

ABSTRACT

**CHURCH AND CLERGY REVITALIZATION SEEN THROUGH THE LENS
OF LUTHER’S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS**

by

John David Roth

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the Transforming Churches Network (TCN) initiative in the Florida-Georgia district of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and how it assisted pastors and congregations in revitalization and to evaluate ways in which Martin Luther’s theology of the cross is related to this process.

The criteria used to recruit congregations for TCN consultation and involvement included (1) a plateau or decline in worship attendance for two or more years, (2) willingness and readiness of the pastor to participate, and (3) willingness and readiness of the congregational leadership to be involved. Pastors from seven congregations that began the TCN process in the fall of 2008 or the beginning of 2009 were interviewed. Each pastor’s coach and two lay leaders working with each pastor were also interviewed to substantiate the pastor’s perspectives.

Seven major findings of this study include the following: (1) Five of seven clergy experienced revitalization through the TCN process while two pastors expressed a level of spiritual diminishment; (2) in five of the seven congregations the level of change experienced by clergy and congregation corresponded nearly one to one while in two congregations the change experienced was higher for the churches than the clergy; (3) no congregation showed a statistically significant change in membership trends; however, in six of seven congregations the leaders, coaches and pastors expressed that a cultural shift

had taken place in the churches becoming more missional; (4) the churches that displayed the strongest cultural shift were led by pastors with the highest level of credibility; (5) the churches with the strongest cultural shift were located in a suburban setting; (6) the seven pastors expressed alignment between their experience and Luther's theology of the cross; and, (7) though the seven pastors interviewed expressed alignment between their experience and Luther's theology of the cross, few of them prior to the interview had connected the theology of the cross to their experience through the change process.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
CHURCH AND CLERGY REVITALIZATION SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF
LUTHER’S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

presented by

John David Roth

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

_____ Mentor	_____ March 26, 2012 Date
_____ Internal Reader	_____ March 26, 2012 Date
_____ Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program	_____ March 26, 2012 Date
_____ Dean of the Beeson Center	_____ March 26, 2012 Date

CHURCH AND CLERGY REVITALIZATION SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF
LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

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May 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Florida-Georgia district of the LC—MS has shown itself to be a community of faithful people open to my involvement over the past ten years. I am grateful for the leadership and growth I experienced with the futures committee of the district. Over the course of three years, the members of this committee were faithful in prayerfully working through complex issues and challenges as we forged a consensus to move forward with revitalization of our congregations.

Asbury Theological Seminary has been invaluable, especially the work of my research team, Dr. Leslie Andrews, Dr. Russel West, and Dr. Milton Lowe. Dr. Andrews has been deeply insightful through our time together. I have appreciated her wisdom and perspective. Dr. Lowe has guided me at crucial moments throughout the process when I was unaware of the next step. He was responsive to me in many ways. Dr. West was a wonderful encourager and instructor, a model of lifelong learning and leadership growth.

I am also deeply thankful for the support from my team members on staff with me at First Lutheran Church of Gainesville, Florida, and for the members who strongly support continuing education. This research is truly a team effort with their involvement behind each page of material. First Lutheran gave me the time and encouragement to persist through the years and to complete this work. I pray it becomes a blessing to this Christian fellowship I dearly love.

Finally and most importantly, I am deeply grateful to my wife, Lisa, and my two children, Justin and Emma, who put up with countless hours of my absence through these years of doctoral work. They are God's great gifts to me. I am so thankful I journey

through life part of this family. God has blessed me beyond measure through them. To God alone be the glory.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Martin Luther's Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 starkly contrasted a theology of glory and a theology of the cross. Spurred by the controversy over indulgences, Luther digs deeply into the Word of God and discovers a paradoxical relationship between humanity and God, most poignantly asserted as the justification of the ungodly (Käsemann, *New Testament Questions* 179). Luther understands that only in the event of Christ's death on the cross is a sinner saved. God's work, seen at the cross in folly, weakness, and especially in suffering, was actually God's power, wisdom, and glory. Luther went counter to the sanctioned theological systems of his day, which emphasized Aristotelian logic, asserting that one can know and approach God through nature and that keeping moral laws were the way to please him (Bayer 30-32). A theology of glory undergirded the sociopolitical system of the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church, whose rulers and lords enjoyed a position of power and privilege. Luther found this sociopolitical system counter to the Christ and his cross. In the *Ninety-Five Theses*, Luther called the institutional Church in all its aspects to repentance and transformation (Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions* 79). Indulgences were one part of the Roman Catholic Church system that placed a financial burden and the burden of salvation upon the individual, allowing people to take credit, at least in part, for their salvation. The Heidelberg Disputation became part of Luther's defense for the controversies and questions raised by those theses. Luther asserted that God alone receives all glory for humanity's salvation.

Three theses from the Heidelberg Disputation state Luther's theological perspective most poignantly:

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1.20].
20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.
21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is. (Luther, *Luther's Works* 31: 40)

Walter von Lowenich contends that though Luther does not use the coined phrase “theology of the cross” from the Heidelberg Disputation throughout his works in subsequent years, it continued to run through Luther's theological development (12-13). Rather than being a passing trend, the theology of the cross becomes the heart of his evangelical theology, the very essence of his reformation thought (McGrath 178).

