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ABSTRACT

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS OF RE-PURPOSING
THE FORT WORTH FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSION

by

Tyler Bower

Adviser: Stanley Patterson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Doctor of Ministry

Title: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS OF RE-PURPOSING THE FORT WORTH FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSION

Name of researcher: Tyler Bower

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Date completed: May 2014

Problem

In 2008 the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church had nearly 200 filled volunteer positions (according to the nominating committee report) as well as a wide range of ministries that served the needs of the members. The weekly attendance at that time averaged between 220 and 250 individuals (including children). In a self-administered survey only 20 members (less than 10% of weekly adult attendance) reported that they were engaged in direct evangelistic ministry aimed at recruiting new

members (accessions). A similar survey was filled out by ministry leaders and 58% of these ministry leaders reported that their ministry had an evangelistic emphasis.

Members were determined to be engaged in evangelistic ministry if they gave an affirmative response to 85% of the questions on the self-administered survey. Likewise, ministries were determined to have an evangelistic emphasis if the leaders gave an affirmative response to 85% of the questions on the ministry leader survey. This deficiency, which inhibits the church's ability to minister to un-churched people and stifles the numerical growth of the congregation, appears to be a result of institutionalism in the church caused by three dominant factors: (a) a leadership structure that focuses almost exclusively on administration, (b) a lack of ministries where evangelism is the primary goal, (c) a misplaced focus on nurture of existing ministries rather than evangelism.

A further challenge was an unclear understanding of evangelism. Within the Seventh-day Adventist context, evangelism is typically understood to refer to a very specific church event – namely the evangelistic series. This event is usually centered on the proclamation of specific Bible prophecies over a period of two to five weeks. This doctrinal presentation is often what Adventists think of when they hear the term “evangelism.” In this document and for the purposes of this project, evangelism was given a more broad definition. Evangelism can take many different forms and it should be understood that any clear proclamation of the good news (whether through word or deed) that helps people make a decision for Christ, is evangelism. Furthermore, it is understood that evangelism is not truly complete until someone has been discipled into spiritual maturity and begins to function in the body as part of God's royal priesthood.

Therefore, whenever evangelism is referenced in this document it should be understood by the more broad definition which includes discipleship towards spiritual maturity rather than by the narrower one that is common within Adventism and emphasizes public proclamations and ends at baptism.

Methodology

The process used to attempt congregational transformation focused on six areas of intervention.

First, there was an attempt to objectively evaluate the current evangelistic involvement of members and ministries. This was accomplished through two self-administered surveys. One was completed by ministry leaders and the other by the church members at-large. The survey was taken at the beginning of the project and again at the end. In addition to the surveys, accessions (new members joining the church through baptism or profession-of-faith) were evaluated during the project time period to determine whether there was an increase in lay-led accessions as a result of the project interventions.

The second was an attempt to develop a church wide vision for lay-led evangelism. This was to be accomplished through sermons, training events, devotional thoughts, ministry retreats, testimonies and the church newsletter. Included in this step was the creation of a new mission statement that sought to identify lay-led evangelism as a primary goal of the church.

Third, was an attempt to develop a process for discipleship that would help members grow spiritually and connect with Christ's mission with the intention that this would result in an increase in lay-led evangelism.

Fourth, an intentional re-purposing of the administrative structures of the church designed to free ministry leaders from administrative responsibilities and give them freedom to develop their ministries without unnecessary oversight.

Fifth, was an attempt to re-purpose existing ministries to help them emphasize evangelism and to unite current leaders with the vision for lay-led evangelism.

Sixth, an attempt to start new ministries led by new leaders who had a vision for lay-led evangelism. These ministries were to be directly evangelistic in orientation and were to place members in ministries where evangelism was the primary goal.

In addition to these six areas of focus, it was necessary to consistently observe how lay leaders were responding to the interventions. In some cases when it appeared that specific interventions were causing significant distress among those leaders it was necessary to adjust, postpone, or even set them aside.

Results

The attempt to transform the congregation from maintenance to mission has had mixed results. Setting aside those areas that were strictly evaluative, only one of the six interventions was fully implemented. The other interventions all struggled for various reasons, ranging from pastoral inexperience in some areas (especially in the areas of discipleship and in knowing how to help ministries become evangelistic) to strong resistance from key leaders in others (most specifically as a result of a perceived loss of power after the administrative restructuring). Ultimately, the attempt to unite the church around lay-led evangelism was not successful and there was not an observed increase in accessions due to lay-led efforts.

Conclusions

The attempt to bring about radical transformation in an institutionalized congregation has proved to be far more difficult than originally anticipated. Furthermore, such a drastic change in mindset appears to take far longer than one would like with hardly any observable change in congregational behavior towards being more mission focused by the end of the three-year project time frame. In the end, while some valuable changes have been observed, they have not yet amounted to a shift in culture or a new paradigm of lay-led evangelism.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS OF RE-PURPOSING
THE FORT WORTH FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSION

A Project Document
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Tyler Bower
March 2014

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Personal History	2
Ministry Context	4
Purpose	6
Statement of the Problem	7
Justification for the Project	8
Expectations of the Project	9
Delimitations of the Project	10
Limitations of the Research	11
Intervention Plan	11
Definition of Terms	14
2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	16
Christian Responsibility and the Great Commission	17
Introduction	17
The Greatness of the Great Commission	18
The Universal Application of the Great Commission	21
Commission to all Believers	21
Jesus' Presence Assured	22
The Heart of the Great Commission	23
Relational Nature of Discipleship	24
Dependence Upon the Master	25
Holistic Nature of Discipleship	26
Baptizing and Teaching	27
Verb Tenses	27
The Antecedent of Baptizing and Teaching	28
Jesus' Example	29
Early Church Examples	29
Great Commission Summary	31
The Priesthood of all Believers	31
Introduction	32
Examination of 1 Peter 2:9	33
The Old Testament Background	37

The Responsibilities of Priests	39
The Need for Faithfulness	42
Priesthood of all Believers Summary.	42
The Role of Clergy and Laity in Ephesians 4:11-13	43
Introduction	43
The Role of the Clergy	43
The Role of the Laity	46
Results of an Equipped Laity	48
The Role of Clergy and Laity Summary	49
Conclusion	50
3. LITERATURE REVIEW.	52
Introduction.	52
The Need for Change	53
Institutional Change	56
Change Begins With the Leader.	57
Characteristics of a Change Leader	58
Tenacity in Face of Change.	59
Preparing for Change	60
Making Personal Preparation.	62
Creating Urgency	62
Establishing the Vision Community	62
Vision.	63
Reorganization of the Leadership Structure	67
Repurposing Existing Ministries	69
Creating new Ministries	71
Involving Members in Ministry	72
Discipleship as a Foundation for Lay Involvement	73
Principles of Discipleship	76
Investing	76
Community	78
Transformational Encounter	79
Outreach.	80
Empowerment	82
Invitation	83
Conclusion	84
4. THE PROCESS OF RE-PURPOSING FOR MISSION	87
Introduction.	87
Evaluation of Current Involvement in Evangelism	90
Developing a Vision for Lay-led Evangelism	91
Origin of our Vision	92
Creating a Mission Mindset	92
Developing a Mission Statement	93
Re-Purposing Administrative Structures for Mission.	95

Proposed Administrative Structure	96
The Church Board	97
The Outreach Leadership Team	98
The Board of Elders	99
Summary of Administrative Changes	102
Developing a Process for Discipleship	102
Action Steps in Disciple-Making	104
Investing in Others.	104
Community	105
Transformational Encounters.	105
Outreach.	106
Empowerment	107
Invitations.	107
Creating a Pastor's Discipleship Group	107
Investing	108
Community	108
Transformational Encounters.	110
Outreach.	110
Empowerment	111
Invitations.	111
Summary of Pastor's Discipleship Group	111
Developing a Discipleship Training Program	112
Theological Foundations Curriculum	112
Creating Lay-led Discipleship Groups	113
Continued Expansion	113
Discipleship Training Program Summary	113
Re-Purposing Existing Ministries to Emphasize Evangelism	114
Creating Ministries That Emphasize Evangelism	115
Involving Members in Re-Purposed Ministries	115
Conclusion	118
 5. OUTCOMES AND EVALUATIONS	 120
Introduction.	120
Description of Methodology	121
Outcomes	121
Evaluating Lay Member Involvement in Evangelism	121
Accessions During the Project.	122
Examination of Attendance Trends During the Project	124
Intervention Steps	124
Developing a Vision for Lay-led Evangelism	125
Results of Re-Purposing Administrative Structures	126
Effects of the Discipleship Process	132
The Pastor's Discipleship Group	132
Discipleship Group Training	134
Discipleship Summary	134
Evaluating the Re-Purposing of Existing Ministries	135

New Ministries That Emphasize Evangelism	136
Involving Members in Re-Purposed Ministries	138
Conclusion	140
6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	142
Summary	142
Overall Project Plan.	142
Implementation of Plan.	142
Evaluation of Lay Involvement	143
Create Mission Mindset.	143
Disciple Members Into Active Ministry	143
Administrative Restructuring.	144
Equip Existing Ministry Leaders	144
Disciple new Leaders	144
Assess Impact of Interventions.	145
Conclusions.	145
Effectiveness of the Interventions.	145
Mission Statement	146
Pastor's Discipleship Group	146
Formal Discipleship Training	147
Administrative Restructuring.	147
Re-Purposing Existing Ministries	148
Creation of New Outreach-Focused Ministries	148
Obstacles Encountered	149
Recommendations	151
Evaluate the Congregation	151
Engage Adequate Lay Support	153
Prepare to Change People—not Systems	153
Avoid Change in an Arbitrary Time Frame	154
Foster Support of Denominational Leaders	154
The Cost of Challenging the Status Quo	154
What I Would do Differently	155
Discipleship as Leadership Development	155
Work With the Willing	155
Utilize Familiar Terminology	156
Avoid Unrelated Changes	156
Approach Change Slowly.	157
Develop More "Sending" Ministries	157
Final Observations.	157
Appendix	160
A. Survey Title:	160
Evaluation of Individual Soul-Winning Efforts by the Membership of the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist Church.	160
B. Survey Title:	161

Evaluation of Soul-Winning Emphases in the Ministries of the Fort- Worth First Seventh-day Adventist Church.	161
REFERENCE LIST	162
CURRICULUM VITAE	168

LIST OF TABLES

Conversions.	121
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Finally, to the Fort Worth First church who has taught me a great many lessons, far more than I have taught them.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Revelation 3:14-21 contains a warning from Jesus to the lukewarm church of Laodicea. In this warning he points out that they are “neither cold nor hot” (verse 15), they are neither on fire for God nor antagonistic towards him. They sit comfortable with their wealth and influence and do not feel any great urgency to deepen their experience with God. Jesus says that this kind of outlook is unpalatable to him and that if they do not change their ways he is going to spit them out of his mouth.

Many Adventist commentators have observed that this warning to the church of Laodicea has prophetic relevance to God’s people living in the last days before Jesus returns. Seventh-day Adventists have long taught that we are living in those last days and that the Laodicean message has specific relevance to our church (Moyise, 2001, pp. 28-41).

Research into the growth patterns of Adventist churches in North America certainly seems to reflect the apathetic condition of the church found in the Laodicean message. With 80% of North American Adventist churches in a state of plateau or decline (Burrill, 2004, p. 39) it certainly seems that our fire for God’s work has cooled. Many churches limp along in maintenance mode struggling to motivate members to just show up for church, let alone get them involved in ministry or outreach.

Personal History

My experience in the Seventh-day Adventist church has validated the research on this subject. I began attending the Adventist church when I was 12 years old— over 25 years ago. Since that time I have been in large churches and small churches. I have attended college and university churches as well as rural, small town churches. I have served in big cities and in small ones. Some of these churches had the appearance of vibrancy with a lot of ministries happening but in reality the majority of this activity was focused inward and was organized by a handful of truly dedicated members. This assertion is substantiated by the fact that the same small group of leaders were consistently responsible for all ministry events and that it was almost always the direct work of clergy that led to kingdom growth. For the most part, each of these churches demonstrated a lukewarm attitude toward mission and outreach.

At the time of this project I was the senior pastor of the Fort Worth First, Seventh-day Adventist church. I began my ministry there in the fall of 2006 as the associate pastor. After a year at the church the senior pastor took a position in another church which left me as an interim pastor for about six months. After that time the congregation and Texas Conference selected me to serve as the senior pastor. I was officially designated as the senior pastor in the spring of 2008.

In the 25 years I have been a Seventh-day Adventist I have yet to be involved with an Adventist church that truly lives up to the description of a vibrant church found in Scripture. If Acts 2:42-47 is an account of the ideal that God would like to see renewed in his church than we are a long way away from that ideal.

I have been in pastoral ministry for nearly 16 years and as a pastor I have sat in countless board meetings where the primary focus was on internal matters. Finance, church repairs, and theological disputes almost always take precedence over the more vital subjects of evangelism and outreach. In such cases it appears that the church primarily exists to service the needs of the existing members and that evangelism and church growth is an optional component that can be added at will or when needed to fill in the ranks.

Jesus' final words before his ascension, as described in Matthew 28, indicate that his primary purpose for the church was that it would be a vehicle facilitating the salvation of the lost. The work of making disciples of all nations was to be their main function. Unfortunately, with 80% of Adventist churches in plateau or decline it appears that maintenance has triumphed over mission and that institutionalization has paralyzed growth. A church becomes institutionalized when it orients its ministries, organizational structures, finances, and mindset so that the primary focus of the church is to maintain the existing state of affairs. It is an inward focused mind-set that puts institutional priorities above missional ones. In an institutionalized church there is a tendency to force ministries and evangelistic ideas to match the existing church culture rather than to take a more incarnational approach and adapt those efforts to the needs of the mission field. In other words, the perceived needs of the church as expressed by the most influential lay-leaders are placed before the Great Commission.

In a time when people all over North America are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt 9:36) (Clarke, 2006) the church cannot afford to be lukewarm towards our mission. Unless a concerted effort is made to transform plateaued

churches the great harvest will rot on the vine. Perhaps a worse fate than that is that God will become fed up with the lukewarm condition of his people and choose to spit them out of his mouth (Rev 3:16) and turn his attention to those faithful few who will put mission at the top of their ecclesiastical agenda.

Based on these observations it appears that the single most important skill for a pastor to develop is how to transition an inward focused, maintenance church, into one that is missional and growing. This project is designed to explore ways to attempt such a transformation.

Ministry Context

The Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church began as a branch Sabbath school out of Keene, Texas in 1895. From those humble beginnings the church has gone through numerous periods of growth, plateau, and decline. Today, it is a congregation with almost 700 members on the books but only averages between 200 and 250 in attendance divided between two worship services. Two pastors are on staff (senior and associate) and there is a part time secretary. The church has moved locations several times over the years and has been in its current location since the late 1970s. Members who remember the relocation to the current address have stated that when the church was built it was basically surrounded by pastures and fields. Today, the church has been swallowed by the city of Fort Worth and the surrounding community is largely composed of lower-middle class single-family homes, apartments, and commercial businesses.

There are over 225,000 people within a five-mile radius of the church and there is an expected increase of 7.9% over the next five years. The racial makeup of the community is very diverse with 39% Anglo, 20% African-American, and 35%

Hispanic/Latino. The projected change of each of these groups over the next five years is -7.9% Anglo, 18% African-American, 18% Hispanic/Latino. Among this population fully 60% is made up of Generation X and Millennials while only 23% are Boomers or Silents (Percept, 2014).

The church itself appears to have successfully made the transition from being predominantly Anglo to being one that is multi-cultural. Precise demographics are not available but on an average Sabbath there is a fairly even distribution of Anglos, African-Americans and Hispanic/Latinos and all these people groups appear to intermingle with very little cultural friction. Where the church has not followed the community demographics is in the area of generation. Again, precise data is not available but a casual survey of the attendance reveals that the generational makeup is skewed toward the Boomer generation. This is even more prevalent among ministry leader where the key decision makers are almost exclusively from the Boomer or Silent generation.

The professional makeup of the church is similarly diverse with a mix of white-collar professionals as well as blue-collar workers. The church appears to have fairly large representation of medical professionals with several doctors and numerous nurses. While the bills are always paid each month, the church does not have an excess of money and long neglected repairs are starting to take their toll on an aging church building.

The church is also the sole constituent of a pre-K through 8th grade school located at a separate address less than a mile from the church. A significant portion of the monthly church budget is allocated towards the support of this school and in some years the financial subsidy to Adventist education has been as much as 70% of local giving.

A review of pastoral records revealed that the average tenure of pastors at FWF going back to the 1920's is about 1.5 years. There has been only one pastor that has overcome this historical trend in a significant way, serving for a full six years. This has resulted in a local leadership that is very influential in the congregation and carries a lot of authority. Prior to the start of my tenure the church had gone through an extended period without a full time pastor (either senior or associate). This too contributed to a consolidation of authority with a few key lay leaders making it difficult for pastors to function as much more than an advisor or chaplain.

Purpose

In harmony with the words of the Great Commission, the task of this project was to develop and implement a process for re-purposing the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church to place lay-led evangelism and discipleship at the center of congregational life. This was deemed necessary because most of the church's ministries were focused on nurture or care for the existing membership rather than on outreach and evangelism. Furthermore, even these inwardly focused activities were not intentionally geared towards making disciples. Therefore an attempt at a systematic re-focusing seemed necessary.

This attempt to align the church with the Great Commission was to follow a six-step process. First, there was an effort to objectively evaluate the current level of evangelistic activity performed by members and ministries. Second, there was an attempt at developing a church-wide vision for lay-led evangelism. Third, we attempted to develop a process for intentional discipleship. Fourth, there was a collaborative re-organization of the leadership structure so that ministry leaders would be freed from

administrative responsibilities and oversight minimized. This was necessary because the previously existing leadership structure placed undue emphasis on internal items (i.e. finances, church repairs, policy) rather than on outreach, evangelism, and discipleship. The pastors, in conjunction with the elders and the church board, worked to create an administrative structure that was intended to empower ministry leaders so that their time and energy could be directed towards Great Commission efforts (outreach and evangelism) rather than being spent on less missional items (maintenance). Included in this administrative re-structuring was an overhaul in the way that the nominating committee worked and the way in which ministry volunteers were chosen.

Fifth, it was necessary to attempt to identify, train, and empower new leaders for the creation of ministries where evangelism was the primary goal.

Sixth, there was an attempt to re-focus existing ministries so that they could begin to move away from a maintenance orientation to one that was more evangelistic.

Each of these three interventions was to be monitored and evaluated by the pastoral staff as well as the elders to determine its success in increasing the number of volunteers engaged in outreach and evangelism. By implementing these changes it was hoped that the church members would become more engaged in these activities that would result in more baptisms as a direct result of lay efforts.

Statement of the Problem

In 2008 the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church had nearly 200 filled volunteer positions (according to the nominating committee report) as well as a wide range of ministries that serviced the needs of the existing constituency. The weekly attendance at that time averaged between 220 and 250 individuals (including children).

In a self-administered survey only 20 members (less than 10% of weekly adult attendance) reported that they were engaged in direct evangelistic ministry aimed at recruiting new members (accessions). A similar survey was filled out by ministry leaders and 58% of these ministry leaders reported that their ministry had an evangelistic emphasis. Members were determined to be engaged in evangelistic ministry if they gave an affirmative response to 85% of the questions on the self-administered survey. Likewise, ministries were considered to have an evangelistic emphasis if the leaders gave an affirmative response to 85% of the questions on the ministry leader survey. This deficiency, which inhibits the church's ability to minister to un-churched people and stifles the numerical growth of the congregation, appears to be a result of institutionalism in the church caused by three dominant factors: (a) a leadership structure that focuses almost exclusively on administration, (b) a lack of ministries where evangelism is the primary goal, (c) a misplaced focus on nurture by existing ministries rather than evangelism.

Justification for the Project

There are several reasons why this project was necessary. First, even a casual analysis of the church revealed that the focus of most ministry efforts was on maintenance rather than evangelism

Second, because of the church's maintenance orientation, lay-members did not generally take responsibility for leading interests to Christ and preparing them for baptism. Therefore, kingdom growth was limited to the efforts of professional clergy. The result was that church growth was determined by the effectiveness of the pastoral

staff and that the average member was not directly involved in fulfilling the mission of the church (i.e. discipleship and evangelism).

Third, because most lay-members did not take part in the evangelistic process they also did not have a vested personal interest in new converts. As a result new member retention and integration was negatively impacted. Even though there was a strong desire in the church to nurture members this rarely seemed to happen with new converts.

Fourth, the inward focus of existing ministries meant that new volunteers were immediately placed in nurture or maintenance roles instead of being trained and released for outreach or evangelism. This created a culture where ministry involvement was synonymous with nurture or maintenance instead of evangelism.

Fifth, because the church's ministries tended to emphasize maintenance instead of mission the congregation's impact on the surrounding community was very low with the occasional public evangelistic meeting or health seminar serving as the only means of direct interaction with the community.

Expectations of the Project

One of the primary expected outcomes of this project was that it would give me insight into the process of producing radical change in a traditional Seventh-day Adventist Church. Furthermore, it was designed to help me develop skills and competencies that will enable me to become a more effective pastor in the future. These skills and competencies could then be used to help other churches transition to a mission focus.

This project was also intended to help transform the Fort Worth First Seventh-day

Adventist church from one that focused on maintenance and relied on professional clergy for church growth to one that was focused on evangelism and relied on lay-members as the primary evangelists in the congregation. If successful, this transformation would result in a church that had higher rates of growth and increased retention of converts.

Another potential outcome of this project was that it would help ministry leaders and lay volunteers grow in their personal spiritual development as they actively engaged in the evangelistic mission of the church. Furthermore, it was hoped that congregational unity would be promoted as members united around the specific goal of impacting the community for Christ and expanding the kingdom of God.

Delimitations of the Project

Because the ultimate goal of this project was to enact cultural transformation in an institutionalized church it is important to recognize that the approach taken has been dynamic rather than static. This means that initial hypotheses have needed to be changed as circumstances dictated. It has not been possible to fully realize each of the interventions mentioned above because of various dynamics of church life. Therefore, I have tried to maintain my focus on the end goal of transformation and church health rather than on the specific steps outlined above.

Another challenge of this project has been that radical transformation takes time. The relatively short duration allotted for this project has made it impossible to evaluate the long-term effects of these interventions. Therefore, conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the interventions are tentative at best.

Finally, I have chosen to limit myself to three areas of intervention (administrative restructuring, creation of new ministries, re-purposing of existing

ministries) in an attempt to keep the project manageable. This means I have intentionally ignored important items such as spiritual gifts.

Limitations of the Research

The justification for this project was grounded in the idea that the church is stuck in a maintenance mode and that mission has fallen by the wayside. One of the tools used to measure that situation was a self-administered survey designed to evaluate the level of lay-led evangelism in the church. While such surveys can be useful in establishing a baseline, they are limited in that they only measure the participant's perceived efforts and may or may not reflect objective reality.

In order to validate the need for the interventions described in this project it has been necessary to look beyond the results of the self-administered survey. This includes looking at baptisms, the number of people involved in giving Bible studies, and the kinds and frequency of outreach and evangelistic efforts. Because there are many ways to evaluate the church's involvement and effectiveness in evangelism it was necessary to narrow the focus of how results are evaluated. Therefore, the results of the project have been evaluated through the responses of the self-administered survey as well as by examining accessions during the project time period.

Intervention Plan

Below is the process that has been used during the course of this project in an attempt to bring about the transformation from maintenance to mission at the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church.

The first step was to objectively evaluate the current evangelistic involvement of members and ministries. A self-administered survey was given to the congregation at

large and a second one given to the ministry directors. The results of these surveys were used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed interventions. More important than survey results, however, would be an observed increase in both lay-led outreach and evangelistic efforts that would result in accessions.

The second step towards transformation was an attempt to develop a vision for lay-led evangelism in the church. This was to be accomplished through sermons, training events, devotional thoughts, ministry retreats, testimonies and the church newsletter. Included in this step was the creation of a new mission statement that identified lay-led evangelism as a primary goal of the church. In order for this vision to be effectively incorporated into the self-identity of the church it has been necessary to continuously promote it from a variety of angles. Rather than a distinct step in the process this component was to continue throughout the life of the project and beyond.

The third step was to develop a process for discipleship that would encourage members to grow closer to Christ and, as a result, unite themselves in his work of expanding God's kingdom. The reason for focusing on discipleship at this point was because, as noted above, many of our members appeared to be in a state of apathy and general disengagement from evangelistic ministry. In order to help them develop the spiritual maturity where evangelism was seen as an imperative and not just an option it seemed necessary to intentionally invest in their personal spiritual growth. Discipleship was intended to be the process by which the church would intentionally work towards uniting with Christ and his mission. This discipleship process was modeled after Jesus' method of making disciples as observed in the gospels.

The fourth step was an intentional re-purposing of the administrative structures of

the church. This included an examination of how much energy was invested by ministry leaders in maintenance-oriented discussions (i.e. copier leases, building repairs, finances) as opposed to how much time was spent planning and implementing evangelistic efforts. In order for ministry leaders to save their best efforts for the important work of outreach and evangelism it was deemed necessary to free them from the often draining work of administration. The purpose of this step was to free ministry leaders to focus on developing their ministries and minimize the amount of energy they had to spend on maintenance items. It is important to note that the goal of this step was to improve the functionality of the church's administrative boards so that creative ministry ideas could be allowed to flourish with minimal oversight.

The fifth step was to work with existing ministries to help them re-purpose to emphasize evangelism. This step was to be closely tied with the discipleship process mentioned above. It was hoped that one of the direct results of the discipleship intervention would be an increase in lay-led evangelism. As existing ministry leaders participated in the discipleship process they were encouraged to fashion their ministries using disciple-making principles.

