

1-1-2005

Metanoic Adaptation: The Necessary Experience that Precedes Church Revitalization

Wayne Evans

George Fox University, passah@ameritech.net

This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Evans, Wayne, "Metanoic Adaptation: The Necessary Experience that Precedes Church Revitalization" (2005). *Doctor of Ministry*. Paper 187.
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/187>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

**METANOIC ADAPTATION:
THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE THAT
PRECEDES CHURCH REVITALIZATION**

**By
Wayne Evans**

**Fulfilling a portion of graduation requirements in
Candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry**

George Fox Evangelical Seminary

Portland, Oregon

2005

DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

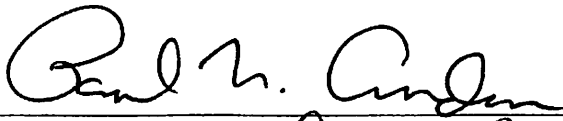
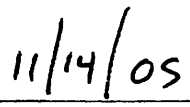
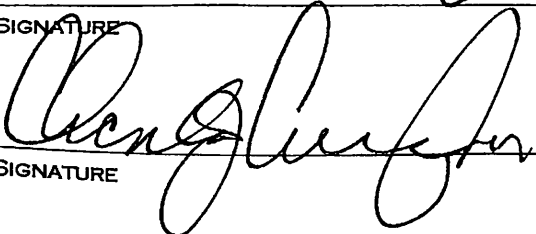
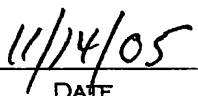
WAYNE EVANS

PRESENTED: NOVEMBER 14, 2005

TITLE

**METANOIC ADAPTION:
THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE THAT PRECEDES CHURCH REVITALIZATION**

***WE THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ THIS
PROJECT AND APPROVE IT AS ADEQUATE IN SCOPE AND
QUALITY TO COMPLETE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN
LEADERSHIP IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION DEGREE***

	
SIGNATURE	DATE
	
SIGNATURE	DATE



**GEORGE FOX
EVANGELICAL SEMINARY**

To Regina

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi

Chapter

1.	THE PARALIZING PROBLEM FACED BY CHURCHES AND THE THESIS OF METANOIC ADAPTATION	1
	Introduction	
	Eastern Region's General History	
	Eastern Region's General Theology	
	My Own Personal History	
	Western Area's General Demographics	
	The Thesis	
	Summary	
2.	THE RENEWAL PROCESS OF A CHURCH'S SELF-IMAGE	34
	Introduction	
	A Historical Perspective	
	The Sociological Perspective	
	Leadership	
	Resources for Re-Imagining the Church	
	Examining a Key Contributor	
	Summary	
3.	THE ADAPTIVE PROCESS OF CHURCH INNOVATION ...	62

Introduction

Approaches to Adaptation

A Friends' View of Outreach

Return to a Key Contributor

Summary

4. A CASE STUDY: FRIENDS WORSHIP CENTER 81

Introduction

Identifying a Church and a Pastor

A Process to Promote Metanoic Adaptation

November 9, 2003—Launch Day

The Story Continues

Summary

5. LOCAL CHURCH REVITALIZATION THROUGH THE
EXPERIENCE OF METANOIC ADAPTATION 99

Introduction

The Need for Revitalization

A Church's Renewed Self-Image

One, the Church Must Pray

Two, Old Hurts Must Be Healed

Three, Pastors Must Teach Sound Biblical Theology

Four, the Church Must Receive Encouragement from Others

Five, Hope Must Be Conveyed Through Realistic and

Compelling Vision

A Church's New Plan for Ministry

The Plan Begins With an Examination of Current Ministries

Next, the Plan Will Often Need to Address

Pastoral Leadership

The Church Then Moves to Implement New Ministries

and Outreaches

A Traditional Conclusion

Summary

Final Conclusion

Appendix A: The Story of Revitalization at Friends Worship Center 121

Preliminary Precautions

Adding Principles from New Church Specialties

Moving Forward

Appendix B: Changing the Future of a Paralyzed Church 129

Defining the Context

Lesson One: The Recognition of Paralysis

Appendix C: Lesson Two: The Recovery of Spiritual Passion 135

Appendix D: Lesson Three: The Roles of Lordship, Leadership, and

Followership 139

Appendix E: Lesson Four: The Return of Purposeful Ministry 143

Appendix F: Lesson Five: The Realization of Your Church's Deepest

Dreams 147

Works Cited 151

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the desire swelled within me for further education in the late 1990's, I held little hope that pursuing it was possible. Books still felt like Superman's kryptonite to me; family funds were very tight; and the standing of my Master of Arts degree seemed insufficient for acceptance into a doctoral program at any seminary. I discussed this dilemma with Dr. Paul Anderson who had attended Malone College at the same time I did in the 1970's. He is now a professor at George Fox University and has—arguably—become the world's leading authority on the Sixth Chapter of the Gospel According to John. He encouraged me to allow the George Fox Evangelical Seminary to perform an educational audit on my transcripts. This endeavor revealed a manageable level of coursework that could be done to earn the seminary's acceptance. The seminary did accept me into the Doctor of Ministry program and I prepared to join. Soon after that, scholarships surfaced and I looked forward to reading the books that arrived for the first semester of courses. Without Paul's encouragement, I never would have pursued the studies that have affected each week of ministry ever since they began. He has since become my dissertation advisor. I will always be grateful to Paul for his encouragement and for his help in preparing this document.

Dr. John P. Williams Jr. has brought a unique form of encouragement to me, as well. We have been friends for over twenty years and colleagues in the World Outreach Center for thirteen years. He and his wife, Carol, inspire me to be a man of pursuit—to

aggressively pursue the Lord, the people in my life, and excellence in all I do. He has taught me immeasurably more about ministry than I could possibly list here and he has counseled me in my studies. He also helped me obtain scholarships and airline tickets. I am grateful to Dr. John for his patience when my studies interfered with my ministry as one of his assistants.

One very special couple, Dr. Ron and Carolyn Stansell, provided me a home whenever I attended classes in Oregon. Altogether, I lived out of their home in Newberg for two months—rent-free with most meals included. They teach and work at George Fox University with unselfishness, however this was an extraordinary act of kindness on their part. I am grateful for their friendship, encouragement, and care. I will always remember the times we watched Super Bowls, debated the politics of State of the Union addresses, and dreamed of God's plans for ministry with the Evangelical Friends International—over which Ron serves as the International Director and I serve as the North American Treasurer.

At Malone College, three people stand out for their special assistance in preparing this dissertation. College President, Dr. Ronald Johnson, has consistently encouraged me and made his staff available to assist any need I experienced. Head Librarian (Stanford Terhune) and his assistant (Jan Anderson) fulfilled that. They expressed personal pride in my efforts to learn and apply what I was learning. They took unselfish steps to teach me technical matters and to obtain research materials. They also took the time to engage me in discussion about the lessons of Metanoic Adaptation with their remarks of how much the insights may help churches regain vital ministry.

A number of people reviewed my writings and provided insights that helped to shape this project. Included in that are my fellow-superintendent and friend (Rev. John P. Ryser), my parents (Darrell J. and Jean Evans), my fellow-students in Cohort C (Dr. Richard C. Sartwell and Dr. Colin Saxton), a member of my first church at Rollin (Dr. David Rawson, the former United States Ambassador to Rwanda), our office Administrative Assistant (Julie Jenkins), and my friend and colleague (Rev. Bruce Bell). Additionally, I am grateful to the committees who provided scholarships: the Charles DeVoi Scholarship, the EP&E Board Scholarship, the David M. Leach Scholarship, the John W. Sarrin Scholarship and the George Fox University Scholarship. They believed that I would take the lessons of Spiritual Formation and Leadership from the classroom and apply them for the benefit of everyday ministry in local churches.

Most of all, I am grateful to my bride of twenty-six years, Regina Evans. Regina gave me the freedom to study and write, listened to my endless recounts of lessons learned and books read, and read my drafts as they were developing. Her consistent expressions of belief in me and of delight in my growth brought me joy and courage. Aside salvation, she is the greatest gift ever given to me by the Lord.

To all of these individuals and many others, I say thank you. I will endeavor to live up to the trust you have invested in me.

ABSTRACT

Title: METANOIC ADAPTATION: THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE THAT PRECEDES CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Author: Wayne Evans

Year: 2005

Institution: George Fox Evangelical Seminary

A look at the church landscape shows that once vibrant and influential churches sometimes have stagnated or died. Without a remedy, some of the EFC-ER churches I superintend have already faced this. My contention is that such churches can be revitalized. When, how, and with what tools can they be transformed? I answer these questions in this document. Revitalization is not a formula to guarantee success; it is an experience that spiritually and strategically remakes the church from the inside out. I call the experience *Metanoic Adaptation*. By research and experience, I frame the conditions, components, and course for that experience.

Chapter One presents the paralyzing problem within the context of the churches I serve and my own life. I claim that the Metanoic Adaptation experience is an internal

change that leads a healthier church to externally change its ministry to find greater fruitfulness.

Chapter Two explores the first portion of the Metanoic Adaptation experience: the church's self-image. A literature review describes psychological, sociological, and ecclesiological insights that foster the internal *metanoia*.

Chapter Three delves into the second portion of the experience: the reformation of the church's outreach ministries. Contributors from varied backgrounds—including a Friends view of outreach—establish the timeless principles of adaptation.

Chapter Four examines what this experience looked like in the case study of Friends Worship Center to demonstrate the experience that propelled them to double their attendance and financial statistics within a period of six months.

Chapter Five distills the key lessons of the previous chapters and presents them in a format for a broader audience, such as an article for publication. Appendices follow that further detail the case study (Appendix A) and provide teaching outlines for use in a seminar setting (Appendices B to F) on the subject of Metanoic Adaptation.

ABBREVIATIONS

CBC	Circleville Bible College
EFA	Evangelical Friends Alliance, predecessor of EFI
EFC-ER	Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region
EFC-MAYM	Evangelical Friends Church—Mid-America Yearly Meeting
EFI	Evangelical Friends International
EP&E	Evangelistic, Pastoral, and Extension Board of the EFC-ER
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NCS	New Church Specialties
NCU	New Church University
OYM	Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, predecessor of EFC-ER

CHAPTER ONE: THE PARALYZING PROBLEM FACED BY CHURCHES AND THE THESIS OF METANOIC ADAPTATION

Introduction

Thirteen years have now passed since I first began serving as the Western Area Superintendent of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region (hereafter referred to also as the EFC-ER or Eastern Region). My official title somewhat misrepresents the extent of my territory. While the Western Area originally plotted on the map between Battle Creek, Michigan and Columbus, Ohio, other churches have been added since my arrival. They are located in southern Florida and around New York City. I also supervise the Friends churches in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The entire collection of churches is quite diverse in size, geography, ethnicity, worship styles, and languages. A brief look at these churches will shortly follow.

With such diversity, the leadership approach required by each church will vary from one to another. At one end of the spectrum, a superintendent who acts as a cheerleader can meet the needs for some of the churches, while at the opposite end of the spectrum, other churches benefit from a superintendent who more nearly resembles a courtroom judge. In between those two extremes, a superintendent's role can vary from a coach to an accountant, with other possibilities required at times. These roles can change from time to time, as well. Experience has shown me that having more than one role to

offer a church is equivalent to a carpenter having more than one tool in his toolbox. Using the correct tools at the right time adds to one's effectiveness as a superintendent.

In writing this document, I note that the problem of stagnation and decline is not unique to the Western Area of the Eastern Region. Within my area of responsibility, however, I can document statistically the reality of the problem. Some churches have already deteriorated to the point of closure, and answers are needed for others before they face their own demise.

I accept the premise that churches often have cycles of birth, maturity, plateau, decline, and death.¹ Evidence the congregations found in the New Testament; most died over the course of history. If it is therefore equally true that some churches may die a premature death—preceded by stagnation and decline—then the question that needs to be asked is obvious: how can these churches be identified and revitalized? In answering that question, both the literature and my experience point to a necessary experience that addresses attitudes and actions preceding any hope of revitalization. This necessary experience, including both spiritual and strategic elements, is something I call “Metanoic Adaptation.” Exploring the basis for such a claim and its implications for church renewal is the central interest of this study.

Metanoic Adaptation identifies the emotional element that lies behind the behaviors of a church and seeks to challenge and modify it so new behaviors have the opportunity to benefit the church's vitality and long term future. External changes in behavior without the internal changes preceding them will have a short life and may lead to deeper discouragements further endangering the vitality and survival of the church.

¹ Larry McKain, ed., *New Church Blueprints: For New Start, Restart & Refocusing Churches* (Kansas City, Missouri: New Church Specialties, 2003), 26.

Eastern Region's General History

The Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region in general and the Western Area in particular began in the earliest days of the State of Ohio. Originally, pioneering Friends from the eastern and southern areas of the United States settled in or near towns and formed Friends congregations. Those congregations grew to the point that the Baltimore Yearly Meeting decided to purposely organize the Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends in 1812 as a forerunner of further yearly meetings located west of the Alleghany Mountains. The name of “Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends” (or “Ohio Yearly Meeting”) served as a simple designation for the collective congregations to identify themselves when they would meet for an annual conference to conduct common worship and business. A copy of the minutes from the first annual conference in 1813 can be found in the Everett L. Cattell Library of Malone College in Canton, Ohio.² Over the next century, additional and growing congregations brought growth to the Ohio Yearly Meeting. During that same time, the Ohio Yearly Meeting experienced two painful separations. These separations will soon be examined further, but they point to strengths that can be utilized as a part of Metanoic Adaptation.

While Ohio Friends began with a strong farm-orientation, that decreased over time. The sites chosen for yearly meeting headquarters exemplify this change in orientation. Mt. Pleasant—and later Damascus—were communities that became greater population centers of Friends from 1813-1964. They were both agricultural in their socio-economic character and, as such, matched the churches’ overall culture. By the

² Jonathan Taylor, *Minutes of Ohio Yearly Meeting: First Held at Short Creek House* (Short Creek, Ohio: Ohio Yearly Meeting, 1813).

1960's, however, more churches could be found in towns, cities, and suburbs. With the 1957 relocation of the church's college (Malone College) from Cleveland to Canton—and with a relatively young and growing Friends church in Canton—the move of the headquarters to Canton became a natural move to make. Yearly meeting sessions moved first in 1965, followed by the offices in 1975. Business and worship sessions that had been held in a wooden tabernacle in Damascus were then conducted in the gymnasium of Malone College. A rented Nazarene sanctuary succeeded that for a time (1987-2001) and, currently, the “sanctinasium” (a combination sanctuary and gymnasium) at the newly built campus of Canton First Friends Church hosts the annual sessions. In 1992, a new headquarters building was constructed and dedicated as the “World Outreach Center”³ with its offices, conference rooms, and small chapel.

Friends in Ohio rode the same wave as the rest of the state with the industrialization, urbanization, computerization, education, and globalization developments of the times. Nearly all of the churches have added education and fellowship facilities over the years. The blended worship styles of hymns and choruses have become increasingly common. Mission-oriented work teams have taken an ever-growing number of people to other parts of the world for days or weeks at a time. Additionally, even smaller churches have begun to make use of modern technology. Modernization has not been lost on the churches, and Eastern Region churches have demonstrated that they can adapt.

³ Dale Chryst, *The Minutes and Proceedings of the 1992 Yearly Meeting Sessions, The 180th Yearly Meeting of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region* (Canton, Ohio: The Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 1992), 29.

The progressive nature of the history highlights a certain strength required of the Eastern Region churches to spark the spirit of revival needed in churches that seek revitalization over stagnation or decline. In a previously published book to which I contributed a chapter on the history of religion in Ohio,⁴ I demonstrated how the values of our history have guided us into the future by taking our beliefs, applying them to innovation, and utilizing the innovations to facilitate evangelism and more effective ministry. In this vein, Eastern Region's history also contributes to a discussion of ways to move forward in the future.

Consider our beginnings. Friends, or Quakers, trace our religious roots back to England in the mid-seventeenth century. George Fox, our founder, led a spiritual revival that spread rapidly—even to America. As early as 1654, the Friends movement displayed a “nascent energy and universal mission.”⁵ Fox was willing to challenge the nature and the role of the church in society. That was very unpopular with church leaders at the time; Fox and many of his followers spent time in jail as a result of challenging accepted norms. His call to an unmediated relationship with Jesus Christ and personal involvement with society were hallmarks of the early movement. Passions for integrity, simplicity, and being Spirit-led were deeply felt. For the greater church to have a revitalized mission and purpose beyond mere form and organization, the challenge had to be made. Believers had to experience their faith differently and find new expressions to carry out the call of God. In his own way, Fox led a Metanoic Adaptation for the believers around him—from which the Friends movement was birthed. Consistent with

⁴ Butalia, Tarunjit and Dianne P. Small, ed., *Religion in Ohio: Profiles of Faith Communities* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), 133-137.

⁵ William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, Second Edition ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), 306.

the claims of Metanoic Adaptation, Fox empowered people to search for religious meaning through personal encounters with Jesus Christ and to articulate their newfound faith through worship, social causes, and lifestyle choices.

As the Friends movement spread to the New World, various authors have identified individual migration patterns. Gene E. Stanley has identified that farmers from the northeastern colonies (the future New England states) migrated to the southern colonies (states) believing this allowed them to profitably pursue agriculture and commerce without the religious persecution they faced in the north.⁶ New problems, however, awaited them in the south. Following the American Revolution, political victories allowed them to gradually disengage from slave holding, but this severely hampered their ability to earn an acceptable living.⁷ Daniel Boone, himself a birthright Quaker, succeeded in opening the way westward to new lands in the late-eighteenth century; and they began to migrate once again.⁸ Many of them came into Ohio through the Cumberland Gap and across the Ohio River.⁹ At nearly the same time, other Quakers from eastern states made their way to Ohio by way of the National Road that arrived in Wheeling (now West Virginia) in 1821 and Columbus (Ohio) in 1827.¹⁰ These Quakers had had a different life-experience than the southern Quakers. More of them were urban, educated, and wealthy; and they came into conflict with the southern-oriented Quakers whose culture was just the opposite.¹¹ David E. W. Holden demonstrated that these two

⁶ Gene Edmund Stanley, "The Beginnings of Quakerism in Ohio" (Master of History, Ohio State University, 1953), 5.

⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ Ibid., 54.

cultural orientations clashed in the disputes of the nineteenth century. This will be covered later.

For the first century and a half, the Friends movement largely faced its struggles in a united way, but several divisions emerged by the first half of the nineteenth century. The first generations of Friends preached from the Bible, were led by the Holy Spirit, lived simple and holy lives, and minimized organizational structures. Worship services were silent unless the Holy Spirit moved persons to speak. Biblical faith can be demonstrated by their writings, but an organized structure for leadership development and discipleship was not practiced. William C. Braithwaite quotes Fox and his fears of an over-developed organizational structure. Fox wrote about institutionalizing and warned them of the danger of being clogged with business, “so that ye can hardly do anything to the service of God, but there will be crying, ‘my business, my business.’”¹² It can be said that an allegiance to these forms of the first generations of Friends contributed to the problems of the nineteenth century. A lack of clarity and a clash of cultures fostered an unfortunate conflict between Friends over theology.

In the midst of that conflict and beyond, experiences of Metanoic Adaptation returned in the Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends a number of times: at each of two separations, with the participation in the revivalist movement, through the conference of the Richmond Declaration, into the new period of pastoral training and missionary endeavors, and beyond.

Early in the nineteenth century coinciding with the first two decades of the Ohio Yearly Meeting, an uneasy polarization was taking place between culturally and

¹² Braithwaite, 309.

ecclesiastically different groups. Elias Hicks spoke out against the willingness of Quakers to cooperate with the changing world and broader evangelical practices. He advocated a primitive Quaker witness, believed that Jesus only *became the Christ* [italics mine] over the course of His life, and taught that holding to the Bible as the final arbiter of one's faith bordered on idolatry. Philadelphia Quakers tried to resolve the problem only to see that Hicks had a sizable group of followers. The two groups separated in 1827.¹³ By 1828, yearly meetings around the world tried to decide which of the two Philadelphia yearly meetings to officially recognize within the family of Friends. In Ohio, the difficulties climaxed in a fistfight—the minutes from that year called it a “riot”—over control of the speaker's podium at the Ohio Yearly Meeting.¹⁴ The two Ohio groups decided to separate. The Orthodox group retained the name “Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends” and pursued what it considered its Christian calling from the Bible; they often chose to be called Friends.¹⁵ The other group pursued its unitarian-universalist theology of preferring to be led by the Spirit detached from strict biblical teachings. According to author Thomas Hamm, the unitarian-universalist group began to increasingly call themselves Hicksite Quakers—with their name referring to the leader of the movement, Elias Hicks.¹⁶

Controversy once again arose within the Ohio Yearly Meeting by the 1850's. The controversy revolved around competing values within the Christian faith. One band of

¹³ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 42.

¹⁴ Elisha Bates, *Minutes of Ohio Yearly Meeting, 1828* (Mount Pleasant, Ohio: Unpublished, 1828), 2.

¹⁵ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

believers followed the leadership of a Friends English banker named Joseph John Gurney, who placed a higher value on Christian mission rather than on Friends culture. His book of *Observations* reads like a training manual for an evangelical Friends' faith and mission.¹⁷ His followers became known as Gurneyites; and their evangelistic outreach led to division and the establishment of Friends yearly meetings around the world.¹⁸ The other band of believers followed the leadership of a Friends farmer from New England named John Wilbur, who placed a higher value on Friends culture than on Christian mission. Author David E. W. Holden describes Wilbur as generally resenting progress: he was against "schools, canals, and factories."¹⁹ He appeared to have a desire for a primitive Quaker faith and lifestyle (his primitive orientation was perhaps influenced by the controversies over evangelism he witnessed in New England and in Europe in the 1820's and 1830's).²⁰ His followers became known as Wilburites; and they were also found in Friends yearly meetings around the world.²¹ It could be described as a Friends version of the classic church struggle between being a light to the world and being a separate community.

After Wilbur's local meeting was dissolved and Friends in New England disowned him in the 1840's, his followers formed their own New England Yearly Meeting.²² Once again, Friends worldwide struggled with which New England yearly

¹⁷ Joseph John Gurney, *Observations on the Distinguishing Views and Practices of the Society of Friends*, Second American Edition From the Seventh London Edition ed. (New York: Samuel S. & William Wood, 1856).

¹⁸ Hamm, *Quaker Transformation*, 21.

¹⁹ David E. W. Holden, *Friends Divided: Conflict and Division in the Society of Friends* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1988), 85.

²⁰ Ibid., 83ff.

²¹ Hamm, *Quaker Transformation*, 27-28.

²² Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 49.

meeting to officially recognize. Nine years of an uneasy tension followed in Ohio. In 1854, however, an easier time of transportation with railroads and riverboats made it possible for Gurney's widow to visit Mt. Pleasant from London, England during the summer yearly meeting sessions. Eliza Gurney's presence gave courage to her husband's followers to make another separation. In the official minutes of that yearly meeting, only the note of her presence was recorded;²³ but the 1855 set of minutes made reference to the "painful separation" that took place in the previous year.²⁴ To complete the separation, a new headquarters location was desired. Damascus was chosen for the new headquarters largely due to the size of the Gurneyite presence of Friends in that community. Damascus had one of the larger Friends congregations in the Ohio Yearly Meeting, a cemetery used historically by many Friends, and land for expansion projects. This land was used for a youth camp and space for both the yearly meeting offices and a Friends bookstore. The worship and business tabernacle constructed in the mid-nineteenth century was used for over one hundred years. It was razed by 1973.²⁵ Organizationally, the Wilburite Friends became known as the Ohio Yearly Meeting—Conservative; while the Gurneyite Friends of the Ohio Yearly Meeting maintained the original name until it was renamed the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region in 1973.²⁶

²³ Jonathan Binns, *Minutes of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1854* (Mount Pleasant, Ohio: Enoch Harris Printer, 1854), 9.