A well-developed theology of the cross can provide much more than a doctrine of God. It can provide a theological foundation for all theology, including practical theological reflection on church revitalization and leadership development from a Christian perspective. This research explores the cruciform implications for the areas of church revitalization and leadership development as they apply to the Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LC—MS), within which I am a pastor. In the spring of 2006, the president of the district appointed me the chairperson of a futures committee, an ad hoc committee authorized to identify, advocate, and initiate strategies to empower the transformation of Florida-Georgia District congregations to fulfill the district vision of “every church a mission and every member a missionary.”

The district's vision is, in reality, on paper but not in practice. In surveys

conducted by the futures committee, church professionals and lay leaders could not verbalize the district's mission. Even when church leaders could recite it, many activities and behaviors of district congregations and leaders appear out of alignment with the mission statement's implications. Robert Quinn states aptly, "Though vision statements are now common in most large organizations, vision is not" (*Deep Change* 195). In my analysis, the Florida-Georgia district shows evidence of a lack of shared missional vision.

Examining worship attendance statistics from the 193 congregations in the Florida-Georgia District between 1998 and 2007 showed that worship attendance declined in 121 churches, thirteen were on a plateau, and only fifty-nine experienced growth. Many churches appear to have lost spiritual vitality and a missional stance in their communities. Past attempts at changing this stagnation or downward trend have not proven effective. Most attempts have been add-on programs and narrowly focused strategies to turn around a systemic issue. Incremental changes have proven not to be enough. Symptoms of this failure are also seen in the deep-seated issues surrounding the clergy, lay leadership, and structure that reward the status quo rather than transformational change.

Many mainline congregations are experiencing numerical decline in the American culture for a variety of reasons. From demographic shifts to generational changes, churches are experiencing revolutionary shifts at a rapid rate; however, the response to such flux in the mission field of congregations concerns me most. The reluctance to make systemic adaptations, I believe, goes beyond psychosocial phenomena.

The FL-GA district has followed the tendencies of the synod and most mainline church bodies, being reluctant to make any systemic innovations in a rapidly changing

culture. At first glance, this tendency toward incremental adjustments may appear as nothing more than a natural tendency toward comfort and keeping matters under some control. It underscores the truth that “organization and change are not complimentary concepts” (Quinn, *Deep Change* 5). Institutionalism prevails over innovation. However, this truth begs the question as to why institutionalism prevails and comfort is sought. When reviewing the theology of the cross, this trend toward comfort and institutionalism can be seen as more than a natural sociological phenomenon, an underlying tendency to avoid the cross. Indeed, one may diagnose the trend toward comfort and institutionalism with Ernst Käsemann: original sin expressing not just resistance but hostility toward the cross (*Perspectives* 37).

Luther’s theology of the cross, when it is fully proclaimed, calls clergy, congregational leaders, churches, and the regional judicatory and its structure to die to self and be raised anew, again and again. No one and no organization ever arrives at the final destination this side of the new creation as St. Paul confesses to the Philippian church (Phil. 3:12-14). This death and resurrection motif is the transformational change I pray will occur through the work the futures committee began.

As Christians are called to die to self, the theology of the cross raises a Christian with Christ to live for others (Forde, *Justification* 55). This call is not done alone, for a theology of the cross must be translated into an ecclesiology of the cross (Hall, *Cross* 193). A cruciform theology actualizes service for the sake of others.

A cruciform church is inherently missional and outreaching. When a congregation displays a lack of missional outreach, it reveals a faulty or diminished cross theology behind its lack of vitality. One can glimpse part of the true practiced theology of a

congregation by reviewing its statistics for worship attendance and adult confirmations, as well as hearing its pastor and members speak of its vision, outreach, and service. This combination of statistical trends and qualitative analysis of interviews, searching for the meaning behind the behaviors and trends, will help explore how a congregation is living out Luther's theology of the cross.

With many churches in membership decline, the futures committee saw a need for revitalization across the district. A theology of the cross will call for a holistic, systemic change for the sake of mission, a dying to self for the sake of others. Clergy and congregations must be challenged, supported, trained, and held accountable. Additionally, congregations must be restructured so they support clergy and leaders while implementing missional growth.

Rarely, if ever, will these things happen from within a congregation that has been on a plateau or experiencing a downward trend in membership (Barna 15). Outside leadership is required in most cases. The district must see its purpose to be that kind of leadership and bring about transformational change in its congregations.

Purpose

Some congregations in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have recently experienced this approach to revitalization through the Transforming Churches Network (TCN). Under the leadership of a number of district mission executives, this movement adopted Paul D. Borden and John Kaiser's writings concerning the American Baptist Church of the West for the polity and culture of the LC—MS. Each district within the LC—MS was invited to participate in this revitalization effort, and adopted the model as the each district's leadership saw fit. Some districts declined involvement in this

movement. The Florida-Georgia District, however, under the auspices of the futures committee, chose to move into a pilot program of TCN. As the district experienced positive responses from the nine congregations in the first two pilot clusters, the momentum propelled the district in convention to adopt TCN as an approach to revitalization, charging the district board of directors to oversee that 50 percent of the 193 congregations undergo a revitalization initiative similar to TCN by the year 2015. The June 2009 district convention passed the resolution unanimously (see Appendix A).

