ Albert O. Bush, *Parasitism: The Diversity and Ecology of Animal Parasites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Pg. 7.

⁸ Charlotte Brontë and ebrary Inc., "Jane Eyre," in *Penguin classics* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England ; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books, 2002). <http://0-site.ebrary.com.catalog.georgefox.edu/lib/georgefox/Doc?id=10006938>. This phrase was from the novelist Eliza Reed to her sister, Georgiana.

⁹ Bush. Pg. 6.

under the auspices of one host-community. Parasites visit harm on their host, and do so to varying degrees. There are truly communities that are parasites. However, this nomenclature is often one that is attached to a community, not because of their parasitical nature, but because there was no plan to integrate the two communities, or at least no plan to truly communicate.

As stated above, the parasite/host relationship expresses itself by the harm that it causes the host, in our case, the host community. The difference between the ecclesial and biological world is the choice a community has to be a parasite or not. In biology, if you are born a strangler fig,¹⁰ you will eventually be deposited on the site of the tree where you will grow and gain sustenance. As you grow, your shoots will surround and eventually either strangle, or shade the host tree. To strangle the tree like it is in a straightjacket is not a choice, but the act of living for a strangler fig.

However, for a community within a church, there is always a choice of whether or not to be a parasite. But this choice goes both ways. It depends on both the host-community and the sub-community to decide on the type of relationship it will be. Questions of finances, integration, space and resources, and even leadership personalities will bring many variables to the table. But without a process seeking preemptive understanding, there are many opportunities for misunderstanding. Often, without a

¹⁰ In their native tropical habitats, many figs are called "stranglers." Seeds germinate high on the moist branches of rain forest trees, sending numerous aerial roots to the ground. The sticky seeds are dispersed by a variety of fruit-eating birds and bats. Like botanical boa constrictors the serpentine roots gradually wrap around the host's limbs and trunk, crushing the bark and constricting vital phloem and cambial layers. The network of roots, resembling a tangle of writhing snakes, also fuse together (anastomose) forming a massive woody envelope or "straightjacket" encircling the host. Expansion of the host trunk as it grows in girth may accentuate the death grip and subsequent girdling process. Eventually the host tree dies of strangulation and shading, and the strangler fig stands in its place. In many cases the host tree may actually succumb from shading and root competition rather than strangulation. When strangler figs start in the ground, as in cultivation, their trunks develop from the ground upward like other "conventional" trees. I.J. Condit, *Ficus: The Exotic Species* (Berkeley: University of California Division of Agricultural Sciences, 1969). Pg. 27.

process to help guide growth, the sub-community can be seen as taking and taking from the host, without ever giving back. While this may or may not be true, perception becomes reality.

Mutualism

Mutualism is arguably what we are shooting for when it comes to the discussion of multiple communities living under one roof. "In mutualistic symbiosis, both partners benefit from the relationship. The extent to which each symbiont benefits, however, may vary and generally is difficult to assess."¹¹ This quote is good to remember. While we are working toward relationships that are mutually beneficial, we are not expecting the relationships to benefit each party equally, or the same, at any given time. Due to the dynamic nature of relationships in general, it should be agreed that to quantify benefits would not only be difficult, but ever changing.

The idea that both communities can become important to one another in itself should not be surprising. How they become beneficial to one another, should, on the other hand, evoke a response of dynamic recognition. Just as people need people, so do communities need other communities. This is true, particularly when the two communities share the same space. This goes beyond a rental agreement, beyond occupying the same space, and moves toward an expression of the body of Christ.

To be truly mutualistic, both communities will have to assent to the intrinsic value in the other community. This value is not found simply on the togetherness of the situation in which these communities find themselves. Rather, it is based on the value that God places upon communities of faith and corporate expressions of worship.

¹¹ Paracer and Ahmadjian. Pg. 6.

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20.

This text brings with it the inherent value that God places on communities and His desire for a presence therein. This is not expressed in one community and not the other, or one over the other. Rather, it is expressed in the ways that each community seeks to communicate with one another, express itself toward God, and seeks Christopresence in all of its endeavors.¹²

Three In One

At the risk of sounding too Trinitarian, it is the claim of this paper that churches seeking to grow multiple communities will move through all three symbiotic models at some point in their existence. In fact, the hypothesis is that the stages of growth will primarily go in the following order: (1) commensal, (2) parasitic, and finally, (3) mutualistic. However, these are more than simply stages, although we will refer to them thusly as such. These ideas, or attitudes, will have varying degrees of influence within the community. It is not necessary that communities experience these stages in any linear fashion. The order is important, while not mandatory. For the purposes of understanding we will engage each model in what is perhaps the most common of developmental stages.

From Inception to Commensalism (0-1.5 Years)

Often, a church seeking to grow a community that is an alternative to the larger church or simply attempting to meet a felt need is not necessarily seeking to be a multiple community church. The forethought in this process is less one of looking to grow and

¹² For a better understanding of the concept of Christopresence, see Appendix A.

integrate as it is simply a desire to grow for the kingdom of God. This compassionate heart sends the church on a process of discovery to flesh out the felt need and to fill that need with the necessary components that will allow for this underrepresented group within the church to feel as if they have received recognition and support from the church. And the blessing is this: the church does, whole-heartedly, support these endeavors. The support often comes by way of a moderate financial investment, lay leadership, or in the best case scenarios, pastoral leadership as well.

The investment made by the church is often relatively small, as the community is either not yet established, or they are established by being loosely organized but are not so much an official entity of the larger church body. In this way, the church shows its support, and the relationship is one that seems to be mutualistic. But the relationship can be more truly described as commensal in that the sub-community is benefiting from the resources that it has been given, and growth might well occur, but there is not a great deal of benefit for the host church. The host church acknowledges the existence of the sub-community and does take pride in its expanding ministry. This can be seen as a benefit, but is not necessarily more than an intellectual assent to the value of having more than one community. At this point, the overwhelming benefit to the sub-community and the relative lack of impact within the larger community makes this relationship commensal.

From Commensalism to Parasitism (1.5-3 Years)

As the sub-community begins to grow, the need for greater resources from the host church grows commensurately. However, depending upon the financial structure of the church, specifically whether or not the sub-community has fiscal freedom with the

funds that are donated through the church for this community, the growing sub-community may not have the financial resources from which to fund much of what it needs. Those needs might be in pastoral support, materials, equipment, or staff support. Due to the growing nature of this community, the resources it needs can be more than was expected at the inception of the community. Furthermore, as they begin to cultivate their own identity within the umbrella of the larger church, a feeling of resentment can take place from the host community about the resources that are being expended, and yet the perceived benefit is hard to quantify. For those outside of the sub-community, it becomes easier and easier to feel as if the sub-community is taking from the larger church by way of resources and even pastoral support.

Additionally, the sub-community has grown to depend on those resources the larger congregation has offered. At first, these resources are a veritable boon from which the ability to do ministry is grown. However, the sub-community and its leadership can quickly come to feel beholden to the host community. In this way, resentment is grown within the sub-community because of a perceived power the host community has over the sub-community.

From both sides of the coin, both the host community and the sub-community, resentment can build and communication becomes harder where resentment is present. At this point, we begin to see the “silo effect”¹³ beginning to take place. The lack of communication from one leadership team to another creates an atmosphere of “us vs. them” on both sides of the coin. While this can be easily remedied by directing the conversation toward preemptive understanding, this is often a crucial time period in the lives of both communities. If they cannot come to an understanding of what integration

¹³ Gunelius.

means, it is possible for both communities to slide away from working toward a shared vision, a common goal, and a unifying understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ in a local multiple community church. A greater understanding of the theological nature of relationships, as expressed by the Trinitarian nature of God, is important to consider.

Regardless of the realm that a local church falls into, be it denominational or nondenominational, the local church is the corporate manifestation of Christ to its immediate community. "According to the Bible, a congregation is the body of Christ, with characteristics both human and divine."¹⁴ This comes with a great deal of responsibility. And if this is true, that the church represents a corporate expression of Christ into its community, it would make sense to try and find a way for it to be in harmony with itself in all of its expressions of worship, be they modern, postmodern, or what have you.

This, perhaps, can be spoken of in some of the same terms in which we speak of a God who is in relationship with Himself. The Trinitarian nature of God should be, at least in part, a model of how a local community can thrive with multiple communities under one ecclesial umbrella.¹⁵

"The 'I Am' invites us to participate in the community of disciples and thereby to enter into relationship with him and be constituted his people. This relational God is the Triune One. He is the Father who desires that we enjoy fellowship with him, the Son in

¹⁴ Merton P. Strommen, *The Innovative Church : Seven Steps to Positive Change in Your Congregation* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1997). Pg. 14.

¹⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994). Pg. 86.

whose fellowship with the Father who desires that we enjoy fellowship with him, the Son in whose fellowship with the Father we are called to share, and the Holy Spirit who as the bond of the divine fellowship brings us into participation in that relationship.”¹⁶

To be the expression of the triune God is to be seeking healthy, yet varied relationships, within the corporate setting or the body of Christ; in other words, the church local. In fact, this assent to understanding this principle is so pervasive that the theologian Volf claims: “Today, the thesis that ecclesial [church] communion should correspond to Trinitarian communion enjoys the status of an almost self-evident proposition.”¹⁷ Volf would argue that there is a correspondence between Trinitarian communion and the church’s communion (ecclesial).¹⁸ This leads to two ideas:

(1) There is a continual back and forth between unity and multiple expressions of God, each needing each other.

(2) Human (ecclesial) community must rise to the heights of God’s selfless love.

Volf states that the first idea is “so vague that no one cares to dispute it,” while the second idea is “so divine that no one can live it.”¹⁹ These comments lead us to an understanding that as the corporate, local expression of Christ in the world today, the church local must exhibit some of this selfless love and understanding of the dynamic nature of the relationships held therein.

¹⁶ Ibid. Pg. 87.

¹⁷ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).Pg. 191.

¹⁸ Roderick T. Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns and Explorations* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008). Pg. 129.

¹⁹ Volf. Pg. 192.

Niebuhr exercised this same desire for a Trinitarian emphasis by what he called a “greater ecumenical service than is currently observed.”²⁰ In other words, the local church needs to express a desire to see the trinity in its full expression. While written almost 70 years ago, the above comment is true today as well. While there has been a resurgence in Trinitarian thought, much of which can be credited to the work of Moltmann in works such as *The Trinity and the Kingdom*,²¹ the application of such Trinitarian thought is often underutilized in the local setting in practical ways. This Trinitarian theology can be practiced in churches with multiple communities is a great number of ways. This can be seen in the way that relationships between multiple communities in the same church might be both healthy and beneficial to each party. These relationships should both exhibit the need for a dynamic unity and multiple expressions of the aforementioned selfless love. All the while, this selfless love is expressed in a desire to dynamically connect with a shared vision for the local church body.

To have these relationships is no easy task, at best, and a veritable land mine of trouble, at worst. Add to these dynamics another expression of worship, or another community based on differing principles and worldviews, and you have a volcano ready to erupt. Quickly, we see the assent to Volf’s two points being ground under the machinery and ego of the local church political hierarchy, of unhealthy relationships, and of a lack of design to the conversations.

Particularly disturbing is the reality that many multiple community churches are

²⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr and William Stacy Johnson, *Theology, History, and Culture : Major Unpublished Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Pg. 62.

²¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom : The Doctrine of God*, 1st U.S. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

not able to move past the parasitic model of symbiosis, and this often creates a bifurcation in order for the host community to keep its perceived healthfulness. To see the value of relationships in light of the Trinity of God is to see each community for its indelible value to the other for existence, sustenance, and the ability to thrive.

The Trinity is often expressed as a community of persons, who find their true being in relationships. “The notion of the Trinity is based on the self-revelation of a God who is at heart relational, not a bare unity, or an isolated monarch. A monarchial notion of the deity encourages the idea that relationship is secondary to God: a Trinitarian concept asserts relationship as *fundamental* to the divine. Furthermore, to speak of the interrelationship of the persons of the Trinity as the key to understanding the divine is to establish personal interrelationship as the foundation of God's interaction with the world.”²²

This idea of relationship being moved to the priority of Trinitarian thought, and more so, to the forefront of theological thought, is par for the course in a postmodern understanding of scripture, of the character of God, and of the nature of the Church. Thinkers such as Leonard Sweet with his apple/orange metaphor of studying scripture—that scripture is relational truth in nature and that we must see the connections that scripture creates with each other and how it is interconnected with itself—as well as his MRI church metaphor—which has its emphasis on the missional, relational, and incarnational nature of being church;²³ Grenz and his work in *The Social God and the*

²² Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Faith, Feminism, and the Christ* (Kitchener: Fortress Press, 1983). Pg. 29.

²³ Leonard I. Sweet, *So Beautiful : Divine Design for Life and the Church : Missional, Relational, Incarnational*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei,²⁴ N.T. Wright's work in *The New Interpreter's Bible: Acts-First Corinthians*²⁵, among many other authors, have the courage to deal with the idea of a relational God and how this concept interacts and informs the postmodern search for God. Far beyond being a novel approach, it owes its foundations to Niebuhr²⁶, Barth²⁷, and Moltmann.²⁸

God, being a God who at the very core of His nature is relational, becomes a type of model for those seeking to express this Trinitarianism within their communities. The idea of giving selflessly to one another, sacrificing and sustaining the goals of each other's ministry, and finding a way to thrive in dynamic unity becomes sacrosanct to the local church community. With these values at the forefront of our understanding of God, the community must be molded around these pillars in order to truly express the nature of God in a local ecclesial context.

This understanding of the Trinity and its relational implications to the multiple community church is elemental in the approach these churches take when it comes to the symbiotic nature of these relationships. Understanding the nature of each model as the communities move through them toward mutualism, and assenting to the value placed on dynamic unity between the communities in respect to shared vision brings this relational view of the Trinity into reality for a multiple community church. It is also what moves a

²⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001).

²⁵ Abingdon Press., *The New Interpreter's Bible : Acts-First Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

²⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, Library of theological ethics ed., Library of Theological Ethics (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

²⁷ Karl Barth, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *Church Dogmatics*, 2d ed., 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975).

²⁸ Moltmann.

community through the more negative model of parasitism and on to a more beneficial symbiotic model, mutualism.

From Parasitism to Mutualism (3 Years and forward)

The move from parasitism to mutualism, both real and perceived, has its very nature in the desire for a dynamic unity that assents to shared vision and finds its expression in the multiple communities within the church. It stems from a deep desire to see both communities grow, thrive, and benefit one another. At this point, the leadership of both communities must be willing to sit with one another and do the hard work that leads toward not only preemptive understanding, but also mutualistic understanding. To this end, there are four identified areas that must be understood and processed through conversation in order to become mutualistic in nature.

After much reflection and research, it became apparent that there is no roadmap from which to help guide these alternative communities and their parent organizations along the way toward a mutualistic symbiosis. While not attempting to create a roadmap from one point to another, the hope is to create a GPS system by which we can constantly check our dynamic course. “The **Global Positioning System** (GPS) is actually a **constellation** of 27 Earth-Orbiting satellites (24 in operation and three extras in case one fails).”²⁹ What this means is that at any given time, in any given place, there are four satellites that are visible and can therefore triangulate any given location. The ability to triangulate signals means that there is always a way to find the route most beneficial, regardless of starting point, and regardless of how far off the originally designed road each community finds itself. While a roadmap cannot change, the GPS is constantly

²⁹ Marshall Brian, "How Gps Receivers Work"
<http://electronics.howstuffworks.com/gadgets/travel/gps.htm> (accessed May 1, 2010).

communicating with its satellites in order to dynamically adjust to find the desired location. In our context, that desired location is a mutualistic symbiosis that grows both communities in their ability to thrive under one umbrella.

By seeking preemptive understanding between both the host and sub-community, there are some elemental values that must be present. These values are not easily found, but are beneficial to the conversation. They seek dynamic unity, or a unity that is not conformity but allows for individual identities and expressions of faith heading toward the same shared goal and vision for the local body of Christ.

The four identified areas of importance are: *Humility, Altruism, Respect, and Discipleship*. These seem easy enough to understand and to implement. However, the implementation of these four values becomes much more difficult than one would think, particularly in the midst of the parasitic model of symbiosis. It is not that any of the values are hard in themselves, and it is not that they are difficult to understand; it is that they are hard for a community to come to grips with and keep at the forefront of their behavior.

Before we jump into a simple explanation of each area, I would like to point out one issue of language that must be made clear. We talk about two communities/services/congregations. We use this nomenclature simply because we need to identify each group within the larger community. But when it comes to building the CHURCH, we see all of these communities/services/congregations as one. A young adult group starts in your church—but it IS your church. While a separate name will most likely be placed on them, or even the term “young adult” will identify them, they are still part of your church. Every stakeholder needs to understand and resonate this to everyone

in the church. Groups often feel ostracized because of their different way of branding or marketing their service; the larger church often feels as if it is not welcome in the alternative community because there is not great communication between the leaders of both areas. All of these create division.

Interestingly, it is often more difficult to do the hard work these relationships require than it is to actually separate the two communities at this point. Having spoken with multiple different pastors of sub-communities within larger churches and with their lead/senior pastors, it seems to be at this point where the desire to stay together wanes. It is sometimes simply easier to change the form of the relationship, whether that is a change of leadership in one of the communities, a desire for the sub-community to leave and forge ahead as their own faith community, or simply to close down the sub-community in order to encompass that community in the larger church body without their own identity and leadership.

Humility.

As followers of Christ there is a Christ-given sense of humility that we all seek. "At every stage in our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend."³⁰ This comes directly from Pauline understanding of who Christ was and is. In Paul's great explanation of Christ's attitude in the message to the Philippians we see him saying this about Christ's humility:³¹

Imitating Christ's Humility

³⁰ John Stott, "Pride, Humility & God", Sovereign Grace Online <http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/sg-o/v1805/prtpride.html> (accessed January 4, 2010).

³¹ Philippians 2:1-11, New International Version

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
⁷but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Humility has always been and will remain a mark of a follower of Jesus Christ.

However, it is not simply to this general idea of humility that we refer. When speaking of humility, it is the idea of *Humble Communication*. Humility in communication works both entities toward *preemptive understanding*.³² Preemptive understanding happens

³² See Section Preemptive Understanding. Pg. 42.

when we begin with the ending, when we thrash³³ early, and when we seek to answer the tough questions first biblically, then philosophically, and finally, practically in order to anticipate as many of the issues that might arise as possible.

While there is no way to perfectly predict all the circumstances, there is a way to go about the process of growing alternative communities that has much less pain and struggle. By humbly seeking a conversation that is transparent and with agreed upon agenda, as to the direction to which all these communities must work in order to grow for the kingdom of God, much better results will occur.

To say, “without agenda” would be a little disingenuous. There are agendas present in every discussion, but acknowledging the agenda that you bring to the table is an act of humility and generosity of spirit. As well, to admit and assent to the overarching agenda of building for the Kingdom of God within your church should provide enough common ground for the discussion to begin.

Altruism

What in particular do you think of when you hear this word? A synonym is “selflessness.” Perhaps it is better defined by using its antonym, “selfishness.” It is seen as an ethical virtue in all the major religions and in society at large. The church often laments the loss of altruism in society, but perhaps we have lost some of that altruistic spirit as well. In this specific situation, I want to attach the word “altruistic” to this phrase: altruistic use of space and resources.

³³ Seth Godin, *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (Toronto, Canada: Penguin Group, 2010). Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 1719-1732. Seth Godin states: “Thrashing is essential. The question is: when to thrash?” Thrashing is essentially looking at all that it will take to make a project, in this case the service/community, successful. Seth would argue that we should thrash early on in the projects’ timeline, trying to find all the questions that need to be answered. I hope you are reading this book early on in the process; it will save you immeasurable heartache by simply asking questions that perhaps you haven’t thought of yet.

Why so specific? Space is one of the greatest issues within church ministry. There is either too much or not enough. When there is too much, something is wrong with the church. When there is too little, empires are built in every room and even every closet. The rulers of these empires are at different times, maintenance men, the knitting ladies, youth pastors, musicians, and the list continues.

These are the practical realities of ministry. The reason they are worth speaking of is that they are the daily life of the church. As a community grows, their need for space grows as well. If an understanding of how the host church will provide or partner for this eventuality is not stipulated to prior to the need, both communities will struggle for a solution. This can result in a slowing of the growth of the sub-community, as we are told by church growth statistics that when a space is 80% full, growth stops.³⁴ This has also been called the “Bonsai Theory” in that churches grow much like a bonsai tree; they will fill the pot they are in, but will not outgrow the space.³⁵

Respect

Respect is the baseline of any working relationship. This is true within the church as much as it is true outside of church work. Respect in relationships is foundational to cooperation and trust. In our context, we will say it is important to have “*respect for shared vision.*” Respect is of the utmost importance as a beginning point, but to continue to have both or all of these communities working in parallel as they move toward the same goal, then there needs to be something which they both understand and can clearly

³⁴ Tim Spencer, "Church Growth Ratios", Church Growth Game Plan http://churchgrowthgameplan.com/cg_ratios_56.html (accessed January 4, 2011). Spencer is quoting Win Arn in the following volume. Win Arn, *The Church Growth Ratio Book: How to Have a Revitalized, Healthy, Growing, Loving Church* (Monrovia: Church Growth, Inc., 1990). Pg. 183.

³⁵ Ken Hemphill, *The Bonsai Theory of Church Growth: Grow Your Church to Its Natural God-Given Size* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991). Pg. 23.

speak to as a primary vision for both communities. This is a vision both shared and agreed upon.

This respect for shared vision means that there must be vision-casting happening in a continuous and cooperative way. This needs to be agreed upon, and it needs to be well understood. The price of not having respect for a shared vision is heavy, as it often leads to separation of the two communities. To have a vision that can be spoken to, respected, and put into tangible action is to have multiple communities working toward a common and agreed upon goal.

It is possible to wonder why an established/host community would need to partner with a sub-community in order to create a vision for the local church. If the larger community is already heading toward a vision that it has prayed over and cast to the congregation with their assent, why would this need to be looked at again? To answer this question we must recognize that the dynamics of the community have changed, and to integrate a new community into the larger church there must be an assent to their value, and therefore, their voice in the direction of the church.

*Discipleship*³⁶

Bonhoeffer states: "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son. ... There is trust in God, but no following of Christ." This is the premise from which we speak of discipleship. And while it seems that every church has a different definition of discipleship, so much so that the word has lost much of its meaning, Bonhoeffer speaks to a focus on Christ as the hallmark of

³⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London, England: SCM Press Ltd. , 1949). Pg. 64.

discipleship. We are called to be disciples of Christ in the midst of community, followers who display their priority, or elemental impulse to follow Christ wherever he leads.

To be a disciple has an impact on the way we view relationships. The case has been made for the Trinitarian view of relationships,³⁷ but a discipling view of relationships speaks to how we walk together in Christ, becoming the tangible relationships that honor Him.

To be brief and blunt, discipleship, in this work will be defined according to: 1) following the example of Christ; 2) living out that example in community; 3) continuing to study and learn who Christ through the study of scripture; and 4) to continue, in the tradition of the Messiah, to do acts of mercy and compassion so that others may experience the love that we have experienced from Christ.

The expanded phrase in our context is coined as such: *Discipling Connections*. These connections are truly the hard work of getting to know one another outside of the worship experience. It is the ligamental connection that will allow for both of the communities to flex and thrive. It is that which will hold the communities together, grow them in the same direction, and as the discipling connections are healthy, so will the church be healthy. Without this last area, there will be a clear bifurcation between the two communities as they both head in different directions, create their own leadership structures, and ultimately, decide to separate from one another.

Discipling connections bring both communities together, outside of a worship service/gathering, and allow for multigenerational relationships, side-by-side service and compassion, and a clear vision that the church is not kept within the walls of the buildings, but within hearts of people who long to connect with others for the kingdom of

³⁷ See Pg. 30.

God. The idea of discipleship includes mentoring, reverse-mentoring,³⁸ acts of compassion and mercy shared between the two communities, and a deep desire for the building of relationships that are instrumental in creating and maintaining a shared vision for the whole church that resides under the umbrella.

To connect to those with whom you do not share the sacred worship space is to agree with an ecclesiology that goes beyond the walls of the church. Furthermore, to create connections with those whom you might disagree with on a variety of points—worship style, music, worldview—yet hold them in high enough regard to enter into relationship with them speaks of a church that acknowledges a relational view of God, and transfers that value into every aspect of church life. The discipleship, or following after one another and Christ, that happens outside of the various worship events is what truly ties individuals from both communities together. Rather than consuming a service, sermon, or worship set, they are learning to value mutual indwelling. In other words, taking the time to live inside the lives of others and allow others to dwell within them.

Mutual indwelling is not a new word in theological circles that have viewed indwelling as fellowship. John 17:21 states: “That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Moltmann comments: “Here the social analogy applies to the divine fellowship which is formed through the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father through the Spirit.”³⁹ A more theological term is “perichoresis,”⁴⁰

³⁸ Earl G. Creps and Leadership Network (Dallas Tex.), *Reverse Mentoring : How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

³⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation : A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, 1st U.S. ed., The Gifford Lectures (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985). Pg. 241.

which is a community concept, and has the same definition.⁴¹ To dwell in someone's life is to resonate with the perfect indwelling expressed by the Triune God. His nature is that of indwelling, and so should be ours.