²⁴ Jonathan Binns, *Minutes of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1855* (Mountpleasant [sic], Ohio: Enoch Harris, Printer, 1855), 9.

²⁵ Kenneth Headland, *Minutes: The 160th Yearly Meeting of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region* (Canton, Ohio: The Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 1972), 24.

²⁶ Galen Weingart, *Minutes of the One Hundred and Fifty-Ninth Session of the Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church, The One Hundred and Fifty-Ninth Session*

The separation that resulted from the Gurneyite—Wilburite controversy occurred in the early days of the revivalist movement in America. Early in the 1870's, David B. Updegraff, from Mt. Pleasant, developed into a passionate evangelical himself and began a preaching ministry that took him to many parts of America in the 1870's and 1880's.²⁷ He had close associations with non-Friends, Charles G. Finney and Fanny Crosby—popular leaders of the revivalist movement. Updegraff's ministry shaped many lives and brought changes to the Ohio Friends. He introduced the Ohio Yearly Meeting to new practices of worship—namely baptism and communion.²⁸ These practices were unusual for many Friends/Quakers since the days of George Fox, who objected to their use and especially their misuse. Under Updegraff's leadership, they became more common in spite of the controversy they produced inside and outside the yearly meeting. After two separations in less than fifty years, Ohio Friends were not ready for a third separation. The fact, however, is that they were recast for renewed ministry and remained independent of many other yearly meetings. A world conference of Friends convened in Richmond, Indiana in 1887 to address the changing nature of the movement.²⁹ The outcome was a declaration of the faith and practice that the various groups could embrace while they still had their differences.³⁰ This is another example of Metanoic Adaptation—which will be further defined later. Wise leaders worked through

of the Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church (Canton, Ohio: Ohio Yearly Meeting, 1971), 28.

²⁷ J. Brent Bill, *David B. Updegraff: Quaker Holiness Preacher* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1983), 23.

²⁸ Ibid., 25.

²⁹ Richard C. Sartwell, "The Influence of Leading Friends in Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends, Evangelical, 1854-1919" (Masters Thesis, Earlham School of Religion, 1974).

³⁰ Connie Bancroft, ed., *Faith and Practice: The Book of Discipline* (Canton, Ohio: Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 2000), 128-142.

their differences and maintained the dynamism of progress. They achieved what Fox addressed when he wrote of the formation of men's meetings: "It was to consist of men of sound principles and judgment in the Truth of Christ, though with freedom for all Friends in Truth to assist. Its proceedings were to be conducted in love, coolness, gentleness, and dear unity, as one only party, all for the Truth of Christ."³¹

The principles of Metanoic Adaptation for the sake of the Gospel and the Christian calling on Ohio Friends enabled them to bridge the gap and to join the wider movement of revivalists in America. During that experience, the use of gifted pastors and speakers opened the door for the beginnings of a pastoral system including the selection and relocation of residential pastors for the local churches—a new practice for Friends. It represented a deepening appreciation for the value of discipleship by providing pastoral leadership that enabled Friends to integrate biblical faith and spiritual allegiance. Thus, the deepening value led to new action: local churches began to identify and utilize local pastors. J. Walter Malone's ministry took it another step after the 1880's. During his days of influence and leadership, the Ohio Yearly Meeting began to make use of paid pastors and started to train those pastors at the school Malone and his wife, Emma, founded in Cleveland in 1892.³² The Cleveland Bible Training Institute eventually was renamed Malone College for the founders and moved to Canton in 1957.³³ With the addition of the training institute, a growing pool of new leaders arose. During the twentieth century, trained leaders stepped forward. With the Malone's

³¹ Braithwaite, 339-340.

³² John W. Oliver, ed., *J. Walter Malone: The Autobiography of an Evangelical Quaker* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993), 64.

³³ Kenneth Headland, *Minutes of the One Hundred and Forty-Fifth Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church* (Damascus, Ohio: The Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church, 1957), 25.

encouragement, Ohio Friends also launched a modern foreign missionary movement first into China and then into India. Women like Esther Butler,³⁴ Esther Baird,³⁵ Delia Fistler,³⁶ and Isabella DeVol³⁷ gave their lives in early missionary endeavors around the world—as teachers, doctors, and nurses. They were joined by a number of men like George DeVol,³⁸ Everett L. Cattell,³⁹ Cliff Robinson,⁴⁰ Russell Myers,⁴¹ and Robert Hess⁴²—as teachers, doctors, and preachers.

Following the advancements made as a result of the revivalist movement, the next major advance came as Ohio Friends gained influence in association with other Friends around the country and around the world. Arthur O. Roberts noted that the first concern for evangelical yearly meetings to cooperate came in 1926-1927.⁴³ It came in reaction to the perceived liberal drift among some yearly meetings at the time. Over the next four decades of fellowship and cooperation, the participating yearly meetings—Ohio, Kansas, and Oregon⁴⁴—now EFC-ER, EFC-MAYM (Mid-America), and Northwest yearly meetings respectively—concluded they could accomplish more by banding together for mutual projects and ministries without forming a super-yearly meeting. In 1964, the

³⁴ Charles E. DeVol, *Fruit That Remains* (Taipei, Taiwan: Dixon Press, 1988), 5.

³⁵ E. Anna Nixon, *A Century of Planting* (Newberg, Oregon: Barclay Press, 1985), 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Walter R. Williams, *Ohio Friends in the Land of Sinim* [sic] (Mount Gilead, Ohio: Friends Foreign Missionary Board of Ohio Yearly Meeting, 1925), 158.

³⁸ Ibid., 156.

³⁹ Nixon, 141.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 174.

⁴¹ Susan Lystrup, *2003 Yearbook*, 2002 Yearly Meeting Minutes (Canton, Ohio: Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 2002), 56-57.

⁴² Nixon, 258.

⁴³ Arthur O. Roberts, *The Association of Evangelical Friends* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 1975), 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

three yearly meetings (along with the newly formed Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting) agreed to form the organization: the Evangelical Friends Alliance (EFA).⁴⁵ The ministries of common concern will be outlined below. The EFA became known as the Evangelical Friends International—North American Region (EFI) in 1991. The change in name reflects the worldwide movement that had been evolving through mission endeavors in the preceding century, the egalitarian respect held between the American and non-American yearly meetings, and the theological union that enjoins them. Each step of this development came as a result of the challenge to be more efficient, more effective, and more enterprising. The synergism of the cooperating yearly meetings fostered those qualities for the sake of the gospel. As such, the gradual moves from independent yearly meetings to an international organization exemplify the internal and external components of Metanoic Adaptation. Evangelical Friends experienced another reformation of what they are to be and do.

In America, Evangelical Friends can now be found from southeastern Canada and New England to California, and from Florida to Alaska. Together, they cooperate in endeavors like publishing educational materials, sharing news of common interest, and overseeing a missionary enterprise that now encompasses over 150,000 attendees in more than 1,000 churches in over twenty-five countries.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kenneth Headland, *Minutes of the One Hundred and Fifty-Fifth Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church* (Damascus, Ohio: The Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Friends Church, 1963), 21.

⁴⁶ Wayne Evans, *Follow-up to the Newberg Meetings* (Newberg, Oregon: Evangelical Friends International—North American Region, 2003).

Eastern Region's General Theology

George Fox felt disappointment that the Church he knew in England in the mid-seventeenth century made great use of religious forms, but seemed to miss the heart of a vital unmediated relationship with Jesus Christ. In Fox's *Journal*, he wrote of it:

But as I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those esteemed the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. When all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, oh, then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition;' and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy.⁴⁷

The movement he founded, thus, sought to regain that vibrancy. While religious forms were nearly eliminated, Friends developed an informal structure of government based on biblical models of elders, overseers, and ministers. Quaker simplicity and honesty (whether in worldly possessions or missionary purpose) became banners of identity.

Over the years since then, controversies and passions continued to shape how those qualities would be expressed. The EFC-ER inherited the line of Friends who sought to remain distinctly Christian with an evangelical zeal and purpose that follows both Bible-based and Spirit-led mandates with a clear Christology. Dr. Paul Anderson extended the Walter R. Williams' book, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, with a fresh Epilogue in 1987. He argues that young scholars after World War II concluded that early Quakers were more Christ-centered than earlier scholars believed.⁴⁸ Given the mystical undertones of early Quaker theology (the immediacy of personal and reliable revelation), maintaining clear Christian foundations was not easy. To balance the closeness of the

⁴⁷ Rufus M. Jones, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1963), 82.

⁴⁸ Walter R. Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, 2nd ed. (Newberg, Oregon: Barclay Press, 1987), 255-256.

Lord with the adherence to His Word was worthy of the effort; and it had a profound effect. Theology drove the historical changes mentioned previously. Christ-centered clarity led to two separations. Revivalistic fervor led to the adoption of baptism and communion, as well as the introduction of the pastoral system. Desires for deeper discipleship led to training pastors. Desires for evangelistic fulfillment led to missionary endeavors. A common sense of mission led to national—and later international—cooperation and organization with other yearly meetings. The biblical model of using elders and overseers led to creating support systems that fit the needs of the times, including the moves to the current World Outreach Center or the reformation of boards and commissions that now exist. Each one of these moves demonstrates internal and external changes in line with the elements of Metanoic Adaptation.

Today, our churches express worship styles that blend traditional hymns and contemporary choruses with preaching aimed at being practical and influential in order to move people closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Purity of heart and life and ministry is the goal. Local ministries have blossomed from earlier efforts in education to meeting the needs of people in many ways: youth events, divorce recovery, marriage rebuilders, sports ministry, care for the poor and aging, crisis pregnancies, preschools and academies, disaster relief, and more. Each one has come as the result of recognizing a challenge to meet real needs and adapting to meet those needs. Even the pursuit of those needs represent continuing examples of Metanoic Adaptation in the EFC-ER.

Dr. John P. Williams Jr., our General Superintendent, has described the passion of the EFC-ER as “GC-squared” (GC^2). In that, he says that we should be “Great

Commission driven in the spirit of the Great Commandment.”⁴⁹ The squaring of the two “GC’s” brings together two of Jesus’ core values. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus charged,

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.⁵⁰

It is called the Great Commission because He calls believers to reach out to everyone with the Gospel. Likewise, Jesus dealt with the heart of the Christian faith in Matthew 22:37-39 by declaring,

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.⁵¹

This is called the Great Commandment because He tied together the love believers have for the Lord with the love we should have for our fellow human beings. In the Eastern Region, we are not perfect at fulfilling that vision, but being driven in that spirit certainly identifies our passion.

While Dr. Williams’ “GC²” ties together the mission and heart of Jesus’ charge to His followers, Dr. Anderson (Editor of the former *Evangelical Friend* magazine) arrived at the same conclusion from another angle in his 1992 article, “The Great Commission in Quadriphonic [sic] Sound.” He juxtaposed monophonic sound (hearing the Great Commission in one way repeatedly) against quadriphonic sound (seeing the richness of

⁴⁹ Susan Lystrup, *1995 Yearbook*, The 182nd Yearly Meeting of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region (Canton, Ohio: The Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 1994), 56.

⁵⁰ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

⁵¹ Ibid.

how the Great Commission is expressed in each of the four gospel accounts).⁵² Mark 16:15 charges the Church to simply go and preach the gospel. Luke 24:49, supported by Acts 1:8, adds the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to effectively witness. Matthew wrote in his chapter 28:19-20 that the church needed to make disciples of all nations in order to fulfill Jesus' desires. Finally, John's account in his chapter 15:14-15 shows the intimacy of Jesus sending His followers out as friends. The richness is seen, according to Dr. Anderson, because, "...each of the Gospel writers complements the others with his own distinctive perspective."⁵³ *G C² or Quadriphonic Sound* [italics mine], Evangelical Friends greatly value the richness of the mission and heart of our movement.

Currently, the Eastern Region alone has an average attendance of over 17,400 in 94 churches.⁵⁴ Together, the churches raise over \$21,000,000 in annual donations.⁵⁵ The bulk of those funds enable the local and regional church leaders to oversee ministry. A great portion of those funds supports the local and national agencies for a variety of causes including the ones previously mentioned. Most Eastern Region churches are Caucasian, but a growing number of ethnic churches (including African-Americans, Haitians, Hispanics, and Taiwanese) are surfacing.

From the historical perspective of these events, Eastern Region churches have repeatedly re-imagined the nature and purpose of the church—always seeking spiritual

⁵² Paul Anderson, "The Great Commission in Quadriphonic [sic] Sound," *Evangelical Friend* XXV, no. 6 (1992): 12-14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁴ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004)."

⁵⁵ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003)."

(internal) and ministerial (external) renewal. Because of that, our history bears out a witness to the experience of Metanoic Adaptation within the Eastern Region.

My Own Personal History

My father and mother (Darrell J. and Jean Evans) saw to it that my brother (Mitch Evans) and I attended Sunday School once we turned four years old.⁵⁶ Mom and Dad did not regularly attend church services themselves, but they exhibited respect for the church and taught values that were largely consistent with the teachings of the church. Mom read Bible stories to us regularly and our aunt (Nancy Skidmore) helped us get to Vacation Bible School, as well. Our family rarely missed any televised broadcast of a Billy Graham Crusade. Even with this exposure, though, the experience of salvation escaped me. In the fifth grade, I received a spanking at school for fighting with another boy. He told me of his desire to enter the ministry as an adult, and I began to call him names like *preacher* and *holy-roller* [italics mine]. After he had taken enough of that, he took a swing at me with his fist. I retaliated; and a full-fledged fight resulted in the hallway. Once the teachers caught us, we were spanked by our teacher, Mr. Gail Robbins. Rather than continuing the punishment at home, I remember my father being proud, saying that he did not think I had it in me to fight.

Later at the age of fourteen, that same boy (Randy Beckley) was a close friend of mine. He never missed an opportunity to witness the grace of God to me. Following multiple invitations to church, I finally decided that if I went to church with him once, maybe I could get him off of my back. When I did go to church with him, we went to a new storefront church in Marysville, Ohio—about fifteen miles from home. The

⁵⁶ Jean Evans, "Growing Up," ed. Wayne Evans (Reedy, West Virginia: 2005).

memories of that day are as fresh as if they had happened yesterday. The guest preacher's name was Rev. Ken Parker, Randy Beckley's pastor. He preached a three-point message on the need for people to come, call, and receive the Lord's grace. I felt personally moved. When he invited anyone to come forward to ask Jesus into his heart, my feet carried me to the altar. After prayer, the preacher moved me into another side room to instruct me to read the Book of John so that I could get acquainted with my new Savior. During the ride home that day, I wondered what I would tell my parents of this experience. Actually, I think I said very little, but my life began to change. Among the first changes, I worked to clean up my language and re-started going to Sunday School.

My Sunday School teacher, Ralph Ridge, at the Claibourne United Methodist Church taught a series of lessons on apologetics with a booklet from NASA scientists explaining why they believed in God. I also read, watched, and listened to anything coming from Billy Graham. Those discipling experiences grounded me in the faith more deeply. After I turned sixteen, I met my future bride for the first time. Not only did Regina Clady and I have great fun on our dates, but we also started regularly attending her youth group meetings at the Fulton Creek Friends Church outside of our hometown of Richwood, Ohio. One of the activities that stood out in my mind in those days was a debate the sponsors (Glen and Judy Schultz) assigned us to perform. The youth group separated into two teams. One team took the side to defend the legitimacy of Christians' playing cards, while the other team took the side to oppose such entertainment for Christians. Since I had been raised playing many card games, I looked forward to defending playing cards; but as it turned out, I was put on the team opposing the practice. By having to make the argument for a side with which I did not agree, I stretched and

learned and presented a strong argument for the opposition. In the end, I do not recall which side won the debate. I do remember how the exercise caused me to search my own values and to be able to understand a side other than my own.

A few months later, I was out on visitation with the pastor of the Claibourne church. That night, I remember praying and having a strange sensation that the Lord was speaking to me. As I thought about the ministry, I sensed Him say: “That’s what I want you to do.” About two days of struggle followed before I knelt in prayer to tell the Lord that that was what I was willing to do. I surrendered my future to Him and to His plan for my life. Two opportunities came quickly to speak at both the Claibourne and Fulton Creek churches. Only at that point did I start attending preaching services. In my mind at the time, I thought it wise to see what this *preaching thing* was all about [*italics mine*]. Those first two sermons were short and full of Scriptures. I practiced the presentations heavily out in the barn—even using hand gestures and voice inflections I had seen Billy Graham use. I patterned myself after him. Fulton Creek’s pastor, Rev. Joe Kirby, was a great encourager of my stretch into ministry. Regina and I grew closer to each other and to the Lord. Time passed, however, before we became engaged. By then, I was already a ministry student at Malone College.

As a sophomore, I transferred to Circleville Bible College (CBC) in Circleville, Ohio—just south of Columbus. It was Regina’s choice of college for herself, but I wanted to be near her and, thus, made the transfer. Part of the course work there was to be engaged in ministry in a local church. Fulton Creek Friends Church offered me a part-time weekend position as a youth pastor. Within six months, I became the acting pastor when the new senior pastor (Rev. Ken Nelson) left suddenly. During my tenure, the

church split. A new senior pastor (Rev. Paul Williams) arrived in the summer, which resulted in my return to lead the youth. That role concluded at the end of my junior year at CBC, when Regina and I married. For a few months, I floated without a position until another church suffered a split and needed an interim pastor. Once again, I served as the acting pastor for a few months—this time at the North Lewisburg Friends Church in North Lewisburg, Ohio. At the time, Regina's mother (Ruth Clady) wondered aloud with me if it might be my calling in life to help split and troubled churches. Reflecting on that occasion recently, it almost seemed to have been prophetic.

Following graduation from CBC, Regina and I began our active careers as pastors. First, there was Rollin Friends Church in Addison, Michigan. It grew from 72⁵⁷ to 98⁵⁸ in average attendance; and we led a building program for a new sanctuary and several other improvements. Near the end of our tenure there, I was selected by the yearly meeting delegates to serve on the Evangelistic, Pastoral, and Extension (EP&E) Board. That board oversees church planting and problem solving. Our first meeting was in Fort Myers, Florida, in January of 1985. The board was sponsoring a church planters conference. I learned by observation that church planters approach ministry differently from other pastors. They were hopeful risk-takers who were passionate about the Lord and about people. Their attitudes invaded our lives and propelled our ministry forward. Our second church was the Deerfield Friends Church in Deerfield, Ohio. It grew from 118⁵⁹ to 189⁶⁰ in average attendance, and again had the beginnings of a building program. We bought land as a church and raised some of the funds to build a new facility on the

⁵⁷ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1980 to December 31, 1980)."

⁵⁸ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1983 to December 31, 1983)."

⁵⁹ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1985 to December 31, 1985)."

⁶⁰ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1988 to December 31, 1988)."

campus. During our time there, Regina and I felt more drawn into church planting and took some extra schooling on the subject. As it turned out, our third church was not a church plant, but a church that was planting other churches. That was the Hanover Friends Church, near Richmond, Virginia, where we served only as the second pastoral couple in their twenty-five year history. By the time we arrived, the Hanover church had already started three other churches. All three struggled in various ways; and both people and money had to be raised to keep them going. One of the first things we did was to reorganize two of the churches and raise financial support. The Hanover church declined slightly in attendance during our time there, going from 233⁶¹ to 217,⁶² but the day school ministry nearly doubled and a new education wing was built even as all church finances strengthened. I was still on the EP&E Board—becoming the President of the Board when I was 32. That involved more travel to churches needing help and guidance.

That background played a role in our General Superintendent, Dr. Williams, inviting us to join his team with me serving as the Western Area Superintendent. That move led us back to Canton, Ohio, in 1992. Since then, my role and responsibilities have increased. At first, I had twenty-seven churches with 3,293 attendees in the area described previously.⁶³ I also assisted or represented Dr. Williams on four boards of the Eastern Region: the EP&E Board, the Missionary Board, the Friends Action Board, and the Executive Board. Over time, the Florida, New York, and New Jersey churches—plus the Finance Board—were added to my responsibilities. I began to write commentary for our adult educational curriculum, serve on two national pastors' conference planning

⁶¹ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1989 to December 31, 1989)."

⁶² Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1991 to December 31, 1991)."

⁶³ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1992 to December 31, 1992)."

committees, and hold the position of Treasurer for the Evangelical Friends International—North American Region. Of special note is the extra work that I received in overseeing the Haitian ministry that came about through the Florida churches. That has led to new churches in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Along with melding existing Haitian churches into an organization that I oversee with our Haitian coordinator, William Bertrand, I have led the way with pastoral training, work teams, and church planting. If all of the American and Haitian churches were added together today, they would number 43 churches with 7,467 attendees.⁶⁴

Through my life, the Lord has drawn me to Himself and given me the capacity to see myself differently—a *metanoia*, or changing of my mind. Personal encounters have convinced me of His caring and leading. This was true when he used Randy Beckley to get me to the church where I met Jesus. It has been true in the way He took Regina and me to each church assignment. When our second of four children was born, Jason tested positive for Down Syndrome. When we felt hopelessness at that news, He showed us that He had been preparing us for that for years without our knowing it. When our firstborn, Diane, came home to tell us she was pregnant, we found in Him the capacity to love and work and prepare for a better outcome than we felt at the time of her announcement. The Lord has mightily used the Bible to teach us and reshape us. His Church has reached out to us with love and guidance. We owe everything to the Lord. From that foundation, we count ourselves fortunate that He has called us into the ministry and used us to help others find their strength in Him too.

⁶⁴ Evans, *Follow-up to the Newberg Meetings*.

All pastors have to face some hurts that find their way into the church. At the same time, I have been involved in multiple churches that have faced potentially crippling dilemmas. The musings of Regina's mother have seemed to be prophetic. It appears to me that the Lord has taken me (and us) into enabling churches with severe troubles to regain health and momentum. True, some have continued to suffer while others have closed. Many others, however, have benefited from the ministry the Lord gave us. Even to pursue this further education at George Fox Evangelical Seminary is a fresh example of that leading—which I did not fully comprehend until I began to research and write for this project.

As I observe, serving as an “interventionist” (as Lyle E. Schaller might put it)⁶⁵ takes a certain combination of passion, skill, and discipline to stand in the gap with churches whose futures hang in the balance. The passion blends energy for endurance, faith to trust the true Source of renewal, desire to see people turn to the Lord, and hope to believe for a better day. The skill brings together God-given talent, education, and experience to deal with dilemmas and chart a course for the future. The discipline restrains emotions when stability is required and forges creative juices into the formulation of a recovery plan that others will embrace for themselves. The passion, skill, and discipline mixture packs a punch greater than a jolt of caffeine, a jigger of intoxicant, and a jackpot of luck. I claim no credit for any qualities the Lord gave me to help these churches other than to recognize the Lord's handiwork in me and continually submit any gifts to His service. I am certainly not perfect at following the Lord or fully

⁶⁵ Lyle E. Schaller, *The Interventionist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 20-21.

utilizing His gifts; but I surrender to Him all that I have; and for whatever is accomplished, I give Him the glory.

Western Area's General Demographics

While my scope of responsibility has increased in recent years, the core of churches from Battle Creek, Michigan to Columbus, Ohio will remain the focus of this project. These are the districts of Central Ohio, Western Ohio, and Michigan. At the time I began serving them, the districts had 7, 13, and 7 churches respectively. Three other church plants in those districts did not report to me; they reported to our church planting coordinator, Eastern Area Superintendent John P. Ryser. Of those 27 churches with which I worked more closely, nine of them were located in the country (Alum Creek, Gilead, Raisin Center, Rollin, Ypsilanti, Fulton Creek, Goshen, Mt. Carmel, and McKees Creek). Four of them were located in towns that had dwindled in community cohesion—in other words, they had ceased serving as towns if towns are identified as having a variety of homes, stores, restaurants, gas stations, and government agencies (Lupton, Raisin Valley, Byhalia, and Somersville). Another two churches (West Mansfield and North Lewisburg) were located in towns that still exist but have a dwindling status of being towns as previously defined. Six churches were located in vibrant towns (Valley View, Tecumseh, Bellefontaine, Shiloh, Trinity, and Urbana). The other six were located in and around cities (Friends Worship Center, Mansfield, Water of Life, Orange Road, Battle Creek, and Springfield). Three of the churches (McKees Creek, North Lewisburg, and Springfield) have either closed or withdrawn as Friends churches.