The sixth step was to identify leaders who had a vision for evangelism and empower them to start new ministries in the church. These new ministries were to be created with evangelism as a primary function. As members got involved in these new ministries it was hoped that they would be quickly placed in front line, evangelistic ministry, rather than in maintenance roles.

Finally, the results of these steps were to be evaluated at the end of the project by the completion of a second self-administered survey and by examining accessions to

determine what effect the interventions had on lay-led evangelism.

Definition of Terms

Bible Version – Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version.

Evangelism/Evangelistic – This refers to efforts that have the primary goal of interacting with non-Adventists with the purpose of leading them towards church membership. The one exception to this definition is when I refer to “servant-evangelism” which is a term developed by Steve Sjogren and is used to describe service based efforts where church members interact with non-Christians. Though the term “evangelism” is used, Sjogren does not see these kinds of activities as being designed to lead non-believers into church membership. I have elected to maintain his terminology even though his definition of “evangelism” is somewhat different from my own. In the Adventist context, “community service” is often used to refer to activities that Sjogren would refer to as “servant-evangelism.”

Outreach – This refers to any efforts that put church members in contact with non-Adventists. Outreach may entail acts of service to the non-Adventist population without the specific goal of leading them to church membership. It may also include those efforts that are directly evangelistic and designed to lead people to membership.

Disciple-making/Discipleship – The intentional investment by the one discipling in the spiritual life of the one being disciplined with the goal that both parties (disciple and disciple-maker) draw closer to Christ and learn to be more faithful and obedient to him. Discipleship is a journey rather than a destination and can occur between believers or between a believer and an unbeliever. It may be linked to evangelism in that Jesus

commanded his followers to make disciples (believers) of all nations (non-believers) (Matt 28:18-20) or it may refer to the ongoing process of spiritual growth among believers (as evidenced by Jesus' continued discipling of the twelve throughout the New Testament).

Institutionalism/Institutionalized – Refers to the condition of a church where the majority of ministries and structures are focused on maintenance rather than church growth. An institutionalized church is one that is geared towards serving the existing constituency rather than on growth through evangelism.

Kingdom Growth – Refers to church growth that comes as a result of evangelistic efforts. Church growth that comes as a result of baptisms or profession of faith are considered kingdom growth whereas church growth that is primarily a result of membership transfer is not considered kingdom growth.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

One of the greatest needs facing churches today is to engage more volunteers in direct evangelistic activities that result in lay-led church growth. Quite often volunteers end up serving in non-evangelistic capacities and therefore their creative energies are consumed with maintenance activities rather than those that might lead to kingdom growth. This is normally considered acceptable because of the prevailing assumption that pastors are responsible for church growth and the lay-members are responsible for day to day church operation. Clarke (2006) summarizes the problem nicely when he states,

dying churches are driven by the primary mission of preserving the institution... Dying churches are high on meetings but low on mission. Members are bogged down in church busyness and given church assignments. Both meetings and church work focus on the institutional agenda rather than the missional agenda of Jesus. (p. 120)

In the following pages we will examine three New Testament themes that demonstrate that this modern understanding of church responsibility and church growth is completely foreign to the Scriptures. Instead, we will see that God expects each and every Christian to be actively involved in the process of spreading the gospel and mentoring the lost in the process of discipleship. Furthermore, we will see that rather than relying on the clergy for the expansion of the kingdom, churches should expect the ministries of the laity to be producing disciples and preparing converts for baptism. A

return to the biblical paradigm of ministry is necessary if churches want to be faithful to the command of Jesus and to expand his kingdom before he returns.

Christian Responsibility and the Great Commission

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt 28:16-20)

Introduction

The Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20 is one of the most significant New Testament passages outlining the purpose of the church. This command for missions and evangelism is repeated at the end of each of the synoptic gospels as well as in the book of Acts (Matt 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, Acts 1:7-8) and appears to be the final instruction given by Jesus prior to his ascension to heaven. While the Matthew passage is perhaps the most famous of these commands it by no means stands alone as the solitary witness to the Christian's personal responsibility to be engaged in the work of spreading the gospel and making disciples. In fact, the apostle Paul recognizes this commission as a central facet of the Christian faith when he remarks in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And *he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.* [italics supplied].

It is appropriate to examine the content of the Great Commission passage in detail because it is central to Christ's stated purpose for the purpose of the Christian church.

Clarke (2006, p. xxvii) notes that, “as the church is shaped by God’s heart for the world, the importance of carrying out the Great Commission will take precedent over all we do. It is the responsibility and indeed obligation of every Christian disciple” (2006, p. xxvii). A detailed examination of this passage will allow the diligent Bible student to begin viewing their Christian responsibility through the lens of the Great Commission.

The Greatness of the Great Commission

Even though the Bible itself never refers to the passage in Matthew 28 as the “Great Commission” it deserves that designation for several reasons. First, the message of the Great Commission was repeatedly emphasized and rephrased in the days following his resurrection and preceding his ascension. The combined message of the commission passages serve as the final instruction given to the disciples before Jesus returned to heaven (Köstenberger, Taylor, & Stewart, 2014, pp. 199-201). As such it serves as a kind of last will and testament for Jesus regarding the church. In cultures around the world special significance is given to a person’s dying wish. In the case of Jesus however, this was not his dying wish, but his post-resurrection command (Strong, 1907, p. 352). It was given so that the merits of his death could be applied to the entire world. This leads us to the second reason why we may call this commission great.

When Jesus commissioned his remaining followers to go into the world and make disciples of all nations he was extending the plan of salvation to the farthest reaches of the earth. Because he would no longer be present to lead people to the Father and instruct them in the ways of God he left it to his disciples to continue the ministry of reconciliation on his behalf. The scope of this commission is nothing less than astonishing. The task Jesus set before his people was a human impossibility, its

magnitude beyond their capability (Strong, 1907, pp. 353-354). Furthermore, this task is not complete until “every person has heard with understanding and every community has a witnessing congregation of God’s people” (McQuilkin, 1984, p. 37).

The third reason we might consider this commission to be great is because of the nature of its content. The disciples were not simply given the task of preaching about Jesus, or even of raising up churches around the world. They were given the assignment of leading lost men and women to Jesus, helping them find salvation, and transforming them into whole-hearted followers of Jesus. John 3:16 reminds us that God’s great love for humanity is what prompted him to send Jesus to die in our place. In the Great Commission, Jesus entrusts the plan of salvation to fallible human beings (McQuilkin, 1984, p. 49). He, quite literally, places the eternal fate of the world in the hands of men who, only days before, had proven unreliable in a time of crisis. If the disciples should fail at the commission Jesus was giving them the plan of salvation would come to an end and Jesus’ sacrifice would have been in vain.

Paul supports this conclusion in Romans 10:14 when he says, “14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” If the disciples had not been sent into the world and faithfully carried out the commission Jesus gave them, the plan of salvation would have died in their generation. No new believers would have been won into God’s kingdom and the sacrifice of the Son of God would have been of no effect to countless lost souls. The disciples, and later the church, became the ambassadors of Jesus and the proclamation of what Jesus accomplished on the cross was in their hands.

The fourth reason for ascribing greatness to this commission is that it is imbued with the power of the risen Christ (Rankin, 2006, pp. 19-20). The specific command to make disciples, baptize, and teach the nations is interposed between two of Jesus' statements that guarantee the success of the Christian enterprise. First, Jesus assures his disciples that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him (v. 18). Second, he promises his eternal presence with those who engage in the work of spreading the gospel (v. 20). Taken together these two statements provide the divine power necessary to turn the impossible into the possible. Having been bestowed with full authority over heaven and earth there was nothing that could stand in the way of Jesus and block the spread of his salvation. Furthermore, his continued presence among his disciples was a guarantee that divine authority would accompany their mission. This promise is even more meaningful when we remember, "that the command to missionize is not there related to the sending by the earthly Jesus, but is traced to the exalted Jesus" (Hahn, 2009, p. 68). As a post-resurrection command, the Great Commission takes on special meaning for Christians.

Without a doubt the commission found in Matthew 28:16-20 is one of the greatest in the Bible. It serves as Jesus' final command before ascending to heaven, it is of global proportions, it is God's chosen method for communicating the plan of salvation to the world and it is imbued with the power of the risen Christ to guarantee its success. Because of these reasons it would be impossible to overestimate the significance and importance of the Great Commission in the life of the Christian. It is the lens through which all Christian activity must be viewed.

The Universal Application of the Great Commission

The Great Commission begins with a description of the eleven remaining disciples gathered together on a mountain in Galilee to await the final instructions of Jesus. It was to these disciples that the commission was given to take the gospel to all the nations. Considering that the message was originally delivered to this select group of men it is reasonable to ask the question of whether this command was intended for all Christians in all times or just for those engaged in professional ministry or perhaps even just for the eleven who were present.

Commission to all Believers

First and foremost it is important to recognize that the Christian church of the New Testament did not consider this commission to be limited to just the eleven who were present that day on the mountain. In Acts 1:26 Matthias is chosen to join the ranks of the apostles and fill the position that was vacated by Judas upon his betrayal of Jesus and subsequent suicide. While the Bible does not mention Matthias' presence at the Great Commission, the eleven clearly believed that he should be included in their ministry and therefore was under the obligation of Jesus' command.

Even greater than the inclusion of Matthias among the apostles as evidence of the universal nature of the Great Commission was the ministry of Paul. When he was called to be a disciple of Jesus, Paul (then called Saul) was not even a believer in Christ. He was a devout Jew, a Pharisee among Pharisees and a persecutor of the church (Phil 3:4-6). Yet, once he had his encounter with the risen Christ, he committed himself to a life of discipleship that led him to the farthest reaches of the world as a missionary and

ambassador for Jesus. With every breath Paul lived out the Great Commission and took to heart the command to make disciples of all nations.

Throughout the New Testament the term, “disciple,” is applied to many different groups ranging from the multitudes who followed Jesus (Luke 6:17), to the seventy (Luke 10:1), to the twelve (Matt 10:1). However, as Jesus’ ministry progressed he began to teach the deeper meaning of discipleship and the conditions that must be met for a follower to become a disciple. “The nature of the conditions show that the one who is to be a disciple of Christ in the fullest sense must be one who is fully identified with Christ, fully committed to Him, and fully submitted to Him” (Bing, 1997, p. 132). The early church seemed to recognize that the commission applied to them all equally and once someone became a disciple of Jesus they immediately began the work of leading others to Christ.

Even the content of the Great Commission itself indicates that it was not intended to be limited to only those who were present on the day it was given (Arias & Johnson, 1992, p. 32). The scope of the mission assigned to them was simply too great for eleven men, no matter how gifted, to accomplish. Jesus called for disciples to be made from all nations, and while Paul would later claim that the gospel had gone to all nations (Rom 16:26), we know there were people groups around the world who were at that time unknown and unreached. It would take more than a handful of dedicated disciples to fully realize the accomplishment of the Great Commission.

Jesus’ Presence Assured

Finally the Great Commission ends with the promise that Jesus would be with his disciples in their mission to the very end of the age (v. 20). The promise of Jesus’

presence was certainly a great encouragement to the church of the first century and it is likely that they believed the end of the age would come in their lifetime. But history has shown us that time has continued far beyond the scope of those original disciples. If Jesus' continued presence is guaranteed until the end of the age it stands to reason that the context of this promise (to engage in disciple-making) continues to stand as well. In other words, as long as time lasts, Jesus will be present among his people in their work of spreading the gospel to the whole world.

All of these factors together indicate that the Great Commission is a universal command to all Christians. It is not limited to the eleven men who were gathered in Galilee the day that it was given and it was not a special commandment given only to fulltime ministers. Instead we should understand the Great Commission as a self-replicating command given to all of Christ's disciples. What this means is that every follower of Jesus is charged with the responsibility of leading others to become disciples. These new disciples then take upon themselves the Great Commission work and in turn seek to bring others into the life of discipleship (Klauber, Manetsch, & Lutzer, 2008, p. 179).

The Heart of the Great Commission

At the heart of the Great Commission is the command to go and make disciples. While the KJV says that they were to go and "teach all nations," the Greek word *matheteusate* literally means to "make disciples" and has a much deeper meaning than simply to teach. It is important to point out that this is the only word in the passage that is given in the imperative which gives it special significance in the passage (Rankin, 2006, p. 16). The supporting words of "go," "teach," and "baptize" are all participles that

serve to support the main verb *matheteusate* (Hiebert, 1992, pp. 347-348). The heart of the Great Commission is the command to make disciples and so the following discussion will center on that idea.

While it is important to keep the supporting participles (go, baptize, and teach) in mind, the failure in Western Christianity has generally centered on the area of making disciples. As Willard notes,

for at least several decades the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian. One is not required to be, or to intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian, and one may remain a Christian without any signs of progress toward or in discipleship. (2006, p. 4)

It is because of this shortfall that this study will focus primarily on what it means to be a disciple.

Relational Nature of Discipleship

In order to better understand the depth of meaning associated with the word *mathetes* (disciple) we must first examine its roots in secular Greek usage. According to Kittel (1967, p. 416), *mathetes* is the usual word for “apprentice” in Greek society (Gerhard Kittel, 1967, p. 416). It could refer to any person who was engaged in receiving systematic instruction from a teacher or master. Deeper than that, however, is the idea that the disciple was intimately connected with the teacher and with his teachings.

Regarding the fellowship of disciples Kittel notes,

The groups which assembled around the great philosophical teachers of antiquity were much too solidly established to disintegrate when the teachers died. This was not just because of the personal regard which the masters enjoyed and which gave them influence even after death. The true presupposition for the continuation of groups of disciples is to be found, not merely at the personal level, but in the cause advocated and presented by the teachers. In the last resort these groups were formed by common acknowledgment of insights peculiar to the masters concerned. The groups regarded these as truth which they could not give up but had to propagate with all their power. The death of the teachers could not alter this. (1967, p. 423)

In this context the identity and purpose of the disciple was inseparable from the life and teachings of the master. To become a disciple was to dedicate oneself completely to the master, enter into a relationship with him, and covenant to learn from and promote his teachings. This relationship was one that was intended to flow into every aspect of a person's life. One could not truly be a disciple of Christ without giving oneself, heart and soul, to the master (Willard, 2006, p. 6). Jesus himself makes this clear in Luke 14:33 when he says, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." In other words, Jesus has the expectation that his disciples will hold nothing back from him and that they will sacrifice every part of their being to follow him.

Dependence Upon the Master

The life of the disciple is characterized by complete dependence upon the master. Kittel emphasizes this point when he says, "the almost technical sense of the word *mathetes*, which implies a direct dependence of the one under instruction upon an authority superior in knowledge, and which emphasizes the fact that this relation cannot be dissolved, controls the whole usage" (1967, p. 416). In other words, it is the relationship of dependence of the disciple to his master that becomes the foundation for a proper understanding of the word *mathetes*.

In the Old Testament there is no Hebrew equivalent for the Greek word *mathetes*. In fact the LXX does not contain the term in any passage and as Kittel observes:

If the term is missing, so, too, is that which it serves to denote. Apart from the formal relation of teacher and pupil, the OT, unlike the classical Greek world and Hellenism, has no master-disciple relation. Whether among the prophets or the scribes we seek in vain for anything corresponding to it. (1967, pp. 426-427)

In Judaism the emphasis was on mastering Scripture and becoming a rabbi whereas the master-disciple paradigm emphasizes relationship and action more than instruction (Bosch, 1984, p. 23). In the context of the New Testament, “disciples of Jesus are people who do not just profess certain views as their own but apply their growing understanding of life in the Kingdom of the Heavens to every aspect of their life on earth” (Willard, 2006, p. xi). This is important to note because when Jesus commanded that disciples be made of all nations he was describing a new paradigm by which God’s people would interact and be connected to their creator. In contrasting these two points Kittel (1967, p. 448) points out “whereas the *talmid* [student] hopes in some sense to master the Torah, it is the business of the *mathetes* [disciple] of Jesus to be stamped and fashioned by Him.” Discipleship to Jesus, therefore, would become the new gateway by which people entered the kingdom of God (Arias & Johnson, 1992, p. 18). To become a disciple would be the chief goal of the Christian. Mastery of his teachings would then flow out of that relationship.

Holistic Nature of Discipleship

For the purposes of this study it is important to recognize that discipleship, in a sense, marks the beginning as well as the fulfillment of the Christian life. It is the beginning of the Christian life because becoming a disciple is to enter into a relationship with Jesus as Lord and master (Wagner, 1989, pp. 52-53). It is also the fulfillment of the Christian life because to be a follower of Jesus is the ultimate goal of the Christian (Hirsch, 2006, p. 103). He is the central personality and doctrine around which all of Christianity revolves. The Great Commission “is not divine revelation so much as it is divine relation, a relationship that is ‘with us always.’ It is a relation that must be

propagated until the ‘end of time’” (Raschke, 2008, p. 48). In the Great Commission Jesus is calling his followers to make him the central focus of their mission. They are to invite others into the fellowship of disciples by leading them into a relationship with Christ and showing them how to commit themselves to growing and nurturing that relationship.

Baptizing and Teaching

The second half of the Great Commission involves baptism and instruction in the teachings of Jesus. Some commentators see these supporting verbs (baptizing and teaching) as the means by which disciples are made. In other words, one becomes a disciple through the process of baptism and teaching (Ferguson, 2009; Miller, 2002, pp. 14-16). Alternately, one could also understand that baptism and teaching are events which happen subsequent to being made a disciple (Hiebert, 1992, p. 350). While there certainly must be teaching involved in the process of making a disciple is it my contention that discipleship is primarily a function of building a relationship with the master. Such a relationship must be in place before a believer can be considered to be a disciple, once a disciple, such a person may be admitted into the body of Christ through baptism (Hiebert, 1992, p. 350). Therefore, baptism and continued teaching are things that happen subsequent to committing oneself to being a disciple. There are several reasons why I have adopted the view that discipleship is in fact the beginning of the Christian journey which is followed by baptism and extended instruction.

Verb Tenses

First, it is important to recognize the prominent place the term *matheteusate* (make disciples) is given in relationship to *baptizontes* (baptizing) and *didaskontes*

(teaching). As noted above, *matheteusate* is the central verb in the passage. *Baptizontes* and *didaskontes* are both supporting participles that follow after the command to make disciples (Arias & Johnson, 1992, p. 18; Bosch, 1984, p. 21). Furthermore, the term for “make disciples” is presented in the aorist tense which “indicates an undefined action usually occurring in the past” (Mounce, 2009, p. 22.20). By contrast the words for “baptizing” and “teaching” are both found in the present tense. This would seem to indicate that there is some kind of progressive time relationship between “making disciples” and baptism and instruction.

The Antecedent of Baptizing and Teaching

Second, the Great Commission passage says that God’s people are to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... and teaching them” (verse 19, 20). Understanding who “them” refers to is essential to understanding the full process involved in the Great Commission. The closest noun preceding “them” in the passage is “nations.” While “nations” is undoubtedly the antecedent of “baptizing” and “teaching” it does not stand alone. The nations that are baptized and taught must be understood in the context of the command to make disciples. Therefore the complete antecedent of “baptizing” and “teaching” are the nations which have been made into disciples through the work of God’s people. Commenting on this passage Ogden (2003, p. 46) says, “Jesus said that disciples are to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit...and to be taught to observe or obey all that he commanded.” This shows that baptism and teaching one how to live according to Jesus’ commands are things that are directed at individuals who have already become disciples rather than the means by which disciples are made.

Jesus' Example

Third, the gospels recount several instances where Jesus called disciples to himself prior to any extended formal instruction (Matt 9:9, Matt 19:21, Luke 9:59, John 1:43). One of these instances is found in Matthew 4:19 where Jesus calls Andrew and Peter to leave their business as fishermen to become fishers of men. Immediately the two left their boats and followed Jesus, responding to his call and becoming disciples. While it is apparent that this was not their first contact with Jesus it is equally clear that they had not received full theological instruction from Jesus at this point. In fact, it was not until after Jesus' death and resurrection that these disciples fully understood who it was that they had aligned themselves with and committed to follow.

These instances in the gospels indicate that extended, formal, theological instruction does not necessarily precede becoming a disciple. These men had only a basic theological understanding of who Jesus was and what he was all about at the time they became disciples. Following their decision to unite themselves with Christ he began to instruct them in a deeper and more comprehensive way. Their experience demonstrates that it is individuals who have committed themselves to being disciples who receive extended mentoring and instruction from the master. Certainly there were times when Jesus taught the masses, even those who were unconvinced about his mission, yet his most thorough instruction was reserved for those who had fully committed themselves to being his disciples (Mark 4:34).

Early Church Examples

Fourth, the later New Testament witness shows that commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior marked the starting point of discipleship. One of the clearest passages

describing this process is found in Acts 8. In this instance the apostle Philip is sent by God to converse with an Ethiopian official from the court of Queen Candace. The apostle finds the eunuch riding in his chariot reading from the scroll of Isaiah. After a brief dialogue between the two, verse 35 says, “35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.” As soon as the official recognized the centrality of Jesus in the plan of salvation he pulled his chariot to a stop and insisted that he be baptized immediately. Philip responded to this request by saying, “If you believe with all your heart you may” (verse 37,NKJV). The two then descended into the river where Philip baptized the Ethiopian thus bringing him into the fellowship of Christ. It is not too much to assume that the Ethiopian eunuch, upon learning about Jesus as the Son of God, made the decision to immediately become a disciple of Christ. Once this decision had been made, Philip followed the protocol indicated by the Great Commission and baptized the eunuch. Presumably, Philip would have continued to instruct the new convert had he been given the opportunity, but instead he was taken away by the Spirit of God and the eunuch went on his way.

Putting all of these pieces together gives the idea that Jesus’ intention was that his followers go into the world and show others how to be his disciples. A certain amount of instruction is vital at this point because someone cannot become a disciple of Jesus unless they know who Jesus is. It is important to recognize that the person of Jesus is the central point of Christian faith (John 14:6). The Great Commission bears this out and emphasizes that a wholehearted commitment to Christ is the foundation for all Christian belief. It would be incorrect to state that complete theological instruction is the foundation for baptism and discipleship. In fact, theological instruction is not even

present in the Matthean passage. Jesus' emphasis is on orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy when He commands that disciples should be taught "to obey" (Arias & Johnson, 1992, p. 20). To place theology before relationship is to return to the Old Testament model of creating masters of the Torah instead of following the New Testament model of making disciples. Certainly, theological instruction and obedience are vital to the Christian life, but they must flow out of the master-disciple relationship.

Great Commission Summary

Without a doubt the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20 is the lens through which all Christians should view their responsibilities before God. At the heart of this commission is the command for God's people to make disciples of all nations. This means that they are given the task of leading people to Jesus and placing them in his hands. As these new disciples enter into a relationship with Jesus and make the intentional decision to be his fully committed followers they are to be baptized and instructed in all the teachings of their new Lord and Master.

The command to go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them is a command that is given to all of God's people in every time and in every place. It is the solemn responsibility of all Christians to unite in this great work and it is a tremendous honor to be joined as co-laborers together with Christ for the salvation of the world.

The Priesthood of all Believers

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet 2:9)

Introduction

From the time of Martin Luther's reformation, the teaching of a priesthood of all believers has been a major emphasis of Protestant Christians (Akin, Brand, & Norman, 2004, p. 37). This priesthood of all believers was, in fact, one of the hallmarks of Protestantism which distinguished it from the prevailing Catholicism of the time (Karkkainen, 2002, pp. 43-44). Through this doctrine the Protestant church was able to cast off the idea of a designated caste of human priests serving as mediators between God and man and instead begin to approach salvation as something that could be individually received, directly from God, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. The universal priesthood as espoused by Luther meant that "all of us alike are priests, and that we all have the same authority in regard to the Word and the Sacraments, although no one has the right to administer them without the consent of the members of his Church, and the call of the majority" (Eastwood, 2009, p. 6). This was a revolutionary concept at the time but was in fact a return to New Testament Christianity where a formal priesthood had not been established. It is important to note that Luther's view of the priesthood of all believers included an element of interdependence in the body of Christ. No member of the priesthood of all believers stands independent from the rest of the body.

Despite the widespread acceptance of the doctrine there is not a harmony of belief about what exactly the priesthood of all believers entails. Muthiah Muthiah (2009, p. 8) points out that there are two prevailing views regarding this doctrine and that the debate centers around whether the priesthood is a reference to status or function. Elliot (2001, p. 551) makes the case that the passage is primarily interested in demonstrating the election of God's people and that it is not pointing out a functional nature of the priesthood. On

the other hand Schweizer (1992, p. 292) points out that verse 9 highlights the priestly function of proclamation. Michaels (1989, pp. 82-87) also points to the offering of spiritual sacrifices in verse 5 as being evidence of function given to the priesthood of all believers. Since the text itself seems to indicate a functional role for the ‘royal priesthood’ (offering spiritual sacrifices and declaring God’s praises) it will be instructive to further examine the functional component of the priesthood of all believers.

Examination of 1 Peter 2:9

There are four New Testament passages that use priesthood language in reference to Christians (1 Pet 2:4-10; Rev 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6), of these 1 Peter 2:4-10 is the passage traditionally used to establish the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. (Muthiah, 2009, p. 7). When one examines verse 9 it becomes clear that Christians are not simply a “royal priesthood” but they are also “a chosen race,” “a holy nation,” and a “people belonging to God.” These terms are Old Testament descriptions of Israel and serve to connect the Christian faith with God’s historical people (McKnight, 2011). To focus exclusively on the royal priesthood portion of the passage is to ignore three-fourths of the description of what election actually means. Unfortunately, space limitations do not allow for a thorough examination of each of these appellations and this study will have to be limited to the priestly standing of Christians.