This indwelling cannot happen without the foundational work that leads us to preemptive understanding. This work not only grows relationships, but it creates a common goal that will hopefully transcend the desires of both communities and tie them together with the *Missio Dei*,⁴² the mission of God in this world. As God has sent the Son, and as the Father and Son have sent the Spirit, so the Spirit sends the church. In this way, all communities who constitute the church can connect with the "sending" that the church has been given.

In order to truly be of one mind the communities must speak of the above four areas—humility, altruism, respect, and discipleship—in a way that leads to preemptive understanding of how to go where God is sending them. It would be wise to spend some time on preemptive understanding as the goal for our directed conversations.

⁴⁰ "In the doctrine of the Trinity, perichoresis is used to capture the mutual indwelling of the equal divine persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. Here also the Greek word *hidrysis* occurs, which is mutuality without mixing or separating. The divine persons embrace one another in love and exist in one another." J Moltmann, "Perichoresis: An Old Magic Word for a New Trinitarian Theology," *Trinity, community, and power* (Nashville, Tenn: Kingswood Books) (2000). Pg. 114.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *God in Creation : A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Pg. 258.

⁴² Hoffmeyer makes the case that the *Missio Dei* was first used to denote Trinitarian relationships. "Thomas Aquinas devotes question 43 of the *Summa Theologiae* to the topic 'Of Mission Of Divine Persons.' For Aquinas, there are two Trinitarian missions, or 'sendings': the mission/sending of the Son and the mission/sending of the Spirit." For Aquinas, this is how God "gets into" the world. JF Hoffmeyer, "The Missional Trinity," *Dialog* 40, no. 2 (2001). Pg. 108.

PREEMPTIVE UNDERSTANDING

The idea of “preemptive understanding” is simply the name put to the idea of learning to discuss forward. To take a look at previous models, both anecdotal and statistic, and see what these communities *should* be talking about. As the conversation is formed intentionally, the goal is for the areas of friction to be mined for solutions. While this may seem like wasted time, when a situation arrives which has already been discussed, there is at least a familiarity with the subject matter and, hopefully, a solution. Of course, this is not a new or novel idea. People have been having discussions on what *might* happen among different disciplines and businesses since the dawn of recorded time. However, in the contemporary Christian church, there seems to be a reticence to speak proactively in this regard. Because of this reticence, many communities and churches that might have found ways in which to thrive together, rather, found ways to destroy one another. This is what is hoped can be thwarted through a process of forward--thinking discussions, through realistic consultation, and through a desire to build for the kingdom of God.

This term is one that has been used in philosophy,¹ psychology,² and academia.³ Up to this point, it has yet to be found in the works of anything having to do with faith, faith communities, or theology. To use this term in the context of multiple community churches is to set a bar to which we can aspire to reach. Working toward a preemptive understanding in a community of communities means there must be a great deal of

¹ Mary Margaret McCabe, *Plato's Individuals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Pg. 232.

² RA DiTomasso, RD DiTomasso, and EA Gosch, *Comparative Treatments for Anxiety Disorders* (Springer Publishing Company, 2002).

³ Jeremy Douglass, "Aesthetics and Technique in Interactive Fiction and New Media," (Santa Barbara: University of California, 2007). Pg. 5.

dispassionate discussion happening prior to the critical moments in the relationships. Even though each church has its own unique identity, there are commonalities between experiences that allow for conversations that take the frame of what “might” happen in regards to the growth and integration in such multiple community churches.

It is proper to set preemptive understanding as a standard for communication and as a hallmark for multiple community churches, a hallmark in that multiple community churches that reach this badge of identity have learned to communicate before the crisis, through the crisis, and after the crisis. It is even possible to avert many of the crises because of preemptive conversations that lead to a mutual understanding.

This becomes even more important as both communities understand the process of symbiosis that often occurs in these communities. It has been postulated that the sub-community will go through all three types of symbiosis (parasitism, commensalism, and mutualism),⁴ and to have a pre-arranged understanding as to how to deal with known issues will make the journey through the models much less frustrating for both communities.

One of the main reasons for a desire and need for preemptive understanding is due to the shifting worldviews and cultures being experienced in today’s world. While there are many different kinds of churches in North America today, they are all being Affected by the change we see happening in the world in regard to the modern/postmodern shift.

⁴ See “Parasitism to Mutualism” Pg. 32.

MODERN VS. POSTMODERN

With the advent of books such as McLaren's *Everything Must Change*,¹ Frost and Hirsch's *The Shaping of Things to Come*,² Long's *Generating Hope*,³ Kimball's *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*,⁴ Barna's *Revolution*,⁵ Tickle's *The Great Emergence*,⁶ and Sweet's *So Beautiful*,⁷ it is easy to see that a shift is coming, and perhaps, has come. Leonard Sweet uses the term "a tectonic shift"⁸ to connote what is currently happening in the cultural milieu in which we find ourselves, taking on the task, and risk, of ministry. Like a new toy, Christians find themselves trying to unpack a new paradigm to view the world, their congregations, their young people, and even their organizational structures. But they can't quite find out how to get the toy out of the package.⁹ They are reviewing

¹ Brian D. McLaren, *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

² Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).

³ Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope : A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997). Long printed a second edition of the book titled "*Emerging Hope*" in 2004.

⁴ Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church : Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007).

⁵ "Because human beings become what they believe, and practicing what they believe is the swiftest and surest means of generating lasting change, this revolution of faith is the most significant transition you or I will experience during our lifetime." George Barna, *Revolution* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005). Pg. 7.

⁶ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence : How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008).

⁷ Sweet.

⁸ Sweet, Leonard. 2008. *LEC7 Module 1 Lecture: Advance 1*. Portland, OR. Lecture Notes.

⁹ As any father knows or will find out, toys these days are not as easy to figure out as they have been in the past. Just unwrapping them takes longer than our children stay interested. It seems that every time we think

the history of their denominations and local churches searching for clues on how to remain relevant to a changing greater culture. They are waving the banner that “everything truly must change,” but yet they are often unable to make those necessary changes; in fact, they are often unable to understand even what changes need to be made. Whether well-read or just intuitive, pastors and lay-people everywhere are coming to the same conclusion: “We can’t simply just change the sound and sight of our worship service and continue to be relevant to a changing culture.” As the culture shifts, so must the church, its assumptions, practices, and perhaps, even the language of its doctrine.

However, it is well to take some time to understand the use of certain terms, their background, and their application in a particular context. The term “*Postmodern*” or “*Postmodernity*” carries with it connotations that are often misunderstood within contemporary faith settings. Postmodernity is sometimes clearly seen as an attack on that which has “always” worked in our churches.¹⁰ While postmodernism does challenge many of the foundations of the modernity, and with it the modern church, it is more than a deconstructive tool bent on destroying all that was sacred in our faith communities. As well, being a “Postmodern” is not something one chooses to be, rather it is something someone is.¹¹

we are finished taking off the wrapping there is another strap that continues to cement the toy to the package.

¹⁰ “Now the Western world is being characterized as postmodern as well. There is less agreement on what it means to be postmodern, but it is apparent that there is a widespread disenchantment with the premises, promises and productions of the modern era. DJ Hesselgrave, *Scripture and Strategy: The Use of the Bible in Postmodern Church and Mission* (William Carey Library Pub, 1994). Pg. 4.

¹¹ Much like those maps in a shopping mall with a red dot and the words “you are here,” the only real answer to that is “Yes, I am.” One is either postmodern in his or her experience and context or they are not. Anecdotal, a few months ago my mother asked me how she could be a “postmodern.” I laughed at the thought, and then realized where she was coming from and the confusion that had set in for her. A postmodern worldview simply is much like looking at the world from a particular cultural mindset. We don’t have the opportunity to visit this understanding; it just is what we are and how we see things.

When did things change? While a study of history makes it hard to pinpoint exact moments of change and transition, a quick overview tells us that major cultural shifts have happened before; here is a brief explanation of some of the major paradigmatic shifts over the last 2000 or so years:

1. Ancient to Hellenistic/Roman (A.D. 300-600)
2. Medieval (A.D. 600-1500)
3. Enlightenment/Modern (A.D. 1500-2000)
4. Postmodern/Emerging (1968*-?)¹²

While postmodernism has become a keyword in the emerging church movement, it has its historical foundations in early 19th and 20th century philosophy, (Hegel--1770-1831, Toynbee--1889-1975 and mid-century Theology and Epistemology. (Tillich--1886-1965, Polanyi--1881-1976)

Polanyi, in his monstrous tome *Personal Knowledge*¹³ speaks specifically about what we have come to know as the search for empirical evidence, rational thought, and the scientific method. He establishes the idea that our interaction with that which we are observing creates a non-objective dichotomy that must be addressed by even the scientific community.

¹² Long. *This author disagrees on the idea of placing the shift from Modern to Postmodern at a year in the 20th century. Scholarship holds that much of the philosophical work that has become elemental in a postmodern worldview began much earlier than this. If this author were to revisit #4, he would put the timeline at around 1900 as to when these concepts were beginning to be discussed. However, as you can see with the other paradigmatic shifts, the transition in thought takes many decades if not centuries. An interesting question is what technology has done to a timeline of transition from one worldview to another.

¹³ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge : Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). This book is a culmination of his Gifford Lectures from 1951-1952 and has become a foundational work in the area of postmodernism. While a scientist, Polanyi understood the idea of personal interaction with that we are studying or seeking to understand, and in this way he was able to clearly establish the idea of Post-Critical thought.

“It goes without saying that no one—scientists included—looks at the universe this way, whatever lip-service is given to ‘objectivity’. Nor should this surprise us. For, as human beings, we must inevitably see the universe from a center lying within ourselves and speak about it in terms of a human language shaped by the exigencies of human intercourse. Any attempt rigorously to eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world must lead to absurdity.”¹⁴

What Polanyi was doing for postmodern thought in the area of science and empirical data assessment Tillich was doing in the field of religion. These two minds got together in 1963 and had a conversation pertinent to the emerging post-critical and post-modern conversation.¹⁵ While the referenced text is of little importance to many, I believe that to see these two thinkers agreeing on what can be known, and how it can be known is essential to our understanding of Postmodernism. In a nutshell, both Polanyi and Tillich were interested in how knowledge is assimilated internally, and what role that interior understanding plays in knowledge of anything. To put it plainly, you bring something to the table when it comes to understanding a theology, doctrine, science, or relationship, and that “something” influences your interpretation.¹⁶

We see these assumptions being played out in the postmodern experience by a lack of adherence to what one would call “absolute truth.” This understanding that a truth claim for one might not be a truth claim for another has been called “moral relativism,” and has been one of the greatest criticisms of a postmodern experience.¹⁷ While an

¹⁴ Ibid. Pg 3.

¹⁵ Michael Polanyi, ed. *Points from a Conversation with Paul Tillich on February 21, 1963*, ed. Richard L. Gelwick, Collected Articles and Papers of Michael Polanyi (Berkeley: 1963).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Philosophically, nonfoundationalism (or antifoundationalism) is certainly one of the most important roots or resources of postmodernism. Nonfoundationalists deny that we have any of those alleged strong foundations for our belief-systems and argue instead that all of our beliefs together form part of a

argument can be made for this understanding, it is certainly an oversimplification of the many tenets of postmodernism. As well, keep in mind that postmodern thought does call into question the concepts of language as being a coherent vehicle for transference of understanding, the place personal experience has in an understanding of doctrine and faith, and the idea that propositional truth is something to be valued as it has been in the past.

Two Metaphors

If we were to build an illustration based around two metaphors, one for the modernist church experience and one for the postmodern church experience, we could call it “The Tale of the CEO and the Vineyard Owner.”

The CEO

The CEO is a bright and capable man. He has a tendency to work from a very rational point of view. What he understands, he understands well; this is because he has worked and reworked the basic business assumptions he learned in business school. He knows how they work, he knows what the board expects of him, he does it proficiently, and he is by all standards successful. He has up-to-the-minute appraisals of the effectiveness of his teams, and when they go in a different direction he knows exactly what to do. His favorite phrase is “The Numbers Don’t Lie!” and he lives and dies by a good business plan. When a product needs to be changed, he brings in the best in the business to fix what needs fixing. He is on the top of his game and can out-plan, out-strategize, and out-work the competition.

groundless web of interrelated beliefs.” W Van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* (Eerdmans Pub Co, 1997). Pg. 6.

However, his employees don't love him. They are in awe of his administrative prowess, but they don't feel like they have a relationship with him. They know what he wants and are more than willing to give it to him, but at times what he asks for is unreasonable. He has a very strong sense of how to do things, and if his employees vary much at all, they are reprimanded, and if need be, fired. However, they want to be part of a winning team. And this CEO has the answers, and at times, that is all they want, the right answers so they can go about their business in the right way. As long as the business plan is good, the employees will be productive and the business will prosper.

The Vineyard Owner

On the other hand, the vineyard owner doesn't see himself so much a businessman, though he is involved in business, as much as someone who partners with the soil to produce whatever has been planted. He has less of a plan and is more interested in preparing the soil. He understands that everyone who works for him has their own take on how their particular job should be done, and he allows for the freedom of those that work for him to express themselves. He also knows that time spent simply walking in the field is time well spent, and so there are days you will see him simply talking to his workers, strolling through the fields, checking on the frames they have put up for the vines.

He also knows that the product he will eventually sell will say less about him as a person and more about the conditions of the field that he was able to help create. And so his time is spent understanding the kind of soil, learning about the weather in the region, getting to know the old farmers in town so he might glean their wisdom, and listening to the workers in his field. In this way, each worker collaborates and has something to add.

The owner likes to build the frames upon which the vines will grow. He understands the need for them to be solid, yet at the same time be able to move enough in order to handle the weight of the vine, regardless of which way it is to grow. He also knows that the relationship he has with the soil, the vine, the weather, and his workers is dynamic, and so he must be willing to hear other voices, to learn, and to move when it is necessary in order to bring a greater crop.

As you can see, there are some assumptions that on an elemental level are different in the two approaches to life, work, and faith. If we were to exegete these metaphors, we would see some of the following:

- **Moderns** place an emphasis on results, while **postmoderns** put an emphasis on process.
- **Moderns** place an emphasis on individuals; **postmoderns** put an emphasis on collaboration and community.
- **Moderns** seek answers; **postmoderns** rejoice in the questions, and in fact, are suspicious of answers.
- **Moderns** seek to franchise; **postmoderns** seek to contextualize.
- **Moderns** yearn for absolutes; **postmoderns** search for mystery.
- **Moderns** reject paradox and seek rational reasoning; **postmoderns** sing the paradox and seek power from connecting the two opposites.¹⁸
- **Moderns** make things out of ideas; **postmoderns** make ideas out of things.

¹⁸ Sweet, Leonard. 2008. *LEC7 Module 1 Lecture: Advance 1*. Portland, OR. Lecture Notes. Sweet uses the metaphor of a car battery and energy collected from connecting the positive and negative poles. By connecting the opposites, energy is created. In much this same way, according to Sweet, the postmodern is energized by his/her connecting of the edges of a paradox. This is in contrast to a more modern approach that would instill reason as the highest value, and therefore work to dispel the paradox.

- **Moderns** often make huddles looking in; **postmoderns** are looking out from their huddles.¹⁹

Shifting Sand

While the above makes it sound as if modernism is an evil that has been around too long, this is not the case at all;²⁰ however, in an emerging culture, modernism is often seen as the enemy of expression, collaboration, creativity and freedom.

In 1834, Edward Mote went to write a hymn on the “gracious experience as a Christian.” As he was walking, these words came to him:

*“On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”*²¹

To look at these lyrics in the context of the modern/postmodern discussion, a modernist would look at them with a strong agreement that all he/she has based their faith on is sinking, or “shifting,” perhaps, would be a better word. So many of those assumptions that made the “solid ground” of their faith are being questioned, or their answers are being disregarded.

However, for a postmodern, the assumptions that had been seen as leading to assurance also led to arrogance, exclusivity, and an “us-against-them” mentality that

¹⁹ Ibid. Sweet also uses the metaphor of a football team to illustrate the differences in modern and postmodern experience of the Christian experience. By using the metaphor of the huddle, all players looking in, he explains the problems with the modern church. Sweet argues that the postmodern church finds more value in looking out from the huddle, and realizing that the most important part of the huddle is the break that sends the players out into the world. In this sense, a church of a more missional mindset would be a church that resonates the most loudly in a postmodern culture.

²⁰ Modernism, stemming from a cultural shift during the Age of Enlightenment, also brought many things to the Church’s table; for instance, the higher critical method, textual research and doctrinal understanding. As well, it has brought with it the assumption that we *can* know more than we do and we *should* work toward a better understanding of the scripture.

²¹ Edward Mote, “My Hope Is Built: The Solid Rock”, The Cyber Hymnal
<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/m/y/myhopeis.htm> (accessed December 10 2008).

ultimately has led the gospel away from the culture that so desperately is in need of a Savior. However, a postmodern would look at this hymn as a declaration of independence from a modernist structure of church and refocus upon that which really matters, a connection with Jesus.

“On Christ. . .”²² is the connection that postmoderns see as vital. Now, to be sure, the modern church always wanted a knowledge of Christ as a focus; however, they solved the dilemma of distance from Christ by doctrine and, at times, dogma. A postmodern will solve the dilemma of distance by relationship and experience. This is not to say that the Bible ceases to be authoritative. However, their assumptions of when the Bible becomes authoritative in the life of the believer is sometimes in opposition to a modernist mindset. Doug Pagitt states, “It seems to me that authority of the Scriptures comes after faith, and is not a precursor for it.”²³

Where the modern church sees *doctrine, directives* and *delineation*; the postmodern sees *connection, contextualization*, and *creativity*. This is GOOD NEWS for the church.

The Emerging Church

George Barna states, “Webster is aptly describing the transformation occurring in American spirituality today. Millions of devout followers of Jesus Christ are repudiating tepid systems and practices of the Christian faith and introducing a wholesale shift in how faith is understood, integrated, and influencing the world. Because human beings become what they believe, and practicing what they believe is the swiftest and surest means of

²² Ibid.

²³ Robert Webber, *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). Pg. 76.

generating lasting change, this revolution of faith is the most significant transition you or I will experience during our lifetime.”²⁴

Does this sound a bit exaggerated? Perhaps, but the ethos of what is happening in our culture is being reflected in our churches. A change in paradigm, a change in perceived authority always comes as a revolution.²⁵

McLaren, one of the first and most prolific writers in the emerging church culture, says: “More and more reflective Christian leaders are beginning to realize that for millions of young adults who dropped out of their churches in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Christian religion appears to be a failed religion.”²⁶ It is interesting to note that McLaren did not choose to use the word “faith,” but rather the word “religion.” This is purposeful in the emerging culture. While often religion is seen as a failed institution, the faith of Jesus Christ is still seen as vibrant, relevant, and a worthwhile pursuit. However, the statistics of those who feel as if they have to leave the institution of church is staggering. In his book *The Present Future*, Reggie McNeal quotes from David Barret, author the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, estimating that “There are about 112 million ‘churchless Christians’ worldwide, about 5 percent of all adherents, but he projects that number will double in the next twenty years!”²⁷

²⁴ Barna. Pg. 11.

²⁵ Phyllis Tickle, "General Session: Phyllis Tickle," in *National Youth Workers Convention* (Sacramento: Youth Specialties, 2008).

²⁶ McLaren, Pg. 33.

²⁷ Quoted in Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003). Pg. 5.

While these figures are indeed monumental, it does not sound the death knell for Christianity; rather, it denotes a shift. A repositioning. It is possible and probable that Christianity will not look the same 20 years from now as it did over the last few hundred years. This bold statement is made in the light of understanding that clearly there will be modern church structures for many years to come, as well.

That is also not to say the era of the church and denomination is over. But there is a shift in the effectiveness that these structures have on an emerging culture and generation. It should be stated that not all young people are postmodern in their approach to church and faith, and certainly, not all postmoderns are from a younger generation. The emerging church is not just a new style of the same old thing. It goes much deeper than the media used in a service or the style of music being played. These ideas stem from an attraction-based model of church growth, as opposed to a shift in the basic understanding of what it means to be church.²⁸

We have for too long defined the concept of church in one particular way. Neil Cole states: "The temptation is to define church according to our own experience."²⁹ This definition would certainly include the models of church that resonate with our upbringing, our culture, and our proclivities. However, the emerging church is seen as something that is a bit more amorphous than any definition. On the question of "what is church?" the answer becomes, "we are," which is nebulous -- but beautiful as well. In other words, every iteration of relationships under the influence of Christ become the church, and are valued as such.

²⁸ Sweet.

²⁹ Neil Cole, *Organic Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005). Pg. 49.

In addition, the concept of church structure is certainly changing. Cole, a proponent of what is called the “organic church,” which includes house churches as well as other expressions of community, says, “In our organic church movement we have come to understand church as this: the presence of Jesus among His people called out as a spiritual family to pursue His mission on this planet.”³⁰

The Emerging church culture is not one of homogeneity, but rather it is a culture that values diversity both in style, expression, theology, and change. In the book *The Relevant Church*³¹ the editors were interested in highlighting 15 faith communities that are contextualizing the message of the gospel into each one’s own particular setting. From SkateChurch³² to Mosaic³³ (a multi-cultural expression) and on, there are different flavors, styles and emphases recorded. This is just an example of what it means to be emerging. Diversity is valued, while the principles of Christ and Him crucified are continuing to be lifted up. Contextualization becomes the word in this case. Emerging church culture ceases to see the idea of franchising (in times past a better word would be Colonialism) as a viable model of church growth. What works in Gary, Indiana will not necessarily work in Riverside, California. While emerging culture certainly sees the global community, an emphasis on tribal expression is tantamount to the contextualization of the gospel.

³⁰ Ibid. Pg. 53

³¹ *The Relevant Church: A Vision for Communities of Faith*, ed. Mike Bickle Jennifer Ashley, Mark Driscoll, Mike Howerton (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books, 2004).

³² <http://www.skatechurch.net/>

³³ <http://mosaic.org/>

The Missional Church

One cannot speak of the emerging church experience without using the term “*missional*.” For this paper’s purpose we will define “missional” using Frost and Hirsch’s expansion of the twelve hallmarks of a missional church as laid out by the Gospel and Our Culture Network.³⁴

- The missional church proclaims the gospel.
- The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.
- The Bible is normative in this church's life.
- The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.
- The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.
- A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.
- It is a community that practices reconciliation.
- Peoples within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.
- The church practices hospitality.
- Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.
- This community has a vital public witness.

These 12 are then expanded by Frost and Hirsch:³⁵

- a. The missional church is incarnational, not attractional, in its ecclesiology. It does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don't yet know him.
- b. The missional church is messianic, not dualistic, in its spirituality. Instead of seeing the world as divided between the sacred (religious) and profane (nonreligious), like Christ it sees the world and God's place in it as more

³⁴ M Frost and A Hirsch, "The Shaping of Things to Come," *Innovation and mission for the 21st-century church*. Peabody: Hendrickson (2003). Pg. 11.

³⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Pg. 12.

holistic and integrated.

- c. The missional church adopts an apostolic, rather than hierarchical, mode of leadership. It abandons the triangular hierarchies of the traditional church and embraces a biblical, flat-leadership community that unleashes the gifts of evangelism, apostleship, and prophecy, as well as pastoral and teaching gifts.

These 12 hallmarks, and especially their expansion, reflect many postmodern concepts and assumptions. And therein lies the tie between emerging church culture and postmodernism. In many ways, the concepts that are being espoused by the emerging church culture really take us back to an ancient mindset. The emerging church is not only looking forward, but also looking behind to take what is best of all the paradigms of Christianity. To this end, there will be different expressions of faith in any given community. This transcends culture, creed, and economic class. The emerging church is a church that has the ability to be fluid in its expression, yet at the same time be grounded in its foundations.

Epistemological Differences

As mentioned before, one of the strongest criticisms of the postmodern worldview, and by association the emerging church culture, is the lack of assent to absolute truth. Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen describes postmodernism as follows: "Postmodernism is, as I see it, first of all a very pointed rejection of all forms of epistemological foundationalism, as well as of its ubiquitous, accompanying metanarratives that so readily claim to legitimize all our knowledge, judgements, decisions, and actions."³⁶ While this is certainly something that many of this mindset would agree with, it is not

³⁶ Van Huyssteen. Pg. 2.

entirely true in an Emerging Christian context. One of the things that the era of enlightenment seemed to lose was the concept of “relational truth.” When the paradigm shifted from the medieval age to the age of Enlightenment, it was books, rather than relationships, that became the rule of authority. This created a vacuum in the relational model of transference of truth.³⁷ A modern mindset, informed by scientific thought and reason, would suggest that there is a body of knowledge somewhere that holds all the truth of mankind. Science will, at some point, answer all the questions we have, and therefore the pursuit of pure knowledge will lead to understanding.

“I believe there is no philosophical high-road in science, with epistemological signposts. No, we are in a jungle and find our way by trial and error, building our road behind us as we proceed.”³⁸ Max Born (1882-1970) German Physicist. Nobel Prize, 1954.

This attitude of not only scientists but of those seeking knowledge as it pertains to faith, created the idea that understanding the subject of truth is as important as a relationship with the truth itself. Dr. Sweet says it well in an interview with George Fox University’s Tamara Cissna:

“There is all too much panic over that word ‘relative.’ I believe in absolute truth (which I believe, by the way, is Jesus the Christ, the way, the truth, the life — notice here that absolute truth is not abstract truth, but incarnate truth). The notion that there are no absolutes is self-defeating and self-contradictory. Not all truth is

³⁷ Leonard I. Sweet, *Dmin 517 Class Notes*. (Newberg, Oregon: George Fox Evangelical Seminary 2008). Dr. Sweet maintains that an understanding of the effect of Guttenberg’s press had on the idea of truth is tantamount to understanding what an emerging church is searching for in an understanding of relational truth.