With churches facing perilous decline in attendance and using attendance to gauge the effectiveness of outreach, that brings in the need to examine the statistics. In 1992, these 27 churches averaged 3,293 in worship attendance.⁶⁶ In 2003—the last year for which there are statistics—attendance in worship averaged 3,142.⁶⁷ That marks a decline of 151. The decline from the three churches that closed or withdrew accounts for 73 of the 151 lost attendees. One other church—Westgate, which became known as Water of Life in 2004—added to the decline after losing 139 attendees. Obviously, Westgate has suffered perilous decline. Two attempts in the 1990's to restore them failed to produce favorable results. In the newest attempt just getting underway with the leadership of the Gilead church, the remaining congregation is restarting. To date, they have reorganized, reintroduced themselves to the community, and experienced renewal including two new conversions in the past six months.

Significant attendance increases occurred at the following churches between 1992⁶⁸ and 2003:⁶⁹ Gilead (from 265 to 506 with a new sanctinasion dedicated in 2004), Orange Road (from 94 to 127 with a new “sanctinasion” added to their already new campus in 2003), Valley View (from 48 to 65), Battle Creek (from 274 to 312 with a new ministry wing being added in the last decade), Ypsilanti (from 112 to 132), Fulton Creek (from 97 to 126 with a new campus), and Shiloh (from 143 to 238 at a new campus purchased in the last decade). At the same time, significant attendance declines also appeared in these churches during the same time frame: Alum Creek (from 91 to 77), Friends Worship Center (from 80 to 64), Mansfield (from 50 to 39), Lupton (from 87 to

⁶⁶ Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1992 to December 31, 1992)."

⁶⁷ Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003)."

⁶⁸ Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1992 to December 31, 1992)."

⁶⁹ Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003)."

62), Rollin (from 77 to 45), Tecumseh (from 140 to 68), Bellefontaine (from 80 to 40), Byhalia (from 66 to 38), Goshen (from 211 to 173), Somersville (from 34 to 18), Trinity (from 622 to 587), Urbana (from 76 to 56), and West Mansfield (from 26 to 17). The other churches (Raisin Center, Raisin Valley, and Mt. Carmel) experienced little change in worship attendance averages between 1992 and 2003.

If this were a sporting record, it could be counted in seven wins (churches that grew significantly), 17 losses (churches that decreased with three churches that closed or withdrew bringing significant declines), and three ties (churches that remained relatively unchanged). The seven with significant attendance increases have celebratory stories to tell. The reality that 17 of the remaining churches have plateaued or declined in attendance demonstrates how great the need is for them to revitalize before they slowly or quickly fall by the wayside and die. They make up over two-thirds of the original Western Area. In the words of Dr. Williams, "Every one of our churches continues to have vital ministry—regardless of their size."⁷⁰ Their contributions to the Kingdom of God may not show in their worship attendance increases; however, they worship the Lord, disciple the people they have, contribute to missions—some with percentages that would put larger and growing churches to shame—and send teams of youth to summer camp or workers to the Friends Disaster Service projects.

According to Dr. Larry McKain of New Church Specialties, churches that are plateaued are usually growing by an average of 5-8% per year just to make up for natural

⁷⁰ John P. Williams Jr., "Interview Regarding the Decadal Study," ed. Wayne Evans (Canton, Ohio: 2004).

attrition.⁷¹ Church consultant Lyle Schaller adds that attendance growth in small and plateaued churches occurs “rarely [and] reluctantly.”⁷² Therefore, the apparent need to revitalize is not only real: it will also tend to be difficult. The question is how to improve the opportunities for success. As this project will show, the answer is not just a matter of technique. Hope lies in a combination of spiritual and strategic components that I call Metanoic Adaptation.

The Thesis

I will begin with an analogy provided by Peter L. Steinke’s book, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*.⁷³ The railroad companies are no longer the dominant industry in America they once were. They considered themselves in the railroad business. As times changed, perhaps we could have seen such companies as the Union-Pacific Airlines [imaginary name mine] or Burlington Automobiles [imaginary name mine] if they had seen themselves as serving the transportation industry in whatever fashion transportation took them. Their self-image as only a railroad business restricted them. The Stanley Tool Company by contrast has not considered itself in the drill business; it is in the business of making holes (whether that takes drills or lasers or whatever hole-making devices develop). The capacity to re-imagine their identity is the first principle of Metanoic Adaptation. In relation to the ministry of churches, re-imagining its identity is the critical internal change that must be experienced before any change in external methodology can occur.

⁷¹ Larry McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints," ed. Conference Attendees (New Albany, Ohio: New Church Specialties, 2003).

⁷² Lyle E. Schaller, *Growing Plans* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 16-17.

⁷³ Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (New York City: Alban Institute, 1996), ix.

The word “metanoic” comes from the Greek word *metanoia*—being defined as “the changing of one’s mind.”⁷⁴ This word forms the theological basis for repentance. Prior to conversion, a person heads in one direction with values and behaviors that take him or her away from the Lord. In repentance, that person has a change of values and behaviors that take him or her in the same direction as the Lord—a 180-degree turn. That person has had a *metanoia*—an internal change of mind (and heart).

The word *adaptation* [italics mine] is described by Noah Lite as a “responsive adjustment”⁷⁵ in one’s actions or recasting them “in a new form.”⁷⁶ It is the ability to innovate as needed. If *metanoia* is an internal change, adaptation is the external change. These are the external changes brought about by the internal changes.

Many churches attempt only external changes to little or no affect. If the external changes bring methodologies that are in conflict with the church’s self-image, the execution of the methodologies may solicit half-hearted energies or may be undermined along the way. The popular phrase, “Close—but no cigar,” befits their efforts. If and when they fail, the churches can return to normal operation satisfied in their efforts to try new things or satisfied to stay with the tried-and-true methods of the past.

It is not the claim of this document that plateaued or declining churches stratify their own preferences above the call of God. Rather, it is my assertion that the theology of God’s call they mentally accept may be in conflict with the preferences of their self-image they emotionally feel. That conflict, therefore, often results in behaviors that reveal a strong leaning to their self-image more than to their calling.

⁷⁴ McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints."

⁷⁵ Arslexis, *Noah Lite Version 1.0* [Internet] (Arslexis, accessed August 28 2005); available from <http://www.arslexis.com>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Metanoic Adaptation can be defined this way. It is the experience of a church changing its internal and heartfelt self-image for ministry (by God's grace) so that it is ready to adapt innovations and strategies in order to more effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the community and world around it.

The claim of this project is that Metanoic Adaptation must be addressed and experienced before a church can achieve revitalization. Furthermore, once the church experiences this, it regains momentum to reach out to others with something worth sharing and finds that worship attendance will grow.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the background of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region in its history and theology. That review demonstrated that there have been eras when practical Metanoic Adaptation has produced new life for the church and its ministry. Without knowing the phrase, the Eastern Region experienced its reality at key junctures in its history. I have also identified my role as the Area Superintendent for the Western Area of churches and explored my own history and theology. With that examination, I showed the thresholds of change beyond which the Lord has enabled me to grow in my relationship with Him and to increase my role in the ministry of His church through the Eastern Region. In both experiences—that of the Eastern Region and my own life—an internal *metanoia* preceded external innovations to produce newfound fruitfulness. That is the effect of Metanoic Adaptation. Finally, I claimed that Metanoic Adaptation is prerequisite to local church revitalization.

In Chapter Two, I review literature that addresses the heart issues of Metanoic Adaptation. Many authors and speakers have offered great contributions on the subject.

Among the contributions, I present one particular source that has contributed beyond the heart issues to offer guidance in the area of innovations and strategies. This is the organization, New Church Specialties founded by Dr. Larry McKain. Some of their contributions fit into both Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

In Chapter Three, I review materials—including those of New Church Specialties—that address the principles of innovations and strategies. These approaches will require adaptations to the ministries commonly offered by churches that are plateaued or declining. Knowing that specific approaches change over time, I evaluate them and offer guidelines that can be timeless.

In Chapter Four, I present a case study of the Friends Worship Center. This church suffered three major setbacks in three years that contributed to their rapid decline. I present the course of action they considered as the remedy for their situation, along with the path of intervention that was finally followed in their revitalization. I show how the principles of Metanoic Adaptation—though that phrase was not used at the time—contributed to the revitalization there. Furthermore, I present evidence that demonstrates confidence to implement Metanoic Adaptation in other churches.

In Chapter Five, I present a summary manuscript that both explains the distilled lessons of Metanoic Adaptation and invites other churches and interventionists to apply the lessons in other congregations. I offer the material so that growing and vibrant churches can make use of the summary lessons before they plateau and decline. My humble prayer is that this will contribute to the revitalization of many churches in the future.

At the end, I add six appendices. One covers the chronology of events that led to the Launch Day at Friends Worship Center to augment the material of Chapter Four. The other appendices serve as working outlines for presenting the lessons of Metanoic Adaptation to churches that may consider pursuing their own revitalization efforts, especially under the auspices of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region and its renewal program offered through the Evangelistic, Pastoral, and Extension Board. The five appendices represent five lessons that can be covered in a weekend seminar.

CHAPTER TWO: THE RENEWAL PROCESS OF A CHURCH'S SELF-IMAGE

Introduction

Chapter One presented the paralyzing problem faced by churches in the Western Area who suffer stagnation and decline in worship attendance. Specifically, the paralyzing problem reaches beyond a church's theology, missiology, and methodology to the more basic heartfelt issue of a church's self-image. What does a local congregation think and feel about itself? What are its core values? How does it see that local congregation's role in the broader Kingdom of God? Each church has answers for these questions, but often the people do not think of them with articulated insight. The answers, however, have a profound impact on the direction of the church's ministry. The corporate self-image of the church either filters in or filters out future paths of ministry action. Some paths may be easier and more enjoyable to take but lead to the church's demise; while other paths may be harder and more difficult but lead to the church's greatest fulfillment. A healthy self-image may fuel future periods of revival; and an unhealthy self-image may undermine any innovations attempted by the church.

The claim of Chapter One is that the principles of Metanoic Adaptation provide the church with the opportunity to re-imagine, or allow the Lord to re-cast, its self-image so that new methodologies can be adapted to affect more fruitful ministry. Chapter Two presents more insight regarding the renewal process in relation to the transformation of a

church's self-image. This will include the literature of authors and consultants who have significant contributions to offer on this subject from historical, sociological, ecclesiological, psychological, and practical points of view.

Political commentator George F. Will wrote in the *Washington Post* and other national newspapers to declare that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) needed to be remade following the fiascos of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. He wrote about the new director, Robert Mueller, hoping that he would succeed in that task. His own words summed up the sentiment: "If J. Edgar Hoover was the FBI's George Washington, the founder, then Mueller may be its Lincoln, the preserver who redefined what he preserved, thereby enlarging it."¹ That is the same sentiment given to other organizations that need to be remade. The popular phrase becomes the "New Iraq,"² the "New [Cleveland] Browns,"³ or the "New Democrat."⁴ Truly a company may overstate how new its old product might be, but it has correctly identified the need to remake it in order to preserve it. Similarly, a church that is stagnant or declining must be remade from the inside out.

A Historical Perspective

During the 1960's, American churches faced new challenges—challenges that can still give insight and direction to churches today. The 1960's were a decade of war and riots, drugs and assassinations, and cultural and generational revolutions. The church of the 1960's encountered those difficulties, plus the resurrection of theological debates

¹ George F. Will, "Mueller May Be FBI's Lincoln," *Washington Post*, February 3 2003.

² Joseph Braude, *The New Iraq: Rebuilding the Country for Its People, the Middle East, and the World*, Paperback ed. (New York City: Basic Books, 2004).

³ Terry Pluto, *False Start: How the New Browns Were Set up to Fail* (Cleveland, Ohio: Gray & Company Publishers, 2004).

⁴ Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 326.

initiated by Friedrich Nietzsche in the 1880's with his "God is Dead"⁵ proclamation, the realignment of mainline denominations, the introduction of eastern religions, and the encroachment of secularism. A spiritual storm assaulted the church of that day, and that assault still exists causing today's churches to continue to wrestle with the issues.

Gaylord B. Noyce argued three factors from both inside and outside the church contributed to the difficulties: 1) a spirit of anti-institutionalism, 2) a response of careless reformation, and 3) an atmosphere of cultural indifference.⁶ The drive to preserve the future of the church through reorganization satisfied practically no one, but it led to a sense of hopelessness in the church. He asserted that hopelessness was due to the fact that survival was not the intended purpose of the church. Paradoxically, survival itself is not an effective object of life-producing mission. Only when a mission drives a group with a focus beyond itself can its survival be secured. The Great Commission, by that token, calls the church to take the Gospel to the world around it.

Noyce contended that the drive to preserve the institutional church had overtaken the call of the gospel and further endangered the future effectiveness of the church. Because of that, he took special interest in a conversation he overheard between two men. One man said to the other, "I think these churches must be empty and closed before there can be much meaningful life in the church again."⁷ It highlights the need to remake struggling churches. The gospel movement had institutionalized, and in the words of

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Second ed. (New York: Random House, 1882), Section 125.

⁶ Gaylord B. Noyce, *The Church Is Not Expendable* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

German scholar, Max Weber, “charisma [became] routinized.”⁸ Old forms that once flowed with grace and power were reduced to lifeless remains. The light of purpose for the church had gone dark.

At the end of his book, Noyce extolled the virtue of being a gospel-driven church. He addressed no course of action for the church to follow to reclaim it; there was no process he suggested to guide churches back to the Lord’s original intent for the church. Rather, he emphasized resisting the urge to protect the institutional church, and he instead called for the church to rejoin the gospel movement. What he identified and elevated is still relevant for churches that are paralyzed by their traditionalism today. Reorganization is insufficient. Religion as usual is insufficient. Only a fresh, burning appreciation for the gospel can form the foundation for revitalization. Metanoic Adaptation seeks to recapture that sense of mission, and then direct that purpose into outreach. Without that, the innovations serve no righteous function.

The Sociological Perspective

In his book, *How Your Church Family Works*,⁹ Peter L. Steinke explored the complex nature of church life. He argued that the church is a sociological structure with a variety of relationships that affect behaviors. As such, the emotional ties complicate how stimuli are handled. New and old alliances and antagonisms form (or reform) as the webs of relationships interact with stimuli. Thus, actions and decisions may be more affected by the relationships involved than by the merits of the matter; and those

⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁹ Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2000).

behaviors can be either wisely or unwisely handled depending upon the health of the relationships.

When an issue arises, systems go into motion. People will respond as distancers at one end of a spectrum and fusers at the other end, with people exhibiting qualities of self-differentiation maneuvering in the middle.¹⁰ The distancers avoid others for fear of the problems of entangled relationships and responsibilities. The fusers are fully entangled or enmeshed in relationships. They are so involved with others that they cannot see situations clearly, nor can they do anything constructive about them. The self-differentiated people in the middle float; they have relationships, but avoid enmeshments. They can both relate to others and maintain some emotional distance in order to deal with actual matters in front of them. They keep themselves and others in a healthy balance, while others either avoid or fully engage people—unhealthy signs for any church.

Steinke argues that the typical desire of a group is to maintain sameness or safety. That drives the group to return to normal homeostatic conditions, meaning without change, they remain in balance. He illustrates the point with a baby's mobile. The mobile hangs over the baby's crib. Objects hang off of several arms that will stay in position and remain balanced until one of the arms is removed. The whole mobile then sways in unbalanced chaos. Once the missing arm is replaced, the mobile returns to its normal balance with no visible change observed. According to Steinke, the church operates in a similar way.¹¹ The people of an established church have learned how to avoid chaotic sways and return to a homeostatic balance if a sway begins. Safety is

¹⁰ Ibid., 11, 38.

¹¹ Ibid., 38.

avored; chaos is feared; and the church goes on its way without experiencing any healthy change that will benefit the church long term.

This condition is a major component of churches that do not adapt to the times. People in the churches have learned to sacrifice their dreams for the sake of harmony. Steinke quotes Michael Nichols, “The main problem is not differences in points of view, it is the emotional reaction to the differences.”¹² Some people press their views, some people appease them, and some people leave the church. These are the marks of immature people who are unable to step back, analyze the situation with some degree of dispassion, and begin to find solutions—which is what a self-differentiated person offers. In the words of G.K. Chesterton, “A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it.”¹³

It may be that plateaued and declining churches have fewer self-differentiated people who help the churches chart a new course. Armed with Steinke’s insights, I can better understand why churches get stuck—it is safer and less risky. It is also less healthy to so highly value sameness. A part of discipleship relates to one’s ecclesiology—what he or she is to believe about the church. It would seem that a warped version of the discipleship one receives in a church encompasses spoken or unspoken matters, such as: appeasement, sameness, and tradition—for the sake of peace. If those qualities prevail, then the dynamism of the gospel is sealed rather than shared; the church has little capacity to attract future leaders with self-differentiated and godly wisdom qualities.

So what can be done once one understands the temptation witnessed in history for people to serve an institutionally focused church? If the activity of self-differentiated and

¹² Ibid., 82.

¹³ Ibid., 41.

wise leaders can help a church retain or regain its ministry dynamic (even to attract new self-differentiated and wise leaders), then the care given to a church's discipleship and ecclesiology must be given specific focus and attention. While Steinke does not engage in serious Bible study in his book [it is more sociological in nature], he does engender reflections on biblical figures who rose to self-differentiated leadership. Moses argued to remain with the sheep rather than return to Egypt when the Lord called him to do so. Only his internal conviction that he was on a mission from God took him back. Paul leaped from being the Church's fiercest persecutor to its leading proponent only because he had a life-changing encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Road to Damascus. To transfer a sense of calling from one person to another or from one generation of the church to the next remains the dilemma of the ages. Discipleship must seek to encompass both the theology (mental acceptance) of the Great Commission and its passion (emotional drive). The resulting personal identification with the call of the gospel propels the internal spirit of revival and the external purpose of ministry in both individuals and churches. One's spiritual growth and ministry involvement hinge on that personal identification.

There are the stories of two churches—as told by author Ronald W. Richardson¹⁴—facing the same problem on the same day in the same town with one handling the problem well and the other handling it poorly. The church that handled the problem well approached it as an event and enlisted the congregation to experience it and work on it together. At the end of the day, they were all tired; but they had hearts of gratitude towards each other and for the solutions they adopted. The church that handled

¹⁴ Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 11-19.

the same problem poorly found itself in one conflict after another, with people blaming each other for what had happened and for the inconveniences they faced. At the end of the day, even the pastor and his wife were not on speaking terms with each other. The first church had a system that allowed them to work as a team, while the second church had a system that fostered a spirit of independence—which led to fragmentation.

That highlights the problem of an unhealthy self-image: it becomes too inwardly focused. The church and its people tend to think too much about themselves—including their personal and organizational survival. A healthy self-image by contrast allows the people and the organization to think more about the needs of other people. To recover that as a healthy church would mean that the people, and the church as a whole, would be better able to transcend their selfish focus and give proper attention to the needs of others. They would have the internal and external capacity to enjoin the Scriptural mission the Lord calls them to fulfill—to evangelize and disciple new people with faith in the Lord.

Richardson presents much more than just those two stories in his book. Like Steinke, he uses the illustration of a baby crib mobile: move away one arm, and the whole thing sways in unpredictable ways. Knowing that a long history of relationships with unresolved issues affects the handling of any current situation, Richardson asserts that that is true even with relationships outside the church. What happens at work, at home, or with a hobby—even during one's pre-adolescent years at home with parents and siblings—enter into current situations. The people involved may not even realize it, but they bring all of that as baggage into the church when the events of church life unfold. Again, a tangled web of relationships greatly affects the handling of current church situations—especially church conflicts.

Whenever a system promotes independence, each person seeks ways to protect him or herself. That person can become either aggressively defensive or offensive, depending upon the situation. However, a system that promotes teamwork can remain more objective in the face of crisis. The person in that team is neither insensitive, nor unfeeling. Rather, the feelings that he or she has just do not need to be acted upon at the time. Finding a solution that the group can embrace and implement has priority. That person also does not subsume his or her feelings. Instead, he or she is willing to test personal assumptions and feelings realizing that they may be wrong. Then Richardson adds that the most healthy and self-differentiated leader is not able to be totally objective.

In the independent model, threats are quickly perceived and acted upon aggressively. One could call it a knee-jerk reaction. In the teamwork model, threats are not quickly perceived. Thus, those individuals (or a healthy group as a whole) can focus energy upon what is a real threat, not on old conflicts or what is imagined to be a new threat. Rather than reacting, they are freer to respond with healthy adjustments.

Richardson claims that people in the church need to find a place to stand. They serve various roles: complainers, troublemakers, peacemakers, leaders, and followers—to name a few. He enters a study of Scriptures to spotlight the healthiest approaches. First, Luke 6:36-38,

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.¹⁵

¹⁵ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

From here, he points to the principle of self-differentiation with the Scriptural injunction to not make snap judgments and to be forgiving. The verses that follow (vv. 41-42) add to that when they record,

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.¹⁶

Next, he refers to Philippians 4:2 as an example of working through disagreements, "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord."¹⁷ Unlike churches that urge people to act alike with sameness as the guiding (and often unwritten) rule, the Scriptures elevate closeness as the guide. The intolerance of sameness creates anxiety that eventually fragments a church. On the other hand, closeness allows people—with all of their differences—to work together and find fresh solutions to the problems they face. Teaching and exhibiting closeness in a church enable the people of the church to work in a healthier environment and have a healthier church. Healthier churches are able to work through difficulties and keep reaching out to others.

Writes Richardson, "Differentiation is equivalent to the biblical concept of wisdom.... Wisdom has to do with people's ability to effectively use what they know."¹⁸ This does not equate with intelligence or academic degrees, although both can greatly help. It may be a greater indicator of the psychological gifts of internal health. Here are four signs of such persons: 1) they perceive reality accurately, 2) they identify their own

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Richardson, 85.

opinions as being opinions, 3) they can formulate possible options for resolution, and 4) they can act flexibly avoiding rigidity.¹⁹ To their wise counsel, less healthy self-differentiated people react—usually with the following approaches: 1) compliance, 2) rebellion, 3) struggle for power, or 4) removal of themselves emotionally from the proceedings.²⁰ He adds that self-differentiated people tend to ask more questions than make speeches. Questions that begin with “When...?” or “How...?” help people think about their responses better and bring more insightful contributions to the discussion than questions that begin with “Why...?” or “Don’t you think...?” since they tend to elicit argument or agreement with the questioner.²¹ In group settings, the same is true. Group discussions on these points may also serve to bond people’s synergistic reflections.

When disagreements escalate into arguments, as they often do before a church split or steep decline in attendance (by my observation), I find Richardson’s writings to be of great encouragement. Not only does he help readers understand what healthy and unhealthy churches look like, he pinpoints the kind of person that can bring about greater health and resolution of conflicts. Churches would do well to identify, train, promote, and follow the wise kind of leaders he defines.

If the case can be made that churches are not traditional enough, taking this admonishment would be very traditional. By traditional, I am referring to the heritage one can see in church history where churches chose leaders for their godly wisdom instead of their family connections or longevity in the church. For example, the Book of Acts points out the qualifications set forth for the first group of leaders to serve under the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Apostles. Acts 6:3 outlines a small group of leaders with a reputation for being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. To appoint or elect such leaders today in our churches would be traditional. The history of the Eastern Region in Chapter One shows a heritage of following George Fox, Joseph John Gurney, David B. Updegraff, J. Walter Malone, and others right down to today's John P. Williams Jr.—people who possessed and utilized those kinds of qualities to help Friends address the challenges of their day with a renewed sense of ministry. To continue to look to leaders like that would be traditional. If a church is to venerate tradition, let it be the tradition of elevating godly qualities of leadership more than methodologies.

