

BAKKE GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES:  
ASSESSING LEADERSHIP NETWORK'S EFFECTIVENESS IN ACCELERATING  
THE DELOYMENT OF CHURCH VOLUNTEERS IN MINISTRY AND SERVICE TO  
THE COMMUNITY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE ACADEMIC COMMITTEE  
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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To Liz

Those who would transform a nation or the world cannot do so by breeding and  
captaining discontent or by demonstrating the reasonableness and desirability of the  
intended changes or by coercing people into a new way of life. They must know how to  
kindle and fan an extravagant hope.

Eric Hoffer

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## ABBREVIATIONS

LN	Leadership Network
EFCLC	Externally Focused Church Leadership Community
LC	Leadership Community
OST	Open Space Technology

## ABSTRACT

This project seeks to answer the research question, “How effective is Leadership Network’s Leadership Community process in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers in ministry and service to the community?” The participants of this project were the members of three separate Externally Focused Church Leadership Communities. These leaders come from 33 churches, whose average weekly attendance is 2,282 with a median weekend attendance of 1,200. The three Leadership Communities met separately four times, over an eighteen-month period. During each three-day gathering participants reported on progress, worked collaboratively to solve common problems, discover innovative approaches to community ministry and set new goals.

To determine the effectiveness of the Leadership Community process in accelerating the deployment of volunteers in community ministry, three data points were used to gather data. First, initial data was gathered from each church at the beginning of the process, via an application process, to quantify the number of volunteers and the hours they were currently serving. The second data point was an annual questionnaire sent to participating churches each year since 2004. It is this questionnaire that records how many volunteers were serving along with the hours they served. The third data point measured the quality and effectiveness of each individual Leadership Community gathering via an electronic survey sent to participants following each gathering.

The results were very encouraging. Cumulatively the thirty-three churches increased the involvement of volunteers from twenty-one percent of their average weekly attendees in 2003 to 45 percent of their average weekly attendees in 2006. Furthermore, they increased their hours of service from 466,866 hours in 2003 to 1,151,861 hours of service in 2006. The financial impact is equally impressive. The economic value of volunteer service, as calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor, increased from \$8,025,427 in 2003 to \$21,620,412 in 2006. The cumulative economic value of volunteers from these thirty-three churches serving in the community from 2003 to 2006 is an impressive \$62,579,468.

The Leadership Community gatherings were also seen as an effective process in accelerating the process. Collectively 94 percent of participants communicated the Leadership Community gatherings “met” or “exceeded expectations” of all gathering attended. The findings from both the increased results and the satisfaction with the Leadership Community gatherings lead to an affirmative answer to the research question.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM / QUESTION

How effective is Leadership Network's Leadership Community process in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers in ministry and service to the community?

#### BACKGROUND FOR THE PROJECT

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ were profound, holistic, and transformational. His three-fold ministry encompassed teaching, preaching and healing (Matt. 4:23, 9:35, New International Version<sup>1</sup>). To walk as his disciple, one was to “be merciful just as [God] is merciful” (Luke 6:36), love as Jesus loved (John 13:34, 35), and be one who was a neighbor to all in need (Luke 10:29-37). In the early centuries of the church, it was the Christ-followers, who through their compassion and kindness, served the people around them, resulting in an estimated 40 percent growth per decade of the early church.<sup>2</sup> Adolf Harnack's research on the expansion of the early church pieces together

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references will be from New International Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal, Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), 6.

a remarkable picture of the early Christian's involvement with the poor, orphans, widows, the sick, mineworkers, prisoners, slaves, and travelers. "The new language on the lips of Christians", he summarizes, "was the language of love." But it was more than a language; it was a thing of power and action: (Harnack 1962:149) This was a "social gospel" in the very best sense of the word and was practiced not as a stratagem to lure outsiders to the church but simply as a natural expression of faith in Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the following centuries the church played a major historic role in meeting social needs and curing social ills. Christians were at the forefront in the abolition of slavery, enactment of child-labor laws, establishment of public schools, universities, orphanages and hospitals. Christian leaders like William Booth and Jane Addams, led the way in restoring the bodies and minds, as well as the souls, of those who were converted. Catholic Scholar Thomas Maserro writes of the social impact the church has had throughout the centuries.

[M]any of the laudable social institutions and practices that we take for granted today have their roots in teachings and activities of the Christian community, including the Catholic Church. For example, the complex system of hospitals and modern health care from which we all benefit sprang from charitable works that were sponsored by churches, both Protestant and Catholic, in previous centuries. Modern labor unions and group insurance policies are an outgrowth of various activities of guilds and sodalities, agencies through which members of the medieval church practiced mutual support, often under direct religious auspices. Churches organized the first schools in our nation and in other lands, and much of our educational system at all levels is still religiously affiliated. It was the church that cared for poor families before there were public social service agencies. The contemporary social work and nursing professions grew out of the efforts of church personnel, largely nuns, and laywomen, Catholic and Protestant alike, to assist families in need of resources, expertise and healing. For good reason, then, the church has been called the "godmother of the nonprofit sector."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 49.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Massaro, S.J., *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 14-15.

## Reasons the Church is not Engaged

Is this the kind of impact the church is experiencing today? For most churches this transformational role has all but disappeared. Why has much of the church withdrawn from the community, either physically or psychologically, that God has placed it in? Briefly there are three factors that have influenced the withdrawal of the church from the community. These factors are missional, theological, and secular.

### *Missional Factors*

First there is a missional factor. Dr. Ram Cnaan, Director of the Program for Religion and Social Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania writes,

While religious organizations—the Church with a capital C—has sponsored many social programs throughout the world, congregations have historically been reluctant to become involved in social programs. After all, the primary mission of a congregation is to provide a religious framework and communal site for worshiping. Its second mission is to sustain the congregation and to guarantee resources sufficient to carry out its primary mission. Social services delivery can come only after these two missions are achieved.<sup>5</sup>

Cnaan defines the practical pressure that keeps churches turned inward. Congregational leaders ask, as leaders from my own church have asked, “How can we meet all the needs ‘out there’ when we have so many needs right here in our church? First, let’s meet the needs within the church, and then we will have greater capacity to meet the needs ‘out there.’” In early 2006 researcher Thom S. Rainer wrote, “In a recent survey of churches across America, we found that nearly 95% of the churches’ ministries were for members alone. Indeed, many

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<sup>5</sup> Ram A. Cnaan and others, *The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare*, (New York: University Press, 2002), 10-11.

churches had no ministries for those outside the congregation.”<sup>6</sup> The “mission” of the church can not merely be to maintain itself. Jesus never commanded the church to merely survive.

### *Theological Factors*

A second issue is theological. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the eschatological teaching of premillennialism became a prominent popular theology of the day. A tenet of premillennialism is the imminent return of Jesus Christ followed by a thousand year reign of Christ on earth. A prerequisite to Christ’s return was the preaching of the gospel to the entire world “as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). It was this conviction that helped fuel the great missionary efforts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An aberration of this teaching, however, was that any effort Christians spent trying to make this world a better, more-livable place, as opposed to getting people into heaven, was to hinder and delay the return of Jesus Christ. It was this attitude that exempted the church from engaging in the ills and hurts of the community. This theological stance, which set itself against amillennialists, who don’t accept a literal thousand year reign of Jesus, was the beginning of what church historian David Bosch refers to as the “great reversal,”<sup>7</sup> where most of the evangelical church, as they came to be called, exempted themselves from societal ills.

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<sup>6</sup>Thom S. Rainer, “Seven Sins of Dying Churches,” *Outreach Magazine* 5, no. 1, January/February 2006, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Bosch, 318.

### *Secular Factors*

The third reason churches have refrained from social ministry is because of the secularization of social services. Although it can be argued that the fount of human services is the church, little by little the church has both relinquished this role and been eased out of this role by government and human service agencies—the “professionals.”

Dr. Beryl Hugen, Professor of Sociology and Social Work at Calvin College, writing in

*Christianity and Social Work*, notes that secularization is not without effect. He writes,

Additionally, “the spontaneous will to serve,” so evident in earlier church volunteers was subverted by the drive for professionalization. Previous values that had stressed compassion, emotional involvement, and vigorous love of humanity... were “educated out” in preference for a “scientific trained intelligence and skillful application of technique.”<sup>8</sup>

Average congregants often feel underqualified to engage the homeless, immigrants, orphans, widows, etc. when so much expertise seems to be required.

The church is often absent from the conversation regarding societal ills and social needs. In the author’s own community of Boulder Colorado, in a publication entitled, *Quality of Life in Boulder County, 2005: A Community Indicators Report*,<sup>9</sup> there is not a single reference to churches being part of the solution in addressing the top community needs such as at-risk youth, health care, homelessness, etc. although “public agencies,”

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<sup>8</sup> Beryl Hugen, ed., *Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice*, (Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work, 1998), 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Quality of Life in Boulder County 2005: A Community Indicators Report*; available from [http://www.bococivicforum.org/pdf/bccf\\_report\\_2005.pdf](http://www.bococivicforum.org/pdf/bccf_report_2005.pdf); Internet; accessed 2 February 2007.

“business” and “non-profit” agencies are frequently cited. Addressing the absence of religious-based literature in social services, Dr. Ram Cnaan writes,

A review of over 35,000 abstracts written between 1977 and 1997 for social workers 220 sources mentioned the term “religion.” A close review of Social Work Abstracts failed to identify a single source that dealt with the religious-based social service organization as a service provider and/or a partner for social work. Nor was there any mention of religious-based social services that complement the services provided by the state, foundations, residents’ associations, and academic disciplines.”<sup>10</sup>

Cnaan further notes that similar patterns were found at papers presented at academic conferences, in textbooks, course outlines, and encyclopedias of social work. Surely a church that focuses primarily on itself is not the church that Jesus came to build. Believers are called to be salt (Matt. 5:13) and light (Matt. 5:14) not for and to themselves but to the world around them. In Matt. 25:35-46 Jesus says the stranger, the sick, the prisoner, the hungry, and thirsty are part of the community the church serves not the community the church avoids.

#### EXTERNALLY FOCUSED CHURCHES

But there is hope. There are an increasing number of churches that are rediscovering their purpose and thinking differently about what the church should be. These are externally focused churches—churches that measure their effectiveness, not by how many are sitting in the pews but rather by how many of their congregants are engaged in community. These are churches that firmly believe that if they are not engaged in meeting the needs of their communities they are not the church that Jesus called them to be.

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<sup>9</sup> Ram A. Cnaan with Robert J. Wineburg and Stephanie C. Boddie, *The Newer Deal: Social Work and Religion in Partnership*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 51.

## LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY HISTORY

My own experience with externally focused churches began in April 2001, when I was hired by Leadership Network (LN) to investigate urban churches that might become part of an “Urban Church Network.” Through site visits and phone conversations with over 150 church leaders I discovered that LN was identifying a genre of churches that were thinking differently about what a church could be and should be in a community that took me beyond urban settings. We at LN were identifying churches that were incredible agents of transformation in the community. Many urban churches have historically been involved in their communities. Early in this process I met with talented, hard working pastors and leaders from some of the most influential African-American congregations in the United States. Such churches included West Angeles Church of God and First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Christ in Los Angeles, Bethel Gospel Tabernacle, and Concord Street Baptist Church in New York City. These churches had extensive community engagement. To these pastors, it just “wasn’t church” if they weren’t involved in the needs and dreams of their communities. One study of 2,150 black churches revealed “67.9% of black churches are involved with social service agencies and non-church programs in dealing with community problems.”<sup>11</sup> The impact of urban Latino leaders was equally impressive. Luis Cortes of Philadelphia’s Nueva Esperanza has helped thousands of Latinos become home owners in the Philadelphia’s Latino corridor in North Philadelphia. On the West Coast pastors and leaders like Daniel DeLeon of Templo Calvario, Rudy Carrasco of Harambee in West Pasadena, and Larry

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<sup>11</sup> Lincoln, Eric C. and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 150.

Acosta of Santa Ana's Hispanic Ministry Center are all helping mobilize congregants for community ministry. The impact of urban churches and ministries was encouraging news but not a complete surprise.

What did surprise us at LN, however, was the number of suburban and even rural churches that were becoming more externally focused. Churches were discovering a new vitality and level of effectiveness as their congregations made the shift from "serve us" to service. LN hosted two events to determine the interest level of churches in forming a Leadership Community (LC). We recognized enough similarity to these scattered churches that we needed a name that went beyond "urban" to describe their ministry. "Missional Church" was our working title but it soon became clear that "missional" was broader in its description than was the term "externally focused," which we adopted to identify churches that were ministering in the community.

The first event was a three hour briefing held in September 2002 at The Potter's House (Church) in Houston, Texas. This venue provided the opportunity to explain what we, at LN, were seeing around the country and our observations were confirmed by the participants. The interest was significant enough to invite a select group of interested Christian leaders to join LN for a three day participatory, interactive event called "The Wild Challenge," facilitated by our alliance partner, WildWorks ([www.wildworksgroup.com](http://www.wildworksgroup.com)) in Dallas, May 28-30, 2003. Seventy-two participants from twenty-four churches confirmed what we had suspected; we were in the nascent stage of what we believed would become a movement. It was the Wild Challenge that served as the green light to coalesce a Leadership Community for Externally Focused Churches (EFCLC). Christian leaders were contacted and invited to apply for this EFCLC.

The inaugural EFCLC convened November 4-6, 2003, at Mariners Church in Irvine, California. Fifty-four leaders from thirteen churches comprised this first Leadership Community. The anticipated outcomes of this first gathering came to fruition as new relationships were formed and each team came away with a two-year strategic plan along with a six month “Action Learning Plan.” There was a sense of anticipation and excitement throughout the three days.

### LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY DEFINED

LCs are comprised of pastors and ministry leaders from nine to twelve churches who are pursuing common ministry outcomes, sharing ideas and practices, developing strategy, and benchmarking results in the context of authentic relationships. The LC utilizes a collaborative process, a varied learning environment, real-time documentation on a live Website, where peer leaders work interactively through a series of four, three-day gatherings over an eighteen-month period. It is here where they dream dreams and set goals in an environment of ongoing accountability to accomplish a significant leap in their organizational performance.

To these communities, LN brings a variety of thought-leaders, resources, and tools which address both the unique challenges of individual churches as well as the common “mega challenge” of the LC as a whole such as recruiting and training of volunteers, funding new ministries, etc. Although much planning and thought is put into the design of each three-day gathering, it is the work that churches do *between* the gatherings, doing the real work, which is most important.

The desired outcome of EFCLCs is to accelerate the learning, knowledge, and application of innovative approaches to externally focused ministry, which would result

in the mobilization and deployment of an increasing number of volunteers serving and ministering in the community.

By October 2006 three EFCLCs, comprised of thirty-three churches, had formed and completed the eighteen-month LC process. It is the purpose of this paper to evaluate the effectiveness of these participating churches in implementing innovative approaches to externally focused ministry, increasing the number of volunteers serving in the community, the total hours served, and the average amount of hours served by each volunteer in participating churches.

### INTENDED OUTCOMES

There are four intended outcome of this project that culminate in a series of recommendations found in chapter seven.

1. To measure and evaluate the progress of each of the thirty-three churches in deploying volunteers to serve and minister in the community.
2. To measure the dollar value of such volunteer contribution to the community.
3. To identify the elements of the LC process that were most helpful and effective in helping them accelerate their involvement in externally focused ministry.
4. To identify the principles of transformational leadership in the LC process, the church leaders and volunteers.

### LIMITATIONS

There are five limitations to the scope of this study. First, the study and survey data had to conform to LN's (the sponsoring organization) designed purpose of the LC, which was simply to measure the number of volunteers and volunteer hours expended in

community ministry and service. Second, although there are five groups of churches that have entered the LC process, only three groups, containing thirty-three churches, have finished all four gatherings. Third, this study does not measure nor evaluate the value (beyond perceived economic value) of community ministry and service or the long-term transformation of the community. It merely attempts to measure the transformation of the church by quantifying the increase of parishioners deployed in community service and ministry. Fourth, the study does not attempt to measure the evangelistic implications or correlations between community engagement and evangelism. Fifth, this project feigns no attempt to be comprehensive in its scope. It does not address, for instance, the role of prayer, asset-based community development, or issues of justice. This project is simply a study of the progress of thirty-three churches engaging their communities with love, service, and ministry.

#### CONTRIBUTION TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership is at the heart of this project and very little will happen without it. This project will focus on the transformational leadership implications of the LC process, the leaders from participating churches, the volunteers and the overall transformational effect they are having on the participating congregations at large and on the community. James MacGregor Burns, often recognized as the father of transformational leadership writes, “Leadership brings about real change that leaders *intend*.”<sup>12</sup> My hypothesis is that the efficacy of the LC process is closely tied to the efficacy of transformational leadership exercised in the LC process itself and by the

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<sup>12</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, (New York: Perennial, Harper Collins Publishers, 1978), 415.

church leaders deploying volunteers in service and ministry to the community. The degree to which genuine transformational leadership is exercised, the more overall transformation will take place.

To be accepted as a participant in the EFCLC, team leaders must have a demonstrated track record of, or commitment to, externally focused, transformational church-based ministries. In addition leaders are accepted into the LC process because of their desire for their church to experience “exponential and not merely incremental growth in their externally focused ministries.” To accomplish exponential growth will require transformational leadership for it is “transformational leadership [that] can move followers to exceed expected performance.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, “[t]ransformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible. They set more challenging expectations and typically achieve higher performances.”<sup>14</sup> This project will attempt to evaluate the results of the participating leaders.

I entered this project with the supposition that the world can only be changed by those who themselves have been changed. Christians who serve will be transformed as they serve and give themselves away to others resulting in more robust and healthy congregations. The apostle Paul reminds Christians that it is through “works of service” that the body of Christ is built up (Eph. 4:12). This supposition is backed by a research study of thirty-six Protestant churches published in 2006 by the School of Social Work, at

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<sup>13</sup>Bernard M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 1998), 2.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

Baylor University. The study notes that deep faith not only leads to service but service leads to “the deepening and maturing of faith.”<sup>15</sup>

Theologically, transformation is, and always has been, the substantive feature of the gospel. The nature of God is to bring about change and empower believers to be active agents for a portion of that change. When one comes to faith in Jesus Christ one’s allegiances change. Converts become a new creation altogether (2 Cor. 5:17) and are transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom.12:2). Collectively Christians are the body of Christ in the world loving, serving and ministering in the world in which he has placed them. The church is to do the things Jesus did (John 14:12); seeking and saving...serving and giving. At a minimum these LCs are formed to accelerate the engagement of the church in the world around them as followers and servants of Jesus.

#### PROJECT IMPLICATIONS

There are implications of this project for LN. Although each church pays tuition of \$3000 to \$5000 to be a part of the LC process, approximately 70 percent of the LC process is subsidized by LN donors. A positive outcome of the LC process, as measured by significant growth of volunteers and hours of service, if relayed to donors, could generate more donations. Conversely, a less than stellar evaluation of the outcomes may lead to LN seek another means of accelerating the growth and progress of church innovations.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Role of Faith in the Service of Christian Volunteers*; available from <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/22974.pdf>; P. 2; Internet; accessed 12 February 2007.

The findings from the LC process and this project will be disseminated to the broader church worldwide via Web-based white papers, books, journal and magazine articles, LN conferences, television and radio interviews, and podcasts, which hopefully will serve as a catalyst to engaging an ever-broadening group of churches in the needs and dreams of their communities. There is also the potential of developing curricula for seminaries and other academic institutions. I believe that churches that are serving their communities are part of a movement that God has initiated. He wants to place the church back into community where it can be the salt, light and leaven it was intended to be. It is my hope that a critical mass of externally focused churches can change the world.

Jesus had the right balance between good news and good deeds (Acts 10:36-38). Engaging in holistic expressions of externally focused ministry is not creating anything new but simply rediscovering what has always been historically true about the gospel. This project could be foundational for a group of churches to be thought-leaders and models for the best practices in the area of externally focused churches.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature that is most relevant to the project of assessing LN's process of mobilizing and empowering leaders in community ministry through LCs. Although not exhaustive, the books reviewed here are foundational to understanding transformational leadership, incarnational ministry, adult learning, the history of the church's engagement in community, and externally focused church models. The categories pertain to (1) historical literature, (2) theological literature, (3) sociological literature and (4) practical / missiological literature.

#### HISTORICAL LITERATURE

*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, by David Bosch, is a classic volume of scholarly endeavor as well as a practical and insightful treatise on how the church has carried out its *missio dei*—the mission of God. Bosch frames his study in the construct of seven historical missional / theological paradigms. Bosch's seven paradigms of mission roughly follow the history of the church: (1) the Primitive Church Paradigm—through the understanding and practice of Jesus, Luke, Paul, and Matthew, (2) the Eastern Church Paradigm, (3) the Medieval Roman Catholic Missionary Paradigm, (4) the Protestant Reformation Paradigm, (5) the Enlightenment Paradigm, (6) the Post-modern paradigm, and finally (7) the Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm.

Each paradigm is defined by the church's relationship to the state, culture, theology, ecclesiastical purpose and guiding Scripture. After perusing two-thousand years of mission history, one can conclude that the church, neither at any time nor in any place, has really been healthy enough to properly propagate itself. Every missionary effort has been flawed in its motives and execution but in the end mission is *missio Dei*—God's mission, and it is to his glory that in spite of our flawed efforts, the gospel goes forth, peoples are converted, churches are planted, and cultures influenced and changed. Recognizing the missional age the church is currently in is helpful in understanding why God appears to be launching the church into the community.

Thomas Cahill's, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus* is one of Cahill's books on the "hinges of history"—people and events that greatly shaped the values, culture, and thinking of the Western world. This book seeks to answer the two questions, "Did Jesus make a difference?" and "Is our world any better today than it was before Jesus walked this earth?"<sup>1</sup> Cahill notes that there seems to be two streams of Christianity that flow through history—the transformational and life-giving gospel of the cross and the dark "subterranean river" of Christianity that is the fount of suppression and exclusion. Cahill concludes that for the past two thousand years there have been those who have read the gospels with fresh eyes and become agents of grace and transformation in every age.<sup>2</sup> This conclusion is very relevant to this project in that becoming an externally focused church is predicated on reading the Scriptures with new eyes and rediscovering what it means to be an agent of grace in this age.

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<sup>1</sup> Cahill, 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 304-305.

*The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* by Rodney Stark is a wonderful treatise on the growth of the church from a sociological perspective. My interest in the book, as it relates to my project, is Stark's observations on how the early Christian's theology and view of Jesus' teachings motivated believers to act mercifully towards the people in distress around them. During the most difficult times of disease or plague, when others fled the city, it was the believers who took care not only of each other but their non-believing or pagan neighbor as well.<sup>3</sup> These counter-cultural actions were instrumental in the forty-percent per decade growth of the church in the first three centuries.<sup>4</sup> The new growth plates of the church today will most likely be in places where believers are acting in similarly counter-cultural ways by radically loving their neighbors.

In Adolf Harnack's epic work, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries. Vol. 1*,<sup>5</sup> the author provides helpful insight on the growth of the early church. This is the sourcebook—the fountainhead to which other author's return for insight on historical Christianity. Particularly informative was Chapter III, *The Gospel of Love and Charity*, where Harnack gives a detailed account of how the early church cared for widows, orphans, prisoners, slaves, the sick and disabled as well as the poor. Their gospel was a gospel of love and their love and care was a magnet that drew others to Jesus and to the fellowship of the church. Ministering love towards others is an expression of God's

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<sup>3</sup> Stark, 92-93.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>5</sup> Adolf Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries. Vol. 1.*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998).

love. This volume, along with Rodney Stark's, *The Rise of Christianity*, provides much of the background material on the externally focused nature of the early church. Since I am finding that all historical books I have read thus far point back to Harnack's work or the sources Harnack sites, this treasure will be important in establishing historic foundations of the early church.

*The Newer Deal: Social work and Religion in Partnership* by Ram A. Cnaan provides the history and social context for churches that are engaged in social ministry today. Written in 1999, Cnaan's research team provides the research on the impact congregations are making in human services. He writes, "Just as no one can imagine a car going anywhere without its wheels, even though the engine is its most important part, no one in the future will be able to imagine a limited partnership of care solving, managing or preventing problems without assistance or direct involvement from the religious community, even though that entity is not its engine."<sup>6</sup> Most helpful was Cnaan's review of the impact that congregations have made outside their walls over the year as well as a helpful analysis as to why the religious community gets so little recognition today in the field of social work.

To understand externally focused ministry from a Catholic perspective, there is probably not a simpler foundational work than Thomas Massaro's *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*. Massaro points out that "many of the laudable social institutions and practices that we take for granted today have their roots in teachings and activities of the Christian community, including the Catholic Church."<sup>7</sup> Massaro

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<sup>6</sup> Cnaan, *The Newer Deal*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Massaro, 14.

elaborates on the hospitals, orphanages, schools, labor unions, etc. that were initiated by believers in response to their understanding of the gospel. He notes, “For good reason, then, the Church has been called the “godmother of the nonprofit sector.””<sup>8</sup>

Most helpful were the Nine Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching:

1. The dignity of every person and human rights
2. Solidarity, common good, and participation
3. Family life
4. Subsidiarity and the proper role of government
5. Property ownership in modern society: rights and responsibilities
6. The dignity of work, rights of workers, and support for labor unions
7. Colonialism and economic development
8. Peace and Disarmament
9. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable<sup>9</sup>

Social teaching may be new for many churches but it has been far from absent from the historic teachings of the church.

Beryl Hugen’s anthology of Christianity and social work in *Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice* fills in many historical gaps in understanding the Christian view and practice of social work from biblical times to the present day. This book is a compilation of the writings of some of the best thinkers in the field of Christian social work. Beginning with biblical texts, the authors trace the role of the church in shaping values and meeting the needs of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 115-165.

society from the days of the early church through the middle ages, through Wesleyan England, through the settlement houses of the late 1800s up to the present day. Hugen writes, “The justice and love of God set forth and exemplified in the Judeo-Christian tradition has given drive and direction to much of western culture’s charities. Historically the whole shape and operation of organized welfare is inexplicable apart from this religious conviction and commitment. Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant thought have all along continuously shaped the ideological basis of social work practice.”<sup>10</sup> It is clear the church has had a defining role in caring for those on the margin. Helpful too is understanding how other social influences, like pauper laws, social Darwinism, professionalization of social services, and governmental assistance have tempered the church’s involvement in meeting societal needs.

*The Black Church in the African American Experience*<sup>11</sup> is a monumental study of the African American church viewed through the eyes of the seven major historic black denominations in the United States, which encompass 80 percent of black church attendees. With backing from the Lilly Endowment and the Ford Foundation, authors Lincoln and Mamiya, conducted a ten-year study of 2,150 churches using over 1,800 interviews with urban and rural black clergy. Their discoveries form the corpus of this helpful work on the African-American church. What was most instructive was the role the church played in serving their community outside the walls of the church. The black church, as a body, is unique in this respect. This book stands as a landmark research

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>11</sup> Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

project on black Christianity. For this reason alone, this book holds much merit as a reference book and as a research tool. It will be a long time before such an extensive research project on the black church in America will be undertaken again.

#### THEOLOGICAL LITURATURE

Robert Linthicum's *Transforming Power*<sup>12</sup> serves as a template for the exercise of legitimate power by the church and those who want to change the world for the better by acting for the common good. Linthicum defines power as "the ability, capacity and willingness of a person or group of people or an institution (whether it is a church or a nation) to act. The book is divided into two section—"The Theology of Power" and "The Practice of Power." Linthicum unpacks the theology of the kingdom of God as well as anyone I have read and ties the first public words of Jesus in Luke 4 to the book of Deuteronomy and the then-current system of taxation, slavery, and oppression. He points out that Jesus' message really *was* good news for the poor. Similar to the work of Jesus, the job of the church is to bring "shalom" (Jer. 29:4-7) to their cities by praying for the city and blessing it. Blessing the city and praying for the city is the approach of externally focused churches I work with. "The essential task of the church is to work for its society's shalom—to work for the full and total transformation of all the people, forces and structures with the love of God."<sup>13</sup> Drawing upon Jeremiah 29, he fleshes out the essential, strategic, and sufficient work of the church. The church is to become God's

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Linthicum, *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for making a Difference in Your Community*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 75.

presence in the city, called to pray for the city, practice faith through action, and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

In Ronald Rolheiser's *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*,<sup>14</sup> the author deftly attempts to define the "constitutive elements" of a healthy spiritual life. By "constitutive" he means the defining and essential elements of a healthy spiritual life, without which, there is no Christian life. These four essentials are private prayer and private morality, social justice, mellowness of heart and spirit, and engagement in a worshiping community. This book is helpful in understanding, from a Catholic perspective, the balance between a private spiritual life and a vibrant expression of a Christian's relationship with God through service.

Contrasting the Catholic perspective with a Protestant perspective, he points out that most Protestant believers see their service and ministry as being elements that nurture their faith but are not the essence (constitutive elements) of their faith. The idea of "constitutive elements" of Christianity is very important in helping churches move to a place where ministry and service to others is not optional but essential to life, health, and growth.

In *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*,<sup>15</sup> Bryant L. Myers provides an excellent foundational work for holistic ministry and community development. At the time the book was written, Myers had spent over twenty years as a worker with World Vision, so he was well experienced regarding

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<sup>14</sup> Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for Christian Spirituality*, (New York: Doubleday), 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Bryant L Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

proven and broken principles of community transformation. Drawing deeply from the strongest biblical foundations and the soundest social science Myers builds the case that

The best of human futures lies in the direction of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as the person who offers the way to become part of God's kingdom. Because poverty is fundamentally relational, I then articulate the twin goals of transformational development as changed people and just and peaceful relationships. By "changed people" I mean people who have discovered their true identity as children of God and who have recovered their true vocation as faithful and productive stewards of gifts from God for the well-being of all.<sup>16</sup>

Myers provides some of the clearest thinking on the poor and disenfranchised in the context of the continuing story that runs through the Bible. He also builds one of the best apologetics for the need for the gospel to go forth in word and deed. He writes, "Words clarify the meaning of deeds. Deeds verify the meaning of words."<sup>17</sup> By defining transformation from a biblical perspective, Myers fills in some of the gaps kingdom workers must have, if they are to be agents of transformation.

The aim of *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission* is to "explore ways to integrate theology, urban studies, and contextualization in a theologically informed, holistic, and transformational theology of mission for the city."<sup>18</sup> It is the product of a sixteen-month investigation and reflection-oriented study group comprised of doctoral students (all of whom are engaged in urban ministry) at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. Although this anthology is written by nine different authors, each author follows a similar stylistic approach. Each chapter

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, eds., *God So Loves the City Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*, (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994) xi.

begins with a story of urban ministry followed by a theological or missiological reflection to describe a specific methodology that others may find useful or insightful in their contexts. The big question the authors seek to answer is, “What is the missional role of the church in the city?” Through their comprehensive study, they have done a good job in answering that question. The role of the church is to be one of a caring neighbor, an empowering entity and transformational agent that works with the community, in relationship with the community. The church is not the Messiah—Jesus is the only one who can transform a person and transform a community.