³⁸ Max Born, *My Life: Recollections of a Nobel Laureate*. (London: Taylor & Francis, 1978). Pg. 89.

absolute. Some truth is relative — to a person, to a culture, to a historical period. What brings together absolute truth and relative truth is relational truth.”³⁹

If we could break down the argument to the simplest of terms, this author would phrase it this way: Moderns found truth in *deductive* ways: lists, proof-texts and arguments. Postmoderns find truth *inductively*: through relationships, lives that exhibit the truth that others say is true. As well, the relationship becomes the vehicle for which truth is transferred and accepted.

There is vitality in relational truth that leads to what many call absolute truth. There is a living, breathing dynamism created in relationships that truly can bring about a transformational assent and change in one's life. The question worth asking, and one that a postmodern-emerging Christian will ask, is this; if truth doesn't transform, is it really truth at all? Truth lived and breathed becomes the *pneuma*, the Spirit of Christ in our lives. This is the kind of truth sought from a postmodern point of view. The dry bones of doctrine only move when the Spirit of Truth is breathed once again into the vessels that hold on to truth. In other words, doctrine is only living in a living soul. Doctrine on a page stays on the page, whether it is right or wrong.

³⁹ Tamara Cissna, "God Sent a Person, Not a Proposition: A Conversation with Len Sweet," *George Fox Journal* Volume 1, no. 3 (2005).

DIRECTING THE CONVERSATION

In order to work toward preemptive understanding the communities involved must have a desire for conversation that is both direct and directed. In one sense, the conversation must be authentic and without factional agenda; in another sense, it must be cared for and have a goal in mind in order to reach the preemptive understanding that has been previously defined. One of the things that can bring on the early stages of conversation between modern and postmodern communities is the use of language that can easily be construed as divisive. For instance, the use of the term *congregation* can be seen as a threat to the larger church body, as they see another congregation as essentially another tribe. Even the word *tribe*, as often used by postmoderns in relationship to their specific group, is seen as a threat to the congregational status of the larger church. There have been times when statements such as “we are concerned about two congregations growing under our roof” have been used. This language becomes divisive without explanation. A postmodern interpretation of the above statement would be very positive; especially in relation to the ideas of “micro-communities,” “specific-context”, and even “diversity,” while a modern member might see the growth of two congregations as a threat to the strength of the current congregational population.

This is just one example that shows there is a very different take on what has often been taken for granted in the linguistic rubric of church people. Other words such as outreach¹, evangelism², missions³, and missional⁴ take on vastly different meanings within the two contexts.

¹ Outreach is defined by this author as the concern a church has for its immediate community and the activities that allow congregants/members to interact with their community.

Not Just a Drum Set

Too often, the differences that exist between these two communities are seen as a differentiation in worship styles. The thought that if we just “make a seeker-sensitive” worship, or if we “use media in a more effective way” we will accomplish the goals of attracting new “Postmodern People” is quite simply short-sighted. This presupposes that style is the most important thing for a postmodern or for any community. This is simply not the case. While stylistic interpretation is important, and certainly relevant to the discussion, to dumb the argument down to a discussion of taste is to oversimplify a worldview, its presuppositions, and to vastly underestimate the validity of a global shift in thinking about and experiencing God and his kingdom. As well, it speaks of an ecclesiology which views the corporate worship as the priority in the expression of the body of Christ.

To guide a conversation toward understanding, there are a few categories that should be considered by both communities. The categories used are: *Scripture and Experience, Worship and Beauty, Authenticity and Transparency*. These categories are values that are held by both communities in regard to church life, worship expression, theological and philosophical understanding of scripture and doctrine, and relational

² Evangelism is defined by this author as the transference of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

³ Missions is defined by this author as short and long-term mission opportunities that take the members/congregants outside of their local sphere of influence and into a broader world experience.

⁴The following definition of the missional church is provided by Alan Hirsch, probably the foremost author on the missional movement: “So a working definition of missional church is that it is a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the Church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true Church. The Church itself is not only a product of that mission, but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. To obstruct this is to block God’s purposes in and through his people.” Frost and Hirsch, “The Shaping of Things to Come.” Pg. 11.

priority. While not an exhaustive list, they will give a reference point from which to begin to discuss the content of each of these values. Within each of these headings you will find a vast array of sub-issues that can also be addressed.

Scripture and Experience

At the heart of any Christian community is the interaction between the biblical authority and experience in the lives of the adherents. How one views scripture, its authority, and the hermeneutic that one takes into the relationship they have with scripture is paramount to understanding the place doctrine and reason play in the life of that community. Pascal identified this divergence of reason and experience, or, for our purposes, the interplay between scripture and experience as such:

“Thus we are left with a conflict of modes of understanding –Those who are accustomed to judge by feeling do not understand the process of reasoning, for they would understand at first sight and are not used to seek for principles. And others, on the contrary, who are accustomed to reason from principles, do not at all understand matters of feeling, seeking principles and being unable to see at a glance.”⁵

The above quote speaks to the current dilemma that many moderns and postmoderns face. There is a perceived shift of authority. It is an existential shift from an emphasis on biblical doctrine, to an emphasis on experience. Phyllis Tickle comments on the shift to Orthonomy: “Orthonomy may be defined then as a kind of ‘correct harmoniousness’ or beauty. In effect, when it is used as here, it means the employment of aesthetic or harmonic purity as a tool for discerning the truth—and therefore the intent and authority—of anything, be that thing either doctrine or practice. Thus it is very

⁵ Blaise, Pascal. *Pensees*. Translated by W. F. Trotter: Kessinger Publishing, 1660, 2004.

common to find that many emergent Christians are genuinely confused and befuddled by Reformation Protestants' constant wrestling with modernist questions of historicity. An emergent, in observing heated debates or impassioned conversations about the factualness of the Virgin birth, for example, can truly be puzzled. For him or her, the whole 'problem' is just not 'there' in any distinguishable or real sense. For the emergent, as he or she will be quick to say, the Virgin birth is so beautiful that it has to be true, whether it happened or not."⁶ In the wake of this transition, many feel a widening gap between what was and what will be when it comes to scripture. Gone seem to be the days of a wholesale acceptance of the modern hermeneutic.⁷

However, this does not mean there is no place for scripture. Nor does it mean experience has replaced the study of scripture entirely and there is simply a free-for-all interpretation of the biblical authority. What this means is that regardless of the interpretation or doctrinal assumption related to how we view scripture, there is an experiential component, which is, perhaps, the Ginger Rogers to scriptures' Fred Astaire. Both are dancing together. Both are important for the beauty to be there. Both are necessary for the authority to be maintained. While Fred Astaire danced with a myriad of women, he and Ginger Rogers will always be the duo that is remembered. This is because, as Katherine Hepburn is quoted as saying, "He gives her class, and she gives him sex."⁸ While perhaps neither of these things are needed when it comes to scripture, the idea that there is a "Yin and Yang" to scripture and experience is important. "Changed lives are an

⁶ Tickle, *The Great Emergence : How Christianity Is Changing and Why*. Pg. 149

⁷ The modern hermeneutic being things such as: The historical critical method, a cry for sola scriptura, and the search for the historical Jesus.

⁸ A Croce, *The Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers Book* (Vintage Books, 1977). Pg. 42.

experiential evidence of our theology, of our views of God. If our faith can't be borne out in experience, how would we be able to call it real at all?"⁹ While this quote is taken from a discussion of the Wesleyan Quadrangle,¹⁰ it is important to note that we seem to be heading in a direction where the ideas of an interplay between scripture and experience is much more of a "Both/And" situation than an "Either/Or."

The postmodern fear of becoming, as Leonard Sweet would say, "Dry Crackers,"¹¹ creates a desire for an experiential bedfellow to a modernist's interaction with scripture. And at times, they may seem as if they are strange bedfellows. A purely intellectual relationship with the scriptural authority denies the relational aspect of truth to reality. It is one thing to say we believe that God is good; it is another to experience His goodness. In the same way, you may say that Christians are to love beyond the second mile¹², but if that love is not experienced by the postmodern, the scriptural authority is lost on them. Quoting scripture without an experience of that scriptural principle is not only a lost cause, but also a fool's errand in a postmodern world. It undermines the very inductive nature of a postmodern's access to scriptural truth.

So, for a postmodern, would it be efficacious to simply do away with scripture and have only experience? As the Apostle Paul would say: "Certainly Not!" The reason

⁹ Daniel G. Sinclair, "The Wesleyan Quadrangle IV - Scripture and Experience" <http://www.wholereason.com/2008/10/the-wesleyan-quadrangle-iv---scripture-and-experience.html> (accessed May 19 2009).

¹⁰ The Wesleyan Quadrangle includes the following four areas: Scripture, Experience, Reason, Tradition. For the purposes of this paper, this author has moved Scripture and experience next to one another; when usually commented on the order is Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience.

¹¹ Taken from a discussion online during an LEC7 chat session. April 2009.

¹² Matthew 5:40-42 (Jesus)"And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

for this answer is simply that it is one thing to have a religious experience, while it is something entirely different to interpret that spiritual experience. The scriptures, in this respect, become a guide path to understanding our relationships, experiences, and even suffering as we seek to bridge the gap of relationship to our heavenly father and his son. The scriptures become an architecture by which we interpret our experience of faith. It could be said that, "Experience without doctrine (scripture) leads to heresy, Doctrine (scripture) without experience leads to Pharisee."¹³

There is a place for both scripture and experience. To varying degrees they will be held up as equals, or as one subservient to the other. However, it seems we are moving away from the days when the clarion call of "Sola Scriptura, Scriptura Sola" will be the only call of the protestant, postmodern church. While this is a strong assertion, it does not nullify the place or position of scripture. It could be seen as an invitation to introduce scripture into the whole realm of our experience, rather than just into an academic or devotional study.

The challenge in the future will be to create awareness that scriptural authority is evident in our lives. This is perhaps no different than the challenge from the inception of the canon, the call to integrate scripture into the lives of believers so that their lives look, feel, and act differently than the lives of those who don't know Christ. The call is not to use scripture as a hammer for behavior modification, but to use scripture to catapult the experience of God in the lives of the believers to an undeniable change and joy. In turn, this compelling nature that is created within us--this love of others and joy for the life God has given us--is what compels others, postmoderns in particular, to seek out what believers have and how they received it. Relationships become the access point to the

¹³ Sinclair.

authority of Scripture. Further, the believer's life, attitude, propensity to joy and longsuffering, along with the presence of the Holy Spirit become the catalyst for an ascension of the authority of scripture to the experience of God.

This is the scripture and experience playing in the lives of the people of God. Never do we see one without the other, but always one informing the other. A life that has cleaved the two apart is as one who's left hemisphere of the brain has been severed from the right.

The postmodern propensity to relativism and reluctance to accept one supreme authority is convinced by the practicalities of the life of the believer. This is, perhaps, the access point. However, to continue the journey with the new believer is important as we can help to build a mature faith that does not stand on the example of your life, but is a living and breathing relationship with God that is informed or interpreted by the scriptural authority. This helps grow the new believer to a stronger relationship with scripture, so as to when they see the believer's shortcomings, (i.e. Sin) they are not lost from faith. But rather, they begin to understand the journey that a walk with God entails. Both the hills and the valleys of a believer's life are interpreted through the eyes of scripture.

Worship and Beauty

"I long to see the imagination released from its prison and given its proper place among the sons of the new creation. What I am trying to describe here is the sacred gift of seeing, the ability to peer beyond the veil and gaze with astonished wonder upon the beauties and mysteries of things holy and eternal."¹⁴

Worship begins with the ability to recognize the gift given from God and formulate

¹⁴ Tozer, A. W. *Born after Midnight* The Best of A. W. Tozer: Book One, Edited by Warren W. Wiersbe. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1978. Pg. 51

a response of gratitude for it. That response takes many different shapes and forms. According to Romans 12:1¹⁵, our whole lives are the act of worship God's gift to us warrants. And thus begins the relationship between how we view the gift of God and how we respond to it.

The difference found between the modern and postmodern expression of worship is not simply a matter of style. Often, this is the understanding, even for the postmodern organizer of worship. However, worship as life assumes that worship is not a place and time, but a continual conversation with God. Postmodern worship gatherings are as vast and varied as there are churches, to be sure. And not all contemporary or progressive worship services have a postmodern ethos.

So what is the postmodern ethos of worship? In a nutshell, if it is possible to hold it therein, it would be: Authenticity, Beauty, Creativity and Context.

Authenticity

Authenticity is a word that has been over-used almost to the point of no longer retaining its meaning. However, within the context of worship it remains a watchword for the postmodern worldview. In keeping with the postmodern value of self-awareness, they approach God in humility and reality. This, at times, smacks of the casual, as opposed to the more formal approach taken by and large by the modern worship experience. Songs sound at times melancholy and speak to the reality of doubt and suffering.

Chris Picco, worship leader, Re:Live Ministry in Loma Linda, California, illustrates this postmodern ethos and tendency toward authenticity in the following lyrics:

“We look for home, in a world that's worn/ And we wait for You

¹⁵ Romans 12: 1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.” (New International Version)

Time goes by, no sound or sign/ And we wait for You

Chorus: Shine Down/Light of this World/Shine Down

The time has come/The earth as one/Is calling out to You

Bridge: When the shadows come/We call on You/When the shadows come/We reach for you.”¹⁶

This is an example of a truly postmodern hymn. It speaks of wanting and not receiving. In this way, it is hopeful as the complaint is continually seeking an answer. To not sing the complaint is to have given up hope

Beauty

If *authenticity* is the watchword of postmodern worship, then *beauty* is its brass ring. This is something that is sought not only in music, but also in environment (as seen from casual, couch and candlelight expressions) to larger, more technologically advanced expressions of worship. Graphic design has begun to play a larger and larger role in the life of the church’s worship expression. (Although some might see this as a marketing tool, it is an extension of authentic expression and the search for beauty).¹⁷

Len Sweet has made the case for an EPIC¹⁸ experience that catches the elemental value system of the postmodern search for God. Beauty in worship connects with particularly the Image-Driven mode of experience. But there is more; there is an understanding that the aesthetics of the worship environment matter. In 2005 it was stated,

¹⁶Chris Picco, "Shine Down," (Loma Linda: 2009).

¹⁷ It is not uncommon to have more digital artists (Graphic Designers) in the community than what would be called “regular” or “analog” artists (Painters/Sculptors).

¹⁸ E.P.I.C.: Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, Connective.
Leonard Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2007). Pg. 12.

“Churches are looking more like office buildings and malls are looking more like churches, complete with vaulted ceilings, icons (paintings) on their walls and towers, and many with carillon bells.”¹⁹ This is, perhaps, a holdover from a modern ethic of reason over experience. The postmodern is rediscovering the use of image (icons, if you will) within the worship service. The power of image is not lost on those who have grown up with an abundance of images to reflect on in the secular world, but with a vast desert of genuine expression of beauty within their spiritual context.

Creativity

Use of *creativity* is not something that has been completely lost in our churches, but for the postmodern, the use of creativity is not limited to approved norms that might have been acceptable within the modern context (Hymnody, Special Music, Corporate Readings, and sometimes Drama). For the postmodern, the sky is the limit, as they say. From video mash-ups, to new takes and arrangements of traditional hymns, to original dramatic presentations, to original music; the postmodern worship expression is bursting at the seams with creative expression and experimentation.

This is uncomfortable within the more modern context in that it is hard to control. “Art always fights the status quo.”²⁰ And within a church setting, this is seen all too often as unacceptable. The postmodern expression of worship seems to always be less liturgy based (unless a particular community wishes for that expression), and more creatively associated. This means that the postmodern expression of worship changes from here to

¹⁹ Fr. James L. Obermeyer, "Icons in the Postmodern Church" <http://www.ancient-future.net/pomoicons.html> (accessed January 2, 2011).

²⁰ David Dark, *Everyday Apocalypse : The Sacred Revealed in Radiohead, the Simpsons, and Other Pop Culture Icons* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2002). Pg. 75.

there, and from month to month in some places. There is very little that cannot be changed, and congregations demand that same-said change.²¹ While this is often seen as intimidating, it should be viewed as an opportunity for dynamism within the community's relationship with God. However, this means we cannot "doctrinalize" every aspect of the worship service. We must hold loosely to that which is sacred, at least in the bovine quality of its sacredness.

Contextualization

Worship needs to make sense to those in the pews or couches or chairs. If it does not, then you will lose the imagination of those seeking to worship together in any given situation. This is why a *contextualization* of the worship experience becomes important. To know your audience, their values, their elemental expectations from a worship experience, and even the place corporate worship has in the community is important to maintain a voice with those who choose your particular place of worship.

This is also the culmination of the first three sub-categories. For instance, why do we all sing, for the most part, the same songs? Walk into any progressive worship experience and by and large you will be singing songs written by just a few very popular worship artists. However, would it make more sense to create the music within the community if you had those who were gifted in such things? Or perhaps there is a greater connection to the art on the screens or on the walls if it was cultivated from those who have chosen this particular community to call home. Even video illustrations and dramatic readings can be made from a local context. This also plays into the postmodern

²¹ The demand for change is sometimes seen as sort of a "generational ADD". However, the desire for change coupled with the desire for excellence is where creativity can grow the kingdom of God in powerful ways. Many are tired of the way church was, and are searching for the way church can be. This is a dynamic expression of worship that seeks interplay with a God who is considerably involved in the lives of his people.

value on the local as opposed to the global experience. While this plays out in their lives by a rediscovering of local markets, growers, musicians and artists, the same should be said within their worship experience.

This often brings a fear of the loss of excellence within the worship service. But this is often seen from the pastor, who may well be stuck within a modern construct of church. What is authentic IS excellent, because it is a true expression of gratitude and love.

Transparency and Authenticity

Authenticity was mentioned before, but for much too brief a moment, and only within the discussion of worship. Now, to broaden the discussion, we need to have a working definition of authenticity, one that transcends both the world of art, psychology and theology. For this we will simply say that authenticity is not false or imitation.²² When one's feelings, interactions, and relationships are not based on what is something false, it becomes an authentic interaction or feeling. The transference of those feelings through honest interactions begets a transparency, or the reality that what is authentic can, and should, be known.

The role of authenticity probably plays out in the most prolific way from the postmodern pulpit. There is a sense of disgust for the dogmatism that marked many of the arguments of the modern pulpit. While passion is in no way undervalued, it takes more of the form of a personal and community narrative as opposed to proscription. There is more of a sense of "me and you" from the pulpit, as opposed to "me against you." It is best

²² R Diessner and others, "Engagement with Beauty: Appreciating Natural, Artistic, and Moral Beauty," *The Journal of Psychology* 142, no. 3 (2008). Pg. 303-332.

described as a shared journey, rather than a guided tour. The pulpit becomes a place to “share” instead of “tell.”

Some would argue that this creates a lost sense of authority in the pulpit. While this may be true in some respects, it would make sense to ask the question, what was the authority of the pulpit to begin with? The authority from the postmodern pulpit comes from one or both of two particular things: 1) an intimate relationship with Christ and His Word (scripture and experience); 2) an intimate knowledge of the congregation to which the pulpit speaks (authenticity and transparency). This has always been the working rubric from which authority was meted out of the pulpit. Postmoderns are often more willing to engage in a discussion with a pastor in that the way the scripture is presented is many times more humble, with a greater willingness to learn on the part of the preacher. As well, in maintaining a consistency with the idea of authenticity in their own lives, the postmodern preacher will interject personal interaction with the text or subject matter. This may have been seen as anathema in the modern age, but in the postmodern age it is not only appreciated, but also demanded. A postmodern preacher who values authenticity will also bring that which occupies his time and conversation to the pulpit.

This transparency and authenticity is also sought in the form of relationships within the community. Small groups often allow for such relationships. To get involved in the lives of others fulfills the calling of Christ to build community in order to “mutually encourage one another.”²³

The idea of “putting on airs” is lost on a postmodern worldview. Perhaps this is seen in the way they dress (everyday attire), and in the kind of sermons they enjoy

²³ Romans 1:12 “that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.” (New International Version)

hearing (everyday situations and ideas) and the type of language they use (it remains authentic in its earthiness and brashness) and in what they hold as sacred. (Often, the only thing they hold as sacred is the idea that nothing really is sacred)²⁴

All of this has implications for our interaction with the world, or more specifically, the way we choose to evangelize, or spread the good news of the gospel to the world. For this we will use the metaphor of a traveller in the world. It is fair to say that an American who backpacks around Europe becomes familiar with the culture in which he/she travels and spends his/her time. While the culture becomes comfortable and better known, it does not necessarily become “home” to the traveler. They may even speak the language, become comfortable to the point of fluency and familiarity, know where the “secret haunts” of the locals are, but that does not make them citizens.

In the same way we are called to walk in culture with authenticity, with contextualization, but not empty-handed. We have been given a gift we are mandated to share to the citizens of the other countries of the world.²⁵ To share this gift, we have to build relationships to the point where the gift is no longer held suspect.²⁶ As a continual “hobo” in the world we have been given, we make our home wherever we may roam. In this way, there is an understanding that while we are not of this world, we have been

²⁴ David Dark, *The Sacredness of Questioning Everything* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009). Pg. 36.

²⁵ Matthew 28:19, 20.

²⁶ While traveling in Israel, I happened upon a television show, much like candid camera, with a specifically Middle-Eastern twist: The host would walk down the street, pick a target, drop a briefcase in front of the target and then run like a wild banshee away from the case. You can imagine the response from the target. This is often the case in evangelism in its current state. However, the modern church structure often did not even allow for someone to walk down the street to meet the briefcase holder. Rather, their show would have been to drop the briefcase only to those who found themselves in the house of the host.

given a mandate to lay our head in this world in order to give respite to those who inhabit this place.

This authentic interaction with culture can be seen in the many different ways that postmodern communities are structured. While the modern church structure was varying degrees of the same, the postmodern expression of church is almost as varied as there are communities. From Shane Claiborne's "the simple way" community in Philadelphia²⁷ to Los Angeles' Mosaic²⁸, postmodern communities find value in increasing the tribe²⁹ through contextual worship, diverse expression, an emphasis on creativity, and a strong bias that leads them away from the inability to change and standard forms of liturgy. Although there are certainly some communities that find a renewed sense of connection to the ancient forms of worship³⁰, including the sacraments, there is no single worship expression, or expression of church that defines the postmodern churchgoer. In some ways, this diversity answers some of the questions brought up in Julia Duin's book "*Quitting Church*."³¹ She specifically speaks of the need of those leaving to find an authentic community; the postmodern expression of diverse community lends an opportunity for those who truly seek to find community in ways that they have perhaps not found before. Therefore, the need for these expressions of community is recognized. However, if these communities are connected to an established church and church culture,

²⁷ <http://www.thesimpleway.org/>

²⁸ <http://mosaic.org/>

²⁹ Godin, Seth. *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*. London: Penguin Books, 2008.

³⁰ Crouch, Andy, ed. "*Life after Modernity*". Edited by Leonard Sweet, *The Emerging Church Culture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. Pg. 92.

³¹ J Duin, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What to Do About It* (Baker Pub Group, 2009).

there can be the give and take of wisdom, dynamism, and dynamic unity that comes from a shared vision.

This all speaks to the interaction with secular culture in general. Rather than a shying away from what is seen as secular, there is a willingness to interact with the cultural artifacts that Christians have so often called anathema to their experience within the world. Moderns often see this as a compromise with culture, while for a postmodern, this connotes an understanding that culture is the sea in which we swim, and to acknowledge its proximity to the lives of the believer, and even to include an understanding of culture within the worship context, just makes sense. Rather than condemn culture, there is a use of that culture, and even a cultivation of culture, in order to make an impact on both postmodern believers and unbelievers alike.³²

³² A wonderful example of this is seen in the artists on the Asthmatic Kitty Music Label. With artists such as The Welcome Wagon and Sufjan Stevens, there is an element of faith that is being brought to the secular culture, with an astonishing amount of acceptance. <http://asthmatickitty.com/>

DYNAMIC UNITY

“The dynamic unity of theology...the unity of interdependent parts, each adjusting to changes in the others, and the whole developing as a result of such changes.”¹ This is a good definition in the context of community as well. Dynamic unity consists of interdependent parts, each constantly changing to the other’s needs. This is the dance spoken of and steps of the dance well taken through a process of preemptive understanding. Each change in one community commits the other to a response that continues the beauty of the relationship. Some changes create a break in the movement, others bring the community closer together. In this regard, the communication between the multiple communities becomes akin to dancing to the same song.

It is impossible to have dance partners listening to different music and maintain the dance. This is the respect for shared vision that is actually an agreement on which music to use for the dance. However, this is not a chorus line of dancers all dancing the same steps. Dynamic unity is an assent to dance together, as partners, this dance of community and relationship.