Leadership

Not all churches have such self-differentiated leaders. According to church pollster George Barna, “When a church takes a nosedive in attendance or membership, it generally does not make a comeback.”²² Either they die or they stabilize at a lower level. The process of making changes overwhelms the people. He writes, “The Church, of course, was never intended by Christ to be a technique-driven institution.”²³ The commitment to Jesus should overwhelm the process. Thus, trying to both grow in Christ and revitalize the church ranks among the most difficult fetes church leaders try to perform.

Once a church plateaus or starts to decline, service replaces the fun of the earlier pioneering spirit. To successfully reverse the trend requires a new spark of hope and

²² George Barna, *Turn-around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1993), 17.

²³ *Ibid.*, 16.

vitality. Only that spark can overcome the typical eight symptoms found in declining churches: 1) the demographics have changed, 2) inadequate leadership presides over the weakening of the church, 3) poor management squanders opportunities and wastes resources, 4) old blood [which used to be new blood] chokes off new life, 5) building campaigns have had negative effects, 6) an ingrown church family shuts out newcomers, 7) resistance to change stifles future possibilities, and 8) poor spiritual health means that weaker Christians are leading without a proper spiritual foundation.²⁴

The aforementioned spark is the spark of revival. That revival, according to Barna, has three essential modern-day elements: 1) a renewed dependence upon the Lord, 2) the calling of a courageous pastor, and 3) the expression of pastoral love for the people of the church who often feel unlovable as having failed with their church.²⁵ Barna suggests taking these four steps: 1) select a new pastor, 2) release the church's past, 3) define what outreach means, and 4) equip the congregation.²⁶ The new pastor (who possesses healthy and hard-working qualities) must be a leader who: 1) builds team spirit, 2) casts a compelling vision for the future, 3) exhibits spiritual depth in prayer and seeking the Lord, 4) acts as a people-person, 5) thinks strategically, and 6) takes risks.²⁷ He or she can then tackle such realistic things as the budget, the facilities, and the action plan. Because, "Success breeds success,"²⁸ the pastor and other leaders can build upon those successes and find that, "[they break] down people's reluctance to get involved and

²⁴ Ibid., 33-39.

²⁵ Ibid., 42-45.

²⁶ Ibid., 47-49.

²⁷ Ibid., 63-66.

²⁸ Ibid., 80.

lures them back to involvement in ministry.”²⁹ This course helps give a church a new self-image in the spirit of the claims of this document on Metanoic Adaptation.

Resources for Re-imagining the Church

Church growth consultant, Jim Griffith, builds upon this point. He claims that over 100,000 churches closed between 1990 and 2000.³⁰ According to his model, five things that must be addressed in order to rescue a declining church include: 1) create local dissatisfaction with the church’s situation by helping the people think more about the unchurched, 2) enable them to embrace the call of the Great Commission to America which has the third largest unchurched population in the world, 3) highlight for them their need to reconnect with the Bible more than one’s ancestry, 4) empower and unleash the laity for ministry realizing that people do ministry and not boards or committees, and 5) help them to build a legacy and measure it by seeing lives changed.³¹

According to Griffith and other authorities, all of these areas need to be addressed and embraced for the church to gain a new self-image; and out of that comes renewed passion for ministry. It is one thing to make that list; it is quite another thing for a pastor to know how to do that. When the pastor believes he or she is elevating those qualities in inviting ways for the church to adopt, the church may receive it as the pastor preaching *at* [italics mine] them. An unreceptive church can easily dismiss that one voice. The pastor needs to love the people regardless of their lack of receptivity. The pastor will need to

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Glenn Lawson, *Grow or Decline: Warns Church-Growth Consultant (Jim Griffith)* (Congregational Church Development, accessed September 1 2002); available from http://www.congregationalist.org/Archivesold/April_02/Grow_or_Decline_Warns_Church_Growth_Consultant.htm.

³¹ Ibid.

live out the truth of these callings, and not just talk about them. His or her life example may preach better than any Sunday morning talk will ever accomplish. There is a little saying I memorized years ago that fits here: "Your talk walks and your walk talks, but your walk talks farther than your talk walks."³² The key is for the pastor to not talk about these things without living them. That means that the pastor must seek spiritual growth, win people to the Lord, gain wisdom from the Bible, help with new endeavors, and witness lives being changed. He or she also needs to depend upon the Lord to open the hearts of the church people. After all, the church belongs to the Lord.

To further help a pastor challenge a church to re-imagine itself, author Lyle E. Schaller advises using outside consultants or interventionists.³³ They bring perspective and skill to communicate what a church needs to hear and what to do with that insight. He does note the reality that goes along with giving advice by quoting novelist John Steinbeck, "No one wants advice—only corroboration."³⁴ So, much listening must occur for the interventionist to be able to speak back to the congregation their deepest and best yearnings for having a ministry that makes a difference in the face of eternity.

In another of his books, Schaller suggests that a new self-image for a church comes by identifying their relevance and purpose in its community.³⁵ For example, the church may see itself best as: 1) a neighborhood church, 2) a regional drive-in church, 3) a church for young families, 4) a church for school-aged children, 5) a church with a strong youth ministry, 6) a church for more mature adults, 7) a church with a calling to

³² Wayne Evans, "Things to Remember," ed. Wayne Evans (Addison, Michigan: 1983).

³³ Lyle E. Schaller, *The Interventionist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁵ Lyle E. Schaller, *The Small Membership Church: Scenarios for Tomorrow* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 43.

support missions, 8) a church that unites around a particular cause, 9) a church offering a particular liturgy, or 10) a church with varying worship services targeting special groups of people. Schaller claims that not all churches need to be large; but when it is not large, the church must abandon the one-size-fits-all approach that has been the staple of the small church for so long and instead move more into specialization ministries or coalitions that allow the small church to remain vital.³⁶

For a church to re-imagine its self-image, Christian A. Schwarz urges using a tool that he developed and has used thousands of times around the world, *Natural Church Development*.³⁷ He teaches that churches will grow all by themselves, unless there exists some unhealthiness that must be addressed. He uses Mark 4:1-29, especially verse 28 upon which to base that claim: “All by itself, the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.”³⁸

His questionnaire tests where the health or lack of health exists in the church being questioned. All of the responses fall into eight qualities that across countries, ethnicities, and worship styles have proven to give back to a church a view of where they are in their health. Those eight qualities include: 1) empowering leadership whereby leaders relate to the people they seek to empower for the work of the ministry, 2) gift-oriented ministry whereby people serve in the church within their areas of giftedness, 3) passionate spirituality whereby the people are excited about their walk with the Lord and their service to Him through the church, 4) functional structures whereby necessary

³⁶ Ibid., 68-69.

³⁷ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream, Illinois: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996).

³⁸ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

ministries have structures of support that fit their needs, 5) inspiring worship services whereby the presence of the Lord is experienced regularly, 6) holistic small groups whereby the people feel they belong and are growing in their faith, 7) need oriented evangelism whereby outreach is geared to natural contacts and natural needs rather than manipulating new involvement or conversion, and 8) loving relationships whereby people in the church enjoy spending time with the other people of the church.³⁹

Once the results are scored, he provides a guideline on how to implement its findings. I have used his instrument as a superintendent. It is helpful, but more complicated than a plan developed by a secular writer and lecturer, John P. Kotter. In his book, *Leading Change*,⁴⁰ an eight-stage process is outlined. Schwarz suggests an involved plan over a period of years that uses the strengths of the church to build up the weaker areas. Kotter's eight-stage process keeps a focus upon a sense of urgency, building teams, developing vision and strategy, communicating the vision continually, encouraging risk-taking, using short-term victories to consolidate and propel the long-term needs, and—this is a key element—changing the culture so that the company (or church) is truly changed far into the future.⁴¹ The people of the church fully embrace and take ownership of the changes in an atmosphere of accepting changes so that they continue to grow past the natural obstacles that will inevitably arise in the future.

Without addressing churches specifically, Kotter claims organizations in the new century will operate with less bureaucracy, with a flatter pyramid of structure, with less

³⁹ Schwarz.

⁴⁰ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 21.

⁴¹ Ibid.

management and more leading, and more service to the public than allegiance to policy.⁴² As he claims, organizations in the previous century were designed to be more inward-focused and less risk-taking to ensure stability—the very qualities that injure a church's self-image as described earlier in this document.

Examining a Key Contribution

To this point, each author or consultant has made contributions to an understanding of the renewal process for churches and their self-images. The work of Dr. Larry McKain, Founder and President of New Church Specialties, pulls much of this together in a process he labels as “Re-Start and Re-Focus.”⁴³ A part of his *Blueprints* notebook and lectures deals specifically with the self-image of a church, while other parts deal with the strategies that need to be employed to fully complete the subject. Therefore, I will utilize a portion of his works in this chapter and the rest in the following chapter.

In an interview with me for this document, Dr. McKain gave this insight about his organization and its approaches as an introduction:

We began with the assumption that God desires His churches to be healthy in their attitudes, values, and agendas. We believed that if the churches were healthy in these ways, they would have the capacity to reach out to others effectively with proper training. Over time, these assumptions and beliefs proved to be true. At this point, we have helped train over 2,300 church leaders nationwide; and the reports we get back from them is that restored health coupled with outreach strategies has helped many of them to grow.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 172.

⁴³ Larry McKain, ed., *New Church Blueprints: For New Start, Restart & Refocusing Churches* (Kansas City, Missouri: New Church Specialties, 2003), 12.

⁴⁴ Larry McKain, "Interview with Wayne Evans," ed. Wayne Evans (Kansas City, Missouri: New Church Specialties, 2004).

He added that, “Churches—and pastors, too—do sometimes prefer to remain where they are in their condition. They value continuity more than change; and that usually results in continued—what is to them—*acceptable* [his emphasis] plateau or decline.”⁴⁵

In his training notebook, Dr. McKain quotes author Steven Covey who argues that one habit all effective people have developed is the habit of “beginning with the end in mind.”⁴⁶ From that vantage point, one can work backwards in his or her mind to the starting point and considered what needs to happen along the way. With that insight now mentally available, the stages along the path into the future can be anticipated and plans for them can be prepared. A mental creation, thus, precedes a physical creation. Dr. McKain further points out that this is consistent with creation. Before the Lord created a physical man, He thought about the idea and drew conclusions about it first. Genesis 1:26 exemplifies this, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’”⁴⁷ That constituted a blueprint. Dr. McKain applies that imagery to the presentation of his fifteen components in *Blueprints*. They represent thoughtful preparation for the revitalization of churches that need renewal.

Here are the components related to a church re-imagining its self-image (as I have segmented them): Divine Call and Passion, Intercession Strategy, Behaviors Determining Core Values, Vision Description, Mission Statement, Agenda Harmony, and Shared Priorities and Relationships.⁴⁸ As I recount each one and engage them, I invite the reader to notice that these do not constitute a formula for success. Rather, they represent tried and tested attempts at cooperating with the Lord over blueprint issues that

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ McKain, ed., *Blueprints*, 17.

⁴⁷ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

⁴⁸ McKain, ed., *Blueprints*, 15.

must be prayed about, thought about, and prepared for while acknowledging that there must be two other uncontrolled responses: the blessing of the Lord and the adoption of the people. Without those two responses, all of the efforts may lack fruitful outcomes.

The first component (Divine Call and Passion) deals exclusively with the pastor. He or she is essential in the process to refocus or restart a church. The home he or she grew up in provided experiences, values, and relationships that were foundational. A history of wise and risk-taking leadership give insights as to the pastor's tendencies and character traits. One can also look at the pastor's spousal support, work ethic, teachability, and other qualities to gauge his or her fitness for the task. Especially key is the walk the pastor has with the Lord. Dr. McKain states in his lectures that, "There can and should be no doubt or question within your mind that, with God's power, you can achieve those spiritual desires that God has placed within your heart."⁴⁹ For the pastor to be convinced that Philippians 2:13 applies to him or her when it declares, "God is at work in you, to will and to do, according to His good purpose,"⁵⁰ is invaluable. That should join a host of other Scriptures that feed the pastor as life verses from which he or she can draw strength regularly. It helps if the pastor can write out what God has called him or her to do. In the words of J.B. Chapman, "Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips."⁵¹ These matters identify a pastor who has the fire, commitment, character, and skill to lead the difficult task of revitalization.

Intercession Strategy is Dr. McKain's second component. It realizes the spiritual nature of the task before the church in keeping with II Corinthians 10:3-5,

⁴⁹ McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints."

⁵⁰ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

⁵¹ McKain, ed., *Blueprints*, 39.

We do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.⁵²

Therefore, to mobilize a team of prayer intercessors unleashes God's blessings to fulfill His plans for a particular church and pastor. These become people who embody Philippians 1:7, "...I have you in my heart."⁵³ These people may become treasured prayer partners, confidants, and advisors during the process.

In the component on Behaviors Determining Core Values, Dr. McKain zeros in to the church's self-image. He defines a core value as "a constant, passionate belief that drives the church."⁵⁴ If it is constant, change comes to that belief slowly. If it is passionate, it stirs the emotions. If it is a belief, it carries the conviction of truth about it. If it is driving the church, it has power to dictate what will—and will not—happen. An assessment tool from NCS enables the church to identify their core values. Dr. McKain argues that a pastor should reconsider becoming the pastor of the church if his or her core values and the church's core values are too different. He also refers to the tools developed by Christian Schwarz (*Natural Church Development*) and George W. Bullard Jr. (*The Life Cycle & Stages of Organizational Development*) as helpful to the process of identifying and implementing change within a church.

In one setting, I used the lessons on a church's life cycle—particularly the timeline—to allow the group to tell me about the times of their greatest ministry and what qualities were present. By doing that, our conversation led to fruitful insights from which the group was able to draw strength and guidance for months to come—as their

⁵² This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ McKain, ed., *Blueprints*, 62.

correspondence back to me suggested. The exercise allowed the participants to examine where they were and where the Lord wanted them to be.

Vision Description and Mission Statement are often thought of as singular efforts. Dr. McKain separates them, however, for this reason. The Vision Description defines what a church determines is the Lord's desire for them to become. It is a matter of being—the church's spirituality, its relationship to others, its sense of calling, and more. The Mission Statement encapsulates the church's direction and function in a written form. It is a matter of doing—the church's behavior and ministries. Being and doing with new freshness, that is the state of renewal and revitalization. If these statements of understanding are written in memorable phrases and posted in a variety of sources or locations, they have the power to reinforce the experience of seeking the Lord. Furthermore, they have the power to energize the efforts of the church in effective directions and to productive ends.

In *Agenda Harmony & Shared Priorities*, Dr. McKain asserts the difficulty of follow-through. Change comes very slowly and deliberately. A simple exercise illustrates the point. If a person is asked to fold his or her arms, it happens with relative ease; it has been done many times over the years. Then to ask that person to notice which arm is folded over the other arm and to reverse the pattern, that person takes awkward moments to fold the arms in the opposite way. That awkwardness illustrates the difficulty of taking a church through change. Old ways of thinking and old habits must be replaced with new ones. Confidence in the new forms is weaker and often meets with resistance. Because of that, care must be taken to know how and when changes are introduced to the look of the facilities, the order of worship, the personnel in leadership,

the way decisions are made, and more. The best way to approach them is to engage people as they set the agenda, prioritize the changes, and build consensus. I see consensus building as different from peaceful appeasement because it is proactive and it builds upon the most noble ideals and goals, rather than upon a return to normal operation. To achieve the highest degree of unity possible, Dr. McKain contends that not everybody will agree with every change to be implemented; but they can see where they are going, how they will get there, and gauge their willingness to participate. As victory builds upon victory, the confidence grows—and so will the level of participation by those who sit back waiting to see if any of this effort will be effective and beneficial.

Finally, the Relationship component brings to the forefront the attitudes people bring with them to the church. Those attitudes may have to do with the way people look at each other (in positive or negative ways); they may also have to do with the way people look at the church itself. If people have lost confidence in the church and still want to be active, they bring various levels of cynicism that need to be healed. For that, Dr. McKain takes people through a section on falling in love with the church all over again. He has developed this to the point, that he has written a book on the subject.⁵⁵ We in the Eastern Region had him speak on the subject at a pastoral conference in 2003. He referred to Jesus' life with the Disciples and how they let Him down: still He gave His life for them (and us). He added the insight from Ephesians 5:25-29 affirming its challenge to the church with its stains and wrinkles. Dr. McKain argued that Paul challenges people to give themselves to the Lord and work to take the church from

⁵⁵ Larry McKain, "Falling in Love with the Church...Again," ed. Friends Pastors Mini-Conference (Ripley, West Virginia: New Church Specialties, 2003).

“wrinkled to radiant.”⁵⁶ Above all, Paul elevates the need to let the Lord help each one to prayerfully maintain healthy attitudes and love each other.

Addressing those individual components in a local church can enable the people to have a new (or fresh) image of their church, as Dr. McKain teaches. Chapter Four will exemplify how we tried to make use of his fifteen components—along with the lessons of others—in the local setting at Friends Worship Center.

Summary

A pastor friend of mine served in an established church and struggled to deal with the preset traditions and personalities he inherited at his church. As a gifted and eager pastor, he moved on to serve as a church planter. There he struggled with the lack of traditions. He enjoyed the freedom he had in charting the course for his church, but when difficulties arose, there were no preset ways or given leaders to resolve them. At times, he felt alone. Later he returned to another established church—only this time he had a greater appreciation for the traditions and the personalities. He approached ministry there by trying to bring the two church styles together. Experience had taught him more about moving forward—and when to fall back. He understood people better and sought to partner with them to find greater strength and cohesion for the sake of the gospel. He grew in wisdom. Over the years, his new church grew, worked through various problems, added staff, added onto the facilities, and moved ahead as a church.

Churches behave as they do because they are made up of people who have an image of what the church is to be and to do. They act to fulfill that image whether they may know their images consciously or unconsciously. If they possess the wisdom to

⁵⁶ Ibid.

make adjustments in their images over the course of time, they can grow both spiritually and numerically. When they lack the wisdom, they will continue to struggle in a variety of critical areas that stifle the church's ministries and effectiveness. The desire to find safety means they give in to less spiritual motivations. A slow or quick death sets in for the church. The experiences and insights of others provided in this chapter are offered as a means to understanding the struggle of a church's self-image and what to do to renew or adjust that self-image. Not all churches will be willing to seek or gain a new self-image; but for those who are willing, the lessons of this chapter should prove to be invaluable.

In history, Noyce demonstrated that it is fruitless to serve religion in order to keep the church alive. The motivations to seek the Lord and to engage others in sharing the gospel with them hold the capacity to re-invigorate the things the church does and why it does them. Sociologically, Steinke gave insight to the inner workings of churches. The systems of relationships and the emotional maturity of the people determine the capacity of the churches to make changes when needed. He showed the need to have self-differentiated leaders to guide churches through the necessary changes and remain healthy. On a more clearly spiritual or theological tone, Richardson linked self-differentiation to godly wisdom and explored what that looks like and how to promote it. Barna built upon that to describe the essential qualities of a pastor in a church that is trying to turn-around, adding the direction he or she should go in order to maximize the efforts. Griffith highlighted that what the church needs is to focus upon other people and the call of God to share the gospel with them, while Schaller extolled the value of using outsiders to import health to a church struggling with those matters. He also added that a

small church should embrace an image and a role that will be achievable for that church. Schwarz and Kotter both offered tools and guidance on identifying the weaknesses of a church and how to strengthen those areas of need. Dr. McKain attempted to take lessons like those offered by the other contributors and systematize an approach to lead a church through the process of renewal.

This is not an exhaustive list of contributors. The consistent theme taken by those included in this chapter, however, shows that the possibility does exist for a church to change in its self-image—the first principle in the experience of Metanoic Adaptation. Churches may recognize the need for a new self-image; or pastors (even denominational leaders) may recognize it. Either way, the first critical step to take is to be sure a qualified pastor leads the way in the process. Often this may require the selection of a new pastor. All of the individual qualities he or she must possess (from past history and track record to values and leadership) really are markings of a self-differentiated and healthy person. The pastor must be anchored in the Lord and able to share that experience with the church. Prayer, Scriptures, vision, and godly wisdom all exemplify that. The best counter to an unhealthy self-image is a proper understanding of the Lord and His superior image for the church. The pastor must teach the Scriptures by faithfully pointing to God's values and plans for the church. The people need to be presented with sound ecclesiology and a genuine Christian pastoral example. In this, the spiritual disciplines and resulting experiences may be contagious—a sickness for which there is no need of a cure...it is the cure.

If people can identify their self-image and contrast that with God's image for the church, prayer will be required to foster the attitude of submission so as to surrender their

unhealthy image of the church to God's superior image. This *metanoia* is not a technique; it is a spiritual experience over which the Lord must preside. If a church aligns its core values, gains a new vision, and adopts new behaviors, a return to a healthy path can result. Tools are available to gauge these qualities. Various contributors also present guidelines to wisely chart a course that will build team spirit and team commitment, build success upon success, and permanently change the culture of the church. An atmosphere of accepting change—not for the sake of change, but for the sake of fulfilling the Great Commission—is a healthy atmosphere. It is one that promotes a healthier self-image for the church. It is one that accepts—even emotionally—the reality that Jesus laid down His life for the Church as an example for believers to do the same by joining Him in the greatest cause known in this world: fulfilling the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment.

All of this leads to this summation. Leadership is the key to the process of renewing a church's self-image. Leadership looks to the Lord. Leadership relates to the people. Leadership brings people to the Lord. Leadership finds a way to help the church re-examine itself. Leadership shows the church where they can find the spark of renewal and revival. Leadership reconnects the church with its calling and mission. Leadership makes use of available tools and resources. Leadership empowers people to find a new self-image. Leadership lies at the base and fosters the experience of Metanoic Adaptation.

In this chapter, a variety of resources were presented that enable a church to gain a new self-image—one that empowers its passion and vision to do new things, even bringing a positive change to the church. This self-image must include a vision of

becoming what the Lord intends the church to be so that it is ready to do what the Lord intends the church to do. In covering the literature, several principles emerge regarding aspects of church health that are not limited by time or culture. Even as current tools and resources fade over the years in favor of new ones, these principles will still be relevant because history has demonstrated the timelessness of revival and *metanoia* regardless of the tools used to bring about the heartfelt changes.

Chapter Three explores other resources and insights that address what a church with a proper self-image can do to revitalize its ministry to the community and world around it. These will be approaches to strategies and innovations guided by timeless principles I present that require the efforts of re-invigorated believers to implement. It is in the adaptive task that revitalization in plateaued or declining churches depends on the experience of Metanoic Adaptation.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ADAPTIVE PROCESS OF CHURCH INNOVATION

Introduction

For a church to travel the road from the endangered list to the company of the thriving is a difficult trip to make. As others have pointed out, it almost never happens because the required changes threaten the views held emotionally by many of the people about what the church should be and do. The claim of this document is that the experience of Metanoic Adaptation is required for the transitions to occur. Metanoic Adaptation is a two-part process whereby a church can experience a change in its self-image and, then, can begin to change its behavior resulting in fruitful outreach.

I reviewed the need for this process (and provided the background of the churches I serve and of myself) in Chapter One and examined the insights of various authorities that dealt with the subject in Chapter Two. Specifically, that chapter focused on the *metanoia* part of the process: the changing of the mind (and really of the heart) about the church's self-image. These authorities contributed to the subject with examinations of what motivates churches, the complex relationships of church participants, the values they place upon Scripture and prayer, the identification and development of leaders, and the difficulties related to change.

Their contributions distill into these lessons. If churches are to lean upon the Lord in fresh ways and join (or in many cases rejoin) the call of the gospel, they are most willing to undergo changes:

- 1) when declines in attendance and depletion of the treasury endanger their survival,
- 2) when they have godly and wise pastors and leaders who will help them to repair broken relationships, to make essential decisions, and to grasp the spiritual needs of people around them, and
- 3) when they have the resources to show them their areas of both weakness and strength so they can gain a new vision and mission.