In *A Theology as Big as the City*<sup>19</sup> urban missiologist Ray Bakke establishes the biblical, historical, and theological basis for ministry in the city. Drawing from over 1,200 references to cities, Bakke examines a few key cities and the lives of seemingly average people who were instrumental in their transformation. This book is a good primer on the theology of urban ministry. Bakke’s premise is that the Bible is a book about urban ministry, and when read from an urban perspective one receives fresh insight into the meaning of the Scriptures in respect to God’s heart for the city—from Genesis to Revelation. As a curious learner and long-time practitioner, Bakke is well qualified to address the needs of the ever-changing urban environments as well as the place the church has in bringing the *shalom* of God to the cities.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE

In his classic and seminal treatise, *Leadership*, James MacGregor Burns defines the difference between transformational leadership and transactional leadership.

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<sup>19</sup> Raymond Bakke. *A Theology As Big As the City*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997).

Transactional leadership involves “exchanging one thing for another,” money for work, jobs for votes, etc. Transformational leaders take into account not only the task to be accomplished but just as important the needs of those being led. Transformational leaders tap into the motives, desires, and needs of followers. Burns firmly proposes that the best transformational leaders lead others to action and change based on the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers. Transformational leadership theory, as first put forth by Burns, states that his own measurement of “power and leadership are measured by the degree of production of intended results,”<sup>20</sup> with the operative words being “intended” and “results.” Understanding transformational leadership is essential to assessing the value of LCs as they relate to community and societal impact. Burns writes, “By social change I mean her real change—that is, a transformation to a marked degree in the attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure our daily lives.”<sup>21</sup> What he describes as “social change” is nothing less than the type of change those in the LCs are seeking.

Twenty-five years after writing *Leadership*, the preeminent fathers of transformational leadership, James MacGregor Burns, wrote *Transforming Leadership: a New Pursuit of Happiness*, in which he deposits the fruit of his learning since penning *Leadership*. It is clear that Burns has transitioned from writing to a business audience to writing to those in the political or social sector. He writes, “Summoned forth by human wants, the task of leadership is to accomplish some change in the world that responds to those wants. Its actions and achievements are measured by the supreme public values that

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<sup>20</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

themselves are the profoundest expressions of human wants: liberty and equality, justice and opportunity, the pursuit of happiness.”<sup>22</sup> To the aging Burns, transformational leadership is too important a concept to squander on helping the business sector squeeze and extract the last penny of profit from an enterprise. Transformational leaders need to work on solving the big problems of the world and in doing so, to change the world. This book is an important piece of work in the world of externally focused churches.

In *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact*, Bernard Bass defines the specific components of transformational leadership. Such leadership is charismatic in that followers want to identify with and emulate the leader. Second, transformational leaders inspire others through challenge, understanding and persuasion. Third, transformational leadership is intellectually stimulating. And last, transformational leadership is “individually considerate” in that it provides followers with support and coaching. Bass posits that the degree to which the leader exercises these components he or she is a transformational leader. He notes that when people describe good leaders, they describe leaders who exhibit the aforementioned components of leadership.<sup>23</sup> Bass measures the outcome of effective leadership in terms of commitment, involvement, loyalty and performance. These are essential outcomes to keep in mind. Bass recognizes that transformational leadership is “an extension of” transactional leadership and both are useful in appropriate situations. He points out however that “Leadership must also address the follower’s sense of self-worth in order to engage the

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<sup>22</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership: a New Pursuit of Happiness*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Bass, 14.

follower in true commitment and involvement in the effort at hand. This is what transformational leadership adds to the transactional exchange”<sup>24</sup>

In Stephen Hacker and Tammy Robert’s book, *Transformational Leadership: Creating Organizations of Meaning*, the authors define the three areas of transformation: personal transformation, relational transformation, and enterprise transformation. Transformation is not merely some type of internal change but rather, the authors are quick to point out, “one cannot declare a transformation without the measurable results to demonstrate the change.”<sup>25</sup> I found this book to be helpful in thinking more clearly about the role individual leaders and interpersonal relationships have in bringing about organizational transformation. All three transformations must be present to bring about genuine transformation that results in dramatically improved performance—in my case engaging an increasing number of people in ministry outside the church. The authors clearly believe that the individual leader is the beginning of the change process. This conclusion informs a potential hypothesis: Communities are transformed by churches that have been transformed led by people who themselves have been transformed.

*Service-Learning: a Movement’s Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future* seeks to construct, through its founders, the roots and practice of service-learning. “Service-Learning joins two complex concepts: community action, the ‘service,’ and efforts to learn from that action and connect what is learned to existing knowledge, the

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<sup>24</sup> Bass, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hacker and Tammy Roberts, *Transformational Leadership: Creating Organizations of Meaning*, (Milwaukee, WI: Quality Press, 2004), 2.

‘learning.’”<sup>26</sup> Service learning goes beyond service and goes beyond learning. To enhance the value of serving one needs reflective learning that informs those who serve and enhances the effectiveness of continued service. The concept of service learning is foundational to understanding the LCs, not only during the three-day gatherings but also the kind of learning that occurs as churches engage their communities and reflect upon their experience.

In *Action Learning in Action: Transforming Problems and People for World-Class Organizational Learning*, author Michael J. Marquardt describes many critical elements and processes that are essential to the success of an LC. Marquardt notes that action learning is built around a problem (project, challenge, issue, or task), in which both the team and the organization are stakeholders in the successful resolution of that problem or challenge.<sup>27</sup> The author also identifies the “six distinct interactive components” that are critical to action learning—the same six elements that are critical to LCs: (1) A problem, (2) The group, (3) The questioning and reflection process, (4) The commitment to taking action, (5) The commitment to learning, and (6) The facilitator.<sup>28</sup>

## PRACTICAL / MISSIOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Ram Cnaan’s *The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare* provides the best and most recent study (2002) of the church’s

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<sup>26</sup> Timothy K. Stanton and others, *Service-Learning: A Movement’s Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Michael J. Marquardt, *Action Learning in Action: Transforming Problems and People for World-Class Organizational Learning*, (Mountain View, California: Davies-Black Publications, 1999). 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-8.

engagement in ministry outside the walls of the church and the positive benefits churches have in the welfare of America. Cnaan's study of 251 churches revealed a number of helpful data points in establishing baseline measurements. Surprisingly the study also revealed data relating the importance of church attendance and friendships within the church as being more powerful influences in external service than the biblical theology undergirding the service. "We discovered that belonging to a congregation is a powerful prosocial experience, one that overshadows even religious beliefs. Indeed we found that the group dynamics of belonging to a 'moral community' brings people to care for others much more than 'individual religious beliefs.'"<sup>29</sup> Understanding Cnaan's work is foundational for understanding the absolutely necessary role the institutional church plays in caring for people as well as the untapped potential of churches that are not engaged in their communities. My mantra has been "Good works create good will, which is the platform for sharing the good news." Because of Cnaan I am amending this to say, "Good friends help turn good intentions into good works which creates good will, which is the platform for sharing the good news."

*Building Communities From the Inside Out: a Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* is the guidebook for "asset-based community development." John L. McKnight and John P. Kretzmann have distinguished themselves among a large field of social workers and community builders through their pioneering work and research based on focusing on the strengths of a community rather than its deficits. The authors present a well-documented case for asserting that most efforts to rebuild troubled communities fall short because they focus exclusively on the needs,

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<sup>29</sup> Cnaan, *The Invisible Caring Hand*, 11.

problems, and deficiencies of the communities rather than the assets and resources of the community.<sup>30</sup> The guidebook serves as a practical compass for community builders who are interested in learning this second approach. The authors introduce a revolutionary mindset regarding what it takes to rebuild community, largely dispelling the myth of broken communities being void of assets or hope. Although the book contains many inspiring examples of where effective community building is taking place, it is the big idea of “asset-based” that creates the energy around which communities are transformed. The authors express the need for an asset-based approach for a couple of reasons. First, outside help is not always / will not always be available, whereas there will always be the internal assets found in every community. Secondly, much of what is done externally in the name of “help” often ends up creating an unhealthy dependency for the “client.” The writers go so far as to say that communities *cannot* be rebuilt by focusing on the needs, problems and deficiencies.<sup>31</sup>

*Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and Doing It Right*, by John Perkins, is a summary of the vision and methodology for beginning Christian community development in order to restore at-risk communities. According to Perkins “Christian community development begins with people transformed by the love of God, who then respond to God’s call to share the gospel with others through evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice.”<sup>32</sup> Christian community development is the

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<sup>30</sup> John P. Kretzmann, and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities From the Inside Out: a Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993). 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> John Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing It Together and doing It Right*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 21.

integration of grassroots efforts with church-based efforts to create long-term solutions to the problems of the poor. It begins with addressing the felt needs of those in the community (the need to belong, the need to be important, and the need to be secure) and responds to those needs in holistic ways. It is based on clear biblical principles, develops and utilizes leaders from within the community, and advocates the three R's of genuine community development. First there is *relocating* back into the city in order to understand the problems of the poor. Second there is racial *reconciliation* along with mutual submission, and third is the need for *redistribution* of resources. Redistribution is bringing back some of the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and financial capital back into the community in order to create economic viability. Through the three Rs, Perkins offers a cogent argument to correct much have what has gone before and passed as “community development.” Often those who are trying to help the community live outside the community, ignore reconciliation, and actually end up pulling more resources from the community.

*Global Good News—Mission in a New Context* is a composite of fourteen essays written by practitioners and thought-leaders in the area of global missions. This fourteen-faceted gem of a volume seeks to explore and unpack the challenges of evangelism and mission in a post-modern and increasingly globalized world. The book is divided into two sections. The first section is about today’s “new global context.” The authors argue that for Christians to have a voice in this millennium they must students of the spiritual and cultural milieu in which they live.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Howard A Snyder, ed., *Global Good News—Mission in a New Context*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2001), 25.

The second section deals with how one becomes good news and shares good news within this new global context. Collectively the authors put forth the proposition that the timeless gospel never changes; it is merely re-interpreted in every age in accordance with the understanding and insight of that age. Christians do not live in an age where the gospel is irrelevant but believers must continually rediscover the vitality of the gospel to make it compelling for every generation. A global gospel is necessary for a global world.

Robert D. Lupton's, *Theirs is the Kingdom: Celebrating the Gospel in Urban America*<sup>34</sup> is a reflective account of Robert Lupton's experience of relocating to inner city Atlanta to work among the poor. This book reflects the deepened understanding of community ministry and the transformation in the Lupton family that occurred through nearly twenty years of ministry in Atlanta. What I appreciate most about this short piece is the way Lupton subtly and gently addresses the excuses of believers who don't want to be involved with those on the margins. He addresses issues like finding and ministering to "the worthy poor." Lupton just asks his readers to see life through the eyes of those in distress. This request is the starting point to giving oneself to others.

Ray Bakke and Jon Sharpe tell their individual stories and perceptions of God's grace and how God works in the cities and city structures through their book, *Street Signs*, an engaging account of two journeys into the city that merge as one common story. This book makes a huge contribution in understanding God's concern for the cities of the world as well as understanding a globalized, tribalized and urbanized world. The authors stress the need to exegete not only the Scriptures but the city as well to get a firm understanding on the history, ethnicity, economic health, educational vibrancy of the

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<sup>34</sup>Lupton, Robert D., *Theirs is the Kingdom: Celebrating the Gospel in Urban America*, ed. Barbara R. Thompson, (New York: Harper Collins, 1989).

community.<sup>35</sup> Eschewing terms like “taking our city” through conferences and crusades, where the city becomes the target, they posit the best way to pull the leaders and the resources of the city together is through city consultations. This methodology is the approach I have seen to be most effective.

*Companion to the Poor* is a compelling story of one missionary’s journey into a squatter settlement on the outskirts of Manila. This work is Viv Grigg’s firsthand account of his experiences detailing his call, his approach to ministry, his failures, and successes along with a developing theology that served as the foundation of his church planting ministry. What begins as a church-planting mission to the poor results in the discovery of a holistic approach to ministry which Grigg terms “holistic discipleship”<sup>36</sup>—addressing not only the spiritual needs of the Filipinos but their social and economic needs as well.

Grigg is a bold, reflective practitioner who has honed his theology of ministry in the trenches. Through this book, he has left every urban missionary a great gift. Grigg has adopted as his model for spiritual disciplines, not the habits of the monastery—scripture, prayer, fasting etc. but rather “the disciplines of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount,”<sup>37</sup> which are more adoptable to the poor and anyone working in transformational, incarnational ministry.

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<sup>35</sup> Ray Bakke and Jon Sharpe, *Street Signs*, (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>36</sup> Viv Grigg, *Companion of the Poor: Christ in the Urban Slums*, (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media with World Vision, 2004), 71.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

In *The Emerging Church*<sup>38</sup> Dan Kimball has written the handbook for what churches need to become if they are to thrive in the twenty-first century. Kimball writes that church is more a “people who are” rather than a “place where.”<sup>39</sup> Kimball sagely notes that the church is to be missional not consumeristic. “I am the church” needs to replace “I go to church.” It is in making this shift where hope is found.

Kimball’s distinctions between the seekers (moderns) and the “post-seekers” (emerging culture) is most helpful. He points out in the modern mindset *facts* influence *belief* that influences *behavior*. Among emerging culture it is *experience* that influence *belief* which in turn influences *behavior*. In both cases behavioral change is the outcome but the means to get there is different.<sup>40</sup> This distinction can help shape externally focused churches, especially with the youth. For the emerging generation it may be more effective to let them experience something first and then bring in the biblical explanations that reinforce the positive behavior. It may be best to start with an urban plunge, let them experience the heartbreaks of the community and then lead them to similar situations in the Scriptures where Jesus experienced and felt the similarly. The result of this experiential approach could be very powerful.

Drawing on examples, testimonies, and experiences of dozens of church-based and parachurch outreach ministries, Amy Sherman’s *Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-based Ministries that Work*<sup>41</sup> tells the story of

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<sup>38</sup> Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>41</sup> Amy L. Sherman, *Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-based Ministries that Work*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1997).

churches that are transforming lives and reclaiming communities through effective, holistic practitioners, whom she names “Restorers.” Sherman challenges churches to take up Christ’s command to “love your neighbor” and offers specific, practical guidance on how to reach out to neighbors in distress. By understanding the challenges of persistent poverty—and the opportunities afforded by welfare reform and faith-based partnerships, she urges the church to engage in redemptive ministry that presents the gospel as the hope of the inner city.

Carl S. Dudley, in *Next Steps in Community Ministry*, chronicles the research findings of a Lilly Foundation study of thirty-two congregations that were helping to launch new community-based ministries. This book is particularly helpful in establishing the ability of churches to engage, at some level, in community-based ministry. Dudley and his team discovered

that all the participating congregations—even ones that previously indicated low social concern, regardless of liberal or conservative theology, of large or small membership size, of social location or cultural composition—proved to have sufficient social, economic, and faith resources to sustain the development of successful programs of social ministry. Not demographics or theology, but leadership made the most significant difference between success and failure.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore Dudley notes that in his research, “we saw volunteers transformed by their involvement in community concerns.”<sup>43</sup> He goes on to say, “we discovered how volunteers found their personal faith enriched . . . .”<sup>44</sup> In the same book, researcher Sally A. Johnson, in the chapter entitled “Volunteer Satisfaction in Community Ministries,”

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<sup>42</sup> Carl S. Dudley, *Next Steps in Community Ministry*, (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute Inc, 1996), xi.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

writes, “In devotion, reflection, and action, faith grows through sharing in community ministry. Not only do our commitments move us to reach out but we are changed by that experience.”<sup>45</sup> This research is helpful in establishing the need to be engaged in community ministry.

In 1159 A.D. theologian and author John of Salisbury wrote in his book, *The Metalogicon*, “We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours.”<sup>46</sup> This project builds on the shoulders of such giants.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>46</sup> *On the Shoulders of Giants*; available from <http://www.aerospaceweb.org/question/history/q0162b.shtml>; Internet; accessed 17 January 2007.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **MINISTRY CONTEXT**

This chapter describes the historical, sociological, and organizational context of this project and will include an historic review of the church’s engagement in community, a review of the LC design, a definition of transformational leadership, and an overview of the major stakeholders in this study—LN and the thirty-three participating churches.

#### **EXTERNALLY FOCUSED MINISTRY IN CHURCH HISTORY**

##### **The Early Church**

If anything can be learned from the history of the early church, one can learn that a church without seminaries, church growth seminars, elaborate youth programs, or large campuses can still grow and change lives at a phenomenal rate. There are many sociological, political, and spiritual factors that contributed to the spread of the gospel. The first century indeed was a “fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4) moment for Jesus to enter the world. One cannot deny the benefits of a common language, the *Pax Romana*, safety of travel, etc. in providing a beneficial environment for church growth. Beyond these external factors, the early Christians lived in such a way that caused the world to stand up and take notice, for they had a distinctive lifestyle that could not be ignored. They were followers of Christ, and as followers of Christ they would seek to follow in his steps—living as he lived, loving as he loved, caring as he cared and if the ultimate price was to be paid, they would pay that price and be welcomed into the company of Jesus himself

and those who have gone before. Much can be learned from the growth of the early church.

Early Christians were captivated by the gospel and profoundly influenced by the teachings and values of Jesus Christ. One can assume from their actions that they were changed by Jesus and consumed with the values of the kingdom of God. They were more than salt and light in their communities. They were the “soul” of their communities. In the Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus dated around A.D. 150, Mathetes writes about the distinctive lifestyles of the believers. A truncated version of his letter follows where the distinctive lifestyle of believers is highlighted:

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity.... But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities... and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all.... They are poor, yet make many rich; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers.... In a word, what the soul is in a body, the Christians are in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas many churches today have withdrawn from their communities and lost the skill of being a part of life and conversation of the community,<sup>2</sup> the early church was far from

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<sup>1</sup> Epistle from Mathetes to Diognetus; available from [http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-08.htm#P668\\_121134](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-08.htm#P668_121134); Internet; accessed 14 January 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Rainer, 16.

being isolated from its community. When charged that Christians were “infructuosi in negotiis (“of no use in practical affairs”), church leader and apologist, Tertullian (155-230) answered,

How so? How can that be when such people dwell beside you, sharing your way of life, your dress, your habits and the same needs of life? We are no Brahmins or Indian gymnosophists, dwelling in woods and exiled from life...we stay beside you in this world, making use of the forum, the provision-market, the bath, the booth, the workshop, the inn, the weekly market, and all other places of commerce. We sail with you, fight at your side, till the soil with you, and traffic with you; we likewise join our technical skill to that of others, and make our works public property for your use.”<sup>3</sup>

The believers of the second and third centuries were far from being recluses. They were engaged in life, side-by-side with their neighbors. They shared in areas of common ground with their neighbors but there was more to their lives. They were captivated with the gospel.

To be absolutely captivated by the gospel allowed these early Christians to freely act differently to go against the flow of the culture. In a society that devalued children, the early Christians fashioned themselves after Jesus who welcomed little children. Describing the place that children had in early Roman and Greek societies, Rodney Stark, writes,

Far more babies were born than were allowed to live. Seneca regarded the drowning of children at birth as both reasonable and commonplace.... It was common to expose an unwanted infant out-of-doors where it could, in principle, be taken up by someone who wished to rear it, but where it typically fell victim to the elements for to animal and birds. Not only was the exposure of infants a very common practice, it was justified by law and advocated by philosophers. Both Plato and Aristotle recommended infanticide as legitimate state policy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Harnack, 216.

<sup>4</sup> Stark notes that in 1991 “a gruesome discovery in the sewer that ran under the bathhouse. The sewer had been clogged with refuse sometime in the sixth century AD. When we excavated and dry sieved the desiccated sewage, we found the bones...of nearly 100 little babies apparently murdered and thrown into the sewer.” Stark, 118.

In a city where children were abandoned and left to die, the followers of Christ would comb the city for abandoned babies and raise them and love them as their own. They deplored both abortion and infanticide and swam against the cultural tide by raising their own children and rescuing those children abandoned by others.

Tertullian writes of how Christians looked out for the needs of others.

Each of us puts in a small amount one day a month, or whenever he pleases; but only if he pleases and if he is able; for there is no compulsion in the matter, everyone contributing of his own free will. These monies are, as it were, the deposits of piety. They are expended upon no banquets of drinking-bouts or useless eating-houses, but on feeding and burying poor people, on behalf of boys and girls who have neither parents nor money, in support of old folk unable now to go about, as well as for people who are shipwrecked, or who may be in the mines or exiled in islands or in prison--so long as their distress is for the sake of God's fellowship, and they themselves entitled to maintenance by their confession....<sup>5</sup>

The teachings of the early leaders emphasized the importance of love and service to others. Tertullian, writing in around 215 said, "It is our care of the helpless, our practice of lovingkindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Only look' they say, 'look how they love one another!'"<sup>6</sup> Writing of how Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage instructed his flock around the year 250, his biographer, Ponianus, wrote:

The people being assembled together, he first of all urges on them the benefits of mercy.... Then he proceeds to add that there is nothing remarkable in cherishing merely our own people with the due attentions of love, but that one might become perfect who should do something more than heathen men or publicans, one who, overcoming evil with good, and practicing a merciful kindness like that of God, should love his enemies as well... Thus the good was done to all men, not merely to the household of faith.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Harnack, 189.

<sup>6</sup> Stark, 87.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Early Christ-followers were externally focused. Yes they loved and did good to all. They embodied the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

Stark notes that there were at least two great plagues in the first three centuries (in 165 and 251 A.D.) that actually were instrumental in the nascent church's incredible growth rate, which he estimates at 40 percent per decade.<sup>8</sup> The plagues were severe, wiping out one-fourth to one-third of the population of the Roman Empire, with an estimated five thousand people a day dying in Rome.<sup>9</sup> When the plagues came, those who were able fled the city, but not the Christians. They stayed and ministered to the sick and dying—Christians and non-Christians alike. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, writing of how believers responded to the plague of 250 observes:

Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains. Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead.... The best of brothers lost their lives in this manner, a number of presbyters, deacons, and laymen winning height commendation so that death in this form, the result of great piety and strong faith, seems in every way the equal of martyrdom.<sup>10</sup>

Writing of the response of those who were not followers of Christ, Dionysius continues.

“The heathen behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treated unburied corpses as dirt...”<sup>11</sup> Stark observes that just

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 83.

giving basic care of food and water to those too weak to care for themselves would greatly reduce the mortality rate of the victims. He estimates that 80 percent of Christians survived the plagues compared to only 25-50 percent of the general population. So when the plagues subsided, the believers constituted a substantially higher portion of the population. Beyond this differential in mortality, when non-Christians were nursed to health by believers, many of them, through being recipients of such love and grace, became Christians themselves. When those who had fled the city returned to find their loved ones still alive and well, it only increased their admiration of the believers, and many of them also became ardent followers of Christ. People tend remember how they were treated in the worst of times.

This type of love cannot be manufactured. It cannot be faked. In the year 362, the Emperor Julian wrote to the high (pagan) priest of Galatia “that the recent Christian growth was caused by their ‘moral character, even if pretended,’ and by their benevolence toward strangers and care for the graves of the dead.”<sup>12</sup> In a letter to another priest he wrote, “The impious Galileans (Christians) support not only their poor, but ours as well, every one can see that our people lack aid from us.”<sup>13</sup> These observations caused Julian to launch a campaign to institute pagan charities “but for all that he urged pagan priest to match...Christian practices, there was little or no response because there were no doctrinal bases or traditional practices for them to build upon.”<sup>14</sup> Stark concludes that it was the gospel’s overwhelming growth and influence that caused Emperor Constantine in

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 88.

313 A.D. to acknowledge the triumph of Christianity rather than cause it. It was the self-forgetting conduct of believers that attracted people to the Christian's God. Church historian Eusebius wrote,

Then did they show themselves to the heathen in the clearest light. For the Christians were the only people who amid such terrible ills showed their feeling and humanity by their actions. Day by day some would busy themselves with attending to the dead and burying them (for there were numbers to whom no one else paid any heed); others gathered in one spot all who were afflicted by hunger throughout the whole city and gave bread to them all. When this became known, people glorified the Christians' God and, convinced by the very facts, confessed the Christians alone were truly pious and religious.<sup>15</sup>

Theologian and Christian thinker Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) argued against a self-serving church as he “insisted that the church was not a refuge from the world but existed for the sake of a world that was hurting.”<sup>16</sup> Through its clear thinking and practice, the early church set the DNA for all time forward what the church could be and what the church should be in relation to the community. This DNA was what historian Thomas Cahill calls “the substance of the original gospel,” and it was essential for the survival and replication of the gospel. Cahill writes,

Through the history of the West since the time of Jesus, there has remained just enough of the substance of the original Gospel, a residuum, for it to be passed, as it were, from hand to hand and used, like stock to strengthen, flavor, and invigorate new movements that have succeeded again and again—if only for a time—in producing *alteri Christi*, men and women in danger of crucifixion. It has also produced repeatedly and in the oddest circumstances, the loving-kindness of the first Christians.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>16</sup> Bosch, 218.

<sup>17</sup> Cahill, 304-305.

## Early Medieval Times

After the fall of Rome in the fifth century and the collapse of the Roman Empire, Western Europe entered what is sometimes referred to as the early medieval or dark ages, which lasted from approximately A.D. 476 to 1000. Literature and the arts for the most part went dormant in the West but Christianity continued to spread along the trade routes and many of the barbarian conquerors adopted the Christian faith. Time does not allow for a thorough treatment of the church's role in distributing mercy during this epoch, but I do want to note that the church's light, though dim, was not extinguished. One historian notes: "In the absence of law and order, citizens tended to look to the bishops for civic leadership. In some cities, the bishop served as mayor and magistrate. The bishops of Spain and France set up vast networks for social welfare, so that the poor did not free-fall now that Rome's safety net had disappeared."<sup>18</sup> Regarding the monks and the monastic movement, historian David Bosch notes that "humanly speaking, it was because of monasticism that so much authentic Christianity evolved in the course of Europe's 'dark ages' and beyond."<sup>19</sup> He goes on to say the monks "worked incredibly hard; they plowed, hedged, drained morasses, cleared away forests did carpentry, thatched, and built roads and bridges...they lifted the hearts of the poor and neglected peasants...."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Light on the Dark Ages; available from <http://fathersofthechurch.com/2006/04/27/light-on-the-dark-ages/>; Internet; accessed March 12, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Bosch, 230.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 232

In the British Isles God was at work. Celtic Ireland was considered too barbaric for the Romans to conquer and civilize. But at the turn of the fifth century Patrick (later to be known as St. Patrick) returned to Ireland, the country of his captors (he was taken captive as a slave for six years from his home in Britain), with a dozen other Christ-followers and through the twenty-eight years of Patrick's sustained ministry "he planted around 700 churches and ordained perhaps 1000 priests. Within his lifetime, 30-40 (or more) of Ireland's 150 tribes became substantially Christian."<sup>21</sup> Patrick did more than plant churches. He was also committed to creating a better life for the Irish.

Patrick's gospel had community implications. Hunter notes that Patrick was the first to publicly crusade against slavery. "Within his lifetime, or soon after, the Irish slave trade came to a halt, and other forms of violence, such as murder and intertribal warfare decreased," and his communities modeled the Christian way of faithfulness, generosity and peace to...the Irish.<sup>22</sup> In the years to follow, according to Hunter, "Patrick's movement blanketed the island: 'In Ireland alone there are more than 6,000 place names containing the element Cill--the old Gaelic word for church'"<sup>23</sup>

### **The Middle Ages**

During what is called the high middle ages (1054 A.D., marking the split between the Latin and Greek Church, to the 1400s) the social influence of the church was felt throughout Europe. Though we often think of this time period as time of the Crusades,

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<sup>21</sup> George C. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2000), 60.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, (New York, Doubleday, 1995), 110; quoted in George C. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press), 2000, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Hunter, 36.

this period was not without external ministries of mercy. Some of our earliest social institutions date back to the high middle ages. It was Pope Innocent III, in the thirteenth century, who established the modern city hospital “to care for the acutely ill who may have no one to take care of them properly, as well as for those who have been injured or who have been picked up on the street and whose friends are not in a position to care for them.”<sup>24</sup> After establishing his then state-of-the-art hospital, Pope Innocent III invited Bishops to Rome to observe his modern hospital...and sent them away to replicate it.

This resulted in an outburst of hospital building throughout Europe. The numbers, expertise and discipline of doctors and surgeons increased greatly. Germany soon had a hospital for every town of 5000 residents. In England, in addition to the medical services provided by the monasteries, there were 750 hospitals to meet the needs of about 2 million people. Without the aid of drugs, leprosy was eradicated from England.<sup>25</sup>

Catholic scholar Thomas Massaro illuminates the innovative and practical role of the church during the middle ages. “Modern labor unions and group insurance policies are an outgrowth of various activities of guilds and sodalities, agencies through which members of the medieval church practiced mutual support, often under direct religious auspices.”<sup>26</sup> Despite the shortcomings of the crusading medieval church, it was not without charity. Beryl Hugen writes, “Yet, in one respect at least, the medieval church protected the poor. Only the church was large enough and universal enough to speak for those

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<sup>24</sup> City Hospitals—Organized Charity; available from <http://www2.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/walsh-u.htm>; accessed 12 March 2007.

<sup>25</sup> The Middle Ages; available from <http://www.churchinhistory.org/pages/middleages/middleages.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 March 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Massaro, 14-15.

outside the [feudal] system....It is significant that the three services most typical of the church at that time were the hospital, the hospice, and the sanctuary."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the work of the institutional church, God was raising up individuals like Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), who rediscovered the Gospel and eventually established the order for his retinue that bears his name. Historian Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) writes of St. Francis in his *Essays in Criticism* (1865):

He [Francis] transformed monachism by uprooting the stationary monk, delivering him from the bondage of property, and sending him, as a mendicant friar, to be a stranger and sojourner, not in the wilderness, but in the most crowded haunts of men, to console them and to do them good. This popular instinct of his is at the bottom of his famous marriage with poverty. Poverty and suffering are the condition of the people, the multitude, the immense majority of mankind; and it was towards this people that his soul yearned. "He listens," it was said of him, "to those to whom God himself will not listen."<sup>28</sup>

Francis' Christianity was a faith that had external social implications and greatly impacted those in the lower strata of society.

### **The Reformation and Religious Orders**

Martin Luther repudiated good works as a means of salvation but never meant salvation to be void of resultant good works. "We are not saved by works, he said, yet added, 'But if there be no works, there must be something amiss with faith.'"<sup>29</sup>

Eventually however the reformation of the church resulted in the fragmentation of the protesting church. The emphasis on the purity of doctrine fragmented and decommissioned the mission of the (Protestant) church. For Calvinists, the belief in

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<sup>27</sup> Hugen, 151.