The basic meaning of these four descriptions is that Christians are God’s elect people (Carpenter & McCown, 1992). Their special standing is not something that is naturally present but comes as a result of belonging to God. This is especially true when we examine the phrase “royal priesthood.”

The phrase *basileion ierateuma* is most often translated “royal priesthood.” Some would see in this phrase an indication of the kingly nature of the saints. “According to the divine plan and purpose the Israelites were to be both a royal and a priestly race. In an evil world they were to be kings, moral and spiritual, in that they were to prevail over the realm of sin” (Nichol, 1980b, p. 595). While there are biblical passages that emphasize the royal nature of the saints (Rev. 3:21, Rev. 20:4) the emphasis here is on their calling as priests. As Kittel (1966, pp. 249-250) notes, “*basileion* means belonging to a king, but in such a way that after this adjectival definition all the emphasis falls on the priestly fellowship. Thus *ierateuma* is the chief concept.” In other words the royal nature of this priesthood does not come from the priests themselves being kings, but is directly a result of them being in service to the King of Kings. Muthiah (2009, pp. 7-8) points out that the “background to the ‘holy priesthood’ of verse 5 and the ‘holy nation’ of verse 9 is Exod 19:6.” He also observes that “the ‘royal priesthood’ in verse 9 is a quotation from the LXX rendering of Exod 19:6.” This rendering tends to obscure the fact that in the Hebrew text the emphasis was on the priestly nature of the kingdom of Israel rather than a declaration that they were both kings and priests (“ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests,” KJV). Because of this emphasis the phrase should not be understood as saying the saints are “kings and priests” but rather that they are priests in service to the King.

For many Christians, the priesthood of all believers means that all Christians have direct access to God without having to go through a human priest as a mediator. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary summarizes this view when it says,

As priests, Christians are to offer themselves as living sacrifices, a body of believers completely dedicated to God. They need no human priest serving as mediator

between them and God, for there is but one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. (Nichol, 1980, vol. 7, p. 562)

While this understanding is certainly present in the passage (e.g. 1 Pet 2:5) the calling to priesthood encompasses much more.

Tuck puts it nicely when he says,

The election is always, and essentially, a special call to service. The Jewish race had been called out by God for a particular service in relation to humanity, and for that service they were endowed with an extraordinary sense of God; that marks the Jewish off from every other human race... The Christian Jews are bidden to think of themselves as an elect race, called to this service for humanity, to show forth the excellences and the grace of God, as manifested in the person, and in the redemptive work, of His Son Jesus Christ. (1996, p. 70)

The concept of a priesthood of all believers means that while Christians do have direct access to God, they are also called to a special work on his behalf. Along with the privilege of approaching God comes the responsibility of representing him to the world.

It is important to emphasize the fact that being a royal priesthood carries with it a serious responsibility. The call to service appears to even take precedence over the privilege of approaching God.

The continuation in verse 9 speaks of proclamation. This makes it clear that the preceding descriptions, including *ierateuma*, cannot be restricted to the inner life of the Christian community, e.g., as a general priesthood, though this is how the passage is customarily treated. What is really meant is a ministry of witness to all humanity along the lines of Is. 61:1. (Kittel, 1966, p. 251)

This responsibility becomes the central reason why Christians are set aside as a royal priesthood. It is, in fact, the primary focus of the passage.

The exact message that the royal priesthood is to proclaim is a little ambiguous. The term *aretas*, translated “excellencies” (NASU) has a variety of meanings in the LXX and the New Testament. It is variously translated as, “glory,” “splendor,” “praise,” “excellence,” and “virtue.” In Greek literature the term came to be synonymous with

dikaiosune, *dunamai*, and *doxa* (Kittel, 1964a, pp. 459-460). Rather than choose one specific meaning, it is appropriate to incorporate them all into our understanding of the message the saints are to proclaim.

Another way of looking at it is to understand that the royal priesthood is established to proclaim the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. For the New Testament writers, the gospel was the central cause for celebration among Christians. Jesus' death on the cross was the glory, splendor, and virtue of God demonstrated in bodily form. As Paul says in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

So what inaugurates an individual into this royal priesthood? Again 1 Peter 2:9 provides us with the answer. It says that those who are designated as God's chosen people have been called "out of darkness and into his wonderful light." More specifically it is those who have been converted and baptized that are included in this royal priesthood. At that point they become a part of the body of Christ united together with fellow "priests" to declare the praises of God. As Felton (2000, p. 370) says, "the sacrament of baptism is ordination to ministry – the general ministry of all baptized Christians. We are *all* ordained ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ; perhaps we have assigned the clergy exclusive use of the term for too long." It is those who have experienced the light of salvation and been baptized that are considered God's saints and therefore members of the royal priesthood (John 1:1-12).

The Old Testament Background

The idea of a chosen people was hardly a new concept in the New Testament. In fact the declaration in 1 Peter is a direct reference to the promise given to Israel by God on Mount Sinai as recorded in Exodus 19:6. Here God proclaims, “you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The idea of Israel’s election as God’s holy nation is the background for Peter’s understanding of the Christian’s standing before God. The Old Testament promise given to Israel is extended to the whole people of God (Muthiah, 2009, p. 8).

There is one significant difference between the promise given to Israel in Exodus and the one that is given to Christians in 1 Peter. The main difference is the condition upon which the promise depends.

In Exodus the condition for being a holy nation was obedience to the covenant God had established. Exodus 19:5 says, “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.” The “if-then” clause indicates a significant condition behind the promise given to Israel. If they would be faithful to God’s commands, then they would receive the blessing of being his treasured possession, a holy nation, and a royal priesthood. Unfortunately, it did not take long for Israel to break this condition. God had just barely given the conditions for their election when they turned their back on him by worshipping the golden calf as a representation of their god. This initial act of rebellion not only broke the conditions of the covenant but also served as the beginning of a long history of rebellion against God.

The New Testament promise, by contrast, is not dependent upon the Christian's obedience. Instead, the emphasis in 1 Peter is that the special election of the Christian is dependent upon one's faith in Christ and his sacrifice. 1 Peter 2:4-5 says,

as you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The New Testament promise of election is clearly superior to the one found in Exodus in that it does not depend on man's obedience, but upon the obedience of Jesus. As the author of Hebrews notes, "But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises." (8:6).

The above discussion shows that the promise given to Christians in 1 Peter 2:9 is a continuation of the promise given by God at Sinai. Christians do not receive a totally new promise but instead they inherit the promise that was originally given to Israel. This is in fulfillment of the promise given in Jeremiah 31:31 which says, "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.'" This New Covenant is addressed by the author of Hebrews where it is made clear that it is superior to the old because it rests on better promises (Heb 8). Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that while the promise is in some way a continuation of the one given to ancient Israel, it is not completely identical in that the conditions for receiving it are not based on the same thing (Heb 8:6) and also that the outcome will be different (Heb 8:9-12).

The Responsibilities of Priests

The context of 1 Peter 2:9 makes it clear that the primary function of New Testament priests is to “declare the praises” of God and to uplift Christ, “the stone the builders rejected” (vss. 7, 9). However, by examining the role of priests in the Old Testament we can gain a fuller understanding of what God expects from his royal priesthood today.

There were numerous functions that priests served in the Old Testament (Stubbs, 2009, pp. 43-48), among them were responsibilities to (a) oversee the tabernacle/temple and its services (Exod 28, 29, 40, 2 Chr 23:18), (b) administrate the sacrifices (Evans, Evans, & Porter, 2000, p. 73), (c) provide intercession between God and man (Lev 1) and, (d) to present and uphold God’s law before the people (Num 31, 2 Kigs 22, 2 Chr 15) (Gelpi, 1993, p. 73). Muthiah (2009, p. 17) observes that the New Testament does not advocate a separated official priesthood but rather that the “functions of sacrifice, proclamation, and interpretation that were associated with the Levitical priesthood” are jointly shared by all believers. It is therefore reasonable to examine how Old Testament priestly functions might translate into the New Testament priesthood of all believers. When we apply these functions to the New Testament priesthood several important factors come to light.

First, it is reasonable to surmise that the New Testament priesthood does, in fact, continue to oversee temple services. However, instead of an external building the people of God have become the “spiritual house” (Davids, 1990, p. 87). This is the essential point of 1 Peter 2:5 which says that God’s people are being built into a spiritual house. The spiritual house made up of God’s people is also called the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:

27) or the Church (Eph 5:22-32). Furthermore, whereas the Old Testament priests were to offer animal sacrifices on the temple altar and oversee the tabernacle services (Num 18:18), New Testament priests are called to offer up themselves as spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5).

Peter's use of cultic imagery shows that there is continuity between the Old Testament priesthood and Christian responsibility. Even though the formal temple was no longer a part of Christian worship, the idea of a temple remained. Much like the promise of the law being written on the Christian's heart (Jer 31:33), the temple and its services were now internal components in a Christian's life. Since every Christian is being built into the spiritual house of God it is reasonable to conclude that New Testament Christians have a priestly function to oversee this tabernacle.

Second, a major function of the Old Testament priesthood was to administer the sacrifices, serving as intercessors between God and man (Exod 40:15, Lev 1:5, Lev 2:2, Lev 3:2). Israelites who sinned were unable to approach God without first going through the priests and without the priest's mediatorial function, the sinner would have been unable to receive pardon.

In the New Testament every believer has access to forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Heb 4:16, 1 Pet 2:5) without having to go through a human priestly mediator. This follows the traditional Protestant understanding of the priesthood of all believers (Ingersoll, 2009, p. 11). Since Jesus is the universal mediator (1 Tim 2:5), Christians have no need of a formal human priesthood to represent them to God.

This understanding, however, only focuses on access to God and does nothing to examine the responsibility Christians have as a royal priesthood. Just as the Old

Testament priests were given the ministry of sacrifices to facilitate forgiveness, New Testament priests are given the ministry of reconciliation and serve as ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor 5:18). As Burrill (1997, p. 69) notes, “the apostle Paul does seem to indicate that there is a priestly service of sacrifice that happens in the New Testament church.” Coleman (1992, p. 64) underscores this fact by pointing out that Jesus himself did not come to evangelize the world but to make it possible for the world to be saved through him. It was to his disciples that he gave the responsibility of carrying the message and bringing in the harvest. In doing so, we perform the mediatorial and priestly function of helping the lost receive forgiveness.

Third, the Old Testament frequently connects priests with the responsibility of upholding the law of God and teaching the people how to be faithful (Deut 17:18, 2 Chr 19:8, 2 Chr 15:3, Ezek 7:26). The New Testament supports the idea that Christians are called to this priestly responsibility (Rom 10:14, Matt 28:20). It is significant that Paul himself considers the preaching of the gospel to be a part of his “priestly duty” (Rom 15:16). Therefore, a major component to being a part of the royal priesthood is to teach God’s law and to proclaim salvation by grace through Jesus.

In summary, we can say that much of the work done by Old Testament priests can be translated to the work of the New Testament priesthood of all believers. Christians are still called to oversee the temple and its services (the spiritual temple which is the body of Christ or the church), they are still called to mediate forgiveness (by uplifting the sacrifice of Jesus to the lost), and they are still called to present God’s law (through Jesus Christ).

The Need for Faithfulness

In the Old Testament, God's promises were often conditional upon the faithfulness of his people. God repeatedly tells the Israelites that they will receive his blessings and continue to be his covenant people "if" they keep his laws and decrees (Exod 15:26, Exod 19:5, Deut 7:12). In Romans 9-11 Paul makes the case that Israel forfeited their election because of unbelief and disobedience. In chapter 11 he compares the nation of Israel to cultivated olive branches that have been broken off because of unbelief and the believing gentiles to wild olive branches that have been grafted into the tree (11:17-21). Paul then observes that the grafted branches can be removed from the root just as easily as the natural branches were. Paul's point is that the gentile believers should not look down on unfaithful Israel nor should they believe that their own election is automatic. Rather, election continues to be conditional in nature and individuals will remain a part of Christ's royal priesthood only as they remain faithful, fruitful and dedicated to him. Jesus himself says, "therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matt 21:42).

While there are clear blessings associated with being a part of God's royal priesthood, that election also comes with specific responsibilities. Our election is conditional upon being faithful to Christ's plan for our life, which includes our service as his representatives to the world. Like the Israelites, if we fail to carry out the work given us, God may very well remove our election and give it to a people who will bear fruit.

Priesthood of all Believers Summary

The purpose of the above discussion is to demonstrate that the priesthood of all believers goes far beyond simply having direct access to God. In fact, the life of the Old

Testament priest was defined by service to the larger community. Today, that responsibility to service remains. As 1 Pet 2:9 points out, the saints are a royal priesthood for the express purpose that they “may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

The Role of Clergy and Laity in Ephesians 4:11-13

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

Introduction

Ephesians 4:11-13 is perhaps the most informative Scripture in all the New Testament for understanding the role of clergy and laity within the life of the church. As such, no discussion on the need for lay-led evangelism would be complete without an examination of this passage. In the following pages we will survey this passage and examine the evidence for lay-led ministry as a cause of church unity and maturity.

The Role of the Clergy

The passage begins with the important phrase “Christ himself gave.” . Much like spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit, God has given to the church certain individuals who are called to a specific role in the body of Christ. Buttrick (1962, p. 690) explains it clearly when he says, “*edoken* here has its normal Greek sense of gave. As God gave Christ to the church to be its head, so Christ has given ministers to the church to serve it in various functions.” Close examination of this seemingly insignificant phrase (he gave) leads to an important conclusion. Since these designated ministers are placed in their

positions by God to fulfill a specific duty, the congregations where they minister should seek to work with (rather than against) those ministers. Indeed, this seems to be the primary point in Hebrews 13:17 where the author says “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.” What seems to be described by these passages is a collaborative effort between ministers and lay-members to accomplish the work given to the church by Christ. This connection between ministers and laity describes an interdependent relationship where the harmonious working between both groups results in a mature and healthy church body.

It is also important to point out that authority in the church is derived from spiritual and relational sources as opposed being strictly positional. As Hirsch (2006, p. 160) notes, “apostolic ministry draws its authority and power primarily from the idea of service and calling, and from moral, or spiritual, authority, and not from positional authority”

In the biblical ideal, church members would support and seek to work with God’s appointed spiritual leader who would in turn lead with wisdom, spiritual discernment and humility. The reality is that in some cases church members feel that it is their job to keep their pastor in check and be guardians against pastors who might try to lead the church astray. A pastor, therefore, must prove his or her worth to their satisfaction before they will actively support his or her efforts. Conversely there are many ministers who seem to have forgotten that spiritual leadership requires humility, service, and discernment. Such leaders may seek to lead their churches as if they themselves were the head of the church

rather than Christ. For a variety of reasons, pastors have lost much of the respect they once enjoyed and the reasons for this change are beyond the scope of this paper. It is enough to recognize that this is a reality in many churches and pastors now have to work very hard to earn trust and gain the ability to lead in the congregations where they have been called by God to serve.

Second, ministers must remember that their position in the church is dependent upon God's blessing and calling and that they are called to a specific function within the church. Deviation from that function, whether through neglect or well-intentioned diversions constitutes disobedience to God. This is why it is vital to understand God's expectation from ministers in the life of the church. It is to this question that we now turn our attention.

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul lists four distinct ministry offices: apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers. Some interpreters see pastors and teachers as two sides of a single office while others believe the passage is describing two distinct titles (Buttrick, 1962; Nichol, 1980a); (Buttrick, 1962, p. 691); (Nichol, 1980a, p. 1023). For the purposes of this study it is not necessary to take a definitive stand on either side. It is sufficient to note that all of the offices mentioned in the verse are distinct from whatever other ministry personnel might be in the church. In our modern context we would probably identify these offices as clergy, or those whose livelihood is derived from full time ministry.

It is interesting to note that Paul assigns the same basic duty to each of the different ministry offices, that is, to "equip his [God's] people" (Eph 4:12). Whatever

other functions they might all have, they all share this primary responsibility (Burrill, 1997, p. 90).

The word translated “equip” is the Greek word *katarismon* and this is the only time it is used by Paul (Juengst, 1998, p. 110). Despite the rarity of the word it offers us very few surprises. The word simply means to equip or train. Training is the process by which someone is prepared to perform a specific function (Trenchard, 1992, p. 216). The assumption is that once a person is trained or equipped they will be set to work accomplishing the thing which they have been prepared to do. Therefore, inherent in the command for clergy to “equip” the saints is an understanding that the equipping results in action. Unless the training results in effective ministry, the demands of Ephesians 4:12 are not met. This is an important fact to remember because a pastor’s job is not complete until the church is active in performing those works of service.

In summary, Ephesians 4:11 identifies several ministry offices, two of which we would consider today to be professional clergy (evangelist and pastor/teacher). To these ministers he gives the responsibility of equipping the saints for works of service. The pastor then, is responsible for both the training of members for service and for mobilizing them into active ministry. This constitutes the most basic responsibility of all clergy.

The Role of the Laity

Just as the clergy are given a specific function in the overall body of Christ, so also are the laity called to service. Ephesians 4:12 says that the body of Christ (that is the laity) is called to “works of service.” Christians may be saved by grace but they have a distinct work to which they are assigned.

The Greek word translated “service” is *diakonia*. This is the same basic word from which we get the English term “deacon.” In Acts 6 the Bible records a dispute that arose because the Jewish widows and Hellenistic widows within the church were receiving different treatment with the daily distribution of food. The apostles had become consumed by managing this situation and upon realizing that they were neglecting their true calling they brought the church together to offer a solution. The plan involved appointing men who were filled with the Spirit who would serve (*diakonia*) the widows and oversee the fair distribution of food.

The role performed by the deacons in Acts 6 is in harmony with the meaning of the term *diakonia*. According to Kittel (Kittel, 1964b, pp. 88-89), *diakonia* means several things in the New Testament. a) “Waiting at table,” or in a wider sense “provision for bodily sustenance,” b) For any “discharge of service” conducted in genuine love and, c) The “discharge of certain obligations in the community.” However, despite the rather mundane origin of the term, *diakonia* also has a strong spiritual component.

2 Cor. 5:18 says, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the *ministry* of reconciliation.” The word translated ministry is once again *diakonia*. This time however, the term does not refer to the waiting of tables or to any other kind of physical duty within the church. Instead, it is talking about the proclamation of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Just as God reconciled the world through the death of Jesus, so God calls all his servants to involve themselves in the ministry of reconciliation. Two verses later Paul tells us that Christians are ambassadors for Christ. As such, we carry the responsibility of representing him and his plan of salvation to the world.

When we apply this broader understanding of *diakonia* to the interpretation of Ephesians 4:12 it becomes clear that Paul does not imply that the body of Christ (the laity inclusive of the pastor) is called simply to mundane tasks like maintaining the church building or mowing the lawn (works of service). Instead, all Christians are ambassadors for Christ and are given the ministry of reconciliation. As Burrill notes (1997, p. 84), “caring was always the responsibility of the whole congregation.” The laity, therefore, is called to gospel service and it is the job of the clergy to prepare them to do it effectively.

In summary, Ephesians 4:12 states that God’s people are to be equipped for works of service. The term “service” in this passage should be understood in the broad sense of ministry for Christ that includes both mundane tasks (waiting on tables) as well as spiritual ones (the ministry of reconciliation). Lay-members, therefore, are not exempt from evangelistic involvement. Rather they are to use their spiritual gifts in service to God and partner with their leaders in evangelistic ministry.

Results of an Equipped Laity

At this point it is important to recognize what happens in a church when the clergy and laity are functioning in harmony with the above-mentioned principles. According to Paul the end result is that the church will be built up, unified, and mature (Eph 4:12-13). It is possible to see a clear cause and effect progression in this passage. It begins with clergy fulfilling their role as trainers and equippers of the laity. This results in a church membership that is mobilized to reach out into the world and make disciples for Christ. As the church engages in this ministry of reconciliation the body of Christ grows (spiritually and numerically), unifies, and matures. This multi-step process is necessary to guard the church against heresy, deception and misdirection. As Paul says

in verse 14, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”

It is important to note that while all Christians are called to take part in the Great Commission we should not become dogmatic in insisting that everyone fulfill this responsibility in the same way. This is the essential point of Paul’s body metaphor in Ephesians 4:4, 15-16 and expanded in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 12: 12-30 where he explains that the body is composed of different parts and that each part is essential to the healthy functioning of the whole. When applied to Ephesians 4:11-16 we should understand that when the whole body unites around the common goal of expanding God’s kingdom, with each part of the body serving in harmony with that goal and according to their spiritual gifts, that the church gains a divine unity. The power of working together to accomplish God’s mission for the church has an edifying effect on the body which gives it the strength to resist the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming (Eph 4:14).

The Role of Clergy and Laity Summary

Ephesians 4:11-12 is essentially a prescription by which the church can become the healthy, robust body God intended it to be. When congregations neglect or ignore this prescription the end result is a feeble church that neither grows nor reaches spiritual maturity. If a church truly wants to have unity and reach full maturity then both pastors and laity must be brought into alignment with this ministry structure. Pastors should spend the bulk of their time discipling, training, and equipping members for effective

evangelistic service. Once equipped, the lay-members must use their training by entering the world, witnessing for Christ, and leading people into a saving relationship with him.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have examined several passages that demonstrate the need for every member of the body of Christ to be active in spreading the good news of salvation. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 explains that the primary responsibility of Christians is to make disciples of all nations. That is to bring the lost into a saving relationship with Christ where they follow him as their Lord and master. 1 Peter 2:9 reveals that as a priesthood of believers, Christians are called to “declare the praises” of God by witnessing to the life, death and resurrection of Christ. This priestly responsibility is given to every Christian. Finally, Ephesians 4:11-12 explains how the body of Christ should be structured in order for it to fulfill its priestly and Great Commission function. Clergy are given the responsibility of training and mobilizing the laity to effectively engage in the ministry of reconciliation.

The purpose for examining these passages is to demonstrate that the New Testament model for church life and growth is radically different from what we typically experience in the church today. Whereas most of our modern churches look to the clergy as the primary (or solitary) soul winners the New Testament teaches that this responsibility falls upon every Christian who has become a disciple of Jesus. A return to the biblical pattern of evangelism is vital if the church intends to successfully reap the harvest that God has prepared.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Far too many churches today are focused on maintenance rather than mission (Stetzer & Dodson, 2007, p. 216) and end up devoting most of their energies to maintaining the institution rather than transforming the world (Hammett, 2013, pp. 36-37). This summation is supported by findings from a 2009 study (Barna) that concluded “demographics suggest that the mainline churches may be on the precipice of a period of decline unless remedial steps are taken.” In order for these churches to become vibrant, evangelistic organizations they must undergo a transformation. The following pages will be an examination of current literature that focuses on changing congregational culture from maintenance to mission.

This examination will follow two lines. The first will focus on the process of bringing about institutional and administrative change by developing a clear sense of mission, forming a guiding coalition to manage change, transforming existing structures and creating new ones.

The second line will focus on bringing about congregational transformation through the personal renewal of members as a result of intentional discipleship. Lasting change must begin with the individual rather than the organization (Black & Gregersen, 2002, p. 91) and so this second line will focus on the goal of personal renewal.

Transforming congregational culture is no easy task and one single approach will not be sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to approach change from an organizational as well as an individual perspective. The following pages will be an examination of literature that speaks to such a two-pronged approach.

The Need for Change

Why should a congregation engage in an intentional change effort? Why go through the difficult process of transformation? Why develop new structures and methods and ministries? The simple answer is that the church is not living up to its high calling and that churches that intend to thrive in the 21st century will need to adapt to reach a rapidly changing culture. Furthermore, an analysis of the ministries and structures of the Fort Worth First church reveals that it is not organized around the principles of the Great Commission and the Priesthood of all believers. Pastors, rather than serving as trainers for lay-led evangelism, are the primary (if not sole) evangelists while the majority of the laity are engaged in maintenance oriented ministries. In order to bring the church into harmony with these New Testament principles change needs to happen.

In *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* the authors compare adaptive change to the human evolutionary process whereby human systems were forced to adapt to changes in the world around them. They define adaptive leadership as, “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 24). Research into church growth trends reveals that mainline evangelical churches have not done a very good job of adapting to the times.

According to the Barna Group (2013, p. 11) not only are Christians “largely indistinguishable from nonbelievers in how they think and live” but we are also failing to impact our society in any meaningful ways. When we consider Jesus’ promise that the gates of hell would not stand against the church (Matt 16:18) it is discouraging to think that over 80% of Christian churches are plateaued or declining and of those that are experiencing growth only about 1% are doing so through reaching the lost (Nelson & Appel, 2000, p. 2).

Mittelberg (2000, p. 20) observes that while just about every evangelical church will cite evangelism as a core value it is difficult to find one where that is seen in practice. He points out that most Christians do not have many non-Christian friends (if they have any at all), that most believers cannot quote even the most well-known Scriptures (i.e. John 3:16) and that a shocking majority of pastors are leading churches where evangelism is not a primary component of their ministries and training.

There are undoubtedly innumerable reasons why churches today struggle to grow and make an impact. Robinson highlights five factors that have contributed to the decline in mainline congregations. All these factors have combined to create a church that is out of touch with modern trends and unequipped to impact society in a meaningful way (2003, pp. 4-11). He then goes on to suggest that the church needs to engage in a cultural transformation much like what has been experienced in the secular world and that simple programmatic change will not be enough (2003, p. 12).