Now in Chapter Three, I address the adaptation part of the process. I present it in a secondary position because it deserves to be there. The temptation for churches and pastors is to focus on innovations. Too often, churches have experimented with new strategies and innovations only to see them fail. When the self-image of the church is in conflict with the images assumed by the new strategies and innovations, the church wittingly or unwittingly undermines the potential for success. If the church has embraced a new self-image, however, then it is drawn to find and utilize new approaches that fit a new sense of vision and purpose. The new self-image is no longer satisfied with the old ways; it seeks new adaptations. Even current ministries that are retained will face makeovers (new funding, equipment, personnel, excellence, or whatever). People will want to see improvements. Does this mean that everyone in the church will so welcome the new adaptations immediately? Not necessarily. Some eagerly want to try the new ways, while others want to see the results first before they have the confidence to be so passionate about it themselves.

Approaches to Adaptation

Rose Sims was married, widowed, and remarried. With the leadership and help of her two husbands, she answered the special calling to revitalize declining and even closed churches. Before her retirement, she (and they) rescued twelve such churches! In her book, *The Dream Lives On!*, she writes, “Some people say, ‘Seeing is believing.’ I say believing is seeing.”¹ For her, a new start for a church begins with a biblical and practical vision. After that, goals must be set and pursued until they are realized. Leaders must handle money wisely—spending the money as investments that will yield good results. The people must possess and practice good people skills and self-discipline. Then the church must observe the needs of the people around them and respond with loving ministry, or create needs in the church to which people can respond and get involved. A succession of events must be arranged and contacts with new people must be sought in order to build upon the momentum. Her strategy involved projects that repaired the church facilities, events that gave people the opportunity to become a part of the new beginnings at the church, and creating an atmosphere that fostered acceptance of new people attending. Her character and personality (leadership) weighed heavily in bringing about the changes and the atmosphere that led to revitalization.

William M. Easum writes about twenty church-growth principles in his book, *The Complete Ministry Audit*.² It is a self-help book pointing to the things churches should aim to achieve. These include: 1) meet the needs of people, 2) give people choices, 3)

¹ Rose Sims, *The Dream Lives On!* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Bristol Books, 1989), 143.

² William Easum, *The Complete Ministry Audit: How to Measure 20 Principles for Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

match ministry assignments with people's skills, 4) prevent inactivity among attendees, 5) broaden the church's outreach into the community, 6) participate in the public arena and be seen by the community, 7) emphasize worship, 8) add worship services with styles of worship that match the people being reached, 9) value the pastor and his or her leadership strengths, 10) promote a growth-mindset within the paid staff, 11) think clearly about the size and strengths of the congregation, 12) provide plenty of space, 13) provide adequate parking space, 14) decide whether the church can build, 15) seek non-transfer growth, 16) be friendly toward visitors, 17) do not be afraid to ask for money, 18) build the ministry upon a solid foundation, 19) plan strategically, and 20) work hard and make changes.

Easum argues that differences exist between the generations in the church. He asserts that the older the congregation, the more difficult will be the possibility of reaching newcomers.³ It is not the age that is the problem as much as it is the way the older and younger generations communicate, the way that they relate to others, and the preferences they have toward everything from money to music to hobbies. The differences keep them from connecting. Although he does not advise a church of older people to give up on reaching younger people in the community, he does claim that it will be very difficult to do it. He advises targeting those in the community that the church demonstrates the capacity of reaching (by virtue of how they connect with them).

The Tenth & Broad Church in Wichita Falls, Texas, reversed ten years of decline by creating small groups. That is the claim of John Knox, the pastor who led the efforts

³ Ibid., 17.

with what he called, “growingroups.”⁴ He observed that people *grow in groups* [italics mine] and that the groups were *growing groups* [italics mine]. Out of that, he reports that the church began to grow in attendance. That church’s first small group was with newlyweds. It mostly involved newlyweds who came from outside the church. They had fellowships, Bible studies, and retreats that bonded them to each other. Then, as a group, they began to come into the church. By that, his older congregation did not have to relate to young people one-by-one; they came as a group. What he did was to establish a church within a church. It required training for new group leaders in the groups and training of welcoming skills for the existing church (so they had an atmosphere that welcomed the groups as they entered the church).

As the number and kinds of small groups grew, he developed visitation teams who made contact with the newcomers. This came under the banner of S.W.A.T. teams with S.W.A.T. standing for “Something Wonderful At Tenth & broad [sic].”⁵ That encouraged people who were established in the church to have better ties with newcomers on a personal basis and to spread the synergistic excitement between both sets of groups. It convinced them that the Lord was doing a new thing through the local church. In that, it was not just Knox bringing newcomers (or “guests.”⁶) to the church; rather, the whole church was a part of the outreach effort. As that bonding took place, he merged couples from the established and newcomer groups into “Enterprise”⁷ teams who ministered and evangelized further newcomers when the church had special events that

⁴ John Knox, *Reversing Ten Years of Decline: Church Growth Analysis*(Center for Church Growth, 1995, accessed June 22 2004); available from <http://4churchgrowth.com/chur4170.htm>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

brought in guests. The strategy created ways for new people to join a small group in order to receive ministry and fellowship, followed by those people joining a ministry team in order to provide ministry and fellowship to still more newcomers. By this strategy, Tenth & Broad produced producers and reversed its attendance decline as they experienced revitalization.

A Friends' View of Outreach

As the Pastor of the Canton First Friends Church for ten years (during which time the church grew from an attendance of 423⁸ to 1,101⁹) Dr. John P. Williams Jr. followed principles and strategies that he carried into his tenure as the General Superintendent of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region (which has grown from an attendance of 11,727¹⁰ to 17,459¹¹ during his fifteen years). In an interview with him, I asked Dr. Williams to explain those principles and strategies.

During his discussion with the church's search committee prior to his arrival at Canton First Friends Church, the committee asked Dr. Williams what programs he wanted to employ if he came to the church as its pastor. He answered, "I don't know. I would like to get to know the people first."¹² He then explained that motivation to me with his assertion that he wanted to discover who the people were, how they viewed the mission of the church, what gifts they possessed, and how to utilize those gifts to advance the church's ministry. Dr. Williams dislikes copying programs. He argues that copied

⁸ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1979 to December 31, 1979)."

⁹ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1989 to December 31, 1989)."

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004)."

¹² John P. Williams Jr., "Interview with Wayne Evans," ed. Wayne Evans (Canton, Ohio: 2005).

programs fail because the leaders fail to take into account the people involved. Too many church growth experts promote the programs that worked in their situations and fail to advise local leaders that they need to contextualize—adapt what will work in the local church where they minister. Williams contends that ministry must be more concerned about the people than about the program.

Dr. Williams claims that ministries must be customized to fit both the gifts of the ministers and the needs of the recipients.¹³ Early in his tenure at Canton, he focused on two groups for outreach: singles and athletes. Single parents came to his house for a weekly Bible study. They bonded with each other as they grew in their faith; and they felt concern for their children and how they and their children used their free time. Since the church already had a small gymnasium, Dr. Williams organized a league with coaches (often athletic parents) who modeled the Christian faith for the team. In effect, they pastored the teams they led and reached many newcomers with the gospel. This led to an innovative move a few years later. He hired Greg Linville to serve as the church's Minister of Sports and Recreation. According to Dr. Williams, it was one of the first churches in the country to develop such a full-scale sports ministry.¹⁴ Sports involvement grew to four times the average attendance of worship services and became a feeder system to the church with new seekers and new believers. From home Bible studies to basketball games, he found people responded to the gospel when presented in ways that related to their perceived needs.

As the church grew, more and more ministries (both in-house and parachurch ministries) sought exposure with the people of the church on Sunday mornings. They

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

wanted to involve the congregation somehow with their ministries. There were too many ministries to give each a Sunday per year to make their appeals. Dr. Williams seized the opportunity to do two things at once.¹⁵ He organized the Sunday School classes and other small groups in the church to teach their participants that they could have personal involvement with the Great Commission by studying and engaging various mission fields and other ministries. He had them focus their efforts towards a date for a mission fair at which those small groups in separate booths could creatively present what they were learning, while the parachurch ministries could make their own creative presentations, also in individual booths. People came and passed by booth after booth sampling the foods of particular countries, shooting basketball hoops for summer camp, flying paper airplanes onto a plywood mission field runway, and signing up for drama teams—among others. People experienced something of ministry involvement with dozens of ministries in a fun evening event—arguably more than they would have experienced had there only been Sunday morning talks.

Dr. Williams contends that the launch of a new ministry takes: 1) observation to see what people have and need, 2) prayer to seek the Lord's mind on how to move the people closer to Him, and 3) creativity to design ministries or events that will draw people into the experience.¹⁶ These are transferable principles for a transformational ministry in other churches. For this, he has not been opposed to the programs of others. In 1988, he believed the time was right for the Canton church to plant a new church. The church hired David Tebbs as the church planter and made preparations to spin off 50-100

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

people in the effort. *The Phone's For You*¹⁷ campaigns were newly available to churches at that time. In this outreach (which became less productive as the rise of telemarketers assaulted people in their homes with repeated calls), banks of telephones were set up, scripts and mailings were prepared (as customized by Dr. Williams and his leaders), and teams of callers were trained. Thousands of calls preceded hundreds of mailings. Scores of unchurched people then attended the first services of the new church—Jackson Evangelical Friends Church in Massillon, Ohio. This sixteen-year-old church now has over 875 regular attendees and has become the fourth largest church in the EFC-ER.¹⁸ Dr. Williams celebrates the fact that during the time several attendees from the Canton church left to start the Jackson church, the Canton church still grew in the same year.¹⁹ The new church did not begin and grow at the expense of the mother church: both could reach new people with the gospel simultaneously. The key of success, he asserts, was not to look for winning programs, but to look for ways to involve people in meaningful ministry. Once again, valuing people overshadowed valuing programs.

This bears out in what I have witnessed with churches that have copied programs into their ministries. Pastors tend to promote the programs of other churches to their churches as *the way(s)* [italics mine] to do ministry—perform the ministry *this way (these ways)* [italics mine] and the church will find certain and predictable results. With such an appeal, the churches grant permission for the expenses and efforts. When they fail to achieve those results, the pastors become discouraged and suffer a loss of credibility. Already this document claims that one of the reasons new ministry programs fail is

¹⁷ Norman W. Whan, *The Phone's for You: The Church Growth Workbook That Works* (Whittier, California: Friends Church Southwest Yearly Meeting, 1986).

¹⁸ Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004)."

¹⁹ Williams Jr., "Interview with Wayne Evans."

because the people wittingly or unwittingly undermine the efforts when the efforts and their results clash with their image of the church. Dr. Williams supports that with his claim that the people are forgotten in the implementation of the programs when those programs are simply copied into the ministry of the church. This requires wise leaders (as described in Chapter Two) who will apply themselves to design ministries that fit the congregation and its setting.

Return to a Key Contributor

In Chapter Two, I covered the ministry of New Church Specialties led by its founder, Dr. Larry McKain. Of the fifteen components he teaches for church revitalization, I segmented seven of them as applying to the *metanoia* principle of that chapter. The remaining eight components—as I apply his teachings to the scope of Metanoic Adaptation—relate more to the adaptive portion of the experience. As I wrote in Chapter Two, these components recognize the mystery of God’s blessing and people’s adoption as they help local leaders think and pray about how to lead and how to prepare for necessary changes in the local church. They include: Ministry Focus Group, Launch Team Roles, Timeline and Critical Milestones, Ministry Flow Chart, Location and Facility Evaluation, Outreach and Advertising Strategy, Church Multiplication Strategy, and Comprehensive Budget and Stewardship. As covered earlier, Dr. McKain draws a parallel between Steven Covey’s principle of “beginning with the end in mind”²⁰ and God’s blueprint in the biblical creation—“Let us make man in our image, in our

²⁰ Larry McKain, ed., *New Church Blueprints: For New Start, Restart & Refocusing Churches* (Kansas City, Missouri: New Church Specialties, 2003), 17.

likeness.”²¹ Vision precedes action. With that parallel, he teaches pastors and leaders to visualize the church in its revitalized form and think backwards to know what steps need to be taken in order to fulfill that vision. His approach assumes the inward work has been taking place in the people of the church as he teaches the more adaptive components. In my analysis, the teaching of the adaptive components only fit if the inward work has taken place. A heartfelt revival must precede the adaptive steps for the adaptive steps to have any hope of a fruitful outcome.

The Ministry Focus Group points to Jesus’ ministry as an example of targeting people and people groups. Jesus ministered to multitudes of people. He launched seventy-two of His followers into ministry. His focus, however, was with the twelve disciples. Dr. McKain argues that Jesus selected a target group into whom He poured His life and through whom He birthed the future church. Claims Dr. McKain, “Most churches are effective, only when they focus their limited resources and attention on reaching a specific group of people, and they do it on purpose!”²² His notebook provides materials for surveying a community, as the ministry focus is determined. It would be consistent with his teachings to say that the church needs to know who they can reach before efforts can reach them.

Also connected to the targeting approach is Dr. McKain’s component on Launch Team Roles. He claims that seven to fifteen people are essential in re-focusing a church.²³ That number allows for efficient training and effective deployment in a variety of roles he describes. This ranges from roles in music to finances. Spiritually, the people

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 56.

²³ McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints."

on this team need to reflect the qualities seen in I Samuel 10:26—“Then Saul also went to his home...accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched.”²⁴ This group needs to share and be committed to the values and vision for the future of the church. That means that they become the backbone of the church. They provide advice, spread the vision, and lead teams of ministers on the day the church is re-launched.

Another vital component of *Blueprints* is Timeline and Critical Milestones. This builds upon the premise of the NCU philosophy that a clear vision of the church’s future allows leaders to think backward with a plan of action. Dr. McKain suggests that leaders write the needed actions on post-it notes that can be moved around on a large board before creating a calendar. That calendar puts fundraising, gardening, training, redecorating, and more into a feasible format and determines when a launch date (a date when the church can aim its outreach efforts to begin) is achievable. The timeline provides goals and energy.

In the Ministry Flow Chart, thought and prayer are required as Dr. McKain claims. They are needed to understand how people move from one place in their experience with the church and the Lord to another. How will non-attendees feel invited to our church? How will they find friends and a place where they feel they belong? How will they be led to the Lord and discipled? How will they find a place to serve the Lord in the church? To ask such questions will help leaders design a flow taking shape as people move from one place to another. This is where Dr. McKain relies on “Divine Moments.”²⁵ He defines divine moments as reliance upon the Lord doing what only He can do—create and take advantage of moments when an individual encounters Him.

²⁴ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

²⁵ McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints."

Without people praying and expecting divine moments, they will not happen. So, prayer must be an important element of the flow chart.

Location and Facility Evaluation examines the place of worship and ministry. It requires the attention befitting its importance. John 10:42 records, “And in that place many believed in Jesus.”²⁶ Matters related to accessibility, accommodations, affordability, and atmosphere all need a critical eye. Funds must be committed to make the facility function at its peak level—or move to a better facility at a better location. There is an old saying that Friends are notorious for finding the best location for a church and settling on a place five miles from there. That may be true of other denominations, as well; but to the extent that it may have been true with Friends, our churches need to accept the reality that unchurched people have a low tolerance for substandard facilities and hard to find locations. The shops and stores they frequent do not have poor facilities...why should the church? Why should going to church feel like stepping into a time machine and going back in time? As Dr. McKain declares, it should not.

Outreach and Advertising Strategy is another of Dr. McKain’s components. The nature of advertising has become more diverse and expensive in recent years. That requires churches to select a plan for promotion that fits the need and the budget. Newspapers used to meet the advertising needs of the church. That is no longer true. Statistically, McKain claims that direct mail, yard signs, and websites now are producing the best responses.²⁷ The best things to promote are special events because they are more captivating and give people a reason to attend. If the facilities must be exceptional, the graphics used in promotions also must be exceptional. The goal is to draw a crowd.

²⁶ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

²⁷ McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints."

Once they have gathered, the goal shifts to bring them back again. The return visits work to establish a relationship upon which the doors of trust open so that the church earns the necessary credibility to share the gospel with the people who are starting to attend.

What excites the heart of God? Dr. McKain argues that it is this, “The transformation of that individual life that walks into Christ’s church, helping them move from pre-Christian to global disciple!”²⁸ That takes the believers valuing people beyond themselves. No longer is it about what meets those believers’ needs; rather it is about the needs of others. This leads the growing believer to strive for evangelism and discipleship whether that happens in one’s own church, with new church plants, or by supporting world missions. Leaders need to help attendees value these things because the Lord values them. “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24).”²⁹ Dr. McKain argues, “There is a huge difference between addition and multiplication. And God is into multiplication. Big time!”³⁰

Dr. McKain’s final component is Comprehensive Budget and Stewardship Development. He argues that a church needs to cast a critical eye to the way it spends its funds as much as it examines the facilities. At the same time, he contends that new funds need to be raised. If the church has made progress in its vision, mission, and agenda, an atmosphere is created that encourages new giving. Beyond that, annual stewardship campaigns teach the spiritual nature of giving and elevate the local reasons for giving.

²⁸ McKain, ed., *Blueprints*, 126.

²⁹ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

³⁰ McKain, ed., *Blueprints*, 127.

Summary

This chapter has not focused on specific methodologies. A great variety of them have come and gone in recent years—undoubtedly with more to come in the future. What those methodologies have offered, however, must not be lost. They have given valuable insight into communicating with the community, attracting a crowd, building relationships, and producing world class Christians. On the other hand, what those methodologies have lacked is the reason they faded into history. Some tactics have been overtaken by technology, while others became oversaturated in the community as other churches and businesses used the same techniques to reach people for their causes. Still more tactics fail to touch lives beyond a certain shelf life. Gone are the days of expensive bus ministries, radio broadcasts, and telemarketing. Pastors have gone from seeking to be great preachers to being great counselors to being great chief executive officers (CEOs) to being great team builders. They have attended seminars on prayer ministries that will increase their church attendance and conferences on stewardship programs that will build facilities to attract newcomers. Flannel graphs have yielded to three-dimensional platforms, and they have yielded to PowerPoint video presentations. The machinations show unending creativity, but none can be considered as *the thing* a church could do to assure successful outreach.

By contrast, this chapter has maximized general approaches. Approaches utilize principles that are more universal and timeless. They do more to spotlight ideals or set goals. They are more practical and adaptable. For a church that has gained a new self-image through revival and now is dissatisfied with the status quo, direction is given to channel its new spiritual devotion and energies. The contributors in this chapter—by my

estimation—coalesce into three key approaches: 1) acquisition of new pastoral leadership, 2) application of basic focus, and 3) adaptation of an effective process. I will elaborate on each one.

Acquisition of New Pastoral Leadership

Each of the listed contributors from Sims to McKain drew upon the need for—or the timing of—pastoral change. Several reasons explain the benefit of the change. One, any negative baggage the church may have had with previous pastors is replaced with a form of imputed hope and optimism in the new pastor. That means that the people place their hopes for new possibilities into the new pastor simply because he or she lacks a negative history there. Two, a new pastor can initiate changes during the hopeful period often referred to as the honeymoon. Churches locked in a struggle for significance are more likely to embrace leadership for change. If the pastor fuels the church's new self-image through preaching and by example, and if he or she exhibits godly wisdom and ability, the door will open. Three, the new pastor can rally people and share his or her faith with them. That faith is a confidence they need to share. It is based in the Lord and in themselves as a church. It is a faith—or confidence—the people can borrow from the pastor until they can exercise their own faith. If faith becomes sight, the momentum can be perpetuated. Beyond seminary training, a pastor who has been exposed to the process and experience of bringing change to a church—perhaps under the tutelage of his or her own pastor (or a mentoring pastor)—will enable the pastor to become a more effective change agent in this new place of ministry that seeks revitalization.

The pastor cannot squander the goodwill the church extends to him or her. Sound biblical preaching and teaching—along with vision-casting and action plans—must be

followed or accompanied with results. Even little victories provide evidence to make further efforts. Sims and Knox empowered their churches greatly by the power of their personalities and abilities. Easum argued for connecting those qualities with the people in a variety of ways. A new pastor who possesses a mix of gifts that promote those results is the first part of the adaptive plan.

Application of Basic Focus

Dr. Williams may have exemplified these same qualities when he joined the ministry at the Canton church, but he takes those lessons a step further with his claims that the wise and effective pastor must demonstrate more than personality and energy; he or she must demonstrate humanity. It must be clear to observers that people matter more than programs (to the pastor). Adjusting budgets and practices or launching new ministries cannot be copied from another church without taking into account the local church and its people. He advocates customization—counting that as personalization. One church cannot do what another church can do. People are unique as are churches. Family connections, age groupings, histories, occupations, hobbies, educational background, financial status, location, personalities, and health create a myriad of possibilities for outreach ministries. Some churches may be able to excel with musical ministries or sports; others may do better with Bible studies or children's events; still more may be more effective with men's activities or newlyweds; and many may stress their website or mailing prowess. Match available strengths to non-attendee's needs and fruitfulness will follow.

Dr. Williams argues that the key to any ministry and outreach is commitment to the gospel. Reaching out to the community and drawing crowds together are not ends in

themselves. They must serve the greater vision to evangelize and disciple. For metanoically-motivated people, their efforts will carry that basic passion. They are convinced of this truth: without their ministry efforts to people in the community, many of their friends and neighbors will live unfulfilled lives and face a Christ-less eternity. With the heart of evangelists, however, they will be able to love these people with greater care and acceptance as they all proceed on their own spiritual journeys with the Lord. Like the pastor who needs to demonstrate that people matter more than programs, the people of the church need to feel the same thing—people matter more than attendance and more than donations. People are more valuable. Jesus died for the whole world, indeed; He also died for the individuals in the world. That basic focus will keep the heart of the Christian faith in their outreach efforts.

Adaptation of an Effective Process

From setting budgets to arranging teams, Dr. McKain argues that churches must think through the process and adapt their strategies. As he contends, it begins with a blueprint or a vision of the future which the church can think about in reverse order as it enacts its revitalization plan. The pastor who teaches and reaches out to that end—matched with a church willing to make the changes—prepares the church for effectiveness. The location and facilities will be upgraded, a calendar for training and improvement projects will be followed, ministry roles will be defined and activated, and other areas will be addressed in the blueprint. A whole church movement will take the gospel to others. McKain argues for the use of mailers, lawn signs, and websites in getting the word to the public; but all of these things must follow an action plan.

In this chapter, I presented claims from contributors for approaches and principles that must be adapted by churches in order to complete Metanoic Adaptation. The role of new and gifted pastors, the focus upon personalization of ministries, and the process that builds a visionary future all contribute to the greater fruitfulness of the church. Metanoic Adaptation blends the changes of heart and mind (addressed in Chapter Two) with the changes in ministry and operation (the focus of Chapter Three) so that the gospel can more effectively touch lives in the surrounding community. In that way, the church is empowered to more completely fulfill the calling given by the Lord in the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

In Chapter Four, I present a case study that supports my claim about Metanoic Adaptation. The Friends Worship Center had declined to levels that endangered the church's future. Then a bold plan that developed out of a brainstorming session with the superintendents was set upon. Training from New Church Specialties further defined the steps of change that led to a revitalized church. The Friends Worship Center more than doubled in size in a period of months and continues to grow as the chapter shows.

CHAPTER FOUR: A CASE STUDY—FRIENDS WORSHIP CENTER

Introduction

As superintendents and with the support of the Eastern Region boards, we regularly offer information and inspiration for pastors and churches to forestall problems and to facilitate church health and effectiveness. To serve those ends, we hold team meetings for our pastors three times per year (Yearly Meeting in July, Mini-Conference in December, and Pastors' Conference in April); we send out monthly mailers with attitude-shaping devotionals and news of materials and seminars that leaders may find helpful; we fill pulpits sharing God's Word and providing vision for God's calling upon our lives and ministries; we maintain regular contact with pastors by phone and on site; and we design training seminars that fit local needs on topics ranging from worship to leadership and from conflict resolution to pastors' taxes. What a great privilege we as superintendents feel for the opportunity we have to affect the health and capacity for our churches to fulfill their potential! If church growth consultant Jim Griffith is correct when he asserts "about 85%"¹ of all churches in America are either plateaued or declining, that then means only 15% of all churches are growing. When attendance in the

¹ Glenn Lawson, *Grow or Decline: Warns Church-Growth Consultant (Jim Griffith)* (Congregational Church Development, accessed September 1 2002); available from http://www.congregationalist.org/Archivesold/April_02/Grow_or_Decline_Warns_Church_Growth_Consultant.htm.