<sup>28</sup> Saint Francis the Saint—the Father of the Renaissance; available from <http://www2.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/walsh-p.htm>; accessed 12 March 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Bosch, 245.

predestination “paralyze[d] the will to mission.”<sup>30</sup> For Lutherans of the seventeenth century, “the Great Commission became a theme for discussion, not missionary action.”<sup>31</sup>

Of the Reformation David Bosch writes,

When the Reformation shattered the ancient unity of the western church, each of the fragments into which it was no divided was obliged to define itself over against all other fragments...The reformational descriptions of the church thus ended up accentuating differences rather than similarities. Christians were taught to look divisively at other Christians. Eventually, Lutherans divided from Lutherans, Reformed separated from Reformed, each group justifying its actions by appealing to marks of the true church.... The church of pure doctrine was a church without a mission.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly the response of some Catholics to these fractured times was quite different. Catholics became more missional. A case in point is the Society of Jesus, better known to us as the Jesuits. Founded by Ignatius Loyola, when he was forty-nine, the Jesuits cut a huge swath for the gospel across the globe. Focusing on education, having never started a school, the Jesuits founded thirty colleges in the first twelve years, two hundred in the first sixty years (and eventually over seven hundred secondary schools and universities).<sup>33</sup> By the 1800s, Lowney notes, one out of every five Europeans was educated in a Jesuit school.<sup>34</sup> They crossed mountains, forged rivers, filled in many of the white spaces on the maps. They were the confidants to European kings, Indian moguls and Chinese emperors. Their mission: “The aim and end of this society is, by traveling

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>33</sup> Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World*, (Chicago: Loyola Press; Reprint edition, January 2005), 7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 212.

through the various regions of the world at the order of the Pope or of the superior of the Society itself, to preach, hear confessions, and use all other means it can...to help souls.”<sup>35</sup> In 1540 there were ten Jesuits, by 1556, the year of Loyola's death, there were a thousand and by 1580 there were 5,000 Jesuits. Vladimir Lenin once said sighing, that with only a dozen cadres as talented and dedicated as the Jesuits, his Communist movement would change the world.<sup>36</sup>

As the gospel penetrated China in the 1600s, it was the merciful actions of the Jesuits that awakened the Chinese to the good news of the gospel. The Chinese were intrigued with the role of service to one's fellowman that had no parallel in Confucianism. They were impressed with the "...themes of [Mateo] Ricci, the first of which concerns the practice of public charity; the management of hospitals and orphanages, the pious foundations and charitable societies caring for the poor, for destitute widows and prisoners, and the practice of almsgiving.”<sup>37</sup>

The Catholics missionaries practiced the “[s]even bodily and seven spiritual works of compassion”<sup>38</sup> found in Matthew 25. As early as 1630 the Christian Humanitarian Society in Hangzhou, China was founded. “...[I]t was the Christian contribution to a larger movement of setting up “societies for the performance of good

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Uhalley Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu, Editors, *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe Publishers, 2000), 46.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 53.

deeds,” that was very popular in late Ming times.”<sup>39</sup> It was practices such as these that engendered a great admiration for the morality of the believers and led thousands to become Christ followers.

### **The Influence of Wesley**

It is impossible to discuss the history of the church engaging the needs of society without addressing John Wesley. Wesley was a man with a mission and a vision—“to redeem the nation” and “to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.”<sup>40</sup> In a country where in “1736 every sixth house in London was licensed as a grogshop”<sup>41</sup> England was a country of drunkenness, despair and moral decay. Children as young as three and a half worked in the mines, the mills and brickyards and “[l]ess than one in twenty-five had any kind of schooling...”<sup>42</sup> The rural poor migrated to the cities in droves looking for work as the primitive wheels of the industrial revolution began to turn, creating urban slums never seen before. “The reins of economic power were completely in the hands of the wealthy few. Beneath the sophisticated veneer of the governing classes, the English populace was gripped in a vise of poverty, disease, and moral decay.”<sup>43</sup> Where was the church? The Church of England catered to the upper strata of society. Churches were subsidized by the government and of the eleven thousand pastors who were on the payroll, six thousand

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Michael D. Henderson, *John Wesley’s Class Meetings*. (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House 1997), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 19.

of them never set foot in their parishes but resided in England or on the continent, farming out their ministry to underlings.<sup>44</sup>

Wesley's goal was formidable but his mission was clear. Preaching to the masses alone was insufficient, as his contemporary, George Whitefield, who would often preach to crowds exceeding twenty thousand, had proved. (Ben Franklin once calculated that Whitefield could be heard by thirty thousand people.<sup>45</sup>) Because Whitefield had no mechanism for preserving the fruit of his preaching, near the end of his life Whitefield called his converts "a rope of sand."<sup>46</sup> Wesley learned from Whitefield and building on Whitefield's "field preaching," Wesley added his class meetings—his small group system, and it was these class meetings that shaped a people and began the redemption of the nation.

Wesley's approach to ministry was shaped by the biography of Catholic nobleman Monr. de Renty (1611-1649). "Throughout his life, Wesley continued to refer to de Renty as the epitome of Christian holiness coupled with concern for the poor and effective methodology."<sup>47</sup> De Renty's small groups formed the model for Wesley's class meetings—small groups that met regularly for encouragement and accountability. More importantly de Renty helped shape Wesley's spiritual growth model.

The focus of the Anglican groups was personal growth through careful attention to themselves; de Renty concentrated on personal growth by ministering to the needs of others. The Anglicans hoped that Christian service would be the eventual outcome of their quest for personal holiness; de Renty viewed Christian service as the context in which personal holiness developed.... [F]or Wesley, de Renty's model of growth-

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 48.

through-service enabled him to steer his groups around the dangers of morbid introspection and mysticism.<sup>48</sup>

Wesley practiced what he preached—“There is no holiness apart from social holiness.”<sup>49</sup> Among other things, he campaigned against the slave trade, agitated for prison and labor reform, including child labor; set up loan funds for the poor; opened a dispensary to distribute medicines to the poor; worked to solve unemployment; and personally gave away considerable sums of money to people in need.<sup>50</sup>

John Wesley may well be the understatement of the past two and a half centuries. On February 24, 1791 at age 88, six days before his death, he wrote his last letter he would ever write to William Wilberforce, who was converted under Wesley’s ministry.<sup>51</sup> In his letter he urged Wilberforce to continue his fight to end the slave trade. Relentlessly, for the next sixteen years, Wilberforce pressed on to end slavery. Parliament outlawed England’s participation in the slave trade in 1807 a few days before Wilberforce’s death and 800,000 slaves were set free. Wesley’s revolutionary concepts and methods of what church could be shaped not only what has become a denomination but an approach to externally focused ministry that touches us today.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>49</sup> Lovett H. Weems, *John Wesley’s Message Today* (Nashville, TN; Abington Press, 1992), 62.

<sup>50</sup> The Life of John Wesley by John Telford; available from [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/telford/telford\\_ch20.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/telford/telford_ch20.htm); Internet; accessed 24 May 2007.

<sup>51</sup> John Wesley: Letter to William Wilberforce; available from <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/wilber.stm>; Internet; accessed 24 May 2007.

## The Industrial Age

The spiritual awakenings of 1726-1825 had not just spiritual but social implications as well. David Bosch writes, “It was those touched by the Awakenings who were moved to compassion by the plight of people exposed to the degrading conditions in slums and prisons, in coal-mining districts, on the American frontier, in West Indian plantations and elsewhere.”<sup>52</sup> Historian Thomas Cahill captures what “awakening” means when he writes,

When in the late seventeenth century George Fox and his fellow Quakers began to read the gospels, Acts, and the letters of Paul, it seemed to them as if no one had ever read them before, for they rediscovered there the blueprint for Christianity as the radical ‘society of friends’ it had once been and the theological courage to oppose slavery, prisons, capital punishment, war, and even unholy union of church and state.<sup>53</sup>

In 1797 Catholic parishioners met and organized an orphanage for children whose parents had died following an outbreak of yellow fever. By the mid-1830s, Bishop John Dubois in New York ordered that all church collections on Christmas day should go for the care of orphans. Within a few years all collections on Easter Sunday went towards that same purpose. “These collections were the forerunners of the Campaign for Human Development, which annually distributes some \$50 million to community-based social services that address poverty and empowerment.”<sup>54</sup>

As in the case of the Campaign for Human Development, some great enterprises have humble beginnings. In 1884, in addition to many social ministries of Temple Baptist Church, “Russell Conwell from Temple Baptist Church established a night school for

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<sup>52</sup> Bosch, 281.

<sup>53</sup> Cahill, *Desire*, 304.

<sup>54</sup> Cnaan et al., *The Newer Deal*, 119.

working people so that those from a lower economic status could have an opportunity to advance their social and occupational standing in society. Conwell's night school was to become Temple University...."<sup>55</sup>

With the industrial age in full swing, millions of immigrants flocked to America's shores and settled in her burgeoning cities, but this growth was not without problems. "The massive crowding illnesses, and social problems created by the influx of largely unskilled, illiterate, foreign-speaking individuals was unparalleled in our history. In New York City, two-thirds of the population lived in tenements in 1890...."<sup>56</sup>

Immigration was also seen by the church as an invitation for ministry. This ministry often took the form of settlement houses where churches "created, financed and staffed outreach programs to the most marginalized inhabitants of the inner cities. They formed Bible classes, kindergartens, industrial schools, clubs, loan banks, job bureaus, dispensaries, reading rooms and other programs that laid the groundwork for later social reforms."<sup>57</sup>

The church was reinventing itself to meet the needs of immigrants. Their work was more than impressive.

These churches viewed themselves as "Institutions" that ministered seven days a week to the physical and spiritual wants of all the people within their reach. [They] sponsored clinics, free Saturday night concerts, self-supporting restaurants and lodging houses, wood wards for the unemployed, "fresh air work" for women and children, and ... there was a marked emphasis on practical education. Institutional churches sponsored libraries and literary societies and carried on kindergartens, trade schools, and community colleges.<sup>58</sup>

In *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, the authors C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya put forth a strong case to insist that the black church

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>56</sup> Hugen, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 30.

has been the one stable social unit for African-Americans. It has been the “enduring institution” of the black community—the one place where blacks have had unfettered opportunities for leadership development. Quoting a representative pastor, they write:

The church has many critics but no rivals in what it has meant in the life of the people—in saving and developing them. Without the Black Church, black leadership and black organization would hardly have developed. Especially as a positive influence in the black experience, black consciousness would have been devoid of real hope and black life would have been completely dehumanized. The Black Church is the biggest happening in the black experience in the United States of America.<sup>59</sup>

The authors propose that it is the black church that nurtured the slaves and was the cradle and ideological seedbed for those who fought for the salvation and liberation of black Americans. Harriett Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr. and nearly all black legislators have come from the black church.

### **The Great Reversal**

There was also a counterweight to this externally focused ministry and the social good it was accomplishing. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the eschatological teaching of premillennialism became the prominent popular theology of the day. One tenant of premillennialism is the world becoming progressively worse before Christ intervenes with his personal and physical return. An aberration of this teaching was that any effort Christians spent trying to make this world a better place was to hinder and delay the return of Jesus Christ. It was this attitude that exempted these believers from engaging in the ills and hurts of the nation. The prominent nineteenth century evangelist D.L. Moody exemplifies this attitude with his repeated refrain--"I look upon this world as

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<sup>59</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, 396.

a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, ‘Moody, save all you can.’”<sup>60</sup> The Christian's main concern then, was not the repair of a wrecked world but the rescue of ruined souls—getting individuals off the sinking vessel of this world and into the lifeboat of salvation. The Christian mandates of love and mercy were slowly abandoned in favor of a verbal message addressing only individual salvation. The effect for a multitude of churches was devastating. David Bosch writes “[B]y the 1920s the ‘great reversal’ had been completed; the evangelicals’ interest in social concerns, had been obliterated.”<sup>61</sup>

Fortunately all churches did not buy into this way of thinking. Through the work of researchers like Ram Cnaan, one can suppose that the DNA of the early church has been transmitted down through the centuries to the church today. He writes,

One way to understand congregational involvement in social and community services provision is to imagine the United States without congregations. Without congregations, one-third of the children now in day care centers would have no place to go. Most scout troops and twelve-step groups would have no meeting place. Many food cupboards, soup kitchens and homeless shelters would disappear, leaving a large number of people hungry and on the streets. New immigrants and refugees would lose their strongest supporters and their anchor as they move into mainstream American life. Numerous old and sick people would be neglected, and the waiting list for institutionalized care would double. The list goes on and on, underscoring the important fact that the absence of congregations in the United States would create a significant social void, along with the loss of the religious, spiritual, and social support provided by congregations.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bosch, 318.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Cnaan and others, *The Invisible Caring Hand*, 81.

## LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY DESIGN

As mentioned in chapter one, LCs were started by LN in 2003 in response to the question, “How can we better connect innovators to multiply their impact for the kingdom?” Although LN had hosted dozens of events, gatherings, briefings, and conferences, ministry leaders deemed these methods alone to be insufficient for the diffusion of information and practice that would transform the church. Working in consultation and cooperation with an independent consulting and facilitation company called WildWorks, based in Dallas Texas, a meeting format was designed and subsequently iterated to its current form. The overall format design is based on a combination of proven adult-learning methodologies, designed not just to be informational but also to be transformational. These process elements as well as the transformational elements of the LCs are outlined briefly below.

### **Well-defined Purpose**

The purpose of the EFCLC is to identify, connect, and resource church leaders who are either leading externally focused churches or want to move external focus from a ministry tactic to an operational strategy. The desire to grow exponentially and not merely incrementally is the first qualification for acceptance into an LC. Writing in their book *Transformational Leadership: Creating Organizations of Meaning*, Stephen Hacker and Tammy Roberts note that “Transformation is embarked upon for the single reason of improving results—and doing so drastically. Transformation of the leader and the organization is a tough undertaking. It requires a remaking of individual skill sets and radical change within an organization.”<sup>63</sup> Every church team entered the process with the

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<sup>63</sup> Hacker and Roberts, 17.

expectancy of change and growth. The EFCLC addresses both the technical and adaptive challenges associated with externally focused churches.

It is useful to note the designated name of these communities. They are “Leadership Communities” to be differentiated from “Learning Communities.” Although both types of communities involve the exchange of ideas and perhaps practices, LCs will succeed only if and when the participating teams are well-led in accomplishing results. As good as the gatherings are the real work gets done between the gatherings. These gatherings are not merely a time for idea exchange. It is action that unifies and creates a true LC. Eric Hoffer, in his seminal work on social movements, *The True Believer—Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, addresses the relationship between unity and action when he writes:

Action is a unifier. There is less individual distinctness in the genuine man of action—the builder, soldier, sportsman and even the scientist—than in the thinker or in one whose creativeness flows from communion with the self. . . . Those who came to this country to act (to make money) were more quickly and thoroughly Americanized than those who came to realize some lofty ideal. The former felt an immediate kinship with the millions absorbed in the same pursuit. It was as if they were joining a brotherhood. . . . Men of thought seldom work well together whereas between men of action there is usually an easy camaraderie. Teamwork is rare in intellectual or artistic undertakings but common and almost indispensable among men of action. The cry ‘Go, let us build us a city, and a tower’ is always a call for united action.<sup>64</sup>

### **Facilitation and Meeting Design**

Each gathering is designed by the LC director (the author) who works with an outside facilitator who actually facilitates the gathering. The director is freed from the pressure of “running a meeting” to encourage, coach, and help individuals and teams in the process. “The job of the facilitator is not to teach but to create an ‘atmosphere

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<sup>64</sup> Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer—Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 120.

wherein the [members] can learn for and from themselves, to develop confidence in themselves, to reflect and develop new ideas.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Team Leaders**

LN asked that each church team be comprised of a designated team leader and two other “permanent” team members. To this permanent team each church could bring an additional two members to each gathering. Of the thirty-three church teams, twenty-seven were led by males, and seven were led by females. Although the male / female leadership gap is wide, it is certainly not a reflection of transformational abilities of women. Transformational leadership, where other’s interests are valued and affirmed, is a great leadership style for women. James McGregor Burns writes, “The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control. As leadership comes properly to be seen as a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the human needs and aspirations of followers, women will be more readily recognized as leaders and men will change their own leadership styles.”<sup>66</sup>

### **Open Space Technology**

In many ways the processes used during the LC gatherings are generational iterations of Open Space Technology (OST). OST is a meeting methodology that “enables groups of any size to address complex, important issues and achieve meaningful results quickly. It is at its best where more traditional meeting formats fail: when there is

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<sup>65</sup> A. Lawler, The Components of Action Learning. In M. Pedler (Ed.), *Action Learning in Practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (Aldershot, England: Gower, 1991), 256; quoted in Marquardt, 38.

<sup>66</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 50.

conflict, complexity, diversity of thought or people, and short decision times.”<sup>67</sup> LN used many of the best features of OST including the use of a facilitator to explain and guide the process. Participants then “host their own discussion groups. Discussions are held in designated areas or separate rooms known as 'breakout spaces'.... Each group records the conversations in a form which can be used to distribute or broadcast the proceedings of the meeting (in hard copy, blog, podcast, video, etc).”<sup>68</sup> OST proved to be one of the best and most valued features of LC gatherings.

### **Appreciative Inquiry**

Appreciative Inquiry is a practice used in the development and evaluation of organizational strategy and tactics. Appreciative inquiry asks three questions, “What is?” “What could be?” and “What will be?” The design of LC gatherings follows this same format. Each session begins with “What is”—where churches report out their progress—where they are today. Through a series of creative exercises done in cross-functional teams, individuals and churches design “What could be” models of ministry—what their ministry would look like if they were successful beyond their wildest dreams, or if they had unlimited resources. It is this “What could be?” stage that opens the pathway to new understanding and breakthrough ideas. “At its simplest, creative leadership begins when a person imagines a state of affairs not presently existing.”<sup>69</sup> Each gathering ends with several hours of “What will be” where church teams create their next six-month “Action-Learning Plan.” LCs are built on the premise that one cannot get different results from

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<sup>67</sup> Open Space Technology, available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Space\\_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology); Internet; accessed 25 May 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 153.

doing more or better of what we have done in the past. To create a different future, one needs to think different, be different and do different

### **Action Learning**

“[A]ction learning is ... a process ...that involves a small group of people solving real problems while at the same time focusing on what they are learning and how their learning can benefit each group member and the organization as a whole.<sup>70</sup> There are two foundational principles built into the design of each three-day gathering (from noon on Tuesday to noon on Thursday). The first is “Experience first...explain later.” In other words, don’t spend a lot of time explaining. Get people doing something first, even if they are a bit confused. Clarity will come through, not before, the actions. Second is appreciating the cycle of “knowledge, understanding, decision-action.” In other words, in the LC process, the facilitator never exposes participants to new knowledge via a speaker, a short reading, a video clip or presentation, etc., where participants are not given the opportunity to answer three questions: “What did you see?” “What did you hear?” and “What does it mean?” These questions are most often followed by presentations of new actions individuals and teams will take as a result of the new knowledge and understanding.

### **Lateral Thinking**

In his book, *Lateral Thinking*, Edward deBono distinguishes lateral thinking from vertical thinking in which the definitions become clear.

Lateral thinking is quite distinct from vertical thinking which is the traditional type of thinking. In vertical thinking one moves forward by sequential steps each of which must be justified. The distinction between the two sorts of thinking is sharp. For instance in lateral thinking one uses information not for its own sake but for its effect.

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<sup>70</sup> Marquardt, 4.

In lateral thinking one may have to be wrong at some stage in order to achieve a correct solution; in vertical thinking (logic or mathematics) this would be impossible. In lateral thinking one may deliberately seek out irrelevant information; in vertical thinking one selects out only what is relevant. Lateral thinking is not a substitute for vertical thinking. Both are required. They are complementary. Lateral thinking is generative. Vertical thinking is selective.<sup>71</sup>

So, in view of lateral thinking, participants at an LCs might read a short article on ant colonies, the Coca-Cola annual report, or an article on Thomas Paine, and then based on their reading, build a model of ministry based on their newly-gained insights. Although most of the readings do not pertain to ministry per se, it is these types of readings that create insight into ministry.

### **Collaborative Learning**

LCs provide a learning environment where people from diverse churches can learn collaboratively, work through issues, and formulate new strategies and approaches for doing externally focused ministry. Although the group consists of senior pastors as well as lay volunteers, LN asks that everyone “take their stripes off at the door” to allow for the greatest learning environment. Collaborative learning promotes the belief that the greatest ideas can come from the least “qualified” person because his or her contribution is most in line with the mission. James McGregor Burns blurs the distinction between leaders and followers when both become servants of a larger goal:

[Transforming] “leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.... Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. Various names are used for such leadership, some of them derisory: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, preaching, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of

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<sup>71</sup> Edward deBono, *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970; reprint, Harper & Row, 1990), 12.

course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leaders and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both.”<sup>72</sup>

Collaborative learning is one of the elements of an LC that makes the process so exhilarating.

### **Goal Setting and Accountability**

Creating a three-year strategic plan at the first gathering and subsequent six-month “Action-Learning Plans” at each of the four gatherings are critical to the LC process and partially what distinguishes a “leadership community” from a “learning community,” which may simply coalesce around what they are learning. Each team is encouraged to think of “exponential” more than “incremental” progress. Teams need to set goals that stretch beyond their current capacity and ability. Bernard Bass writing on the importance of goals writes, “Transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible. They set more challenging expectations and typically achieve higher performances.”<sup>73</sup> Part of the strategic plan includes a clear mission and vision of what each church is attempting to accomplish. A clear vision and mission is essential for transformational leaders. Mission, vision, and goals are essential in the exercise of transformational leadership. Bernard Bass writes: “The transformational leaders articulate a sense of vision and purpose to followers. They align the followers around the vision and empower followers to take responsibility for achieving portions of the vision.”<sup>74</sup> The absolute necessity of goal

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<sup>72</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Bass, 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

setting and accountability is affirmed in the writing of James McGregor Burns: “All leadership is goal-oriented. The failure to set goals is a sign of faltering leadership. Successful leadership points in a direction; it is also the vehicle of continuing and achieving purpose.”<sup>75</sup>

### **Measuring Progress and Results**

As previously mentioned, at the outset of the project, each church team creates a three-year strategic plan against which their achievements will be measured. Participants will also evaluate each of the four gatherings of the LC. Each gathering ends with a report of each church team’s six-month goals and each gathering begins with a presentation of what each church team accomplished in the previous six months. Each year churches are asked to measure and give an account of their progress (or lack of progress) in launching volunteers into community ministry to LN, the sponsoring entity. This accountability is designed to accelerate each church's progress from incremental to exponential. “[Measuring] is important because one cannot declare a transformation without the measurable results to demonstrate the change. A transformation in thinking is not hidden. Transformed thinking produces resulting actions and altered actions create changed results.”<sup>76</sup>

### **Outside Teachers**

For all gatherings beyond the initial meeting LN brought to the LC gatherings transformational leaders who were adept at teaching their craft. The teachers included Don Simmons, senior consultant with Creative Potential Consulting and Training, whose

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<sup>75</sup> Burns. *Leadership*, 455.

<sup>76</sup> Hacker and Roberts, 2.

emphasis was on transforming church volunteers into laborers for the harvest. John Handy, former Senior Vice-President of Mattel Toys, who took us through a series of exercises designed to turn information into innovation. The final presenter was Jack Jezreel, founder of JustFaith.org—a recognized division of Catholic Charities, whose mission is to transform churches into instruments of mercy and justice. James McGregor Burns highlights the role of teachers in transformational leadership. He writes, “Leaders can also shape and alter and elevate the motives and values and goals of followers through the vital teaching role of leadership. This is transforming leadership.”<sup>77</sup> I also had a teaching role at the gatherings themselves and during my visits to nearly all of the churches. In addition to teaching I also co-authored two books on externally focused ministry—*The Externally Focused Church*<sup>78</sup> and *Living a Life on Loan: Finding Grace at the Intersections*<sup>79</sup> and several published articles on externally focused ministry. Teaching and writing help create common language for a movement. Again, Eric Hoffer writes, “The mass movements of modern time, whether socialists or nationalists, were invariably pioneered by poets, writers, historians, scholars, philosophers, and the like. The connection between intellectual theoreticians and revolutionary movements needs no emphasis.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 425.

<sup>78</sup> Rusaw, Rick and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Longmont, CO: Group Publishing, 2004).

<sup>79</sup> Rusaw, Rick and Eric Swanson, *Living a Life on Loan: Finding Grace at the Intersections* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2006).

<sup>80</sup> Hoffer, 138.

## **Multiplying Impact**

Key learnings and insights on externally focused ministries from the LC were captured and developed into practical tools and concept papers that will hopefully enhance the externally focused ministries of churches and diffuse the externally focused model throughout the broader church. This process is commonly referred to as the diffusion of innovation.

## **Diffusion of Innovation**

LN recognizes that of the approximate 350,000 churches in North America, a small number of these churches have exhibited extraordinary influence in introducing innovations to other churches. These innovators and early adopters are the client base for LN. Innovation and influence are very important values of LN. It is also important to understand how innovation diffuses to a broader audience.

Several years ago Everett Rogers wrote a book entitled *Diffusion of Innovations*. In this classic study on change, he seeks to answer the question: “How do new ideas and practices become commonplace within a social system?” His thinking is most helpful in understanding how innovative change occurs within a social system—in this case, the church. He defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas.”<sup>81</sup> Rogers defines five categories of individuals in any social system—the innovators, the early adopters, the middle majority, the late majority and the laggards.

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<sup>81</sup> Everett M Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovations* (Fourth Edition), (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 5.

## **Innovators**

The first 2.5 percent of individuals in a social system to adopt an innovation are called “innovators.”<sup>82</sup> They are those who come up with new ways of thinking about something and doing things that challenge the status quo. James McGregor Burns writes of the vital role of the innovator.

Interaction begins when the innovator rallies support to carry out the change he intends. Innovators have a triple burden: they must break with the inheritors among whom they may have been numbered; they must mobilize followers by appealing to their wants and hopes and other motivations; they must adapt their intentions to those of would-be followers without sacrificing their essential goal.”<sup>83</sup>

## **Early Adopters**

Early adopters make up 13.5 percent of a social system.<sup>84</sup> Though perhaps not innovative themselves, they recognize an innovative idea, and because they possess a bias towards action they begin to implement the new ideas without the need to ask, “Who else is doing this?”

## **Middle Majority**

Middle majority (adopters), comprise 34 percent of a social system.<sup>85</sup> They may understand the new and innovative thing but need a bit more certainty before they can adopt it for themselves. They ask, “Where is this working? Are there models I can take a look at?”

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>83</sup> Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 221.

<sup>84</sup> Rogers, 262.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

## **Late Majority**

Late majority (adopters) comprise another 34 percent of a social system.<sup>86</sup> Like their Middle Majority companions, they also want to know where the new idea is working, but they have another stipulation. Where is it working in a setting like theirs? They might ask the question, “I can see this working in Little Rock Arkansas, but are there any places in the Northwest where this is being implemented?”

## **Laggards**

In a social system Laggards comprise 16 percent of a given social system<sup>87</sup> and “are the last in a social system to adopt an innovation...[because they] tend to be suspicious of innovations and change agents.”<sup>88</sup>

What is important about understanding the diffusion of innovation is within a social system people need different amount of information, experience, and time before they are willing to adopt the innovation. Ideally LCs are composed of innovators, early adopters, and early middle majority adopters. It is the structure and model of LCs that as the early adopters create new models and new practices, these new ideas and (hopefully more effective) practices are adopted by an ever-increasing group of churches. Understanding diffusion of innovations is helpful in understanding how ideas and practices, like worship bands or Saturday evening services, which were once unusual, are now seen as commonplace.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 265.

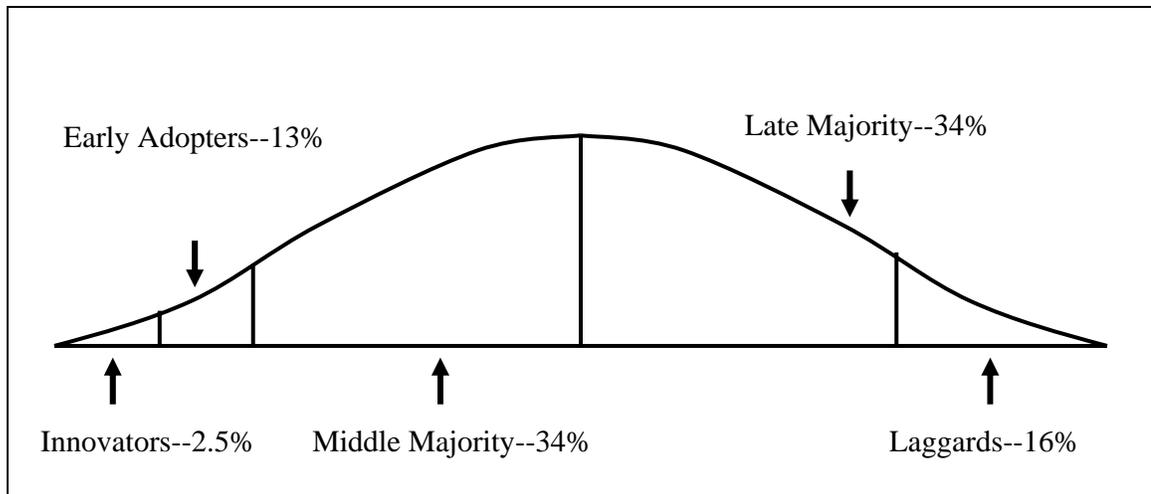


Figure 1. Illustration of Diffusion of Innovation

### TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In 1978 James McGregor Burns released his groundbreaking book on transformational leadership titled, *Leadership*. Subsequent volumes have been written on transformational leadership, and time and paper length do not allow for a full treatment on the subject. However a few salient points are important in understanding the topic.

Transformational leadership is distinguished from and contrasted with transactional leadership. In 1978 Burns wrote,

The relations of most leaders and followers are *transactional*—leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties. Transforming leadership, while more complex, is more potent. The *transforming* leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may covert leaders into moral agents.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 4.

Transformational leadership, then, concerns itself not just with the goal or desired outcome but also seeks to incorporate the competencies and needs of those who will actually carry out the tasks at hand. Transformational leadership is equally concerned with the people as much as the task. Bernard Bass adds further insight on the difference between the transactional and transformational leader.

The [transactional/transformational] model portrays transactional leadership as contingent reinforcement. Reinforcement is in the form of a leader's promises and rewards or threats and disciplinary actions; reinforcing behavior is contingent on the follower's performance. The transformational leader moves the follower beyond self-interests and is charismatic, inspirational, intellectually stimulating, and / or individually considerate.<sup>90</sup>

Burns further contrasts the leadership styles of transformational and transactional leaders in respect to developing new leaders.

Instead of exercising power over people, transforming leaders champion and inspire followers.... As leaders encourage followers to rise above narrow interests and work together for transcending goals, leaders can come into conflict with followers' rising sense of efficacy and purpose. Followers might outstrip leaders. They might become leaders themselves. That is what makes transforming leadership participatory and democratic."<sup>91</sup>

Transformational leadership is what is required to tap into the hearts of volunteers. They want to be involved in efforts that call them to live out their calling as Christ-followers.