The purpose of this research, therefore, was to explore the TCN initiative in the Florida-Georgia district as a means to assist pastors and congregations in revitalization and to examine ways in which the theology of the cross is related to this process. The research explored the revitalization of the congregations by measuring changes in statistics considered symptomatic of increased congregational vitality: average worship attendance, number of adult baptisms, and number of adult confirmations post enrollment in TCN (see Appendix B). The research studied the revitalization of pastors and congregations through interviews with seven participating clergy, each clergy's coach, and two lay leaders within each of the congregations. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I describe how the theology of the cross aligns itself with transformational change and mission with recommendations that can increase its alignment.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions were explored in this study:

1. Have participating TCN clergy experienced revitalization and, if so, how?

2. To what extent have participating TCN congregations experienced revitalization as seen in average worship attendance, adult confirmations, and a perceived shift in church culture toward outreach post enrollment in TCN?

3. Have participating clergy seen TCN aligned with Luther's theology of the cross, and, if so, in what ways?

Definition of Terms

In this research I have used a number of terms in specific ways that need definition for the reader to understand more clearly what I was examining. Other research may use similar terms with different definitions. Therefore, I offer these following words or phrases.

Worship Attendance Plateau or Decline

Congregations are said to be on a worship plateau or decline when the experience less than a one percent increase in average worship attendance for a three year period or longer.

Revitalized Congregation

A revitalized congregation is defined as a church that is regularly and consistently "making new disciples who make new disciples" (Tiemann). A revitalized church possesses many of the following characteristics:

- Growth through adult baptisms and confirmations,
- Increase in worship attendance by 5 percent or more annually,
- Rise in stewardship and financial commitments,
- Increased number of hours invested in community service,
- Regularly scheduled outreach events,

- Growth in small groups, and
- New congregations planned or began.

Attendance growth is determined by calculating the percentage growth between the attendance at low point and the average attendance. Attendance at lowest point is defined as the lowest monthly attendance between the beginning of the TCN intervention and six months after the intervention began. The average attendance is defined as the average monthly attendance for all months since seven months or more after consultation. The month including Easter is excluded from this average, since it would show significantly more growth than normal months (Tiemann).

Clergy Revitalization

Clergy revitalization is defined in this research as a behavioral and attitudinal shift in which a pastor engages, moving from a caretaking ministry to an empowering ministry for mission. Attitude changes among the clergy were seen in the energy, vitality, and clarity on mission and purpose enunciated by the clergy themselves through the interview process. Behavioral shifts were seen in the time the clergy are spending in the community, in missional relationships with the unchurched, and in mentoring relationships to develop leaders.

Transforming Churches Network (TCN)

The Transforming Churches Network is a movement within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that has adopted Borden and Kaiser's process of leading revitalization in churches through Borden's books *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field*, *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the*

Mission Field, and Kaiser's book *Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission*.

Theology of the Cross

The reformer, Martin Luther, gained an ontological insight of how one approaches theology he encapsulated with the term theology of the cross, that God is known indirectly through suffering and the cross rather than directly through human logic and moral action. In other words, God's work through Christ's death and resurrection are typical for how God interacts with humanity and the way God continues to encounter human beings. Theologians of the cross experience death to self and resurrection to God's promises. They passively receive God's work of salvation, putting to death human pride and self-justification. The theology of the cross will be manifested in a number of ways. Congregations will increase their outreach or and become more missionally focused. Clergy and congregations may experience *crosspoints*, times when they are existentially put to death or die to self or institutional self-preservation to be resurrected. Christian leaders will manifest this cruciform theology by growing and learning throughout life, by developing accountable relationships for confession of sins and mutual support, and by increased willingness to risk reputation, status, and security for the sake of others. Theologians of the cross describe things as they really are, speaking frankly about self and congregation. Cruciform congregations and leaders prioritize the needs of others outside of the congregation over the needs of the institution or current members. They live out servant-leadership egalitarian relationships within the congregation and promote the priesthood of all believers as everyone engages in the

gospel ministry. Finally they verbalize that God is to receive all glory and God's work is central in all things.

Ministry Intervention

The futures committee recruited eleven congregations from central and south Florida to participate in two geographical clusters for the beginning of TCN within the Florida-Georgia District in the fall of 2008 and winter of 2009. These clusters were formed for the sake of geographic proximity, making a reasonable drive for participating TCN pastors to meet monthly. Of the original eleven churches, two congregations in the central Florida cluster did not accept the TCN prescriptions. Another congregation accepted the prescriptions but later was removed from TCN for the pastor's lack of compliance. Another church in central Florida started the TCN process four months later than the rest of the cluster, accepted the prescriptions, and joined the central Florida cluster. I conducted my interviews in seven of these congregations involved with TCN.

The TCN process began with each church completing a three-month self-study of their congregation's ministry (see Appendix C). Each church sent their study to the lead consultant and team members three weeks prior to the consultation weekend. The teams read through all of the material, trying to assess the health and vitality of the congregation. The teams compiled preliminary thoughts on strengths and concerns by e-mail or conference calls. Typically the consultant teams perceived a lack of outward mission, an unclear vision, and a bureaucratic structure that inhibited innovation, separating responsibility and authority, and providing no accountability for mission goals (Kaiser 25-40). The consultation team, though, realized that the compiled strengths and thoughts prior to the consultation weekend were preliminary observations. The team

explored these areas more thoroughly during the consultation weekend. Consultant team members generated lists of questions to ask pastors, staff, and congregants as a result of the self-study.

I participated on three consultation teams for churches within the Florida-Georgia District and one team for a congregation in Wisconsin. On these consultation weekends, the teams interviewed staff persons, held a focus group of approximately twenty members asking for the strengths and hopes the participants had for their congregations, and conducted a training event on church revitalization and mission outreach for the leadership of the church (see Appendix D). One member of the consulting team preached during Sunday morning worship on vision.