There are times this dance is hard; to dance through commensal, parasitic, and mutualistic models of symbiosis and keep humility in communication as well as respect for shared vision is no small feat. The reference to Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers is once again appropriate. In this metaphor, Fred is the host community, having the ability to lead the sub-community in the dance, but the sub-community is Ginger Rogers, doing

¹W. Ysaac, *Inculturation as Praxis and Method of Radical Solidarity with the People*, The Third World and Bernard Lonergan (Manila: Lonergan Centre, 1986). Pg. 42. As quoted in JSB Garcia Jr, "Lonergan on Interdisciplinarity in Theology," *Hapag: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Theological Research* 4, no. 1 (2008). Pg. 36.

all of the steps backward, in order to complete the dance. Both partners have roles that make the dance become beautiful. If one community slips and falls it is up to the partner to make adjustments in order for the dance to continue. This is hard enough between two well-trained dancers; to do this with two communities seems almost impossible.

But the thesis of this project is that the dance can be beneficial. Even more than beneficial, it can redefine what we believe church to be, how it functions, and the underlying conversations that bind us to one another. This binding is toward the goal of dynamic unity. More than one entity, coming together for common purpose, yet growing toward the goal in each their own identity and capacity as partners, holding hands through the dance. These are relationships that are intimate, trusting, communicative, progressive, and dynamic. These are relationships that are hard, and must be dealt with in intentional ways to maintain their health.

Dynamic unity also is the living, breathing paradox in which at the same time we work in harmony and disharmony, in convergence and divergence.² It is this paradox that creates the energy for both communities to grow, thrive, and seek a shared vision. Dynamic unity seeks its own journey, a journey of multiplicities, while seeking the same goal. It is the freedoms to have each community express its values and priorities, while at the same time agreeing to a commonality that binds them together. It is a tip of the hat to the mutual indwelling that accompanies a solid Trinitarian understanding of relationships, and allows that understanding to inform the most basic forms of relationships between the communities. Communication takes place in humility, the sharing of resources has the greater goals of both communities in mind, the shared vision is maintained and respected,

² J Mukarovsky, "Standard Language and Poetic Language," *A Prague School reader on esthetics, literary structure, and style* (1964). Pg. 4. While the language of harmony and disharmony are used in the idea of poetry for Mukarovsky, his definition of dynamic unity suits this project.

and the connections come from the opportunities to disciple and mentor one another. Both communities, deeply valuing the worship expression and identity of the other, seek to form relationships that transcend the corporate worship gatherings and meander into the homes, businesses, schools and lives of the membership of each group. Mentoring and reverse-mentoring become valued interactions that seek preemptive understanding for the many different steps each dance partner will have to make; it is the agreed upon choreography, so to speak, of the host-sub-community relationship.

To reach dynamic unity, and to maintain a mutualism within the relationship is not only possible, but also inevitable, when the appropriate steps and conversations take place. The burden of responsibility does not lie with one community over the other, but on both equally. As this shared burden is taken upon the shoulders of each community, the load becomes light, the burden a joy and the shared experience a testament to the Triune God.

The Mission of God as Dynamic Unity

The *Missio Dei*, or mission of God is the singular goal that all communities of Christian faith, particularly under the same umbrella, can connect to. To see the Gospel of Jesus Christ grow in this world, and to be a part of the kingdom of God is a priority of purpose that weaves a web around the communities that have previously been mentioned. It is this dot on the horizon that moves each community toward one another as two lines

reach that point on the picture. The journey to the horizon point is different, to be sure, but the commonality is priority over the differences expressed in each community.

This priority transcends local ecclesial vision and speaks to the very heart of what it means to be the bride of Christ. To engage in the mission of God, regardless of the origin of that engagement, is to fulfill what it means to be a Christian. A church can do this most effectively by creating an environment that allows for dynamic unity and preemptive understanding.

SECTION 4

THE ARTIFACT

UNDER THE SAME UMBRELLA: MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES, ONE CHURCH

Chapter 1. Tired of Change?

I've figured out that I can be gone from my house for 13 days. By the 14th I start to get annoyed. By the 16th I am frustrated. By the 21st day, all I can do is yearn for home. I believe this has less to do with my missing my family (although, of course, this plays an integral part), and more to do with being tired of change. I find this especially true when I am traveling for the majority of the time. I have been blessed with the opportunity to play music and speak all over the world. These whirlwind trips are always exciting, always blessings, and always a couple of days too long.

I realize that this probably makes me a poor "postmodern" pastor in some regards. But sometimes, the constant change is simply exhausting. I feel like I have, at times, seen 25 different countries from the inside of concert halls and buses. After awhile, every restaurant looks the same, every new venue becomes awash in the grey of the concrete, and the food tastes the same.

On these trips, the only constant seems to be that change is continually happening. Now, it's safe to say that if nothing is changing, you are probably dead, so I'm happy for the change. However, one can become fatigued. And when one is fatigued, it is possible to make poor decisions. It is possible to sleep through your flight, to sit at the wrong terminal and realize it at

the last second--as they call your name over the public address system—that now you have to run so as not to miss your flight. When you are exhausted, you can treat people poorly, misinterpret conversations, and just find yourself lost in the midst of a constantly moving world.

There is nothing wrong with fatigue. You just have to do something to pay back all of the effort you have been expending, or prepare for it in advance. I find when I have a more complete itinerary when I travel, I worry less and I become less fatigued. When I get off a plane and know the person who will meet me, or they are standing there with a sign with my name on it, my anxiety lessens and I enjoy the journey. When I am given a GPS in the car that has been rented for me, I worry less about the destination and can take in the new road to my destination. These make for a good trip.

In the broader context of the world in which we find ourselves making a living, raising families, and belonging to a local church community, change is quickly becoming the constant as well. It is easy for us to become fatigued with change, specifically within a local church context. Let's face it, churches have never really been called "early adopters,"¹ let alone "innovators" when it comes to their desire for change. Local church communities have historically struggled with the idea of change, not to mention their denominational counterparts.²

These are just a few of the titles, among literally thousands, that lead us to take a look at what is happening in the world today. There is a shift, a change in the way people view the world. Many have called this shift a swing from "Modernism" to "Postmodernism." To understand this

¹ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003). Rogers argues that only 2.5% of the population are innovators; then come the Early Adopters at 13.5%; followed by the Early Majority at 34%; followed by the Late Majority at the same percentage; (34%) and lastly, the Laggards at 16%. This creates a sort of bell curve if seen graphically.

² The idea that there are things that are changing is hardly a new idea. In the 1800's, many youth organizations spontaneously cropped up and became a vital expression of the church in that time period. They, as well, were met with reticence and even opposition. "The secretary for one national youth organization known as the Luther League Federation wrote in its secretarial record, "We look forward to the day when we have only the devil and not also our church fathers to fight." Strommen. Pg. 10.

shift, we need to take a look at the basic tenets of each of these worldviews in order to see how things truly are changing.

Is it True Things are Changing?

With the advent of books such as McLaren's *Everything Must Change*,³ *The Shaping of Things to Come*,⁴ *Generating Hope*,⁵ Kimball's *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*,⁶ Barna's *Revolution*,⁷ Tickle's *The Great Emergence*,⁸ and Sweet's *So Beautiful*,⁹ it is easy to see that a shift is coming, and perhaps, has come. Leonard Sweet uses the term "a tectonic shift"¹⁰ to connote what is currently happening in the cultural milieu in which we find ourselves, taking on the task, and risk, of ministry. Like a new toy, Christians find themselves trying to unpack a new paradigm to view the world, their congregations, their young people, and even their structures.

³ McLaren.

⁴ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*.

⁵ Long. Long printed a second edition of the book titled "*Emerging Hope*" in 2004.

⁶ Kimball.

⁷ "Because human beings become what they believe, and practicing what they believe is the swiftest and surest means of generating lasting change, this revolution of faith is the most significant transition you or I will experience during our lifetime." Barna.

⁸ Tickle, *The Great Emergence : How Christianity Is Changing and Why*.

⁹ Sweet, *So Beautiful : Divine Design for Life and the Church : Missional, Relational, Incarnational*.

¹⁰ Sweet, Leonard. 2008. *LEC7 Module 1 Lecture: Advance 1*. Portland, OR. Lecture Notes

But they can't quite find out how to get the toy out of the package.¹¹ They are reviewing the history of their denominations and local churches searching for clues on how to remain relevant to a changing greater culture. They are waving the banner that "everything truly must change," but yet they are often unable to make those necessary changes; in fact, they are often unable to understand even what changes need to be made. Whether well-read or just intuitive, pastors and lay-people everywhere are coming to the same conclusion: We can't simply just change the sound and sight of our worship service and continue to be relevant to a changing culture. As the culture shifts, so must the church, its assumptions, practices, and perhaps, even the language of its doctrine.

Modernity vs. Postmodernity

It is outside the scope of this work to spend a great deal of time discussing the history of certain philosophical assumptions. However, it is well to take some time to understand the use of certain terms, their background, and their application in a particular context. The term "*Postmodern*" or "*Postmodernity*" carries with it connotations that are often misunderstood within contemporary faith settings. Postmodernity is sometimes clearly seen as an attack on that which has "always" worked in our churches. While postmodernism does challenge many of the foundations of the modernity, and with it the modern church, it is more than a deconstructive tool

¹¹ As any father knows or will find out, toys these days are not as easy to figure out as they have been in the past. Just unwrapping them takes longer than our children stay interested. It seems that every time we think we are finished taking off the wrapping there is another strap that continues to adhere the toy to the package.

bent on destroying all that was sacred in our faith communities. As well, being a “Postmodern” is not something one chooses to be, rather it is something someone is.¹²

When did things change? While a study of history makes it hard to pinpoint exact moments of change and transition, a quick overview tells us that major cultural shifts have happened before; here is a brief explanation of some of the major paradigmatic shifts over the last 2000 or so years:

5. Ancient to Hellenistic/Roman (A.D. 300-600)
6. Medieval (A.D. 600-1500)
7. Enlightenment/Modern (A.D. 1500-2000)
8. Postmodern/Emerging (1968*-?)¹³

While postmodernism has become a keyword in the emerging church movement, it has its historical foundations in early 20th century philosophy (Hegel, 1770-1831, Toynbee, 1889-1975) and mid-century Theology and Epistemology. (Tillich, 1886-1965, Polanyi, 1881-1976)

Polanyi, in his monstrous tome *Personal Knowledge*¹⁴ speaks specifically about what we have come to know as the search for empirical evidence, rational thought, and the scientific

¹² Much like those maps in a shopping mall with a red dot and the words “you are here.” The only real answer to that is “Yes, I Am.” One is either postmodern in his or her experience and context or they are not. Anecdotally, a few months ago my mother asked me how she could be a “postmodern?” I laughed at the thought, and then realized where she was coming from and the confusion that had set in for her. A postmodern worldview simply is, much like looking at the world from a particular cultural mindset. We don’t have the opportunity to visit this understanding; it just is what we are and how we see things.

¹³ Long.

*This author disagrees on the idea of placing the shift from Modern to Postmodern at a year in the 20th century. Scholarship holds that much of the philosophical work that has become elemental in a postmodern worldview began much earlier than this. If this author were to revisit #4, he would put the timeline at around 1900 as to when these concepts were beginning to be discussed. However, as you can see with the other paradigmatic shifts, the transition in thought takes many decades if not centuries. An interesting question is what technology has done to a timeline of transition from one worldview to another.

¹⁴ Polanyi.

method. He establishes the idea that our interaction with that which we are observing creates a non-objective dichotomy that must be addressed by even the scientific community.

“It goes without saying that no one—scientists included—looks at the universe this way, whatever lip-service is given to ‘objectivity’. Nor should this surprise us. For, as human beings, we must inevitably see the universe from a centre (*sic*) lying within ourselves and speak about it in terms of a human language shaped by the exigencies of human intercourse. Any attempt rigorously to eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world must lead to absurdity.”¹⁵

What Polanyi was doing for postmodern thought in the area of science and empirical data assessment Tillich was doing in the field of religion. These two minds got together in 1963 and had a conversation pertinent to the emerging post-critical and post-modern conversation.¹⁶ While the referenced text is of little importance to many, I believe that to see these two thinkers agreeing on what can be known, and how it can be known is essential to our understanding of Postmodernism. In a nutshell, both Polanyi and Tillich were interested in how knowledge is assimilated internally, and what role that interior understanding plays in knowledge of anything. To put it plainly, you bring something to the table when it comes to understanding a theology, doctrine, science, or relationship, and that “something” influences your interpretation.¹⁷

We see these assumptions being played out in the postmodern experience by a lack of adherence to what one would call “absolute truth.” This understanding that a truth claim for one might not be a truth claim for another has been called “moral relativism,” and has been one of the greatest criticisms of a postmodern experience. While an argument can be made for this

This book is a culmination of his Gifford Lectures from 1951-1952 and has become a foundational work in the area of postmodernism. While a scientist, Polanyi understood the idea of personal interaction with that we are studying or seeking to understand, and in this way he was able to clearly establish the idea of Post-Critical thought.

¹⁵ Ibid. Pg 3.

¹⁶ Polanyi, ed.

¹⁷ Ibid. Pg. 17.

understanding, it is certainly an oversimplification of the many tenets of postmodernism. As well, keep in mind that postmodern thought does call into question the concepts of language as being a coherent vehicle for transference of understanding, the place personal experience has in an understanding of doctrine and faith, and the idea that propositional truth is something to be valued as it has been in the past.

Two Metaphors

If we were to build an illustration based around two metaphors, one for the modernist church experience and one for the postmodern church experience, we could call it “The Tale of the CEO and the Vineyard Owner.”

The CEO

The CEO is a bright and capable man. He has a tendency to work from a very rational point of view. What he understands, he understands well; this is because he has worked and reworked the basic business assumptions he learned in business school. He knows how they work, he knows what the board expects of him, he does it proficiently and he is by all standards successful. He has up-to-the-minute appraisals of the effectiveness of his teams, and when they go in a different direction he knows exactly what to do. His favorite phrase is “The Numbers Don’t Lie!” and he lives and dies by a good business plan. When a product needs to be changed, he brings in the best in the business to fix what needs fixing. He is on the top of his game and can out-plan, out-strategize, and out-work the competition.

However, his employees don't love him. They are in awe of his administrative prowess, but they don't feel like they have a relationship with him. They know what he wants and are more than willing to give it to him, but at times what he asks for is unreasonable. He has a very strong sense of how to do things, and if his employees vary much at all, they are reprimanded, and if need be, fired. However, they want to be part of a winning team. And this CEO has the answers, and at times, that is all they want, the right answers so they can go about their business in the right way. As long as the business plan is good, the employees will be productive and the business will prosper.

The Vineyard Owner

On the other hand, the vineyard owner doesn't see himself so much a businessman, though he is involved in business, as much as someone who partners with the soil to produce whatever has been planted. He has less of a plan and is more interested in preparing the soil. He understands that everyone who works for him has their own take on how their particular job should be done, and he allows for the freedom of those that work for him to express themselves. He also knows that time spent simply walking in the field is time well spent, and so there are days you will see him simply talking to his workers, strolling through the fields, checking on the frames they have put up for the vines.

He also knows that the product he will eventually sell will say less about him as a person and more about the conditions of the field that he was able to help create. And so his time is spent understanding the kind of soil, learning about the weather in the region, getting to know the

old farmers in town so he might glean their wisdom, and listening to the workers in his field. In this way, each worker collaborates and has something to add.

The owner likes to build the frames upon which the vines will grow. He understands the need for them to be solid, yet at the same time be able to move enough in order to handle the weight of the vine, regardless of which way it is to grow. He also knows that the relationship he has with the soil, the vine, the weather, and his workers is dynamic, and so he must be willing to hear other voices, to learn, and to move when it is necessary in order to bring a greater crop.

As you can see, there are some assumptions that on an elemental level are different in the two approaches to life, work, and faith. If we were to exegete these metaphors, we would see some of the following:

- **Moderns** place an emphasis on results, while **postmoderns** put an emphasis on process.
- **Moderns** place an emphasis on individuals; **postmoderns** put an emphasis on collaboration and community.
- **Moderns** seek answers; **postmoderns** rejoice in the questions, and in fact, are suspicious of answers.
- **Moderns** seek to franchise; **postmoderns** seek to contextualize.
- **Moderns** yearn for absolutes; **postmoderns** search for mystery.
- **Moderns** reject paradox and seek rational reasoning; **postmoderns** sing the paradox and seek power from connecting the two opposites.¹⁸
- **Moderns** make things out of ideas; **postmoderns** make ideas out of things.

¹⁸ Sweet, Leonard. 2008. *LEC7 Module 1 Lecture: Advance 1*. Portland, OR. Lecture Notes. Sweet uses the metaphor of a car battery and energy collected from connecting the positive and negative poles.

- **Moderns** often make huddles looking in; **postmoderns** are looking out from their huddles.¹⁹

Shifting Sand

While the above makes it sound as if modernism is an evil that has been around too long, this is not the case at all;²⁰ however, in an emerging culture, modernism is often seen as the enemy of expression, collaboration, creativity and freedom.

In 1834, Edward Mote went to write a hymn on the “gracious experience as a Christian.” As he was walking these words came to him:

*“On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”*²¹

To look at these lyrics in the context of the modern/postmodern discussion, a modernist would look at them with a strong agreement that all he/she has based their faith on is sinking, or “shifting,” perhaps, would be a better word. So many of those assumptions that made the “solid ground” of their faith are being questioned, or their answers are being disregarded.

However, for a postmodern, the assumptions that had been seen as leading to assurance also led to arrogance, exclusivity, and an “us-against-them” mentality that ultimately has led the gospel away from the culture that so desperately is in need of a Savior. However, a postmodern would look at this hymn as a declaration of independence from a modernist structure of church and refocus upon that which really matters, a connection with Jesus.

¹⁹ Ibid. Sweet also uses the metaphor of a football team to illustrate the differences in modern and postmodern experience of the Christian experience.

²⁰ Modernism, stemming from a cultural shift during the Age of Enlightenment, also brought many things to the Church’s table; for instance, the higher critical method, textual research and doctrinal understanding. As well, it has brought with it the assumption that we *can* know more than we do and we *should* work toward a better understanding of the scripture.

²¹ Mote.

“On Christ. . .”²² is the connection that postmoderns see as vital. Now, to be sure, the modern church always wanted a knowledge of Christ as a focus; however, they solved the dilemma of distance from Christ by doctrine and, at times, dogma. A postmodern will solve the dilemma of distance by relationship and experience. This is not to say that the Bible ceases to be authoritative. However, their assumptions of when the Bible becomes authoritative in the life of the believer is sometimes in opposition to a modernist mindset. Doug Pagitt states, “It seems to me that authority of the Scriptures comes after faith, and is not a precursor for it.”²³

Where the modern church sees *doctrine, directives* and *delineation*; the postmodern sees *connection, contextualization*, and *creativity*. This is GOOD NEWS for the church.

The Emerging Church

George Barna states, “Webster is aptly describing the transformation occurring in American spirituality today. Millions of devout followers of Jesus Christ are repudiating tepid systems and practices of the Christian faith and introducing a wholesale shift in how faith is understood, integrated, and influencing the world. Because human beings become what they believe, and practicing what they believe is the swiftest and surest means of generating lasting change, this revolution of faith is the most significant transition you or I will experience during our lifetime.”²⁴

²² Ibid.

²³ Webber. Pg. 76

²⁴ Barna. Pg. 11

Does this sound a bit exaggerated? Perhaps, but the ethos of what is happening in our culture is being reflected in our churches. A change in paradigm, a change in perceived authority always comes as a revolution.²⁵

McLaren, one of the first and most prolific writers in the emerging church culture, says: “More and more reflective Christian leaders are beginning to realize that for millions of young adults who dropped out of their churches in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Christian religion appears to be a failed religion.”²⁶ It is interesting to note that McLaren did not choose to use the word “faith,” but rather the word “religion.” This is purposeful in the emerging culture. While often religion is seen as a failed institution, the faith of Jesus Christ is still seen as vibrant, relevant, and a worthwhile pursuit. However, the statistics of those who feel as if they have to leave the institution of church is staggering. In his book *The Present Future*, Reggie McNeal quotes from David Barret, author the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, estimating that “There are about 112 million ‘churchless Christians’ worldwide, about 5 percent of all adherents, but he projects that number will double in the next twenty years!”²⁷

While these figures are indeed monumental, it does not sound the death knell for Christianity; rather, it denotes a shift. A repositioning. It is possible and probable that Christianity will not look the same 20 years from now as it did over the last few hundred years. This bold statement is made in the light of understanding that clearly there will be modern church structures for many years to come, as well.

²⁵ Tickle, "General Session: Phyllis Tickle."

²⁶ McLaren. Pg. 33

²⁷ Quoted in McNeal. Pg. 5.

That is also not to say the era of the church and denomination is over. But there is a shift in the effectiveness that these structures have on an emerging culture and generation. It should be stated that not all young people are postmodern in their approach to church and faith, and certainly, not all postmoderns are from a younger generation. The emerging church is not just a new style of the same old thing. It goes much deeper than the media used in a service or the style of music being played. These ideas stem from an attraction-based model of church growth, as opposed to a shift in the basic understanding of what it means to be church.²⁸

We have for too long defined the concept of church in one particular way. Neil Cole states: "The temptation is to define church according to our own experience."²⁹ This definition would certainly include the models of church that resonate with our upbringing, our culture, and our proclivities. However, the emerging church is seen as something that is a bit more amorphous than any definition. On the question of "what is church?" the answer becomes, "we are," which is nebulous -- but beautiful as well.

In addition, the concept of church structure is certainly changing. Cole, a proponent of what is called the "organic church," which includes house churches as well as other expressions of community, says, "In our organic church movement we have come to understand church as this: the presence of Jesus among His people called out as a spiritual family to pursue His mission on this planet."³⁰

The Emerging church culture is not one of homogeneity, but rather it is a culture that values diversity both in style, expression, theology, and change. In the book *The Relevant*

²⁸ Leonard I. Sweet, "So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church, 2009."

²⁹ Cole. Pg. 49

³⁰ Ibid. Pg. 53.

*Church*³¹ the editors were interested in highlighting 15 faith communities that are contextualizing the message of the gospel into each one's own particular setting. From SkateChurch to Mosaic (a Multi-cultural expression) and on, there are different flavors, styles and emphases recorded. This is just an example of what it means to be emerging. Diversity is valued, while the principles of Christ and Him crucified are continuing to be lifted up. Contextualization becomes the word in this case. Emerging church culture ceases to see the idea of franchising (in times past a better word would be Colonialism) as a viable model of church growth. What works in Gary, Indiana will not necessarily work in Riverside, California. While emerging culture certainly sees the global community, an emphasis on tribal expression is tantamount to the contextualization of the gospel.

The Missional Church

One cannot speak of the emerging church experience without using the term *Missional*. For this paper's purpose we will define "missional" using Frost and Hirsch's expansion of the twelve hallmarks of a missional church as layed out by the Gospel and Our Culture Network.³²

- The missional church proclaims the gospel.
- The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.

³¹ *The Relevant Church: A Vision for Communities of Faith.*

³² The Gospel and Our Culture Network (www.gocn.org) say, "The missional church represents God in the encounter between God and human culture." To this end they have created 12 hallmarks of a Missional Church.

- The Bible is normative in this church's life.
- The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.
- The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.
- A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.
- It is a community that practices reconciliation.
- Peoples within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.
- The church practices hospitality.
- Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.
- This community has a vital public witness.

These 12 are then expanded by Frost and Hirsch:³³

- d. The missional church is incarnational, not attractional, in its ecclesiology. It does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don't yet know him.
- e. The missional church is messianic, not dualistic, in its spirituality. Instead of seeing the world as divided between the sacred (religious) and profane (nonreligious), like Christ it sees the world and God's place in it as more holistic and integrated.
- f. The missional church adopts an apostolic, rather than hierarchical, mode of leadership. It abandons the triangular hierarchies of the traditional church and embraces a biblical, flat-leadership community that unleashes the gifts of evangelism, apostleship, and prophecy, as well as pastoral and teaching gifts.

These 12 hallmarks, and especially their expansion, reflect many postmodern concepts and assumptions. And therein lies the tie between emerging church culture and postmodernism. In many ways, the concepts that are being espoused by the emerging church culture really take us back to an ancient mindset. The emerging church is not only looking forward, but also looking behind to take what is best of all the paradigms of Christianity. To this end, there will be different expressions of faith in any given community. This transcends culture, creed, and

³³ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Pg. 12.

economic class. The emerging church is a church that has the ability to be fluid in its expression, yet at the same time be grounded in its foundations.

The Truth about Truth

As mentioned before, one of the strongest criticisms of the postmodern worldview, and by association the emerging church culture, is the lack of assent to absolute truth. While this is certainly something that many of this mindset would agree with, it is not entirely true in an Emerging Christian context. One of the things that the era of enlightenment seemed to lose was the concept of “relational truth.” When the paradigm shifted from the medieval age to the age of Enlightenment, it was books, rather than relationships, that became the rule of authority. This created a vacuum in the relational model of transference of truth.³⁴ A modern mindset, informed by scientific thought and reason, would suggest that there is a body of knowledge somewhere that holds all the truth of mankind. Science will, at some point, answer all the questions we have, and therefore the pursuit of pure knowledge will lead to understanding.

“I believe there is no philosophical high-road in science, with epistemological signposts. No, we are in a jungle and find our way by trial and error, building our road behind us as we proceed.”³⁵ Max Born (1882-1970) German Physicist. Nobel Prize, 1954.

This attitude of not only scientists but of those seeking knowledge as it pertains to faith, created the idea that understanding the subject of truth is as important as a relationship with the truth itself. Dr. Sweet says it well in an interview with George Fox University’s Tamara Cissna:

³⁴ Sweet, “*Dmin 517 Class Notes*.” Dr. Sweet maintains that an understanding of the effect of Guttenberg’s press had on the idea of truth is tantamount to understanding what an emerging church is searching for in an understanding of relational truth.