It is also of interest to note that most people are inherently attracted to the qualities of a transformational leader over a transactional leader. Note the outcomes of the following study:

When peers of VMI (Virginia Military Institute) military cadet leaders were asked what characterized the important traits of a good leader, they tended to describe traits

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<sup>90</sup> Bass, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 26.

of *inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration* such as: self-confidence, persuasiveness, concern for the well being of others, the ability to articulate one's ideas and thoughts, providing models to be emulated by others, holding high expectations for themselves and others, keeping others well-informed, maintaining high motivation in themselves....Invariably, for well over 2,000 trainees, the characteristics of the ideal leader included the components of transformational leadership....<sup>92</sup>

Transformational leadership not only brings about transformation of the leaders and followers but also has the potential to bring about transformation on a grand social scale. Burns writes, "Summoned forth by human wants, the task of leadership is to accomplish some change in the world that responds to those wants. Its actions and achievements are measured by the supreme public values that themselves are the profoundest expressions of human wants."<sup>93</sup> In other words, transformational leadership is needed to change the world. Transformational leadership is needed in situations where people, volunteering from their hearts, are needed to bring about change. Transactional leadership will not do if one expects to mobilize people toward "supreme public values" or kingdom values.

Burns is also careful to point out the differences between "change" and "transform." His definitions are illuminating in respect to personal or corporate transformation.

To change is to substitute one thing for another, to give and take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another. These are the kinds of changes I attribute to transactional leadership. But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance a radical change in outward form or inner character, as when a frog is transformed into a prince or a carriage maker into

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<sup>92</sup> Bass, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 2.

an auto factory. It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership.<sup>94</sup>

This depth of transformational change is the type of change that is necessary for transforming Christians, churches, and communities; the difference is not merely a difference in degree but a difference in kind. Transformational leadership goes far beyond leaders who are trying to mobilize followers to accomplish something. Transformational leadership seeks to tap into the hearts, desires, and motivations of people, who themselves are being transformed, in order to change their communities and perhaps the world.

## STAKEHOLDERS

There are two stakeholders in the outcome of this project—the participating churches, and LN. The participants of the study are the thirty-three churches who were participants in the first three EFCLCs. Each church was selected to be a part of an LC by means of an application process. Ideally each church is an innovator or early adopter in externally focused ministry. In reality, all churches were engaged at some level in externally focused ministry. What they had in common, regardless of age, size, or current externally focused ministries, was their desire and passion to exponentially expand their impact outside the walls of the church. From personal interviews and baseline data taken from their application, each church indicated the desire to launch an increasing number of people into the community to proclaim the gospel in deed and word.

The second stakeholder in this study is LN, the sponsor of the EFCLCs. Because the LC process is an innovation of LN, and those who lead these LC gatherings often feel

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<sup>94</sup> Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 24.

as though we are “building the airplane while flying it,” the outcomes of this study are very important for at least two reasons. First, as previously mentioned, although each of these churches paid a tuition fee of \$3000 to \$5000, the LCs are, for the most part, donor sponsored. Like all responsible donors, LN’s donors look for the return of their philanthropic dollar. A positive outcome may be a catalyst to increased giving and signal other potential donors to join the sponsorship.

Secondly, LN is using the LC process to significantly advance the progress in several other areas of church mission. Currently LN has formed LCs for multi-site churches, churches with strong recovery ministries, church planting churches along with several others that are in the launch phase or will launch in the near future. The outcomes of this study will be looked upon with eagerness.

Having addressed the ministry context of this project through historical, sociological and organizational lenses, chapter four addresses the biblical issues and implications of this project. Both chapters are foundational for establishing the context of this project.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **BIBLICAL / THEOLOGICAL BASIS**

This chapter examines the biblical and theological foundations for externally focused ministry. Because of the richness of texts related to those on the margins of society (178 verses on the poor, 103 verses on widows, 39 verses on the fatherless, 37 verses on strangers, 102 verses on aliens, 60 verses on the sick, 47 verses on the oppressed, 6 verses on orphans, 55 verses on the needy, etc.) and the role of God's people in doing good, a thorough exegesis of each passage would prove impossible in the confines of this paper. I will, however, attempt to explore five biblical themes of externally focused ministry that although are not exhaustive, are sufficient to provide a foundation for leaders who desire to engage in ministry outside the walls of the church.

The first theme will be an overview of the creation story that sets the stage for "the way things ought to be." The second theme will be selected passages from the Old Testament that reveal God's heart towards those on the margins of society. The third theme will be some of the major ideas around the kingdom of God. The fourth theme will address the teachings and praxis of Jesus. The fifth theme pertains to Scriptures concerning good works and good deeds.

#### **THE CREATION STORY**

In Eden there was wholeness. Man and woman lived in harmony with their environment and talked freely and openly with God. They were knowing-recipients of

God's good gifts. There was physical work to be done in the garden, tending plants and nurturing fruit-bearing trees. They were told they could eat and enjoy the fruit of their labor. There was also creative work to be done that would summon the best of their creativity in naming the animals with the finality that "whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:19).

Man and woman were not only in fellowship with God, they were in partnership with God; perhaps not full-partners, but junior partners. God created the living plants in the garden, but man was given the responsibility to "work it and take care of "the garden (Gen. 2:15). God "created the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air" (Gen. 2:19) but he entrusted to man the responsibility of naming each animal. Man was also created for leadership in God's dominion. There were no creatures formed that were higher in God's creative hierarchy than man himself. It was humankind who was created to "rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock...and over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26). The climate was such that man had no need of clothing and there was seemingly no need, or at least mention, of permanent shelter.

In this idyllic setting God was clearly in charge. It was his domain, and he set boundaries defining what was and was not permissible. Man lived in harmony with woman—a partner taken from his own flesh. Her well-being was attached to and could not be separated from his well-being and his good. They would be united as one and be called husband and wife—terms that only have definition in the context of the corresponding opposite, but then there was a great interruption.

The great interruption was called "sin" and everything changed. But the brokenness was not the way that God intended it. It was the aberration of a broken world filled with

violence or indifference towards<sup>1</sup> and hatred of neighbor, exploitation of the weak, tribal factions, drunkenness, marital strife, conniving, and chicanery. But God had a redemptive plan. From this broken world he called forth a nation—a nation through which he would reveal his plan and work his redemption and partially, though not completely, restore the world to the way it is supposed to be. That nation was Israel.

## OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES

Israel was different from the nations around her. God gave to this nation something he has never done before or since. He formed a covenant with this nation and gave to her people a code of ethics regarding behaviors and relationships—collectively known as “the Law.” The Law, not only directed people towards loving God, it was also the directive towards loving one’s neighbor. The law was a reminder that God was very interested in the destiny of every person including the poor, the weak, the aliens, and the vulnerable—the people in every society without power or voice. From the beginning God has given to his people the responsibility for looking out for those on the margins.

### **Exodus to Deuteronomy**

The early chapters of the Old Testament reveals the centrality of the importance of God’s inclination towards the vulnerable. When the Law is first given to Moses as recorded in Exodus and Leviticus, alongside the moral and ceremonial laws, God addresses how his people were to care for and treat the widows, orphans, and the poor—those without voice or power (cf. Exod. 20:9-10, Exod. 22:21, Exod. 22:22-23, Exod. 23:6, Exod. 23:11, Lev. 19:10, Lev. 19:33-34, Lev. 23:22, Lev. 25:35, etc.). God addresses

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<sup>1</sup> Cain’s answer to God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9) demonstrates the devastating consequences of sin. In many ways the rest of the Bible is God’s answer to this question.

issues of justice, provision, equality, mutuality, and full participation in the community. The book of Leviticus contains the radical concept of forgiving debt, releasing the indentured and returning land to the original owners every fifty years in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25-27). Such a system, when lived out, would prevent generational poverty and sends a message about who is important in a community as well as what is important.

Robert Linthicum writes,

Simply put, Jubilee was a legislated reversal of fortune! It was Israel's most radical vehicle to redistribute its wealth so that society could be rebalanced and neither wealth nor power could accumulate in the hands of a self-selected few. That was what Jesus was proclaiming when he read Isaiah 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth that Sabbath day."<sup>2</sup>

In the three farewell speeches of Moses, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, "the second telling of the law," Moses reiterates God's heart for those in distress and how he wants his people to care for those in distress. Linthicum says that "[t]he book of Deuteronomy is the clearest statement in the Bible of the world as God intended it to be."<sup>3</sup> The commands were not random but given to guide the Israelite's actions toward those on the margins to reflect the very heart of their God. "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt" (Deut. 10:17-19). As Moses was nearing his death he wanted to be certain that God's provision of community, justice, and necessities became earmarks of the Israelite community (cf. Deut. 14:28-29, Deut. 15:4, Deut. 15:7, Deut. 15:11, Deut. 16:14, Deut. 24:10-15, Deut. 24:17-21, Deut. 26:12-13, Deut. 27:19, etc.).

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<sup>2</sup> Linthicum, *Transforming Power*, 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

Linthicum points out that it was the rediscovery of the book of Deuteronomy that led to the reforms brought about by Josiah and was foundational for rebuilding the wall and repopulating Jerusalem under the ministry of Nehemiah.

One passage of Scripture comprehensively reveals multiple facets of God's heart for those in distress.<sup>4</sup>

Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow (Deut. 24:17-21).

This passage is rich in understanding the heart of God towards those on the margins of society. The first has to do with justice. The alien, the fatherless, the widow and the poor all deserve justice and have inalienable rights as human beings that supersede geopolitical borders (cf. Prov. 31,8,9, Isa.10:1,2 etc.). Second, God is concerned with basic kindness. Although one could demand the surety of a widow's cloak, God is concerned with her comfort and survival. The historical memory of their own oppression while slaves in Egypt was to be a catalyst to kindness, not a catalyst for the formerly oppressed to become the

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<sup>4</sup> Although Old Testament passages often link aliens, widows and fatherless together as a group and the poor and needy together there are enough passages that freely place them under the same protection or beneficiaries of the same provision (cf. Exodus 19:10, Leviticus 19:10, Leviticus 23:22, Deuteronomy 10:17-19, etc.), that unless there is a compelling exegetical reason not to do so, I will approach these passages collectively as how God wants those on the margins protected and provided for. Throughout this paper I will refer to these collectively and interchangeably as "those on the margins," "the distressed," "the marginalized," "those without voice or power," "those in need," etc. One could easily argue that the poor are poor and the needy are needy because they are widowed, orphaned or aliens since those groups were most often excluded from the means of wealth—the ownership of land.

oppressors. God also tells those with the means of production (wheat fields, olive trees and vineyards) not to extract every farthing of profit from the land but rather to leave a second harvest for those on the margins. In a subtle way, God was telling his people to provide for the poor but also preserve their inherent dignity by allowing the poor to harvest for themselves what they need. Work is part of God's redemptive plan, expressed before the fall (Gen. 2:15), and lived out in the new Jerusalem (Isa. 65:22).

### **Wisdom Literature**

The “wisdom literature” (Job-Song of Songs) is “the accumulated wisdom of the people who lived under and within the Old Testament part of the biblical story. This literature summarizes the learnings of the community of faith concerning rights and just relationships and testifies to people’s experience that God’s rule is the only rule at the end of the day.”<sup>5</sup> The wisdom literature continues to magnify the centrality of care and love towards those in need. When Job was pondering the reason for his suffering he reviewed his kindness towards those in need.

If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow—if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint. For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things” (Job 31:16-23).

It was clear that Job viewed care for the distressed as an integral part and extension of his relationship with God (cf. Job 20:10, Job 29:11-13, Job 30:25, Job 31:31-32, Job 34:19).

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<sup>5</sup> Myers, 33.

Proverbs, the “short statements learned from long lessons” contain numerous couplets pertaining to care, mercy and justice toward those in distress (cf. Prov. 10:15, Prov. 13:23, Prov. 14:20-21, Prov. 14:31, Prov. 19:7, Prov. 21:13, Prov. 22:2, Prov. 22:9, Prov. 22:16, Prov. 22:22-23, Prov. 28:8, Prov. 28:27, Prov. 29:7, Prov. 29:14, Prov. 31:8-9, Prov. 31:20 etc.). It is quite clear that the Proverbs were the experiential validation of the mandates and desires of God toward the poor. Generosity and justice were rewarded and smiled upon whereas stinginess and injustice led to ruin.

### **The Prophets**

Whereas the law contained dozens of admonitions and guidelines regarding the treatment of those on the margins, and the poetic books serve as practical and personal reminders of the consequences of adhering to these guidelines, the prophetic books were written as a rebuke and reminder of how God’s people were to live as; an outline of where they had erred and rebukes regarding their shabby treatment of the poor. Catholic scholar Ronald Rolheiser writes:

Moreover, the call to do justice as an integral part of relating to God is already strong within the Jewish scriptures. Beginning about 800 B.C., the Jewish prophets made one truth central to their teaching. They taught that the quality of faith in the people depends upon the character of justice in the land—and the character of justice in the land is to be judged by how we treat the most vulnerable groups in the society, namely, widows, orphans and strangers. Thus according to the Jewish prophets, where we stand with God depends not just upon prayer and sincerity of heart but also on where we stand with the poor.<sup>6</sup>

The prophets call God’s people back to himself and to the historic commitment to those in distress (cf. Jer. 5:28b, Jer. 7:5-7, Jer. 22:3, Ezek. 16:49, Ezek. 22:19, Ezek. 47:22, Amos 5:11-12, Zech. 7:9-10, Mal. 3:5). Speaking of King Josiah, God even equates one’s treatment of the poor and needy with one’s relationship with God himself. “He [King

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<sup>6</sup> Rolheiser, 64-65.

Josiah] did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 22:15-16).

In the years preceding the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah had a prophetic message from God concerning Israel’s “internal” focus along with an exhortation to move beyond formal worship to true righteousness:

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me...I cannot bear your evil assemblies...They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen...Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isa. 1:13-17).

Throughout this prophetic book, Isaiah exposes the inadequacy of the faith of people who focus on loving God but forget about loving man (cf. Isa. 10:1-2, Isa. 11:4, Isa. 25:4, Isa. 32:7, Isa. 61:6). Addressing the futility of their prayers and fasting apart from concern for others, God says, “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him?” (Isa. 58:6-7a)

One particular passage from the prophets is particularly instructive regarding what God requires of his people...a requirement that transcends time and geography. That passage is Mic. 6:8. “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Into this setting of lapsed obedience, Micah addresses the people of God. What is good and what is required by the Lord? There are three things God requires. In reverse order, the first good thing that God requires is a humble walk with him. A humble walk

with God is foundational for everything Christ-followers do since one must be internally strong to be externally focused. Most churches in the United States are relatively good at developing systems and programs that help parishioners walk with God, but there is more that God requires.

The second thing God lauds and requires is a love of mercy. Mercy is God's attitude and action towards those in distress. Mercy is the motivation for feeding the hungry, giving a cup of cold water in Jesus name, or a blanket to someone who is cold. Many churches have mercy ministries expressed in "food pantries" or "clothing closets." Jesus demonstrated mercy when he fed the five thousand. He didn't permanently end world hunger, but he did make the lives of a large group of people just a little better on that day. Jesus demonstrated mercy when he healed Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-15). Most certainly this unnamed woman had other fevers in her lifetime, but for that evening Jesus made her life a little bit better. Mercy is a good thing and to "be merciful" is one of those unique areas where believers are called to be like God the Father himself (Luke 6:36).

"To act justly" is the third requirement of God-followers. How does justice differ from mercy? Mercy most always deals with symptoms of deeper societal ills. Justice traffics in the systems that cause the symptoms. The late Harvie Conn defines the distinction between mercy (charity) and justice and in so doing asks,

What will be the instrument of the church in affecting... change? Not simply charity but also justice. Charity is episodic, justice is ongoing. One brings consolation, the other correction. One aims at symptoms, the other at causes. One changes individuals, the other societies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Harvie Conn, *A Clarified Vision for Urban Mission: Dispelling Urban Stereotypes*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 147.

It is relatively easy for churches to be involved in ministries of mercy. It is exponentially more difficult to get involved in issues of justice. Normally mercy is applauded while justice is critiqued and criticized. The late Brazilian Archbishop, Dom Hélder Câmara, wryly commented, “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist.”<sup>8</sup>

The exhortation in Micah. 6:8 is foundational for every leader seeking biblical foundations for externally focused ministry. When a church is walking humbly with God, demonstrating mercy, and working towards justice for all, it is on the path to becoming the church Jesus died to build.

## UNDERSTANDING THE KINGDOM

### **The Response to John the Baptist**

The first recorded words from John the Baptist in Matthew’s gospel are “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 3:2). It’s a short sermon—just eight words in the Bible, but it got a powerful response. “People went out to him from Jerusalem and Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River” (Matt. 3:5-6). Short messages solicit a big response only when the hearer understands the context, the meaning of the words, and the urgency of the message. Even when Jesus said to his disciples, “Come and have breakfast” (John 21:12), the disciples understood and acted upon every word of this short invitation. Sometimes the short message does not even have to be verbal. The apostle Paul, writing a few years later wrote, “...if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle” (1 Cor. 14:8)?

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<sup>8</sup> Hélder Câmara; [Wikipedia: the Free Encyclopedia]. Available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A9lder\\_C%C3%A2mara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A9lder_C%C3%A2mara); Internet; accessed 17 April, 2007.

Clarity of the message and understanding context is everything. Hearing “Get down!” on a battlefield elicits a different response from “Get down!” on a dance floor.

Why did John’s audience respond in droves to his short message? One would have to believe that his audience already understood the historical context of John’s words. What did they know that people today have missed? What were they anticipating that others had forgotten about? What did they understand about history and the Scriptures that others had missed? What would they have been thinking about?

### **The Kingdom of God in Daniel**

To understand the “kingdom of God” one has to go back to the prophetic book of Daniel. During the time of Daniel, the Jews had been conquered by the Babylonians and dragged off to Babylon. The Babylonian captivity in 605 B.C. “marks the beginning of the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24), the prophetic period when Jerusalem is under Gentile control.”<sup>9</sup> The “times of the Gentiles” ends when the Messiah returns. Daniel records that one night Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar had a perplexing dream about “an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance” (Dan. 2:31). Perplexed about the dream, he calls in his soothsaying “magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers” (Dan. 2:2), but they are unable to tell him his dream and its meaning. As they were being rounded up to be put to death, Daniel, who was in the king’s service, tells King Nebuchadnezzar “there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (Dan. 2:28). He steps forward, not only with the interpretation of the dream, but recalling the details of the very dream itself. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that the four metals of the statue (gold, silver, bronze, and iron) symbolize four kingdoms. Babylon is the first kingdom. Three other kingdoms were to follow the

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<sup>9</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 383.

Babylonians in influence and domination. Daniel ends his message to Nebuchadnezzar by telling of one more kingdom—the kingdom of God. “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan. 2:44).

Later Daniel has a dream of four beasts, again representing four kingdoms that dominate the earth. His dream ends with “one like a son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven [who was] given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14). Daniel’s dream ends with the certainty that “the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever” (Dan. 7:18). “Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him” (Dan. 7:28). The stage is now set for the coming king and the coming kingdom.

### **The Kingdom and the Birth of Jesus**

By the time Jesus was born, Israel had been chafing and languishing under foreign control for over six hundred years. By the time B.C. turned the page to A.D. the Babylonians had been conquered by the Persians who were in turn conquered by Alexander the Great and the Greeks. Greece eventually yielded to the mighty hand of

Rome whose kingdom consisted of fifty million inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> The Romans were the kingdom de jour. Every Jew who understood history and understood the Scriptures knew that the next kingdom on the horizon was God’s kingdom as prophesied by Daniel and the air was thick with anticipation.

The births of John the Baptist and Jesus had been foreshadowed with prophecies and speculations that pointed to a coming king. John would do the lead blocking as the one who would go before Jesus and would “rescue [them] from the hand of [their] enemies” (Luke 1:74). The angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her, “You will...give birth to a son, and ...he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:31-33). Jesus was the coming king! Shortly after the birth of Jesus, the Magi from the east came in search of the “king of the Jews,” (Matt. 2:1-2) and they were not disappointed. Their gifts and homage were proof that they believed they found the king. When the baby Jesus was dedicated in the temple the eighty-four year old prophetess, Anna excitedly “spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel” (Luke 2:36-38). Many reflected the anticipation of Joseph of Arimathea who twice is described as one who was “waiting for the Kingdom of God” (Luke 23:53, Mark 15:43).

### **Centrality of the Kingdom Message**

As previously noted, Matthew records John the Baptist’s first public words— “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 3:2), and with anticipation, the crowds from Jerusalem and Judea responded by confessing their sins and being baptized in the

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<sup>10</sup> Roman Empire; available from <http://www.crystalinks.com/romanempire.html>; Internet; accessed 15 March, 2007.

Jordan (Matt. 3:4-11). If the king was coming, they wanted to be ready. After Jesus was baptized by John and returned from his desert temptation, he found himself in his hometown of Nazareth (Luke 4:14-30). When the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him, he scrolled down to Isaiah 61, where he read, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” This verse and the verses that followed fleshed out his “great commission” and would prove to be his lode star. Isaiah 61:1-6 depicts the gospel being preached through proclamation (“proclaim”) and demonstration (“bind up the brokenhearted,” “to comfort those who mourn,” “provide for those who grieve,” etc). The kingdom becomes a place of beauty, not ashes, gladness not mourning, praise and not despair (v.3 ). The transformed people—referred to as “oaks of righteousness,” are those who “rebuild, renew, and restore the city.”

As Jesus began his ministry, the words of his first public sermon were, the same message as his older cousin’s—“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17). Jesus was announcing the coming kingdom. What shape that kingdom would take would unfold through his actions and teachings over the next three years, but wherever he went he spoke to people about the kingdom—“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” (Matt. 9:35. cf. Luke 4:43, 8:1, 9:11) The first petition that Jesus taught his disciples to pray pertains to the kingdom and is found in Matt. 6:10—“...your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus said one is to seek first (in priority and importance) his kingdom (Matt. 6:33). In the book of Acts (1:3), in his post-resurrection appearances “He appeared to them over a period of

forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” The kingdom is not ancillary but central to his message.

Jesus’ message was not confined to his own preaching. When he sent his disciples forth in mission (Matt. 10:7, Luke 10:9), he instructed them, “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’”—the same message he and John had been preaching.

The central teaching of Phillip (Acts 8:12) was “the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ...” Similarly the apostle Paul preached the kingdom of God. When Paul was arrested in Thessalonica his accusers underscored the central message of his teaching—“These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here...they are all saying there is another king, one called Jesus” (Acts 17:7). When Paul came to Ephesus for three months he spoke out boldly, “arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). For two years he set up shop in the School of Tyrannus where he taught about the King and the kingdom (Acts 19:9). In Paul’s farewell address to these same Ephesians he says, “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again” (Acts 20:25). When Paul arrived in Rome, even under arrest, he arranged to meet with Jewish leaders and “[f]rom morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God...” The closing curtain on the book of Acts finds Paul under house arrest welcoming all who came to see him “and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:31; cf. 28:23). In Paul’s writing he refers to the kingdom no less than sixteen times.

## **The Kingdom Must Have a King**

It is clear that people polarized around believing or not believing Jesus was the king. The bookend passages of Jesus' earthly life centered around his kingship. He was king in the manger (Matt. 2:1,2), and at his trial he was king before Pilate—"You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world..." (John 18:37),<sup>11</sup> and even king on the cross, it was the thief that recognized his kingship by being asked to be remembered by Jesus when Jesus entered his kingdom that Friday afternoon (Luke 23:42). The central message of Paul's teaching was not just about the kingdom but about the king. Certainly this aspect of Paul's teaching was noted by the Thessalonians: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here...they are all saying there is another king, one called Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

## **What is the Kingdom of God?**

The kingdom of God is any place over which God has operative dominion. Although "[t]he earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1) the kingdom of God extends only to those sections of geography or chambers in the hearts of people where God is honored as sovereign and his values are operative. The kingdom of God has a king. His name is Jesus—Matt. 2:1-12, John 18:37. To preach the kingdom is to tell people about the King and the type of things he values in his kingdom and the world he wants to establish. Isaiah gives a picture of what community life is like when God's reign is fully operative in the renewed community (Isa. 65:17-25).

1. There is joy—(v.19).
2. There is absence of weeping and crying (v.19).

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<sup>11</sup> Jesus claim to be King; see also John 19:12, Luke 23:2.

3. There is no infant mortality (v.20).
4. People live out their full lives (v.20).
5. People will build houses and live in them (v.21, 22).
6. People will sow and reap (v.21, 22).
7. There is fulfilling work (v.22).
8. There is confidence that their children will face a better life (v.23. cf. Zech. 8:4).
9. People experience the blessing of God (v.23).
10. There is intergenerational family support (v.23).
11. There is rapid answer to prayer (v.24).
12. There is an absence of violence (v.25).

So any place where there is sorrow, weeping, infant mortality, premature death, etc. is actually an affront to the kingdom of God. This passage also helps explain the actions and miracles of Jesus. When five thousand Jews were hungry, it was an affront to the kingdom, so he fed them. When four thousand Gentiles (Mark 8:1-5) in the region of Decapolis were hungry, he also fed them also because the kingdom of God knows no geographic or ethnic boundaries. When people were sick or paralyzed, their infirmity also was an affront to the kingdom, so Jesus healed them. When the twelve-year-old girl had died, Jesus raised her from the dead (Luke 8:40-56) because children don't die in the kingdom. When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus raised him from the dead (John 11:38-44) because premature death is an affront to the kingdom of God, and there is no premature death in the kingdom. Through his miracles he was presenting attractive illustrations of what the kingdom of God is like. He didn't heal everyone; he didn't feed everyone; he didn't raise every dead person. He was creating a compelling visual illustration for what the kingdom of God is like.

When Jesus sent his disciples out to minister, they too were to preach the kingdom and do the same things Jesus did to show people what the kingdom of God is like (Matt. 10:7,8, Luke 9:2).

### **Parables About the Kingdom of God**

When Jesus preached about the kingdom of God he frequently used parables to reveal the differing facets of the kingdom. Each parable in itself is incomplete in describing the workings of the kingdom, but taken together, they provide a good picture of principles of how the kingdom operates. The scope of this project does not permit the development each parable, but what is important is to see how many different stories Jesus told to explain the kingdom. The kingdom of God is like:

1. A man who sowed good seeds in his field—Matt. 13:24.
2. A mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field—Matt. 13:31.
3. Yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough—Matt. 13:33.
4. Treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field—Matt. 13:44.
5. A merchant looking for fine pearls—Matt. 13:45.
6. A king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants—Matt. 18:33.
7. A landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard—Matt. 20:1.
8. A king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son—Matt. 22:2.
9. Ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom—Matt. 25:1.

10. A man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them—Matt. 25:14.

11. A man who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he doesn't know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—Mark 4:26-27.

Each parable provides a different glimpse of operating principles of the kingdom and how the kingdom grows and multiplies.

### **Teachings and Values of the Kingdom**

The kingdom of God is a place where worldly values are turned upside down. Most likely the clearest (but not exclusive) place for a glimpse of kingdom values is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Being the king it can be assumed that whatever Jesus valued is a kingdom value. What ever Jesus taught is kingdom teaching. Again, time, space and attention span do not allow for a complete treatise on the teachings and values of the kingdom but it can conservatively be said that the following represent kingdom values:

1. Children are valued and held in high esteem—Matt. 18:2, 19:4, Mark 10:14.
2. The poor are blessed and given a place of honor—Luke 6:20, James 2:5.
3. Those persecuted for righteousness are blessed—Matt. 10:9.
4. Servanthood is valued over power—Matt. 20:21ff.
5. The wealthy have a hard time entering in—most likely because of the humility and servanthood that is required to serve in the kingdom—Matt. 18:24,25.
6. We love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us and pray for those who mistreat us—Luke 6:27,28.
7. It's a life filled with faith and free from worry—Matt. 6:25-34.

8. It's a life of giving—Matt. 6:1-4.
9. It's a life of prayer—Matt. 5:14, 7:7-12.
10. It's a life of fasting—Matt. 5:16-18.
11. It's a life of love—Matt. 5:43-48.
12. It's a life of forgiveness—Matt. 6:14, Matt. 18:23ff.
13. It's a life where marriage is honored—Matt. 5:27-35.
14. It's a life of reconciliation—Matt. 5:21-26.
15. It's a life of good deeds—Matt. 5:16.
16. It's a life of honesty—Matt. 5:33-37.

### **What is Kingdom Work?**

Kingdom work involves two aspects. It is introducing people to the King, and it is helping to bring his perspective, values, and generative structures to the world. Many of the parables describe the work of the kingdom as sowing and reaping, commonly understood as the work of direct ministry of evangelism and discipleship. Part of kingdom work involves introducing people to the King and helping them grow in that most-important relationship as they learn to embrace kingdom values, but the kingdom is more than evangelism and discipleship.

In the broadest sense, any time one is involved in making this world more reflective of the place that God will ultimately make it in the coming kingdom (Rev. 11:14) one is involved in kingdom work. Because the kingdom is a place of beauty, cleaning a park or painting a mural that covers graffiti can, in the very broadest sense of the words, be considered “kingdom work.” Isaiah speaks of transformed people who “will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that

have been devastated for generations” (Isa. 61:4). If people are involved in rebuilding, restoring, and renewing the city, their transformational efforts (again, in the most inclusive sense) can be considered kingdom work. When one is involved in correcting and making right any of the social ills, injustices, or wrongs of this world, because these wrongs are an affront to the character of God, one is involved in kingdom work. For those who are engaged in healing the sick, preventing illness, or building a hospital, this too is kingdom work. Those who care for children as Jesus did, this too is kingdom work. The peacemakers of the world and those who work towards forgiveness and reconciliation are involved in kingdom work. With this view of the kingdom a second implication is the possibility of involving many more people in “kingdom work” than would be involved in what one would normally refer to as “direct ministry” of evangelism and discipleship. Acts of kindness and mercy can be affirmed as “kingdom work.”

The implications of living this way are fairly awesome. Christ-followers can inform those who are caring for the sick or teaching our children or cleaning our parks that they are involved in building the kingdom of God. They may protest that they don’t attend church, may be of another faith persuasion, or not have any faith at all, but God can still use them to further his kingdom purposes.

At this juncture it is important to affirm that kingdom work does not in any way, shape or form, merit entrance into the kingdom. Doing the work of the kingdom does not make one a member in the kingdom. Jesus puts forth this disclaimer:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles” then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:21-23).

## **Entering the Kingdom**

There are three passages where Jesus gives the requirements for entrance into the kingdom—each affirming the simple faith that is required. In his discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3-5). To the multitudes Jesus said, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20). One must remember that in the Scriptures, righteousness is something that is imparted to individuals and is never merited (Romans 3,4). Jesus told the disciples, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). Child-like faith, a new birth and imputed righteousness is what brings one into the kingdom. Any time believers are involved in introducing others to the King and helping to bring about the kingdom, they are involved in kingdom work.

## **The Kingdom Without a King and a King Without a Kingdom**

It is important to keep in mind that the kingdom always includes a king. Historically the church (God’s workforce for expanding the kingdom) has swung to one side of the pendulum or the other—trying to bring the King to people without helping to bring the kingdom or they bring the kingdom to people while failing to tell them about the King. Both are less than Christian. The kingdom, by definition must have a king. Conversely if one is telling people about the King (Jesus), then the appropriate follow-up question is, “What is he king over?” The answer is his kingdom. A kingdom always has a

king and a king, by definition, always has a kingdom. To be kingdom Christians, one must be about both helping to build the kingdom and introducing people to the king. The kingdom is not realized in its fullness until the final transformation occurs—“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:14).