Table 1.1. Standard TCN Weekend Schedule

EVENT TIME	PURPOSE	PEOPLE INVOLVED FROM CONGREGATION
FRIDAY		
1 p.m.	Interview	Pastor
2 p.m.	Interviews—each ½ hour	Staff and/or key leaders
5 p.m.	Dinner interview of spouse	Pastor and spouse
7 p.m.	Panel discussion	20+ members at large, no current leaders
SATURDAY		
9 a.m.	Training of leaders	Key leaders, pastor, and staff
3 p.m.	Writing of prescriptions	None
SUNDAY		
8 a.m.	Prayer and talk with pastor	Pastor
9 a.m.	Preach vision in worship	Congregation
10:30 a.m.	Town meeting to present findings	Congregation

To conclude the weekend, the consultation team conducted a town meeting after Sunday worship for all members of the congregation. At that time, the consultant team presented a summary of its findings in terms of five strengths, five concerns, and five prescriptions for the congregation to accomplish within the following year. The consultant team called each church to discuss the prescriptions thoroughly and to adopt them as a whole by a specified date, about six weeks post consultation (see Appendix E).

After enrolling in TCN, pastors participated in learning communities: small groups of covenanted clergy who met monthly for specific learning modules on church leadership and mission. Pastors in the central Florida cluster began their clergy learning community in September 2008, while pastors in south Florida began their learning community in January 2009 (see Appendix F).

The coaches assigned to the pastors instructed them to begin a leadership learning community within their congregations using the material they covered the previous month in their clergy learning community. The pastors were to recruit a group of no less than six influential or positional leaders within their congregations to be involved. Few of the pastors, though, followed through on this step.

The district's TCN facilitators assigned a coach to each pastor. Briefly trained in directive coaching techniques, the coaches began meeting with the pastors after the congregations adopted the TCN prescriptions. Most of the coaches were part of the initial consultation teams. This directive style of coaching, a one-on-one relationship between TCN clergy and a trained coach, covers specific TCN training material and is directed by a missional agenda. Monthly the coach and pastor were to meet face-to-face. Weekly they were to communicate by phone or e-mail. Each pastor was to complete reports forms

for the coach that focused upon the pastor's functioning and behavior changes (see Appendix G).

Context

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was founded in 1847 by a collection of confessional, German Lutheran congregations spread across the Midwest. From my observations these Lutherans came to the United States for two main reasons. My childhood congregation represents the missionary strand founded in 1845 as a missionary outpost to the Chippewa Indians of Michigan. They were sent to establish a settlement to show the Native Americans “how beautiful it is to live with Jesus” (“History of St. Lorenz”). This missionary sentiment can still be seen in the denomination.

However, the second reason for the immigration of German Lutherans who founded the LC—MS has taken prominence over the course of the denomination's history. Reacting to the Prussian Union in Europe, where the government tried to force Lutherans to unite in worship and doctrine with Reformed churches, a large contingent of Saxon Lutherans left Germany and settled in Missouri to separate themselves from unionistic practices and to maintain pure doctrine.

The story of the founding of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a bit more complex than these two reasons. The group of immigrants who came to settle in Missouri to create a “Zion on the Mississippi” had placed “themselves in total subjection to a group of autocratic pastors led by the infamous Martin Stephan, who was later deposed for embezzlement, adultery, and other high crimes and misdemeanors” (Lischer 13). This shameful “open secret,” as Richard Lischer calls it, was “sublimated ... into mission

crusades, family feuds, and interminable quests for ‘pure doctrine’” (14). Thus, the quest for pure doctrine had emotional energy behind it.

Edwin H. Friedman states this observation:

All institutions tend to “institutionalize” the pathology, or the genius, of the founding generation so that the damaging potential in any crisis or catastrophe, whether in a family or an organization, often has less to do with the force of the impact than with the way in which that institution has been organizing itself to that point. (21)

The LC—MS is still fighting the battles that the early founders fought, though often people are unaware how they are repeating the history and continuing the pathology and genius of the founders.

This struggle between missions and pure teaching has lurked behind many battles and debates within the church body. For example, at the synodical convention of July 2007 the debate focused on whether the Great Commission was *the* priority of synod or *a* priority of synod. Sadly, the latter was adopted, showing the ambiguity in the LC—MS concerning mission.

A pull away from mission toward maintenance happens in congregations as well. Churches have two types of *customers*. Primary customers are those who do not yet have a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Secondary customers are those members who currently have that faith. When primary customers change places of priority with the secondary customers, a congregation will typically see decline. A church cannot serve itself and serve others equally. Institutional needs will take precedence (Borden, *Direct Hit* 33).

The denomination’s primary customers, sadly, have become the members rather than the pre-Christian people in each congregation’s community. Though for decades the LC—MS talked about becoming more missional, quite notably, the trends drifted in the

opposite direction. In 1970 the membership of the synod was reported to be 2.8 million members. Though the synod implemented numerous strategies and programs over the years, by 2005 the membership decreased to 2.4 million members while the population of the United States increased dramatically.

Though the statistics have not been as dramatic for the Southeast region of the United States, the Florida-Georgia District has not escaped these trends. While the population of Florida and Georgia increased from 1990 to 2000 by 24.5 percent, the membership of district congregations grew only by 6.7 percent. Within the next five years from 2000 to 2005, while the population in the two states grew by another 11.1 percent, the membership of district churches actually decreased by 2.4 percent.