More current research has revealed similar disturbing trends. As Barna (2011) notes, a majority of Americans now view Christianity as just one among many options and that over 70% of Americans take an a la carte approach to faith, picking and

choosing components from various sources to create their own belief system. Barna's 2011 *State of the Church* research shows that a decline of statistical significance is present in almost every faith category when compared to results from 1991. This includes a decrease in the number of people claiming to be Christian, church attendance, faith practices (i.e. Bible study, prayer), and volunteerism. By contrast the percentage of those who are characterized as unchurched has risen from 24% in 1991 to 37% in 2011.

Within Adventism the picture is not much better. Burrill (2004, p. 39) observes that "fully 80 to 85 percent of all Adventist churches in North America are plateaued or declining." He concludes that the Adventist church must either begin rapid planting of new churches, work to renew existing churches, or else enter into a period of decline and death.

These findings are supported by a research project led by Kidder (2011, p. 12) that examined Seventh-day Adventist churches in North American in an attempt to identify characteristics common to flourishing churches. In this study they wanted to examine churches that "had sustained 5 percent growth (in attendance, membership, and baptisms) for five consecutive years" excluding those that ministered primarily to first-generation immigrant populations. Their research identified only five churches that met their selection criteria. In order to have a larger sample to study they expanded the criteria to included churches that experienced 3-5% growth for three to five years. This resulted in adding another 18 churches to the study, bringing the total to 23.

What is significant about this study is that it reveals that the number of growing churches is even less than what is expected by Burrill's estimates. Kidder's own estimate that over 80% of Adventist churches in North America are plateaued or declining seems to

be very conservative. The 23 churches that met the research's growth criteria is only .4% of the more than 5,000 total Adventist churches in North America (North American Division Statistics, 2013). If we define growth the same way that Kidder does and assume (conservatively) that 50% of churches are targeted towards non-immigrant populations then this still means over 99% of NAD churches are not growing in any significant or sustained manner. Furthermore, the annual statistics chart for the NAD reveals that 2011 had a growth rate of only 1.35% marking a 10 year low for the Division. From 2001 to 2011 the annual growth rate never rose above 2.26%.

With so many churches plateaued or declining it seems obvious that if we do not address the issues that led to these statistics the Christian faith will likely continue a gradual slide into obscurity and irrelevance in North America. However, if we can reverse this trend and take the steps needed to create churches that meet the challenges of modern society, Christianity can once again become a growing, evangelistic movement. Change, therefore, is not just a good idea, it is a necessity.

Institutional Change

One side of the change process is concerned primarily with institutional or organizational change. Quite often a church that has reached a plateau or state of decline has systems in place that are inefficient and ineffective. This would correspond to the theory of Natural Church Development (Schwarz, 2000, pp. 28-29) that functional structures are one of the eight characteristics of healthy churches. In such a case it will be necessary to cut away the dead wood, as it were, and create spaces for new and vibrant ministries to grow up. The following sections will focus on the change process as it relates to structural and administrative change.

Change Begins With the Leader

Before change can take place in any congregation there needs to be someone who catches a vision for what God wants to see happen. It is important that this person be a leader in the church with enough authority to bring the vision to life. Change is never easy and the change agent must be prepared to engage in a long and difficult process.

Friedman (2007, p. 14) makes the case that systemic change is almost always a result of the influence of what he calls a “self-differentiated leader.” Such a person is “someone who has clarity about his or her own goals, and, therefore, someone who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about.” Such a leader can help to overcome gridlock and move an organization forward. However, the “self-differentiated leader” should also be prepared to face opposition and sabotage, indeed, such a leader should expect these things. He writes,

Eventually I came to see that this “resistance,” as it is usually called, is more than a reaction to novelty; it is part and parcel of the systemic process of leadership. Sabotage is not merely something to be avoided or wished away; instead, it comes with the territory of leading, whether the “territory” is a family or an organization. And a leader’s capacity to recognize sabotage for what it is – that is, a systemic phenomenon connected to the shifting balances in the emotional processes of a relationship system and *not* to the institution’s specific issues, makeup, or goals – is the key to the kingdom. (2007, p. 11)

Friedman’s observations underscore the fact that change efforts will create tension and conflict and change agents need to be prepared, emotionally, to meet this challenge. Such a “self-differentiated leader” with a clear sense of identity and purpose is needed to navigate the muddy waters of change.

An experience by the Union Baptist Association (UBA) also illustrates why it is important for the change agent to be someone who is a leader within the local congregation. Herrington (2000, p. 11) notes that churches engaged in a change process

made progress so long as consultants from the UBA team were present. However, as the consultants exited the scene the churches often stalled out. After examining the situation the leaders of the UBA discovered that the consultants had been the ones leading the change process and the local pastors, while supporting the work of the consultants, were themselves following a managerial style of leadership. As such, forward momentum stopped when the consultants left and the churches returned to maintenance. This experience illustrates the importance of having a primary leader (preferably the pastor) serve as the change agent in a church. The pastor must personally embrace and model the values that need to be established and he must also be the primary one to keep the congregation moving forward. If the motivation for change comes from an external source then as soon as that source moves on the motivation for change will fade as well.

Nelson and Appel (2000, p. 57) do not insist that it is the pastor's responsibility to lead the charge but they do point out the need for a dedicated change agent or champion. This person must internalize the values behind the changes being attempted, have the stamina to keep moving forward despite resistance, and be a person of influence within the church. Furthermore, they identify inadequate leadership as the number one reason why change fails to happen in a church (pp. 59-60).

Characteristics of a Change Leader

Since it is apparent that change must begin with a leader in the local church it is thus appropriate to examine the characteristics of a successful change leader.

Herrington (2000, p. 16) cites spiritual and relational vitality as "the driving force in congregational change." By this he means that there is a strong sense of love for God

and for fellow believers. He believes that this should be the first step in any change process. A leader seeking to initiate change must have these two characteristics.

Friedman observes that an effective leader will have a non-anxious presence that influences the emotional system of an organization. He says,

Furthermore, the power inherent in a leader's presence does not reside in physical or economic strength but in the nature of his or her own being, so that even when leaders are entitled to great power by dint of their office, it is ultimately the nature of their presence that is the source of their real strength. (2007, pp. 230-231)

For Friedman (2007, p. 231), effective leadership is more about emotional intelligence than technical expertise. The ability to lead is rooted in the ability to be self-aware and self-differentiated. Such a leader can avoid being swept up in the emotional processes of a chronically anxious system and lead the motivated members of the system towards strength and enduring change.

Wood (2001) describes many other characteristics that successful change leaders must have. Among the various personality traits and skills he mentions is the underlying reality that transforming struggling churches is a daunting task that requires a tremendous amount of dedication and fortitude. He notes that every change effort will be met with resistance, sabotage and disgruntled members. The leader must be prepared for these certainties and committed enough to the change process to keep things moving forward. Without such strong willed determination a pastor should not attempt a transformational process. This observation makes it clear that love for God and man is not enough. A change leader also needs a certain tenacity and perhaps a rather tough skin.

Tenacity in Face of Change

Expanding on the idea of a leader's need to withstand pressure, Hirsch quotes a statement from Addison saying,

The ultimate goal of these apostolic leaders is to call the denomination away from maintenance, back to mission. The apostolic denominational leader needs to be a visionary, who can outlast significant opposition from within the denominational structures and can build alliances with those who desire change. Furthermore, the strategy of the apostolic leader could involve casting vision and winning approval for a shift from maintenance to mission. In addition the leader has to encourage signs of life within the existing structures and raise up a new generation of leaders and churches from the old. The apostolic denominational leader needs to ensure the new generation is not 'frozen out' by those who resist change. Finally, such a leader must restructure the denomination's institutions so that they serve mission purposes. (2006, p. 154)

Congregational transformation, therefore, is a balancing act. The change agent must work to change the structures that function to maintain the status quo while at the same time keep those who created the structures from going into revolt. The change agent must also simultaneously mentor and protect a new generation of leaders that can adopt and carry forward the new vision. All this must be done without allowing conflict over changes to destroy a church or bring the change process to a halt.

Preparing for Change

It is never wise to simply leap into a change process in a church. Careful planning should precede any attempt at transformation. It is also important to recognize that not all change is the same. Heifetz et al. (2009, pp. 29-33) point out that there is a difference between adaptive change and technical change. Where technical change is rather straight forward and can follow mechanical processes, adaptive change requires members of the organization to change themselves. This means that the individuals in an organization facing adaptive change will be required to confront their identity and even abandon portions of their identity that are counterproductive towards progress. Often, the discomfort of this kind of change is greater than that of maintaining the status quo, which is why adaptive change can be so difficult. Technical change can be accomplished

through technical expertise but adaptive change requires the ability to work with people and mindsets and is far more difficult.

An example of this that is familiar to many Adventists is the Wednesday night prayer meeting. In many Adventist churches prayer meeting is a long held tradition that used to be a big part of church life. Today, however, most churches seem to struggle to have even a handful of members come out for these mid-week meetings. A technical change approach to this problem might be to have better announcements at church or to adjust the prayer meeting format or try to choose different topics to encourage people to attend. An adaptive solution may be to discard prayer meeting altogether and develop new ministries that meet the congregation's needs. The challenge comes when people view ministries such as prayer meeting as being essential to their church identity and insist on holding onto ministries and systems long after they have ceased being effective.

Herrington (2000, pp. 29-48) outlines a three-step process for laying the groundwork for change. These three steps are "making personal preparation," "creating urgency," and "establishing the vision community." The latter two steps are also highlighted in *The Leader's Change Handbook* in a chapter written by John Kotter, which outlines the eight steps to transformation. Here it is explained that the first step towards change is to create a sense of urgency and the second is to create a powerful guiding coalition (Conger, Spreitzer, & Lawler, 1999, pp. 87-91). It is clear, therefore, that before change can occur there must be a widely perceived sense that change is needed and there must be a group of people committed to seeing it happen.

Making Personal Preparation

Herrington's (2000, pp. 29-34) first step towards change centers on the change leader. Since change most often begins with a leader, making personal preparation to face the struggles of change is vital. Personal preparation should include practicing spiritual disciplines, reaffirming God's mission for the church, and being open to self-assessment. These things should help the leader become firmly grounded in God's calling and purpose and allow him or her to withstand all the pressures that change will bring.

Creating Urgency

The second step towards change is creating a sense of urgency. Creating urgency is the process by which a congregation is made aware of the need for change. Without a strong sense of urgency it is very difficult to enact significant change. It is important that this sense of urgency does not become negative and critical as that can result in defensiveness and a desire to preserve what remains rather than risk losing everything through change that does not work (Herrington et al., 2000, pp. 34-41).

Establishing the Vision Community

Finally, the third step is to create a vision community that will oversee the change process. The vision community is a representative group of members who can help establish the vision for the congregation and the change elements that need to be put in place. This should be a diverse group that seeks God's will, community among each other and consensus in order to lead the congregation through the change process. The authors stress how important these initial steps are to the effectiveness of enacting

change. Without strong preparation the later stages of change will be more difficult or impossible (Herrington et al., 2000, pp. 41-48).

The sentiment of establishing a vision community is echoed by Nelson and Appel (2000, p. 8) when they emphasize the need to build consensus before trying to bring about change. Burrill (2004, p. 44) agrees with this principle and points out that it is not sufficient for the pastor alone to be convicted of the need for change. Key leaders and members passionate about seeing the church become vibrant and healthy must be invited to become a part of the change process.

The consensus among authors is clear: congregational change requires a united effort by a group of people who strongly believe change is necessary. It is not enough to have one or two strong willed and passionate individuals. There must be enough people supporting change that they can overcome congregational inertia and opposition. The guiding coalition which is convinced of the need for change can then be a support for the leader or pastor who is spearheading transformation.

Vision

A significant component to change is having a sense of direction. A church must be able to clearly identify where they want to go and what they want to achieve. This is where vision comes in.

Mission, and vision have different meanings to different authors but at their core they are both concerned with creating “a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization” (Nelson & Appel, 2000, p. 130). In the case of a church these things are an attempt to identify God’s will for the future and to articulate it in a way that catches on

and becomes the values that drive congregational activity. However, before one can articulate a vision for the future there must be a clear understanding of the present.

De Pree (2011, p. 11) writes, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” Providing a clear understanding of the current state of affairs is a vital component to church transformation. When it is compared with God’s preferred future a tension often develops that can become a catalyst for change. Furthermore, once we know where we are we can develop strategies to get where we need to be.

Herrington (2000, p. 50) sees mission, vision, and visionpath as a three-step process for laying out a church’s plan for fulfilling God’s plan. Each step is more specific and detailed and they move from a “general description of God’s eternal purpose” to a “detailed description of the steps that will be taken to achieve the vision.”

For leadership guru John Kotter, a successful vision is one that is easy to communicate, is appealing and helps clarify the direction that an organization needs to move. He observes that the creation of a vision usually begins with the chief executive but is then shaped over time by the guiding coalition and other key people. Lack of a strong vision is why many change attempts do not succeed (Conger et al., 1999, p. 91).

Nelson and Appel (2000, p. 24) reference Peter Drucker as saying that every corporation must know two things, a) Why we are in business? And b) Who is our customer? They then apply these questions to the church and explain how it is necessary for churches to be clear about why they exist and what they hope to accomplish. These authors also go on to emphasize that vision and values need to line up with practice and that a church needs to be clear on negotiables versus non-negotiables in ministry.

Biblical values and vision drive the change effort and provide the foundation for making decisions on which ministries stay and which ones need to go (pp. 32-34).

Burrill (2004, pp. 50-51) suggests using four questions as a starting point for discussion in order to “re-create the dream.” The first question is, “Why are we here?” This question forces the congregation to evaluate their purpose for existence. It is important that the church answers this question biblically and not just with their own opinions. The second question is, “Where will our present course take us?” In plateaued or declining churches the answer is usually obvious. The third question is, “Is this where we want to go?” This question connects the reality of stagnation or decline with the biblical purpose that churches are to be expanding the kingdom of God. The discrepancy between God given purpose and current trajectory becomes a rationale for change. The fourth question is, “In order to fulfill our destiny as a church, what must be changed?” Asking these four questions can then become the starting point for creating a new vision within the church.

It is important to remember that just because a church adopts a clear vision that successful change is not guaranteed. Indeed there are countless congregations that have clearly defined mission and vision statements that never come close to fulfilling God’s calling for their church.

There are a number of reasons why visions fail. In some cases the vision is too obscure or ill defined; in other cases the vision-caster may have poor communication skills or is unable to create a sense of urgency. Perhaps the vision is too small or not compelling enough (Nelson & Appel, 2000, p. 134). All these factors may combine to prevent a vision from being realized.

Herrington, Bonen, and Furr (2000, pp. 61-68) suggest that the biggest failure of churches relating to vision and mission is under communication. In order for the vision to be embraced by a majority of the congregation, it is necessary to communicate it repeatedly and in many different ways.

Kotter (Conger et al., 1999, pp. 92-94) agrees with this sentiment and lists “undercommunicating the vision by a factor of ten” as one of the eight errors that hinder transformation. He also indicates that communication needs to go beyond written and spoken explanations of the vision and extend into the realm of modeling the new behavior. Successful change agents need to be able to demonstrate the new vision in their own behavior and mobilize other change agents to do the same.

Burrill (2004, p. 53) seems to have a more optimistic outlook when it comes to communicating the vision. He states that when the leadership of the church is totally committed to the vision then the rest of the congregation will usually get on board. He advocates for the need to create a mission mindset among the leaders and the congregation. Unfortunately, his discussion on how to create a mission mindset is quite brief and seems to underestimate how difficult it is to convince church leaders to adopt it.

The above discussion shows that having a clear sense of direction in the form of a vision or mission statement is vital to bringing about change. However, the presence of such statements does not guarantee that change will happen. Furthermore, buying into a vision statement, even if a majority of the congregation adopts it, does not guarantee successful change. In order for real transformation to happen a congregation must actually begin to change existing structures and systems that interfere with the new vision. This is often where conflict begins to arise.

Reorganization of the Leadership Structure

Institutionalized churches tend to be focused on maintaining their current way of life. They seek to keep equilibrium and uphold the status quo, resisting change that might upset the applecart. Quite often the leadership and administrative structures that exist in an institutionalized church are themselves barriers to being more effective, missional and vibrant. Furthermore, the leaders that created these structures (whether intentional or not) are often the most resistant to change because change means destabilizing the systems that they created (and benefit from). However, in order for change to actually take place it will be necessary for a church to address these leadership and administrative structures, removing or changing those things which are not in harmony with the new vision.

This observation is supported by Heifetz et al. (2009, p. 27) who state that, “the reality is that any social system (including an organization or a country or a family) is the way it is because the people in that system (at least those individuals and factions with the most leverage) want it that way.” They also note that “new adaptations significantly displace, reregulate, and rearrange some old DNA. By analogy, leadership on adaptive challenges generates loss” (p. 26). This means that adaptive change will likely result in some people feeling displaced or left out. As leadership systems change, those who are unwilling or unable to change with them may find themselves moved from a place of central leadership to the fringes of authority.

Herrington, Bonem and Furr (2000, pp. 69-77) include empowering change leaders as one of the stages in leading congregational change. By this they mean two things, first, to establish a new model for leadership and second, to remove obstacles that

would prevent leaders from serving effectively. Along these lines they point out that it is important to create a permission giving culture where leaders feel able to experiment with new ideas and methods. If existing structures hinder ministry leaders they should be carefully evaluated and gradually brought in line with a model that is more empowering.

Kotter (Conger et al., 1999, pp. 94-95) agrees with this latter sentiment when he lists “not removing obstacles to the new vision” as one of the 8 errors in creating change. He points out that these obstacles can be in the organizational structure or in personnel. In either case these obstacles, if not addressed, can derail the change process.

This goes along with what Heifetz, et al. say about adaptive change in that, every successful adaptation has three characteristics: (1) it preserves the DNA essential for the species’ continued survival; (2) it discards (reregulates or rearranges) the DNA that no longer serves the species’ current needs; and (3) it creates DNA arrangements that give the species’ the ability to flourish in new ways and in more challenging environments. (2009, p. 24)

Burrill (2004, pp. 54-55) points out that in smaller churches there is often a matriarch or patriarch that serves as the gate-keeper for the church. All changes need to have the support of this individual or else they will be doomed to failure. In medium sized churches (50-400 in attendance) the church board is often the group that must be engaged to create change. In larger churches the congregation will often follow the direction of the leading change agent (i.e., pastor) so long as that person is well respected by the membership. Burrill concludes by explaining that a pastor seeking to create change must work with the appropriate individual/board in order to make things happen.

Unfortunately, Burrill seems to assume that it will be possible in most cases to garner the support of the gate-keepers and he does not offer suggestions on what to do if that is not possible. It is apparent that when the gate-keepers will not align with the

vision for change that a leadership conflict is destined to occur between them and the change agent.

Regarding the area of leadership, the International Mission Board identifies a decentralized leadership as one of ten characteristics that are common among successful church planting movements.

Denominations and church structures that impose a hierarchy of authority or require bureaucratic decision-making are ill-suited to handle the dynamism of a Church Planting Movement. It is important that every cell or house church leader has all the authority required to do whatever needs to be done in terms of evangelism, ministry and new church planting without seeking approval from a church hierarchy. (Garrison, 2002)

Heifetz et al. (2009, p. 26) point out that “adaptation relies on diversity.” For a church or any other organization this means that adaptation is best accomplished through developing a culture where a diversity of views is expected and valued. While this approach does not demand a truly decentralized leadership it does underscore the need for a wide range of input from a variety of perspectives.

Decentralization of leadership in the local church can give greater freedom to ministry leaders and allow them to take their ministries in new and exciting directions. However, in institutionalized churches this kind of decentralization is quite rare and to create it involves pulling power away from those who have the most control. Unfortunately, this often results in strong resistance as those in power seek to maintain their authority. This necessary shift in the balance of power is almost certain to result in resistance and conflict.

Repurposing Existing Ministries

Removing obstacles and reorganizing the leadership structure of an institutionalized church is not the only change that needs to happen to bring about

revitalization. It is also necessary to repurpose existing ministries so they are in alignment with the new vision.

Herrington, Bonem and Furr (2000, p. 85) identify the eighth stage in leading congregational change as “reinforcing momentum through alignment.” One component of this reinforcement is to align existing ministries with the vision. The process of realignment is not a solitary step but an ongoing process that never ends. In a church undergoing change there will be many ministries in various stages of implementing the vision. The goal is to keep all of those ministries moving along in the change process (pp. 85-94).

The idea of reinforcing momentum is described by Kotter (Conger et al., 1999, p. 98-99) as “institutionalizing new approaches.” This includes giving careful consideration to who will follow the change agent as leader of the organization. He notes that it is very easy for tradition to reassert itself and reverse change efforts if the new culture is not firmly institutionalized. Routinizing change can also happen simply through the course of time. As new members get involved with ministries that have gone through the change process it will become natural for them to do things that way. This helps cement the change in the daily practice of the church (Nelson & Appel, 2000, p. 58). This observation implies that the change agent must be willing to make a long term commitment or else risk having the change process be aborted before it can sustain itself.

Along with the idea of transforming existing ministries to match the new vision it may also be necessary to eliminate ministries that consume resources but do not contribute to the new direction the church is going. If the ministry cannot be brought in

line with the stated values of the church then they should be dropped and the resources used in more productive ways (Nelson & Appel, 2000, pp. 28-29).

Once again there is the potential for conflict and resistance as change agents seek to bring ministries in line with the new vision. Even if ministry leaders seem to agree with the new direction it is difficult to convince them to make the changes necessary to bring their ministry in-line. Eliminating non-compliant ministries is even more risky as the change agent seeking to discontinue an ineffective (but cherished) ministry can be seen as an invader tearing down the most precious works of the church. The stakes are even higher in a volunteer organization like a church where disaffected members can simply go somewhere else rather than join in the new vision. While bringing existing ministries in line with the new vision is vital to successful transformation, the process is neither quick nor easy.

Creating new Ministries

Whenever a new direction is determined for a church there will likely be need for the creation of new ministries. These new ministries should be designed from the ground up to support the new vision. This will help buttress the change process and help keep it firmly in place as time goes on. Stage 7 in Herrington's (2000, pp. 78-85) change process is about implementing the vision and this includes the creation of new ministries that will directly fulfill the vision.

Nelson and Appel (2000, p. 55) support this idea when they suggest that a church undergoing change needs to decide how to apply the new vision to practical ministry. They point out that the church needs to ask whether change requires realignment of existing ministries or the creation of new ministries or structures. Their own experience

led them to develop a number of new ministries that were more in line with the direction they felt God was leading them (p. 132).

One of the challenges in creating new ministries is to find leaders who are qualified to develop them and who also share the new vision. However, if such people can be found and strong new ministries can be created they can become a model for existing ministries which might make repurposing them easier.

Involving Members in Ministry

Beyond structures and ministries it is important to remember that change really depends on people. Individuals are what drive the congregation and any transformation process must seek ways to involve members in ministry that is aligned with the new vision.

Kidder's research (2011, pp. 13-14) reveals that growing churches have leaders that spend a considerable amount of time motivating and equipping lay-members for ministry. In fact, empowering servant leadership was identified by Kidder as one of four key factors involved in church growth. A similar but separate factor is a committed and active laity. This means that both clergy and laity need to be active in working together to expand the kingdom of God.

The principles behind *Natural Church Development* also identify the need for healthy churches to involve more members in meaningful ministry. Two of the eight quality characteristics are focused on this area: Empowering Leadership and Gift-Oriented Ministry (Schwarz, 2000).

While it is clear that there is a great need to involve members in ministry the actual process of involvement is less obvious. Simple invitations to "sign-up" are often

ineffective and the traditional nominating committee is usually more focused on filling ministry vacancies than in involving every member in ministry. As such, a new foundation for lay involvement must be developed. This foundation begins with creating a more committed laity through intentional discipleship.

Discipleship as a Foundation for Lay Involvement

Administrative and structural change is only one side of the coin in transforming congregational culture. Without a transformation taking place in the hearts of church members all the structural changes in the world will not bring about genuine kingdom growth. The kind of individual transformation that is needed in the church is best achieved through intentional discipleship. In this context discipleship refers to the intentional investment in a collaborative spiritual journey with a fellow believer where peer to peer mentoring encourages all parties to have a stronger relationship with Jesus. The expected result of such discipleship is a more mature faith that will reveal itself in a stronger alignment with Christ's mission, hence more direct involvement in evangelism. The following sections will explore the idea of using discipleship as a means to produce individual transformation to coincide with administrative and structural change.

Ogden (2003, p. 22) summarizes the current state of discipleship in America with one word, superficial. He points out that church growth practices have focused largely on reaching the masses but have not given adequate attention to challenging believers to experience deep life change. The result is that we have churches full of newborn Christians who have not fully come out of the world.

Interesting research by the Barna Group (2007) has discovered that as many as 38% of Americans consider themselves "evangelical Christians." However, when the

same population was asked to identify with specific biblical values that would be indicative of evangelical beliefs and practices only 8% fit the criteria. The number of self-proclaimed evangelicals outnumbers those who actually express evangelical beliefs and values by a margin of five-to-one. What this means is that while people are willing to claim the title “evangelical,” their actual beliefs and values do not actually reflect evangelical norms (Barna identifies nine theological perspectives as being normative to evangelicals) (2013).