Eastern Region has grown (according to one study) in 45% of the churches from 1993²-2003,³ that therefore means that 55% of our churches have not grown. As Dr. Williams has pointed out, these non-growing churches are ones that faithfully proclaim God's Word and demonstrate various levels of vitality as they contribute to the cause of Christ.⁴ However, given that 45% of the churches are growing, we are doing better than the national average within the Eastern Region; and the case can be made that our efforts have not been in vain. The Lord has graciously blessed us.

For a variety of reasons, however, some efforts have not benefited the churches as desired. In those cases where pre-emptive efforts have not produced the fruit of health and effectiveness, our policies provide the authority—in extreme cases—to officially monitor a church's decisions and behavior or to officially take control of a church and make leadership decisions for it. This authority is vested in the Evangelistic, Pastoral, and Extension (EP&E) Board and is managed largely through the superintendents (and a small task force when deemed necessary).⁵ In the past decade, this action has been called for only a few times. In those cases, we have usually tried to resolve any current dilemmas, provide training that encourages new healthy behaviors for the church, and get momentum going again with new outreach. It goes beyond the scope of this project to examine those churches because closure or withdrawal has even occurred with churches not under the control of the EP&E Board. The point for this course of study is to discover additional and better ways to affect healthy change when churches struggle.

² Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1993 to December 31, 1993)."

³ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003)."

⁴ John P. Williams Jr., "Interview Regarding the Decadal Study," ed. Wayne Evans (Canton, Ohio: 2004).

⁵ Connie Bancroft, ed., *Faith and Practice: The Book of Discipline* (Canton, Ohio: Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 2000), 105.

With the guidance of New Church Specialties and other contributors (such as authors and consultants outlined in this document), we applied their lessons to the Friends Worship Center in Columbus, Ohio, beginning in mid-2003.

Identifying a Church and a Pastor

The Friends Worship Center faced three crippling blows within the space of about three years. First, the church suffered a split. Publicly, the dispute centered on the choice of worship music. In reality, the selection of music style triggered a deeper problem over the control of the church. At the time, the church was known as Calvary Friends Church. The name change to Friends Worship Center occurred within months after the split. It represented the attempt to reconnect with the community. The first time its new name appeared in public, though, was in the obituary for its pastor. He died from a heart attack. That was the second blow to the church. The arrival of a new pastor six months later was not enough to lift the spirits of the people and enable the church to regain momentum. Within three years—and after making several of his own leadership blunders—it became clear that his ministry was concluding. The time of his departure marked the third blow to the church's morale, attendance, and finances. The church was sinking fast.

Founded in 1899,⁶ the predecessor of the Friends Worship Center ministered on Sullivant Avenue until road construction consumed a portion of its property. The remaining worship structure would have been very close to the new interstate and its exit ramp. Fearing dangerous and noisy access, the church began construction of a new

⁶ Ralph Blackburn, "Church Focus," *The Columbus Citizen—Journal* Year Withheld.

campus in 1973 and moved to it in 1974.⁷ The new facility was located on nearly ten acres of land in a middle-class suburb. At first, they only constructed an educational wing that combined worship space and classrooms in a fellowship hall. Statistically, they grew to a high Sunday morning attendance of 131 in 1980.⁸ The current sanctuary and additional educational classrooms were constructed in 1983.⁹ With the additional financial pressures and the corresponding appeals for financial support, attendance drifted backwards. For most of the next twenty years, attendance hovered around 80. Near the end of his three-year tenure in 2003, the previous pastor saw the attendance drop to an average of 53 with many Sundays in the 40's¹⁰ and the church took out a small no-interest loan from the Eastern Region to cover a portion of his compensation package. Eastern Region also gave a small grant to assist during this troubled time. It became clear that he would have to leave the church or face a drastic cut in his compensation.

As the search began for a new pastor, the leaders feared for the future of their church. They only considered bi-vocational candidates because the church could only offer its parsonage, \$9,600 per year in salary, and no fringe benefits.¹¹ They considered that this was barely enough to ask a pastor to cover basic preaching needs and crisis management. At the same time, it would allow the church to fulfill all of their financial obligations so long as offerings remained steady. Already, they were only able to offer

⁷ Ralph Blackburn, *Dedication Bulletin: The Educational Structure* (Columbus, Ohio: Calvary Evangelical Friends Church, 1974).

⁸ Eastern Region, "Statistical Report (January 1, 1980 to December 31, 1980)."

⁹ Robert Stroup, *Dedication Service* (Columbus, Ohio: Calvary Evangelical Friends church, 1983).

¹⁰ Michael Willis, *Monthly Attendance Report* (Columbus, Ohio: Friends Worship Center, 2003).

¹¹ Mark Lockhart, *Church Information Sheet* (Columbus, Ohio: The Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 2003).

basic services at the church. There was no capacity to offer an array of ministries common even to smaller churches. The personal needs of some of the families consumed a major amount of the attention of the congregation. Friends Worship Center was not a hospital for anyone other than itself at that point. It was quite possibly the weakest point in its history. Their only hope of a plan for regaining momentum was to keep the doors open and hope for a better day.¹²

At the same time, the Eastern Region superintendents sought the Lord for a better solution. The local church leaders gave the superintendents reasons to have confidence in their future potential. First, they actively sought ways to regain their financial integrity. Second, they refused to speak ill of their pastor when he displayed his own foibles. Third, whenever health and growth seminars were offered, the leaders attended them. Fourth, they maintained good communication with the congregation and the Eastern Region regarding their situation—always stretching to find the right balance between trusting in the Lord and making wise decisions. Fifth, they were well located in the community. All of these reasons encouraged the superintendents to have enough confidence in them to try something new.

Likewise, there was a pastor available during that cycle of pastoral changes with a solid track record as a church growth pastor. Rev. Bruce Bell (along with his wife, Judy) had served at three churches in his twenty-four year career. Two were staff positions serving youth.¹³ Plus, he had served as the Senior Pastor of the Goshen Friends Church

¹² Bruce Bell, "Interview Regarding the Refocus Results at Friends Worship Center," ed. Wayne Evans (Columbus, Ohio: 2004).

¹³ Bruce Bell, *Pastor's Information Form* (Zanesfield, Ohio: Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region, 2003).

near Bellefontaine, Ohio, for twenty years.¹⁴ That church was a rare country church to have had a dramatic increase in attendance. They had grown in his twenty years there from 70¹⁵ to 230.¹⁶ They had also constructed a gymnasium, office suite, classroom space, and a new sanctuary in that time. Over the years, Rev. Bell was a leader on various Eastern Region boards and served as the District Superintendent for the Western Ohio District [a voluntary position mostly for the purpose of coordination].¹⁷ During that cycle of pastoral changes in 2003, there were only two churches available to him that were prepared to offer a full time compensation package [Yearly Meeting delegates establish a minimum compensation package below which a church cannot expect full time services from its pastor.]. One church was too far from his family roots in Ohio to consider. The other church decided to select another pastor than Rev. Bell. Since Eastern Region leaders did not want to lose him to another denomination, other options had to be considered: a staff position, a church planter, or other type of ministry position.

In praying about this church in whom we believed despite their current difficulties and praying about this pastor in whom we had confidence as a gifted leader, the superintendents brainstormed one afternoon about the possibility of bringing the two of them together.¹⁸ We knew this plan would take significant funding at the beginning—the kind of funding committed to planting a new church. We knew it would take the approval of the local church, the Bell family, and the EP&E Board (described earlier as the board that oversees church planting and other pastor-and-church issues). We knew it

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ John P. Williams Jr., John P. Ryser, and Wayne Evans, "Considering Options," (Canton, Ohio: 2003).

would be wise to have a mother or sponsor church to put itself into the project. We also knew it would take an extraordinary approach to revitalize it. As we became more convinced in the viability of the plan, Dr. John P. Williams Jr. and I divided up the responsibilities and set out to see if the others involved in the decision-making would embrace our plan. We invited the Bells to come to the World Outreach Center to discuss the possibilities and what would be entailed. With their consent, Dr. Williams consulted with potential mother/sponsor church pastors. I approached the leaders of the Friends Worship Center—and later the congregation. With the willingness of the local church secured, Dr. Williams and I presented the plan to the EP&E Board's Executive Committee meeting and gained their endorsement. The only hesitancy came from potential mother/sponsor church pastors. This being present, we devised a strategy to utilize the Central Ohio District pastors as an oversight committee. For this role, the district pastors agreed. The door was opened to proceed.

For each group involved, the basic appeal of the initial vision was this. Friends Worship Center would yield its decision-making authority to a mothering/sponsoring body. It would also cooperate in making adjustments deemed necessary to achieve the revitalization. The leadership body would take funding from all of the sources, assure the hiring of the Bells, make investments in all necessary property improvements and outreach efforts, guide the training and deployment of the local ministry team, and aim all of the combined efforts at a target date whereon the church would effectively be re-launched. Due to limited funds and energy, we believed that a launch date had to be picked within the first six months of the Bells' arrival. This initial vision became the initial plan. More definition of the plan developed along the way.

A Process to Promote Metanoic Adaptation

Rather than to review the chronology of events that led to the re-launch of the Friends Worship Center, it seems more appropriate to the scope of this document to examine the process that promoted the principles of Metanoic Adaptation for this church. To be sure: leaders met, training sessions were held, physical work was done, dollars were spent, and plans were adopted. An outline of that will be presented in Appendix A.

At the time of the Bells' arrival at the church, the people of the church felt the conflict of their own self-image. The most immediate concern involved their recent history of troubled decline. The three blows the church had suffered that led to their inability to afford—let alone to attract—a quality full time pastor caused them to doubt themselves. They could only keep the church doors open and hope for a better day.

A second surface problem had deeper roots of conflict. The surface problem—which was commonly seen, but not understood—was the debilitating physical and relational health of some of its members. Serious sicknesses and personal difficulties consumed the attention and energies of the church as a whole. They restricted the freedom of the church to experience the life and the hope offered to them by the Lord. The deeper roots of conflict had to do with their view of the nature of the church itself. It appeared to me that in many of their hearts, they felt that the church was called to care for individuals—both in their needs and their desires. The call to evangelize and disciple people appeared to hold secondary importance. Not apparent was the capacity to do both at the same time. Their minds could have taken an exam on the basic theology of the church and passed, but their hearts pull towards individualism seemed to have led them to

personal and corporate conflicts between their ecclesiology and their experience. What they knew in their minds and what they felt in their hearts appeared to be incompatible.

Consistent with the claim of Metanoic Adaptation, Friends Worship Center needed to value a new image of itself in ministry before any strategies could channel their vision for ministry into productive actions. Three elements of Metanoic Adaptation were already realized. First, they felt the insecurity described in the Introduction to Chapter Three (page 63) on statistical endangerment. Second, they were entering the time of pastoral change described in the summary of Chapter Three (pages 77-78) on acquisition of a new pastor. Those two elements combined to create the third element: to open their hearts to the intervention described in Chapter Two (page 48) on using outside resources. It was a time to act.

One of my first actions as their Area Superintendent was to elevate an image of their church winning people to Jesus Christ and discipling them in the ways of the Christian faith. That was central to the presentation I made to them about re-launching the church under the care of the EP&E Board and a sponsoring church. They needed to envision and to emotionally identify with that calling. When the time came for them to decide on the plan and their willingness to enter into it, most of them rallied to the vision and committed to the plan. Soon after the arrival of the Bells, I met with Pastor Bell to follow up on this vision. We discussed the need for the people of the church to turn to the Lord in a new spirit of revival. To have some daily influence on the congregation through the pastor, I gave him four books and challenged him to embody the heartfelt passions of those books as he preached and led the church. Those four books—in my own life and estimation—had the power to open new doors of revival in his heart

personally. Through him, I hoped and prayed to bring that same opening to the people. The names of the four books are listed in Appendix A.

Dr. Larry McKain and the team from New Church Specialties added the next dose of spiritual medicine for the church's revitalization. They taught at a three and one-half day conference that they called New Church University. They covered the life cycles of churches posing the question of what it would take for a church in decline to revive. The lessons Dr. McKain and the other speakers presented on the church's calling, core values, vision and mission, agenda harmony, and relationships fed each of us (as our regular discussions at the conference revealed) with a new image of ourselves (counting myself with the leaders of the church who attended). The new image was that of the church leaning upon the Lord for spiritual power to build people—both current attendees and those not yet reached by the church—for Jesus Christ.¹⁹ The image of building people for the Lord rose above their image of caring for people. To be sure, building involves caring; but it goes much further and to nobler ends. That provided a basis for the church's new self-image.

Following the conference, Pastor Bell led the congregation in those same lessons. He stressed the need to absorb the biblical calling upon the church locally. He led them in discussions about the church's core values. He enabled them to weigh the harmony or disharmony of their individual agendas for the church and to see how that affected their vision and their ability to fulfill the church's mission. Within the congregational discussions, he saw more and more of them responding favorably. At the same time, a few reacted to it negatively. In fact, a few families left the church saying this was not for

¹⁹ Bruce Bell, Judy Bell; Mark Lockhart; and Wayne Evans, "Discussions at New Church University," (New Albany, Ohio: 2003).

them. With those who remained, the Scriptures used, the vision-and-mission statements completed, and the prayers prayed, those elements re-drew the image they had of themselves. By separating what the Lord wanted the church to be (internally) from what He wanted the church to do (externally), the people of the church were better able to look more objectively at themselves and begin to make the necessary adjustments. The Metanoic portion of their revitalization was taking place.²⁰

As the relationships within the church underwent a change that bonded them into a team (they engaged each other more as comrades than as competitors—as a troop and not as individuals), the relationship with the newly identified mother church (Canton First Friends Church, as described in Appendix A) strengthened. The Bells attended Canton's staff meetings and visited with the congregation over the months before the Launch Date that was set for November 9, 2003. Rev. Mark Engel, from the Canton church, involved several of his church's leaders in discussions and training that overshadowed the decisions being made. Pastor Engel had not attended the New Church University, but his own training and experience led him in similar lines of thinking and acting. As the two pastors led the way (in making plans for the church in areas ranging from the audio-visual equipment and the appearance of the grounds to the refinement of the worship service or adding other ministries), the work was being done. Moreover, people wanted to be a part of God's new plans for Friends Worship Center and were, thus, doing the work. September and October were busy as the local church adapted the lessons and applied the strategies that they were learning.

²⁰ Bell, "Interview Regarding the Refocus Results at Friends Worship Center."

It is true that some of the time available for accomplishing the discussions and the tasks had to be compressed. Financially, only a small window of time could be afforded. Had it not been for the heart changes of the people, I doubt that the changes could have been accomplished. They were accomplished, however, as evidence of the Adaptation portion of the church's revitalization took place. Metanoic Adaptation was not a phrase utilized during the revitalization efforts; but as the Area Superintendent keeping in regular contact with the church, I witnessed the reality of its experience. Good people experiencing the difficulties of a declining ministry were desperate enough to try a new path with new leadership and found new hope for their efforts.

November 9, 2003—Launch Day

Greeters and workers arrived early on that Sunday morning. One team began with a prayer meeting around the altar. Another team prepared the coffee and other refreshments—including a cake that was professionally made with the church's new logo on top. A team of greeters took their positions with bulletins in hand. Dr. Williams had bought a digital camera with which I took pictures throughout the morning and emailed back to the Canton church periodically so they could be shown during each of its three morning services. Everything was ready for the arrival of the morning's worshipers.

People did arrive—though not as many as hoped for due to a foul-up with the mailed invitations to the community. Over half of the invitations did not arrive in people's mailboxes until the day after the event. We could only identify three families who came because of receiving invitations. Most of the newer people claimed that they came because of the buzz-factor (a wave of excitement) in the community that things were changing in exciting ways at Friends Worship Center. Several of them came as

current attendees personally invited their friends and neighbors. Some of the newer people had actually attended in years past and decided to try the church again as if it were for the first time. Music played in the background as people milled around getting refreshments or visiting. Some of the people were given guided tours so they would know where their children or teenagers would be—and who would be ministering with them—during and after the service. As the service began, people were making their way to a seat. Pastor Bell introduced himself and gave a call to worship that led into a period of uplifting singing. Part of the way through the service, he gave a brief recount of the church's story and why the new launch was needed. He did incorporate the news that a new young couple had just gotten engaged to be married the night before and were starting their journey into the future with Friends Worship Center. A drama team acted out a skit. The pastor had me share greetings and lead in prayer. All of the children were invited to the front where Pastor Bell spoke to them and prayed, then dismissed them to the Wild Over Worship (WOW) service. After the offering, then he began his sermon. At the close of the service, the musicians returned to sing a final song with Pastor Bell closing with a benediction.

One might categorize the service as normal if by normal one means that there was singing, praying, and preaching. On the other hand, it was anything but normal if by that one means that in contrast to the past format of worship the distractions had been eliminated and each phase of the service was conducted with newfound excellence. Joy and laughter bubbled over in various parts of the service leaving the clear impression that the people—even the newcomers—appeared to have had a great experience.

After most of the people left, the team leaders stayed behind for prayers of thanksgiving, an evaluation of the day, the sharing of stories, and a slide show of pictures from the morning. Elder Tami Bowling exclaimed, “God DID do a new thing in our church today!”²¹ When the figures were calculated, the attendance that morning was 103. According to Elder Mark Lockhart, it was a record attendance in the church for a period of more than a decade. Comments were made about sadness over the delayed invitations; but they were balanced with the notions expressed that we had to trust that the Lord brought the people we were to reach right at that time, and that only the Lord knew who might get their invitations late and respond on another Sunday.²² The victories clearly set the atmosphere of praise within that follow-up meeting. After all of their prayer and work, they saw the fruit. Faith had become sight; and they were glad to have been a part of it.

The Story Continues

In the days that followed, the local leaders reviewed the cards with information on the guests. Their follow-up program began: handwritten letters were sent out, Mark and Martha Edwards made cookies and delivered them, and periodic contact was maintained. Several of the newcomers continued to come. Attendance increased as a result. First one person and then another person gave their hearts to the Lord for salvation. Worship services continued to receive advance preparation so they continued to show the excellence found on the Launch Date. By Thanksgiving, the congregation held a chili dinner with a program afterwards to enumerate the blessings given by the Lord through

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

the people. Within the church, the buzz of excitement seemed only to grow. Said Nancy VanHoose, “You never know what the Lord will do next!”²³ One of the families that had left the church for a time in the fall returned. The husband soon died of cancer, but the wife claimed, “The people showed us such love and supported us with prayers and phone calls—that’s what bought us back.”²⁴ Rick Guenther, whose wife and mother-in-law both died during the summer leaving him to raise two young daughters, worked in the area of the church’s stewardship program even more as the changes continued to happen, saying: “The Lord IS doing a new thing here. I don’t want my daughters to forget that.”²⁵ After being bedfast for months with back trouble, Al VanHoose returned to church and rejoined a visitation team because, “The Lord answered the church’s prayers for me so I could tell others of His goodness.”²⁶ According to Pastor Bell, the testimonials could expand many times over.²⁷

For the church overall, the testimonial is also told in the statistics. During the first six months of 2003, the average attendance was 53.²⁸ Between the arrival of the Bells and the end of October, attendance grew to 65—a 22.0% increase with October’s average at 71.²⁹ November’s average was 85.³⁰ After that, the attendance average continued to grow with monthly averages in the 90’s. On a regular basis, the Friends Worship Center has nearly doubled in attendance since the revitalization efforts began. More special

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Willis.

²⁹ Bruce Bell, *Monthly Attendance Report* (Columbus, Ohio: Friends Worship Center, 2003).

³⁰ Ibid.

events were planned since the Launch Date. At one point this past summer (2004), there were 145 on a Sunday morning and 205 on a Sunday night—the night an Elvis impersonator (Galen Oakes) from the Jackson Friends Church in Massillon, Ohio, sang Christian words to some of Elvis Presley's greatest songs.³¹ At the same time, offerings in the first half of 2003 averaged \$976 per week.³² That average had climbed to \$1,497 per week before the Launch Date—an increase of 53%.³³ During the first five months of 2004, offerings averaged \$1,980—an increase of 103% over the same period in the previous year.³⁴ By the end of 2003, the loan to Eastern Region was paid in total and the church began to support missions once again. In 2004, only about \$4,000 of Eastern Region grants went to support special outreach projects for FWC. These included purchasing discipleship materials for the whole congregation, yard signs that were distributed throughout the community, two outreach concerts, and a new church marquis. Another \$1,000.00 from Eastern Region was given from another fund to help support a summer youth pastor intern. He organized youth activities, participated in worship music, and led a work team to paint, clean, and rake a city park near the church for public usage. Canton's funding has also greatly decreased. Mostly, those funds covered some costs of the new church marquis, the lawn signs, discipleship materials, and materials for the 2004 summer vacation Bible school. As of this writing, Friends Worship Center is covering all of its expenses for 2005. Two other aims of Metanoic Adaptation appear to have been achieved—to change the culture of the church and have more fruitful outreach.

³¹ Bruce Bell, *Monthly Attendance Report* (Columbus, Ohio: Friends Worship Center, 2004).

³² Willis.

³³ Bell, *Monthly Attendance Report*.

³⁴ Bell, *Monthly Attendance Report*.

Summary

A church that had declined during the 1980's and 1990's to plateau with Sunday morning worship attendance in the 80's had faced three major traumas within the previous three years. Their attendance had dropped to the low 50's—a perilous decline that threatened the future of the church. There were sufficient reasons to believe that they could rise above that threat with some intervention and a gifted pastor. At the time, such a gifted pastor was available. His pastoral track record inspired the confidence that he could significantly help the church. As the superintendents prayed for the Lord to show the way, a plan developed that each party involved embraced with hope and commitment. Steps were taken to empower the church to gain a new self-image and adapt fresh methodologies in its ministries. The attitude taken by the church and its leaders followed the claim of this document that such an approach—now defined as Metanoic Adaptation—could lead the church into a more healthy and fruitful ministry. As a result, attendance has doubled and offerings have more than doubled.

A new culture does appear to have become reality at Friends Worship Center. This, of course, will have to be nurtured and monitored into the future to ensure that it remains healthy. In the spirit of Noyce's book, the church that feared being expendable turned into being expandable with new reliance upon the Lord—and not organizational loyalty or duty. A new pastor who continued to grow, himself, was able to lead his congregation into spiritual and numerical growth. What might have become a sad outcome or a tragic ending instead transformed into what has become a happy new beginning for the church.

In this chapter, the case study demonstrates that churches suffering stagnation and decline can be helped with a comprehensive plan of intervention utilizing spiritual formation and leadership—the principles of Metanoic Adaptation. The example of Friends Worship Center combined with the contributions of many authors and consultants to support the experience of church revitalization.

In Chapter Five, I present a summary manuscript as an article that both explains the summary lessons of Metanoic Adaptation and invites other churches and interventionists to participate in applying them in other congregations. Following Chapter Five, I outline in Appendix A more chronological detail of the story of transformation and revitalization at Friends Worship Center. This was an experience of Metanoic Adaptation in a real life and local church. It includes the struggles of what worked and what did not work, along with how obstacles were overcome.

CHAPTER FIVE: LOCAL CHURCH REVITALIZATION THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF METANOIC ADAPTATION

Introduction

After fifty days of Scripture studies and prayer in the upper room, the Church of Jesus Christ was born on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. It was first empowered by the Holy Spirit and then the Church began to share the gospel with the people around them. Three thousand people began their walk with the Lord that day. The Apostles disciplined them and led them through expansion and persecution. When a theological debate arose over Gentile conversions, it was settled at a council meeting in Jerusalem. Like a pebble dropped in water, ripples of evangelism spread out from that church center. Years later, the center of Church leadership moved from there to Antioch, then to Rome. Obviously, persecution contributed to this; but there was persecution in Rome, as well. The church in Rome adapted to it better than did the church in Jerusalem. Over time, the church at Jerusalem faded into history.