To help comprehend the condition of the Florida-Georgia congregations, the futures committee of the district conducted a phone survey of pastors to ask their assessment of the state of the district. After the data from these phone interviews was compiled, the futures committee developed a discussion format and held six regional focus groups around the district. The 104 people who attended these focus groups commented on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the district. Only 25 percent of those surveyed could articulate the vision of the district: "Every congregation a mission and every member a missionary." Of those surveyed 68 percent were church professionals who have more connections and communication with district staff and functions. Thus, less than half of the church professionals even knew the vision of the district. Much needs to change in order to bring about the awareness of this vision, let alone a purposeful living out of this vision.

In this survey the strengths listed with recurring emphasis were

- District level leadership,
- Collegiality and willingness to collaborate,
- Diversity of cultures and multicultural ministries,
- Strong Lutheran schools, and
- Abundant retiree resources.

The list of weaknesses were reiterated many times by the 104 surveyed as follows:

- Many pastors isolate themselves and face burnout.
- District staff spends too much time reacting to crises.
- Clergy are aging with many are near retirement.
- Many congregations exhibit an inward focus.
- Bonds between congregations appear weak.
- Few ministries target the younger generations.
- Pastors have no accountability for continuing education.
- Mission plants are not resource producing.
- Few ethnic missions grow to self-standing ministries.

The lists of strengths and weaknesses have some strong correspondences that need further analysis. People listed collegiality among the clergy as a strength while at the same time they listed isolation and burnout of clergy as a weakness. Putting these two perceptions together, I perceive a conspiracy of disconnection. Pastors stated that they liked not being bothered by others sticking their noses into their ministry; however, they were not finding support from others and desired encouragement. They also admitted they did not engage or support other pastors. Clergy resigned themselves not to have the

support they wanted as long as they were able to keep free of accountability.

From the regional focus groups and the list of the strengths and weaknesses that the futures committee generated, I perceive another correlation in the area of district leadership. Those 104 surveyed identified good leadership from the district. They voiced concern that district staff spends too much time reacting to crises, or as one participant stated, “putting out fires.” In my analysis, most people in the district sincerely value the individuals in the district office for their collegiality and helpfulness; however, leadership means more than collegiality or helpfulness. The weaknesses listed in the futures committee survey display symptoms of poorly defined leadership (Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge* 13; Freidmann 12) The district staff has unintentionally become consumed by institutional goals and management with little time focused upon leading change.

One must be sympathetic to the precarious position from which district leaders work. Struggling in the middle of the hourglass (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 31), they are caught between the consumer needs of congregations and the dictated agenda of the national denomination. The LC—MS hierarchy rewards bureaucratic behaviors. Like most of mainline Christianity, institutional needs often take precedent over reaching the lost. As Borden states, “The Church in North America has lost its primary sense of mission. We spend far too much time and money engaging disciples in tasks and responsibilities that do not advance the mission” (*Direct Hit* 39). The LC—MS typically portrays Borden’s analysis.

Through the previous description of the current situation, one can ascertain that the whole, the sum of all the parts, and the interaction of all of these parts contributed to

the state of the Florida-Georgia district and its congregations. I contend that only a systemic, holistic intervention strategy that focuses on developing leadership skills in the clergy, refocusing the congregation to mission, and restructuring a congregation for mission will result in a revitalization of the churches and revitalization of the clergy.

Methodology

I conducted the research using a qualitative model to study the effects of the TCN intervention on congregations and pastors. Through the use of twenty-six semi-structured interviews, I analyzed the effects of the TCN intervention. This descriptive study was enhanced by a statistical review of the seven TCN congregations.

Participants

The participants in this research intervention included the pastor, the pastor's assigned coach, and two congregational leaders from each of seven congregations that adopted the TCN prescriptions in the Florida-Georgia district since the fall of 2008. One individual coached three of the pastors, thus the number of interviews became twenty-six.

Instrumentation

Each congregation generated baseline statistics by completing a congregational self-study for the TCN consultation weekend (see Appendix A). Of particular importance were the statistics on worship attendance and adult confirmations.

Interview protocol 1. I developed an interview protocol that focused on the clergy's experience of TCN. It included three different foci: (1) a set of questions concerning clergy behavioral changes in terms of spiritual disciplines and missional activities, (2) a set of questions about changes in the pastor's and the church's perspective toward ministry and mission, and, (3) a set of questions related to how the pastors and

churches experienced change and its relation to the theology of the cross (see Appendix H). I conducted these face-to-face interviews in January and February 2011.

Interview protocol 2. A second interview was conducted in person with the coach of each of the seven pastors, asking similar questions to interview protocol 1 through which I gained another perspective on the changes in behavior, attitude, and vitality of the TCN clergy and congregations (see Appendix I).

Interview protocol 3. I developed a third interview protocol for two lay leaders from each of the seven TCN congregations. This survey asked questions about the pastors' changes in behavior, attitude, and vitality from the lay leaders' perspectives and the perspective on how TCN has helped the congregation change to become more missional (see Appendix J). These surveys were also conducted in person.

Variables

The primary variable in this research was the TCN intervention and the attempted church revitalization experienced as a result of enrollment in TCN. In analyzing the seven churches, I looked at their age and location as potential factors that influenced the experience of revitalization. When reviewing the seven pastors, I considered the length of the pastor's ministry in the present congregation, the years of experience in pastoral ministry, and the level of credibility perceived by the congregation each pastor possesses. These various factors seem to be contributors for the depth of experience in revitalization.