³⁵ Born.

“There is all too much panic over that word ‘relative.’ I believe in absolute truth (which I believe, by the way, is Jesus the Christ, the way, the truth, the life — notice here that absolute truth is not abstract truth, but incarnate truth). The notion that there are no absolutes is self-defeating and self-contradictory. Not all truth is absolute. Some truth is relative — to a person, to a culture, to a historical period. What brings together absolute truth and relative truth is relational truth.”³⁶

If we could break down the argument to the simplest of terms, this author would phrase it this way: Moderns found truth in *deductive* ways: lists, proof-texts and arguments. Postmoderns find truth *inductively*: through relationships, lives that exhibit the truth that others say are true. As well, the relationship becomes the vehicle for which truth is transferred and accepted.

There is vitality in relational truth that leads to what many call absolute truth. There is a living, breathing dynamism created in relationships that truly can bring about a transformational assent and change in one’s life. The question worth asking, and one that a postmodern-emerging Christian will ask, it is this; if truth doesn’t transform, is it really truth at all? Truth lived and breathed becomes the *pneuma*, the Spirit of Christ in our lives. This is the kind of truth sought from a postmodern point of view. The dry bones of doctrine only move when the Spirit of Truth is breathed once again into the vessels that hold on to truth. In other words, doctrine is only living in a living soul. Doctrine on a page stays on the page, whether it is right or wrong.

So What?

³⁶ Cissna.

There are clearly differences between both worldviews. To deny this would be foolish. To consider postmodernity as a passing fad could be dangerous. On the other hand, some have argued that we are rapidly passing through postmodernity and are moving toward the great unknowable. Perhaps this is true. Perhaps postmodernity is a quickly dying idea, one that won't stick. The problem, however, lies in the truth behind the statistics that the church in North America is dying. Shifting congregations, people moving from smaller churches to mega-churches does not mean a revival. People are leaving; not just young people, but people for whom the language of modernity does not ring true. Perhaps it's fatigue, perhaps it's a sense that mystery has been forgotten, perhaps it's just a different song that they sing. Whatever the reason, they are going.

These are the people that attend your church. They are brothers and sisters, uncles, cousins, aunts and parents and nieces and nephews. "They" are "us." And every time the church fails to respond, we allow a sheep to be lost on the journey.

I once had an angry phone call from a man; I can't give you his name as he never gave it to me. The phone call began abruptly, as if I had somehow interrupted him in mid-sentence, although he had called me. I had spoken at a worship conference the day before for a particularly conservative denomination. This man was angry about what I had said. He asked me if I "cared at all" for the people in the church? I've had these calls before, and I am not easily pulled into an argument. The sum total of his argument was that I would change the church so radically that I would run out those who didn't like what I had to say about worship style and genre. (I found this interesting in that we had created a worship experience based around nothing but hymns). After listening for a few minutes, I had enough. I don't usually do this, but I engaged. My associate who works in my office was soon looking at me with a look of bewilderment in his

eyes. I went after this anonymous caller. I asked him whether he cared about those “outside” the church? I reminded him that every time he refused to engage those who might not be comfortable in the church he was comfortable in, he was not fulfilling the great commission that he had been called to. I tried to get him to see the exclusivity of his stance.

It didn’t work. He ended the phone call with the wildest of threats: “I’ll **pray** for you!” I told him I hoped he would, and I would certainly be praying for him as well. To date, I can’t imagine we were praying for the same thing!

This conversation bothered me on a philosophical level. I was philosophically annoyed by this interaction. What annoyed me was this: we were not speaking the same language, we were not attending the same seminar, and we did not see the world and even God in any of the same ways. There was no commonality, other than the cultural expression of our faith through denomination affiliation. I hung up the phone annoyed, but even more so, saddened. It wasn’t just him who was unwilling to learn a new language. Postmoderns have a responsibility to engage the structures of church in new and less condemning ways. Postmodernity is often defined by what it is not, but as it matures, it needs to find out what it is. In finding out what it stands for, we will understand those of us who walk away, and what it is we need to stay engaged in community.

Perhaps asking all of us to sit in one room, to worship the same, and to LIKE it, is too much to ask. But scripture compels us to be in community with one another.³⁷ We need to engage in productive conversation that will keep us in community, rather than divide us into silos that never communicate. We need to keep our churches vital and dynamic, yet unified in mission and vision, even if the expression of both of those things is varied from one community to the

³⁷ Romans 1:12.

next. We need to meet under the umbrella, and seek the warmth of close community walking in the same direction. We must be willing to guide our conversations through mentor and reverse mentoring relationships, discipling connections, and a strong of dynamic unity.

The time has come to stop walking away and to engage in the hard conversations, the hard relationships, and the hard ways of being a church. If it were easy, there would be no real need for this book. But because of the difficulty, and because there have been very few who have made commitments to stay under the umbrella, there is little in the way of guidance and direction. This book seeks to solve these issues. At its best, it may illuminate a path not yet seen or taken. At its worst, it will help each community to really understand why they can't stay together.

Blessings on the journey.

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Chapter 2

The Water Where We Swim

As differing worldviews are becoming better defined, (modern, post-modern, etc.) we see these philosophical underpinnings becoming part of the fabric of the communities and generations who resonate with their sounding call. In church, this is no different. We have missional communities, postmodern communities, emerging communities, and even mega-church communities. All of these communities express themselves with different language, different priorities, and different values. The differences between them are staggering; and we have not and will not enter into a conversation that would address worship styles, national and cultural issues, or language differences. We are, as usual, swimming in rushing waters.

While this is perhaps not a new phenomenon, certainly there has been change before;¹ change that has meant significant shifts to the church global, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the church local. The local church has often borne the brunt of burgeoning change, and often times not knowing why. It is foolish, and perhaps dangerous; to think the larger worldview issues will not visit themselves in very practical ways on the local church. These issues not only visit the local church, but they have come home to roost², if we might borrow an ornithological term.

¹ “The Right Reverend Mark Dyer, and Anglican bishop known for his wit as well as his wisdom, famously observes from time to time that the only way to understand what is currently happening to us as twenty-first century Christians in North America is first to understand that about every five hundred years, the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale.” Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence : How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008). Pg 17.

While Tickle uses this bit of humor to illustrate a point, the point is well taken. We are once again in the midst of one of these “rummage sales” that was spoken of. We are transitioning from a modern to a post-modern era. As well, we are moving from a Christian to a post-Christian culture in North America. If European contemporary church history can tell us anything, it is that there is life after church. What it can’t tell us, categorically, is whether or not this is a good thing.

² Richard A. Spears, *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs* (Chicago: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

In the midst of this change, the local church finds itself in the precarious position of trying to navigate through uncharted waters. While it is beneficial to understand how to steer a boat (philosophical understanding), it is perhaps just as important to know how to steer a boat in the particular waters you find yourself (practical application). Local context, relationships, church personality, staffing, and even age demographic can wreak havoc on all the best philosophical assumptions. In fact, these assumptions are, at times, the very things that create friction in the first place.

Beyond what is previously mentioned, to add that there are often times when these communities find themselves under one *Ekklesia*, or under one umbrella. These two, or more at times, different communities trying to sort out the philosophical implications of their world views' in the same local context can be a recipe for disaster. Bonds that once were strong are often loosed, families torn apart, and relationships strained. The toll that it takes on leadership can be hard, if not downright harsh; and the local church can be broken in the wake of this friction. Churches can be burnt down, at least metaphorically.

So the journey toward thriving ecclesiastical communities, specifically those who are housed under one umbrella, begins with asking the question of "What is Church?" it will be from this question that the rest of this work will flow.

Brick Buildings?

Oddly enough, these are my first memories of church. The buildings. My father, being a religion professor at a Christian University, had the opportunity to go speak often. When we went, I would remember the buildings. I suppose, it's because I assumed that is what the church was made of. Bricks and mortar; stone and wood. And why not? The wisdom of the day spoke

consistently of going to church, of being at church, and of leaving church. Why wouldn't a young person growing up in the church believe that the church was the building?

But the church, or the bride of Christ³, at its most elemental has not been about the buildings. Acts 2 gives us the earliest iteration of church:

“**42** They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”⁴

Clearly, the focus is not on buildings, but on the fellowship of believers. Of course, in today's Christianity, these fellowships happen in and around church facilities. It need not go unnoticed that the buildings are resources and assets to the church communities that hold them. However, one of the calls of the emerging church is to “be” the Church, as opposed to “going” to church.⁵ Perhaps this is simply semantics as opposed to earlier iterations of this call to God's people, but the language is resonating in today's postmodern world.

Is it possible that the reason why this language is singing such a resonate tone for those who find themselves drawn to a postmodern expression of faith, in all its vast and myriad expressions, is because this idea of the church being about the people is foreign to the language of church many of us were exposed to growing up? To ask, “how did we miss this?” is to ask a

³ Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:24; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:1-2

⁴ *The Holy Bible : New International Version, Containing the Old and the New Testament*, Reference and red letter ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978).

⁵ Jonathan Dodson, "Stop Going to Church", Boundless.org <http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0002157.cfm> (accessed December 5 2010).

question of changing worldviews, changing language, and perhaps, even changing ecclesiological ideas.⁶ What are the precipitating ideas that lead us to this discussion?

Is it possible, particularly among mainline denominations, that the local expression of the body of Christ (i.e. The church local) has had to play a role secondary to their overarching denominational umbrellas?⁷ And if that is the case, what has this done to a local ecclesiology? Perhaps these questions seem out of line for the thesis of this book, (Multiple Communities, One Church) but speaking towards a current mindset of what it means to be the church is paramount to a discussion of how those concepts are expressed in a local church context.

These ideas play themselves out on a local level in the way that leadership deals with its laity, in the way that laity is involved in ministry, and in the way a local church sees its mission in and to the world. There are also questions of mission, vision, ownership and responsibility. Beyond those questions, are the questions of integration, discipleship, and communication. But these questions flow from particular understandings of the ecclesiological presuppositions that every local context must have. These questions transcend denominational churches, non-denominational churches, and even home groups as they seek to grow for the kingdom of God.

⁶ The idea that there are things that are changing is hardly a new idea. In the 1800's, many youth organizations spontaneously cropped up and became a vital expression of the church in that time period. They, as well, were met with reticence and even opposition. "The secretary for one national youth organization known as the Luther League Federation wrote in its secretarial record, "We look forward to the day when we have only the devil and not also our church fathers to fight." Merton P. Strommen, *The Innovative Church : Seven Steps to Positive Change in Your Congregation* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1997). Pg. 10.

⁷ Scott Thumma, "What God Makes Free Is Free Indeed: Nondenominational Church Identity and Its Networks of Support. ", Hartford Institute for Religion Research http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html (accessed December 6, 2010).

Global or Local?

According to the Hartford Institute for Religious Research, there are 217 denominations as of 2006 in the United States.¹ It is beyond the scope of this book to try and breakdown each denominational statistic of adherents or to delve into each of their specific cultures and ecclesiological ideas. However, it is safe to say that denominational churches far outnumber non-denominational churches.² This makes the ecclesiological question, as it relates to denominations, very interesting. To explain, let me speak from my own context. I have grown up in a global denomination. Our identity has traditionally been connected to our denomination, as opposed to being a member of a local church.

This gives voice to a local ecclesiology that truly is secondary in nature to the more global identity that my denomination espouses. The tithing structure of this denomination follows this line of thought in that 100% of the local church tithe is drawn up to the higher echelons of administration. This has an incredible effect on the ability of the local church to actually connect with its' perceived *missio dei*. The denomination, however, often seeks to define that mission for the local church. One of the strongest arguments within this particular faith tradition for a strong denominational identity, beyond that of perceived "truth," is the idea that you might walk into any denominational church on any given weekend and experience the same sort of expression you have become comfortable with in your home church. But, of course, this has never been the case. This relatively small denomination, with membership of around 16 million, has the majority of its members in a vast and varied array of countries around the world.

¹ "How Many Denominations Are There in the U.S.?", Hartford Institute for Religious Research http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#denom (accessed December 6, 2010).

² "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Affiliations", The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life <http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations> (accessed December 6, 2010). According to this website, Nondenominational churches in the Evangelical Tradition make up approximately 3.4% of the 26.3% overall amount of Evangelical Protestant Church Affiliations in the U.S.

Therefore, there are a myriad of ways in which the faith is expressed locally around the world, and even around a neighborhood.

However, this diversity among unity is often underplayed, and the idea of conformity in worship and expression of faith is, at times, valued above local expression and connectedness. This creates people of a faith, even a global faith, that do not have to have a real connection to the local congregations where they worship; or even a desire to connect with a local congregation.

Perhaps one of the problems is that the connections to a denomination are not through relationships; they are through assent to doctrine. This view of church inclusion has its roots in modern thought, which holds reason above all else as a marker of entry and welcome into the community.³ In this respect, there is a sense of “no time-ness and no place-ness”--to poorly coin a phrase--toward the idea of denominational identity. In other words, our identities as believing and belonging Christians do not stem from a geographical location and a local community, but rather an intellectual assent to doctrinal statements that exist outside of time and space.

There are both positives and negatives to this sort of Christian identity. To belong to a global Christian community is breathtaking in its scope. To have brothers and sisters across the globe with whom there is a common Christian culture and background is not only comforting, but it is also a powerful testament to a system of beliefs that holds sway in the lives of its adherents. It would not be too strong a statement to say that those who are involved in a global church community, as opposed to only a local church community, have an identity that transcends a good or bad local experience of church. In this way, it is possible for one to be

³Richard Rice, *Ministryhealing : Toward a Theology of Wholeness and Witness* (Loma Linda, Calif.: Loma Linda University Press, 2006).

turned off by a church, but not wholesale throw out the global community and culture of a denomination.

On the other hand, too much emphasis on the global community of a denomination can create a sense of disregard for a local expression of faith, as it holds a second seat to the larger denominational identity. This means that it is possible to belong to a church, and never build relationships within the local context that become deep and sustaining and abiding. To be sure, much of this depends on the person who is attending a local church; so it is important to accede that this variable exists.

Nondenominationalism

Nondenominational churches have a very different sort of worldview. While as far as leadership decisions go, the sky is the limit; but they often lack a long tradition and a sense of connectedness to a wider body. At this point, local leadership takes on a vastly different meaning in that the responsibility for the local expression to be all things to its' congregation grows exponentially. As well, there is, in some situations, a great deal of "cult of personality" placed upon a charismatic and dynamic pastor. This may make for an exciting expression of worship and a clear communication of the priorities of the community, but if there is a change in leadership and a vastly different direction chosen there can be a great deal of upheaval.⁴

⁴ "The role of the senior pastor seems to be a key indicator in the effectiveness of the churches in their growth. Six out of ten churches (62 percent) are still led by their founding pastor." John N. Vaughan, "America's 100 Largest Churches: Attendance Now Begins at 8,000", Church Growth Today <http://hubpages.com/hub/ChurchGrowthToday> (accessed December 26 2010).

This statistic is interesting in that we don't know, by and large, how the transition from the founding pastors will work in this kind of Mega-church congregation. We have anecdotal evidence that points to a poor transition, (Laura Goodstein, "Dispute over Succession Clouds Megachurch", New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/us/24cathedral.html> (accessed December 26, 2010). But this not the only situation we can look to in this regard. This will be an interesting phenomena to watch in the years and decades to follow.

In a nondenominational setting, there may be a lack of choice within the local church as far as worship expression or worldview understanding goes. This can create a very homogenous congregation and a myopathy of vision. Another pitfall of a stand-alone church is the power that a congregation holds over its pastor. Founding pastors notwithstanding, there are a number of stories of pastors who have been asked to leave, with very little in the way of procedure, due to a felt disconnectedness, regardless of the truth of the accusation. A denominational structure often mediates these types of situations.

The Local/Corporate Expression of Christ

Regardless of the realm that a local church falls into, be it denominational or nondenominational, the local church is the corporate manifestation of Christ to its immediate community. "According the Bible, a congregation is the body of Christ, with Characteristics both human and divine."⁵ This comes with a great deal of responsibility. And if this is true, that the church represents a corporate expression of Christ into its community; it would make sense to try and find a way for it to be in harmony with itself in all of its' expressions of worship, be them modern, postmodern, or what have you.

This, perhaps, can be spoken of in the some of the same terms in which we speak of a God who is in relationship with Himself. The Trinitarian nature of God should be, at least in part, a model of how a local community can thrive with multiple communities under one umbrella.⁶

"The 'I Am' invites us to participate in the community of disciples and thereby to enter into relationship with him and be constituted his people. This relational God is the Triune One. He is the Father who desires that we enjoy fellowship with him, the Son in whose fellowship

⁵ Strommen.Pg. 14.

⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994). Pg. 17.

with the Father who desires that we enjoy fellowship with him, the Son in whose fellowship with the father we are called to share, and the Holy Spirit who as the bond of the divine fellowship brings us into participation in that relationship.”⁷

To be the expression of the triune God, is to be seeking healthy, yet varied relationships, and that within the corporate setting or the body of Christ; in other words, the church local. In fact, this assent to understanding this principle is so pervasive that the theologian Volf claims: “Today, the thesis that ecclesial [church] communion should correspond to trinitarian communion enjoys the status of an almost self-evident proposition.”⁸ Volf would argue that there is a correspondence between trinitarian communion and the church’s communion (ecclesial).⁹ Out of this leads to two ideas:

(1) There is a continual back and forth between unity and multiple expressions of God, each needing each other.

(2) Human (ecclesial) community must rise to the heights of God’s selfless love.

Volf states that the first idea is “so vague that no one cares to dispute it,” while the second idea is “so divine that no one can live it.”¹⁰ These comments lead us to an understanding that as the corporate, local expression of Christ in the world today, the church local must exhibit some of this selfless love and understanding of the dynamic nature of the relationships held therein.

⁷ Ibid. Pg. 87.

⁸ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Pg. 191.

⁹ Roderick T. Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns and Explorations* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008). Pg. 129.

¹⁰ Volf.

Niebuhr exercised this same desire for a Trinitarian emphasis by what he called a “greater ecumenical service than is currently observed.”¹¹ In other words, the local church needs to express a desire to see the trinity in its full expression. While written almost 70 years ago, this quote is true today as well. While there has been a resurgence in Trinitarian thought, much of which can be credited to the work of Moltmann in works such as *The Trinity and the Kingdom*,¹² the application of such Trinitarian thought is often underutilized in the local setting in practical ways. This work seeks to create a practical discussion and application of a Trinitarian understanding to the local church setting. This can be seen in the way that relationships between multiple communities in the same church might be in both healthy and beneficial relationships. These relationships should both exhibit the need for a dynamic unity and multiple expressions of the aforementioned selfless love.

To have these relationships is no easy task, at best; and a veritable land mine of trouble at worst. Add to these dynamics another expression of worship, or another community based on differing principles and worldview’s and you have a volcano ready to erupt. Quickly, we see the assent to Volfs’ two points being ground under the machinery and ego of the local church political hierarchy, of unhealthy relationships, and of a lack of design to the conversations.

A Community of Persons

The trinity is often expressed as a community of persons, who find their true being in relationships. “The notion of the Trinity is based on the self-revelation of a God who is at heart relational, not a bare unity, or an isolated monarch. A monarchial notion of the deity encourages

¹¹ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Theology, History, and Culture: Major Unpublished Writings*, ed. William Stacy Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946). Pg. 62.

¹² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom : The Doctrine of God*, 1st U.S. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

the idea that relationship is secondary to God: a Trinitarian concept asserts relationship as fundamental to the divine. Furthermore, to speak of the interrelationship of the persons of the Trinity as the key to understanding the divine is to establish personal interrelationship as the foundation of God's interaction with the world.”¹³

This idea of relationship being moved to the priority of Trinitarian thought, and more so, to the forefront of theological thought, is par for the course in a postmodern understanding of scripture, of the character of God, and of the nature of the Church. Thinkers such as Leonard Sweet, and his apple/orange metaphor of studying scripture, as well as his MRI church metaphor;¹⁴ Grenz and his work in *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*;¹⁵ N.T. Wright’s work in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Acts-First Corinthians*;¹⁶ among many other authors, have the courage to deal with the idea of a relational God and how this concept interacts and informs the postmodern search for God. Far beyond being a novel approach, it owes its foundations to Niebuhr,¹⁷ Barth,¹⁸ and Moltmann.¹⁹

God, being a God who at the very core His nature is relational, becomes a type of model for communities seeking to express this Trinitarians within their communities. The idea of giving selflessly to one another, sacrificing and sustaining the goals of each other’s ministry, and finding a way to thrive in dynamic unity becomes sacrosanct to the local church community. With these values at the forefront of our understanding of God, the community must be molded around these pillars in order to truly express the nature of God in a local ecclesial context.

¹³ Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Faith, Feminism, and the Christ* (Kitchener: Fortress Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Leonard I. Sweet, *So Beautiful : Divine Design for Life and the Church : Missional, Relational, Incarnational*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

¹⁵ Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self : A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, Matrix of Christian Theology [1] (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Abingdon Press., *The New Interpreter’s Bible : Acts-First Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

¹⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York,: The Macmillan Company, 1941).

¹⁸ K Barth, GW Bromiley, and TF Torrance, *Church Dogmatics* (Burns & Oates, 2004).

¹⁹ Moltmann.

This is much easier said than done.

The Aftermath

The streets are littered with the bones of ministries that have fallen prey to a misunderstanding of this type of dynamic unity among multiple entities. Much of this is due to unhealthy relationships, jealous ecclesiology,²⁰ a misunderstanding or lack of shared vision,²¹ strong-yet-isolated leadership,²² accusations of leeching from the larger body,²³ or simply a desire to be their own corporate expression of Christ in a local setting.²⁴ These are just a few of the many pitfalls that multiple communities seeking to thrive under one umbrella might experience. The list might go on and on, and much of this is due to the personality of those in leadership, the core values and mission of the church, and a desire to keep what is valued traditionally within the community. Change will always evoke a response, even if that change is from the inside.

I can remember when we were expecting our first child. While my wife had read all the necessary books for giving birth, nothing could have prepared her for what would really happen inside of her body. While the changes were for a wonderful and God-given reason, they were changes nonetheless, and not necessarily comfortable. The end result was a wonderful baby girl, Hannah, who continues to be a joy for our family, we look back at the time of transformation and understand that while it was necessary, it was hard, it was frightening at times, and it was new. We did have an underlying philosophical basis from which to start, however; the idea that to

²⁰ See Chapter 3.

²¹ See Chapter 7.

²² See Chapter 5.

²³ See Chapter 6.

²⁴ See Chapter 3.

have a child was ultimately a good thing, and that it expressed our desire to be in the image of God, as co-creators of life in this world.

The Trinitarian nature of God gives us this philosophical and theological basis from which to look at the idea of multiple communities/expressions in the same church. It is a starting point from which all discussion can derive. Holding up the two principles of *dynamic unity* and *selfless love*, we begin to look at all of the necessary components for a thriving, multiple community expression of a local church. While there is no roadmap for these situations, as every church has its own personality, leadership principle, and vision; there is a great deal that can be said to forward the conversation. It is often found that churches get into these relationships unknowingly, and find themselves treading water, not knowing the way to find the shore. It is a natural occurrence, but one that might be avoided, or a way found to better navigate these waters.

From here we need to take a look at what we are NOT speaking about.

NOT Multi-Site

“Among Protestant churches in the United States: Well over 1,500 churches are already multi-site. One out of three churches say it is thinking about developing a new service in a new location. Seven out of the country’s ten fastest-growing churches offer worship in multiple locations, as do nine of the ten largest churches.”²⁵

This seems like a great many churches have opted to go for a multi-site solution to the problem of growing communities. And to be sure, this option has been quite successful in a limited sort of way. But if we were to take a closer look and realize that the number of *churches*

²⁵ Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution : Being One Church-- in Many Locations*, The Leadership Network Innovation Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006). Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 186.

that meet each week in just the 100-499 in attendance range is close to 105,000.²⁶ This is not even to mention the same study that puts the churches with an average attendance 7-99 at 177,000.²⁷ In the grand scheme of things, there are a very *few* churches that are experiencing this kind of revolution. While it may be the wave of the future, most churches are leaps and bounds from being close to going back to the future.

This work does not deal with multi-site options. Rather, it deals with multiple communities living under one umbrella. In this author's estimation, this is a much greater need that has been significantly ignored up to the present time. It is possible that there was simply no need to speak of multiple communities that are housed in one church because these communities have always been seen as subordinate to the larger community. Or perhaps, these secondary communities were seen as stopgaps until those in attendance were "grown-up" enough to take their place in the pew of the main sanctuary. However, there is a trend, in regard to this thought that might be troubling to those not ready for change.²⁸

NOT Church Plants

One of the other iterations that might seem to parallel multiple community churches (MCC) are those groups that are brought up to be sent into the world. From inception, these churches are primed for planting their community in other soil. These communities are based on a very different set of philosophical assumptions, and therefore, do not fit the mold of MC churches.

²⁶ ""What's the Size of U.S. Churches?", Harford Institute for Religious Research
http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#numcong (accessed December 7 2010).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See Following Chapters.