Since 1991 the Gallup organization has conducted regular polls to evaluate how many Americans self-identify as “born-again” or “evangelical.” Results have ranged from 35 to 47% of Americans claiming this identification (Newport & Carroll, 2005). However, in similar Gallup studies it has been revealed that only 22% accept standard evangelical values and beliefs (i.e., the importance of sharing one’s faith, Bible inerrancy and having a born-again experience) (Winseman, 2005). Again, there appears to be an inconsistency between the number who claim to be evangelical and those who actually have evangelical belief systems. The conclusion that Ogden (2003, p. 23) makes is that if all the millions of self-proclaimed “born again Christians” were truly followers of Jesus, the moral fabric of our country would be much stronger than it is. This can only mean that our efforts to transform lives have fallen short and Christianity does not impact society as much as it should because Christians themselves have not been transformed to reflect Jesus. These factors point to the conclusion that our efforts at discipleship have been largely ineffective at producing true disciples.

If it is true that we have failed at discipling our members then it stands to reason that church transformation can never really happen until we address that failure. We will

never be able to build a church that is missional and transformative unless the members of that church have themselves been transformed. Discipleship, therefore, is the process by which transformation occurs from the ground up.

Kidder states (2011, p. 67) that the chief emphasis of the church should be to “grow fully devoted disciples of Jesus with a passion to win the world for Him.” The result is a church full of vibrant ministries and dedicated ministers. It is a church where volunteers willingly sacrifice their time and resources to build up the church. The process of making disciples, therefore, becomes a foundation for church revitalization, lay involvement, and growth.

Samaan (1999) agrees with this emphasis on making disciples by pointing out that this is the chief work of the church. He observes that the result of disciple-making is more believers who are committed to reproducing their experience with Christ in others. In this way disciple-making has the potential for exponential growth as each successive generation replicates itself in others.

Hirsch (2006, p. 102) describes six elements of mDNA (the DNA of missional churches) that must be present in order for a church to become an authentic apostolic movement. While he believes all six need to be present and working in concert, he emphasizes discipleship as the most important. Without a strategic approach to discipleship the rest of the elements collapse.

It is important to recognize that there is no single discipleship approach that will work in every situation. Since every disciple and disciple-maker is unique it is necessary to develop approaches to discipleship that fit individual situations. As such it is more

important to identify principles of discipleship rather than try to develop a set curriculum for disciple-makers to follow (McCallum & Lowery, 2006, p. 37).

It is clear that discipleship must be a part of any real church transformation and without intentional discipleship any change is likely to be superficial and temporary.

Principles of Discipleship

It was mentioned above that there is no set curriculum for discipleship that will work for all people in every situation. Instead, discipleship should focus on principles that can be incorporated into the discipling process. Below is a discussion of some of the principles that should be present in any discipleship process.

Investing

Samaan (1999, p. 67) points out that making disciples is all about people rather than programs. He draws from the example of Jesus who focused on pouring his energy into the twelve so that they could continue the work when he was gone. Jesus' example is one of investing in people so that they would experience inner transformation and then become disciple makers in their own right. Samaan also points out that this is often a daunting challenge for pastors because it requires them to be open and even vulnerable with those they are discipling.

For Hirsch (2006, p. 102) the idea of investing oneself in the life of another is at the center of what it means to make disciples. He writes, "The founding of the whole Christian movement...was initiated through the simple acts of Jesus investing his life and embedding his teachings in his followers and developing them into authentic disciples." This statement makes a strong assertion that Jesus' method for making disciples was to invest himself in them to the point where they began to reflect his ideals and message.

Clearly, this approach to discipleship goes far beyond simple biblical and theological instruction.

Another way to look at this idea of investing is through the lense of friendship. Jesus' interactions with his disciples demonstrate that friendship and brotherly love (John 15:9-17) were at the heart of his work with them. McCallum (2006, p. 65) points to friendship building as the first step in the disciple-making process and observes that an inability to make friends is a tremendous barrier to discipleship. He goes on to point out that a deeper level of investment follows the initial friendship development. He says, "When you invest into a relationship, you give of yourself with consistency and godly concern. You give of yourself in the hope that, like a good stock investment, what you invest will come back for the kingdom of God" (p. 78).

Ogden (2003, pp. 65-68) also identifies investing as a key component of discipleship. He points to Jesus' selection of the twelve as an example of how modern disciple-making should focus on a few rather than on the masses. Jesus did not put his trust in the masses who responded to his miracles but rather in the twelve who were to carry on his legacy and entrust others with the message that was to be spread throughout the world (2 Tim 2:2).

Investing also implies a sacrifice on the part of the one discipling and definite commitment to sticking with it for an extended duration. The principle of investing is perhaps the most foundational to successful discipleship. Without this principle firmly established, any discipleship proccess will likely be incomplete.

Community

Engaging community and embracing unity are two components of spiritual and relational vitality that are essential for churches undergoing change. These two components need to be in place before a change process is initiated (Herrington, Bonem, & Furr, 2000).

Kidder (2011, p. 79) describes church growth seminars where he asks participants to describe their ideal church. Often responses include statements that the church be loving, accepting, and full of love and joy. He goes on to point out that the ideal church described in Acts 2 was a highly relational group of believers. However, this deep fellowship is not just a result of common secular interests but is closely tied in with fellowship and love for God. The spiritual bond among believers allows for a deeper sense of commitment and community. He notes, “any credible model of spirituality must include the development of the personal spiritual life in the context of community.”

As one of the ten characteristics of healthy churches, Macchia, McDonand, and Robinson (1999, pp. 77-92) point out the need for a sense of Christian community to be developed in a congregation. They point to Jesus’ experience with the disciples as the model for meaningful community. Macchia et al. list loving and caring relationships as an additional characteristic of healthy churches. However, it seems that this characteristic could easily be included along with the one about community. Indeed, true Christian community cannot exist without loving and caring relationships where grace, mercy and forgiveness are evident.

Hirsch (2006) takes the idea of community and expands it in significant ways. He asserts that missional churches must develop what he calls *communitas* which goes

beyond mere community. *Communitas* is the strong sense of belonging that can only come through shared struggles. He points out that in the church, *comunitas* can be created when members join together for missional work that takes them out of their regular comfort zone and immerses them in an environment where they have to pull together to succeed. He believes that *communitas* cannot be achieved by simple fellowship but rather must have an external force (i.e., a mission project or even persecution) to fuse people together.

Community is the principle of discipleship which binds people together. It is what allows accountability to take place and open and honest spiritual evaluation to happen. This sense of community must go beyond friendship to become a deep sense of oneness with each other, with God and with His purpose for our life.

Transformational Encounter

Encountering God's holiness and experiencing God's grace are two items that need to be a regular part of a congregation's experience, especially as they engage in a change process. Having a strong sense of love for God and an earnest desire to know his will allow churches to achieve spiritual vitality which is the driving force for change (Herrington et al., 2000).

A comment from the Gallup organization says, "a significant number of 'unchurched' Americans feel there is not enough emphasis on spiritual experiences in the churches" (Kidder, 2011, p. 67). This is rather disturbing considering that the church is intended by God to be the conduit of spiritual power here on earth (Matt 16:19). This perceived lack emphasizes the need for churches to create opportunities for participants to experience God in a powerful way.

The need for transformational encounters is emphasized by the identification of God-exalting worship as one of the four key components to thriving churches. Church revival is always connected with some form of worship revival. People come to church seeking the presence of God, therefore our worship services need to provide a place for those divine appointments to happen (Kidder, 2011, p. 137).

God's empowering presence is identified as one of the ten characteristics of healthy churches. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church results in a manifestation of the fruit of the spirit, the use of the gifts of the spirit and an experience of the kingdom of God in the daily life of members (Macchia et al., 1999, pp. 27-38). While Macchia et al. do not refer to God's empowering presence in the context of discipleship, it is logical to conclude that what is healthy for the church is also healthy for the individual. Helping followers of Jesus experience the empowering presence of God is then a key component to the process of making disciples.

Perhaps one of the best ways to have a transformational encounter with God is through the study of His word. The Bible is a source of powerful inspiration, motivation, and is the living, breathing word of God. Bible study is a vital component to disciple-making. It is often the means by which God nourishes, transforms, convicts and motivates believers (McCallum & Lowery, 2006, pp. 109-113). Bible study should therefore be a primary component to discipleship and be used as a way to connect disciples with the transformational power of God.

Outreach

In Mark 9:35 Jesus said, "if anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Much of Jesus' ministry focused on serving those who came to him in

need (John 2:1-10; Matt 14:15-21; Matt 4:24). Whether their need was for healing, spiritual renewal or something to eat, Jesus was always available to serve. His practice gives us a model to follow and demonstrates what outreach looks like for the Christian.

Steve Sjogren (2003) highlights the importance of servanthood in his book *Conspiracy of Kindness*. In this book he makes a case for using servant evangelism (small acts done with great love) as a way to serve our community and show God's love in a practical way. Rather than viewing outreach and evangelism as primarily a head-to-head communication process, he advocates turning evangelism into one that is heart to heart. By serving people in simple yet heartfelt ways we are able to tangibly express God's love thereby creating opportunities for relationships to develop where the gospel can be communicated verbally. Sjogren's approach is to use simple acts of service to plant gospel seeds that will then bear fruit in time, according to God's plan.

In addition to being a servant, Jesus was also well known as a teacher who spoke as one having great authority (Mark 1:27). The teaching elements of his ministry demonstrate another way in which Christians should approach outreach. Within Adventism, this approach has been widely used. Many Adventist churches have regular evangelistic efforts that are geared towards communicating Bible truth. There are also numerous kinds of Bible study guides available through Adventist publishing houses that encourage members to engage in teaching others about God.

Another less obvious means of outreach that Jesus used was the process of discipleship itself. While Jesus certainly served the masses and taught all who came to him, his greatest efforts were focused on maturing the twelve apostles. Cole (1999) advocates using discipleship as a primary means of outreach and expanding God's

kingdom. His *Life Transformation Groups* focus on finding people who are not connected with God and engaging them in a process of radical transformation where the end result is men and women committed to Christ. This approach turns discipleship itself into an outreach process and seems to be very close to what Jesus did. This is evidenced by the fact that Jesus did not choose the most religious people to be his apostles. Rather he selected common men who were a little rough around the edges. He selected fishermen, a tax collector, and even a terrorist (zealot). Through his systematic investment in their lives this rag tag group was transformed into the nucleus of the Christian movement that eventually spread to the farthest reaches of the world.

While all discipleship groups should have some kind of outreach focus it is important to remember that the most effective outreach will be by investing in those who are being discipled. As they are transformed more and more into the image of Christ genuine evangelism has taken place. If those who are transformed are then able to reproduce their experience in others it is possible to start a chain reaction of discipleship that can radically change the culture of a congregation (Ogden, 2003, p. 185).

Empowerment

Samaan (1999, pp. 87-88) describes Jesus' process of empowering his disciples as taking place over several steps. It begins with calling them to follow him, appointing them to journey with him and observe his life, and then in sending them out to put into practice those things he modeled for them. Empowerment then is a part of the discipleship process and happens in the context of real world experiences rather than through a seminar, lecture or class. Jesus used on the job training to empower his disciples to be able to carry on the work after he was gone.

Jesus' strategy illustrates a principle that church leaders witness regularly: The reach of our ministries is directly proportional to the breadth of our leadership base. Only to the extent that we have grown self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted disciples can new ministries touch the brokenness of people's lives. (Ogden, 2003, p. 72)

A major component to Jesus' discipleship plan was to empower the twelve to carry on his mission once he was gone. In fact, the spread of the Christian faith depended almost entirely on how well Jesus' life, character, and teachings were infused in the hearts of the twelve.

Jesus' method of empowerment is a four step process that is very similar to that taught in mentoring circles today--I do, you watch; I do, you help; you do, I help; you do, I watch (Ogden, 2003, pp. 75-98). This shows that empowerment is best accomplished through "on the job training" where practical experience is combined with instruction. There was never a case where the disciples received instruction that was removed from mission. Empowerment, then, is not about taking members through a class on spiritual gifts or discipleship or ministry leadership but an intentional mentoring process where the member is equipped and launched into ministry.

Invitation

If a disciple is one who is on a lifelong journey with Jesus then discipleship must consist of taking steps in that journey. While Jesus is the master, fellow disciples can act as guides on the journey, helping younger disciples grow in their relationship with God. One component of discipleship then is to help disciples move forward in their walk by inviting them to take the next step in their faith. An invitation is an opportunity to challenge a disciple to invest more in their spiritual life and to live more fully for Christ. Quite often the best way to accomplish this is to invite fellow believers to simply partner with us as we engage in the life and ministry of the Christian walk.

The process of organic “disciplemaking” (McCallum & Lowery, 2006) is actually a series of invitations given to a disciple by a disciple. It begins with an invitation into friendship that later may evolve into an invitation to join into an intentional discipleship journey. Other invitations include encouraging disciples to develop devotional habits of prayer and Bible study, to overcome sin, to begin sharing your faith and to disciple others. One might even ask for a favor or assistance as a way of engaging someone in the work of the gospel much like Jesus asked the woman at the well in John 4 for a drink of water in order to engage her in a spiritual conversation. The role of the one leading a disciple is to encourage his disciple to take those next steps. The process is only complete once the new disciple is closely knit with the master and has begun to lead others in their walk with Him.

Ogden (2003, p. 63) also points out that discipleship involves a multi-step process. He points out that Jesus’ call to the twelve was a three-step process. He writes, “if stage one is ‘come and see’ and stage two is ‘follow me,’ then stage three is ‘come and be with me’.” Each of these individual steps was precipitated by an invitation on the part of Jesus. He invited the first disciples to “come and see,” later he invited them to be followers, and finally he invited the twelve to be with him and begin to take on leadership roles. Part of the disciple maker’s role then, is to invite those who are being discipled to take the next step in their walk with Jesus.

Conclusion

With over 80% of churches plateaued or declining it is clear that Christianity has become more about maintenance than it is about mission. To reverse this trend and

become the great commission movement that Jesus intended it to be, the church must seriously consider the need for congregational change and renewal.

Transforming congregational culture is no easy matter. It requires a carefully mapped plan that will take an institutionalized congregation focused on meeting its own needs to one where Jesus' commission of transforming mission is the primary focus. The amount of change such an institutionalized church must undergo is staggering.

There must be a renewed vision for mission and outreach. There must be a strong group of leaders dedicated to moving the church in a new direction. There must be a re-organization of leadership and of administrative structures so that new missional leaders can be empowered and congregational inertia can be overcome. Existing ministries need to be brought in line with Jesus' evangelistic focus and new ministries need to be created that embrace the heart of the Great Commission. Finally, there must be personal transformation among the members of a church. There must be a renewal of self-replicating discipleship that mentors Christians into spiritual maturity creating a new and vibrant culture focused on fulfilling the Great Commission.

Some of the changes that need to take place in an institutionalized congregation are structural in nature. These changes give missional leaders the freedom to pursue ministry in whatever way God leads them. Effective missional churches will create structures that empower all members to fulfil the Great Commission in their sphere of life and ministry. These kinds of structural changes can be brought about by careful planning and persuasive leadership. However, in order for real transformation to occur the power of the Holy Spirit must be present.

Lasting transformation in a congregation only happens when individual church members are changed by God's power in their life and become engaged in the salvific work of the body. Such personal transformation does not come as a result of programming or administrative changes. It only happens as leaders follow Jesus' process of discipleship and invest long-term in the spirituality of individual members. As church members are transformed through the process of discipleship then the administrative and structural changes take on greater meaning and allow them to pursue God's calling in a myriad of different ways thus fulfilling his plan to make disciples of all nations.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS OF RE-PURPOSING FOR MISSION

Introduction

One of the great challenges in ministry is to transform an inwardly focused, institutionalized church into one that recaptures its vision for outreach and begins to put mission ahead of maintenance. This kind of transformation is difficult for several reasons.

First, institutionalized churches often lose their vision for the lost and have a church-wide culture of maintenance. Taking care of the existing church building, ministries and members is seen as the primary purpose of the church (Stetzer & Dodson, 2007, p. 32). This culture of self-preservation results in a church that designs ministry primarily for itself with very little resources being devoted to reaching the lost. Therefore, any attempt to transform a congregation from maintenance to mission requires an intentional effort to transform the culture of the congregation.

Second, inward focused churches tend to create administrative structures that serve to fortify existing programs and maintain the status quo. Lyle Shaller refers to these kinds of churches as voluntary association churches. These are churches that tend to model their organizational structure after a democratic government where the church board is made up of members representing different factions in the church. Commenting on this type of church, Stetzer and Dodson write,

Whenever one group seeks to make a positive change in the church in one direction, the opposing factions begin to whine, complain, and gossip. It's a perfect democracy modeled after our government... The board then meets in emergency session, and the point is raised that three or four people might leave if the positive change becomes a reality. Then compromises are made and deals are cut so that the church retains the status quo. (2007)

In an institutionalized church, boards, committees and procedures all work together to prevent radical change from taking place and to maintain the current balance of power. These churches may also have a very centralized leadership that works to control the activities of every branch of church life. The system that is in place is there because those in leadership want it that way (Heifetz et al., 2009, pp. 27-28). In order to enact meaningful and lasting transformation these structures have to be reorganized and ministry authority has to be decentralized. It is important to observe at this point that such a change cannot merely be technical in nature but must rise to the level of being adaptive. Whenever challenges arise that are beyond the ability of existing systems to cope adaptive change is required. Heifetz (Conger et al., 1999) observes that in these cases,

... because social learning is required, the problem cannot be treated with the mindset of a technical expert distilled from the people with the problem. Why not? Because the stakeholders are the problem. The locus of responsibility for problem solving must shift from those in authority to the people who have to do the changing. (pp. 59-60)

In other words, adaptive change requires a change in mindset and behavior on the part of those who need to change. Simply adjusting structures and policies from the top, while necessary, will not be sufficient by themselves to affect real change. For example, a physician can prescribe treatments for a patient, but if the patient does not embrace the prescription and make the necessary lifestyle changes, then adaptive change does not happen and illness will persist (p. 60). In order to transform an institutionalized church,

the members themselves will need to embrace the idea of decentralized leadership and be willing to take on the responsibility for creating a missional church.

Third, institutionalized churches often have a variety of ministries that are focused exclusively on meeting the needs of the existing constituency and a shortage of ministries that intentionally engage in reaching out to non-Christians. McIntosh (2003, p. 76) points out at times churches will focus inward in an attempt to grow spiritually with the expectation that this new spirituality will result in vibrancy. Unfortunately, such an approach usually results in churches that always look inward and never outward. Evangelism and outreach ministries come to a standstill as more and more resources are focused inward. He notes, “a historical analysis of churches shows that the greatest danger is too much of an inward focus. The biggest challenge for church leaders is not how to get people to study the Bible more but how to get people to evangelize more.” It is quite possible for the church to be extremely busy running these ministries, feel like they are doing God’s work and yet never see a new member added to the body of Christ. When a congregation suffers from this kind of basic introversion the greater work of reaching the lost may disappear.

The three areas of church culture and identity, administrative structures, and ministry focus need to be addressed if a church is going to make the transition from maintenance to mission. It is also important to recognize, as Heifetz (2009, p. 29) observes, “the most common cause of failure in leadership is produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems.” Lasting change is not just about making a few tweaks to the system here and there, but rather about a foundational shift towards mission. This kind of adaptive change must permeate the entire congregation,

both systems and individuals. The following pages outline a process for intervention that was attempted at the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church in an effort to help it make such a transition.

Evaluation of Current Involvement in Evangelism

In a self-administered survey only 20 members (less than 10% of weekly adult attendance) reported that they were engaged in direct evangelistic ministry aimed at recruiting new members (accessions). A similar survey was filled out by ministry leaders and 58% of these ministry leaders reported that their ministry had an evangelistic emphasis. Members were determined to be engaged in evangelistic ministry if they gave an affirmative response to 85% of the questions on the self-administered survey. Likewise, ministries were determined to have a evangelistic emphasis if the leaders gave an affirmative response to 85% of the questions on the ministry leader survey.

In 2008 the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church had over 600 members officially on the books, weekly attendance hovered near 250 (including children) and the nominating committee report listed almost 200 names in various volunteer positions. These volunteers represented a wide range of ministries, which primarily functioned to service the needs of the existing constituency.

A self-administered survey was distributed on three consecutive Sabbaths and was designed to evaluate member's involvement in evangelism. Among those who completed surveys only 20 adult members reported that they were engaged in personal evangelism (this figure represents the number of those who responded in the affirmative to five out of six questions in the survey and represents less than 10% of weekly attendance).

Ministry directors were also surveyed to evaluate the amount of focus their ministries place on evangelism. Among these directors 58% reported that their ministry had an evangelistic emphasis. This figure is based on the number of ministry leaders that answered affirmatively to five out of six questions on the survey (see Appendix for actual survey questions). Furthermore, even a casual examination of church activities reveals that the focus of the church is on maintaining the status quo rather than progressing towards being missional.

These factors all combine to create a church that appears to have become largely institutionalized where the ministries, administrative structures, and culture all strive to maintain the current establishment. Therefore, in order to help the church to become more missional it seemed necessary to attempt to bring about significant transformation in almost every area of church life.

Developing a Vision for Lay-led Evangelism

One of the very first areas to be addressed was that of vision and identity. Based on the current ministries and church activities it appeared that the congregation did not have a cohesive vision for the future. The only widespread church identity was, as one member put it, “to be the most conservative Adventist church in the Metroplex.” Between having no clear vision for growth and an identity that tended to suppress rather than support innovative approaches to ministry it was clear that the church would likely continue in a state of plateau (or decline) unless intervention was taken. Therefore, the attempt to develop a mission (Burrill, 2004, p. 24) mindset among the congregation was one first step in working towards transformation.

Origin of our Vision

Before a church begins developing a new vision or mission focus it is important to recognize that these things must be firmly rooted in Scripture. In the church setting, our work and goals are defined by God. When we talk about creating a vision for the church we are really saying that we desire to discover and embrace God's vision. Speaking of that mission Burrill (2004, p. 22) comments, "what is that mission? The marching orders of the church are clear; they come straight from the founder of Christianity. Jesus established the church on the Great Commission." Therefore, the main purpose in working to develop a vision for lay-led evangelism and to create a mission mindset is to bring the church into harmony with God's mandated purpose for his church.

Creating a Mission Mindset

The first step in developing this mission mindset was to regularly communicate the biblical mandate for church growth. Jesus' command in Matthew 28:16-20 makes it clear that the church is to be actively engaged in the process of making disciples. Fulfillment of the Great Commission is perhaps the single most important work for the church to do and a failure to engage in this disciple-making endeavor constitutes disobedience to the risen Lord (Burrill, 2004, p. 23). Therefore, it was necessary to make this topic a central theme in church-wide communications.

There were three primary venues where the importance of evangelism was emphasized. The first was from the pulpit by the pastor. Rather than have a specific sermon series on the topic of evangelism, the themes of personal witnessing, evangelism, and working for the lost were a regular part of most sermons.

The second venue for promoting the vision of growth and outreach was through the church's newsletter. This meant repurposing the existing newsletter so that it could focus on stories that highlighted members and ministries involved in evangelistic activities.

The third venue was the institution of a special feature time in the regular worship service where testimonies could be shared and where ministries that conducted outreach programs could be highlighted. The goal of these testimonies was to bring attention to lay-members and ministries that were having positive experiences reaching out.

The process of communicating the vision for church-wide outreach and evangelism did not have a designated end date. It was to be constantly re-articulated and proclaimed through these venues. Even after the vision was formally adopted by the congregation (in the form of a new mission statement), it was important to keep it alive by constant repetition.

Developing a Mission Statement

The second step in creating a vision for lay-led evangelism was to formally create a mission statement that reflected this concept. There were several steps taken in creating this mission statement.

First, there was a series of meetings with the church elders to talk about the purpose of the church in the context of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), the Priesthood of all Believers (1 Pet 2:9), and the role of clergy and laity (Eph 4:11-12). The goal of these meetings was to help the elders see the need for an intentional focus on lay-led evangelism in the church. Once the elders arrived at a consensus for moving the

church in that direction, a recommendation was presented to the church board to rewrite the church mission statement.

In order to help prepare the church board for the recommendation to rewrite the mission statement a working retreat was held for all church board officers. This was a two day retreat where they explored the same themes that the elders discussed as well as other topics such as the principles of Natural Church Development (Schwarz, 2000). On the second day of the retreat a Mission Statement Development Committee was selected by the church board to prepare a draft of a new mission statement.

The Development Committee then met to work on writing a draft for the mission statement that was to emphasize the need for lay-led evangelism. Once this draft was completed they presented the new statement to the church board for fine-tuning and approval. Once the board approved the final draft of the new mission statement it was presented to the church at large in a business meeting. It was hoped that the above efforts would result in the formation of a guiding coalition (Harvard, 2005, p. 76) that would work together to make the new vision a reality.

There were two other reasons behind writing a new mission statement. The first reason was to open a dialogue that was intended to help the church leadership see the need for lay-led evangelism and become aware of the current focus of the church on maintenance rather than mission. This could then be used to create a sense of urgency (Conger et al., 1999, p. 88) that could propel the change process forward. The second reason was to have a clearly stated goal of mobilizing members and ministries to impact the community for Christ. It was intended that once the statement had been formally

voted by the church-in-business session it could then be used as the justification for later interventions that would seek to empower lay-members for evangelistic ministry.

Re-Purposing Administrative Structures for Mission

In addition to casting the vision for lay-led evangelism it was important to start working on changing administrative structures that appeared to inhibit spontaneous lay-led ministry. One of the administrative barriers to lay-led evangelism in the Fort Worth First church was the formal church board structure. There were several aspects of the administrative structure that worked against empowering lay-members for mission. The goal of this restructuring was to improve the effectiveness of the ministry leaders by giving them greater freedom and fewer administrative hoops to jump through. It was hoped that this would foster greater collaboration among ministry leaders and elders, allow for a free flow of ideas, and ultimately create a more functional approach to church ministry and governance.