### **Kingdom Implications for the Church**

“Kingdom” is mentioned 121 times in the gospels. “church” is mentioned three times in the gospels, all in the book of Matthew. Have Christians settled for too little in thinking about what God has for them? It’s about the size of the kingdom, not just the size of the church. Unless churches have a kingdom perspective, they are likely to reduce externally focused ministry to mere programs, emphasis or tactics and funding will most likely be cut if this ministry does not result in increased attendance or expanded budget. Kingdom ministry will not be core to who they are as a church. Kingdom Christians can truly rejoice any time the kingdom is expanding, wherever it is expanding, whether it results in one’s particular church growing or not. Sometimes kingdom ministry lead to church growth, but honestly sometimes it does not. But nevertheless God calls his people to be the church and to build the kingdom—whether it builds one’s own church or not.

Howard Snyder contrasts the difference between kingdom people and church people.

Kingdom people seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice; church people often put church work above concerns of justice, mercy and truth. Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; Kingdom people work to see the church change the world.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Howard Snyder, *Liberating the Church* (Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Press, 1983), 11; quoted in Bosch, 378.

## THE TEACHINGS AND PRAXIS OF JESUS

Attempting to cover with depth the wealth and richness of scriptural passages relating to Jesus teaching on the poor and the marginalized (cf. Matt. 6:2-3, Matt. 19:11, Mark 12:42-43, Luke 12:33, Luke 14:13-14, Luke 18:22, Luke 19:8, etc.) is too vast a scope for this modest project. My assessment of such a task would lead me to rely on the words of the Apostle John: “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written (John 21:25). Author and columnist for the Catholic Herald, Ronald Rolheiser, however, provides a cogent summary of the New Testaments teaching regarding those on the margins of our communities:

More than a few Christians might be surprised to learn that the call to be involved in creating justice for the poor is just as essential and nonnegotiable within the spiritual life as is Jesus’ commandment to pray and keep our private lives in order. Jesus’ teaching on this is very strong, consistent throughout all the Gospels, and leaves no room for equivocation. In the Christian scriptures, one out of every ten lines deals directly with the physically poor and the call from God for us to respond to them. In the gospel of Luke, that becomes every sixth line, and in the epistle of James, that commission is there, in one form or another, every fifth line.<sup>13</sup>

The ministry of Jesus cannot be ignored since it is Christology (what Jesus did and taught) that shapes the church’s missiology (what the church is to do) that informs ecclesiology (how the church organizes to best fulfill its mission). All mission begins and ends with Jesus.

Again, the length and scope of this project does not allow for addressing a fraction of the teaching, preaching and healing (Matt. 4:23, Matt. 9:35) ministry of Jesus. I will,

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<sup>13</sup> Rolheiser, 64.

however, look at a central passage that seem to be the heart of his teaching and ministry—the story of the helpful Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), who defines what it means to be a “neighbor.”

### **The Good Samaritan**

Jesus tells the story of the Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) in response to a question regarding the identity of, or who qualifies as, a “neighbor.” The story of the Good Samaritan is perhaps the most universally known story of Jesus. A “Good Samaritan” is known around the world as one who helps others he or she has never met. The Samaritan in Jesus story provides not only a meta-example of love and engagement towards a neighbor, but the story also gives us illustrations of practical things ways to be a neighbor to those in need. First it is interesting to note that there was no kinship, friendship, or relationship between the Samaritan and the poor soul who was waylaid outside Jerusalem. One would expect help from and towards those who through family, friendship, or affinity are the natural recipients of human love, often expressed in the Greek word *phileo*. But the Samaritan’s love was larger. It was without condition or qualification. God’s unconditional love (*agape*) goes to where it is most needed. On a practical level, the Samaritan demonstrates useful ways the church can engage in loving and helping others. These practical ways can serve as a template for church involvement.

First, the Samaritan didn’t avoid the person in need. “He saw him...took pity on him [and] went to him” (Luke 10:33-34). Most ministry opportunities happen at the intersection of the unexpected and the interruption. Ministry rarely occurs on one’s schedule. Churches that engage their communities develop an awareness of the needs around them. They “see” those who are hurting and take action.

Second, the Samaritan offers medical help by bandaging the stranger's wounds. Medical and dental costs have soared in recent years. Is there anything churches can do to offer medical or dental care for those in need? A few of years ago, Mariners Church in Irvine, California, was ministering to a teenage boy through their partnership with Orange County Social Services Foster Care. He was a good kid but painfully shy and withdrawn, mostly due to severe acne and the accompanying scarring. Mariners covered the cost of the laser surgery and treatment that made his skin like that of a newborn baby.

Third, the Samaritan provided transportation by putting the wounded man on his donkey. One of the ways the poor are isolated is through a lack of public transportation. If those without automobiles can't get to work or to school, they can't climb out of poverty. Arlington Texas, for example, has virtually no public transportation. Unless one has access to a car, it is difficult to get around, so First Baptist Church of Arlington's "Mission Arlington" began a public transportation ministry that transports more than two thousand people a day to work and to school. Maybe it's a bit ambitious to start a bus company, but there are other ways of helping with transportation. Is there anything churches could do to take shut-ins grocery shopping or to doctor appointments?

Fourth, the Samaritan provided lodging and companionship. He actually took the injured man to an inn and stayed with him throughout the darkest hours of the night. "The poor are poor largely because they live in networks of relationships that do not work for their well-being."<sup>14</sup> Part of the redemptive process is developing friendships with those on the margins. Five years ago Calvary Bible Church in Boulder, Colorado, responded to a request from the local homeless shelter to provide overflow housing on the coldest nights

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<sup>14</sup> Myers, 3.

of the year. The church responded by hosting eight to ten men every Monday night from October to April. Today, many homeless people worship side-by-side with homeowners. The people of Calvary Bible Church recognize that homelessness is not a disease; it simply describes a person's relationship to permanent housing.

It's interesting that the last thing the Samaritan offered was money (which he gave to the innkeeper). Much good can be done apart from money. Sometimes there is no substitute for hard cash. Cash is necessary to pay for medical expenses and heating bills.

### SCRIPTURES CONCERNING GOOD WORKS AND GOOD DEEDS

The last set of Scriptures I want to look at comes from the New Testament's admonitions and guidelines for believers to engage in doing good. Building on the foundation of Old Testament teaching, the example and teaching of Jesus, what are the Scriptural mandates for believers today? The New Testament is not short on commands live out one's faith by doing good towards others. Loving God cannot be separated from loving one's neighbor as our own selves (Matt. 22:37-39) and loving of neighbor can never be separated from love of God (1 John 4). Jesus inferred that good deeds would draw people into a relationship with God himself, "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Rather than attempting to address all the New Testament verses on good works or good deeds (cf. Col. 1:10, 2 Cor. 9:8, 2 Thes. 2:16-17, 1 Tim. 2:10, 1 Tim. 5:10, 1 Tim. 5:25, 1 Tim. 6:18, 2 Tim. 2:21, Heb. 13:20-21, Jam. 1:27, Jam. 2:14, Jam. 3:13, 1 Pet. 2:12), I want to explore one central verse along with several correlating passages. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of

God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:8-10).

Understanding this passage, in its totality, has proved critical and foundational in motivating believers towards external engagement. This passage is divided into two logical sections: how one is saved (Eph. 2:8-9) and why is saved (Eph. 2:10). One is saved by God’s grace (unmerited favor) that is appropriated “through faith”—when one trusts him for his or her salvation. This transaction is totally apart from any work or good thing one does to merit salvation. But the second part of the verse (v. 10) says that each believer is God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for a purpose—to do good works, which were prepared by God in advance for every individual to engage in. These concepts can be illustrated in ways that seem to be helpful when explaining to others.

In the seventeenth century, French philosopher, mathematician, and physicist penned these oft-quoted words, "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> He was right. As a physicist he knew something about vacuums, but it doesn’t take a scientist to know what a vacuum feels like. God has created a place in every heart for himself and one will always feel a sense of incompleteness or emptiness until God takes his rightful place. No accomplishment, achievement, fortune, or fame can fill that void. He created a space where he alone can dwell.

When one receives salvation, as God’s free gift, as expressed in Eph. 2:8-9, the God-shaped vacuum is filled. One receives all of God that one is ever going to get, but

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<sup>15</sup> Blaise Pascal Quotes; available from [http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/there\\_is\\_a\\_god\\_shaped\\_vacuum\\_in\\_the\\_heart\\_of/166425.html](http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/there_is_a_god_shaped_vacuum_in_the_heart_of/166425.html); Internet; accessed March 15, 2007.

there is another vacuum in our lives that is just as real; and it comes from the verse that follows. Paul suggests there is also a “purpose-shaped” vacuum. The passage says, “We are God’s workmanship...”(Eph. 2:10). He has individually created every person exactly according to his specification and design. He has also created every believer “to do good works, which [he] prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). Because God has prepared these good works in advance, this preparatory work creates a vacuum for believers, not to invent, but to step into and discover. Unlike the God-shaped vacuum where “one size fits all,” the purpose-shaped vacuum is individual and is found at the intersection of the way God has made an individual and what God wants to accomplish in this world through that individual. God has designed Christ-followers with a predisposed passion to co-labor with him in doing what he wants done.

Every major resource that God has given to believers has been given, not just to be someone but to do something good and purposeful in the world.

1. God gives leaders to *prepare his people* for good works. Paul said, “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” (Eph. 4:11-12).
2. God gives his Word to *equip his people* for good works. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

3. God gives to the body of Christ other Christians to *spur his people on* toward good works. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24).
4. And last, God gives spiritual gifts to *enable his people* to do good works. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms” (1 Pet. 4:10).

Christians are created in Christ Jesus to do good works; God gives them leaders to prepare them for those good works, his Word to equip them for those good works, spiritual gifts to enable them to do good works, and one another to spur them on toward good works. Paul's words in Ephesians. 2:8-10 applies to every believer. All who have experienced Ephesians 2:8-9, should also be experiencing Ephesians 2:10. God has prepared “good works in advance” for everyone “created in Christ Jesus.” Most pastors, missionaries and vocational Christian workers will say that frequently they experience the intersection of their passions with God's purpose where they feel fully alive. So either a person believes that this intersection is reserved only for those who have “surrendered to vocational Christian service” or it can and should be the normative experience for every believer. I believe the latter to be true.

The Scriptures pertaining to ministry to those people on the margins form a foundation for externally focused ministry and provide the weight of evidence to suggest that ministry beyond the walls of the church should be a defining element of what Christ-followers do. Catholics use a word to define the place of good deeds that those in the Protestant world might find quite foreign. The word is *constitutive*. Constitutive elements of the Christian life are those practices that essentially define the Christian faith and

without which there would be no Christianity. This study of Scripture leads me to personally conclude that good deeds, expressed through loving one's neighbor must be constitutive to the faith and life of every Christ-follower.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESS**

This chapter details the research methods used to assess and evaluate the transformational effectiveness of LCs in deploying church volunteers in ministry and service to the community. This chapter will present an overview of the participants in the sample, the process and methods used to collect data from the participants, and the process used to evaluate the results.

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

The participants of the study are the leaders from thirty-three churches who participated in the three LCs. These leaders and churches form a non-random, convenience sampling of churches that were chosen based on their interest in and qualification for an LC for Externally Focused Churches. The author personally visited or had extensive phone conversations with the leaders of approximately 100 churches and extended invitations to approximately 80 of these same churches. The thirty-three churches in the study were those who accepted the invitation, filled out the required application and paid the registration fee. I am confident that this was the best sampling method available, given the parameters of an LC.

These 33 churches come from a variety of geographic locations in the United States with a fairly strong representation from each geographic region. The churches age in range from 125 years down to 3 years with average church age of 43.1 years and a

median church age of 29.5 years. The collective weekend attendance of all 33 churches is 75,329 people with an average weekend attendance of 2,282 and a median weekend attendance of 1,200. The range of weekend attendance for all churches is 65 to 7,500. Fifteen churches have an average weekend attendance of over 2,000. Seven of the team had female team leaders while twenty-six of the teams were led by males. The racial make-up of participants was predominantly Anglo. An average of 10.8 people from each church participated in at least one of the four gatherings. Of the thirty-three teams, seven teams were led by senior pastors, twenty-four teams were lead by a church staff member, and two teams were led by lay persons. Twenty-nine churches convene in their own buildings while three churches convene in rented facilities. Because the way of measuring “externally focused” budget varies so much from church to church, with some churches counting only dollars, while other churches including staff salaries and office expenditures, no attempt to quantify budgets was attempted.

Each church was selected to be a part of an LC by means of an application process which will be explained under the subheading of Procedures. The following is a list of the participating churches along with each of the three group’s attendance figures and age.

**Group One**

Collective Weekly Attendance: 44,670

Average Weekend Attendance: 3,436

Median Weekend Attendance: 3,100

Average Age of Church: 52.6 years

Median Age of Church: 40 years

1. Cornwall Church—Bellingham, Washington
2. Creekside Community Church—San Leandro, California
3. Fellowship Bible Church—Little Rock, Arkansas
4. Grace Brethren Church—Long Beach, California
5. Greenwood Community Church—Greenwood Village, Colorado
6. Hope Presbyterian Church—Cordova, Tennessee
7. Lake Avenue Church—Pasadena, California
8. LifeBridge Christian Church—Longmont, Colorado
9. Mariners Church—Irvine, California
10. Northland, A Church Distributed—Longwood, Florida
11. Perimeter Church—Duluth, Georgia
12. The River Church Community—San Jose, California

## **Group Two**

Collective Weekly Attendance: 9,382

Average Weekend Attendance: 1,042

Median Weekend Attendance: 917

Average Age of Church: 42.2 years

Median Age of Church: 43 years

1. Calvary Baptist Church—State College, Pennsylvania
2. Calvary Bible Evangelical Free Church—Boulder, Colorado
3. Christ Community Church—Omaha, Nebraska
4. Crosswalk Community United Methodist Church—York, Pennsylvania
5. Faith Reformed Church—Traverse City, Michigan

6. Hempfield United Methodist Church—Lancaster, Pennsylvania
7. Imago Dei Community—Portland, Oregon
8. New Song Community Church—Oceanside, California
9. Fellowship at Cinco Ranch—Katy, Texas

### **Group Three**

Collective Weekly Attendance: 21,277

Average Weekend Attendance: 1,934

Median Weekend Attendance: 1,800

Average Age of Church: 42.2 years

Median Age of Church: 26 years

1. Christian Life Center—Tinley Park, Illinois
2. Crossroads Christian Church—Lexington, Kentucky
3. Faith Lutheran Church—Golden, Colorado
4. First Baptist Church—Elk Grove, California
5. Hope Church—Oakdale, Minnesota
6. Rolling Hills Community Church—Tualatin, Oregon
7. Southbrook Christian Church—Centerville, Ohio
8. University Baptist Church—Houston, Texas
9. West Conroe Baptist Church—Conroe, Texas
10. Word of Grace—Mesa, Arizona

## PROCEDURES

The research methods for this study will be based on quantitative and qualitative research methods. In addition to the collection and analysis of the quantitative data (the author's primary data source), I will also collate, analyze, and attempt to interpret the answers to the salient open-ended questions "in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon."<sup>1</sup>

### **Data Points**

Three data points were used to obtain accurate data needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the LC process (the independent variable) in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers in ministry and service to the community (number of church volunteers engaging in the community being the dependent variable).

The first data point comes from the initial application form that was sent to potential participating churches. The second data point comes from yearly quantitative and qualitative information collected from each participating church at the end of each calendar year. The third data point came from an online survey administered by a company called Zoomerang that was sent to every participant following each LC gathering.

Although different data points could have been created and selected, I chose to use these three data points for two reasons. First, I designed the questions for the application, the yearly survey and the post-gathering Zoomerang based on information I was seeking for my dissertation. Secondly, this information coincided with the

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<sup>1</sup> Carl F. Auerbach & Louise B. Silverstein, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 3.

information the sponsoring organization, LN, was also seeking in measuring the effectiveness of the LC process as well as ways to improve each LC gathering. The Zoomerang was chosen specifically because of its ease of distribution and data collection.

### **The Application**

The application was the tool that provided baseline data for the study. The baseline data was collected to obtain the “starting point” for each church. To provide the common language to provide for accurate common measurement, the following definition was included in introduction to the application: “Externally focused ministry is that ministry which is done outside of the church building. Such ministries would include your own externally focused ministries, partnerships with parachurch organizations, partnerships with human service agencies, etc.” The application also included the following questions that were designed to assess the quality and readiness of the applying church.

1. Background information
  - a. Brief history of church / externally focused ministry
  - b. Weekly Worship Attendance
2. External Ministry Descriptions
  - a. What externally focused ministries is your church engaged in
  - b. Percentage of congregation involved in external ministry (in the twelve months)
3. What do you consider to be the strengths of your current approach(es)?
4. What do you consider to be the challenges of your current approach(es)?
5. Opportunities for the future
  - a. What are your untapped areas for involvement, growth or impact in the next three years?
  - b. If you were sitting here three years from now, what would need to happen to make you satisfied with your progress?

6. Why are you interested in participating in this Externally Focused LC? (Author's note: The answer to this question was useful in determining what LC participants had in common)
7. What resources are you aware of that, if accessible, would accelerate your work?
8. Who will participate in the LC? What is their ministry involvement, position or title? (List the 3-5 most likely participants)

The information from each church was extracted from the application and transferred to a one-page document for each participating church that would serve as a helpful "at-a-glance" reference for each church. One hundred percent of the participating churches submitted applications.

### **Kingdom Impact Reports**

At the end of each calendar year I sent an email to every team leader from each participating church to respond to a brief questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The answers to two questions were used to tabulate the relevant quantitative information.

1. In this past year how many people from your church were engaged in ministry / service outside your church? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many hours did each person serve? \_\_\_\_\_

Four open-ended questions were used to extract the qualitative information I was looking for:

1. Major externally focused accomplishments of the past year
2. A four-sentence story of one person who was touched through one of your externally focused ministries
3. Multiplying effects: if your church held any type of teaching event with other churches or leaders around externally focused ministry please write down, what, who, when and how many attended

4. A brief description of how your church's involvement in the LC has helped (or not helped) your church

Both the quantitative and qualitative questions were designed and formulated to discover the answers to the questions that I was seeking to answer in the formal thesis proposal. This data was collected, reformatted and placed into LN's Kingdom Impact Report (See sample pages in Appendix 2). For the sake of simplicity, I will use 2006 data since, in my opinion, it is most representative of the effects of involvement in the EFCLC. Qualitative data will be coded and summarized. Of the thirty-three participating churches, thirty of them (90.9 percent) submitted the required quantitative and qualitative information we asked from them.

### **Zoomerang Surveys**

Following each LC gathering, each LC participant was sent an email thanking him or her for his or her participation at the gathering, giving details of the next gathering, and asking for a response to a short on line survey administered through an online survey company called Zoomerang. The email also outlined the purpose of the survey, the approximate amount of time it would take to complete the survey, and a deadline for completing the survey. In most cases a second email was sent encouraging participants to complete the survey. Because my administrative assistant and I pressed the churches hard for end of year data, resulting in 90.9% compliance, we did not overly press compliance for this survey so the Zoomerang Survey had to be treated as a Volunteer Sample Survey where participants choose or not choose to participate.

Although nearly all post-gathering Zoomerang Surveys from each of the twelve gatherings differed somewhat in their specific content, there were ten questions that

remained consistent and were necessary to the success of this project. For obtaining quantitative data I chose to use the “directive questionnaire” approach that “leads respondents to answer in specific ways by limiting the range of responses available to them.”<sup>2</sup> The author rejected using “nondirective questionnaires” and open questions” since the latter measurement techniques are primarily used to provide the researcher with qualitative data, while the focus of this study was primarily on quantitative data. To extract the best data from the answers I chose to use a three-answer, Likert-type scale to quantify the answers since

[q]uantitative measures generally increase reliability because they are structured more formally than qualitative measures. Highly directive questionnaires and interviews, for example, follow the same format in asking questions and provide respondents with the same response categories every time they are used, which increases the likelihood that people will respond consistently.<sup>3</sup>

What I wanted to know was whether the different aspect of the gathering (1) Did not meet the participant’s expectations, (2) Met the participant’s expectation, or (3) Exceeded the participant’s expectations. Giving one of these three answers, each participant was asked to evaluate:

1. Overall experience
2. Useful contacts/networking
3. Overall pace of the gathering
4. Take home value of the gathering
5. Idea generation

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence R. Frey, Carl H. Botan, Paul G. Friedman, and Gary L. Kreps, *Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

6. Process time with your team
7. Usefulness of content / presenter
8. Strategic planning and viable work plan
9. Location of gathering

For one of the questions I used closed question (simple “yes” or “no”) format to determine whether or not “the vision or direction for external focus in [the participant’s] church changed / accelerated as a result of [the] gathering?” This question was followed by the opportunity to give a qualitative answer: “If so, how?” Since “Qualitative research is research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts...in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon,”<sup>4</sup> these answers were then coded and placed in charts. The answers to the final question, “What contributed most to your experience at this gathering?” were also coded and placed in a bar graph.

Compliance in filling out the Zoomerang survey was more difficult but the respondents were sufficient to produce reliable data on the individual gatherings. Of the 479 participants who were invited to take Zoomerang surveys (several people attended multiple events), 231 Zoomerang surveys were filled out following each of the twelve gatherings resulting in 48.2 percent compliance, comparing surveys that were completed compared to the total surveys that could be filled out. The Zoomerang proved to be a very helpful data collection and analysis tool.

## DATA TREATMENT

In analyzing the data I am seeking to discover the correlation between the LC Process and the acceleration of the deployment of church volunteers in ministry and

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<sup>4</sup> Auerbach, 3.

service to the community. Because “[a] statistical relationship between two variables is referred to as a correlation”<sup>5</sup> I will analyze the 2006 numbers of people deployed in service along with the hours they served against the baseline data of 2003. Using data from the U.S. Department of Labor on the value of volunteer service, I will also calculate the increased economic value of community engagement. Additionally, I will analyze the efficacy of the LC gatherings as well, measuring the satisfaction with the process as well as the value of the LC gatherings in accelerating the church’s externally focused engagement.

In addition to the quantitative analysis of the statistical data I will employ grounded theory for coding and interpreting the qualitative information. The author considers the quantitative information sufficient for answering the research question but also wants to note valuable information that came to light from the qualitative findings. Through discovering repeating ideas and repeating themes that lead to theoretical constructs and a theoretical narrative I hope to make sense of the qualitative data as the data pertains to the efficacy of the LC process.

## VARIABLES

Because the LCs began convening as early as November 2003, it must be noted that there may be confounding variables that influenced outcomes. Such variables would include other conferences participants may have attended, books and literature attendees may have read, and conversation participants had with influential individuals. Although it could be argued that these participants may not have attended said conferences, read such

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 304.

literature, or had such conversations had they not been part of an LC, these variables must be acknowledged nonetheless.

It has been said that not everything that counts can be measured, and not everything that can be measured counts. I move forward with the expectation that I am measuring the things that count in accelerating the engagement of volunteers into the community so that processes and results can be replicated or can spawn future learning.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

This chapter provides a description of the research findings of the project as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of the LC process in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers in ministry and service to the community. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section contains the research findings nominally measured from the quantitative data taken from a questionnaire, sent yearly to each participating church. This questionnaire is the instrument used to measure the progress and results of EFCLCs in deploying church volunteers in ministry and service to the community.

The second section contains the research findings taken from the Zoomerang questionnaires that participants were asked to complete following each LC gathering. The Zoomerang questionnaire is the instrument employed to measure the effectiveness of the individual components of the LC gathering itself in accelerating the deployment of said volunteers.

The third section of the chapter titled “Other Findings” details other relevant discoveries including church accomplishments, impact stories, and multiplying effects from the remaining qualitative material.

## MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS IN RESULTS

### Group 1

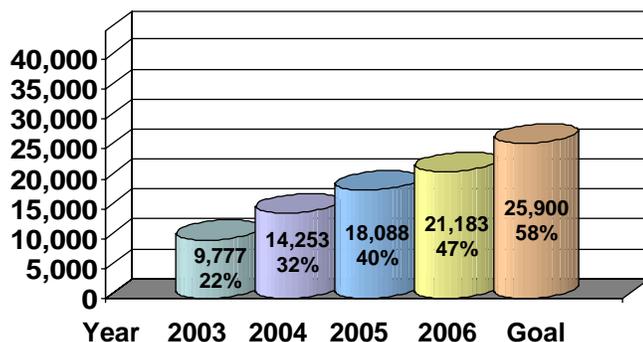
EFCLC, Group 1 consists of thirteen churches with a collective weekend attendance of 44,670; an average weekend attendance of 3,436; and a median weekend attendance: 3,100. The average age of the participating churches is 52.6 years, with the median age of the church being forty years. The first EFCLC gathering was held November 4-6, 2003, and the last gathering was held May 3-5, 2005.

Table 1. Externally Focused Church  
Leadership Community – Group 1

EFCLC GROUP 1	Baseline (2003)	2004	2004 % over baseline	2005	2005 % over baseline	2006	2006 % over baseline
TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE	9,777	14,253	46%	18,088	85%	21,183	117%
TOTAL HOURS SERVED PER YEAR	269,543	426,271	58%	714,115	165%	596,671	121%
AVERAGE HOURS PER PERSON	28	30	7%	39	39%	28	0%

The results of the EFCLC, Group 2 are summarized in Table 1, showing the cumulative totals of numbers of church volunteers serving in externally focused ministry, the number of hours those people served and the average number of hours people served in a given year.

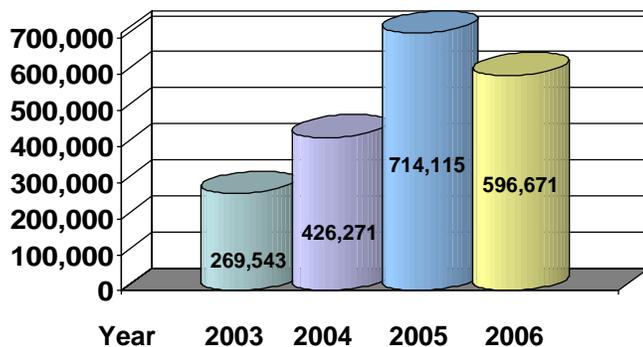
Figure 2. Number of People / Average Percent of Congregation Involved in External Ministry: Group 1



Collective Attendance = 44,670  
 Mean (Average) Attendance = 3,436  
 Median Attendance = 3,100

Figure 2 shows the collective number of people and the percentage of the average weekly attendees engaged in externally focused ministry from 2003 to 2006. Group 1 churches more than doubled the numbers of attendees between 2003 and 2006 and by 2006 had nearly doubled congregational participation in externally focused ministry.

Figure 3. Total Hours Served Per Year: Group 1



Grand Total of Hours Served = 2,006,600

Figure 3 shows the total number of hours served each year by Group 1 churches. By 2006 Group 1 churches had more than doubled the hours of volunteer service and ministry to the community.

Table 2. Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours Served 2003-2006 <sup>1</sup>: Group 1

Year	Dollar Value of Volunteer Hour	Hours Served	Dollar Value of Hours Served
2003	\$17.19	269,543	\$4,633,444
2004	\$17.55	426,271	\$7,481,056
2005	\$18.04	714,115	\$12,882,643
2006	\$18.77	596,671	\$11,199,514
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,006,600</b>	<b>\$36,196,657</b>

Table 2 represents the dollar value of volunteer hours of Group 1 engaged in community ministry. The value of volunteer time is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Independent Sector takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits.<sup>2</sup> The same value of volunteer time will also be applied to Groups 2 and 3 as well as to the cumulative totals.

## Group 2

EFCLC, Group 2 consists of nine churches with a collective weekend attendance of 9,382; an average weekend attendance of 1,042; and a median weekend attendance of

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<sup>1</sup> Value of Volunteer Time; available from [http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html); Internet; accessed April 24, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

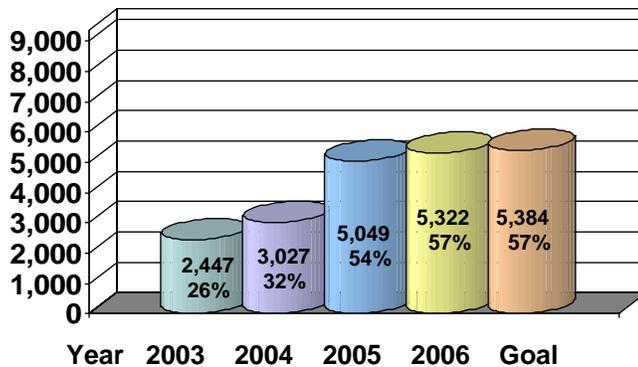
917. The average age of the participating churches is 42.2 years, with the median age of the church being 43 years. The first EFCLC gathering was held March 2-4, 2004 and the last gathering was held August 30-September 1, 2005.

Table 3. Externally Focused Churches  
Leadership Community – Group 2

EFCLC GROUP 2	Baseline (2003)	2004	2004 % over baseline	2005	2005 % over baseline	2006	2006 % over baseline
TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE	2,447	3,027	24%	5,049	106%	5,322	117%
TOTAL HOURS SERVED PER YEAR	73,151	137,572	88%	206,845	183%	209,756	187%
AVERAGE HOURS PER PERSON	30	45	52%	41	37%	39	32%

The results of the EFCLC, Group 2 are summarized in Table 3, showing the cumulative totals of numbers of church volunteers serving in externally focused ministry, the number of hours those people served and the average number of hours people served in a given year.

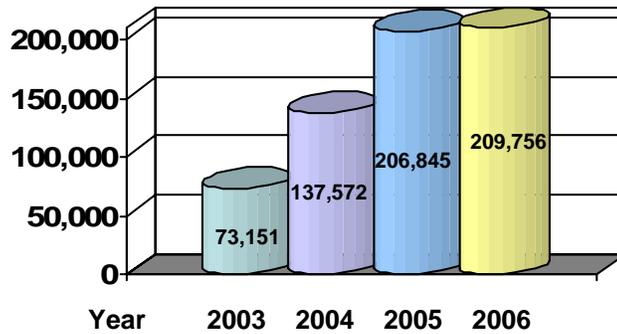
Figure 4. Number of People / Average Percent of Congregation Involved in External Ministry: Group 2



Collective Attendance = 9,382  
Mean (Average) Attendance = 1,042  
Median Attendance = 917

Figure 4 shows the collective number of people and the percentage of the average weekly attendees engaged in externally focused ministry from 2003 to 2006. Group 2 churches more than doubled the numbers of attendees between 2003 and 2006 and by 2006 more than doubled congregational participation in externally focused ministry.

Figure 5. Total Hours Served Per Year: Group 2



Grand Total of Hours Served = 627,324

Figure 5 shows the total number of hours served each year by Group 2 churches. By 2006 Group 2 churches had nearly tripled the hours of volunteer service and ministry to the community.

Table 4. Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours Served 2003-2006: Group 2

Year	Dollar Value of Volunteer Hour	Hours Served	Dollar Value of Hours Served
2003	\$17.19	73,151	\$1,257,466
2004	\$17.55	137,572	\$2,414,389
2005	\$18.04	206,845	\$3,937,120
2006	\$18.77	209,756	\$3,880,486
<b>Total</b>		<b>627,324</b>	<b>\$11,340,459</b>

Table 4 represents the dollar value of volunteer hours of Group 2 engaged in community ministry.