The idea of being a “sending” church has often been connected to a church that sends missionaries.²⁹ However, for our purposes, we will define a “sending” church as a church God “created to give birth to other churches.”³⁰ In this view, churches that have the express agenda to “daughter” other churches do not fit the mold for this work. These churches grow specifically to send, rather than to try and find some sort of integrative strategy and relationship. This creates a vastly different presupposition from which to grow relationships. There is no need for integration, but there maintains a need for mentoring and support. The relationship between the two communities may remain much more parent/child in focus in order to get the growth church off on their own. This has its own pitfalls, to be sure, but they are not the same pitfalls we seek to deal with in this work.

In some ways, this church is let off the hook as far as finding a need to integrate both communities into the reality of one church body. They are allowed to thrive separately, and as the finances become more and more separate, and a stronger and more dynamic identity is recognized, there are less and less reasons to integrate leadership, congregations, and vision. In fact, it is specifically for this differing vision, albeit worship styles, demographic needs, or mission, that the daughter church is grown and sent.

We will be dealing with communities that are home grown and meant to stay to help nourish the body that is already present in the local church. While to some, church planters included, this seems easier than going and starting a new group, this is actually incredibly difficult to grow and integrate into the new structure.

²⁹ MacDonald Gordon, "The Sending Church", InterVarsity/Urbana.org <http://www.urbana.org/articles/the-sending-church-urbana-81> (accessed December 7 2010).

³⁰ J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Publishing, 2001).

Not Small Groups

Small groups, cell groups, life groups, discipleship groups; all of these are NOT what we are talking about. Small groups are an integral part of any faith community³¹, or that is at least what our guilt tells us! The communities for which we undertake this work are those that have gone beyond small groups, even if that was their inception, and have moved into the realm of communities. Depending on the size of the larger church this can be a group of 20-600 or beyond. It is really a question of percentages, rather than being tied to a particular number.

For instance, in a church of 100 (we will use this number for easy reference), a group of 10 people will probably not tax the church's resources in a significant way; the use of space will be limited, and can take place even off campus. However, if a sub-group in a church of 100 grows to be 25-30 in attendance, it has a dramatically different feel. Their need for resources, be those resources space, finances, or pastoral care, increases exponentially. There are many variables that should be acknowledged as well; the physical plant of the building is important, the amount of giving by the church, the status of its pastoral staff, (vocational, bi-vocational, etc.) the consistency of the congregation in attendance, as well as many other considerations. All of these variables adjust the breaking point for a group to be seen as a viable³² sub-group within the church community.

Small groups do not meet these criteria of viability, nor is their purpose one of growth. Small groups are often built for the life of the church and for a growth in faith maturity, study,

³¹ A Google search for the phrase "small groups are an integral part" elicited almost 9 million hits. While small groups are not in any way the focus of the paper, it is anecdotally noted that while every church I have ever worked for and every pastor that I have spoken with would love to have small groups working better, or at all, within their church. Is it possible that small groups that are effective and do more good than harm are really the exception to the rule as opposed to the rule by which we all hang our guilt?

³² Viability will be taken on in a later chapter. However, viability of a sub-community within a church is not to be confused with the sustainability the group expresses outside of the community relationship with the larger church. It is possible that a viable sub-group within a church is not viable, either financially or ecclesiologically, outside of the larger church body, but *is* viable for its own identity within the larger church.

and overall health of the local church body. These are achieved to various degrees depending on the relevance of curriculum, the connection of members, and the overall attitude the local church has toward small groups.

For our purposes, we are trying to identify groups that go beyond the small group model and move into areas of community. It would behoove us at this point to take some time to identify what it is that we ARE talking about.

4 Criteria for Viability

Now that we have spent time talking about what we are NOT talking about, we need to define and identify specific criteria to use in order to target the kind of communities that we would like to engage. At this point, we have discovered that we are not talking about multi-site churches, churches with the express goal of daughtering groups to become other churches, and small group iterations of community. While all of these are vital to the overall growth of the church in North America (the geographic location to which this work is defined), they do not fit into the discussion we have before at present. They are all iterations of communities and churches that are meeting the needs of those who would be part of the community of Christ in its global scale.

Criteria #1.

For multiple communities to thrive together, there must be a *viable host community* to begin with. Therefore, the first criterion for a viable sub-group is the existence of a viable host-church for which it can grow under. This may seem obvious, but we should state it so as not to confuse the conversation. As well, if the host-church/community is barely surviving on its own, there will very possibly be little in the way of resources or vision, beyond simple survival. I refer

back to my high school training and recall our discussion on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.³³ A church that is floundering will need to make sure that it has its physiological needs³⁴ first met. Translate this understanding to a church context; let's say that physiological needs (air, water, food, sleep) are translated into things such as; A meeting place, funds to hire leadership, consistency in worship, and sustainability of community (or, will people walk back through the door next week?). These needs must first be met in order to begin to think of a larger picture of mission within the church.

As these needs are met, the community is better able to assess its' needs and its' ability to support the caring for those needs. Often, it is clear that one of the needs is an approach to ministry that takes into account new ways of being a church, new ways of worshipping, and having multiple community identities within its' congregation. As it seeks to be able to support these ministries/communities, the church can actually become healthier due to the influx of people. However, there needs to be a baseline of health and stability in order for the sub-community to be supported in a way that will help them to thrive and co-exist on the same church campus.

Criteria #2.

Critical Mass. "The critical mass is the smallest amount of fissile material needed for a sustained nuclear chain reaction."³⁵ This is the formal definition; but in today's vernacular, critical mass could be said to be the amount of which gets any particular ball rolling. For our purposes, this is less of a number and more of a feeling in a room. It is extremely difficult to put a number

³³ Abraham Maslow, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" http://www.abraham-maslow.com/m_motivation/Hierarchy_of_Needs.asp (accessed December 10 2010).

³⁴ Appendix A--Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Translated.

³⁵ "Critical Mass", Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_mass (accessed December 20 2010).

on a group of motivated individuals. As well, there are a great deal of variables which must be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not a group is moved toward community.

Things such as:

- **Size.** This is *size relative to the viable host community*.³⁶ 10 may not be critical mass where the local church is actually 300 in attendance; but a group of 30, in that same church can get some real traction when it comes to growth, vision and ownership.
- **Leadership.** Often, it is the leadership of a group that has a vision for community. Driven leadership is one of the crucial criteria for a group to move into the realm of community. As leadership see's the potential for growth, for kingdom involvement, and for the opportunity to find a particular identity, so goes the group.
- **Support.** Critical mass is not simply those who are inside the community, but it also speaks of those who are outside the community but are supportive of the endeavor. The host community has to be supportive in philosophy, in understanding the need for the future-community, and have a desire to see the local expression of the kingdom of God grow under their roof.

Criteria #3

Worship Expression. At some point along the way, there needs to be an understanding that the future-community will need its own expression of worship from which to see their guiding principles spoken. Many communities begin this way, as they already have a critical mass of people willing to take on this challenge; while others seek to grow a community so as to

³⁶ The author hesitates to come up with any type of formula that might be seen as a rubric from which to begin a process of multiple community growth within a church. This idea of viability from numbers is so varied it is possible that the same number may be at very different realities when it comes to identity within a larger church. Because of the dynamic nature of the three identified variables (Size, Leadership, Support) it does little good to focus on numbers. There will always need to be a combination of the three, that the community, both large and small, recognize are in place before the conversation might begin in earnest.

eventually have a worship expression that will meet their needs. Either way, the need for corporate worship stands as important, and at times, paramount to creating a different identity to that of the host-church.

“Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living, whereas tradition is the living faith of the dead.”³⁷ Often, on the fields of the music wars lie the broken and wounded of the church. These situations are often the skirmishes, which help define the battle. As these sub-communities seek for a valid form of worship expression that is both relevant to their experience and also honors the church in which they find themselves, we find tension bubbling under the surface. As we seek to find preemptive understanding, the acknowledgment of the importance of worship expression must be recognized. While answers take a long time to discover, the importance of the conversation should not be denied.

Criteria #4

Space. When discussing these criteria with others, this was the one area often questioned. It seemed, to some, to be too simple to really put it into the equation. How could something as simple as an extra room really have such an effect on the growth of a group within a church? In answer to this question is the following quote: “Space is the most fundamental barrier we all face--and the easiest to overlook.”³⁸ To not give people space, at least within this context, is to tell them they don’t exist. Perhaps that is too strong, but at least the point is made. When a church does not make room for one of its ministries, outreaches, or communities, it is making the statement that they don’t rate in anyone’s estimation enough to be considered “space-worthy.”

³⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Vindicating the Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).Pg. 65

³⁸ Nelson Searcy, "How to Identify and Break through the Top Five Church Growth Barriers, No Matter What Your Size", Outreach Magazine http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Top_Five_Church_Growth_Barriers/ (accessed December 20 2010).

If you have ever worked in a church, you know that space is one of the most often sought after commodities that a church has. The battles that have been fought along these lines are often epic in nature. Often, to create a space for a new community is a hard-fought battle that leaves many scars. If a group is thinking of growing, or is growing without guidance, it is possible that the host church may not have thought of all the implications of a thriving and growing community underneath its roof, but not necessarily in the sanctuary.

Symbiosis

In the quest for models from which to shape a design for multiple community churches, it would seem that a model from biology might take precedent. **Symbiosis**³⁹ is essentially the “association between two organisms.” The reader would have come in contact with this biological concept from the earliest forms of education. For our purposes, we will take a look at four different symbiotic relationships and show how they are expressed within the local church body. While this is not a research in biology, there will be but a cursory explanation of the different relationships.

Commensalism

This term, first used by PJ van Beneden in 1876,⁴⁰ indicates a relationship between organisms (in our case, communities) in which one of the parties’ benefits, but the other is essentially unchanged. A good example of this would be silverfish and army ants. The silverfish raids with the ants and share their prey. The ants, however, are neither harmed by the presence of

³⁹ “Symbiosis is an association between two or more different species of organisms. The association may be permanent, the organisms never being separated, or it may be long lasting.” Surindar Paracer and Vernon Ahmadjian, *Symbiosis : An Introduction to Biological Associations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Pg. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Pg. 6.

the silverfish, nor are they benefitted. This relationship benefits one of the parties, but does not hinder nor harm the other organism involved.

A commensal relationship is a *baseline* for what might be seen as a healthy relationship between two communities that are housed in one church setting. The hope being that the smaller group is allowed to grow, and even thrive, but has very little effect on the host-community at all. Many churches begin their multiple communities with this as the vision for ministry. There is no thought to integration, much like the army ants to the silverfish. By and large, you rarely see the army ants and the silverfish slowing their work to get to know one another. Rather, the ants continue and the silverfish is just an observer, who can, at times, benefit from the process of the ants' life.

The word *baseline* is used for this relationship in our setting simply because there might be seen a successful relationship if nothing changes in the host-community and the sub-community is allowed to thrive and to grow. And while this may seem like a perfectly fine answer to the question of growth, it does very little to build toward an integrative model of church sustenance and life. This model ignores the ideas and mandates of integration⁴¹, discipleship⁴², and dynamic unity.⁴³

To simply have a community thrive, on its own, in a church with multiple communities does not truly build for the kingdom of God. Rather, it creates the "silo effect," to borrow a marketing term.⁴⁴ To translate the silo effect into more common words for this discipline, it would be safe to say that ministries belonging to the same church that do not have the same

⁴¹ Acts 2:42-47.

⁴² Matthew 28:19, 20.

⁴³ John 17:21-22.

⁴⁴ "In marketing terminology, the silo effect occurs when a lack of communication or coordination of efforts between or within business units, departments, teams, etc. has a negative impact on overall performance in terms of meeting goals." Susan Gunelius, "Branding and the Silo Effect", Corporate Eye <http://www.corporate-eye.com/blog/2008/07/branding-and-the-silo-effect/> (accessed December 23 2010).

goals, vision, and mission, will tend to work independently of one another. This creates friction. As well, this does not create the kind of corporate identity for the community that will sustain healthy relationships. As ministries thrive essentially independent of one another, the respect for any established shared vision, whether spoken or implied, falls by the wayside. In a commensal relationship, while one community benefits, that same community; its leaders, congregants, and volunteers, establish an identity that at times appreciates the host-community, but can quickly grow to resent them as well.

This resentment stems from the perception that they need a host-community at all. As the silo community grows and becomes more viable as an entity that has grown beyond the original local church setting, it is easy for their leadership to see the grass being greener if they could simply be in charge of their own domain. To leave the host community becomes the goal at this point. The problem, herein, lies with relationship not being one of equals. This relationship is built upon commensal grounds, and therefore, if the sub-community leaves the host, it will suffer the ill-effects of no longer having the host community to support and sustain it. It may survive for a time, it might even survive in perpetuity, but not without its injuries.

The converse, while not necessarily being as ill affected (that is, the host-community) is still cognizant of the split. Unlike the ants and the silverfish, these communities do recognize the other's presence. In fact, beyond the army ants and the silverfish, these two communities cannot go their separate ways without considerable loss and the commensurate scarring that accompanies a split.

As well, it is perhaps fair to note that the lack of affect the sub-group has on the host-community speaks of the host-communities inability to see integration as a value among its church. This, in and of itself, is a significant issue. If a host church is so self-focused that a group

starting in its' midst does not take considerable time, care, and resources in order to have it thrive, is not really a host-church at all, but rather, a landlord. The landlord/tenant relationship is greatly out of the scope of what this work is targeting and defining as a healthy relationship in churches that seek to have multiple communities.

*Parasitism*⁴⁵

“You had no right to be born; for you make no use of life. Instead of living for, in, and with yourself, as a reasonable being ought, you seek only to fasten your feebleness on some other person's strength.”⁴⁶

The above is perhaps a dramatic definition of what a parasite is, but going beyond the clinical is at times both relevant and eye-opening. When it comes to dealing with communities and their relationships, we should not forget that there is a human aspect, a more personal tone that must be taken. With that in mind, however, it is important to understand a more clinical definition of what parasitism is.

“An organism living in or on another living organism, obtaining from it part or all of its organic nutrient, and commonly exhibiting some degree of adaptive structural modification - such an organism that causes some degree of real damage to its host.”⁴⁷

Finding a place for parasitism within the context of symbiotic relationships is often tricky. Due to the micro-predatory nature of some organisms, those of which have more than one host, they can be found in many different classifications. However, for the purposes of this paper, we will look at a parasitical community which has been brought up under the auspices of

⁴⁵ Albert O. Bush, *Parasitism: The Diversity and Ecology of Animal Parasites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Everyman's Library (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1991). This phrase was from the novelist Eliza Reed to her sister, Georgiana.

⁴⁷ Bush. Pg. 6.

one host-community. Parasites visit harm on their host, and do so to varying degree's. There are truly communities that are parasites. However, this nomenclature is often one that is attached to a community, not because of their parasitical nature, but because their was no plan to integrate the two communities, or at least no plan to truly communicate.⁴⁸

As stated above, the parasite/host relationships express itself by the harm that it causes the host, in our case, the host community. The difference between the ecclesial and biological world is the choice a community has to be a parasite or not. In biology, if you are born a Strangler fig⁴⁹, you will eventually be deposited on the site of the tree where you will grow and gain sustenance. As you grow, your shoots will surround and eventually either strangle, or shade the host tree. To strangle the tree like it is in a straightjacket is not a choice, but the act of living for a strangler fig.

However, for a community within a church, there is always a choice of whether or not to be a parasite. But this choice goes both ways. It depends on both the host-community and the sub-community to decide on the type of relationship it will be. Questions of finances, integration,

⁴⁸The idea of "preemptive understanding" is simply the name put to the idea of learning to discuss forward. To take a look at previous models, both anecdotal and statistic, and see what these communities *should* be talking about. As the conversation is formed intentionally, the goal is for the areas of friction to be mined for solutions. While this may seem like wasted time, when a situation arrives which has already been discussed, there is at least a familiarity with the subject matter and, hopefully, a solution. Of course, this is not a new or novel idea. People have been having discussions on what *might* happen among different disciplines and businesses since the dawn of recorded time. However, in the contemporary Christian church, there seems to be a reticence to speak proactively in this regard. Because of this reticence, many communities and churches that might have found ways in which to thrive together, rather, found ways to destroy one another. This is what is hoped can be thwarted through a process of forward thinking discussions, through realistic consultation, and through a desire to build for the kingdom of God.

⁴⁹In their native tropical habitats, many figs are called "stranglers." Seeds germinate high on the moist branches of rain forest trees, sending numerous aerial roots to the ground. The sticky seeds are dispersed by a variety of fruit-eating birds and bats. Like botanical boa constrictors the serpentine roots gradually wrap around the host's limbs and trunk, crushing the bark and constricting vital phloem and cambial layers. The network of roots, resembling a tangle of writhing snakes, also fuse together (anastomose) forming a massive woody envelope or "straightjacket" encircling the host. Expansion of the host trunk as it grows in girth may accentuate the death grip and subsequent girdling process. Eventually the host tree dies of strangulation and shading, and the strangler fig stands in its place. In many cases the host tree may actually succumb from shading and root competition rather than strangulation. When strangler figs start in the ground, as in cultivation, their trunks develop from the ground upward like other "conventional" trees.

I.J. Condit, *Ficus: The Exotic Species* (Berkely: University of California Division of Agricultural Sciences, 1969).

space and resources, and even leadership personalities will bring many variables to the table. But without a process seeking preemptive understanding, there are many opportunities for misunderstanding. Often, without a process to help guide growth, the sub-community can be seen as taking and taking from the host, without ever giving back. While this may or may not be true, perception becomes reality.

Mutualism

Mutualism is arguably what we are shooting for when it comes to the discussion of multiple communities living under one roof. "In mutualistic symbiosis, both partners benefit from the relationship. The extent to which each symbiont benefits, however, may vary and generally is difficult to assess."⁵⁰ This quote is good to remember. While we are working toward relationships that are mutually beneficial, we are not expecting the relationships to benefit each party equally, or the same, at any given time. Due to the dynamic nature of relationships in general, it should be agreed that to quantify benefits would not only be difficult, but ever changing.

The idea that both communities can become important to one another, in itself, should not be surprising. How they become beneficial to one another, should, on the other hand, evoke a response of dynamic recognition. Just as people need people, so do communities need communities. This is true, particularly when the two communities share the same space. This goes beyond a rental agreement, beyond occupying the same space, and moves toward an expression of the body of Christ.

To be truly mutualistic, both communities will have to assent to the intrinsic value in the other community. This value is not found simply on the togetherness of the situation in which

⁵⁰ Paracer and Ahmadjian. Pg. 6.

these communities find themselves. Rather, it is based on the value that God places upon communities of faith and corporate expressions of worship.

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20.

In this chapter we looked at the need for a Trinitarian/relational view of God that could translates to the sub/host community relationship. We looked at criteria for viability and we took a quick look at a biological model for discussion of relationship. While this does not do the topic justice, it begins to direct a conversation toward preemptive understanding. There is a great deal more involved when it comes to models of leadership integration, discipleship of communities, respect for shared vision, altruistic use of space and resources, as well as learning to communicate in humility. All of these are needed to create a conversation that leads to understanding the problems before they are problems.

As for the biological model of relationship, let me suggest the following: *At some point in the development, growth, and ultimately integration of the sub community, each form of symbiosis will become apparent.* From a parasitical relationship, to commensal, then, on to mutualism. If a community does not pass through these states on their way to mutual benefit, I would begin to question the connectedness of the sub-community to the host community. That relationship is everything when it comes to building a working model that allow both communities to thrive, and still carry an identity that meets the needs of each congregation.

This is the beginning of a much larger conversation, but perhaps there has been some philosophical and theological foundations built. This is also a deeply practical pursuit. We will have to go beyond the philosophical and move into the realm of application. This is where the

mission of the church will be clearly exposed. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and there will be dancing in the streets, at times, these will happen at the same time. We just need to focus on getting both communities doing the same thing at the same time.

If there is a resonant tone being struck, the hope is that it is a tone that seeks to build for the kingdom of God. Understanding that we don't build the kingdom, but we build for the kingdom, and allow the Spirit to inhabit what we have built for his home.

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Chapter 3—Does this Sound Familiar?

Have you ever been to a lake, or even a river where there was a great rock to jump off? Not one of those small ledges, say 10 or 12 feet up, that might give you a second or two of pause; I'm talking about a rock that will make you stand and question your ability as a human being, as a man or a woman with his or her faculties present. The kind of rock that all your friends have to basically shame you into jumping off when it finally comes down to it. Its that first jump that is always the hardest. Once you know what is beneath the water, the jump is much less scary. After you have survived the first foray into this water, and you know you will be all right, you will definitely be more brazen with your jump the next time!

There is a simple reason for your comfort level. You know what is beneath you. The water is not just what someone has told you it will be. Rather, the water has become your water, and you know it, first hand. Gone is the fear of what lies underneath. You are free to explore just how great flying through the air can be. At this point, little thought is given to what lies underneath, because you know it. The water is yours.

It is one thing to know how to jump off a rock. Quite honestly, anyone can do this. It is quite another thing to jump off a particular rock. In this respect, context matters. They don't call it "home court advantage" because it is not an advantage. Knowing your context is key to success in so many areas, and in church communication this is true as well.

Does This Sound Familiar?

Multiple community churches (MCC) are a fact of life. Some deal with this diversity well, others struggle to thrive together. By and large, this is due to the communication that each community has toward the other communities with which they share space. Some of the conversations can be predicted. Others seemingly come out of nowhere. However, each conversation has a price tag. If it is possible to preemptively understand where the other community and leadership is coming from, what their intentions are toward your community, and how to come to an understanding of shared vision, it would thwart much of the trouble we see in this regard.

So it seems to be time to ask the question: “Does this sound familiar?”

“We need a ministry that will reach out to _____.”

This sentence is usually followed up by one of the following: Postmoderns; Young Adults; Young Professionals; Young Families, or Differing Ethnicities. Have you ever heard this statement before? Be careful, you are standing on the edge, looking over into the water. This is often the first statement that is made that should lead toward a much deeper conversation, but rarely does. Perhaps a reason why it does not lead to a continued conversation is the fact that these are the kind of comments made all the time in churches, and it often seems that these “needed” ministries do not come to pass.

“Your group/community/ministry is going really well; we are going to have to find a new place for you soon.”

Once again the question is asked: “sound familiar?” This question seems innocuous enough, but there are some underlying tensions that can be recognized. 1) The

use of the word “Your.” While it is a great word and gives you or your team ownership, the word is actually divisive. If it is yours, it is not theirs. If it’s yours, it is not “Ours.” This question of ownership from the larger church is important. In fact, it is one of the most important questions to be asked. Can a church feel ownership of a group within it that has its own identity, somewhat separate from the larger congregation? What are the marks of ownership? Is it communication between the two leaderships? Is it submission to the larger vision? Is it outright leadership within the smaller community that would allow for the larger church to feel as if it has ownership? And at that point, is ownership less a sense of commitment to the mission of the smaller community, but greater control? In other words, is ownership literally ownership? What kind of autonomy is allowed with the smaller community, and how is their growth going to be directed?

The second part of this statement, “*we are going to have to find a new place for you soon,*” is dangerous as well. At the risk of sounding a bit paranoid, which often happens in these situations, I would have to ask the question of “why?” Why is the larger community responsible for finding a larger venue for the smaller community? Do they feel this sense of responsibility in partnership or as a favor? If it is a partnership, then a great conversation may be had; however, if it is a favor, there is a possibility of a sense being created that the smaller community is leeching off the larger community for space and resources. This will inevitably create a feeling of resentment within both communities, the smaller community feeling as if they have no power to make decisions for themselves, while the larger community will deal with the smaller community as a child that cannot care for themselves.

These may be extreme positions, and to be sure, there is a continuum on which these feelings land, but the possibility is there. As well, if the alternative community has seen rapid growth, and their ability to grow is hampered because of decisions that are out of their hands, they will undoubtedly feel as if their God-given mission is no longer theirs to complete. This creates a feeling of helplessness that is soul-starving to a growing community.

“We would love to have your people have the opportunity to worship with us in the main sanctuary/gathering place. . .”

This is perhaps the most dangerous of all starting points of a conversation in our context. The reason for this danger is what is not said. What is not being said is possibly the following: “We have noticed you’ve got a good number of people who are identifying their church experience with the smaller community and not the main body under this umbrella. We would love you to do something about this.”

As I write this, I understand the paranoia from which I am writing. And please understand; this is not something I would include if it were not a common conversation in this context. I have spoken to many associate pastors of alternative communities who end up having this conversation with church leadership at some point. It usually does not happen until there is critical mass that has been established. If a person identifying with the smaller group is not something that was anticipated, this conversation is much harder in the sense that there are perceived issues of commitment to the larger umbrella culture and mission of the church. If it was anticipated, then the conversation can be constructive and begin to inform the ecclesiological thinking of leadership in the church.

What we really have here is one of the elemental questions that each local church

needs to answer: What is church? When people come and identify with the local church, must they identify with all aspects of the church, or just one? For instance, if a person comes and loves the children's programs, but rarely, if ever, is part of the corporate worship gathering, are they part of the church? Is membership, or at least identity, based upon hearing a preaching pastor and being involved, at least as a spectator, in the corporate worship experience? If a church has more than one service, is there one service that takes precedence over another service?¹

This moves us on to questions of multiple worship services and their desire to target certain demographics of people. Charles Arn, a church growth researcher from Monrovia, California, estimates that half of the country's 355,000 Protestant churches would benefit from starting a new worship service, either to reach a new group of people or to bring in more of the same.² This is probably a true statement. However, Bosch argues:

"The strategy of 'targeted worship opportunities' may well mean 'church growth.' It may indeed bring people in the door: people of 'our kind.' But what you end up with is not the church. It may be an interesting social club of like-minded and attractive people. But it is simply no longer the Christian church: rich and poor, old and young, black and white, conservative and liberal, all together at the table of the Lord. Surely one of

¹ For instance, if a church has an early and a later service, often the first church service is treated like a "dry run" for the later, and usually better-attended, service. The more services a church has, often, the less this feeling is fostered. These feelings often come from the attendance in the room. It is human nature to love a full room. Usually, whichever service has the best attendance will be the service that takes precedence. In a traditional church setting, it is often the traditional service, as opposed to a more contemporary service, that is seen as the heart and soul of the church. Churches with a "high" church service often treat this service as the pinnacle of church experience.