Even powerful churches die as the years pass. There is no need for this if the church can repeatedly be revived. By contrast, the church at Rome survived persecution, scandal, and apostasy. It rebounded with the strength given to it by new leaders, monastic orders, and creedal councils. The question arises: how can a church rebound? How can a church reverse its decline? How can any church catch itself before its life cycle reaches the point of death?

By virtue of study and experience, I have found that there is an essential experience required for revitalization to occur and I call it *Metanoic Adaptation* [italics mine]. It is the experience of a church being remade from the inside out. The church goes back to the example of Pentecost—seeking the Lord in devotion and prayer, receiving new power from the Holy Spirit, and launching into new ministry. In *Metanoic Adaptation*, the church must examine and rebuild how it looks at itself—what the church is called to be (internally) and what a church does (externally) as a result of that. The term *metanoic* [italics mine] comes from the Greek word *metanoia*, which means a changing of one's mind.¹ The change enables the church to experience a new self-image—one that has a fresh appreciation for its mission. The term *adaptation* [italics mine] is defined as a responsive adjustment in one's actions—one recasts his or her behaviors "in a new form."² The church realigns its ministries to fit its new self-image. This experience is not purely academic; it is both heartfelt and practical. It helps the church to more completely achieve the Lord's plans for it in fulfilling the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment. The church finds fresh purpose and renewed mission for its existence.

The Need for Revitalization

I have been the Western Area Superintendent of the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region (based in Canton, Ohio) for thirteen years. During that time, some of the churches I oversee have grown while others have declined and closed. It has

¹ Larry McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints," ed. Conference Attendees (New Albany, Ohio: New Church Specialties, 2003).

² Arslexis, *Noah Lite Version 1.0* [Internet] (Arslexis, accessed August 28 2005); available from <http://www.arslexis.com>.

been in my heart to find more effective ways to bring revitalization to the churches. The pastors have attended one conference after another to learn how other churches have grown. Many of the churches have tried one outreach after another; but those efforts failed to make the difference. Why will the outreach programs work in some churches and not in others? Why do some churches increasingly slide in their effectiveness? Questions like these have pierced me over the years. I have read about life cycles in the church. I have read about the evolution of communities. I have read about re-connection with the community by making changes in the church. I have read about the problems of traditionalism in the church.

The one area that I observed that lacked clear understanding was the one addressed by Metanoic Adaptation—the need for a church to have an emotional and theological change in its heart that leads to adjustments in its approach to ministry and specifically to its outreach. Many authors contributed to my understanding of how the church works. Gaylord B. Noyce claims that churches sometimes close in on themselves; the people start to serve the *institution* [italics mine] of the church when they fear for its demise.³ As a result, the people lose the purpose for the church's existence—evangelism and discipleship. They only know that they want their church to continue.

Peter L. Steinke contends that churches rely upon a series of complex social relationships in order to make decisions about normal operations and potential changes.⁴ If an unhealthy balance in the relationships exists, paralysis sets in; necessary changes are thwarted, and progress ceases. Lyle E. Schaller argues that as the level of leadership in

³ Gaylord B. Noyce, *The Church Is Not Expendable* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969).

⁴ Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2000).

the church suffers, it becomes vital that outsiders with wisdom and ability be imported in order to reverse the trends.⁵ Without spiritually wise and gifted leadership, a church suffering from paralysis cannot heal itself. George Barna declares that such churches usually do not make the turn-around.⁶

Turn-arounds do happen, however. Churches do experience Metanoic Adaptation. Even when they do not know the term, they do know the experience. My own Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region (EFC-ER) has exemplified that since its beginning in 1812. Sixteen years into its formation (1828), there was a fistfight for control of the speaker's podium between two factions struggling over theology and mission. A split resulted. Another split came in 1854 without the pain of any fistfight. That time, perpetuating the Friends community conflicted with the evangelical call to reach out.⁷ These experiences brought self-examinations (internal changes) and fresh innovations (external changes) to the EFC-ER. That led the churches that became the EFC-ER to join the revivalist movement of the late-nineteenth century. Gifted leaders like David B. Updegraff and J. Walter Malone introduced new practices and directions. The churches began to hire trained pastors and to launch an international missions outreach.⁸

The experience of self-examination and innovation in these examples continued to strengthen the growth potential of the EFC-ER. Actually, they served as the gun barrel

⁵ Lyle E. Schaller, *The Interventionist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 20.

⁶ George Barna, *Turn-around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1993), 17.

⁷ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 21.

⁸ Butalia, Tarunjit and Dianne P. Small, ed., *Religion in Ohio: Profiles of Faith Communities* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), 133-137.

aiming us into the future by which we still benefit. In the words of historian David McCullough as quoted in *Newsweek* magazine, "If you know history, you know that there is no such thing as a self-made man or self-made woman. We are shaped by people we have never met."⁹ That has been reality for today's people in the EFC-ER. Our small denomination—or movement—has grown over 40% since 1990 (see page 65 for the statistics). Today, churches that struggle with plateau and decline are finding inspiration in these historical examples—along with modern lessons—and are experiencing effectiveness for future ministry.

A Church's Renewed Self-Image

Most churches try innovative strategies alone only to see many of them fail to reinvigorate their church's outreach. Why? The churches desire to fulfill the call of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20,

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.¹⁰

If the people in the churches were to take a test on ecclesiology, they would pass with flying colors. Most of them know their ecclesiology. The problem rests not in their minds; the real problem lies about eighteen inches lower—in their hearts. The churches *feel* [italics for emphasis] certain things about their local church. The ministries and strategies that reached them hold special emotional status to which they feel the need to maintain loyalty. The ways decisions have been made (or who makes them) are practices that become set in stone as the right way for things to get done. The tried and true ways

⁹ Joe Meacham, "Rethinking Washington," *Newsweek*, May 23, 2005, 40.

¹⁰ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

of the past are reliable and trustworthy. Those habits still matter to the people of the church even if they fail to touch new people. To move away from those habits may feel like a betrayal of what they have inherited. Changes appear too risky and might threaten the safety of the church they have come to know and love.

Speeches for sameness sound eerily familiar in these semi-fictional examples. "If the pastor and elders want to make all of the decisions, let them pay all of the bills." "Are we going to change the music and become more like the world?" "We put our babies in that nursery; it was good enough for them." People make excuses for their mediocrity, but excellence demands better. To quell the disruption, however, churches opt for inaction. Churches wittingly or unwittingly undermine attempts at change. Whenever saying farewell to practices that have been enjoyed for so long brings a greater pain than the anticipation of joy at greeting future successes, little permanent change will occur. What is felt about the church has a stronger pull than their ecclesiology. Then a dire future looms ahead. Needed changes are averted. Some people leave in protest, others remain in the church with their dreams diminished, and new people are never successfully brought in. Slow or rapid attrition precedes the death of the church.

The critical point in time arrives when the church lives off of a self-image that fails to grow. If the loyalties are so strong and the brake is set, change may never be possible. According to church pollster George Barna, that is the path many churches will take.¹¹ Some churches willingly remain unchanged even if they know it will bring the church's closure, asserts Dr. Larry McKain, founder of New Church Specialties.¹² The

¹¹ Barna, 76.

¹² Larry McKain, "Interview with Wayne Evans," ed. Wayne Evans (Kansas City, Missouri: New Church Specialties, 2004).

timing for a church to willingly make needed changes is, therefore, very key to its future. There are three occasions when churches are most receptive to change: 1) when declines threaten the survival of the church, 2) when godly and wise leaders surface who can maneuver the church through the difficulties of change, and 3) when resources challenge the status quo or inspire hope in a brighter future for the church. One—or all three—of the conditions serve to force change upon the church. Once that happens, I would argue that five foundational areas must be addressed.

One, the church must pray. Prayer is the first and best way to connect the church with the Lord of the Church. He reveals their failures that must be confessed, draws the people close to His heart, transforms the individuals with newfound willingness to risk changes, and brings to them power from the Holy Spirit. Concerts of prayer must be arranged for the corporate church. At the same time, individuals must seek the Lord in their personal devotions. Individuals should be encouraged to develop a devotional life that makes use of guides that instruct and inspire new closeness to the Lord and to each other. When coupled with worship services that bring the people into the presence of the Lord, a new dynamic takes place in the seeking heart. That dynamic is a life-changing Divine encounter. Prayerful planning will help to foster this, but there is an element of the Lord interjecting Himself that is unplanned. That is the beauty of praying and seeking. The spiritual *metanoia* that results reconnects people with a vision for fields that are “ripe for harvest (John 4:35).”¹³ Instead of maintaining traditions, the church gains a new focus for its purpose and gains new power from the experience of prayer.

¹³ This passage is taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

Two, old hurts must be healed. As long as the old hurts remain unchecked, there will always be a withholding of commitment and passion; the gains made in prayer can be squandered. In his book on the subject, Dr. McKain claims that people with a history of hurts in the church become critical.¹⁴ They may participate in the church out of devotion, but they provide little help for the church to make advances. Like those suffering and cynical people, Jesus saw the wrinkles (the failings and idiosyncrasies) of His followers and the future church. He was not blind to those qualities that were less than godly and productive. He still gave Himself in full devotion and service. Jesus set an example for all who see the wrinkles and still hope enough to believe the Lord will make the Church radiant (Ephesians 5:25-27)—becoming the Church He always intended it to be. To look at the local church through the eyes of Jesus gives the cynic a chance to be healed of past hurts and to believe in the church again. This results in fresh vitality. Even the former cynic can begin to risk exercising new commitment in the church to serve with purpose and passion. If each victory there can open new doors of joy and service, the reclaimed cynic can inspire the whole congregation with the hope that the Lord is indeed at work in the life of the congregation and the community. They can begin to see an infectious climate of jubilation spread amongst them.

Three, pastors must teach sound biblical theology (specifically in ecclesiology). For people to feel drawn in fresh ways to the Lord and to each other, they need to establish a renewed firm foundation upon which to continue the experience of revitalization. That firm foundation is biblical truth. This can be given to them in a variety of settings: sermons, Bible studies, Sunday School, small groups, leadership

¹⁴ Larry McKain, *Falling in Love with the Church* (Kansas City, Missouri: New Church Specialties, 2004), 29-30.

training, and prayer groups. What does the Bible teach about survival (Proverbs 3:1-18), taking risks (Acts 4:18-20), change (Acts 15:6-10, 19), relationships (Galatians 2:8-9), leadership (II Timothy 2:2), and followership (II Corinthians 11:1)? What qualities exist in a great church (I Thessalonians 5:11-24)? What does God think of people (John 21:12-17)? How does wisdom affect ministry (Romans 11:32-36)? What is an effective witness (Acts 17:19-23)? These are just the beginning of subjects that should be taught straightforwardly without sarcasm or judgment. Additionally, extended studies of Scriptures should be pursued with Exodus and how the Lord taught the people to pursue purification before being used by Him, Nehemiah and his leadership to organize people so they could accomplish great things, the Gospels and Jesus' passion to follow His Father's will, Acts and the early church overcoming its struggles, Ephesians and the use of spiritual gifts, and others (Barnabas' character and discipleship, the power of the Holy Spirit, and Paul's connection with the unchurched, as examples). These subjects bring into greater focus the "great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1)"¹⁵ that cheers on the church to grow and adapt. To effectively proclaim these truths, the pastor must have a dynamic spiritual life first. He or she must demonstrate it in genuinely personal and powerful ways for the truths to be translated beyond mere words and lessons. The ring of truth that reaches out to people comes from life examples. Jesus' talks touched people because they had seen them in Him before they heard them. It is true that no pastor is perfect, but he or she must be genuine. Then the talks take on the ring of truth for the hearer.

¹⁵ This passage was taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

Four, the church must receive encouragement from others. When others have already traveled a road that is unfamiliar to us, their words of encouragement carry great weight to encourage us to travel that road ourselves—especially over the rough spots. Their testimonials of how they experienced revitalization add modern-day evidence to the atmosphere and acceptance of change that is being fostered by prayer, healing, and biblical instruction. The testimonials’ emphasis should not be upon what to do; rather it should be on encouragement to trust the Lord, to find and follow His vision and mission, to exercise godly wisdom, and to take risks. This can be found with lay-witness missions (invited guests from revived churches come to tell their stories to one’s own church), pastors’ gatherings (where peers who understand the loneliness of leadership can boost one’s courage and insight), and renewal seminars (that join instruction, illustration, and inspiration for powerful new energy). This can also take on the form of books that can be read. I suggest the heart-shaping writings of Brennan Manning and Henri Nouwen as solid sources for this. Their writings encourage change to one’s values and vision. That personalizes the revitalization desired by the local church. One of the contributions superintendents can make here is to challenge and cheer these efforts. They can also put the church desiring revitalization in touch with other churches that have traveled that road to recovery themselves. It is a vital resource to know who to talk to at the right time in order to pass on the words of wisdom and inspiration to others as they take new steps in the life of their church. To gain that confidence propels both the individuals and the church as a whole forward in their renewal experience.

Five, hope must be conveyed through realistic and compelling vision. Such a vision elevates the church to see a new horizon. It enables the people to see others beside

themselves. It helps them see more clearly how they can affect others for the sake of the gospel. If a vision of the future is too underwhelming, passions and commitments are not engendered. If a vision of the future is too unrealistic, discouragement and fear may be the outcome. So the realistic and compelling vision generates hope (the hope that a new day is possible if the people lean on the Lord and give themselves to His cause) and commitment (the commitment to take risky steps into the future). The pastor is the crucial person to communicate the church's vision. He or she embodies it, communicates it, and transfers it to the people of the church. Many creative ways are available for the pastor to share the vision. The pastor's personality, track record, and godly wisdom lead the way for this; but a mixture of sermons, signs, newsletters, carrying cards, website entries, and more make it possible for the vision to be received in memorable and repeated ways. As the people absorb the vision, it is not unusual for the pastor to hear the vision come back to him or her in the words of the people. That is how one knows the vision has been transferred; the pastor's words become their expressions. What should a vision look like? Dr. McKain suggests the pastor write a fictitious letter of a guest who comes to the church three years into the future describing his or her family's visit to the church—how the people treated them, what it was like to find the children's areas, how the music and message touched them, and why they plan to return and participate in the life of that local church. Such a letter should not be so flattering as to nullify its effect; rather it should show what the church—once it is revitalized—would become in its character and personality. That vision prepares the way to discover its mission—remembering that the vision should show what the church is to be and the mission should show what the church is to do. By this, the church gets beyond itself and

feels the personal calling to go into the harvest fields. While leadership is key to a church experiencing renewal, the leaders cannot orchestrate every aspect of how the people will fit into that. If the atmosphere has been created for seeking the Lord, the most gifted and organized pastor will find that the Lord will lead people in personal ways for their own involvement. There is room in a compelling vision for personal touches and creative adaptations. Under the Lordship of Christ, exciting things can happen for which no pastor can take credit!

A Church's New Plan for Ministry

Dr. Paul Anderson of George Fox University refers to this statement by Doctor Charles Conniry in his own teachings, "Tradition is the living faith of those now dead (the *faith* lives on in others after earlier people are gone); traditionalism is the dead faith of those now living (the faith died with the people who had it and only their *behaviors* are carried on by others)."¹⁶ For people who have served the traditions set by predecessors but now have come to a newfound faith and mission of their own, continuing church practices *as is* [italics for emphasis] becomes most unsatisfying and unacceptable. Metanoic Adaptation is an experience with two parts. The church needs to feel a new self-image in order to put purpose and propulsion into its ministry. It also needs to have a new plan of action in order to channel its spiritual passions into ministry.

The plan begins with an examination of current ministries. If the church sees a new horizon, they will need to examine their ministries to be sure that the help they offer in ministry is conveyed to others in the most helpful ways. Under the Lordship of Jesus, the leadership of a local church should take a blank piece of paper (without regard for

¹⁶ Paul Anderson, "Dissertation Advice," ed. Wayne Evans (Canton, Ohio: 2005).

sacred cows) and determine the usefulness of the church's current ministries. In this, they should examine six areas of the church's overall ministry: 1) what it does, 2) how well it does it, 3) who does it, 4) where it is done, 5) what it costs, and 6) how they could be more effective. This exercise may involve surveys conducted with people who have visited the church recently and should be guided by the help of an outside leader (a superintendent, a trusted pastor, or church consultant) because they provide extra insight beyond that of the church. As the examination proceeds, the ministries should be redesigned to maximize effectiveness. Effectiveness will be a new filter for some churches because many paralyzed churches use the filter of tradition.

A host of changes are possible. This may mean that the ways worship services are conducted tighten up [It is my contention that many services involve too many speakers, too many inside jokes, and have too little of a sense of spiritual flow.]. It may mean that the youth group be led by a new set of leaders, that the Sunday School be given more funding, or that the weekly church dinner be discontinued—to name a few possibilities. The decorations used in the church may need to be updated, the greeters may need more training, and there should be fewer business meetings for the membership.

Next, the plan will often need to address pastoral leadership. If the transformation happens at the time of a pastoral change (A change of pastor is usually advisable because it emphasizes the church's new start—negative baggage fades and a new honeymoon period begins.), the church should consider salaries and retain enough funding for outreach, equipment, or new ministries even if it means hiring a part-time pastor or raising new funds. I contend that small churches have too little to do to keep a full-time

pastor busy in productive pursuits. These churches could utilize the funds more wisely elsewhere. In some small churches with whom I have worked, they have committed every possible nickel to make sure the church can afford a full-time pastor. When this happens, extraordinary pressure is placed on the pastor to bring in new attendees. Often the church micromanages the pastor and criticizes his or her use of time and resources; or they criticize his or her preaching. This criticism arises because so much is on the line; they cannot afford (literally) to fail. It may contribute to the church's atmosphere of conflict and restricts its capacity to develop new ministries.

If the church demonstrates basic internal health and godly wisdom, it may be possible for new funds to be raised—even externally. The EFC-ER did that with the Friends Worship Center in Columbus, Ohio. In that case, our regional leaders had enough confidence in the church to channel donations there from other churches to make it possible to obtain a qualified full-time pastor. Funds were sufficient to make upgrades, purchase equipment, start new ministries, and perform outreach. In their story, three major traumas hit the church in a short period of time and endangered their future. Leaders in the EFC-ER secured extra funding, identified Canton First Friends Church as the mother church (who took full responsibility for the church's transformation), and made preparations to re-introduce the church to the community. In five months, local attendance and local offerings doubled. That path has continued to benefit everyone involved as the church has grown and new attendees have given their hearts to the Lord. They eliminated their debt by themselves and returned to their support of missions again. The confidence leaders had in the church that led to those extraordinary efforts were justified as the turn-around occurred.

The church then moves to implement new ministries and outreaches. This should be built upon that earlier vision. For that, it is wise to consider timeless principles rather than dwell upon passing fads. For example, the effectiveness of bus ministries and telemarketing has faded into history. New methodologies will continue to come and go, but the approaches that link new people with the gospel will endure. Dr. John P. Williams Jr., the EFC-ER General Superintendent, claims that methodologies cannot be copied into other churches.¹⁷ More humanity and creativity must be demonstrated to take into account the people who would carry out the ministries and the people who are being sought. "People matter more than things (programs)," claims Dr. Williams.¹⁸ Whatever new ministry [Sports ministries, singles groups, worship bands, men's groups, and more only scratch the surface of new ministry possibilities.] launches, it needs to match the gifts and needs of people. Additionally, it must fit into the church's overall plan for evangelism and discipleship.

To perform outreach, recent studies show that targeted mailings are more effective than newspaper ads, websites—even through picture displays—share more information than the church marquis, and hand-addressed envelopes get opened more than processed labels on envelopes.¹⁹ The Apostle Paul demonstrated at Mars' Hill (Acts 17:23) that it is the responsibility of the church to adapt to the culture around it. Without that, few others in the culture will experience a transformation in their own lives. If the commitment is to increase church attendance, this could be misused; but if the

¹⁷ John P. Williams Jr., "Interview with Wayne Evans," ed. Wayne Evans (Canton, Ohio: 2005).

¹⁸ John P. Williams Jr., "First Principles, 2005," Canton, Ohio.

¹⁹ McKain, "Lectures on Blueprints."

commitment is to fulfill the Great Commission, the church must connect with the needs and in the language of the people in the community.

Sometimes it may be helpful for a church to reach out with small groups that meet separate from the church for purposes of marriage and family issues. The church can invite those groups to church services after they, as a group, have bonded and become open to spiritual teachings, and thereby make it easier for them to visit for the first time (knowing they will find friends there). This can be especially helpful if the people in the church do not readily connect with people in the community due to age and socio-economic differences. As people do come into the church, the probabilities that they will return increase if they find friends, enjoy the service, and have new events in the future to look forward to. Remember: when guests visit the church, the goal of the church is not to lead them to Christ immediately—the goal is to get them to come back. Usually weeks and months pass before the trust and insight level is sufficient for the newcomer to experience conversion—and longer for them to achieve basic discipleship or join a ministry.

Metanoic Adaptation has an outcome beyond the church's self-image; it changes ministry effectiveness. Alterations increase the likelihood of reaching new people with the gospel. The principles outlined here (examine and redesign current ministries, secure new and qualified pastoral leadership, adjust budgets and increase available funds, develop ministries with people in mind, and utilize methods that reach and touch the lives of new people) are timeless. Above those principles, maintain primary allegiance to the Lord and the gospel; otherwise all of the efforts are truly fruitless. An internal revival

and external outreach to others completes revitalization. Plus, it will affect the church for years to come as a new healthy church culture sets in.

A Traditional Conclusion

Tradition is typically pointed out as the key opponent of change, but it can also be a friend. Part of my claim is that the emotional self-image of the church is a specific form of traditionalism that paralyzes churches before a plateau and decline in attendance lead to closure. It is also true that tradition can be appealed to for the church's emotional self-image to be renewed. History reveals the right traditions that must be upheld. It is very traditional for a church to seek the Lord in prayer and worship (Acts 4:31). It is very traditional for a church to select wise and godly leaders (Acts 6:3). It is very traditional for a church to take risks (Acts 15:26). If a church were to draw a timeline of the important events of its past, turning points could be seen where those traditions lived before—probably many times. Those are traditions worth upholding. To that extent, traditions can strengthen a church that seeks Metanoic Adaptation.

Churches need to adapt current realities from the inside out. An acceptance of change is required—it should be an atmosphere of life-long learning and adaptation. The culture of the church must be changed. Otherwise, the effective approaches adopted during a period of revitalization can become the stale traditions of the future. Whenever that staleness surfaces, the church of any size and history needs to revisit the lessons of Metanoic Adaptation again and again under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and leaders He brings to the church.

Summary

This document examined the paralyzing problem of many churches—a stagnation of a church's self-image that precedes the stagnation and decline of its fruitful ministry. It explored the path to renewed vitality—resurgence in its ministry must be preceded by resurgence in its self-image. The materials covered have established that.

Chapter One presented the paralysis problem within the context of the churches I serve and the life I have lived. I outlined the brief histories, statistical reviews, and theological foundations of the churches. This established a link between crisis moments in history that launched periods of self-examination and the new forms or levels of ministry that resulted from the experiences. My own life mirrored that reality: crises introduced self-examinations that led to periods of personal growth. As a consequence of those observations, I researched the matter and arrived at this claim. If a paralyzed church can experience a change in its mind and heart (known in Greek as *metanoia*), it can then adjust or remake its ministries (a process of adaptation) to regain fruitful effectiveness. Thus, a church must experience Metanoic Adaptation in order to revitalize its potency.