The quality of each coach and the different consultant teams varied and may have caused differing results in the TCN process. To attempt to counter the diversity in coach quality, each coach and consultant underwent some training and was requested to use the

same manuals and methods. Thus, some, but not all, of the differences in personality and skill from team to team and coach to coach were mitigated.

The selection process the futures committee initially used to start the pilot clusters in central and south Florida appeared to bias the results. This process of recruitment attracted a higher percentage of congregations farther toward decline than the average church in the district, resulting in a more difficult revitalization work; however, each congregation displayed a willingness to participate and on the outset was more eager to change. Considering these two countervailing dynamics, I believe the pilot congregations had more difficulty in revitalization than the average congregation of the district.

Statistical growth in these congregations may be affected by the external demographic trends Florida has experienced in recent years. Florida faced an economic downturn during the research, and many of the interviewees commented upon how some members had moved out of the area due to job loss. This experience of population loss is a marked change for Florida communities that until recently saw a large influx of people from out of state.

Other intervening variables may include the relational health of clergy families and the personality style of the pastors. If pastors were more open to change, they were more prepared to lead change in their congregations. If pastoral families were healthier, that support system mitigated some of the other environmental factors pastors faced that increased the likelihood of burnout.

The level of trust between congregational members and clergy, the pastor's credibility, appeared to be a significant factor in whether each church engaged this process wholeheartedly. Credibility is seen as a combination of the perceived character

and competence of the pastor (Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility* 21) along with the length of time the pastor has been in the congregation. I surmise that a pastor needs all three criteria to some extent: competence in pastoral skills, character formation as a Christian role model, and a reasonable length of time in the congregation to have the needed credibility. Since pastors were held more accountable after adoption of TCN but also given more authority, pastors with lower credibility seemed to have more difficulty leading their congregation through the change process.

The current leadership of TCN in the Florida-Georgia district has now begun to attempt to do a better job of discerning these factors before initiating the consultation process with congregations.

Data Collection

I conducted all interviews of leaders, coaches, and clergy during January and February 2011. Clergy, coaches, and lay leaders met me in person. Each interview used a similar set of questions. I sent letters to each TCN pastor in November 2010 to introduce myself and my research to them. Within two weeks of the clergy receiving the letters, I made a phone call to set up the time of the interviews requesting ninety minutes for the interviews. For the coaches, I made a phone call to introduce myself and to set a date and time for the interview. I requested ninety minutes for these interviews as well. I set up the lay leader interviews through the participating clergy approximately a week before my on-site visit to the churches' communities. Once conducted, the average length of pastoral interviews was seventy-two minutes and three seconds, the coaches' interviews forty-five minutes and forty-six seconds, while lay leader interviews averaged thirty-six minutes and forty-five seconds (see Appendixes H, I, and J).

I discovered that the district office of the Florida-Georgia district did not vigilantly supervise the collection of Internet-based reports for the statistical data collection. Only one of the seven churches did them regularly (see Appendix B). As a result, I collected some data for the years 2007 through 2010 from what congregations send to the LC—MS on an annual basis. This data was retrieved from the LC—MS Web site.

Data Analysis

I used content analysis for the qualitative data, coding each different response with like responses compiled together to display their relative strength while using a weighting system for each response as well. Thus I could gain both the frequency and the significance of the codes. The quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics.

Limitations and Generalizability

The futures committee intended that initial findings to be duplicated across most of the congregations of the Florida-Georgia district. Borden has worked with numerous congregations under a host of different denominations and structures in various demographic and cultural contexts and has reported growth results in many circumstances. Thus, the findings could be generalized to many church settings.

However, those congregations and denominations with a similar polity and theology to the LC—MS may find the results the most applicable. Churches under a more inflexible hierarchical structure may discover results are not as easily reproduced, while churches working with a more flexible structure may more readily revitalize. Denominations or congregations with a poorly defined doctrinal understanding of the gospel and mission of Jesus Christ may find the results difficult to reproduce. Churches

with a low view of the pastoral ministry, placing much of the authority into the congregational assembly rather than in pastoral leadership, may also find these findings hard to match.

Theological Foundation

Only through the cross comes a resurrection: Good Friday first, then Easter. Without the hope of Easter, however, one could never take the fullness of crucifixion. Without the hope of God's promises in renewing his Church, the Florida-Georgia district of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will not face dying to self.

Though the cross appears as foolishness or a stumbling block, Paul asserts to the Corinthians that the cross displays the power of God unto salvation, though in a hidden way. He knows of no other word, no other gospel to proclaim to them (1 Cor. 1:18-2:5). Throughout the letters to the Corinthian church, Paul places the cross at the center of every issue, even when he does not explicitly use the word.

Graham Tomlin asserts that for Luther, God's work through cross and resurrection was not atypical but typical. That is, Luther saw God at work putting to death and bringing to life throughout the biblical narrative and, existentially, in each Christian's life (192). Like Paul, Luther saw no other word to be proclaimed.

Thus, when Luther approached any theological topic, he did so through the lens of cross and resurrection. From the *Ninety-Five Theses* and Hiedelberg Disputation on, the *theologica crucis* became his ontological approach to theological truth (von Lowenich 17-18).

Luther, indeed, viewed any topic theologically as part of the cross/resurrection story. He treated no topic independent of his law/gospel or cross/resurrection distinction.

Likewise, the topics of leadership development and missional revitalization connect integrally to God's typical way through death and resurrection. The more the cross and resurrection are appropriated by a congregation or a Christian leader, the more a congregation is revitalized and a leader is developed.