The first limiting factor was the size of the church board. At the start of this project there were 35 members on the board, which included all the ministry leaders and elders as well as the school principal and pastors. Whether as a result of this relatively high number (almost 15% of the weekly Sabbath attendance) or for some other reason it was often difficult to achieve a quorum. This led to frustration as those who were present were often prevented from conducting business until additional members arrived. Furthermore, important decisions ended up being postponed to meetings where more people were present, thus slowing down the forward momentum of the church.

The second limiting factor was the focus of the church board. The Seventh-day Adventist church manual states that “its [the board’s] chief concern is the spiritual

nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases” (General_Conference_of_Seventh-Day_Adventists Secretariat, 2000, p. 81).

However, evangelism and ministry development often took a back seat to more administrative functions such as finances and the establishment of policies.

The third limiting factor was that the board had taken on the role of an oversight committee when it came to creating or expanding ministry. At that time all ministry decisions had to be approved by the board and nothing new could be instituted without its direct authorization. This set up a system where people who wanted to try to develop new and innovative ministries first had to get permission from a group who had authority to veto the proposal but no responsibility to help the idea succeed. The result was that new ideas were quickly shot down or unreasonable demands were placed on the leaders so that they often gave up in frustration.

In order for lay-led ministry to fully develop it seemed appropriate to develop a new administrative structure. This new structure focused on (a) giving freedom to ministry directors and lay-members to develop new ministry approaches without fear of having their ideas criticized or rejected, (b) separating the responsibilities of administration and ministry development into two boards and (c) reducing the number of people necessary to conduct church business.

Proposed Administrative Structure

There were three main components to the new administrative structure. The first was the church board that would focus on administration, finance, and policies. It was to serve as a kind of executive committee. The second component was the Outreach Leadership Team (OLT) that would focus on ministry development (the primary function

of the board as outlined by the church manual). The third was the board of elders, which would serve as the guiding spiritual voice of the church. The elders would also serve as mentors for ministry directors.

The Church Board

Since most of the board's energy was already spent on matters of finance and administration that was to continue to be their primary function. The church board would therefore, no longer be responsible for implementing ministry or evangelism. Their focus would be strictly on administrative items.

Since the board was to be refocused to strictly deal with administration and finance it seemed appropriate to decrease the size so that it was more of an executive committee rather than a full-fledged church board as defined in the *Church Manual*. The new church board consisted of the Pastors, the Head Elder, Head Deacon, Head Deaconess, Treasurer, Clerk, School Principal plus five members at large selected by the nominating committee and voted on by the church.

This committee met monthly to review church finances and set policies for the congregation. They were not to have direct oversight over the ministries, however, through the establishment of policies the church board could influence the way in which ministries were able to use church funds, represent the church in ministry activities, and use the church facilities.

The ultimate goals of redefining the role of the church board were to simplify the work of the board, free the ministry directors from administrative responsibility and negative oversight, decrease the amount of time wasted waiting for quorums, and put the best of our energy into ministry development rather than maintenance.

The Outreach Leadership Team

The second component of the new administrative structure was the Outreach Leadership Team (OLT). This group served as a kind of ministry director's network where the primary focus was on ministry development and implementation. The name for this board was borrowed from the Share Him program led by Robert Folkenberg, Sr. (www.sharehim.org). Since the goal of Share Him is to empower lay-members to conduct evangelism it seemed an appropriate title for this ministry board.

The OLT was composed of all the ministry directors, their assistants, the elders, the pastors and any interested members who wanted to attend. In other words, it was to be an open meeting. There was to be no voting on items at the OLT, instead it functioned as a venue for training, networking, support and encouragement. Initially, leaders attending the OLT meetings were organized into groups based on areas of overlapping responsibility and each group was assigned an elder to serve as a guide and mentor.

This group met on a monthly basis and the meeting was to focus on several items. First, it was to be a time to receive training from the pastors on how to develop disciple-making ministries. Second, there was to be an opportunity for ministries to report on what they have been doing and what they planned to do. Third, ministry events were to be coordinated with the central church calendar. Fourth, time was to be given to special prayer needs. Fifth, the treasurer's report and church board minutes were to be made available so that the ministry directors were up to date on the business side of the church.

The main purpose of the OLT was to create an environment where ministry development could happen in a collaborative and positive environment. The team had no authority to set policy or make rules for the church. However, they did have the freedom

to develop their ministries, spend their money, and put items on the church calendar in whatever way they deemed appropriate provided they were in harmony with any policies set by the board. This structure was intended to allow ministry directors significant freedom as well as show them that the church trusted them to lead in the position to which they had been elected.

The Board of Elders

The third component of the new administrative structure was the board of elders. This board met on a monthly basis and consisted of the elders and church pastors. The focus of this board was to be on visioning, setting the direction for the church, prayer, spiritual nurture of the congregation, and open discussion of major issues.

In the New Testament the elders were the leaders and overseers of local congregations (Burrill, 1997, p. 77). At the Fort Worth First church the elders were serving mainly as ex-officio members of the church board and performed pulpit duties on Sabbath morning. Their influence was limited because they did not have a designated leadership function in the administrative structure except to vote on the board. In order to elevate the role of the elder so that it more closely resembles that which is described in the Bible (1 Pet 5:1-4, Jas 5:14, 1 Tim 5:17), several changes needed to be made.

First, like ministry directors, elders needed to be freed from administration to focus their attention on spiritual and ministry development in the church. This would correspond to the election of deacons in Acts 6:1-7 where men filled with wisdom and the Spirit were selected to oversee the daily distribution of food so that the apostles could devote their best energy to the ministry of the word and prayer. Therefore, it was decided (first in an elder's meeting, then at the church board, and finally in business session) that

only the Head Elder would formally serve on the Church Board. The remaining elders were then free to put their energy into other areas. Elders were invited to attend and participate in Church Board meetings but their attendance was not required and they were not given a formal vote.

Second, the elders needed to be given an opportunity to voice their input on major issues facing the church. Therefore, any major decision that would impact the entire church, would be discussed by the board of elders before it was presented to the church board. This was to allow the elders a chance to share their collective wisdom on potentially divisive topics. Since there was no formal voting in the elder's meeting and it was to be an open format it was the perfect venue to discuss challenging topics without fear of one person or another manipulating the system to force an issue. Once consensus had been reached by the board of elders, a recommendation could then be presented to the church board for an official decision. Delegating this responsibility to the elder's meeting allowed the elders to exercise spiritual leadership and also prevent situations where the urgency to complete a board agenda might rush a decision on a topic that had not been thoroughly explored.

Third, elders were assigned to different ministries to serve as mentors and guides for the directors. This mentoring was to take place at the monthly OLT meeting as well as through personal contact during the month. At the OLT meeting elders were asked to lead in small group discussions and help facilitate the training of ministry directors. It was also intended that they contact their ministry directors during the month to encourage, support, and hold them accountable for developing their ministry. This function allowed the elders to have a direct impact on a group of ministries and placed

them back into the biblical role of an overseer. The elders were not to serve as managers for these ministries but as a resource, sounding board, encourager, and guide.

Fourth, elders were to take a more active role in the spiritual nurture of members and volunteer identification. This was to be accomplished by asking elders to take on two new responsibilities. The first was to serve as row hosts on Sabbath morning and the second was to open their homes once a month for Sabbath lunch.

As row hosts the elders were to become acquainted with the people who sat in their areas, keep track of attendance patterns, identify needs, and provide prayer and spiritual encouragement for those in their area. They were also to be intentional about trying to discover the spiritual gifts and ministry interests of people in their rows. With this information it would be possible to start involving people in ministry that otherwise might have gone unnoticed. At the end of the worship services on Sabbath the elders were to meet together for a debriefing where they identified any visitation needs, potential church interests and possible ministry volunteers. This meeting was to be led by the head elder and a report given to the pastoral staff.

The purpose of having elders serve as host homes for Sabbath lunch was so that they could connect with visitors and members in a more intimate and personal way. This would allow the elders to extend their spiritual leadership farther than if they only served at the church building itself.

In many ways, the elders are the glue that holds the other structures together. They were to help set the vision for the church and communicate that vision to the ministry directors through the mentoring relationships. They were to be integral to the process of identifying visitors and new volunteers. If the elders did not shoulder their

responsibility then other parts of the structure would suffer. By making these changes the elders were to have more authority and influence than they have had in the past but they would also have greater responsibility.

Summary of Administrative Changes

The reorganization of the administrative structures of the church was intended to help facilitate a shift in organizational focus from maintenance towards mission. This was to be accomplished by decreasing the number of people on the church board (which would focus on administration), creating a ministry directors network (the OLT) where teams could work together to develop effective outreach strategies, and giving the elders a leading role in working with ministry leaders and identifying potential volunteers and needs. While this change was organizational rather than adaptive it seemed necessary to pave the way for spontaneous ministry to happen.

Developing a Process for Discipleship

In chapter 2 of this project the theme of discipleship was explored in detail. In that discussion it was pointed out that discipleship is more than just intellectual agreement to a set of doctrines but is a lifelong commitment to walking with Jesus and helping others to do the same. This means that personal evangelism and discipleship go hand in hand. Indeed, a true disciple of Jesus will have the same passion for the lost that their master has and will become “intensely interested in the salvation of others” (White, 1923, p. 207).

Intentional discipleship appeared to be something that was missing from the Fort Worth First church. Instead, the focus was typically on studying Adventist doctrine and preparing people intellectually for baptism, which often fell short of making genuine

disciples. McCallum and Lowery (2006, pp. 35-35) note that one purpose of discipleship is to develop leaders who can carry on the work of the master. They observe that this kind of leadership development rarely happens as a result of a five or ten week discipleship class. True discipleship and leadership development require a different approach than indoctrination. Therefore, a process needed to be developed that would help existing members as well as potential members develop into genuine disciples for Christ.

The basis for this discipleship process was to be the formation of discipleship groups. These groups were to be based on action steps of disciple-making which arose from an examination of Jesus' interactions with the twelve disciples/apostles. While other researchers might identify different or additional steps in disciple-making process, the ones chosen for this project were selected because they were obvious in the text and easily transferrable to a modern context. Many of these action steps can also be found in White's (1915, p. 363) description of Christ's method for reaching the lost. She writes, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'."

The steps of disciple-making followed by this project were: Investing in Others (Mark 3:13-15), Community (Mark 7:17, Mark 14:12-26), Transformational Encounters (Matt 8:23-27, Matt 17:1-8), Outreach (Matt 10:5-16), Empowerment (Matt 10:1) and Invitation (Matt 4:18-20). The implementation of these steps was to progress along two lines in the church. The first line was through the establishment of a discipleship group led by the pastor where these steps were put into practice with little formal theological

instruction. The second line was to be through the establishment of a training program where the steps of disciple-making were taught to interested members of the congregation. These individuals would then be encouraged to begin their own discipleship group. This line represents the standard “train and mobilize” approach to equipping people for ministry. The reason for exploring both lines was so that the strengths and weaknesses of each approach could be evaluated and adjustments could be made based on this information.

Action Steps in Disciple-Making

The following pages will provide an explanation of each of the six steps of disciple-making used in this project followed by a description of what efforts were made to implement these steps in the life of the church.

Investing in Others

This first principle of disciple-making is foundational to everything else that was to happen in this process. It is the beginning, middle, and end of making disciples. Jesus’ life was an example of service, self-sacrifice, and investing in the lives of the people he encountered. Almost everything Jesus did amounted to some kind of investment into another person. In our day when materialism and self-indulgence are so prevalent it is vital that disciple-makers understand the importance of becoming servants who invest in others.

While Jesus invested in countless people through a multitude of ways he gave special attention to developing the twelve disciples. These individuals received additional instruction, time and attention from Christ (Matt 13:34-36). His interactions with them provide us with an understanding of what it takes to make a disciple. Clearly,

making a disciple is not something that happens easily or overnight. It requires an intentional and consistent investment in the life of the individual being discipled. The selection of the twelve was also a strategic decision made by Jesus (Luke 6:12-14). There were many other disciples that he could have appointed but he selected the twelve and set them aside to receive special training and mentoring (Ogden, 2003, p. 63). This kind of intentional investment in the spiritual life of another is the first and most basic step of disciple-making.

Community

The twelve disciples who followed Jesus were more than just a group of scattered individuals who had a mutual interest in the Messiah. Over time they became a close-knit community. This sense of community is beautifully captured in Acts 2:42-47 where the early church is described as having regular fellowship, spiritual gatherings and a great love for one another. A feeling of community appears to be a vital aspect to the disciple-making process. In fact, as was observed in chapter 2, a disciple cannot exist by himself. A disciple is always defined in the context of relationship with a master. In the case where there are multiple disciples, they function as a community that is dedicated to living the calling of their master. Building a strong spiritual community is another component of disciple-making.

Transformational Encounters

By walking with Jesus, the twelve were able to have frequent and numerous encounters with the power of God (Matt 14:21, Matt 17:2, Matt 4:24). They witnessed miracle after miracle, which served to strengthen their faith and help them realize that Jesus was more than a mere man. When we turn to the Old Testament we also see that

transformational encounters with God played a strong role in establishing, encouraging, and reforming God's people (Exod 15:4, 1Kgs 18:38,39, Ps 71:16). It is for this reason that the disciple-making process must also seek to create opportunities where people can encounter God in a powerful way.

It is important to recognize that we, as human beings, cannot force others to have a transformational encounter with God. However, we do have the ability to create opportunities where participants may experience God's presence in a unique or powerful way. Providing these opportunities then becomes one of the responsibilities of someone attempting to make disciples for Christ.

Outreach

When Jesus was developing his disciples he taught them that they should not live for themselves but that they should be servants to all (Mark 9:35). Through his example and his instruction he showed them that outreach was a vital part of being a child of God. Two methods of outreach can be easily seen in Jesus' example. The first is service (John 2:1-11, Matt 15:21-28) and the second appeals to faith (i.e. evangelism) (John 4:1-26, John 6:35, John 11:25).

Jesus makes it clear that his people should seek to become servants and to put the needs of others before their own (Mark 9:35, Mark 10:43-45). This means that part of the discipleship process is learning to care for and serve those outside the church.

The second method of outreach is evangelism. This can be seen in instances where Jesus appealed to individuals and crowds to make a decision for the messiah and his kingdom (John 14:1, Luke 18:22).

While service focuses on showing God's love in a practical way, evangelism focuses on teaching people about Jesus and encouraging them to make a decision for him and his kingdom. Outreach is an essential part of any discipleship effort because without it, there is a tendency to become inward focused and lose sight of the Great Commission mandate.

Empowerment

One of the main goals Jesus had in working with his disciples was to empower them to continue the work of ministry after he was gone (Acts 1:8). Through their interactions he was preparing the twelve to take over leadership of the Christian movement when after he was gone. The process of empowerment included personal instruction (Matt 16:5-20), on the job training (Matt 14:16), and taking risk (Matt 10:16). Empowering believers for fruitful service is an important component to disciple-making.

Invitations

Jesus was constantly inviting people to take the next step in their journey with him (Luke 9:59, Luke 18:22, John 8:12). Ogden (2003, p. 124) observes that "discipling relationships should be formed on the basis of a prayerful invitation by the one initiating the discipling relationship." Consequently, our own disciple-making efforts should begin with an intentional invitation to the one being discipled and include times where we invite them to take the next step with Jesus.

Creating a Pastor's Discipleship Group

The first attempted discipleship approach was the formation of a pastor's discipleship group. Through this group the above-mentioned steps of discipleship were

to be put into action and tested. The development of this group was to progress along the following steps.

Investing

First, careful prayer was conducted to identify men from the church that could be invited to be a part of the discipleship group. This is in step with Ogden's suggestion (2003, p. 124) that one should spend time in prayerful consideration before engaging in a discipling relationship. Initially three individuals were selected to serve as the core of the group. These three men were chosen because I had a rapport with each of them (though I was not close to any), they were all active in church life and ministry (though none were key leaders) and each appeared to have a desire to invest in their own spiritual growth. I selected only men for this group to avoid the potential risks associated with intimate relationships between genders.

Once these three individuals had been identified they were invited out to dinner one at a time where the vision for discipleship could be shared with them. It was at this dinner that they were invited to become a part of the discipleship group journey. To fulfill the Investing component of the process it was important to stay in contact with the three individuals on a weekly basis, at church, and through various group events. The selection of these three individuals was an intentional step that I took to become involved in their world and to invest in their spiritual development.

Community

After speaking with each of the three initial members a date was set for the first community-building event for the group as a whole. The focus of the community-building event was food, fellowship, and prayer. The group met at a restaurant for dinner

and used the time together to get to know one another better and begin to share what was happening in each person's life. The goal of this time of fellowship was to foster a stronger relationship with each one of them that could serve as a basis for later ministry efforts. At the end of the meal the group joined together in the parking lot for a time of prayer.

The discipleship dinner was to be held approximately every three weeks and was to be the central meeting for the group as well as the primary point of entry for new members. Each member of the group was encouraged to invite other men to the dinner whenever they wanted on the condition that they would be willing to invest in the life of the person they were inviting. The dinner was not just about eating together, it was about beginning a journey with another person who is seeking to walk with Jesus. By joining the group a person was also joining the journey of faith.

New members were to be prayerfully invited to the dinner until there were 12 members in the discipleship group. These additional members were to be chosen from people who tended to be on the fringes of church life or who were not yet members. The purpose behind choosing these kinds of people was so that the discipleship process could be somewhat evangelistic in nature and also to raise new leaders from among those who were not currently leading. This would correspond to Jesus selecting men like Peter and John (fishermen) to be his disciples rather than priests and rabbis.

The discipleship dinner was to be the primary community-building event for the group though other activities were also to be held.

Transformational Encounters

There are two ways that were to be used to try to create transformational encounter opportunities for the group. The first was to be through day long spiritual retreats and the second was to be through Bible study accountability groups.

For the spiritual retreats it was intended that the group go to a retreat center or some other environment conducive to meditation and reflection. At these retreats there was to be dedicated times for Bible study, journaling, discussion, prayer, and listening to God. The goal of these retreats was to take time out to hear from God so that our walk with Jesus might be strengthened.

Between times of retreat the discipleship group was also to be organized into smaller groups of two or three with the intent of developing an intentional Bible reading plan and accountability process. These groups were to be modeled after the Life Transformation Groups presented by Neil Cole in his book *Cultivating a Life for God* (1999). The purpose of this element was to make sure the group members were connecting with God on a consistent and personal basis.

Outreach

Once the group was established they were to begin to have regular community service projects. These projects were to be based on ideas taken from the book *Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren (2003). It was intended that the group would conduct these service projects at least once per quarter as a way to serve the community. The group was also to prayerfully consider ways to engage in outreach and evangelism. It was hoped that the most natural way for this to happen was for members of the group

to invite others to the community building events. From there a spiritual dialogue could be opened which may result in more formal Bible studies.

Empowerment

To fulfill the empowerment component each member of the group was to be encouraged by the group leader to become active in some kind of ministry in the church. If they were not already active it would be important to discover their areas of interest and connect them with ministries that would be suitable to their gifts and abilities. Ultimately, it was intended that each member of the group would have a clear area of ministry within the church.

Invitations

Since each person in the group was at a different place in their spiritual journey it was not possible to formally lay out this step in the process. Different invitations were necessary for each person depending on where they were on their spiritual journey. The key point here is that it was to be the leader's responsibility to help each member of the group identify their next step for growth and encourage them to take it. In most cases this involved overcoming personal challenges in a member's life that were brought up in the community events and during times of prayer.

Summary of Pastor's Discipleship Group

Through the establishment of a pastor's discipleship group the steps disciple-making were to be tested in a real world environment. The ideal outcome of this group was that it would grow as members decided to invest and invite others to take part in the social events. From there, new people would have a chance to serve, do evangelism,

encounter God and make decisions for Jesus as they participated in the life of the group.

These new members could then be an avenue for yet more people to become connected to the group.

Developing a Discipleship Training Program

Where the focus of the pastor's discipleship group was to be about practicing the principles of disciple-making, the second line of development was to focus on creating a training program to equip members to be disciple makers. This training program was to begin by laying a basic theological foundation for discipleship and progress towards implementation where participants receiving the training were to develop their own discipleship groups.

Theological Foundations Curriculum

Since there was no common vision in the church for lay-led evangelism and discipleship it was necessary to develop a series of studies that would lead participants to discover God's plan for every member to become a minister. This theological foundation was then to be the launching point for the creation of lay-led discipleship groups. There were five main topics covered in the theological foundations training, a) Praying for Workers (to be sent into the harvest field), b) The Purpose of the Church, c) The Great Commission, d) The Priesthood of all Believers, e) The Role of Clergy and Laity.

The discipleship training was launched by having a Sabbath morning sermon that focused on Matthew 9:35-38 where Jesus instructs his disciples to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest field. An appeal was given at the end of the sermon for people who want to be harvest field workers to come forward and sign up for the discipleship

training. This group then scheduled a time to meet on a weekly basis to begin the training.

Creating Lay-led Discipleship Groups

As the theological foundations of disciple-making were being covered, participants in the training were encouraged to begin thinking about people that God was calling them to work for. At this point the training program was to become less about instruction and more about helping participants form their own discipleship groups. Each member was encouraged to follow the same process for creating his discipleship group that was followed in the creation of the pastor's group. The weekly training was intended to gradually evolve to become a support network for the newly formed discipleship groups.

Continued Expansion

The above process was to be repeated throughout the year and in various venues so that new participants could get involved in the disciple-making process. A one-time push would not be sufficient to engage a large portion of the congregation in discipleship. It would only be through repetition that enough people would eventually get involved in the process so that lasting change in congregational culture could be achieved.

Discipleship Training Program Summary

This second line of establishing a disciple-making culture in the church was to begin with training interested members in the process and end with the establishment of lay-led discipleship groups. These groups would then serve as the basic structure for discipleship in the church.

Re-Purposing Existing Ministries to Emphasize Evangelism

At the start of this project a majority of the existing ministries in the Fort Worth First church existed primarily to serve the needs of the current constituency. This meant that while people may have been active in ministry, they were not necessarily active in evangelism or in making disciples. If the primary purpose of the church is to expand the kingdom of God then the ministries of the church need to reflect that goal. It is for this reason that it seemed necessary to re-purpose existing ministries so that they might become evangelistic entities in the church.

The re-purposing process was to begin after the nominating committee had finished selecting ministry directors for the new officer term but before the final vote was taken. The newly nominated directors were to come together for an orientation meeting where they would learn what was expected of them as ministry leaders. One of their primary responsibilities was to attend the monthly OLT meeting. They were also asked to develop their ministries along the lines of the steps of discipleship mentioned above. Ministry directors were then asked to agree to these expectations before accepting their nomination to serve as a ministry director. The purpose of this step was to insure that the ministry leaders understood what was expected of them and to give justification for asking non-compliant ministry directors to step down from leadership if they did not engage in the process.

Once the new officer term began, the ministry directors were to be trained how to develop their ministry using disciple-making steps. Directors were asked to schedule events for their ministries that included the 6 steps of disciple-making (Investing, Community, Encounter, Outreach, Empowerment and Invitation). It was hoped that as

the directors began to structure their ministries around these steps there would be an increase in the number of lay people engaged in evangelistic activities.

Creating Ministries That Emphasize Evangelism

The re-purposing of existing ministries to have an evangelistic component would not be sufficient in itself to transition the Fort Worth First church from maintenance to lay-led mission. Therefore, it also seemed necessary to create new ministries that emphasized evangelism. By creating new ministries it was hoped that more volunteers would get involved in the important work of growing the church.

The Fort Worth First church has long been blessed to have a large number of medical professionals in the congregation. In the past there have been sporadic health oriented events, which have enjoyed modest attendance. These events were not usually well advertised in the community and also have not been intentionally connected to other ministries in the church. Considering the current US focus on health care (i.e. the establishment of the Affordable Care Act) and the resources available to the Fort Worth First church, a fully developed health ministry seemed like an ideal way to reach out to our community.

Involving Members in Re-Purposed Ministries

Once the discipleship groups had been established, existing ministries had begun the process of re-purposing and new ministries had been created, it would be vital to develop a system that would effectively connect lay-members with those ministries. The intentional involvement of members in disciple-making ministries was to happen through several avenues.

First, there was to be a yearly ministry fair where all the ministry directors would have the opportunity to showcase their ministry. It was hoped that this fair would help uninvolved members become acquainted with the various church ministries and provide a way for them to join in.

Second, a ministry booth was to be created and located in the foyer of the church. Each Sabbath a different ministry would have the opportunity to staff the booth and share information about their ministry. Additionally, the featured ministry was to have a chance to share about their ministry in the special feature time during the worship service.

Third, a bulletin board was to be created which would be located in the foyer and would advertise ministry events that follow the principles of disciple-making ministries. The bulletin board was to serve three purposes; a) it would be a visual reminder of the importance of discipleship, b) it would be a visual representation of all the different activities happening in the church and, c) it would encourage accountability among ministry directors to conduct events centered on disciple-making principles.

Fourth, the elders were to be trained to make recruiting volunteers a regular part of their visitation and Sabbath responsibilities. This was to help connect nurture with ministry involvement as elders worked to recruit the people they visited into active ministry.

Fifth, a yearly spiritual gifts seminar was to be conducted where participants could learn about their spiritual gifts and calling. Ideally this event was to precede the ministry fair.

Finally, the nominating committee was to be restructured to give ministry directors greater authority and responsibility in choosing their ministry teams. The *Church Manual* (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Secretariat, 2010, pp. 106-107) states “officers are elected every one or two years through an appointed nominating committee” and “with earnest prayer the committee should begin preparing a list of nominees for all offices.” In practice this meant that the nominating committee was responsible for finding all the ministry volunteers for the entire church. This significantly limited the number of volunteers in ministry as the nominating committee members only knew so many people. It would not take long before the nominating committee had worked through the people they knew personally and had to revert to picking names from the church directory to fill vacant positions.