Chapter Two examined the historical, sociological, ecclesiological, psychological, and practical nature of churches. It revealed that the reason church self-images stagnate is due to a blend of factors: traditions that must be continued, leaders who fail to challenge the status quo, relationships lost in unresolved conflicts, the elevation of value for peace and safety, and discipleship that maintains sameness. Consequently, the evidence shows that the churches slide; and most do not recover. To experience *metanoia*, leadership is required even if it must be imported with a new pastor or outside

consultants. This must be matched with enthusiastic followership to achieve renewal. Healthy leadership embodies credibility and hope, inspires prayer and healing, teaches biblical values and instruction, channels love and encouragement, and casts a new vision as the church responds in its active followership. Resources exist to empower churches that are willing to undergo the internal changes.

Chapter Three demonstrated the next stages churches must take once they experience the *metanoia* of a new self-image. The chapter minimized specific programs that should be pursued, but maximized the general principles that should be adapted. These included the need to be committed to the gospel, to treat people with humanity, to act with creativity, to match people's gifts and needs, to adapt programs, and to develop an action plan (complete with calendars and budgets). The overall effort must enable the church to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment. I presented resources that I believe contribute to a church's better understanding of these effective and fruitful pursuits.

Chapter Four presented a case study to certify the claims of Metanoic Adaptation. The Friends Worship Center revived after a period of serious decline was countered with outside intervention. Their story emphasized the basic health we found in the church and how that encouraged others to assist them acquire a proven pastor. The church's former self-image had focused on the care it could give to its needy members, while the renewed self-image elevated the call to build people of faith. Once that change occurred in their hearts, changes to the operation of the church quickly followed. Rather than continuing to slide in attendance, the church reached out to the community out of the overflow of their hearts and witnessed a rapid doubling of attendance. As the statistics and the

testimonials continued to reveal, a new period of fruitfulness has followed consistently with the claims of Metanoic Adaptation.

Chapter Five has drawn together the most essential elements of the previous chapters. It established the experience of Metanoic Adaptation as something that is needed, practical, and worthy of a church's pursuit. Effort has been given to present it in a fashion to invite other churches to seek it before death sets into them. The difficulties have been outlined. Likewise, the benefits have been demonstrated in biblical, historical, personal, and contemporary examples to further encourage a local church's participation.

Appendix A details the chronology of the transformation at the Friends Worship Center as an augmentation to the contents of Chapter Four. It includes the struggle with negative surprises that occurred during the course of that church's experience. The Appendix sections B through F contain the outlines for presenting the material of this project in a seminar setting. It does not assume that a seminar setting will bring about the needed revitalization; rather, it invites the pursuit of revitalization. It also does not assume an audience with academic prowess; rather, it presents the material in a common fashion (in other words, terminology and illustrations are selected for the broadest appeal). The Appendices (B through F) build upon the five key elements of insight and action; and they end with the suggestion of the next steps to be taken—especially within the Eastern Region.

Final Conclusion

I conclude with the following statements that I believe are true and reliable: 1) the Lord has a calling upon His Church, including each local church—one that will better

enable it to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment; 2) all churches (regardless of size, history, or location) will experience periods of plateau and struggle that will challenge the status quo or even the future of the church; 3) when those challenges come, the decisions made at that time will greatly determine that local church's future fruitfulness; 4) to make healthy decisions that rejoin the church with God's calling, an experience of renewal and revitalization referred to in this document as Metanoic Adaptation is required; 5) Metanoic Adaptation first pursues internal and spiritual components and then extends them to external and practical expressions that enable the church to be remade from the inside out; 6) leadership exhibiting godly wisdom is essential even if that leadership must be imported with a new pastor or outside consultants; 7) even with that leadership provided, the Lord's blessing and the people's wholehearted embrace of the leadership are vital to the successful outcome of the revitalization (There is still mystery in how the Lord works.); 8) there are many tools, guides, and resources (from a church's own history to questionnaires and personnel to studies—including the Bible, itself) that help churches seeking this transformation, and they should be used with bold sensitivity to the Lord and to the people; 9) an attitude of wanting personal growth and an atmosphere of accepting change will create in the church a culture that will continue to adapt to unforeseen challenges in the future; and 10) churches are revitalized and many examples of that are found in history, as well as in modern times, when they seek and experience the remaking of Metanoic Adaptation.

If the reader of this document is involved with a church that currently needs to have its own Metanoic Adaptation, the next step to take is to pray and seek godly and wise leadership that can guide the church through the experience. Appendix A provides

an example of how it was experienced at the Friends Worship Center in Columbus, Ohio; and Appendices B through F further prepares the way—including how the Eastern Region seeks to implement it in a local Eastern Region church. For churches outside of the Eastern Region, there are church consultants (like Dr. Larry McKain of New Church Specialties) that are available to help. Whoever leads it, my prayer as I conclude this document, is that the Lord of the Church will Shepherd the way to His glory and to the blessing of many new people in our communities.

APPENDIX A: The Story of Revitalization at Friends Worship Center

Aside of the image changes that are recorded in Chapter Four, the congregation met and worked and prayed with fervor during the summer and fall of 2003. This is a brief account of those efforts.

Preliminary Precautions

By July, the local church had prepared the parsonage to receive the Bell family. A task force of leaders was assembled to oversee the project. This included: Wayne Blizzard, a layman from the Willoughby Hills Evangelical Friends Church serving as the President of the EFC-ER's Executive Board; David Tebbs, Pastor of the Jackson Friends Church serving as the President of the EFC-ER's EP&E Board; Chris Jackson, Pastor of the Orange Road Friends Church located near Columbus who represented the Central Ohio District of churches; Bruce Bell, Pastor of the Friends Worship Center; Mark Lockhart and Tami Bowling, both Elders at the Friends Worship Center; and myself as the Western Area Superintendent. July became a relaxed month of allowing the Bells to settle into their new home and church, involving most of the task force members with the annual Yearly Meeting sessions, and to have an initial conference call with the task force in preparation for an onsite meeting to come in August.

By August, Dr. Williams had secured the participation of Pastor Mark Engel and the Canton First Friends Church as the mother/sponsor church. This church is the largest church in the Eastern Region with a track record of health, outreach, and generosity. I

visited the Friends Worship Center and Pastor Bruce Bell to cast an impassioned vision for spiritual revival. I told them that we—including myself with them—only had something to offer the community in ministry if we have an overflow of the Lord's presence and grace at work in us. To encourage this, I gave the pastor four books that I believed would lend insight and inspiration to the cause: Brennan Manning's *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Henri Nouwen's *The Life of the Beloved*, Christian Schwarz's *Natural Church Development*, and George Hunter's *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. As the task force gathered to tour the church campus, to list needed improvements, and to remake the budget, a hopeful and compelling spirit of great anticipation was evidenced. The original task force decided to take an advisory role in lieu of the leadership that was to be provided by the Canton church.

A calendar to guide tasks was made and vigorous attention given to the many projects. Included in that list were: groom the lawn, plant flowers, redesign the sign, rearrange room decorations, outfit a staging area for children's ministry, rethink the elements of worship services, train greeters and education teams, and give a major focus on audio-visual equipment. Qualified people from inside and outside the church were given assignments to make these—and other things—happen.

August was a key month because the principles of Metanoic Adaptation (without the phrase yet existing) were being implemented. The heart and spirit of the church were addressed, followed by the various strategies implemented. Three key things came together during that month that advanced the cause. First, the local leaders took it on themselves to eagerly pursue outreach as a part of their summer Vacation Bible School, which was heralded locally as a great success. Second, the Launch Date of November 9th

was selected, which gave an even deeper sense of focus and urgency to the work being done. Third, four leaders attended the New Church University held on the north side of Columbus.

Adding Principles from New Church Specialties

Dr. Larry McKain and his team of NCS trainers led the three and one-half day New Church University in the Columbus area. They addressed all fifteen components described at length in Chapters Two and Three and made themselves available for personal consultation. The four leaders who attended included: Pastor Bruce Bell, Judy Bell, Mark Lockhart, and myself. As the four of us met often during the NCU conference, we discussed how best to implement the fifteen components. According to Pastor Bell, the spiritual character of the local leaders was already strong but increased during the sessions. He said, “We could already see how the Lord had brought us together for this task, but NCU helped us feel the privilege and the power of it as a calling. With greater intensity, we devoted ourselves to consider this as a highpoint of our lives.”

Still, we identified with the need for prayer intercessors and began to recruit them; we concluded that the leadership team already in place should serve as the ministry focus team and began to gauge the core values of the church that eventually led to the vision and mission statements; and we developed questions that we wanted to ask Dr. McKain that specifically addressed the revitalization efforts at Friends Worship Center. In a twenty minute interview with him, we asked: 1) “Does it appear (given the brief story of our progress we relayed to him) that we have already covered a number of the components so that we can have confidence in taking a shorter time frame in having a

new launch?” 2) “Does our situation better fit the ReFocus instead of the ReStart so that we do not have to actually close the church before opening it again on the Launch date?” and 3) “What advice would you give us as we move forward?” To these questions, Dr. McKain responded that there was no magical time in which implementation had to occur in spite of his general teaching that up to two years was common; the key was to not ignore the components and to move forward as we felt we were ready to do so. He added that the timing was our call and that he did not see any particular signs of difficulty that should slow us down. He did agree that we should count Friends Worship Center as a ReFocus because the church did not need to begin again; rather, it was being remade. Finally, he advised us to review core values and agenda harmony with the congregation to ensure the highest degree of team spirit within the church. Dr. McKain concluded our private meeting telling the four of us to “Go for it” because we were heading in the right direction. Pastor Bell followed through on that advice with other leaders in the church, and eventually with the congregation as a whole. He was careful to weave heart and hand issues into a single tapestry to which the congregation responded with a high degree of agreement and commitment.

Moving Forward

Early in September, Pastor Engel from the Canton church brought a team of his leaders to the church to finalize a list of print materials (bulletin formats, music selections, and educational lessons) and equipment (new microphones, computer, video projector, and set of drums) needed for the project. The Canton church was raising \$15,000 to put into the project during the last four months of 2003. This was in addition to the projected income from local offerings of \$26,000—matched by another \$26,000

from the EP&E Board—during the second half of the year. Furthermore, the Canton church provided training for several aspects of ministry, provided musicians to cover most of the Sundays into the early part of 2004, and provided guidance on constructing an internet website and producing community mailers.

By the end of September, more and more improvements were being made showing the whole-hearted devotion of the local people to the revitalization efforts. Each improvement was met with more excitement and more work. Offerings doubled from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per week. Very few formal meetings of either the task force or the mother church were needed along the way. The work was listed, phone calls were made as needed, and the people gave maximum effort in both spiritual and strategic ways.

October was a busy month. Pastor Bell was joining in some of the staff meetings of the Canton church. He and Judy prepared a booth about Friends Worship Center's revitalization for the ministry-missions fair at the Canton church at which hundreds of people stopped by to learn of the progress and report that they were already praying for the Columbus church. Prayer letters and phone calls to other churches expanded the base of prayer support. Central Ohio District churches contributed over \$1,000 in cash and materials to meet the financial needs of the ReFocus effort. Gradually, the equipment arrived and was installed—followed by the necessary training to operate it. A new children's ministry was developed and refined during October. It was called "WOW" which stood for "Wild Over Worship." An older video projector and other equipment were added to the new staging area to make this a quality ministry. The website with a new church logo went online at <http://www.friendsworshipcenter.org/>. An oversized postcard with the new logo, a picture of the Bells, and an invitation to attend the Launch

Date went to a professional printer and mailing service for preparation in mailing them during the week prior to the Launch Date. The church adopted a guiding Scripture and posted signs with its words around the church. The Scripture, Isaiah 43:19, reads, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”

In early November—prior to Launch Day—the last of the preparations and rehearsals concluded. The parking lot striping ensured attractiveness and gave markings for parking spaces for arriving guests. Banners with the church’s logo and a welcome message marked the proper door to enter. The church started setting up Starbucks coffee and refreshments in the lobby on Sundays. New music had been learned. Using the equipment became normalized. Inside jokes and other distractions were removed from the worship services. Leaders for the WOW service were trained and ready. November 9th and the people being targeted were bathed in prayer. A local newspaper did an article on the new pastor and the attempt to revitalize the church. Furthermore, newcomers and neighbors reported that there was a *buzz* [italics mine] about the church in the community. That *buzz* was reportedly being felt in the other Central Ohio District churches and other parts of the Eastern Region. People kept asking what was going on at Friends Worship Center. It proved to be an exciting time.

Then came a disaster!

Major work had gone into the preparation for the mailer that would go out to the target area surrounding the church. The wording, the graphics, the invitation, and the overall appearance of the postcard were as nearly perfect as the leaders could make it. The printer provided a final version of the mailer to be proof read. Task force leaders considered it ready to mail. Everything on it was correct, including the mailing codes.

When the printers mailed the postcards to the community, however, someone at the printing service inadvertently altered the mailing codes or reverted to an earlier version for publication. The clerk at the local United States Post Office spotted the alteration. He would not mail out the postcards until proper authorization could be arranged—which cost precious time and energy. In the end, over half of the postcards did not arrive in community mailboxes until the day after the Launch Day. In spite of that, all preparations for the Launch Day continued unabated.

Negative Surprises

There were three negative surprises that occurred during the turn-around period covered in the case study. One, time passed before a mother/sponsor church was identified. Two, a few families left the church in disagreement with the efforts being made. Three, the print company that prepared the mailers made a mistake in the printing that delayed the invitations arriving in the homes of the community. It is probably predictable that such surprises will occur in every church desiring healthy change. This highlights a few lessons that will prove to be beneficial to future churches. Of primary importance is the lesson to lean on the Lord. If He has opened the door for the church to begin a new day, He knows all about the struggles and has more than enough grace to meet them with victory. The church must rely upon Him more than they should rely on a plan. A secondary lesson is to be ready to develop Plan B, Plan C, and Plan D. Quick adjustments will be called for and there may not always be time to wait for a called congregational meeting to make a group decision. Again the call is issued for the church to follow wise and godly leaders who must make quick and tough decisions and then work hard to follow-through in appropriate ways. Finally, the lesson is seen to

communicate both the news of changes and the hope for God's best outcomes. If the people know what is happening and why, they are less troubled and more cooperative. Furthermore, if they observe the leaders finding hope in the midst of a troubling situation, they will tend to gravitate to that hope themselves. Leaders can turn a struggle into either a deeper catastrophe or a greater victory by what they communicate both in words and in attitudes. Negative surprises tear at the heart strings of everyone involved; but leaning on the Lord, making quick adjustments, and communicating genuine hope can turn the situation into a new strength.

Summary

To continue with the story of Friends Worship Center, Chapter Four and the subsection on November 9, 2003—Launch Day takes the story from here. It is a story of Metanoic Adaptation that continues to be experienced at this local church.

APPENDIX B: Changing the Future Of a Paralyzed Church

Defining the Context

To share the lessons of Metanoic Adaptation in a form that makes it more accessible to the leaders of a local church requires more than the text of a doctoral dissertation. In Appendices B through F, I present outlines from which lessons can be developed to present Metanoic Adaptation in a seminar setting with five sessions. Already the Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region established a precedent through the Friends Worship Center to revitalize churches that appear to be paralyzed. From that experience, a few churches have expressed interest in such a program for them. The Evangelistic, Pastoral, and Extension (EP&E) Board has already approved limited funding to help one or two churches over the coming year. The five lessons, herein, are designed to prepare the leaders in those churches for revitalization in their churches. The Eastern Region program heavily invests in the lessons and guidance of New Church Specialties. Therefore, these five lessons are not a replacement for the Eastern Region program; rather they are preparatory for it.

To make it more personal, I am picturing a weekend setting at a local Eastern Region church. The five sessions would take place in a fashion like this. Following a light dinner on Friday evening, the group would gather around tables prepared to take notes on handouts that would be provided. Three sessions would be held on Saturday

morning and early afternoon followed by an afternoon break. The final session would be held on Saturday evening. Sunday morning could be a service of worship, challenge, and commitment befitting the response of the leaders to the weekend. Each session on Friday and Saturday would center around one of five major elements of Metanoic Adaptation. Blended in each session would be such ingredients as: identification of churches in need, insight on how the paralyzing factors arise in churches, instruction in attitudes and actions that can remedy the situation, and inspiration with how revitalization does happen in churches. Because the presentation prepares the way for the Eastern Region program, the steps and requirements related to that program will also be addressed. At the conclusion, there must also be the necessary invitation to fully commit to the program to which they will be asked to respond.

Lesson One: The Recognition of Paralysis

The Star Wars Analogy

- 1) Episode Four: A New Hope (1977)
 - a) Joins the middle of the story about a new hope for the old Republic
 - b) Essential people made a difference at a critical point in history
 - c) Presence of dangers required character and courage to achieve victory
- 2) Episodes One to Three
 - a) Menacing problems followed by attacks and revenge
 - b) Old Republic buckled and Empire-building began
 - c) Control and power brought sense of hopelessness
- 3) Picture the overall story

- a) The grand history of the Republic failed to adapt to new challenges
- b) Key people embodied new possibilities
- c) Amazing changes resulted by the end of the final episode
- 4) Other examples of this story in popular culture
 - a) Apollo 13 (the 1995 movie)—“Houston, we have a problem.”
 - b) Styx (and their 1991 song)—“Show Me the Way”
 - c) Department of Homeland Security (after the 9/11 attacks)
- 5) Beginning again is a lesson of church history
 - a) Timeline and turning points in the EFC-ER
 - b) Turn-around at Friends Worship Center
 - c) Could it be true here and now?

Local Church Timeline Exercise

- 1) Look for the turning points in the local church history
 - a) May include significant success in evangelism, new ministries, building programs, favorite memories and so forth
 - b) Circle the key years when examples of Metanoic Adaptation occurred
 - c) Celebrate the heritage of progress represented in those occasions
- 2) Ask what qualities and characteristics were prevalent at those times
 - a) May include excitement, steps of faith, the leadership of particular leaders, and new things being done
 - b) Make a list of those qualities in a visible location
 - c) Point to those qualities as part of the worthy traditions of that church
- 3) Ask for the story of what has happened since the last great revival

- a) May include changes in the community, loss of excitement, church conflicts, aging of the congregation, and conserving traditions
- b) Ask how that makes them feel about the church and its future
- c) Stop to pray that the Lord will use the following weekend to open the door for a new turning point in the church's life

Typical Lessons of Church Paralysis

- 1) Churches tend to follow a life-cycle
 - a) Includes birth, maturity, plateau, decline, and death
 - b) Certain qualities tend to match those stages: life on the edge, expansion and organization, normalization, retrenchment and conflict, and closure
 - c) Barna and Schaller both claim that turn-arounds are difficult
- 2) The role of self-differentiation (or lack of it)
 - a) Explain spectrum of fusers, self-differentiated, and distancers
 - b) Equate self-differentiation with godly wisdom in Scripture
 - (1) Luke 6:36-38, 41-42 and sawdust attitudes
 - (2) Philippians 4:2 and closeness over sameness
 - c) Conflicts cripple progress when it is absent
- 3) The role of homeostasis
 - a) Show the baby mobile that sways and returns to normal
 - b) Explain peace and safety dominate planning values
 - c) Dreams are yielded and healthy progress is stifled

The Bottom Line: the Self-Image of the Church Petrifies

- 1) What the church is to be is subsumed
 - a) By who the church already is
 - b) By what the church already does
- 2) The conflict between ecclesiology and practice
 - a) What they know and believe is at odds with...
 - b) What they feel and have loyalty to
- 3) The predominant tell-tale signs of a paralyzed church's self-image
 - a) Forward momentum in all areas is diminished or in decline
 - (1) Attendance and financial statistics
 - (2) Recruitment
 - (3) Outreach efforts
 - b) Failure to attract or hold dynamic leaders is observed
 - c) Finding direction in past successes guides decisions
 - d) Faithfulness is defined by adherence to tradition
 - (1) Who does it
 - (2) What is done
 - (3) How it is communicated
 - e) Feelings are restricted because they are so often negative
 - f) Falling off of spiritual disciplines accelerates

*"A paralyzed church has a self-image that
ceased to grow long before its attendance."*

What Will Not Revitalize the Paralyzed Church?

- 1) Stick with the same behaviors...but work harder

- 2) Adopt the latest programs promoted by growing churches
- 3) Make adjustments and hope for a better day to arrive

What Will Revitalize the Paralyzed Church?

- 1) Changed hearts
- 2) Changed lives
- 3) Changed visions
- 4) Changed missions
- 5) Changed behaviors

*“These are the Results of the Experience of
—Not the Process of...But the Experience of—
Metanoic Adaptation.”*

Overnight Devotional Assignment for Reading and Meditation

Isaiah 43:1-5

John 15:1-9

I John 4:16-19

APPENDIX C:
Lesson Two:
The Recovery of Spiritual Passion

The Example of Rose Sims

- 1) Widow who with first and second husbands revived twelve churches
- 2) The restaurant and the blizzard that changed her purpose for living
- 3) Essential qualities that she employed
 - a) Love of people
 - b) Confidence she knew what to do
 - c) Personality and persuasiveness
 - d) Action towards a vision
- 4) A new feeling of being drawn permeated the people
- 5) Momentum outlived her tenure

*"Some say, 'Seeing is Believing.'
I say, 'Believing is Seeing.'"*
—Rose Sims

A Change in Approach

- 1) Most pastors attend conferences and churches try new methods...and fail
- 2) Without a new self-image, they undermine the attempts
- 3) They want right things and they want wrong things...conflict

"And now I will show you the most excellent way."
—Apostle Paul
I Corinthians 12:31

The Church Must Pray (individually and corporately)

- 1) Prayer connects (or reconnects) the people with the Lord
- 2) Seek the Lord for His mind, heart, and vision
- 3) Confess past and present failures and inadequacies
- 4) Surrender whatever has held the church back (examples)
 - a) Have taken prayer and devotions for granted...or forsaken them
 - b) Have counted the church as being there for their needs
 - c) Have ignored the spiritual needs of friends and neighbors
 - d) Have allowed conflicts to become perpetual “Cold Wars”
 - e) Have selected pastors and leaders who lack the highest qualities
 - (1) Godly wisdom
 - (2) Spiritual passion
 - (3) Love for people
 - (4) Vision
 - f) Have held onto past successes more than future possibilities
 - g) Have wanted the church to be what it used to be
- 5) Revel in the love the Lord has for you as individuals
 - a) He carries your picture in His wallet...hangs it on His refrigerator
 - b) He holds plans of blessing for you as an individual
 - c) He grants you His Spirit
 - d) He has a place for you in His vineyard as a fellow-laborer with others

Meditate on These Scriptures (in small groups and report back on what it says to you)

- 1) Colossians 3:12-15

- 2) Philippians 3:7-14
- 3) I Corinthians 13:1-8a
- 4) Song of Songs 2:10-14
- 5) Psalm 78:5-7

Preparation to Pray Individually

- 1) Here are four questions to ponder and discuss prayerfully when we pray
 - a) What Scripture reading touched me the most and why?
 - b) Has my prayer life become filled with duty or tenderness?
 - c) Has my ministry become marked by process or joy?
 - d) What changes would I be willing to make if the Lord showed the way?
- 2) Listen to the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir's rendition of "How Long Has It Been (Since You Talked With the Lord)?"
- 3) Find a lonely spot in the church to pray for fifteen minutes
- 4) Individual prayer time; play soft music to welcome them back

Open Sharing About These Scriptures and Prayer

- 1) Allow five to ten minutes
- 2) Guide the discussion around what God is doing in their hearts

Final Instruction

- 1) Describe "divine moments"
 - a) God does what only He can do when He decides to do it
 - (1) Only He can renew our hearts
 - (2) Only He can renew our vision
 - (3) Only He can change lives

- (4) Only He can change a church
 - (5) Only He can answer prayer
 - (6) Any others? (give courage, mend relationships, et al)
- b) May this richness be multiplied in this church
- c) May “Divine Moments” happen with newcomers meeting Jesus
- 2) When we return from the break, we will examine lordship, leadership, and followership

*“I tell you, open your eyes and
look at the fields!
They are ripe for harvest.”*
—Jesus
John 4:35