### **Group 3**

EFCLC, Group 3 consists of 11 churches with a collective weekend attendance of 21,277; an average weekend attendance of 1,934; and a median weekend attendance of 1,800. The average age of the participating churches is 42.2 years, with the median age of the church being 26 years. The first EFCLC gathering was held April 5-7, 2005 and the last gathering was held October 10-12, 2006.

Table 5. Externally Focused Churches  
Leadership Community – Group 3

<b>EFCLC GROUP 3</b>	<b>Baseline (2004)</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2005 % over baseline</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2006 % over baseline</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE</b>	3,336	5,553	66%	7,163	115%
<b>TOTAL HOURS SERVED PER YEAR</b>	124,172	235,302	89%	345,433	178%
<b>AVERAGE HOURS PER PERSON</b>	37	42	14%	48	30%

The results of the EFCLC, Group 3 are summarized in Table 5, showing the cumulative totals of numbers of church volunteers serving in externally focused ministry, the number of hours those people served and the average number of hours people served in a given year.

Figure 6. Number of People / Average Percent of Congregation Involved in External Ministry: Group 3

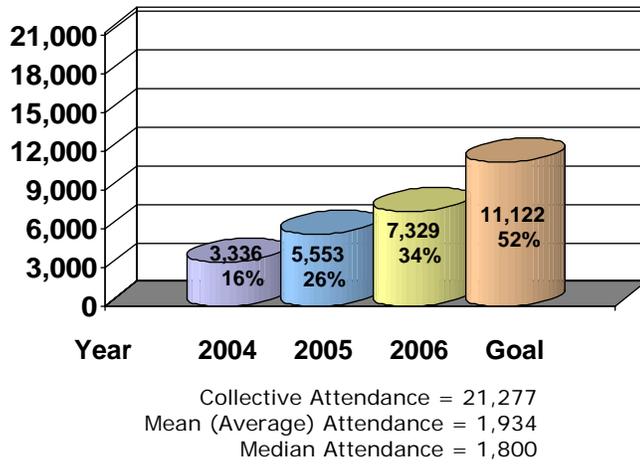


Figure 6 shows the collective number of people and the percentage of the average weekly attendees engaged in externally focused ministry from 2003 to 2006. Group 2 churches more than doubled the numbers of attendees between 2003 and 2006 and by 2006 more than doubled congregational participation in externally focused ministry.

Figure 7. Total Hours Served Per Year: Group 3

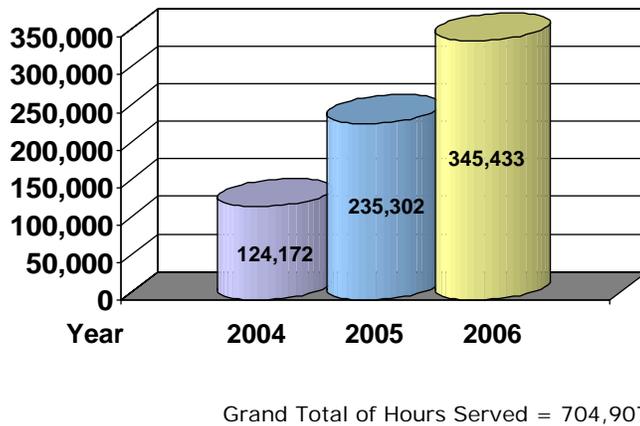


Figure 7 shows the total number of hours served each year by Group 3 churches. By 2006 Group 2 churches had increased the hours of volunteer service and ministry to the community by 278 percent.

Table 6. Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours Served 2003-2006: Group 3<sup>3</sup>

Year	Dollar Value of Volunteer Hour	Hours Served	Dollar Value of Hours Served
2003	\$17.19	124,172	\$2,134,517
2004	\$17.55	124,172	\$2,179,219
2005	\$18.04	235,302	\$4,244,848
2006	\$18.77	345,433	\$6,483,777
<b>Total</b>		<b>829,079</b>	<b>\$15,042,361</b>

Table 6 represents the dollar value of volunteer hours of Group 3 engaged in community ministry.

### Groups 1-3

EFCLC, Group 1-3, in aggregate, consists of 33 churches with a collective weekend attendance of 75,329; an average weekend attendance of 2,282; and a median weekend attendance of 1,200. The average age of the participating churches is 43.1 years, with the median age of the church being 29.5 years.

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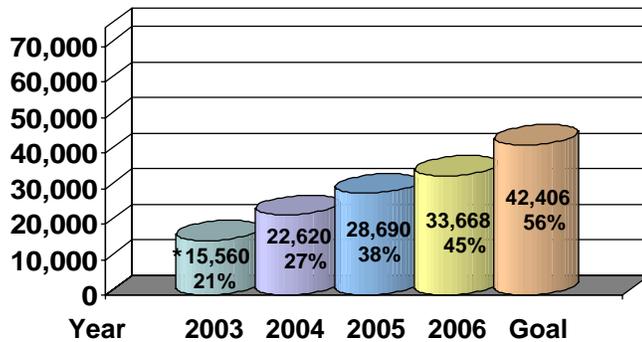
<sup>3</sup> Assumes that the 2003 data for EFCLC Group 3 is equivalent to the 2004 data.

Table 7. Externally Focused Churches  
Leadership Community – Groups 1-3<sup>4</sup>

EFCLC GROUPS 1, 2 AND 3	2003	2004	2004 % over baseline	2005	2005 % over baseline	2006	2006 % over baseline
TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE	15,560	22,620	45%	28,690	84%	33,668	116%
TOTAL HOURS SERVED PER YEAR	466,866	688,015	48%	1,156,262	148%	1,151,860	147%
AVERAGE HOURS PER PERSON	30	31	2%	40	34%	34	14%

The results of the EFCLC, Groups 1-3 are summarized in Table 7, showing the cumulative totals of numbers of church volunteers serving in externally focused ministry, the number of hours those people served and the average number of hours people served in a given year. It is interesting to note that although both the number of people who served and the total hours they served more than doubled, the average amount of hours people served did not increase significantly (14 percent).

Figure 8. Number of People / Average Percent of Congregation  
Involved in External Ministry: Group 1-3

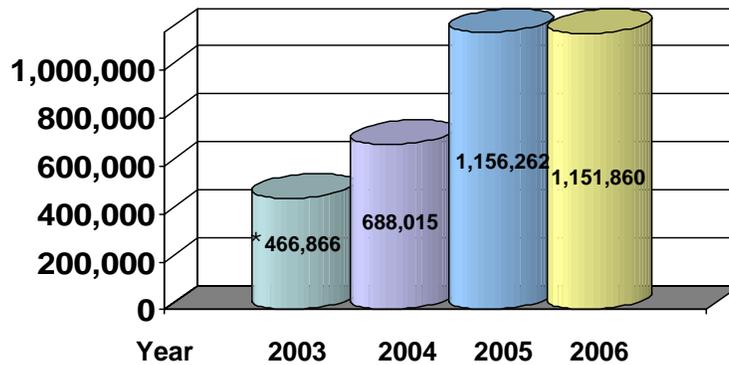


Collective Attendance = 75,329  
Mean (Average) Attendance = 2,283  
Median Attendance = 1,200

<sup>4</sup> Assumes that the 2003 data for EFCLC Group 3 is equivalent to the 2004 data.

Figure 8 shows the collective number of people and the percentage of the average weekly attendees engaged in externally focused ministry from 2003 to 2006. The three groups of churches more than doubled the numbers of volunteers between 2003 and 2006 and by 2006 more than doubled congregational participation in externally focused ministry.

Figure 9. Total Hours Served Per Year: Groups 1-3



\* Assumes that the 2003 data for EFCLC Group 3 is equivalent to the 2004 data.

Grand Total of Hours Served = 3,463,003

Figure 9 shows the total number of hours served each year by Group 1-3 churches. By 2006 Group 1-3 churches had increased the hours of volunteer service and ministry to the community by nearly two and a half times with an even higher amount in 2005.

Table 8. Dollar Value of Volunteer Hours Served 2003-2006: Groups 1-3

Year	Dollar Value of Volunteer Hour	Hours Served	Dollar Value of Hours Served
2003	\$17.19	466,866	\$8,025,427
2004	\$17.55	688,015	\$12,074,663
2005	\$18.04	1,156,262	\$20,858,966
2006	\$18.77	1,151,860	\$21,620,416
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,463,003</b>	<b>\$62,579,468</b>

Table 8 represents the dollar value of volunteer hours of Groups 1-3 engaged in community ministry.

#### EFFECTIVENESS OF RESULTS IN ACCELERATING THE DEPLOYMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

James McGregor Burns points out that “[l]eadership brings about real change that leaders *intend*...”<sup>5</sup> Effectiveness, then, can be measured by comparing actual outcomes against desired (intended) outcomes as expressed in the goals that EFCLC leaders set at the beginning of the EFCLC process. Collectively, the average goal for the participating churches was to have 56 percent of their average weekly attendees involved in externally focused ministry. Collectively these churches obtained a 45 percent involvement, meaning they were 79 percent effective in reaching their desired outcome. It is important at this juncture, however, to note that churches were encouraged to think big in the setting of “stretch goals” for their desired outcomes.

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<sup>5</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 415.

Effectiveness can also be evaluated by comparing actual outcomes against baseline data. Looking at the results of the data one can conclude that participating EFCLC churches more than doubled the number of church volunteers deployed in ministry and service to the community (from 15, 560 volunteers in 2003 to 33,668 volunteers in 2006). Additionally they more than doubled the number of hours each church gave in service to the community (from 466,866 in 2003 to 1,151,860 hours in 2006). The financial impact of their volunteer hours grew from \$8,025,427 in 2003 to \$21,309,410 in 2006. Cumulatively, over the three year period, these thirty-three churches gave more than sixty-two million dollars in volunteer ministry and service to the community.

## MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

### **EFCLC Gatherings**

Each of the three EFCLC groups met four times over an eighteen month period. Each gathering began roughly at noon on a Tuesday and ended roughly at noon on Thursday. Each gathering is designed by the LC Director and the facilitator who will lead the gathering. The content of the forty-eight hour gathering follows a progressing pattern of three realities: “What is, What could be, and What will be.” To explore and develop each of these three scenarios, the facilitator guides participants through a series of creative exercises designed to accelerate the innovative process.

Participants began each gathering with lunch followed by a welcome and orientation. Each church then presented a brief (three to five minutes) report on “what is working, their greatest success, what is stuck, and their biggest surprise.” This exercise

establishes “what is,” and is designed to bring other participants up to date on progress each church is making.

To create “what could be” scenarios, the facilitator guides participants, usually in cross-functional teams, through a series of creative readings, videos, model creation, etc. to help participants think of ministry solutions in ways they’ve never before considered. It is during this time when breakthrough ideas usually surface.

The remainder of the gathering (usually beginning after lunch on the second day) is spent with church teams working on “what will be” through strategic planning or work on their six-month “Action Learning Plan.” Each session ends with a brief report-out by each church declaring what progress they want to make in the coming six months.

To facilitate relational connections with other churches, participants worked in cross functional teams, shared six meals together and frequently connected with each other via email, phone, or site visits between each gathering.

### **Zoomerang Survey**

Following each gathering a Zoomerang survey was sent to each participant asking for feedback on the gathering. The survey was designed to measure the effectiveness of the individual components of the LC gathering. The survey was completed by 231 people with a fairly equal representation from each LC Group (Group 1—seventy-seven; Group 2—seventy-five; Group 3—seventy-nine).

This project includes the twelve most salient questions and responses of the survey.<sup>6</sup> Questions that related to “quality of meals,” “current opportunities and

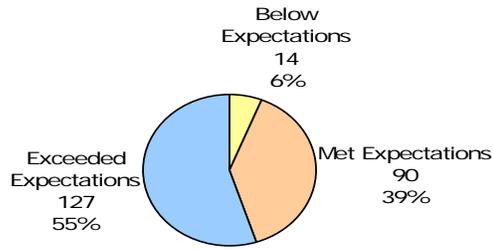
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<sup>6</sup> For the sake of clarity and to avoid confusion with question numbers, I have truncated the Zoomerang Survey and changed the question numbers to show twelve questions (with Question 10 having parts “a” and “b”).

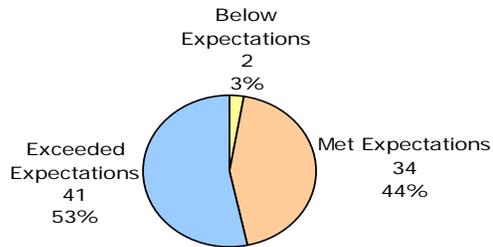
challenges,” etc. are not included because the findings are not immediately germane to the scope of this project. For the first nine questions participants were asked to select their answers from three possibilities: (1) “Did not meet expectations,” (2) “Met expectations,” and (3) “Exceeded expectations.” The areas of evaluation along with the answers are found in Figures 10-18. The answer to Question 10 contained two parts (10a and 10b). Question 10a asked for a forced choice (“yes” or “no”) answer. The qualitative answers for Question 10b, which asked participants to identify how their vision or direction was accelerated as a result of the gathering, were coded in agreement with methodologies associated with grounded theory and displayed in a pie chart (Figure 20). The qualitative answers to Question 11, “What contributed most to your experience at this gathering?” were also coded according to the same methodology and placed in a bar graph (Table 10). The answers to Question 12 were taken from the 2006 yearly questionnaire mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter. I felt it was important to include these findings in this section because the answers pertain to quality and outcomes of the LC experience. As with earlier qualitative data, relevant text was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and assigned a theoretical construct after initial ideas and themes were identified.

Figure 10. Q.1 Rating “Overall Experience” of Leadership Community Gatherings

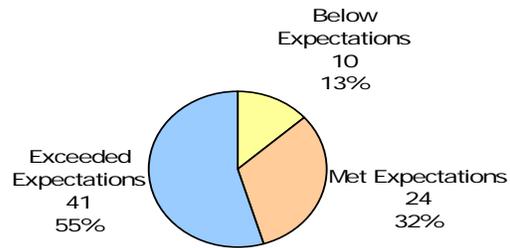
**Groups 1-3**



**Group 1**



**Group 2**



**Group 3**

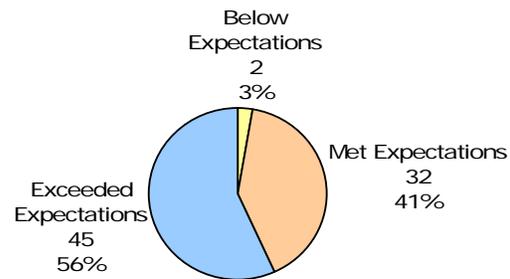


Figure 11. Q.2 Rating “Useful Contacts / Networking” at Leadership Community Gatherings

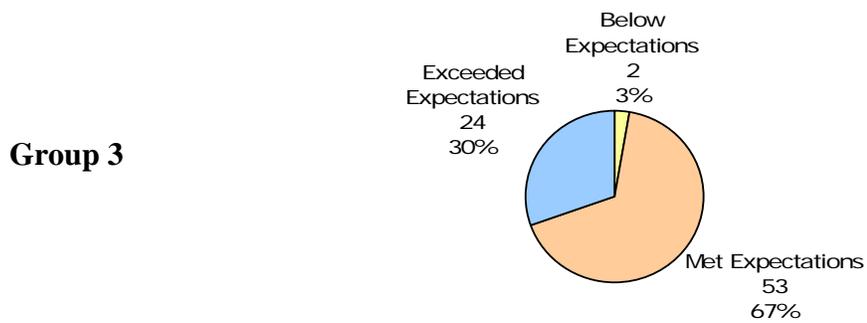
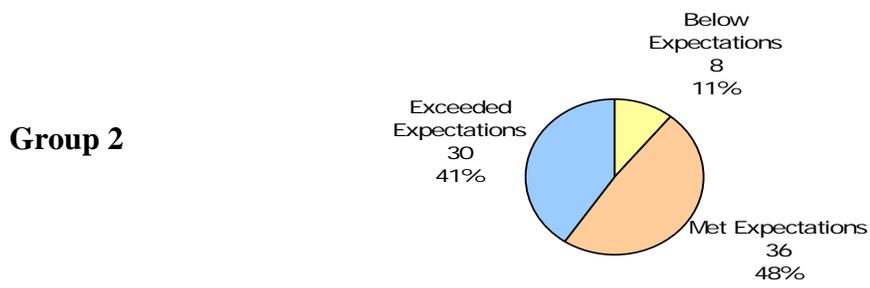
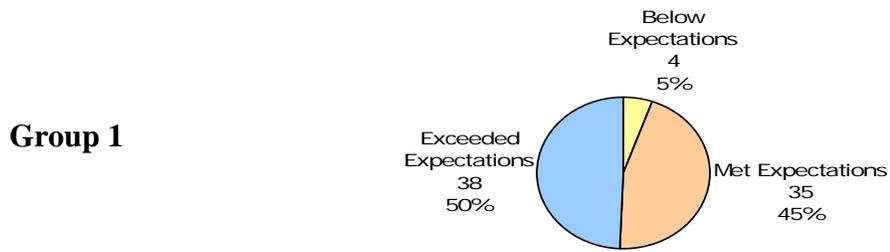
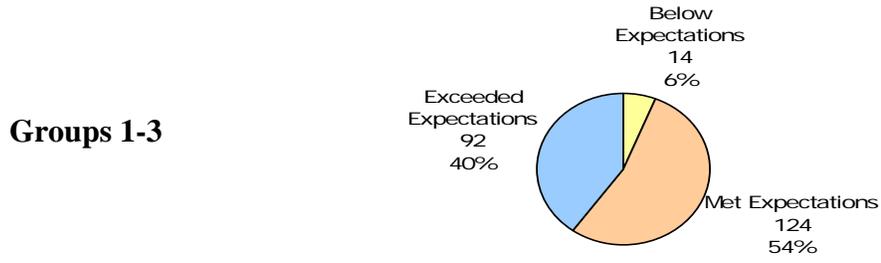
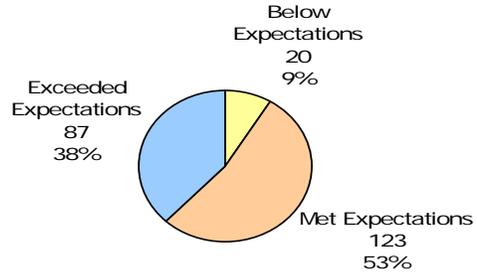
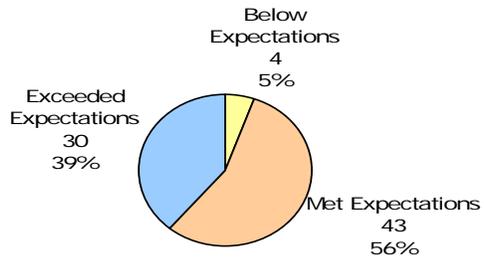


Figure 12. Q.3 Rating “Overall Pace” of Leadership Community Gatherings

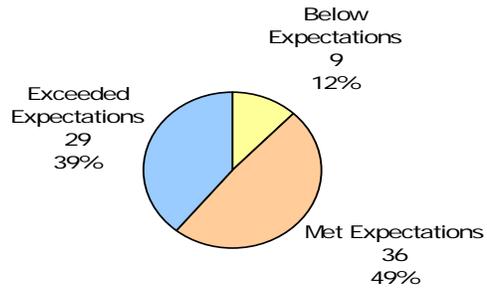
**Groups 1-3**



**Group 1**



**Group 2**



**Group 3**

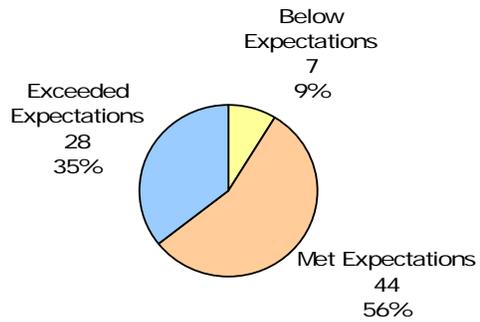


Figure 13. Q.4 Rating the “Take Home Value” at Leadership Community Gathering”

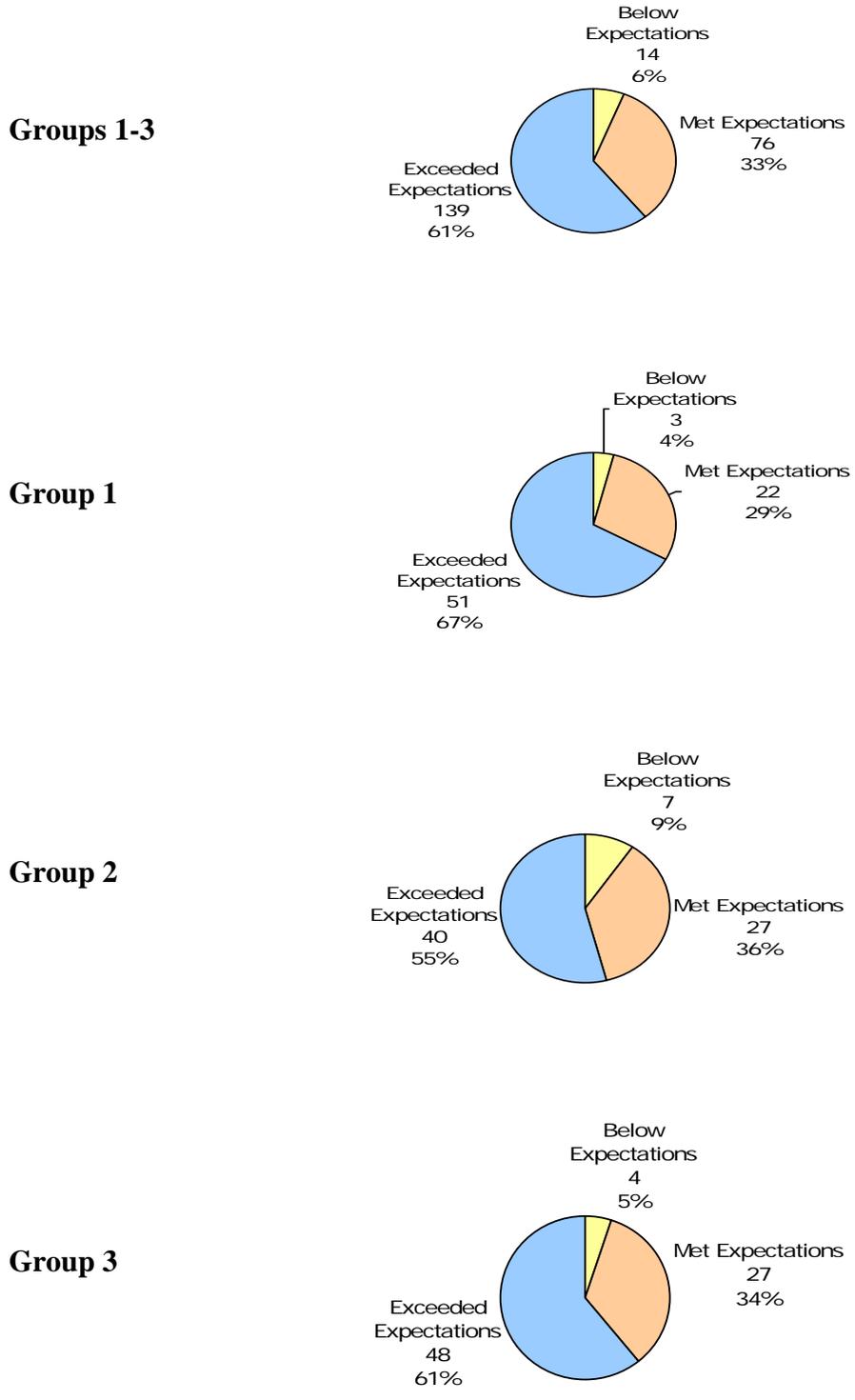


Figure 14. Q.5 Rating the “Idea Generation” at Leadership Community Gathering

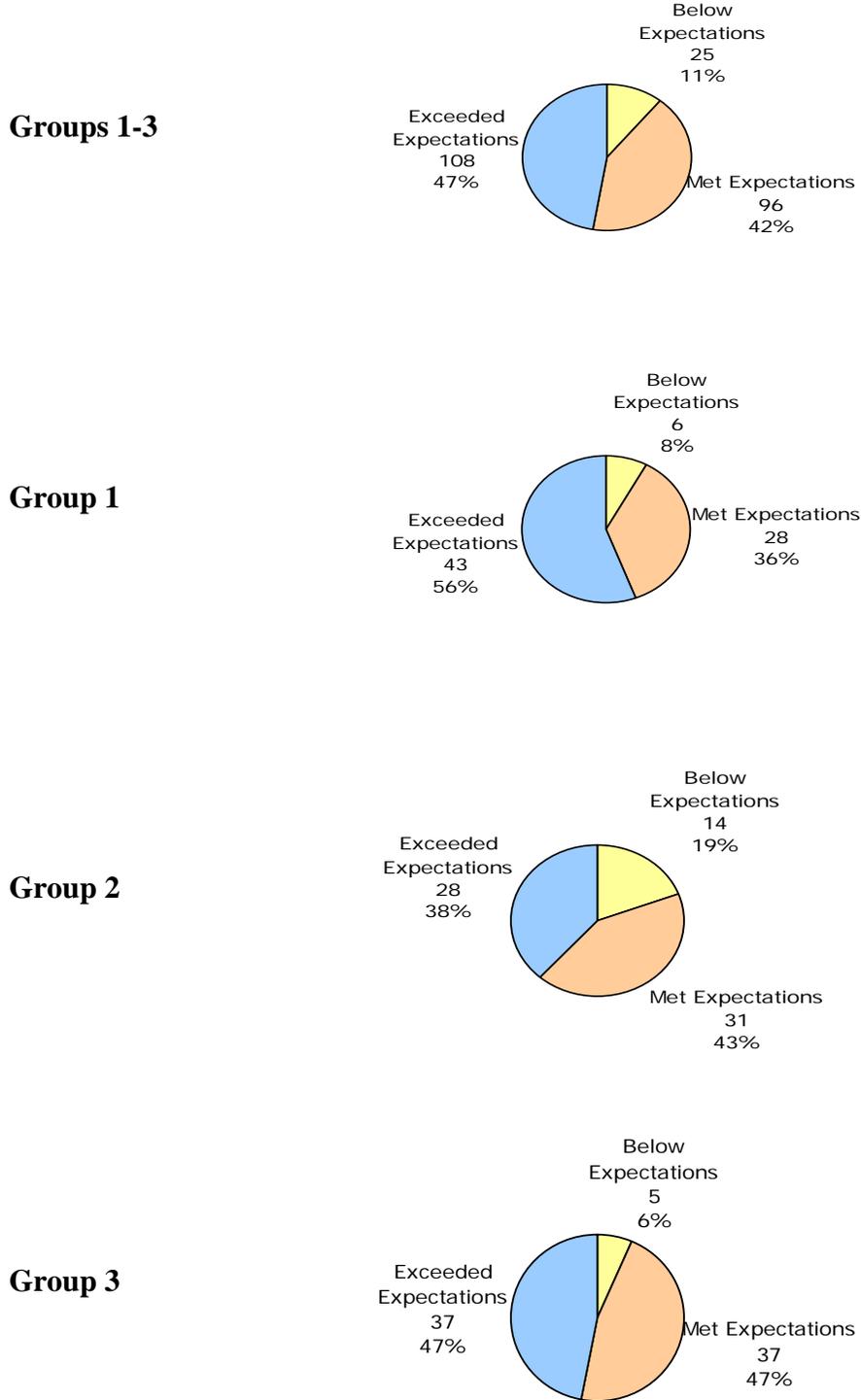


Figure 15. Q.6 Rating “Process Time with Your Team” at Leadership Community Gathering

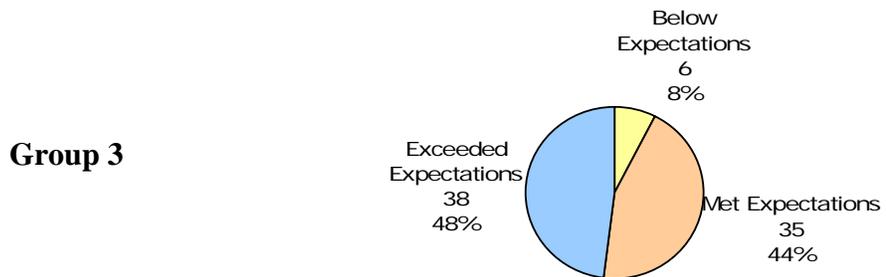
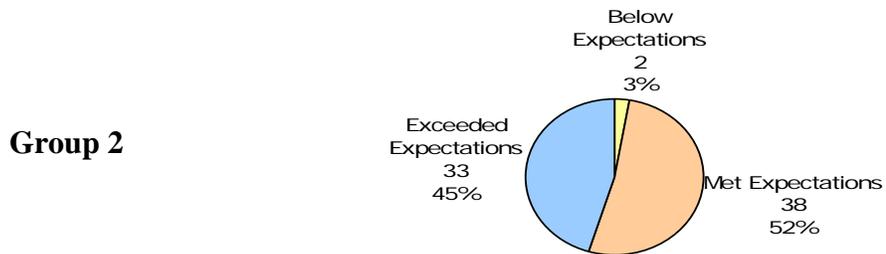
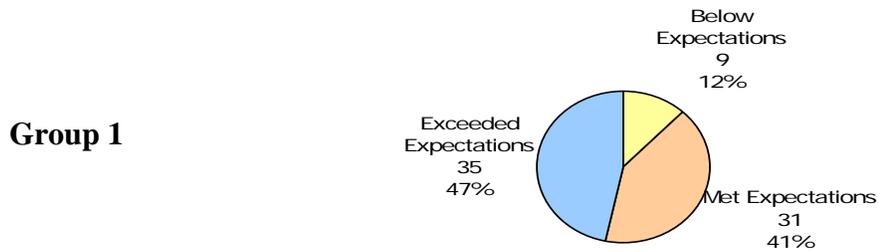
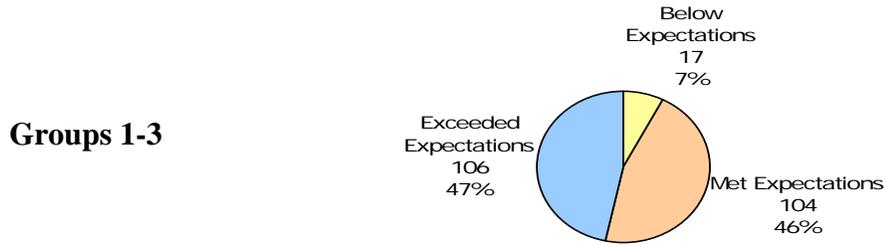


Figure 16. Q.7 Rating “Usefulness of Content / Presenter” at Leadership Community Gathering