The new nominating committee process was to be divided into two phases. The first phase was to nominate the ministry directors and church board. The second phase was to assist the ministry directors in staffing their ministries. Each ministry director was to be consulted on what their ministry team needs were and whether or not they would like the nominating committee to assist in recruiting members to their team. However, while the nominating committee was available to help with this task, ministry directors were encouraged to develop their own leadership team. Since they had been entrusted by the church with the responsibility of leading a ministry it seemed reasonable that they should also have the ability to build their own ministry team.

The goal of allowing ministry directors to develop their own teams was to empower the directors to lead and to make it possible for new people to be engaged in ministry as the sphere of influence of each ministry director would be different from that

of those who sit on the nominating committee. This is a way of decentralizing authority and returning responsibility directly to ministry leaders.

Conclusion

The preceding pages have described a process for repurposing the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church from maintenance to mission. Each component of the repurposing process is just one part of the whole solution. Transforming a fully institutionalized church is not an easy task and will not be accomplished without full spectrum participation (i.e. adaptive change). Additionally, it is also appropriate to recognize that no matter how many interventions one puts in place in a church, lasting and meaningful change will only come as a result of the power of God among his people (Herrington et al., 2000, p. 27). Therefore, the above process should be seen as a framework whereby the church will attempt to align itself with the working of the Holy Spirit. Without the infusing of God's presence however, the intervention will not be successful. Each step along the way must be bathed in prayer and a careful study of the Scripture and the process of transformation may at times have to be slowed down to accommodate the pace at which the Spirit is able to move in the congregation.

Scripture makes it clear that God has high expectations for his church. He desires his people to be fully committed to the great work of making disciples for him from all nations of the world. Since the Great Commission is the universal mission statement for all Christian churches (Burrill, 2004, p. 22) it is imperative that everything possible is done to bring the church in harmony with that command. Failure to move in that direction is willful disobedience on the part of the church and is a sin (Burrill, 2004, p. 23). The stakes could not be higher. Fortunately, Jesus promises that he has all power

and authority and that he will be with us when we engage in the great work of making disciples for him (Matt 28:18-20).

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATIONS

Introduction

Developing a culture of discipleship and evangelism is difficult in any church, doubly so if that church has become deeply inward focused and institutionalized. No single intervention will be sufficient to transform such a church from maintenance to mission, therefore, a variety of approaches must be attempted. Because of the sheer number of changes that need to take place in an institutionalized church it is extremely unlikely that a true culture of discipleship and evangelism can be established in the brief time period allotted for this project (three years). Change takes time and should progress incrementally (Heifetz et al., 2009, pp. 26-27). Therefore, the pace at which interventions can be introduced and implemented must be carefully considered especially in the light of resistance from key leaders. In some cases it may be necessary to set certain interventions aside in favor of maintaining overall church unity.

In the following pages I will share the results of interventions attempted at the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist church from 2010-2012 intended to help develop a culture of discipleship and evangelism and transform it from a maintenance focused church into one that was mission driven.

Description of Methodology

The effectiveness of the interventions will be evaluated in several ways. The first is through the comparison of results from a self-administered survey taken by the congregation at the start of the project and again at the end. Additionally there was a second survey taken by ministry leaders, which will also be examined. Next, attendance trends will be examined for the project duration as well as the number of baptisms and professions of faith that occurred during that time. Finally, there will be an explanation of each of the interventions attempted and an account of how they progressed.

Outcomes

One of the goals of this project was to increase the amount of evangelistic activity conducted by lay-members. As such, a survey was conducted at the beginning of the project to try and establish a baseline percentage for how many lay-members were engaged in this kind of ministry. This same survey was re-administered at the end of the project in 2012 to evaluate what, if any, changes took place.

Evaluating Lay Member Involvement in Evangelism

The original survey revealed that 31% of members indicated that they were involved in evangelistic activities and 58% of the ministry leaders indicated that their ministry had an evangelistic emphasis. When the survey was re-administered the number of positive responses actually went down with 24.1% of respondents indicating they were strongly involved in evangelistic efforts and 41% of ministry directors responding that their ministry had an evangelistic emphasis.

Based on the surveys, the involvement of lay-members in evangelism remained static or perhaps even decreased. Casual observation of ministry activities conducted during the project period confirms that there was not an increase in organized evangelistic efforts conducted by the laity. Based off this information it appears the project interventions had almost no effect on how active the congregation was in evangelistic efforts.

Accessions During the Project

Besides the self-evaluation survey another means of analyzing the effectiveness of the interventions was to examine baptism and profession of faith numbers during the course of the project. For the purposes of this analysis new members were grouped into one of three categories based on how they entered the church. If they joined as a direct result of a public evangelistic meeting they were labeled “Evangelist”; if they joined as a direct result of Bible studies conducted by a pastor they were labeled “Pastor”; if they joined through the work of a lay member they were labeled “Laity.” In the case where a local pastor conducted an evangelistic series the conversions were counted as the work of an evangelist.

Table 1 shows the year-by-year breakdown of conversions resulting from the work of an evangelist, a pastor, or a lay member.

Table 1

Conversions

Year	Evangelist	Pastor	Lay-Member
2010	34%	66%	0%
2011	0%	50%	50%
2012	80%	20%	0%
Combined	28%	57%	14%

The above figures show that most of the church's growth is a result of public evangelism and pastoral work. This is especially true when we consider that there was no public evangelism conducted in 2011 and this avenue of growth still accounts for 28% of total converts.

The ratio is even more strongly weighted towards the work of the clergy when a specific adjustment is made in the figures. During the time of the project the Fort Worth First Church loaned their facilities to an African group that was looking for a place to worship. The Conference included any baptisms from that group into the membership at FWF even though the group was completely autonomous. As such they were not a part of this project and their contributions should not be considered. When this adjustment is made the ratio of conversions for the project period is; 32% evangelist, 64% pastor, 4% laity. Of the 44 individuals who joined the church during the project time period, only two (4.5%) could directly be traced to the work of a lay member.

The baptism and profession of faith trends reveal that the overwhelming majority of growth comes from public evangelism and the work of the pastors.

Another interesting observation from the year-to-year figures is that there was no correlation between baptisms resulting from the work of lay-members and the

interventions attempted by the project. With only two baptisms coming from the direct work of a lay member it is clear that the interventions did not make an impact in this area during the project timeframe.

Examination of Attendance Trends During the Project

Attendance trends during the project period also seem to indicate that the project interventions had no impact on positive church growth. The average Sabbath attendance for both worship services in 2010 was 264, in 2011 it was 280, and in 2012 it was 256. It is unclear why 2011 saw an increase in overall attendance when records going all the way back to 2004 indicate a slow but steady decline. During the project duration the only attendance number that saw a consistent increase were those for the early morning contemporary service which was started in 2009. The attendance at that service has gone from 41 in 2010 to 49 in 2012 whereas the traditional second service has gone from 223 to 206.

Taken together the attendance trends reveal that weekly church participation has remained largely static during the course of the project interventions and is in fact continuing a larger trend of gradual decline that reaches all the way back to 2004 (this decline may in fact extend further back but reliable attendance numbers were not available).

Intervention Steps

One of the first steps in creating a church-wide culture is to develop a vision in harmony with the goals in mind. This vision can then be used as a basis for future changes and serve as a compass to inform the direction a church should take. At Fort

Worth the first intervention was to develop a new mission statement that emphasized lay-led evangelism.

Developing a Vision for Lay-led Evangelism

The new mission statement was developed over the course of several months. Initially, a church board retreat was held where the importance of lay evangelism was highlighted. From that retreat a small committee was formed to begin working on crafting a new mission statement that would highlight the importance of evangelism in the life of the church.

A few early roadblocks nearly derailed the process. One such roadblock was the insistence by some members of the committee to try and make the mission statement become an affirmation of our distinct Adventist identity. For some, that was far more important than capturing the vision for wide spread mission. This was the first red flag that showed the process of transformation was not going to be an easy one. Ultimately, it was decided that we would reference the General Conference mission statement in our own, therefore avoiding the necessity of restating the details of our unique denominational identity.

The General Conference mission statement is,

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to make disciples of all people, communicating the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and unite with His remnant Church, discipling them to serve Him as Lord and preparing them for His soon return. (Mission statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2013)

The final mission statement which was voted by the church board and then by the church in business session was:

In harmony with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church, Fort Worth First is dedicated to fulfilling its calling by following the biblical pattern of mobilizing members and ministries to impact their community for Christ. (Church Board, 2008)

One key factor should be pointed out about the mission statement. It focuses on methodology rather than on theology. The way that the church seeks to fulfill the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church is by “mobilizing members and ministries to impact their community for Christ.” The mission statement gives the responsibility of fulfilling the mission to the ministries and members of the congregation rather than to the clergy. The intent of this mission statement was to show that it is the congregation’s job to make a difference for Christ. Such work does not belong exclusively to the clergy but rather to all members of the church.

This mission statement was published in the church bulletin and advertised from the pulpit. However, a full marketing campaign was never conducted. There was an initial push by the pastoral staff to widely promote the mission statement but it never seemed to catch on. References to the mission statement continue to be made in meetings and training events but it does not appear to have been internalized by the lay leadership of the church. In fact, very few of the church leaders are even able to give the key points of the mission statement when asked.

While the statement has not truly impacted the church in any significant way it has been used as a justification for other interventions.

Results of Re-Purposing Administrative Structures

At the time the project was begun the Fort Worth First church had a disproportionally large Church Board when compared to the active membership. Every elder as well as every ministry leader was considered a Board member. At that time there

were close to 40 members on the Board in a congregation that averaged less than 250 in attendance each week. This means that over 15% of total attendance (which includes guests and children) was a member of the Church Board.

The sheer size of the Board made conducting business rather difficult. There were multiple occasions where formal decisions could not be made at all because of a lack of a quorum. Often the meeting did not start until 15-30 minutes late while waiting for the last few people needed to meet quorum and conduct business.

Another challenge was that administrative items always seemed to take precedence over ministry items in the Board agenda. Even when the pastoral staff tried to limit discussion on administrative items (or place them at the end of the agenda) there was a strong push from the Board members to give those items more emphasis. Furthermore, with so many people on the Board every discussion was quite lengthy as each person wanted to make his or her voice heard. It was not uncommon to spend 15-30 minutes discussing some minor point of administration (i.e. should we continue the lease on our folding machine?) and after just a few of those items the 2-hour allotment for the meeting would be over. These administrative items were certainly decisions that needed to be made, but they were taking precedence over the more weighty matters of outreach and ministry.

The end result of this situation was an administrative board that was not very effective in encouraging new and creative ministries that could potentially have a positive impact on the church. Ministry leaders were required to bring their ideas to the board for approval. It was not uncommon for such ideas to be either vetoed outright or to have so

many restrictions placed on them that the ministry leaders no longer desired to try and bring their idea to life.

In an attempt to alleviate this problem and create a more functional system that put ministry leaders (rather than the board) in the driver's seat the need for an administrative restructuring began to be shared. The proposed solution was to divide the overly large Church Board into three distinct groups with a certain amount of overlap.

The first group was the Church Board, which consisted of the pastors, the school principal, the main officers of the church (Head Elder, Head Deacon, Head Deaconess, Treasurer, Clerk) and five members-at-large chosen by the nominating committee and elected by the church. The focus of this much smaller Church Board was to decide administrative matters, set policies, and oversee finances. It was to serve as a kind of administrative board or executive committee.

The second group was the Outreach Leadership Team, which consisted of all the elders and ministry directors plus the pastors. Ministry assistants were also invited to attend these meetings. The OLT met once per month and the focus was on ministry development and implementation. The purpose of the meeting was to provide training for ministry leaders, orientation toward a mission focus, and a place where ministry leaders could network with one another in the accomplishment of the mission. This group was to serve as a kind of ministry board and fulfill the ministry and evangelism responsibilities assigned to the church board in the church manual (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Secretariat, 2010, p. 90).

The third group was the Board of Elders. This team would also meet monthly to consider the overall spiritual status and direction of the church. Furthermore, each elder

was assigned specific ministries where they were supposed to come alongside the ministry directors and provide encouragement and mentoring.

The overall goal of this intervention was to free up ministry leaders to focus their best energy on ministry development. They were no longer required to attend lengthy board meetings that were far removed from the day-to-day work of a ministry. It was also hoped that if they had a meeting devoted exclusively to ministry planning that the church would see an increase in lay-led outreach events. Additionally, the intervention was designed to give more responsibility to the elders as they worked with the ministry directors and helped them develop their programs. Finally, it was hoped that the new structure would minimize the emphasis on non-missional items and allow the church to put its main focus on ministry development and mission.

This intervention was fully implemented but appears to have had very limited success in increasing lay-led missional activities. Several challenges arose that have prevented it from realizing its full potential.

One challenge was confusion regarding the terminology of the different teams. Even after widespread explanations of the meaning and purpose of the OLT, many people still did not know what it stood for or what its purpose was. There seemed to be difficulty by some to hang on to this new term and grasp its purpose. Despite bulletin announcements, pulpit announcements, and a personal letter to each ministry director, some leaders still did not know they were even expected to attend the OLT let alone its purpose or potential.

A second challenge was a resistance to deviate from a strict reading of *Church Manual* policy. Many people continued to hold onto the idea that the Church Board was

the only board that mattered and that every ministry leader and elder needed to be a member. They did not understand that the OLT was fulfilling the ministry and outreach functions of the Church Board. Because of this resistance and/or confusion there was a push for the Church Board to be re-expanded while at the same time there was a lack of attendance at the OLT meetings.

There were generally two reasons cited by those ministry leaders who opposed the new structure. The first reason was that the church was deviating from *Church Manual* instruction. In the 2000 edition of the Manual (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Secretariat, 2000, pp. 81-82) it states that “the church board is composed of the principle officers of the church” and that “the following church officers should be included in the church board membership [followed by a list of church offices].” It was pointed out that based on this wording we were out of harmony with the *Church Manual*. In response to this objection it should be noted that the 2010 edition has changed the wording somewhat. Now it reads, “Every church must have a functioning board whose members have been elected during a church business meeting” and “in addition to conference-appointed pastors, the church should elect a representative board that includes the following officers: [followed by a list of church offices].” Furthermore, the manual concludes the section by saying, “in some cases, depending on the size of the membership, the board may not include all of this list or may add additional members.” (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Secretariat, 2010, pp. 124-125). Though slight, the inclusion of the word “representative” and the allowance for a church to have fewer members than what is formally listed appears to give greater flexibility to the local church in determining who precisely sits on the board.

The second reason for resistance to the new structure was only expressed second-hand. However, there seem to have been several key leaders who shared this opinion. There was a belief among some of the leaders that the restructuring was conducted, not out of a desire to benefit the church, but rather as an experimental portion of my doctoral project. Rumors began to be spread that the restructuring was being conducted simply so I could attain a doctoral degree. The implication being that the changes were self-serving rather than for the good of the church. At the height of the resistance three of these leaders approached the Conference administrators in an attempt to have me transferred to another church.

In addition to the active resistance of some leaders there has been a general apathy towards this intervention. Only a few ministry directors attend the monthly OLT meeting. It is unclear at this time why so many fail to attend. However, it does appear that many ministry leaders simply do not see it as being very important.

Despite all these challenges there have been a few ministry leaders who have benefited from the administrative changes. Those who have participated in the OLT meetings have realized that they now have great freedom to develop their ministry. They no longer have to pass every single minor decision through a governing board. So long as they stay within their budget and follow any policies set forth by the Church Board they are free to organize their ministries in any way God leads them. They have also found it helpful to network with other leaders at the OLT meeting and join together for specific projects. As a result there have been a few community outreach events that likely would not have occurred under the old system.

At the present time we have retained the three-part division of our administrative structure. Most of the active resistance has subsided though there is still a silent boycott underway by a few leaders. I am still attempting to encourage ministry directors to attend the OLT meetings. In time, I hope to help more leaders get on board with the OLT concept and mentor in new leaders who are more open to the idea. Failing that, it may be necessary to consider re-combining the boards.

Effects of the Discipleship Process

The attempt to create a culture of discipleship in the church was intended to progress along two lines. The first was through the establishment of a discipleship group led by myself that contained very little formal training for the members of the group. Instead of following a traditional training approach we simply launched into group life. The second approach was to follow the traditional “train and mobilize” pattern where instruction would be given to potential group leaders who would then take that information and attempt to put it into practice. Below I will share how each of these two lines progressed.

The Pastor’s Discipleship Group

I began the process of forming my discipleship group by prayerfully considering who God wanted me to begin investing in. I began by making a list of men in the church that God seemed to be leading me to. In the end I felt led to approach three men to become the core of my discipleship group.

I approached each of these men individually and explained to them that I was starting a discipleship group and that I did not know where it would take us, but that I felt

God was calling me to include them. I then asked if they would like to be a part. Once all three agreed we began to meet as a group.

One of the foundations of disciple-making ministries is a strong interpersonal bond between the members of the group. Therefore we did not begin with an in-home Bible study but rather with social gatherings. We set a once a month date at a local restaurant. At that meeting we would eat together, share what was happening in our life and pray for each other. Each person was encouraged to invite other men to join us at the dinner on the condition that the one doing the invitation had to take personal responsibility for investing in the person they invited. The dinner group expanded from the original four members to around eight or nine (though all members were rarely present all at once). This social/relational time became quite valuable and deep bonds eventually started to develop.

A second component of the group was to conduct community outreach. We only managed to carry out this component one time but it was a great blessing to all who participated. It was near Christmas time and so we set up camp outside a shopping area and passed out hot cider and water with a smile and wishes for a Merry Christmas. Our efforts seemed to be well received and the guys bonded together even more through this experience.

Unfortunately, the group did not continue long term. There are two reasons why this seems to have been the case. The first was that a couple of people who did not see the value in mostly social interactions started attending the dinners. These influences tried to steer the group to a more formal setting with a more formal Bible study format. The second was that I began to get heavy resistance from key leaders at this time over

other changes taking place in the church. This resistance weighed very heavily on me and I began to focus my attention on these problems rather than upon the group.

In the end this intervention did not have the effect I had originally hoped for but it did have some positive results. Namely, that I was able to build a strong bond with several men from the church, a bond which still exists today.

Discipleship Group Training

The discipleship group training began with an open invitation to all members who were interested in learning how to form and run a small group. A relatively small number of members came to the training out of which three groups were formed.

Of the three groups none lasted more than a year. The first group disbanded after several months. The leaders simply did not see the results that they expected and therefore got discouraged early. The second group disbanded as a result of leadership conflicts within the group. The third group lasted the longest but ultimately died out because one of the co-leaders was not fully living up to the Christian lifestyle and the group began to lose its focus on discipling people for the kingdom and devolved into a merely social gathering.

Overall the “train and mobilize” approach did not work very well. While there were some positive results from the effort its eventual failure only made it harder to start new groups. However, now that some time has passed there appears to be a renewed interest by some to explore the small group concept.

Discipleship Summary

The attempt to institute an effective discipleship process through small groups was largely ineffective. The combination of active resistance, apathy, and inertia proved

to be too great a challenge to overcome. However, the attempt was not a complete loss. The experience and lessons learned were valuable and will be a positive aid in the future when small discipleship groups are attempted once again.

Evaluating the Re-Purposing of Existing Ministries

Another aspect of re-purposing the Fort Worth First church from maintenance to mission was to deliberately work with existing ministries and help them become more missional. This portion of the intervention was to progress along two lines. The first was through training conducted at the monthly OLT meeting designed to help ministry leaders expand their focus to include outreach and discipleship elements. The second was to work with individual leaders and develop specific plans for their ministry to become more discipleship oriented.

The first line failed to achieve measurable results simply because most of the ministry leaders neglected to attend the OLT meetings. Therefore the training never went beyond the few faithful who always attended. However, those ministry leaders who did attend the OLT meetings and joined in the training seem to have the most vibrant ministries at the present time. While none have fully adopted all the principles of a disciple-making ministry they are at least active and meeting on a regular basis. In other words, they are functioning, whereas many of the other ministries are not.

The second line also faced some challenges. The first ministry I began to work with was the Young Adult ministry. We held a one-day retreat where we discussed the elements of disciple-making ministries and began to develop a vision for expanding the Young Adult ministry. There were several subsequent planning meetings where progress started to be made but eventually stalled out. I believe there were several reasons for this

false start. The first was that the majority of the leaders in the ministry were all related in one way or another. Underlying family dynamics started to surface, which prevented the group from really gaining cohesion and momentum. The second challenge was that the ministry leader had the opportunity to become part of the leadership of a local church plant and transferred his membership to begin working with them. This effectively put an end to the attempted repurposing of the Young Adult ministry.

In time, the nominating committee found a new leader for this ministry and at the time of this writing there are some exciting things happening. The new ministry leader is fully on board with the discipleship model of ministry. He has initiated Bible studies with his roommate who in turn has started studying the Bible with his girlfriend. Both of these individuals are also currently serving on a praise team at church. These two souls are drawing closer to God and the church because the ministry leader caught the vision for lay-led discipleship and evangelism. In time, I believe this ministry will continue to grow and bear fruit.

No other ministries have been repurposed at this time. After the initial failure with the Young Adults I decided to step back and re-examine my material and the process I was using to institute change. I hope to return to this intervention in the future with a clearer understanding of what needs to happen.

New Ministries That Emphasize Evangelism

In addition to creating discipleship groups and repurposing existing ministries an attempt was made at starting new ministries that would focus largely on interacting with non-believers. The biggest challenge to this intervention was finding leaders who had the time, talent, and vision to create such a ministry. After much prayer and evaluating the

gifts of our church body I was impressed that this new ministry should focus on health related evangelism.

The Fort Worth church has a large number of physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals in attendance. The church has conducted numerous cooking classes, health seminars and screenings over the years. With the increased national focus on health care during the time frame of this project it seemed only natural that we develop a fully functioning health ministry.

The first step was to identify a leader who could pioneer this ministry. The person elected to lead in this area saw the potential that this kind of ministry had to impact the community. The church sent the ministry leader to the NAD health ministries' training and she came back with a clearer idea of what the ministry could be.

Under the leadership of this ministry volunteer we had a health weekend (which was more of a training event for health ministry volunteers) and a healthy living seminar for the community. Both events were lightly attended. The original leader eventually resigned without conducting any more events and a new volunteer was selected by the nominating committee.

This ministry has thus far failed to be the evangelistic force it was intended to be. This is likely due to a couple of reasons. The first is that the ministry turned out to be more service oriented than evangelistic. While members did have an opportunity to interact with non-Adventists, there was no clear process to transition guests from an interest in health to an interest in spiritual growth. The second is that the ministry never took a central place in the church calendar. Events happened infrequently and leader simply did not have the time or experience to do more than that.

Involving Members in Re-Purposed Ministries

Initially there were six steps that were designed to help involve members in disciple-making ministries. The six steps were: a) to conduct a yearly ministry fair, b) to set up a centrally located ministry booth for leaders to occupy and use to promote their ministry, c) to create a bulletin board where discipleship oriented ministries would be highlighted, d) elders would be trained to make ministry recruiting a primary part of their visitation, e) a yearly spiritual gifts seminar would be conducted, and f) the nominating committee process would be restructured to give ministry directors greater freedom in building their ministry teams. Of these six steps only three of them were attempted and of those only one was fully implemented.

The one step that was fully implemented was a restructuring of the nominating committee process. In the past the nominating committee was responsible for finding every single church volunteer, from elder down to assistants in the children's Sabbath School classes. This was a daunting task and it usually devolved into trying to find warm bodies to fill vacant slots. One of the inherent weaknesses in the traditional nominating approach is that the committee is limited in how many people they know. They also do not have a good idea of who will work well with someone else. Therefore, it was decided that the nominating committee would focus their efforts on finding ministry directors and then allow those directors to develop their own ministry teams.

This step accomplished several things. First, it allowed the nominating committee to focus its energies on a more narrow range of leadership positions. Second, it gave greater responsibility and freedom to the ministry directors since they were asked to staff their ministry with people they wanted to work with. If there was a need for more

volunteers in any given ministry, the directors were empowered to find what help they needed. This decentralized the process of involving members in ministry and theoretically allowed for a wider base of participation. Third, the selection of volunteers was no longer limited by the relational knowledge base of the committee. This has resulted in several people being asked to serve in ministry who never would have been approached by the nominating committee simply because they were unknown to any of the members on the committee.

This step has been fairly successful though some ministry leaders really struggle to find volunteers. This difficulty is especially seen in ministry leaders who have gotten used to the nominating committee doing all the work for them. Furthermore, some ministry leaders simply are not very good at team building and they tend to take most of the responsibility upon themselves instead of recruiting others to help them.

The second step that has been attempted is a ministry fair. Two such fairs have been held with moderate attendance. Each ministry was invited to set up a booth and provide snacks and information about their ministry. Members would then go from booth to booth and sign up if they found something they wanted to get involved in. The fair did not appear to have a large impact on the number of active ministry volunteers although a few ministries did report being able to recruit new members to their team.

In 2012 there was a spiritual gifts seminar conducted in conjunction with the ministry fair. This seminar was lightly attended and appears to have had minimal impact.

The other steps that might be taken to involve members in ministry have not been realized at the current date. However, these things would likely contribute to the creation of a culture of volunteerism and service in the church if they could be implemented.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages I have shared the results of an attempt to transform the Fort Worth First church from maintenance to mission. I have listed the various interventions attempted as well as the results of each attempt. In conclusion, I would like to share my assessment of the overall attempt to transform the church.