Paul F. Bosch states: "Multiple Sunday Services, at the least, exact a terrible price in contemporary church life"; they are, at worst, "unfaithful" ecclesologically, and they are inimical to the needs of contemporary worship." Paul Bosch Paul Westermeyer, Marianne Sawicki, *What Is "Contemporary" Worship: Open Questions in Worship*, ed. Gordon Lathrop (Kitchener: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1996).

² Greg Warner, "Church within a Church: Are Multiple Worship Services Healthy?", Seedstories.com <http://www.seedstories.com/articles/article.cfm?id=2&page=1> (accessed January 2, 2011).

the church's finest glories is its pleroma, its rich and even contradictory fullness.”³

This, of course, is leading us back to the question of “what is church?” Either communities, or at least the host community, must answer this question at the beginning of the process of growth or integration. To not answer this question is to, quite possibly, end up in the same place as Dieter Zander found himself at Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Illinois.⁴ For all intents and purposes, the Axis young adult ministry at Willow Creek was an incredibly successful program. However, their corporate gatherings were shut down after a period of time. While there are many different opinions on why this happened, it seems that Zander clearly thought they had not answered the ecclesiological question of what constitutes a church.⁵

We will deal more extensively with the ecclesiological questions in the following chapters, but we must keep this question of what constitutes church at the forefront of all other conversations. This question is THE question that must be answered in order to have some sort of anchor point from which to answer the plethora of other questions we have been asking and the questions to follow. To answer this question in a cursory

³ Paul F. Bosch, “The God Business: Multiple Services in the Age of Consumerism” http://www.worship.ca/docs/ww_20.html (accessed January 2, 2011).

⁴ “Dieter Zander left Willow Creek and now works for Bay Marin Community Church planting churches in nearby San Francisco. His departure was sparked by differences over how the baby buster congregation fit into the larger church body, he says. “We all said we wanted to do something to reach the next generation ... but we weren’t really saying the same thing.” Pastor Bill Hybels expected the new congregation eventually to “fold into the main ministry of the church,” Zander explains. But baby busters will never worship and think like boomers, say Zander and others, because the differences are more than generational.”

To continue: He (Zander) says he has no hard feelings about Willow Creek. “They are consistent with who they feel God wants them to be.” *But his experience emphasized the need for clear direction and understanding for any church beginning multiple worship services.* “Where is this going ultimately? We did not fully answer that at Willow.” Warner. Pg. 2.

⁵ See Appendix C for a roundtable discussion based on the history of Axis and where this community is now.

fashion is like saying that to fix a car you have to “fix it.” It is more complicated than a simple “WE are the church.”

How you define the church becomes paramount to your understanding of how these groups integrate, what integration even is within the local church context, and how the leadership of each group should deal with one another. Remember, we are not simply speaking of planting a church in a currently used church building, but we are truly wanting to grow the kingdom of God, create conversations that lift up that kingdom, and create parallel communities that are seeking the same vision and mission, yet have identities that meet the needs of their people.

Now, having looked at some conversation starters that are from the perspective of the host church toward the alternative community, let us take a look at some that are headed in the other direction. It would be much easier to write this book from one particular perspective. However, it is much more beneficial to try and take a look at this from a 360-degree perspective. Admittedly, this is harder for me; however, in writing this I find that I am forced to take another approach. This approach must take into account what the leadership in present authority must sort through as discussion pitfalls.

“You need to give us the freedom to create our own identity.”

While this may be a true statement, there are inherent difficulties. It speaks to an elemental value of isolationism that might not be healthy. Every community needs to create an identity that speaks to its values and principles. However, to function under one umbrella, these values must be grown from the rich soil of shared community. Identity cannot be handed down, there must be some room for organic growth of the sub-community; but this must be done in conjunction with the broader church culture, the

DNA that is lived, and the sense of shared vision the communities hold together. This can only happen through the deep indwelling of leadership into the lives of those who are leading the sub-communities. The value of shared vision between the two communities must be assented to by both leadership structures. As well, there should be a great deal of time spent in mentoring and reverse-mentoring⁶ relationships between the leadership of both communities. Without this, there will be great potential for misunderstanding.

“Our congregation feels as if they have already been to church.”

While a strong sense of ownership of one’s ministry is important, there is a clear philosophical bifurcation, an “us” versus “them” mentality that is inherently present. A clear identity has been forged within the smaller community. Identity, in and of itself, is not a bad thing, but without a nod to the relationship with the larger church, problems ensue. We will tackle this problem in a more expanded way⁷ in a few pages. However, it is prudent to note the ecclesiological nature of the aforementioned statement. Since “their” people feel as if they have already been to church, is there no more reason to commune with the larger community?⁸

⁶ This concept is greatly expanded in: Creps and Leadership Network (Dallas Tex.). This book makes the case for young leaders and their responsibility to mentor those who have gone before them in leadership. As well, Creps argues that older; more established leadership should be intentional about learning from young leaders. He does this without denigrating the traditional leadership role of older and more mature leaders.

⁷ See “Benevolent or Jealous Ecclesiology?”

⁸ “We’re not only feeding toxic tribalism; we’re also saying the gospel can’t successfully bring these two different groups together. It’s a declaration of doubt about the unifying power of God’s gospel. *Generational appeal in worship is an admission that the gospel is powerless to join together what man has separated.*” Tchividjian.

These words were written by the pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in his blog on why the church had decided to no longer have multiple worship services based on genre or style of worship. These are strong words, and to be taken with a grain of salt. However, what does ring true is a desire for the unifying power of the gospel in the lives of those in the local church. How does one go about creating unity out of something that seems to be built to have a silo effect? The answer, to a point, is that worship expression is only one aspect of the church, and not the whole mark and measure of a community. Is it possible to create a sense of community outside of the worship gathering? This

We might ask the question, “Is the worship service the only time these communities might come together?” If the answer to this question is yes, then we have created a very narrow theology of church in our community. If the answer is “no,” then we have a much greater expanse with which to work. It is the difference between a garden and a farm. A garden has such a limited space that there will be very few varieties of fruits and vegetables. If there are many varieties, the quantity will be in such short supply as to leave many wanting. However, a farm allows for various crops to grow, and grow abundantly, so there is enough to feed many different families, even whole villages. Perhaps this is what we need in our churches, a farm rather than a garden of opportunities to connect and integrate both communities together.

DNA⁹

Does your church have the sort of theological underpinnings to embark on such a risky endeavor? “Code is the often unspoken assumptions that shape a church's vision, values, and mission. It's subtly mirrored in a church's symbols, stories, and history. It is difficult to define because it is invisible, like the air we breathe.”¹⁰ In the previous quote, Ford makes a very astute assumption. The DNA of any local church is not necessarily seen in its mission statement. It is more often seen in the living ecclesiology of the

author would argue that it is not only possible, but also more probable that a community gathering outside of a worship service will create a broader sense of fellowship and togetherness. The worship service actually serves this process less than the majority of other opportunities a church affords its congregants.

⁹ See Appendix B for more resources in identifying church DNA.

¹⁰ Kevin G. Ford, "Leader's Insight: Your Church's DNA: Each Church Has a Unique Make-up That's Essential to Its Life, Health, and Future ", Christianity Today/Leadership <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/currenttrendscolumns/leadershipweekly/cln70723.html> (accessed January 2, 2011).

church. It is not what it says it believes in, but more how it functions. To see the functioning DNA of a church, you must examine quite closely the history, stories and processes of each local congregation. Every congregation has a different DNA that is made up of families, socio-economic realities and history, and even pastoral support throughout the years. Different denominational affiliations play a major role, as do governance policies.

Some of these things—governance, affiliation, and economics—might preclude a church from beginning another congregation under the same umbrella from the very beginning. This is an important thing to note. As well, have groups grown and been successful before in this church? How were previous groups and experiences handled? How did these experiences end? Is there any wisdom in speaking to those who have a significant history in the church? What is the church seeking to be in the future, and does that hum in the resonant tone that the church has been used to hearing?

It is one thing to say we “need” a ministry that will reach a particular group with a particular identity, but it is another to have that group, a dynamic and growing group, sharing the same space. This group is sometimes in the church, but not really “of” the church. This feeling of separation may not happen at first. But as people are brought into the church through this new community, their loyalties will lie with the alternative community, not necessarily the host church. This begins the aforementioned conversations in earnest. To answer these questions becomes paramount to maintaining healthy communication and healthy relationships between the two communities.

If your church does not have the DNA to begin with, they will not have a particular aptitude for these kinds of relationships. The attitude that leadership takes

toward this kind of endeavor is also of paramount importance. To not have senior leadership support often makes these efforts a fool's errand, at best.

Discovering DNA

The process of discovering the identity of your church at the most elemental levels is both hard and easy at the same time. It is hard because of the realities that might be discovered. It is easy because you simply have to ask questions that will be answered in the obvious. By this I mean the answers come from what your church is doing. In the end, where a church spends its money, where its resources are allotted, and the time that the professional pastoral ministry spends on certain things will tell you, very specifically, what your local church values.

To begin, ask three simple questions that will begin this process of discovery. Ask them to the pastors, the elders, deacons, and those who do not hold leadership positions in the church.

“What is perceived passion of this church?”

Perceived passion is, at times, different than any mission statement the church may have. In the end, this is a question that asks what the church finds itself doing most of the time. If a church says it believes in discipleship, yet has very little intentional discipleship happening, then it is possible that discipleship will not be perceived as a passion of the church. In all of these questions, we are not looking for a scientific or statistical reality; I believe we are looking for a *thematic reality* that will keep occurring. A thematic reality is an overarching feeling, or theme, that seems to be consistent enough to take notice. It will rarely be expressed in exact wording, but it will be expressed by the caveats you hear in the conversations. Things like; “we SAY we are interested in this, but

in reality I spend most of my time doing that. . .” These are the kinds of conversations that will occur.

Looking for something more scientific? Check the appendix for this chapter. There are many consulting firms and ministry businesses that will help to identify a church’s DNA. A Google search will come back with over 135,000 thousand hits for the phrase, “Identifying the DNA of your church.” But for the purposes of this discussion, we are not looking at a wholesale change in the DNA of your church. We are simply wanting to identify what is the perceived passion of the local congregation, and whether that passion has room for another iteration of community.

“Where do you think the majority of resources in your church are expended?”

This question asks the practical question of how your church spends its money and time. As well, the question is asked in a way that is once again leaning toward the idea of perception. Perceived DNA is truly the DNA of the church. You will, however, need to ask all of these questions to a wide range of people within your community. If you do not, it is possible for the answers to be skewed in one direction or another. For instance, to only have this conversation with those on the church board, whom we assume know more than the average congregant, would give you a much different answer than if you asked the average volunteer in the youth or children’s ministries.

You can always tell what a person, organization, and certainly church, values by where they put their resources. Moreover, how the congregation perceives where money is spent is important, in that it allows for this perception to be perpetuated. In other words, if it is not true, and no one cares, then it may as well be true.

“How would your church deal with another community under the same

umbrella?”

I understand how obvious this question is, but it is important nonetheless. It is important because it prepares a church for a growing community within its walls. If the question is asked, discussion begins. The variety of answers you will receive will be eye opening and will speak of an implied ecclesiology that is benevolent, jealous, or indifferent. Also, it gives people an opportunity to discuss past history with alternative groups, the desire, or lack thereof, for multiple worship expressions, and those with discerning minds will wonder about the ideas of integration and what that means to the local church.

You may connect with a strong theme of reticence to begin this endeavor. This is good to know, in that to begin an endeavor without the support of the church at large would be foolish. There might not be a perceived need for an alternative community, and therefore, more must be done on the perception of such a need. All of this information leads to more discussion from the church as whole as to how to move ahead.

If your church is already in the midst of an alternative community growing under its umbrella, these questions may still be asked, but of both communities. I would add one more question for the sub-community: *“Is integration with the larger community important? And what does that look like?”* Integration can only take place when both communities are interested in a mutually beneficial relationship. We do not want a commensal relationship, but one of true mutuality, and so both communities must answer these questions.

A Benevolent or Jealous Ecclesiology?

What do I mean by *benevolent ecclesiology*? Simply, an ecclesiology that is

broadier than “one church in one room.” A *jealous ecclesiology* is one in which the church defines its membership by their presence at the main event. In a church with just one main event, this is easy to quantify. You show up, you are accounted for, no problem. Whether your kids go to the children’s programs or not, whether you are actively involved in ministry outside of the main event, these are not the main questions. The main question is “are you IN church each week?”

In my early years in ministry I worked with a pastor who knew who was at church and who was not. I was amazed at the close eye he had on the congregation each week. This was not a small church; it would be defined as a medium-sized church, with a weekly attendance of about 300. This pastor, a wonderful man of God, was deeply concerned with consistent attendance and what that meant for the spiritual lives of the congregants. He was very concerned, perhaps rightfully so, about the parents who took their children to their programs, but did not attend the main sanctuary service. He seemed to believe that the main event, if you will, was to be the high point of the congregants’ spiritual experience each week.

I will not deny falling prey to this kind of ecclesiology. I’m not sure I understood this until I was in the pulpit each week, trying to foster a vision of what the church might be through my preaching. From the pulpit, it is easy to have a jealous ecclesiology. To view church from the pulpit is to see the church very myopically. And the better a preacher tends to be, the more focused his/her ministry is on this gift. But this gift can create a jealousy for those whom you might influence. The more you spend your time creating the oration, the less time you have to interact with the community in other settings. This interaction is paramount to keeping a benevolent ecclesiology. A

benevolent ecclesiology would maintain a stance that would allow people to fall under the influence of the *community* of Christ locally. Therefore, those who come under the influence of those who are part of the local church are now tacitly in relationship with the local church community and its leadership.

This is a hard thing for pastors to understand. It is hard for me to understand, if the truth is to be told. So much of our week is focused on the main event, focused on our worship gatherings, worship gatherings that have become more and more filled with people hitting their cues, and with countdown clocks, and with stringent run-sheets. These main events are great, and they take up much of our time so that they might be as great as we can make them. Additionally, from the vantage point of the pulpit, it feels as if our influence over the community comes from our time spent speaking to them. However, I would posit that our influence comes as much from being part of the community as it does from being the mouthpiece of the community. Sermons can change lives, but changed lives are better sermons.

I would like to add a parenthetical statement here, if I may. I am not anti-worship gathering. I am not against having a phenomenal program and worship event. I love the music, the lights, and the media. I even love High-Church expressions of worship and singing a hymn with a 150-voice choir in church and a 100-person orchestra in front of them. All of these things are wonderful, and if a church has the passion, resources, and desire to make a service that excellent, they should, by all means do just that. I also want to recognize the power of a thoughtful and excellent sermon. All of these are important.

However, I would like to reference scripture here. Amos 5:21-24¹¹ speaks of a God who is tired of those who would worship him, but they have not sought justice and mercy for those in their midst. In this same way, our religious services should be an outpouring and celebration of the ministry and worship with which we all are a part of each day, each hour of our lives. Rather than the apex of our spiritual experience through the week, our gatherings should be the period on a full and pregnant sentence of praise and worship of God. At this point, the “main event” ceases to be the pinnacle of the experience, but is melded into a life of faith. Church, therefore, is integrated, not something other than the spiritual life of the believer.

A pulpit-centric ministry will lend itself more easily to a jealous ecclesiology. This, of course, can go both ways. If the host community has a great deal of emphasis on the event, and the alternative community does as well, there will inevitably be a clash of pulpits, which can also mean as a clash of preachers. If this relationship degrades into a conflict of personalities or egos, then it is hard to put the kingdom of God at the forefront of the conversation. The need for humility becomes paramount to a healthy communicative process.

¹¹ ²¹ “I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.

²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.

Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.

²³ Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.

²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:21-24 (NIV)

To ask whether the church is jealous or benevolent in its approach is a theological question. It is also a question of how people connect with the gospel within a local church community. Should we be content with those who grow in their spiritual journey, yet do not come and worship in a corporate gathering? Should we desire they focus more of their time in fellowship during a church service? How you answer these questions helps to identify the nature of your ecclesiology.

Here is a question that speaks to a practicality when it comes to a corporate worship gathering. While we often talk in terms of community and fellowship within the church service, or corporate worship gathering, is there really that much fellowship that happens during the service? I have always found it to be true that fellowship and connecting happens before and after the service, rather than in the service. As a preaching pastor, I find it ultimately distracting when people use the service to connect with one another, specifically when I am preaching! This probably happens more than I would like. But this thought begs the question of whether or not discipleship and integration happen within and during the church service, or more effectively at other times in the life of the church.

An understanding of this begins to make the idea of a jealous ecclesiology out of line with a church that sees its fundamental fellowship outside of the church service. This is not to downplay the role of the preaching pastor; their role is well defined and important. However, to speak of a triune God, as we have in Chapter 2, and the importance of relationships means that the influence of the pulpit is seen in the context of relationships cultivated within the community. As preachers, we must earn the right to

Speak into the lives of those who would come to hear us. We do this by cultivating a culture of relationships within our communities.

A benevolent ecclesiology is one in which the leadership sees the local church as a place that gives people opportunities, many opportunities, to connect with God and their fellow believers. Downplayed is the idea of everyone drinking from the same well, and lifted up is the concept that every believer is indeed a priest¹² and has a priestly calling in their lives. We gather together for mutual encouragement,¹³ study of the word,¹⁴ and to pray.¹⁵ But to limit any of these things to the corporate worship gathering is to create a long line of thirsty people, unable to bring water from a well themselves. Further, it relegates everyone to the same well. This is not biblical, nor is it beneficial to the Body of Christ. If we are to believe in the priesthood of all believers, then we must be ready and willing for our people to be filled wherever the well is running over.

Practically speaking, they may be acquiring their sustenance from another place within the church. One of the other places they might be drinking is the alternative community to which the church plays host. To maintain ecclesial influence over these folk, one of a few things must happen. One, the preaching/senior/lead pastor must be present within the alternative community in order for them to hear his/her voice. Two, the alternative community must bring their folk to the main sanctuary/gathering place to be in fellowship with the larger church body. Three, the leadership of both communities must covenant with one another to be in one accord as to the vision of the church, the process of integration, and what integration means.

¹² 1 Peter 2:9; Revelations 5:10

¹³ Romans 1:12

¹⁴ Acts 2:42

¹⁵ Acts 2:42

Holding Hands, or a Hand with 11 Fingers?

Integration. This is a sticky word, as my friends from England might say. The idea of integration takes many forms. Remember, we have been working from a biological model of symbiosis, which does not necessarily lend itself to integration in the most general of terms. To be involved in a mutualistic relationship means that both communities are benefitting. However, the concept of integration needs to be discussed in order to continue to look toward the future. Dieter Zander's comments from the previously recorded article ring true in many situations. "They are consistent with who they feel God wants them to be." But his experience emphasized the need for clear direction and understanding for any church beginning multiple worship services. "*Where is this going ultimately? We did not fully answer that at Willow.*"¹⁶

Zander is speaking of integration, and what was expected of the sub-community in the long view of their legitimacy. Many churches have begun Young Adult ministries, grown them, encouraged them through their first growth spurts, and fostered them for a few years.¹⁷ However, after a few years, (four seems to be the common point in most stories of this nature) the alternative or sub-community has established an identity that is

¹⁶ Warner. Pg. 2.

¹⁷ Anecdotally, the time frame from which these communities start to when they are shut down, moved out, or their initial leadership is asked to leave seems to be about four years. According to Strommen: It takes time to launch innovations, even those as attractive as television or videotape recorders. Hence, a time lag can be expected for new programs a denomination or congregation wishes to introduce. Kennon Callahan, in *12 steps to an effective church*, insists that a congregation wishing to develop a major program should plan on four to five years of development." Strommen. Pg. 18.

I would argue that the four-year timeline makes sense in light of the fact that we are usually working with communities that don't have a long history, and their people have change built into their DNA. Therefore, it would stand to reason that change would happen more quickly, they would adapt to innovation more easily, and growth would happen at a more rapid pace. Often, by the time the host community truly understands what is happening, the growth has allowed for a silo identity to be established. Once established, the task of going back and working toward an integration model becomes just that much harder.

separate from that of the host community. At this point, often the host community leadership begins to understand that they are not reaping the rewards of having a vibrant and dynamic alternative community in their midst. Perhaps there was an assumption that as some of these people grew toward maturity, either spiritual or chronological, they would shed themselves of the alternative community and integrate into the larger church community. When this does not happen, questions of loyalty appear, as well as issues of influence, autonomy, and even financial viability.

Perhaps we can use a metaphor to explain the assumption and the reality of what is happening. Integration can be seen in more than one way, depending on your perspective. Take a look at your hands. Each has its own identity. One might hold your ring, while the other might be the hand that you use to write. Each hand has a function, and the fingers help to make each hand work more efficiently. But often the assumption from the host community is that the fingers on the other hand will eventually migrate to their hand; in this way their hand continues to grow and flourish. There is also a desire for the new hand (sub-community) to grow more fingers as they lose some of theirs to the host hand. (Stay with me now . . .) In other words, the host hand (for our purposes) is seeking to grow its effectiveness by integrating more fingers onto its hand. Thus, we say that one hand now has 11 fingers. The hand now looks strange, and trying to keep all those fingers busy and productive can be a problem.

A better model would be a model of hands clasped together, with fingers intertwined. This is how many of us pray. This is how you show intimacy with a loved one, by holding hands. This model works so much better because there is an assent to the part that each finger plays in relation to the other. Both hands, built for specific things,

find a home with the other, and relationships are grown.

All of us can remember the first time we held hands with someone. It was truly a breathtaking experience. And the beauty of holding hands is that this feeling of intimacy does not change, regardless of the length of the relationship. Four years to forty years, and the intermingling of the fingers still creates sparks for the couples holding hands. I've been married 15 years and still love holding my wife's hand when we walk.

My children and I have a special conversation just using our fingers. I squeeze their hand three times signaling the words "I love you." Their response is four squeezes which connotes "I love you too." Unless, of course, you are my middle child Jacob; then you will squeeze my hand 15 or 20 times to signal a much deeper conversation he only sometimes lets me understand.

But the point is made. To clasp together is a sign of intimacy. And when communities decide to share this kind of integrative model, relationships grow. They come together for a common purpose. One cannot be jealous of the other, for they need both hands and all the fingers to create a tight clasp. This kind of integration is perhaps the healthiest of all, in that communities must work together, closely, in order to move toward any desired location. If they are holding hands tightly, then even when one begins to move in a different direction, there can be comfortable correction, rather than critical correction. And lastly, it allows for the communities to move together. It drives each to keep moving through the negotiations in a forward manner, rather than stopping. This is progressive in its nature. And this means that you have communities who are working toward common goals, who can only be so far separated, and who are clasping onto one another for the sake of intimacy and relationship.

This is an integrative model that can stand the test of time. I love going to Central Park in New York, or any park in any town for that matter, and watch the couples that have grown old together hold hands as they walk. They both need one another. They complement one another. And they are greatly enhanced by one another. What if we could commit our community relationships in such a manner? This is a dream that few churches have yet to fulfill. But I believe it can happen. It can happen when both communities decide to take on the mutually hard work of holding hands and growing together.

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SECTION 5
ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

January 10, 2011
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Greetings!

My name is Timothy Gillespie and I am currently the Young Adult Pastor at the Loma Linda University Church in Loma Linda, California. The Young Adult ministry, Re:Live (www.reliveministry.com) currently has about 600 in attendance each week. This ministry is running under the umbrella of the larger church culture, a mega-church with approximately 6,000 members. This ministry has allowed me to see first-hand the struggles and triumphs of alternative ministries that grow inside of larger, more established churches.

I have currently been working on a book entitled: *Under One Umbrella: Multiple Communities, One Church*. The burden for this book came from my personal experience. However, as I researched this particular issue, I have found there are a great number of communities that are facing the same situations. What does it mean to be a part of a larger church when your community has an identity of its own? This book seeks to create a guide to help communities discuss and discover what integration means and how to work toward a dynamic unity.

Having been involved in writing from my collegiate years, (B.A. Religious Studies, B.A. English, Writing Emphasis) and having contributed to other authors works, I am excited for the opportunity to explore this topic and create an artifact that will be of help to so many churches in the midst of these circumstances.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I know it is valuable.

Timothy Gillespie

Title:

Under One Umbrella: Multiple Communities, One Church.

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Overview:

I have written a “popular” style book called, *Under One Umbrella: Multiple Communities, One Church*. This book is relevant to any church that has multiple groups meeting on one campus. It seeks to speak to the reality of multiple needs that are created by different communities and deals honestly with issues bound to arise out of these types of relationships. Mega-churches have coped by their growing of multiple campuses. There are very few medium-to-small churches that have had clear success in integrating diverse groups in order to grow the church as one complex whole. This book will look at four identified areas--communication, space and resources, leadership, discipleship—where it seems, that tensions most happen and share how to deal with each of them through an open, dynamic conversation that leads to a clearer understanding of what the central needs of both groups, and how to build beneficial integration within the local church setting. The term “under one umbrella” is a nod to Chaim Potok’s discussion of sub-cultures that must exist under a greater umbrella culture.