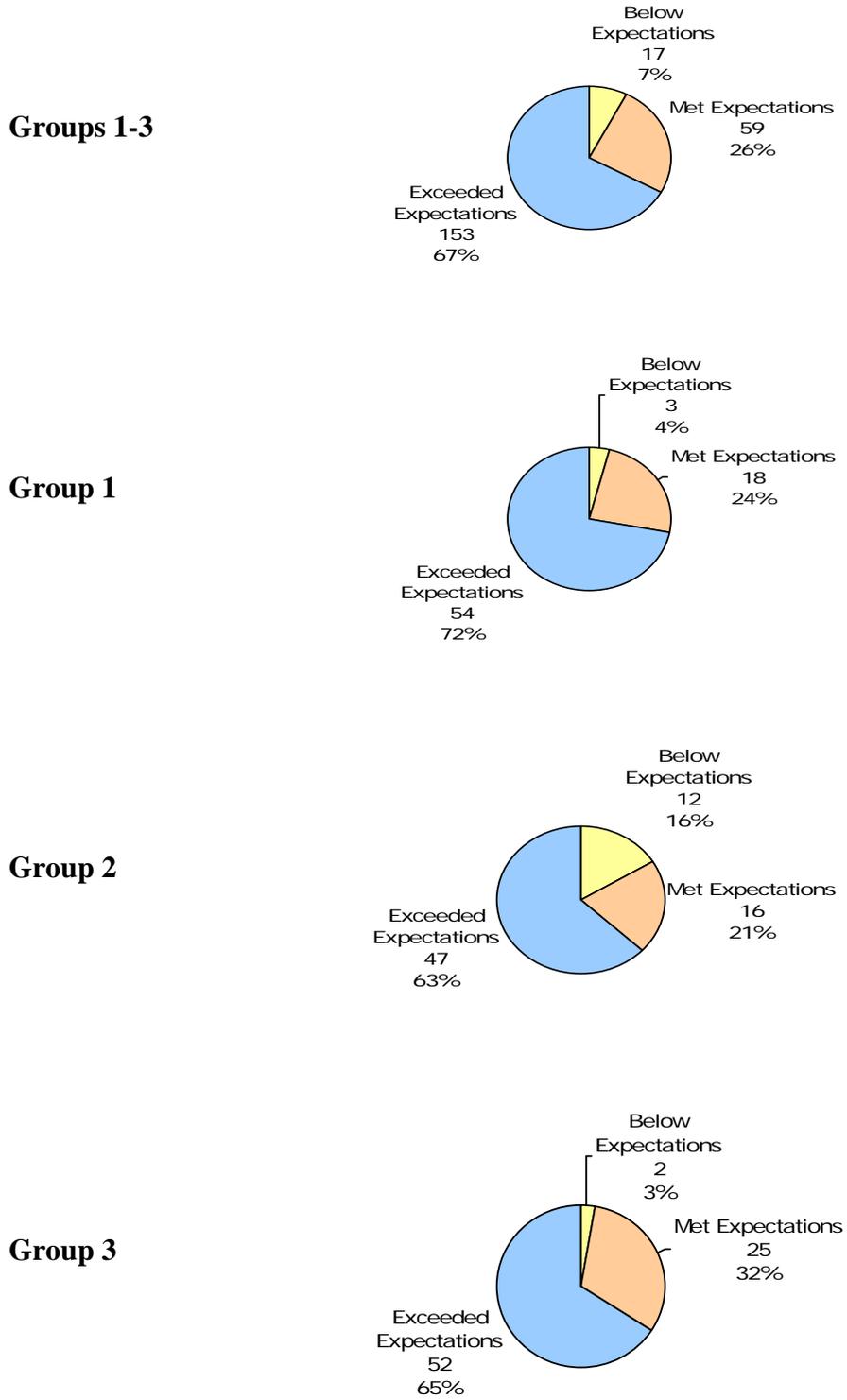
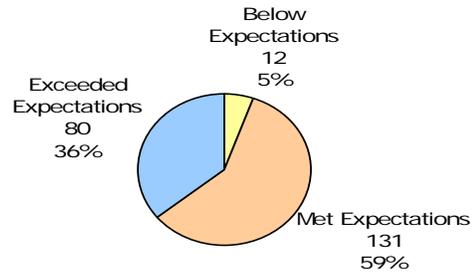
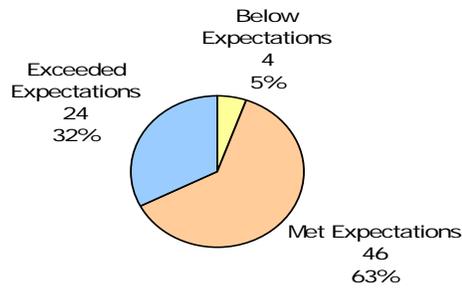


Figure 17. Q.8 Rating “Strategic Planning and Viable Work Plan” at Leadership Community Gathering

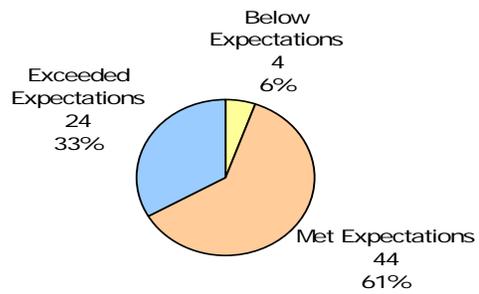
**Groups 1-3**



**Group 1**



**Group 2**



**Group 3**

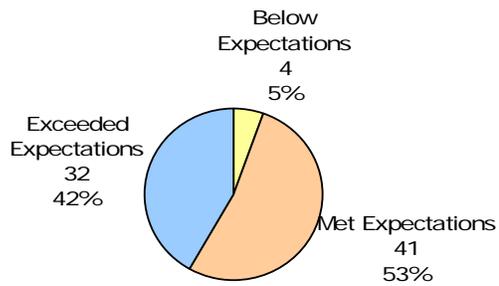
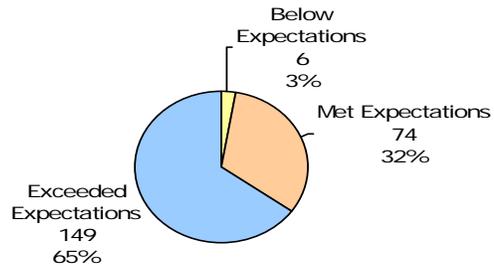
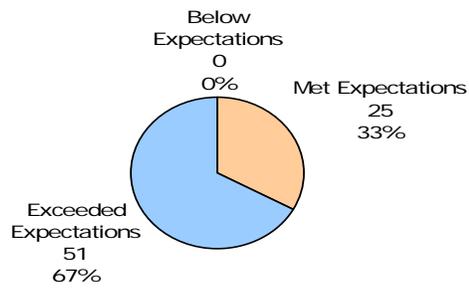


Figure 18. Q.9 Rating the “Location of Gathering”  
at Leadership Community Gathering

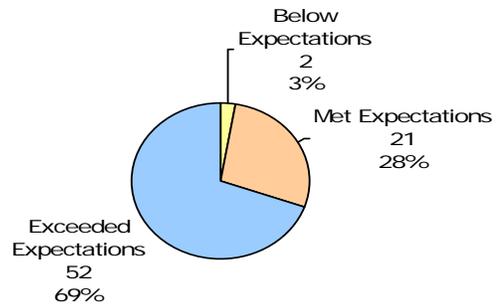
**Groups 1-3**



**Group 1**



**Group 2**



**Group 3**

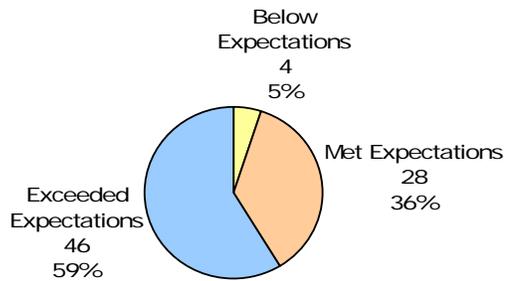
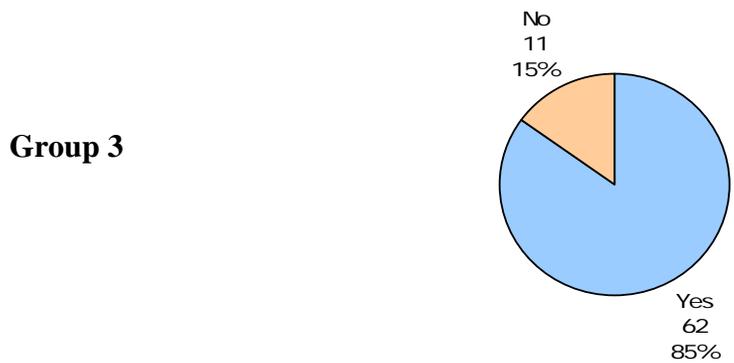
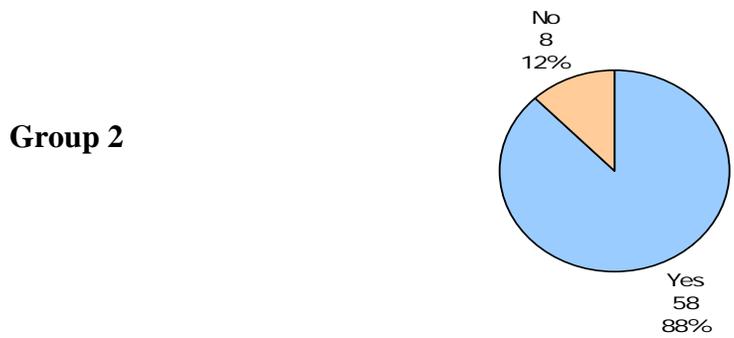
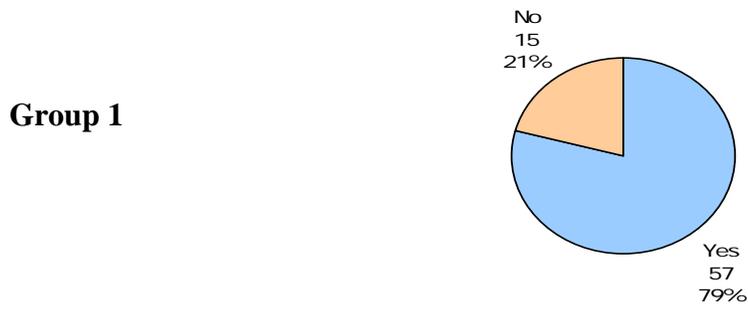
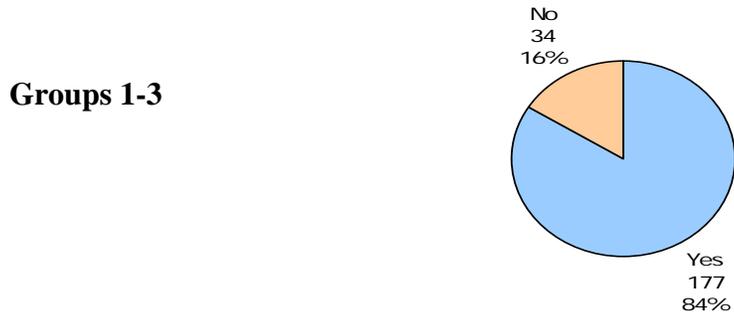


Figure 19. Q.10a “Was the vision or direction for external focus in your church changed / accelerated as a result of this gathering? Yes / No”



## Summary of Quantitative Information

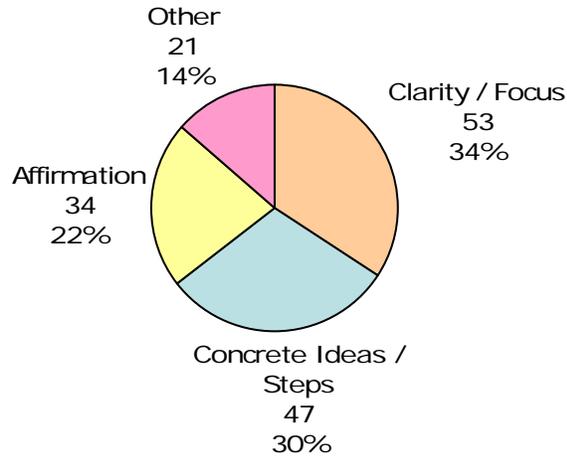
A summary of the combined data, using two different display formats, for the various components of EFCLC groups 1-3 gatherings are summed up below:

Table 9. Percentage of responding participants who answered, “Met Expectations or Exceeded Expectations”

<b>Group 1</b>		
<b>Overall experience</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below Expectations	2	3%
Met Expectations	34	44%
Exceeded Expectations	41	53%
<b>number of respondents</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Group 2</b>		
Below Expectations	10	13%
Met Expectations	24	32%
Exceeded Expectations	41	55%
<b>number of respondents</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Group 3</b>		
Below Expectations	2	3%
Met Expectations	32	41%
Exceeded Expectations	45	57%
<b>number of respondents</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Groups 1-3</b>		
Below Expectations	14	6%
Met Expectations	90	39%
Exceeded Expectations	127	55%
<b>number of respondents</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>100%</b>

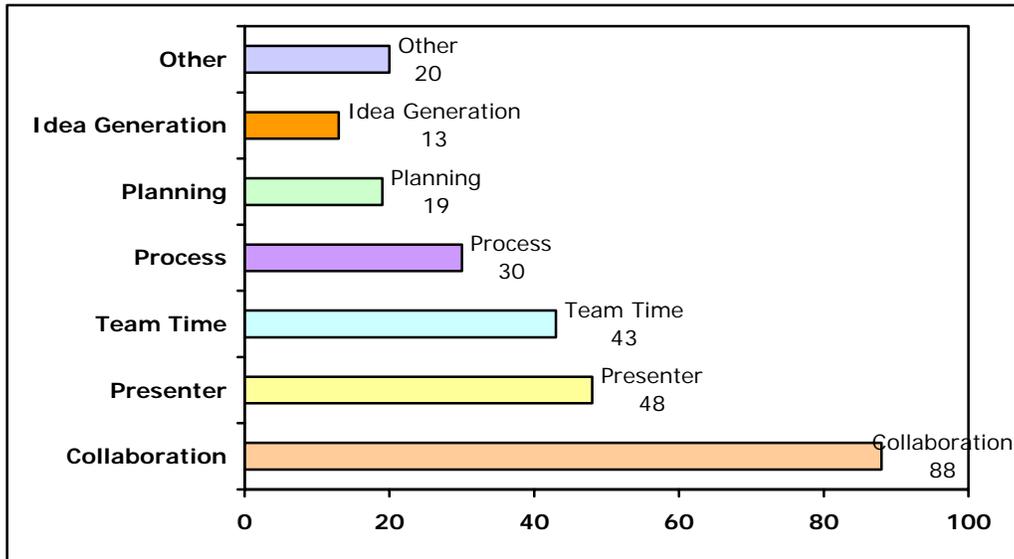
Ninety-four percent of the participants indicated the LC gathering experience met or exceeded their expectations with 55 percent indicating that the overall LC gathering experience exceeded the expectation. This data is encouraging since most participants enter each gathering with very high expectations.

Figure 20. Q.10b “Was the vision or direction for external focus in your church changed / accelerated as a result of this gathering? If so, how?”



Thirty-four percent of the churches who provided an answer to Question 10b indicated that their church’s vision had changed or accelerated through coming away with a clearer vision or sharper, narrower focus regarding what they were to do. Nearly a third of the churches (30 percent) indicated that it was the concrete ideas or program that added most to accelerating their vision or direction. Twenty-two percent of the responding churches submitted answers to indicate that the gatherings affirmed the direction and approach they were committed to.

Table 10. Q.11 What contributed most to your experience at this gathering?



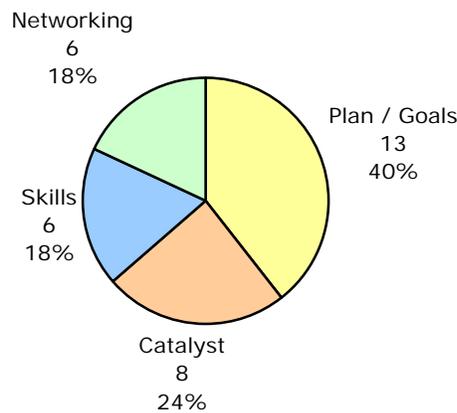
Collaboration was the most cited as the factor that contributed most to the participant’s experience at the LC gatherings. They were anxious to mix with and learn from other like-minded participants during these interactive sessions. The content presenter (speaker) was cited as the next highest contributor to the LC gathering experience. Most speakers were limited to two hours of content delivery over the forty-eight hour gathering, but also usually served as “consultant in residence.” Participants were able to glean heavily from these diverse thought-leaders. Time with one’s own church teams came next in order. Many leaders said things like, “Even though we have offices down the hall from each other, we’ve never had concentrated time like this to dream and plan.” The creative process was cited next followed by idea generation.

**Effectiveness of LC Gatherings in Accelerating the Deployment of Volunteers**

Looking at the results of the data one can conclude that leaders from participating EFCLC churches valued and benefited from the EFCLC gathering experience. Eighty-

five percent of participants indicated that the EFCLC gatherings accelerated their externally focused vision or direction and 94 percent said the gatherings met or exceeded their expectations.

Figure 21. Q12 How has involvement in the Leadership Community has helped your church?



All of the answers to this question, after coding, fell into four themes. Capturing the highest number of responses was LCs serving as a “catalyst to the vision and engagement of the church in externally focused ministry.” A typical answer that fell into this category comes from Cornwall Church in Bellingham, Washington:

The LC was the catalyst in where our organization now lies. The outreach ministries that once were under Cornwall Church have now evolved into Rebound of Whatcom County. Rebound is a nonprofit faith-based social service agency that caters to the at-risk community. We actually were initially modeling ourselves after Andy Bales and the Lake Avenue Community Foundation whom we met at the leadership community gatherings.

The second most cited answer pertained to the value of “goal setting and planning.” From Rolling Hills Community Church in Tualatin, Oregon, comes this story:

We have a new awareness of our mission in the community, and the impact we can have with our good deeds. We have developed and are implementing a community service strategic plan with measurable objectives. This plan includes equipping our

people to look for opportunities to communicate the Good News as they serve, and to date we have over 600 recorded spiritual conversations that have taken place in our community.

Both “networking with other churches” and “practical skills” garnered eighteen percent of the responses. On the value of networking, Mariners Church in Irvine, California, responded, “The greatest value would be in allowing us to hear and see so many approaches to reaching our community. It produced more creative approaches for us.”

On the value of obtaining practical skills West Conroe Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, replied:

Leadership Network created an opportunity for our church to clarify its passion for reaching our community for Christ. The process brings structure into our much unstructured environment. We know “what” to do; Leadership Network has provided the answers to “how.”

## OTHER FINDINGS

Though not directly germane to the research question I do want to make note of a few of the highlights, which may not typical of all participating churches, are exemplary of what externally focused churches can do.

### **Church Accomplishments**

In 2006 Mariners Church in Irvine, California, and participant in EFCLC Group 1 listed their externally focused accomplishments:

1. Katrina is an ongoing and in-depth response for us. We have collected more than \$556,000.00 for Katrina relief and our teams have made 25-30 trips to date. We are partnering through a local church there. Our teams have become very committed and close.
2. A partnership has been created with several area churches called CDR-3 to be better prepared to respond to the next disaster.
3. We launched ministries focused on foster care and adoption.

4. We started a military ministry and sent 270 Christmas packages were shipped to Marines in Iraq.
5. In Mexico, we funded the building of 16 homes and one church. This building project was a totally “hands on” event.

Similarly Perimeter Church in Duluth, Georgia, (EFCLC, Group 1) wrote:

1. We are partnering with 51 organizations / ministries / public schools.
2. We have started / helped start the following ministries: Good Samaritan Health Center of Gwinnett, Home Repairs Ministry, Movers & Shakers.
3. We estimate that Perimeter volunteers have touched and blessed approximately 5,000 persons / families in the community this year.
4. Over the past 2 years, Perimeter has hosted the Children's Restoration Network Annual Easter Gala. This past March, we estimate 1,500 children in attendance.
5. On Saturday, Dec. 9, 2006 Perimeter hosted Bethany Christian Service's Annual Christmas Party for foster and adopted children throughout the state of Georgia. There were 250 children in attendance. Total attendance was 500 including 40 volunteers from Perimeter.
6. Annually, Perimeter has church-wide drives for diapers, food, school supplies and blood. In 2006, Perimeter contributed: 500 bags of groceries, 225 pints of blood, 122 packages of diapers, and 85 filled school back packs.
7. There are nearly 50 lay leaders serving in Community Outreach mobilizing approximately 800 people in an ongoing basis, and 3,600 people annually.
8. 2,300 Perimeter volunteers in 2006 (up from 900 in 2003, 1,500 in 2004, and 1,900 in 2005).
9. We led 120 Perimeter service projects.

### **Impact Stories**

Because nothing has really changed until people are transformed, each church was asked to submit stories of individuals outside the church who were impacted by the participating church’s externally focused ministry. Again, though not germane to the research question, there is no doubt that lives have been impacted by externally focused ministry. Calvary Bible Church, Boulder, Colorado, (EFCLC, Group 2) submitted the following story:

Fifteen months ago, Cliff stepped off a bus from Fresno and landed in Boulder. Some nights sleeping in the homeless shelter, and others sleeping in a local park, Cliff became a loyal attendee at Calvary Bible Church. After three weeks of attendance, he learned that Calvary would take a team of eight to do relief work through PRC Compassion in New Orleans. Cliff became the ninth. He continues to serve inside

Calvary as a greeter, and outside Calvary in a men's ministry team to single moms and their kids. Using his construction skills, he enjoys "extending the long arm of the Lord," to God's children in need. Cliff now lives comfortably in a local hostel and continues to be a voice of gratitude and faithfulness to church and Boulder community members alike.

Cornwall Church in Bellingham, Washington, submitted this story of life change:

Amanda is the mother of two young boys and is pregnant by rape with her third. The rape was committed by the father of the two boys. Amanda went into hiding, changed her name, her boys' names and lived on the streets. She decided to start attending our CHAT group. CHAT (Creating Healthy Attitudes Together) is our support group for pregnant and parenting teens & young single moms. She was a proclaimed atheist but wanted to discover some sort of spirituality (Buddhism). She continued to attend CHAT for over a year before she decided that she needed to attend church. She has since given her life to the Lord and is quoted as saying, "without the support of CHAT and the girls in the group, I would be dead."

### **Multiplying Effects**

Leadership Network also encourages churches to diffuse what they have learned to other churches and the greater body of Christ. Each church was asked to submit a few lines on how they were multiplying their externally focused influence. Some churches began working with other churches in their communities, some church leaders spoke at conferences and workshops, other churches hosted externally focused events at their facilities. In May 2007 LifeBridge Christian Church in Longmont, Colorado, (EFCLC, Group 1) hosted the first annual Externally Focused Church Conference with nearly 600 participants from over 25 states in attendance. In 2006 Grace Brethren Church, Long Beach, California, (EFCLC, Group 1) helped begin an LC for Southern California churches that became Leadership Network's EFCLC, Group 5. Likewise Perimeter Church in Duluth, Georgia, (EFCLC, Group 1) began an LC for externally focused churches for the greater Atlanta community beginning May 2007.

## **Conclusion**

The data analysis has been very encouraging. The thirty-three churches involved in the three EFCLCs have all made great progress in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers in ministry and service to the community. Furthermore they indicate that the EFCLC gatherings have been very helpful in helping them move forward. A further analysis, summary, implications and applications will follow in chapter seven.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The structure for this final chapter will be in four parts. The first part will contain an evaluation of the EFCLC project and process along with a summary of the principles learned through the project. The second part will focus on other applications to other ministry situations inside and outside of LN. The third part contains recommendations for churches that emerged from the research. It is these recommendations that will help shape the way churches think about and structure externally focused ministry. The fourth part contains future research questions. Finally the fifth and last part will contain final conclusions.

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

#### **Project Outcomes**

In answering the research question, “How effective is Leadership Network’s Leadership Community process in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers?” the research is quite conclusive. Measured in terms of ministry outcomes, the LC process is very effective in accelerating the deployment of church volunteers in service and ministry in the community. If indeed, “Leadership brings about real change that leaders *intend*”<sup>1</sup> then transformational leadership theory has been validated in this study. As noted in chapter six, cumulatively the thirty-three churches increased the involvement of

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<sup>1</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 415.

volunteers from 21 percent of their average weekly attendees in 2003 to 45 percent of their average weekly attendees in 2006. Furthermore, they increased their hours of service from 466,866 hours in 2003 to 1,151,861 hours of service in 2006. The hours served in 2006 alone are the equivalent of 576 people working 40 hours a week for 50 weeks! The financial impact is equally impressive. The economic value of volunteer service increased from \$8,025,427 in 2003 to \$21,620,412 in 2006. The cumulative economic value of volunteers from these 33 churches serving in the community from 2003 to 2006 is a staggering \$62,579,468. Personally, I am very proud of the way the church leaders led so effectively in mobilizing believers. They mirror James McGregor Burn's view of effective leaders:

For creativity to become leadership, however, conceptual transformation is not enough. As scientists must go beyond 'revolutions on paper' and put their ideas to the test in a struggle to win acceptance by their peers, all the more so must creative leadership. Leadership is a social phenomenon, and leaders are 'intimately tied to other people and the effects of their actions on them.' According to Wolin, the groundbreaking political theorists were motivated by 'the ideal of an order subject to human control and one that could be transfigured through a combination of thought and action.' They intended 'not simply to alter the way men look at the world, but to alter the world.'<sup>2</sup>

These leaders, have indeed, altered the world—if only the world around them.

### **Project Process**

Measuring the effectiveness of the EFCLC gatherings as a means in accelerating the process is also quite conclusive. The research and feedback indicates that clients loved the process. Collectively 94 percent of participants communicated the LC gatherings "met" or "exceeded expectations" with 55 percent indicating that the "Overall LC Gathering Experience" (Figure 10) exceeded their expectation. A meaningful 94

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<sup>2</sup> Burns, *Transforming Leadership*, 168

percent of participants indicated the “Take-home Value” (Figure 13) of the gatherings met or exceeded their expectations. I view these statistics a good indicator of the value of the time invested at such gatherings.

Ninety-four percent of participants indicated that the “Usefulness of Contacts / Networking” (Figure 11) either met or exceeded expectations. Because LCs are built on the premise of mutual and peer learning, this indicator is particularly important. Participants found other like-minded leaders with whom they could have further contact. It was not unusual for church leaders to visit, email, or phone one another during the six month period between the gatherings. Leaders resourced leaders.

Eighty-nine percent of participants indicated that “Idea Generation” (Figure 14) at the gathering met or exceeded expectations with 47 percent indicating that their ideas generated exceeded their expectation. Ideally this is what LCs are about—the infusion of new ideas and approaches to externally focused ministry. Many creative approaches and tactics were discovered or iterated during the gatherings and then implemented upon returning to their respective churches.

Overall, participants were very satisfied with the “Process Time” (Figure 15) they had with their own church teams with 93 percent citing that this time met or exceeded their expectations. Team members would often make comments like, “We never get this much time together as a team even though we have offices next to each other. This is great.” Of the actual sixteen hours of meeting time (1 pm to 6 pm on Tuesday, 9 am to 6 pm on Wednesday and 9 am to noon on Thursday), teams usually spent five to six hours working together as a church team. This time frame appears to be the right amount of time. Although the gatherings were fast-paced with no formal breaks, 91 percent of the

participants said the “Overall Pace” (Figure 12) of the gatherings met or exceeded their expectations.

“Usefulness of Content / Presenter” (Figure 16) was met with a 93 percent satisfaction rate with 67 percent of participants indicating that the content / presenter exceeded their expectations. This result was quite satisfying since a large percentage of participants are not only great practitioners but thought-leaders as well. I recommend continuing to bring world-class presenters into the LCs as each one contributes to the overall quality of discussion and idea generation.

One surprise discovery was the number of participants who really enjoyed the “Strategic Planning and Viable Work Plan” (Figure 16) process. Ninety-five percent of participants found the process to have met or exceeded expectations. Strategic planning accompanied by six-month “Action-Learning” plans, where specific ministry goals were set, were part of each gathering . James McGregor Burns notes that to be effective, transformational leaders must make plans but notes that “[g]reat plans must be loose at the joints, in fact a process of planning and replanning.”<sup>3</sup> His ideas seem to fit the planning modes employed during the EFCLC gatherings. Plans are modified and remodified at each gathering in order to take advantage of new opportunities and new breakthrough ideas. The value of planning and goal setting was also confirmed when the question was asked, “How has involvement in the LC helped your church?” (Figure 20) A full 40 percent specified planning and goal setting as their greatest benefit their church received.

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<sup>3</sup> Burns, *Transformational Leadership*, 221.

Eighty-four percent of participants indicated that “the vision or direction for external focus in (their) church changed / accelerated as the result of (the) gathering(s)” (Figure 18). This finding alone could serve as the single validation for the effectiveness of Leadership. Bernard Bass writes: “[T]ransformational leaders articulate a sense of vision and purpose to followers. They align the followers around the vision and empower followers to take responsibility for achieving portions of the vision.”<sup>4</sup> Without vision there is no transformational leadership. Without increased vision that appeals to a broader group of constituents there is no increased engagement in externally focused ministry. Vision is the match that sparks the tinder.

#### PRINCIPLES LEARNED

1. The LC process is an effective process for accelerating congregational involvement in externally focused ministry. Every participating church made significant progress towards their desired outcome of engaging an ever-increasing number of their congregants in externally focused ministry. I can’t help but ponder, “If thirty-three churches can produce sixty-two million dollars worth of social good in a three year period, what could 350,000 churches in North America produce?”
2. Leaders enjoy and benefit from goal setting, planning, and accountability. The highest rated component of the LC gatherings (next to “location”) was the “Strategic Planning and Viable Work Plan[s]” that were products of each gathering. Ninety-five percent of participants indicated this aspect met or exceeded their expectations. James McGregor Burns suggests that goals and

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<sup>4</sup> Bass, 64.

transformational leaders always go together. “All leadership is goal-oriented. The failure to set goals is a sign of faltering leadership. Successful leadership points in a direction; it is also the vehicle of continuing and achieving purpose.”<sup>5</sup>

3. Good friends help turn good intentions into good deeds. Volunteers in churches engage in externally focused ministry because their churches gave them increased opportunities for externally focused involvement they could do with others from their church. Each EFCLC gathering ended with plans and goals that involved new tactical approaches for engaging an increasing number of their people in community ministry. In 2002 Dr. Ram Cnaan, professor and Chair of the Doctoral Program in Social Welfare at University of Pennsylvania, published the results of a study of 251 churches and found that

[R]eligious people do not volunteer more compared with nonreligious people, nor do they give more hours to volunteering compared with nonreligious volunteers... [R]eligious people volunteer within the context of a congregation and that this context leads to increased external (communal) volunteerism. Thus religious beliefs, in and of themselves, do not explain the link between religion and volunteerism.<sup>6</sup>

4. Communities recognize and appreciate congregational engagement in serving the community. Although recognition and appreciation are difficult to quantify, several churches received awards, letters of commendations and newspaper publicity that recognized their contribution to their communities. In December 2004, for instance, Calvary Bible Church in Boulder, Colorado, (EFCLC Group Two participant) was given the prestigious Governor’s Award, recognizing them

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<sup>5</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 455.