The combined interventions have had only a limited effect on lay-led evangelism. Most of the church's baptisms continue to be the result of the work of the clergy. In only a few rare cases have lay-members taken on the responsibility for discipleship and bible study that leads to baptism. Those few rare cases are a blessing but they fall far short of the intended goal of church wide transformation.

I believe there are several reasons why a culture of lay-led evangelism has not been achieved.

The first reason is that there simply has not been enough time to bring about such a radical change. This kind of transformation simply cannot happen in the span of two or three years. Any attempt to move faster has caused all kinds of conflicts and roadblocks to appear. Therefore, a full transformation must be seen as a long-term goal.

The second reason is that the scope of changes needed is simply too large for one person to accomplish alone. To bring about any one of the above interventions takes a great deal of planning, prayer, convincing and recruiting. To bring about all of them, while at the same time managing the existing church structures has proved to be far beyond my capabilities. While some of the interventions have been implemented, most of them have only been half-heartedly attempted (or not attempted at all).

The third reason is that there is a high emotional cost to trying to transform such a deeply institutionalized church as Fort Worth First. My attempts to bring about transformation have resulted in me being labeled a liberal, a trouble-maker, and an agent of disunity. I have faced personal attacks directly as well as behind my back. A coalition even formed that led to the loss of our associate pastor and an attempt to have me removed from leadership. All these things have caused me to shift into a maintenance mode from time to time rather than to continue to push forward with the transformation agenda. Perhaps someone with greater experience or stronger willpower could have pushed through the resistance but that kind of effort was beyond my ability.

There are likely more reasons behind the relatively meager results of these interventions but these three stand out as the most obvious and significant. Despite the challenges and lack of results I still believe that transformation is vital. The Great Commission remains as the marching orders for the church and until we realize a priesthood of all believers dedicated to making disciples for Christ, we have a work of transformation to accomplish. I believe the only way to bring about this kind of transformation is through Spirit filled dedication over time. Congregational transformation takes time, it takes consistency and it takes the Holy Spirit. If even one of those elements is removed the process is derailed and the transformation will fail.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The goal of this project was to develop a process by which the Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist Church could be transformed from maintenance to mission. The interventions attempted were designed to empower lay-members to engage in effective evangelistic efforts, decentralize ministry and organize the church in a way that encouraged rather than discouraged innovation and creative thinking.

Overall Project Plan

The attempt at transformation focused on three major areas. The first was a re-organization of the administrative structure of the church that decentralized authority and gave greater autonomy to ministry leaders. The second was to create new ministries that had evangelism as a primary objective. This area also involved identifying new leaders who would embrace the idea of lay-led ministry. The third was an attempt to re-purpose existing ministries so that they took on an evangelistic thrust in addition to the nurture orientation that they already possessed.

Implementation of Plan

The attempted interventions progressed in a systematic and deliberate manner.

Evaluation of Lay Involvement

The first step was to evaluate the current level of lay involvement in evangelistic activities through a self-administered congregational survey.

Create Mission Mindset

The second step was to attempt to create a mission mindset in the congregation that would form the basis for future steps. To establish this mindset a committee was formed to create a new mission statement for the church that highlighted our responsibility to be workers for God. The final draft of the mission statement read, “In harmony with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church, Fort Worth First is dedicated to fulfilling its calling by following the biblical pattern of mobilizing members and ministries to impact their community for Christ” (Church_Board, 2008). This mission statement was printed in the bulletin, highlighted from the platform and reaffirmed in leadership meetings in the church. In addition to the creation of this mission statement sermons were preached that emphasized lay-led evangelism.

Disciple Members Into Active Ministry

The third step involved an attempt to disciple members in the church so that there was greater commitment to Christ and the work of the church. The discipleship component followed two lines. The first component was to develop a pastor’s discipleship group that focused on following Jesus’ example of discipleship by investing in a few individuals and engaging with them on a journey with Jesus. The second component was to train individuals in the church who expressed interest in discipleship and share with them elements of discipleship that they could apply to their own ministries.

Administrative Restructuring

The fourth step was an intentional re-purposing of the administrative structures of the church. This involved dividing the church board into two separate committees. The church board was reduced to 13 members (8 ex officio members and 5 members at large) and their focus was limited to finances, policies and general administration. The remaining ministry leaders and elders were assigned to the Outreach Leadership Team that functioned as a network for ministry leaders. Their focus was on ministry implementation. The goal of this restructuring was to free ministry leaders from mundane administrative tasks and to eliminate some of the barriers that made spontaneous ministry difficult. In addition to these two main committees, the elders were to provide mentoring to ministry leaders and work with the pastors to reinforce the vision for lay-led evangelistic ministry.

Equip Existing Ministry Leaders

The fifth step was to work with ministry leaders who were overseeing existing church ministries and provide them with tools to become more outreach focused. This involved sharing with them principles of discipleship gleaned from Jesus' ministry, which included nurture and outreach. This training was presented at the monthly OLT meetings.

Disciple new Leaders

The sixth step was to identify new leaders that could pioneer new ministries that had an evangelistic orientation. After evaluating the gifts and talents of the congregation as well as the needs of the community it was decided that health ministries would be an

ideal outreach ministry to develop. In addition to the traditional evangelistic campaign, health ministries have taken a central role in the outreach ministries of Fort Worth First.

Assess Impact of Interventions

Finally the congregation was re-evaluated at the end of the intervention period to determine what, if any, change had occurred in lay-led evangelistic efforts.

Conclusions

Transforming congregational culture is no easy task and it involves many diverse aspects (organizational as well as adaptive change). Furthermore, evaluating culture is imprecise and therefore it is difficult to identify success in a project such as this. Ideally the interventions would result in an increase in lay-led evangelism and an increase in baptisms as a result of lay efforts. However, there are other less tangible effects that are harder to evaluate such as the willingness of members to invite friends to church, the friendliness of members towards guests, and the support shown for outreach events. In the following pages I will evaluate the intervention attempts and draw some general conclusions from the process.

Effectiveness of the Interventions

Unfortunately, the interventions did not result in a measurable change in congregational culture. The church did not experience an increase in lay-led evangelistic efforts or in baptisms as a result of lay efforts. In fact, almost all baptisms were the result of the direct efforts of clergy. While there is some anecdotal evidence that there is more of a mission mindset than there was before, that mindset has not translated into an increase in obvious lay-led evangelistic activities.

Mission Statement

The mission statement that was developed never seemed to become a rallying point for ministry leaders. Even though the mission statement was shared with leaders and the congregation at large it never really became integral to the identity of the church. The value of the mission statement was mostly as a defense for new ministry programs. If new ministry ideas could be shown to line up with the mission statement it became easy to defend those ideas from would-be derailment. Perhaps the most significant new ministry that was developed and utilized the mission statement as a rationale was the creation of a contemporary early service. This service was not primarily evangelistic. However, since Fort Worth First was such a traditional church it seemed important to provide a second worship option for people we would be trying to reach through our evangelistic efforts. Therefore, the mission statement was used as a defense for the creation of the new service based on the argument that we needed to provide a meaningful worship experience for those who would not necessarily identify with the traditional format.

Pastor's Discipleship Group

The discipleship component was never fully implemented and the two approaches to discipleship stalled out for different reasons. The first approach to discipleship was the pastor's discipleship group. This failed to mobilize members in ministry though it did help build some bonds between members of the group and the pastor that have proved to be valuable to all parties involved. There were two primary reasons why the pastor's discipleship group did not reach its full potential. The first reason is that there was no clear curriculum or process of discipleship in place. Instead, there was an attempt to

follow general principles of discipleship in an informal, non-structured manner. This resulted in a lack of focus and intentionality. Furthermore, pastoral inexperience with this kind of discipleship also contributed to its failure to reach its full potential.

Another factor contributing to the shortcomings of the pastor's discipleship group was the sudden flare up of church conflict. This conflict ended up taking priority and the emotional toll of dealing with the conflict led to the derailment of the pastor's discipleship group.

Formal Discipleship Training

The formal training component for discipleship also failed to gain any real traction. This second line of discipleship suffered from some of the same problems as the pastor's group. Again there was no set curriculum for ministry leaders to follow, instead, they were trained in principles derived from Jesus' method of discipleship. Another challenge was an apparent lack of interest by ministry leaders and members to attend the training. Only a handful (less than 12) attended the formal training and no tangible result from the training could be observed.

Administrative Restructuring

The administrative restructuring (both the restructuring of the board and the nominating committee) was the only intervention that was fully implemented and adopted by the church. While the administrative changes did not lead to increased lay-led evangelism there were some positive outcomes from the restructuring. First, it allowed ministry leaders greater freedom. This allowed several ministries to hold events that otherwise might not have happened or would have been difficult to implement. A second positive result was that board meetings became shorter and more focused. Since

the board was smaller and only had to deal with specific items it was much less volatile and their work could be accomplished more quickly.

On the other side of things the restructuring was not without challenges. One of the first challenges was confusion among ministry leaders about the purpose of each committee. This led to OLT meetings that were very poorly attended. Another challenge was that it seemed that certain leaders felt as if they had lost power (because they were no longer on the church board though they were part of the OLT) and therefore there was resistance from these leaders and an attempt to reassert control and reverse the changes.

Re-Purposing Existing Ministries

The attempt to re-purpose existing ministries to have a stronger evangelistic component began (and ended) with the young adults. While there was not an observed increase in evangelism there was increased activity in that ministry. Time may yet reveal this increase in activity to have a positive evangelistic effect. If nothing else the ministry became more active in the church strengthening the bonds of current young adult members.

Creation of New Outreach-Focused Ministries

The new ministry that was created that was designed to be outreach in nature was focused on health and wellness. The church has had several health fairs and healthy living seminars, which have been attended by members and visitors alike. While there have not been any baptisms directly linked to these events they have been almost totally lay-led.

Obstacles Encountered

Changes such as those attempted by this project cannot be implemented without facing some obstacles. In fact, Friedman et al. (2007, p. 246) note, “it is simply not possible to succeed at the effort of leadership through self-differentiation without triggering reactivity.” The most notable obstacles seemed to center around a struggle for power and a desire to maintain the conservative orientation of the church. The intervention that caused the most conflict was the one that was fully implemented, the reorganization of the administrative structures.

One of the results of this intervention was to decentralize authority in the church. Elders took on a mentoring role but lost much of their positional authority. Instead of using a vote to approve or deny ministry ideas, it became necessary for them to work with ministry leaders directly and those ministry leaders were under no obligation to obey their opinions. So long as ministry leaders followed established policies, they had complete freedom to run their ministries. They were encouraged to listen to the advice of elders but not obligated to follow their directives.

The initial goal of this intervention was to help elders to take on a more active role in shaping ministry by being mentors to ministry leaders. They were to use their influence with the leaders to provide advice and counsel and to encourage them to come up with ideas in harmony with the overall church vision. While the restructuring gave the elder’s less formal authority, their ability to directly impact individual ministries in a positive way was increased. They were given greater responsibility and a more pastoral role. Unfortunately, as time went by the majority of elders defaulted on their mentoring role and began to feel that they had been excluded from the decision making process in

the church. The decentralization of authority led to an attempt by some leaders to recentralize power and change the leadership dynamics of the church. This attempt reached a climax when key leaders confronted me with a list of changes that they insisted needed to happen. When I did not immediately respond to these demands they approached the Conference leaders in an attempt to have me transferred. In the end the Conference officers refused to meet with these lay leaders without myself and my associate pastor also being present. The lay leaders declined to be involved in such a meeting and the resistance died down for a time.

Another source of conflict, which led to the derailment of some of the interventions, was the creation of the contemporary first service. Even though the contemporary service was brainstormed among the elders, recommended by them to the church board, voted by the board and sent to the church in business session and then approved by the business meeting there was still great resistance to the service. This resistance came from the same group that opposed the administrative changes. The contemporary service has continued to be a flashpoint for some people and serves as a rallying cry for those who are disgruntled in the church.

Despite these overt forms of opposition the most significant challenge which hindered the effectiveness of the interventions was much more mundane. Most of the interventions did not reach their full potential simply because the lay leaders did not take advantage of the mission orientation and the pastoral staff was unable to adequately instill a mission mindset in the congregation. While a few ministry leaders and members seemed to grab hold of the idea for lay-led evangelism, the concept was not widely adopted. The OLT meetings and training events suffered from chronic low attendance. It

proved difficult to even get the majority of elders to attend these meetings. Likely there were a combination of factors that led to this weak response. Not the least of which was the pastoral staff's inability to effectively communicate the vision and motivate the ministry leaders.

Recommendations

The interventions attempted in this project largely focused on organizational change and true adaptive change was never accomplished. This resulted in a failure to achieve the hoped for goal of congregational transformation. Based on this experience several recommendations arise from the intervention attempts:

Evaluate the Congregation

The first step must be a careful evaluation of the congregation. One need not conduct formal surveys or have years-worth of data to identify a church that leans more towards maintenance than mission. Often the signs of maintenance are evident after only a few visits. There are several ways to begin to identify a maintenance-focused church.

One way is to observe how the church interacts with visitors. Are visitors treated as honored guests where the church rolls out the red carpet" or are visitors an afterthought. Chances are that a maintenance church will put forth little effort to intentionally connect with visitors and help them feel like part of the family.

Another way is to look at the kinds of events that are promoted in the bulletin. What ministries do the church seems to emphasize, what audience are they trying to target, their own members or the community? If the ministries and events have only a minimal chance of putting members in contact with spiritual seekers then there is a good chance that mission is not a top priority.

How money is spent is also a good indicator of where the church's priorities might lay. A mission-focused church will look for ways to leverage its discretionary spending towards mission. For example, if a church needs new carpet, a mission minded church might approach fund raising from the perspective of how the new carpet will be more appealing to visitors. A maintenance church might promote the need for new carpet by pointing out trip hazards. In other words, does the church intentionally connect the expenditure of money with mission?

Another gauge of a church's mission orientation is whether or not there are regular testimonies that relate the impact members are having on the community. If there are new members or visitors who are able to share how the church has blessed them or if members are able to get up and say how they were blessed by serving others then you can assume the church has mission on their mind. On the other hand, if testimonies are basically introverted then this may indicate a maintenance mindset.

The same can be said for the content of prayers, sermons, and announcements. What kinds of messages are being presented in those public forums? Is mission a value that is being regularly upheld? Is there a lot of insider language being used? All these things can help a person evaluate the mission orientation of the church.

Perhaps the most effective measure of a church's mission mindset is to ask random adult members what the vision of the church is. Their response will give a fairly accurate picture of what the church is all about. If nobody is able to articulate some kind of vision for discipleship, mission, evangelism or outreach, then you can assume those things are not really a part of the fabric of the church.

Engage Adequate Lay Support

Second, it is important to recognize that no intervention will be effective without a significant amount of support from lay leaders. A critical mass is necessary in order for the scales to tip from maintenance to mission (Conger et al., 1999, pp. 90-91). Ideally, the recognized lay leaders would buy into the new vision and direction for the church. However, this is often difficult to implement because those same lay leaders have the most personal investment in the status quo. Therefore, if the pain of change is greater than the pain of stagnation there will be no change (Conger et al., 1999, pp. 88-89). Another way to create critical mass for an intervention attempt might be by working with receptive lay-members who are not currently in those key leadership positions. Since they are somewhat on the outside already, they may be more receptive to change. If this group of members can catch the vision and learn to spread it to others it might be possible to create a groundswell in the congregation where change happens from the bottom up. Unfortunately, this kind of approach will inevitably result in conflict unless the established lay leadership can be brought to embrace the new direction for the church.

Prepare to Change People—not Systems

Third, changing congregational culture is about changing people and not systems. One of the main failures of this attempt at cultural change was that it focused too much on systems, procedures and public training events and not enough on personal transformation. Since the people were not prepared for significant change, they were not able to fully utilize the administrative and structural changes. Essentially, this change effort never rose above the level of technical change. It seems apparent that a successful cultural change must begin with the individual members in order to become adaptive.

Therefore, future attempts at transformation should focus more on individual discipleship efforts before making structural and administrative changes.

Avoid Change in an Arbitrary Time Frame

Fourth, changing congregational culture cannot be crammed into an arbitrary timeline. In the case of Fort Worth First change has come very slowly and any attempts to move things faster have resulted in significant opposition. This required putting some interventions on hold and abandoning others altogether. Ultimately, a pastor seeking to change congregational culture must be prepared to stick with the process over the course of many years and have the emotional and spiritual fortitude to endure the inevitable conflicts (Friedman et al., 2007, pp. 246-247).

Foster Support of Denominational Leaders

Fifth, pastors seeking to significantly change a congregation should stay in very close contact with the conference leaders. Sooner or later disgruntled lay leaders will make appeals to the conference office. If the conference supports the lay-members over the pastor then the interventions will fail and the pastor will likely be forced to move. However, if the conference is kept up to speed on the intervention process they will be more prepared to support the pastor that will give the change attempt a greater chance of success.

The Cost of Challenging the Status Quo

Sixth, before beginning a significant change process the pastor should very carefully count the cost. Challenging the status quo will result in power struggles, conflict, and pain. Anyone engaging in such an effort must be absolutely certain that

God requires the intervention. If a pastor is not prepared to endure the pain and difficulty that results from implementing change it may be advisable to simply maintain the status quo and seek to instill kingdom values on those who demonstrate receptivity. It is probably better to allow a church to maintain a status quo situation rather than begin an intervention and be unable to bring it through to completion.

What I Would do Differently

Based on the experience gained from this project there are several things I would do differently if I were to attempt such a change process again. Following is a brief summary of those items.

Discipleship as Leadership Development

I would begin with discipleship on a small scale using a formalized discipleship program such as the one developed by Greg Ogden (2007). I would use discipleship as a way to develop and mature leaders that could be primary change agents in the future. This would help ensure that there were a larger number of lay-members who fully understood and embraced the need for lay-led evangelism and that would use their influence and efforts to bring about necessary change. I would refrain from making any structural or administrative changes until a solid contingent of lay leaders had been mentored and were supportive of the need for change.

Work With the Willing

I would attempt to work with receptive ministry leaders on an individual basis to help them develop evangelistic elements for their ministry. Rather than trying to repurpose ministries by first changing structures I would work to change the mindset and

focus of leaders so that when administrative structures were changed the leaders would be prepared to take advantage of their freedom.

Utilize Familiar Terminology

While I believe the two-part division of the church board is ultimately beneficial I would approach this change differently. Rather than name one committee the “church board” and use a rather unfamiliar term (Outreach Leadership Team) for the other, I would use more familiar terminology. I would seek to have an “executive committee” that focused on policy, finances, and administration, and a “church board” that focused on evangelism and ministry development. These terms are already used in the Adventist church and should eliminate confusion. It would be important to make sure that the church board did not default to fulfilling administrative roles but instead maintained focus on ministry development. By maintaining this more familiar terminology it should be possible to enact administrative change in a subtler manner thus, garnering less opposition.

Avoid Unrelated Changes

I would avoid trying to make changes that were not directly related to the goal of transforming congregational culture. In hindsight, the creation of a contemporary worship service served as a distraction to the attempt of bringing the church together around a common goal of evangelism and church growth. By introducing such a controversial ministry the discussion became focused on worship styles rather than on outreach.

Approach Change Slowly

I would approach the process of change more slowly and systematically, combining discipleship with ministry leadership. As new leaders embraced the mission mindset I would work to promote them to official ministry positions over time—thus changing the culture of leadership boards from the inside out.

Develop More “Sending” Ministries

I would seek to create new outreach ministries that more directly involved members in giving Bible studies and leading people to Christ. While the health ministry has had some success it is still attractional in nature and is run by a few highly qualified individuals. We still do not have any ministries that really engage large numbers of members in working with un-churched people. Perhaps a better ministry would be to start a Bible school out of the church where members are trained to follow up on Bible study interests. This type of ministry would require many more lay volunteers and would put them in direct evangelistic situations with interested seekers.

Final Observations

The attempt to transform the culture of Fort Worth First from maintenance to mission has been a challenging experience to say the least. The emotional and spiritual toll of this process has been great. Change attempts have been met with hostility, opposition, and apathy with very few noticeable results. It has been very difficult to mobilize the congregation around the idea of lay-led evangelism.

The one glimmer of hope comes from the fact that as time goes by, opposition has decreased and new leaders are gradually being raised up who want to see a change in the status quo. These changes have come slowly and many of them have begun to take shape

after the formal intervention period of this project ended. Attempts, which failed early in the project, now seem to be taking root. Time may eventually prove to be the greatest factor in changing congregational culture.

In hindsight it seems clear that a major reason why the interventions did not have the desired result is because most of the steps taken to transform the congregation were organizational in nature and never really rose to the level of adaptive change. In studying resources and preparing for the change process I myself underwent a significant change but I was not able to confer that change to the rest of the church. I operated under the assumption that if obstacles to lay-led evangelism were removed, that the church would naturally step up and function as intended. This, unfortunately, was not the case. Adaptive change is about more than removing obstacles and changing systems and I did not fully realize this fact until after the process was well underway.

Finally, while the goal of this project was to develop a process for congregational change it seems clear in hindsight that, despite what change experts may say, there is no such thing as a process for change. Change is an organic experience that is unique to every situation. There may be common principles in every successful change event but the steps that lead to successful change in one place may be ineffective in another.

Considering all the challenges that will arise from an attempt to transform congregational culture it may be better to allow plateaued churches to remain plateaued. In many cases, plateaued churches will likely continue to chug along for many years before falling into decline. Rather than waste valuable energy on a laborious and possibly fruitless effort at change it may be advantageous to put maintenance pastors into maintenance churches. Then re-allocate pastoral resources towards church planting

where it is possible to create a missional DNA from the inception of the new church. It seems that planting new missional churches would have a greater impact on the spread of the gospel than attempting to transform institutionalized churches that are more interested in serving the needs of their own constituency than mobilizing to impact the world for Christ.

It is my opinion that while every pastor should seek to instill biblical values in the congregation they serve; most pastors should not seek to bring about radical change in congregational culture. The process is simply too difficult and fraught with pitfalls to expect that most, or even many, change attempts will be successful. Changing culture in severely institutionalized churches might best be left to change specialists rather than be expected of the average pastor. Even though as many as 80% of Adventist churches are plateaued or declining (Kidder, 2011, p. 13), attempting to return them to growth by transforming their culture is probably not the most efficient or effective path for most pastors to take. Instead these churches could be allowed to mostly care for themselves and the pastoral resources could be allocated to raise up new congregations with a missional DNA that will carry the Adventist message to future generations.

APPENDIX A

Survey Title:

Evaluation of Individual Soul-Winning Efforts by the Membership of the Fort Worth First
Seventh-day Adventist Church

I have read the Informed Consent Letter and recognize that by completing and returning this survey I am giving my informed consent to participate.

General Questions:

Please circle the answer or fill in the blank as indicated.

Age Group: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 66+

Gender: Male Female

Number of years as a baptized Seventh-day Adventist: _____

Number of years attending FWF: _____

Specific Soul-Winning Questions:

1. I regularly pray for specific non-Adventist individuals that they might be receptive to the Adventist message. Yes No
2. I have held face to face formal Bible studies with a non-Adventist in the last 12 months. Yes No
3. I speak with non-Adventists about my faith at least twice per month. Yes No
4. I am part of a spiritual group outside of the regular services of Fort Worth First that has at least one non-Adventist in attendance. Yes No
5. I have non-Adventist contacts with whom I am working to build a stronger relationship. Yes No
6. I regularly invite my non-Adventist contacts to church. Yes No

APPENDIX B

Survey Title:

Evaluation of Soul-Winning Emphases in the Ministries of the Fort-Worth First Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I have read the Informed Consent Letter and recognize that by completing and returning this survey I am giving my informed consent to participate.

For the purposes of this study, “soul-winning” refers to activities that place Seventh-day Adventist members in contact with non-Adventists for the purpose of building relationships and ultimately presenting the Adventist message.

General Questions: Please circle your answer or fill in the blank as indicated.

Age Group: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 66+

Gender: Male Female

Number of years leading this ministry: _____

Specific Soul-winning Emphasis Questions:

1. My ministry follows a documented plan for outreach which puts Adventist participants in contact with non-Adventists. Yes No
2. My ministry creates opportunities for participants to develop meaningful relationships with non-Adventists. Yes No
3. My ministry plans social events for participants that are often attended by non-Adventists. Yes No If yes, how often?: _____times / month.
4. My ministry intentionally creates opportunities for participants to experience the presence of God in their life which are attended by non-Adventists. Yes No
5. My ministry has a clear process for encouraging non-Adventists in their relationship with Christ. Yes No
6. I consistently look for ways to involve new volunteers in service to God through my ministry. Yes No

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Education

- 2008 – Present: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Andrews University. D.Min. in Church Growth and Evangelism. In Progress.
- 2001 – 2004: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Andrews University. Received M.Div. Graduated with a 3.89 cumulative GPA.
- 1994 – 1997: Union College. Received B.A. in Theology
- 1992 – 1994: Champion Academy. Received High School Diploma.

Experience

2008-Present	Senior Pastor: Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist Church	Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
2007-2007	Contract Teacher for the class “Jesus in His Time and Ours”	Southwestern Adventist University
2006-2007	Associate Pastor: Fort Worth First Seventh-day Adventist Church	Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
2004-2006	Associate Pastor: Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Church	Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
2001-2004	Graduate Assistant for Dr. Ranko Stevanovic, Andrews University	Andrews University
1998-2001	District Pastor: Wrangell and Petersburg, AK	Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Ordination

2006	Ordained to the Gospel Ministry	Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
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