Purpose:

- To work toward a “preemptive understanding” in the local church setting.
- To seek to integrate the doctrine of the Trinity on relationships in a local church setting.
- To explore ecclesiology that encompasses multiple community expressions under one local congregation.
- To open a conversation that both informs and directs us toward reaching goals for both communities.
- To explain some of the potential challenges, pitfalls, and regrets in these relationships and how they can be negotiated.

Promotion and Marketing:

- This book will find its majority market share in leaders who work in churches of medium size (51-300 people), and large churches (301-2000). This does not exclude both the small and mega church ends of the continuum, but it will have its most significant impact on churches and church leadership of medium size churches. Research puts the medium size number of churches around 105,000 in North America. In addition those of a slightly smaller congregation (7-99 people) consist of 177,000 congregations.¹ They should find this work informative and helpful as they are trying to grow their diverse communities in light of the larger church.
- The author's denominational affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist church also creates a closed marketing system within Adventist Book Centers, (ABC's) of which there are over 100 locations in North America, also AdventSource, a Seventh-day Adventist resource center, distributes to church leaders throughout the world.
- Timothy has an extensive Facebook network (2000+) made up of many church, youth, and young adult leaders.
- Because of the Global Media Ministry of his current working context there are options to market via satellite and web.
- Upcoming speaking engagements in which to market: (2) Australia. (2 weeks each) (1) England (4 days speaking at a conference) Denmark/Norway (1 week speaking in each)

Competition:

- There are currently no books on this topic, from the author's perspective.
- There are many books on the multi-site movement.
 - *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church in Many Locations.* Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, Warren Bird. 2006. (Zondervan)
 - *The Multi-Site Church Road Trip: Exploring the New Normal.* Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, Warren Bird. 2009. (Zondervan)

¹ "What's the Size of U.S. Churches?", Harford Institute for Religious Research
http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#numcong (accessed December 7 2010).

- *Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movements Next Generation*. Scott McConnell. 2009.
- There are also a few books on the transition from a traditional church to a more emerging/missional/postmodern church.
 - *The Church in Transition: The Journey of Existing Churches into Emerging Culture*. Tim Condor. 2006 (Zondervan)
 - *Transitions: Leading Churches Through Change*. David Mosser. 2011. (Westminster John Knox Press). This book has not yet been published.
- There are a plethora of titles having to do with postmodernity and church. However, they are focused on an iteration of church that does not account for the interplay between traditional communities and their more emerging mission of those who live within the community.

Uniqueness:

To date, there are few books that work towards the author's vision of a preemptive understanding of what these communities will need to tackle in order to find a model of integration that works while maintaining the integrity of both expressions. This book targets local church relationships and communication; it is not simply a book on leadership, but on conflict resolution and preemptive understanding. Any congregation that is seeking to work within multiple contexts under the same umbrella will find value in this conversation.

Endorsements:

John O'Keefe (contacted), Leonard Sweet, Bailey Gillespie (contacted), Richard Rice (contacted).

Book Format:

This book will be presented traditionally. It will have an interactive section in the appendices, rather than breaking up the chapters. As well, there should be e-Book/Kindle version.

Christian Theme:

Local Ecclesiology, Communication, Community, Worship, and Conflict Resolution.

Chapter Outline:

Chapter 1 - *Tired of Change?*

Statement of Problem: Multiple communities living under one ecclesiological umbrella often create friction. This book will deal with primarily the friction between more postmodern (Defining the context of the discussion—i.e. worldview shifts, cultural shifts, worship transitions, etc.) communities and the traditional church structures where they are incubated. The first chapter outlines some of the philosophical and worldview changes that exacerbate these situations and relationships.

Questions:

1. What are some of the philosophical underpinnings that create friction between modern and postmodern thought?
2. Where does this create conflict in the local church?
3. Is there a simple way to understand some of the differences between the two worldviews?
4. Are there commonalities from which to begin a discussion of local church expression?

Chapter 2 – *In What Water Do You Swim?*

The Problem Explodes. Chapter 2 takes us toward a more practical understanding of the philosophical changes that are creating frictions in local church communities. It begins with a personal story of some of the situations the author found himself in that created an interest in this study. From there, it moves onto identifying some common issues that lead to a need for the upcoming chapters. Chapter 2 will also take on the doctrine of the Trinity as a relational doctrine to help see the implications of this doctrine on community. Some of the questions to be asked and answered are:

1. What are some practical implications of growing a community under the umbrella of a more established community?
2. How many people does it take to make a group?
3. Is there a theology that can inform our discussion of multiple community churches?

Chapter 3 - *Does This Sound Familiar?*

Conversations in the Local Context. This chapter deals with the local context, leading into the discussion of why conversation is crucial. Chapter 3 begins to ask questions which connect with local situations that cause conflict. It also moves the reader to define what is the context of their particular community, allowing for the discussion to begin. Some of the questions to be asked in this chapter are:

1. How can a church wanting to begin a ministry with potential to become its own expression of faith under the same umbrella even exist?
2. Do we need to have multiple communities in this church?
3. Does this church have the DNA to successfully enter into these kinds of relationships?

Chapter 4 – *Pick Your Conversation?*

Hard Work for Communities. Chapter 4 will spend considerable time looking at the need for a roadmap, or better, a GPS system that will allow these communities to talk, vision, deal with conflict, and grow together. Attempting to answer these questions, the chapter will attempt to answer the following:

Questions to be asked:

1. What are the four central issues understood for conversation to begin?
2. How do we know if these areas are relevant to your local situation?
3. Does your church already have a clear plan on how to deal with these four conversations?
4. How will your church leadership engage in this kind of frank discussion?

Chapter 5 – *Are You Ready For The Talk?*

Humble Communication. This chapter begins by exegeting this concept and how this helps communities work towards “Preemptive Understanding.” For example, this chapter asks and answers the following questions:

1. What is Humble Communication?
2. What stands in the way of communication taking place?
3. Why is preemptive understanding important in these situations?

Chapter 6 – *Leeching?*

Altruistic use of Space and Resources. Some of the greatest friction happens in this area. What we are really talking about is a church that is able to look at what they have, what is working and what isn’t, and make decisions based on true understanding of what the vision of the local church. While this seems like an obvious evaluation, the amount of felt ownership of space and the way churches budget, often reflects what they truly hold dear. This chapter seeks to help churches see the reality behind the way they use assets, resources, and budgets.

This will include an appendix that will allow churches to catalog their resources and help to begin the “Preemptive Understanding” Discussion. Some of the questions to be asked and answered in this chapter are:

1. What is preemptive understanding?
2. How does preemptive understanding aid in the allocation of space and resources?
3. What value does your context place on space and resources?
4. Is there an ability to engage in a discussion that will bring about a change in the way space and resources are used?

Chapter 7 – *Respect?*

Respecting the Shared Vision. Not all churches are blessed with visionary leaders who can clearly enunciate where the church is headed. This creates problems with underlying communities in that it may feel like different entities in the church are heading in different directions. The key to solving this problem is to take a look at the current vision see what can be adjusted and renewed in order to accommodate more than one entity taking on that vision as their own. The questions chapter 7 looks to ask and answer are:

1. What is the overarching vision adopted by the host-church?
2. What are the commonalities between the host church vision and the umbrella community’s mission?
3. Does leadership of the two communities have good communication?
4. If the umbrella community has yet to be started, is there a way to set up an effective communication process?

Chapter 8 – *Are You Connected?*

Discipling Connections. This is the key to the integration of both communities. However, one has to ask oneself whether or not the integration is from one community to another or if it is a co-mingling of both communities. The idea behind this chapter is taking a look at what it means to truly be in community in these contexts. The questions to be asked and answered are as follows:

1. What does integration mean to both communities?
2. Is there a rubric from which to work so that it is possible to quantify how each group is doing in this regard?
3. Are both communities willing to dwell in the lives of those in the other community in order to create the dynamic unity of known relationships?

Chapter 9 – *Velcro, Glue, or a Weld?*

Community Building, Enriching, Growing. This chapter deals with what holds a community together in the context of discipling connections. It continues the discussion of integration, and brings it from what integration looks like in a church, to what integration looks like in people's lives. This is the idea of mutual indwelling. The following questions will be asked and answered:

1. How does your church/community define and enact discipleship?
2. What does your church intentionally have in place as far as discipleship and mentoring?
3. What are the greatest challenges that churches face in order to create discipling connections?

Chapter 10 – *Do You Dance?*

A Dynamic Unity. The life of church is dynamic and varied. There are a myriad of conversations that need to continually take place in order to help these communities live under one umbrella in the most positive and beneficial matter. This chapter brings together what we have talked about and helps set a goal for future conversation, and for future planning. Chapter 10 will also dwell on the idea of dynamic unity and its implications within a local church setting. The questions that this chapter seeks to ask and answer are:

1. What does a healthy multiple community church look like?
2. Is there a long-term plan for integration and what does it entail?
3. What does a church feel like when there is a dynamic unity present?

-Appendices:

- Finding your Resources.
- Discovering Shared Vision.
- Small church vs. large church issues.
- Checklist for Preemptive Understanding.
- Discipling Assessment. (What is already happening in your church by way of discipleship and discipling connections?)
- Case Study: Willow Creek Axis: A conversation about the past, present, and future of this ministry.

Intended Readers:

Primary Audience:

The primary audience for this book is Pastors and Lay leaders seeking to enlarge their ministry or work together in a local church setting

Secondary Audience:

Practical ministry professors/students. The secondary audience is those who teach pastors how to be professional ministers. This book deals with management and communication issues that these students will inevitably encounter in the local church context.

Tertiary Audience:

This work is valuable to anyone within the communities that seek to thrive together. While the book deals with leadership issues, the latter chapters deal specifically with what a church (meaning the people) should and can do in order to grow two communities together.

Manuscript:

The manuscript has the first 3 chapters finished, the rest are in various states of production. The estimated length of this project, is 228 pages. (62,559 words, Medium Text, Medium Formatting)

Author Bio:

Timothy Gillespie is the Young Adult Pastor of the Loma Linda University Church. (www.reliveministry.com). He has played music professionally in the band Big Face Grace, and still is actively involved in creating music and supporting local Christian artists. (www.reliverecords.org) As well, he is working as the Regional Chaplain for Azusa Pacific University's regional center in San Bernardino and as undergraduate chaplain for the High Desert Regional Center.

He is married to Sara, an art teacher and entrepreneur (www.savvychickids.com) and has three children (Hannah 9, Jacob 6, and Isaac 4). He is currently enrolled at George Fox University working on his Doctorate in Leadership in Emerging Culture with Leonard Sweet. Timothy received his BA in both Religious Studies and English, with an emphasis in writing. He also graduated with a Masters of Divinity from Andrews University in southwest Michigan.

Timothy Gillespie is particularly suited to write this particular book. The reasons for this stem from the fact that he works in a large church setting, (some call it mega-church, although it is not traditionally in the mega-church format) and he runs a large Young Adult Community (600+) within the larger church. The struggles between the two entities have been dynamic and challenging in many ways. His field of study, leadership in emerging culture, has allowed him to see some of the philosophical issues that pertain to these situations. Timothy is both a practitioner of ministry and an observer of

emerging culture. From this vantage point, and with this experience, Timothy is able to bring knowledge, wisdom, and vision to the discussion of multiple communities existing and thriving beneath one ecclesiastical roof.

Professional:

Young Adult Pastor, Loma Linda University Church—2007-Present

Associate pastor with the responsibility of the 18-35 year old age range. Duties include: Visioning, Preaching, Administration, team-building, Organizing and Coordinating the young adult worship service, church school board representative, Mentoring and Training stipend pastors.
www.reliveministry.com

Regional Chaplain, Azusa Pacific University—2009-Present. Chaplain responsibilities for both the Inland Empire Regional Center and the High Desert Regional Center. Extension campuses with both graduate and undergraduate students.

Speaking Experience:

Weekly Speaking: Re:Live Worship Service, Loma Linda University Church; Azusa Pacific University High Desert Regional Center; Azusa Pacific University Inland Empire Regional Center.

Weeks of Prayer, Evangelism, Spiritual Retreats, Leadership Conferences, Camp Meetings and other Speaking Opportunities Colleges and Universities: Canadian Adventist University College (2010) Loma Linda University Chapel Service (2008), Pacific Union College Week of Prayer (2006) Columbia Union College Week of Prayer (2004), Canadian Union College Week of prayer (2001), Avondale College Week of Prayer (1999).

Evangelism: New South Wales Evangelism Outreach (1998), Finnish Young Adult outreach (1999), San Diego Area Youth Outreach (2000).

High Schools: Sydney Adventist College, (2008), Glendale Adventist Academy (2004), Newbury Park Adventist Academy (2004, 2007), San Diego Academy (1999), Loma Linda Academy (2001, 2007), Portland Adventist Academy, (1995-2002) Mt. Pisgah Academy (2001, 2007), Cascade Christian Academy (2004), Conejo Adventist Elementary (2001), Sacramento Adventist Academy (2000), Brisbane Adventist Academy (1998), Loma Linda Elementary-grades 5-6 (2005) **More on request.**

Retreats: Mesa Grande Academy Spiritual Retreat (October 2006), SECC Sixth Grade Outdoor School (2007) Carolina Conference Young Adult retreat (Sept. 2006) Hinsdale Academy Sr. Retreat (1997. 1998) Southern Union Leadership Retreat (2004) Oregon Conference Ministry Retreat (2004), more on request.

Camp Meetings: North Carolina Conference (2008), Korean Adventist Camp meeting (1999).

Training Seminars: Leadership Training: SEC Pastors/Lay People, Egypt (2010) Praise and Worship--Arlington Church (2010) PUC Fall (2009), New Life SDA Church, Raleigh-NC (Sept 2006), Leadership Training (August 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) Loma Linda Academy, Southern Union Leadership Camp (2005), **more on request.**

Publishing Credits :

Case, Steve (Editor) *Shall We Dance: Rediscovering Christ-Centered Standards* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1996). Chapter on Dance by Timothy Gillespie

V. Bailey Gillespie with Judith Gillespie and Timothy Gillespie, *Keeping the Faith: A Guidebook for Spiritual Parenting* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2003). Parent Potentials editor for high school resources.

Timothy Gillespie, Face the World (1998) Companion Bible Study Guide to Big Face Grace Album Release.

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Education with the John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry at La Sierra University, *The Potentials Project* (Riverside, CA: Hancock Center Publications, 1999). Contributing editor.

V. Bailey Gillespie with Timothy Gillespie, *Hey! Love Them and They Will Come.* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2010 (At Press). Chapters on Worship and Service.

POSTSCRIPT

This project has been undertaken amidst the joys and struggles of growing community under the auspices of a larger church umbrella. Much of the work comes from a desire to change the outcomes of these communities, and the outcome of the community I have been blessed to serve. When choosing this project, I had only hints of what would be in store for my context, for our community, and for me professionally. Working on this project while concurrently being involved in one of the kinds of communities this project seeks to know has at times blinded me, pushed me, angered me, and caused me great joy. This project has allowed me to step outside my context and grow a theory of communication and integration that would not have come had I simply been trying to wrestle in the dark with what God had given me.

Of no less importance is the host community to which my context calls home. As we have tried to dance through the different models of symbiosis we have at times stumbled and laughed, stumbled and cried, and even made the dance look beautiful. We are working our way toward dynamic unity, mutual indwelling, and a mutualism that is beneficial to all involved. Had we a GPS that would have led us toward preemptive understanding, our road would have been easier, and our burden a joy. But this is thinking in retrospect, and we did not have those resources. The need for this project has become more and more apparent to me. The graciousness of my senior pastor and his executive team has often been hidden from me, often due to my own anxiety and blindness. It is truly a testament to their desire to keep both communities together that we have come this far. At times it has been much harder to stay than to leave. I am glad we have stayed.

On the first day of the *Leadership in Emerging Culture* cohort at George Fox University, we were all asked the question of what the emphasis of our projects would be. As I stated what I hoped to research and discover I can remember one of my classmates, Mark McNees, shouting out, "Can't happen!" I was taken back as I was in a new school, did not know anyone, and was immediately challenged on my premise. I took stock quickly and tried to think of something else to write to about which I would be as passionate for. As all those who have completed this level of education know, if you do not have passion for the subject, it is much harder to complete. But to my chagrin, nothing else came to mind. So I chose to stick with this topic, and I am glad that it has come to fruition.

It is my genuine desire and hope to that this project may become a resource for those churches who do not seek multi-site endeavors, but seek to bring a strong new community into their midst, to grow and integrate with this community, and to ultimately experience the joy of dynamic unity. It is not impossible. It is hard, it is humbling, and it is the work of God in the local church.

If I have grown theologically through this process, it is due a growing understanding of a relational God. Before this program, I found myself always struggling to put words to the unease I often felt with an expression of faith that did not seem to resonate with my own worldview. The more I heard Leonard Sweet speak, read his material, and exegete the metaphors he would leave with us, the more I began to understand that I had been a visitor to my own expression of faith. The trinity made little sense because I did not understand it in a relational context. My ecclesiology spent little time reflecting on the power of connections and what the Body of Christ truly was. As

this became more clear, my expression of faith became much more my own. Gone were the borrowed words that had previously defined me, and in their place was a deep desire to understand the relational nature of God and how it plays out in the relationships we keep, seek, and hope for. Without this understanding, this project would have been bankrupt of relational priority, which I have come to believe is the very nature of God himself. As we understand this, we become the *imago dei*, the image of God. This image is reflected in our communities, their missiology, but foremost in their Christology. To be in relationship with the Giver of Grace becomes the fountain from which every community, every relationship held therein, and every person is filled. I will be forever thankful for this outside understanding of what was held in my heart.

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APPENDIX A

Metaphors have a way of leaking into your soul and your consciousness. We use them as word images in order to capture the essence of a concept; the elemental meaning of a thought or an idea. Metaphors are the currency of language in today's postmodern-post-everything world. We invest in them because they contain meaning and insight. Perhaps we lean on them because of the very nature of today's communication in a hyper-connected, hyperactive world.

Or perhaps we use them because they are stories. Good metaphors are good stories. And good stories have a life of their own; they preach their own sermons and create their own meanings. They ultimately go beyond the conversation and saturate us with a deeper vision and understanding than most of would have had either way.

Or maybe we use them because Jesus did. Maybe that is enough.

I can remember taking a walk in downtown San Francisco ("The City" for those in the know, San Fran for tourists looking to offend the local population). That particular city I have always found fascinating. Its proximity to water makes it beautiful to me. And it's penchant for unpredictability creates great memories.

One of these memories of The City holds particular meaning for me.

It was a gorgeous day. Those phenomenal days when it is chilly but not cloudy. The sun was shining, and as I walked past the Trolley turn-around, it seemed to shine of it's former glory. Rather than the run down remnants of a past era of transportation, the trolleys seemed to glow.

As I continued to walk away from the turn-around and head up the street, past the Mac Store, I was suddenly overtaken by fog. Fog the likes of which I had never seen before. It turned the burning streets into grey blocks of foreboding. Not to be overly dramatic, but it truly changed the tenor of The City that day. It became dangerous and I became anxious. The once calm streets became nervous with people rushing, rather than lollygagging by the sun-drenched buildings.

But as I soaked in the change, and literally became soaked in the mist, the beauty of what was happening began to grow on me and in me. Everything was different, everything changed. Because truly, the mist changes things, the mist permeates everything you are, you don't see things the same anymore, you understand your insignificance, you feel alien on the ground, and, hopefully, you realize that the mist is a gift!

There is a particular character that comes out of the city when you experience the rolling fog. Just simply the way that it overtakes roads and buildings and cars and people and makes them seem as if they are something other than they were. In the process of becoming "other" you see things that you had perhaps never seen before. The lights of the cars glow wider and brighter than before; the shop windows reveal not just merchandise but respite and rest from the overtaking that is taking place.

The city seems to take on a life all its own. It has become something else. And once you have experienced this phenomenon you understand that you might be overtaken at any moment. You come to respect it. You come to welcome it. You grow to lean into the permeating mist that will cover you. And truly, when it is not there, you miss it.

It is in the midst of the metaphor of the mist that we may find an image to exegete. A gift of a picture that can clarify what Christ is to us, and the presence that we seek. We need something to explain the overwhelming priority of Christ in our theology and praxis of our faith. A thing that goes beyond the stationary and static explanations of Christocentricity and moves us toward a more dynamic understanding of who Christ continues to be in the world today. We need an image that can encompass both the metaphors of journey and destination, of kingdom of God and empire of man.

To perhaps coin a phrase; I am seeking to explain the concept of ChristoPresence. This is overwhelming sense of Christ being all and in all and over all. It is a move beyond the metaphor of Christocentricity that brings us to a myopic view of Christ in the world. Christopresence stretches past the static nature of a point in time or geography and moves us toward the dynamic interplay of Christ in the world, in the spaces between us, and in the pauses of our sentences. The awkward silence becomes God-breathed respite in which to recognize the holiness of Christ in everything.

Christ in the midst of us.

Christ in the mist of us. . .

The Mist Changes Things.

To encounter the presence of Christ is to see through a filter that changes things. It is a filter that changes everything. This Christ soaked vision of the world holds us to a different interpretation of the most mundane and natural things of this world.

While a sunset has always been brilliant, to see it through the mist of Christ is to acknowledge his presence in the creation of a sunset. His ability to weave together

matter and create a masterpiece of tranquility and beauty is indeed the first step to acknowledging his ongoing presence in the natural world.

Of course, the sunset is only one of the many symbols of his handiwork that take us back to the most elemental understanding of a God who creates a place for his creations to encounter and glorify Him. To see Christ in Creation is to remember Him back to his rightful place among the trinity. As he was shorn from the side of his father, our acknowledgement of His hand in the inception of the physical world is a nod to the indelible penmanship of his part in creation. His hand, working in accordance to the fathers', created the grass on which we walk, the air that sustains us, and the love that inspires us. Truly, creation was, at it's beginning, an act of pure and unrequited love for that which he had envisioned us to be.

Finding Jesus at the heart of creation also acknowledges his divinity. We too often see his humanity in his incarnation, without recognizing his deity in the creation of all that we see, touch, smell and encounter on this earth. For Creation was not just a gift given to Him as well as us by the Father, but the result of a partnership of love that sought to create a place of unending wonder for those who would inhabit it. To find Christ in the smallest revelation of nature is to find the deep and indwelling love that he has for us, and that he has had for us since water was separated from land.

While those without a knowledge of Christ can see and steward creation, those of us with an understanding of the presence of Christ understand that what once was, an unsoiled revelation of his love, will once again be restored to it's former glory. We see His creation through the mist and realize what has been and what will be when it comes that that which he has made.

I love those movies that begin with an old picture of a building or a town and then slowly morph into what the building or subject has become. The change in perspective that the camera shows often reveals truth before a word of dialogue has been heard from the soundtrack of the movie. In this same way, the mist of Christ reveals His creation in the way it was supposed to be seen. It reveals a changed creation. A creation that is not only crying out for restoration, but is changing because of our perspective on it.

The mist of Christ changes everything, but that change comes from our vantage point and the filter we are looking through. The building may be the same building, but because our sight has changed we see something else, something different, something redeemable. Something worth acknowledging as God-breathed and with the potential to become, once again, God-honoring.

The mist permeates everything you are.

If you have ever walked around the central valley of California during the Thule Fog, you know what it means to become soaked when it is not raining. The fog is so thick you stop your car far off the road and wait. The mist makes it simply too dangerous to drive as usual. Often, as you stand outside your car waiting for a break in the fog, you will come to realize that if you are not wearing a rain-repellent jacket, that your shirt and your arms have become saturated with water. You reach up to touch your hair, and it feels as if you were just in the shower. It can be surprising as the mist simply settled upon every part of you without you realizing it.

The same can be said about the presence of Jesus Christ in your life. As we begin to acknowledge his presence, it is as if we have put our hands to our head and realized that we have become permeated with His presence. It does not hide itself from our experience. The mist seeks to saturate even the hidden compartments of our hearts, the places we would rather keep dry. To be soaked in the presence of Jesus is to be chilled to the bone, to be drenched in the love that is his grace and the presence, which is his kingdom.

There is not a thing that cannot be covered in his presence. The kingdom of God is a vast and varied land that has the perpetual covering of Grace upon it's fields. To wake in the kingdom of God is to be covered in the dew of the experience of who he is and how He loves. Christ is king in His kingdom and we have been given not only access, but a place to call home within his presence. As Stott says; "to be invited to the kingdom is to actually be invited to live in the palace with the king." We are called not only into a new life, but also into the influence of Christ in our lives. Each day, everyday, we awake in the dew-covered kingdom of Jesus Christ; a place where He resides with us.

This permeating mist plays out in practical ways as well. As we begin to give way to the priority of Christ in our spiritual experience, we see all the peripheral nature of that which is not of Christ. Our theology submits to the all-covering priority of Christ. We speak of Sabbath, but only in Christ; we speak of Creation, but as Christ's love and presence is exposed in the Genesis account; we speak of man, but only as he submits to the priority and supremacy (Colossians 1:15-23) of Christ. Jesus Christ becomes the overflow of our hearts (Luke 6:45), and our lips sing one song, in many parts and voices to his glory and grace.