The cross puts to death and God brings to life. In practice, congregations are called to repent for not faithfully following their Lord's bidding. That repentance puts to death their self-justification for the lack of mission in their status quo. The congregation is called forth to new life through forgiveness and new birth, remembering their baptism and incorporation into the living body of Christ. This transformational, radical, and discontinuous change calls the church "anew from nothingness into being," bringing Christians "out of death into life" (Käsemann, *Perspectives* 93).

A theology of the cross has been called a protest theology, critiquing the powers that be and structures that exist (Tomlin 4). This theology inherently puts to death the status quo. The cross "passes judgement upon the church where she has become proud and triumphant, or secure and smug, and recalls her to the foot of the cross" (McGrath 181). However, the theology of the cross can also be a constructive theology about new life and new creation, placing faith and hope in God's promise of resurrection. Because the theology of the cross is not solely about protest and critique, it can bring hope to seemingly hopeless situations. Thus, hope is alive for mainline denominations, like the LC—MS, which have experienced signs of decline and decay. This hope, however, comes in a paradoxical way. Hope comes in the form of death to the status quo for a new day of ministry.

Though statistical and sociological studies may conclude the improbability of such turnarounds for established congregations and mainline denominations, sociology concludes the same for every event in God's story of salvation. The theology of the cross does not follow logic, convention, or probability. This theology follows Christ to the cross, dies there, and is resurrected with Christ on the third day. God brings to nothing through the cross and recreates everything. God shows human wisdom as folly through the foolishness of the cross and creates wisdom in the cross's message greater than the wisdom of the world, where God's weakness is greater than human strength (1 Cor. 1:18-2:5).

Paul applies the theology of the cross to individual followers of Christ as well, especially in 2 Corinthians. He sees himself like a jar of clay, nothing but ordinary, but extraordinarily filled with God's grace and promises (2 Cor. 4:7). Christian leaders will be "hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9, NIV). Paul's description of his ministry and that of all Christian leaders sounds very similar to the non-anxious, courageous leadership espoused by Gene Wood, Jim R. Herrington, Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor, James M. Kouzes and Barry Posner, John Kotter, Peter L. Steinke, Friedman, Lyle E. Schaller, Borden, Quinn, and others. Leaders find their identity in Christ rather than in circumstances. They are present but not highly anxious, weak and dependent but courageous and strong in the Lord.

Revitalization, bringing churches from maintenance of their institution to missional outreach, is the goal of TCN. This kind of change is well aligned to Luther's theology of the cross. Congregations enrolled in TCN will die to self-preservation and be

brought to new life, serving their communities and touching the lives of people who need to hear and experience the love of Christ, God crucified and resurrected, the God of “astonishing compassion” (Hall, *Cross* 22).

Overview

In Chapter 2 I review the literature on Luther’s theology of the cross as it has been expanded and developed over the years and evaluate TCN’s compatibility with this cruciform theological perspective. A brief review of theologians who contributed to the development of Luther’s theology of the cross is followed by its application to the process of change, leadership development, ecclesiology, church revitalization, and strategies for regional judicatory revitalization. I then make some recommendations that would enhance the current TCN process to become more aligned with the theology of the cross. I conclude the literature review with a conceptual framework.

Since the focus of this research has hermeneutical elements of experience, in Chapter 3 I explore how the phenomenological approach for qualitative research aligns itself with this inquiry into clergy and church revitalization. I detail how the twenty-six interviews were initiated and conducted along with a more thorough description of the three different interview protocols for the three different participant groups. I then discuss the steps in data analysis including my use of Dedoose, an Internet based qualitative analysis program. I conclude Chapter 3 with a discussion of the ethical considerations I employed for my participants.

Chapter 4 reports on the data gathered from the 26 interviews of lay leaders, pastors, and their coaches as they experienced both the difficulties and the opportunities the TCN intervention brought their ministries and congregations. I profile the participants

in this study, which includes four subgroups. After this profile, each research question is explored in conjunction with the data. Under each research question I include two or more findings from my analysis. In total I elucidate seven major findings from exploring the three research questions. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the major findings.

Chapter 5 reflects more thoroughly on the seven findings and views them as a cluster or constellation. Through such a process three over-arching axioms emerged. I then list a number of implications from these axioms and elaborate recommendations based on those implications.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

This literature review evaluates the compatibility of TCN and the theology of the cross as theologians have expanded and developed Luther's insights over the years. Numerous aspects are aligned between the two. TCN in its current form shows some deficiencies in theological and practical development that a regional judicatory could supplement to make TCN more fully aligned with Luther's down-to-earth, cruciform perspective. A brief review of Lutheran theologians who contributed to the development of Luther's theology of the cross is followed by its application to the process of change, leadership development, ecclesiology, church revitalization, and strategies for regional judicatory revitalization. I then make some recommendations that would enhance the current TCN process to become more aligned with the theology of the cross and conclude the literature review with a conceptual framework.

Theology of the Cross

Charles B. Cousar writes, "The cross is not a nicety. It exposes humans as always the sinners, unable alone to achieve salvation; it crushes the illusions of transcendence and self-righteousness" (12). Because it crushes human illusions, Jürgen Moltmann asserted the theology of the cross has been a "thin" tradition in orthodox Christianity, one that has been "never much loved" (*Crucified God* 3). Thus, a survey of its development is also thin but, like a scarlet thread, runs through church history. Sometimes theological movements have used a limited version of the theology of the cross. At other times theological and ecclesiological movements mask over or contradicted it. Indeed, one may study church revitalization, leadership development, organizational change, and

ecclesiology more easily without a reference to the theology of the cross, because it brings a paradoxical relationship to these items, where “everything is turned upside down” (Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke* 7: 315). However, viewing these different disciplines through the lens of the cross enhances and deepens their understanding.