<sup>6</sup> Cnaan, *The Invisible Caring Hand*, 216.

as Colorado's "Volunteer Agency of the Year" in appreciation of their community engagement.

5. LC gatherings are an impetus to clarity, innovativeness and action. As previously noted from data taken from Table 19, 84 percent of participants indicated that "the vision or direction for external focus in (their) church changed / accelerated as the result of (the) gathering(s)." When asked about how their vision or direction was changed, 34 percent cited an increased clarity or focus of their vision with 30 percent citing new ideas and concrete steps they would take as a result of the gathering.
6. The collaborative process with peers is highly valued among transformational leaders. When asked what contributed most to the participants experience at each gathering (Table 10), 88 percent of participants cited "collaboration" as being the most beneficial element of the process. A collaborating environment allows for genuine peer learning and the cross-pollination of ideas. Having been part of all twelve gatherings the author was personally impressed with the high level of energy and creativity in the room. Although each gathering contained a variety of participants from senior pastors to lay volunteers, because the nametags contained no titles and participants felt, for the most part, they were with peers, the collaborative learning was exceptional. James McGregor Burns links the creative process to collaboration of diverse contributors when he writes:

What causes such eruptions of creativity? Perhaps when we try to account for cultures that engender creativity, the emphasis ought to be on the word culture—the cross-fertilization in a given place and time of individuals and their turns of mind and ambitions, of developments in education and knowledge techniques, of new ideas or the groping toward new ideas. Even more important is the interaction of creative people, and the opportunities for interaction—within and

among families, at schools and in workplaces, in political and scientific and artistic groups and professional associations, and across entire societies.<sup>7</sup>

7. There's always room for a thought-leader. Although the EFCLC gatherings are built on the premise that "the answers are in the room," outside presenters, who came with fresh ideas, values, insight and experiences were greatly appreciated. A full 48 percent of the participant cited the content presenter as the component that contributed most to their experience at the gathering.
8. There is incalculable value in meeting over an eighteen-month period if one desires to bring about a more permanent change—turning externally focused ministry from a ministry tactic to a constitutive value of the church. It is too early in the process to tell if the externally focused ministry of each church has become a constitutive element of the church, but the indicators of increased community engagement from 2003 to 2006 are hopeful and in my opinion as one who speaks at many one-off gatherings, that the results that have been obtained thus far could not have been duplicated through a conference or a single gathering, regardless of how powerful that one event might be. It is meeting, dreaming, planning, executing, and evaluating progress over time that has made the difference.
9. When the meeting design is sound and the gathering is well-led and well-facilitated, leaders can accomplish a lot of work in forty-eight hours. A corollary finding might be leaders won't put up with boring meetings after engaging in a more effective process. For the most part the Tuesday at noon to Thursday at noon gatherings were contiguous sessions, breaking only for a working lunch.

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<sup>7</sup> Burns. *Transforming Leadership*, 161.

Participants used their own judgment as to when and how frequently they left the room for a bathroom or coffee break. Even with this rigorous schedule, 91 percent of participants found the “overall pace” of the gathering met or exceeded their expectations. I recommend that a forty-eight hour session over two nights is preferable to a two day, over one night session. A half day on the first and third days seems to fit well with the energy levels and travel schedules of participants.

10. Data collection is always tough for an individual researcher or an organization.

Collecting good data took extensively more work than I imagined. This data was vital to the success of the study as well as LN’s Kingdom Impact Reports. I suggest devising a system to provide rewards for compliance for submitting timely data—perhaps a twenty-five dollar Starbucks certificate or a partial refund of tuition. Whatever the reward, it should be commensurate with the value the individual or organization places on trusted data.

#### APPLICATION TO OTHER MINISTRY SETTINGS

This project and the results of this project are applicable to both of the previously mentioned stakeholders of the project—the participating churches and LN. Each of the participating churches benefited from the project, not only from the increased engagement of volunteers into the community and increased benefit to the community but also from being exposed to a different process of achieving results and getting real work accomplished through goal setting and collaboration. Interestingly two new LCs for externally focused churches (one in Atlanta and one in Los Angeles) have formed because of a church leader’s direct involvement in EFCLC Group One. Both leaders recognize the value of the transformational power of such a process.

There are also direct applications for LN. Because the LC process is new and an innovation of LN, the evaluation of the outcomes and process is helpful and instructive in forming new LCs. Currently LN has nine ministry initiatives that employ the LC process. Other ministry initiatives include LCs for church-planting churches, multi-site churches, churches with strong recovery ministries, etc. The outcomes of this project may also be of value when inviting churches to join LCs in any future ministry initiatives. This project may also be of interest to sponsors and donors of LN who are interested in achieving increased concrete results.

This project also has application for any transformational initiatives that seek to bring about increased results through goal setting and collaborative processes. Certainly faith-based organizations, non-profits, government agencies, institutions of higher education, and businesses could benefit from this outcome-based collaborative process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHURCHES

### **Churches Can and Must make a Difference in a Community**

As noted in chapter three, God's people have historically been God's hands and feet in the world. Cities, communities, and cultures have been transformed and revitalized as churches have sought to follow Jesus into the cities and communities of the world. Churches that have been in step with Jesus have had a transforming effect on communities and culture. Sociologist Rodney Stark summarizes the urban impact of the early church in the first few centuries.

Christianity served as a revitalization movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world. . . Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities

filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachment. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fire, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services. . . For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities tolerable.<sup>8</sup>

If the church is missing from the conversation of a community, the community will languish. Catholic scholar Thomas Massaro writes on the need and responsibility for churches to engage their communities today.

It would be irresponsible to deprive society of the contribution of religiously motivated persons whose ideas and energies are the potential basis for much needed activism and social movements for great improvement. To take just a few examples from our own country, where would American society be if religious groups had not agitated for the end to slavery (in the Abolition movement), to extreme militarism (the peace movement), to racial injustice (the Civil Rights movement), and to extreme poverty (the fight against hunger, homelessness, and illiteracy)?<sup>9</sup>

The role of the church in engaging the needs and dreams of the community becomes even more critical as social services are trimmed from federal and state budgets. Dr. Ram Cnaan writes,

Because the U.S. government doesn't provide a safety net for those in extreme need, this responsibility has been delegated to local communities and, by default, also to local congregations. When someone is hungry and homeless, help is most likely to come from members of a local congregation. When children of working parents are left alone at home, the local congregation is most likely to offer an after-school latchkey program similarly, when people are discharged from alcohol rehabilitation centers, it is most likely that they will turn for support of the AA group housed in the local congregation. In other words, in America, congregations are the "hidden" safety net.<sup>10</sup>

Because the church is nearly ubiquitous and always local in its presence in a community, perhaps the church is in the best position to make a sustained and positive kingdom

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<sup>8</sup> Stark, 161.

<sup>9</sup> Massaro, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Cnaan, *The Invisible Caring Hand*, 281.

difference in the world. Could it be that the social forces that are shaping the culture today are providing new opportunities for the church to make an impact through service and ministry?

### **Create Structures for What is of Value**

Everything one truly values in church has a supporting structure to insure that this particular value is operationalized on a regular basis. For example, for churches that place a high value on the Word of God, there is always a place in the weekly service where the Bible is read. For churches that value prayer, there is always a structured time in the weekly service for prayer. The same principle holds true for the Lord's Supper, baptism, etc. The church creates structures to support these and other values because it believes these values are constitutive elements of what it means to be the church. If the church stopped doing these things we just would not be the church that God has called it to be. If one does not have a structure that operationalizes one's values, these are not values but mere sentiments. If ministry outside the walls of the church is to be a constitutive value of the church then church leaders must create structures that help put external service into practice. Addressing the importance for transformational leaders to address systems and structures, James McGregor Burns writes,

Planning for structural change, whether of the system or in the system is the ultimate moral test of decision-making leadership inspired by certain goals and values and intent on achieving real social change; it is also the leader's most potent weapon. It is a test in that planning calls for thinking and acting along a wide battlefield of complex forces, institutions, and contingencies; if the planners really 'mean it,' they must plan for the reshaping of means as required by the ends to which they are committed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 419.

In essence Burns is saying, “If one wants to change the end results (deploying people in externally focused ministry) one must change the means—the systems that operationalize “the ends we are attempting to achieve.” Here are five suggested practices every church can do to “operationalize” externally focused ministry.

1. Preach about it regularly. Build into the rhythms of preaching and teaching God’s heart for those on the margins (see chapter three) and the absolute need for service and ministry as it pertains to our spiritual formation (see chapter four essay on Ephesians 2:8-10). The message of good news and good deeds resonates not only with believers but with seekers and unbelievers as well. A strong theological base forms the foundation for implementing the remaining four strategies.
2. Make it part of the ministry plan. In every planning cycle each ministry department, from children to senior adults, should be asked to submit, as part of their plan, what they will do to get the people in their bailiwick, ministering and serving outside the walls of the church. All churches staff, budget, and plan around that which they value.
3. Infuse externally focused service into small groups. Most likely small groups are the simplest and most efficient way to regularly engage congregants in externally focused ministry. Every small group (community group, life group, etc) can be asked to have regular engagement in ministry or service outside the church or the small group. A practical means of implementation is to have each small group partner with a human service agency outside the church. Then four to six times per year, instead of meeting for three hours in someone’s home, these groups

serve in ministry together. Service and ministry become what it means to be part of a small group for these churches.

4. Engage in annual church-wide externally focused projects. Every church can provide an annual day or weekend where everyone in the church can participate in a community service project. Externally focused churches call these events “Sharefest,” “Carefest,” or “Serve Day,” etc. One church in California calls their day of service, “Beautiful Day.” Among the variety of projects churches are engaged in, they also can partner with schools to execute work projects—painting, landscaping, deep cleaning, repair work, etc, that shrinking school budgets simply cannot allow. Such projects don’t require previous screening and can include the contribution of people of all ages—from babies in backpacks to senior adults. There is something very valuable and enduring about parents and children working side by side for a day. Service puts shoe leather on our spiritual words. These one-off events often lead to greater ongoing engagement for a larger percentage of congregants. People don’t serve twice until they’ve first served once.<sup>12</sup>
5. Partner with others in the city who care about what and who your church cares about. Partnerships with local schools or human service agencies that serve those in distress help make permanent the desire of a church to engage and serve the community. People of good will make great partners with people of good faith. One does not have to start a new church-based organization to have an impact.

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<sup>12</sup> Casey Yorman, Outreach Pastor at North Coast Church, Vista California, interview by author, Vista California, 16 September 2005.

Many churches have discovered it's better to join with something God is doing through his common grace in an existing non-profit agency than trying to create and resource a new ministry of their own. Rather than creating new faith-based entities, which take up kingdom resources, why not partner with others in the city who share a common concern for things your church cares about? Churches are finding there is tremendous leverage when they discover they can partner with most any organization or entity that is morally positive and spiritually neutral. Working with those outside the normal spheres also puts Christians in face to face and shoulder to shoulder relationships that spawn a thousand unlikely conversations through which people come to faith. One does not partner around theology but around what the church and the community commonly care about in the city.

### **Broaden the Definition of “Ministry”**

Traditionally many churches narrowly define “ministry” as evangelism, discipleship, teaching a class, or leading a small group. As one broadens the definition of “ministry” to include “meeting someone else’s needs with the resources God has entrusted to you,” [my definition] believers can find a thousand ways to be useful to their community and every Christ-follower can discover their Ephesians 2:10 calling (see Chapter Four)—the intersection where their personal passions intersect with God’s purpose, where that person feels fully alive and he or she makes a difference in the world.

### **Good Friends Help Transform Good Intentions into Good Deeds**

Although this project did not uncover this finding, I did discover this insightful principle from my preparatory reading of Dr. Ram Cnaan’s research. Here’s the

discovery. The most determinative factor in serving outside the church is not personal convictions, spiritual giftedness, great intentions, biblical literacy, or quality of prayer life. The most determinative factor is being part of a spiritual community and doing it together with others. Cnaan writes,

Church attendance is a much stronger predictor [of volunteering] than anything else. Put simply, church attendance and participation in church programs are by far the strongest predictors of volunteering. People who participate tend to volunteer and visa versa, telling us that volunteering should be conceptualized as a close cousin to worship attendance and program participation.<sup>13</sup>

Cnaan continues with the role that churches as social networks play in engaging volunteers:

Most volunteer coordinators now that the best way to recruit volunteers is to approach them through people they know and trust. Volunteering is social, and therefore, it is the participation in a congregation and the bonding with other congregants that foster volunteering among religious people. It is the social function of the congregation that actualizes the religious teaching of helping others.<sup>14</sup>

One may conclude that Hebrews 10:24-25 (“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another...”) is not merely a prescriptive exhortation towards good deeds but is also descriptive of how good deeds are most effectively carried out.

Cnaan’s findings support the aforementioned suggestion for engaging small groups in externally focused service as a means of accelerating engagement in community ministry. Cnaan also cites other studies from the United States, Canada,

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<sup>13</sup> Cnaan, *The Invisible Caring Hand*, 221.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

Belgium and Australia that confirm the positive correlation between congregational involvement and community engagement.<sup>15</sup>

### **Figure Out Ways to be Useful to the Community**

Often times the accepted approach to ministry is to come up with a program and then offer it to the community. Those church leaders who are getting traction from their externally focused ministry have taken a different approach. They start by asking the question to school principals, mayors, executive directors of human service agencies and community leaders the same question Jesus asked: "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mat. 20:32, Mk. 10:51, Lk. 8:41), and they end up tutoring children, painting homes for elderly and disabled, refurbishing broken playgrounds, and a thousand other things that put them face to face and shoulder to shoulder with their neighbors. This question does not supplant the need for "asset-based ministry," which the scope of this paper does not cover. This question simply is a well-defined step to get churches engaged in their communities based on the needs and dreams of the community. Churches that are effectively engaging their communities have discovered that becoming good news often precedes sharing good news.

### **Good Deeds Create Good Will and Good Will is a Wonderful Platform for Sharing the Good News**

As the church engages the community with good deeds, most all of the time this service translates into good will. It's easy for churches to become self-congratulating when the community recognizes and thanks them profusely for their help. Good will, however, is not good news. School principals, parents, and neighbors are grateful for the love and service showed to them, but faith still comes from hearing the good news of the

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<sup>15</sup> See Cnaan, *The Invisible Caring Hand*, pp 216-228 for data of these studies.

gospel (Romans 10:16). When people in the community are shown grace (unmerited favor) and mercy (help or relief for those in distress), two questions inevitably arise: (1) Who are you? (2) Why are you doing this? The good will becomes the platform for sharing the good news—if we are paying attention. Service provides the opportunity to see and hear the gospel. Tim Keller writes,

... the ministry of mercy is a dynamic witness to those with whom you share the gospel, because it builds a ‘plausibility structure’ for our message. Most Christians in evangelism seek only to make the gospel credible, to make it cogent and persuasive intellectually. But people believe in a message mostly for non-rational reasons. A belief appears convincing to the degree that it is supported by a consistent, loving group or community. The mercy ministry of Christians provides tremendous social and psychological support for the validity of the gospel. Thus the economic sharing of the early church lent power to the apostle’s preaching (Acts 4:32,33), and thus Jesus teaches that visible love among Christians will convince unbelievers of the truth (John 17:21). The ministry of mercy, then, is the best advertising a church can have. It convinces a community that this church provides people with action for their problems, not only talk. It shows the community that this church is compassionate.<sup>16</sup>

So perhaps the best apologetic is one that is demonstrated as much as postulated.

To be effective churches must learn how to combine compassionate service with passionate proclamation.

### **Churches Must First be Transformed if They Hope to Transform Anyone Else**

In spite of all the need for change and transformation that is needed in cities and communities, the area over which pastors and church leaders have the most influence, and the area that is perhaps in the most desperate need of change, is the church.

Historically, it is my observation that Christian leaders are fairly adroit at informing other domains of society (media, education, entertainment, technology, etc.) of their need to change, while ignoring the changes the church can make. Christian leaders are often

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<sup>16</sup> Timothy Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey, P&R Publishing Co., 1997), 212.

impotent in getting the adherents of our faith to follow God's precepts but often demand that secular society live by them. If the church could be changed and her people transformed and infused with kingdom values lived out through kingdom actions, these changed lives would perhaps be the most powerful catalyst for transformation. Professor of Theology at Notre Dame, Richard McBrien, suggests a balanced role for religion in a pluralistic America.

First every religious community may demand conformity to its beliefs on the part of its own members. Second, no group in a pluralist society may demand that government legislate a moral conviction for which support in society at large is lacking. Third, any group, including any church, has the right to work toward a change in society's standards through persuasion and argument. Finally, no group may legitimately impose its religious or moral convictions on others through the use of force, coercion, or violence.<sup>17</sup>

McBrien's words, in most cases, are in stark contrast to the church's de facto strategy for influence. Christian leaders often ask those outside the church to adhere to Christian standards while ignoring the behavior of those inside their domain of influence, the church. Communities can only be transformed as the church itself is transformed.

Robert Linthicum's exhorts the church:

How far has the kingdom of God become embodied and made real in the city's people of God? God's primary intention for the city is to bring God's kingdom into that city—to permeate its political, economic, and religious structures, to transform the lives of its inhabitants, to exorcise evil and unrepentant principalities and powers, and to place over that city, not a brooding angel but a Christ who would gather the city to himself... God would seek to do this in every city by creating in that city a new community: the church. The community would be the very embodiment of God's kingdom in the city.... Through its witness, the church would call the city to participate in God's kingdom.... That is why [Colin] Marchant insists that the underlying question to every church in every city is this: How far has the kingdom of God become embodied and made real in the life, witness, and social action of your church in this city?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>David Hollenbach, SJ., *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethic*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 92.

<sup>18</sup> Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan*, 105.

To the extent that the church is transformed the community has the potential for transformation.

### FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As with any research project, new questions surfaced during the course of this study that go beyond the scope of this project. These questions may form the basis of a future project. Such questions would include:

1. Since transformational leadership has to do with changing values as much as with results, how were the values of leaders and volunteers changed in the process?
2. Would the churches have obtained different results if transactional leadership principles, as opposed to transformational leadership principles, were employed?
3. How was the “nature” of the local congregation changed as more volunteers were deployed into the community?
4. How sustainable are the changes in the external focus of a local church?
5. What is the correlation between “good deeds” and “good news” in externally focused churches?
6. What is the long-range effect on the community and the relationship of the church with the community?

### CONCLUSION

The church in America is in a fix today, perhaps as deep a fix as never before in the history of the church in America. Ed Stetzer, in his book *Planting New Churches in a*

*Postmodern Age*, makes a number of observations regarding the demise of the church in America. For example:

In 1900, 27 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.

In 1950, 17 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.

In 1996, 11 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.<sup>19</sup>

Further he cites Win Arn's report that 3,500 to 4,000 close their doors each year in the United States<sup>20</sup> making the United States the fifth largest mission field on earth.<sup>21</sup>

Missiologist, David Smith, writes,

'We ring our bells, says Darrell Guder, 'conduct our services...and wait for this very different world to come to us.' Pastors continue to preach sermons and carry on internal polemics over doctrine as though nothing outside has changed, but the reality is that everything has changed and the people 'are not coming back to the churches.'<sup>22</sup>

Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, in their book, *Lost in America*, say "roughly half of all churches in America did not add one new person through conversion growth last year."<sup>23</sup> Further they state, "In America, it takes the combined effort of eighty-five Christians working over an entire year to produce one convert."<sup>24</sup> Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, creators and instructors of a church planting class called ZerOrientation, say that although this year in the United States 1,300 churches will be started, 3,750 will disband

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<sup>19</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Press, 2003), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> David Smith, *Mission After Christendom*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 33.

<sup>23</sup> Clegg, Thomas and Warren Bird, *Lost in America: How You and Your Church Can Impact the World Next Door*, (Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing, 2001), 27.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 29.

and close their doors.<sup>25</sup> Ninety-eight percent of church growth is by transfer growth as smaller churches close their doors and growth is consolidated into fewer, though larger churches.<sup>26</sup> Although there are few true atheists in the United States and the vast majority of unchurched people describe themselves as “spiritual” (though not religious) and would like a deeper relationship with God,<sup>27</sup> the church is doing a dismal job of connecting with these seekers. If present trends continue, by 2060 “no one will be in church.”<sup>28</sup> David Smith observes that the real problem of Christian mission in the modern West is not the absence of spiritual hunger within the postmodern generation, but rather the church’s failure to recognize the existence and significance of this quest on the part of thousands of people beyond its doors. Even where such recognition does occur there is often a refusal to respond on the terms set by the searchers, rather than those dictated by existing ecclesiastical traditions and structures.<sup>29</sup>

One cannot expect the trajectory of the church in the future to change by doing more or better of the same things the church has done in the past. One needs to think differently and act differently if one expects the future to be different...and better. How can the trajectory of the church be changed?

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<sup>25</sup> Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *ZerOrientation—Creating Church Where It Doesn’t Exist* (Anaheim, California: Church Resource Ministries, 2004), 2.

<sup>26</sup> Halter and Smay, lecture, September 28, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Pete Ward. *Liquid Church* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002) 2-5.

<sup>28</sup> Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, “Creating Church Where It Doesn’t Exist” (lecture given in Denver Colorado, 28 September 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Smith, 73.

I believe that some of the answers to that question are found within the context of this paper. If a local congregation of people refuses to get outside the walls and engage the community with words and works of love, the days of that church are numbered. God has designed the church to be salt, light, and leaven in the world—agents of transformation that work very well up close and very poorly from a distance. The church must rediscover her role as “the soul” of a community and in doing so to discover fresh ways to enter into the life, rhythms, and conversations of the community. As with individuals, the church can only become great by becoming a servant.

The churches that were participants in these LCs have discovered fresh ways to love and serve. They have discovered afresh the words and life of Jesus whose ministry put him face to face with the needs and dreams of those he would die for. They have rediscovered the gospel and why the gospel really was “good news” to the people of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and how it can be good news today.

Most people tend to overestimate what can be done in one year and underestimate what can be done in five years. The church does not need another “40 Days of Purpose” as much as it needs “40 Years of Purpose” if church leaders really want to transform the church and make a sustained and lasting kingdom difference in a community. A common proverb says, “The best time to plant a tree is ten years ago.”<sup>30</sup> But there is a corollary that is often left out. “The second best time to plant a tree is today.” The church may have

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<sup>30</sup> Available from [http://thinkexist.com/quotation/the\\_best\\_time\\_to\\_plant\\_a\\_tree\\_is\\_twenty\\_years\\_ago/254949.html](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/the_best_time_to_plant_a_tree_is_twenty_years_ago/254949.html); accessed 25 May 2007.

not done what it could have done or should have done in the past but there is no time like today to begin.

We shall not cease from our exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time

T.S. Elliott

## APPENDIX 1

Dear Colleague,

*I need your help.* As you may know Leadership Network has a handful of donors who are eager to advance what God is doing through innovative and influential churches like yours by helping to fund and staff Leadership Communities. Though your church pays a registration fee, the program is subsidized approximately 70% by Leadership Network donors. Like any good donor they want to know what difference their investment is making. So here's how you can help all of us advance the ball.

The *Leadership Community for Externally Focused Churches* convenes around accelerating the number, level and frequency of engaging the people in your church in the needs and dreams of your community. Although community transformation is a desirable byproduct, what we can take responsibility for is those within our bailiwick that can be deployed. So...

### **Here is the quantitative information I need from you:**

1. Current data--In 2007 (this past year)

- How many people from your church were engaged in ministry / service outside your church in 2006? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many hours / 2006 did each person serve? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Here is the qualitative information I need from you:**

1. A brief description of how your church's involvement in the Leadership Community has helped (*or not helped*) your church.

2. A four-sentence story of one person who was touched through one of your externally focused ministries.

3. Multiplying effects-If you held any type of teaching event with other churches or leaders around externally focused ministry please write down, what, who, when and how many attended.

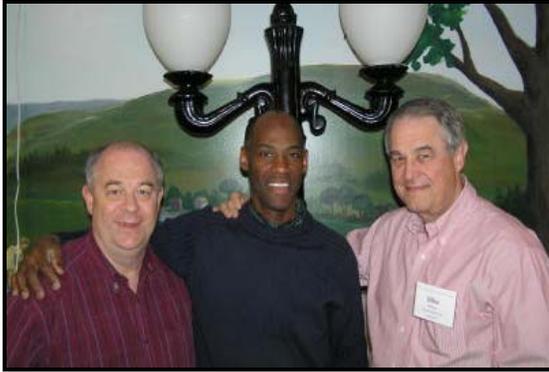
I know this is a busy time of year but I think doing this report will also help you and your team get a snapshot of where you are in this process. Most likely you or one of your colleagues has this information at hand. So forward this to them if you like. Thanks so much in advance for your help!

Shoulder to shoulder,

**Eric**

## APPENDIX 2

### **FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS**



#### **Impact Story**

A single mom with five children called one of our mentoring coordinators pleading for her oldest son to get into the middle school mentoring program but there was not a mentor available. She continued to call and after prayer and moving him to the top of the waiting list he entered the mentoring program. A second son also joined the program this fall. When the mother faced a life-threatening dental emergency, a number of mentors rallied to help her and that help may have saved her life. The mentors have become like family to this mom and her children and God is bringing life-change in all of them.

(L-R) Mike Robinson, Shelby Smith, Ray Williams

Church	External Ministries	Three Year Dream, Main Challenges
<p><b>Fellowship Bible Church</b>  <b>1901 Napa Valley Road</b>  <b>Little Rock AR 72212</b></p> <p><b>Website:</b> www.fbclr.com</p> <p><b>Weekend attendance:</b>                      5,000</p> <p><b>External ministry budget:</b> 32% of a \$12 million budget</p> <p><b>% of church involved:</b>                      45%</p> <p><b>Church Age:</b> 28 yrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Mission projects</b> in China, Poland, Ghana, Brazil, and Honduras</li> <li>▪ <b>The Nehemiah Group</b>--A growing relational network of churches that presently includes 60-75 churches seeking to bring the church of central Arkansas together</li> <li>▪ <b>Share Fest</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Moms in Touch</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Abstinence by Choice</b>--provided abstinence training in 19 schools in Central Arkansas</li> <li>▪ <b>Christian Educational Assistance Foundation</b>--providing scholarship to low income families desiring their children to attend Christian schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>STEP</b> (Serving To Equip People) is a ministry which provides after school discipleship and tutoring</p>	<p><b>Three Year Dream:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Measurable progress in the “main challenges” area</li> <li>▪ A congress (collaborative time such as the one we experienced in the Wild Challenge) with the key spiritual leaders in the community coming together to formulate a unified vision and action plan for the community</li> </ul> <p><b>Main Challenges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mobilizing greater numbers of volunteers in key areas</li> <li>▪ A lack of unified vision among the churches in the community</li> </ul>

## FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH

### Accomplishments in 2006:

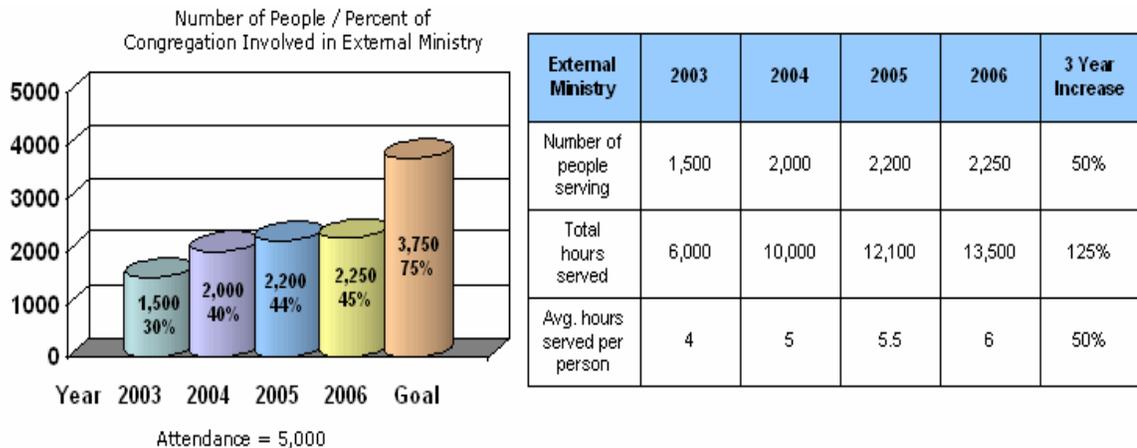
- The start of a new home weatherization and improvement program known as Warm Homes Warm Hearts. Five homes were completed in the spring and another 25 during ShareFest 2006.
- Opening of a neighborhood charitable health clinic in the urban neighborhood we serve.
- Supported the completion 4 Habitat for Humanity Homes.
- Major supporter in the launch of Prison Fellowship's Inner Change Freedom Initiative in Arkansas.
- Played a significant role in the 8<sup>th</sup> successful ShareFest in Central Arkansas. More than a 100 churches participated in some way with 3500 volunteers working on the community workday, almost 7000 holiday food boxes collected, and a ShareFest love offering gift of \$88,000 (the largest gift to a single ministry in the history of ShareFest)

### Multiplying Effects:

- Taught two workshops on External Ministry at our National Church Conference in May with approximately 125 ministry leaders attending.
- Consulted with 4-5 churches in Central Arkansas that are adopting the one-church, one-school, one-neighborhood model.

### How involvement in the Leadership Community has helped our church:

We have continued to move forward in our one-church, one-school, one-neighborhood focus building on strategic plans developed during our leadership community.



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### Education

2002 MDiv (granted); Northwest Graduate School of the Ministry  
1989 Certificate of High Proficiency; Spanish Language Institute, San Jose, Costa Rica  
1972 B.A. Social Science; University of California at Berkeley

### Publications

Books:

The Externally Focused Church (Co-author) (Group Publishing, 2004)

Living a Life on Loan (Co-author) (Standard Publishing, 2006)

Articles:

Is Your Church a Good Neighbor? *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2002

From Great to Good: When Great isn't Good Enough. *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2003

Churches Transforming Communities, *Outreach Magazine*, March / April, 2004

Church for the City, *Outreach Magazine*, January / February, 2005

The Gospel of Community Transformation, *Outreach Magazine*, July / August 2004

5 Habits of Externally Focused Churches, *Rev! Magazine*, September / October 2006

La Bella Vita, *Hemisphere Magazine*, February, 2007

### Experience Highlights

Tango; Director of Charitable Investing, 1999-present

Leadership Network; Director of Externally Focused Churches Leadership Communities, 2002-present

GoodCities; Consultant, 2002-present

Campus Crusade for Christ; Campus Staff, Regional Director, 1974-1999

Promise Keepers; National Key Man/Ambassador Training Team, 1994-97

### Personal

Eric has been married to Liz since 1977. They reside in Louisville Colorado and have three married children; Andy (b. 1981), Jeff (b. 1983) and Kacey (b. 1986) and two grandchildren; Gentry (b. 2005) and Jenda (b. 2006). Eric's hobbies include hanging out with family and friends, reading, blogging, photography, cooking, travel, good coffee and writing. Wanting to be a reader, he read; wanting to be a chef, he cooked; wanting to be an athlete, he played; wanting to be an author, he wrote; and wanting to be a good husband and father, he tried to imitate his dad.