The theology of the cross was not much loved by the Corinthian church, which Paul founded. They were following “another gospel” that appears antithetical to Paul’s message. That other gospel is hard to ascertain, though some of its tenets can be deduced from the letters Paul wrote to the church. Tomlin proposes that this other gospel was a form of Epicureanism with its sets of laws and rules (71). The Corinthians wanted to move beyond the cross to resurrection life, to freedom that could be equated with licentiousness. Though some denied the resurrection, others apparently promoted a realized eschatology, a “theology of the resurrection” (Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom* 82).

To this stance, Paul asserted to know only Christ crucified among them (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul would argue that the resurrection does not nullify the cross. Rather, “through the resurrection Christ is still known to the church as the crucified one” (Cousar 104). Paul does not see the crucifixion merely as an historical event but as an event of cosmic significance that “exposes and judges the wisdom of the age and the rulers of this age” (26). As Käsemann writes, “A theology of the resurrection that does not become a theology of the cross is bound to lead ... to a wrong-headed enthusiasm, and therefore to another form of the theology of glory” (*Jesus Means Freedom* 82). Luther penned succinctly centuries later: “The cross is our only theology” (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 5: 176). The theology of the cross, then, works like a corrective lens, helping a theologian to

see clearly and to see things as they really are.

Luther first prominently uses the phrase “theology of the cross” in the Heidelberg Disputation. However, when he studied the Psalms prior to 1519, he rediscovered “the righteousness of God” in Romans. That righteousness had been defined in scholastic theology as God’s demand and verdict upon humanity. Luther determined that the righteousness of God is God’s gift to sinful human beings, which declares the ungodly righteous. This understanding of God’s righteousness is at the heart of the theology of the cross, for a theologian does not arrive at this definition by natural reason or speculation, but through revelation only, specifically the revelation of the cross. In Luther’s sermon on St. Martin’s day, 11 November 1515, he refers to this theological perspective: “Preach one thing: the wisdom of the cross” (*Luther’s Works* 51: 14). The last words attributed to Luther written two days before his death were: “We are beggars, that’s true” (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 85: 317-18). Between these words from youth to old age, Luther discovered that the wisdom of the cross is none other than knowing on an existential level that he was devoid of wisdom. He was a beggar before God. Douglas John Hall sums this insight up when he writes, “The gospel of the cross condemns every pretension to possession.... It reduces us to the status of beggars” (*Lighten Our Darkness* 109) where the Christian finds wisdom, righteousness, redemption, and holiness in Christ alone and him crucified (1 Cor. 1:30).

Philip Ruge-Jones finds Luther’s early emphasis on the theology of the cross as a movement for reform or transformation of the Christian church, specifically the papacy. At heart a theological matter, the theology of the cross worked itself out in practical, social, and political considerations. The movement, however, became institutionalized as

the Lutheran Church, starting after the Diet of Worms and culminating in the *Formula of Concord*. The movement shifted from bringing about reformation to bringing about the growth of a new institution, the Lutheran Church (*Cross* 136). Subsequently, the theology of the cross was used in a theology of glory way, to self-justify a separate church body and to prove the Lutheran church had the true exposition of Scripture and proclamation of the gospel. Rediscovered in a crisis of Christianity and lived out existentially in the Reformation, the tradition of the theology of the cross appears to have dwindled during the great debates in the ages of Lutheran orthodoxy. The tradition truly became thin once again.

Alister E. McGrath writes that the resurgence in studies of Luther's theology of the cross came aptly at another time of crisis, the advent of the two World Wars (179), for the disillusionment of WWI and WWII unmasked the façade of human moral progress. Again theologians facing this crisis took up the application of the theology of the cross.

Karl Barth writes about that era of crisis in Europe and Western Christendom:

Whoever now desires certainty must first of all become uncertain.... For something has happened. It is simply that over against man's confidence and belief in himself, there has been written in huge proportions and with utmost clearness a *mene, mene tekel*. (149)

During times of crisis such as the inhumanity of war, the theology of the cross "calls the thing what it actually is" (Luther, *Luther's Works* 31: 40) and shows both human depravity and God's mercy. In the midst of humanity's ability to claim nothing about itself, the theology of the cross gives a basis to hold to God's promises and bring hope to hopeless situations.

Born out of this crisis and pain, numerous theologians reworked a theology of the cross from Luther's initial work, finding in it "a new relevance and urgency" (McGrath 180). The classic study of Luther's theology of the cross, working through the area of ontology, reason, and revelation, was written by von Loewenich. He countered his time and context, as he was challenged by rationalism and historical criticisms of the Christian story. His work emphasizes five aspects of that theology:

1. The theology of the cross as a theology of revelation stands in sharp antithesis to speculation.
2. God's revelation is an indirect, concealed revelation.
3. Hence God's revelation is recognized not in works but in suffering, and the double meaning of these terms is to be noted.
4. This knowledge of God who is hidden in his revelation is a matter of faith.
5. The manner in which God is known is reflected in the practical thought of suffering. (22)

In this way von Lowenich used the theology of the cross as a critical theology, undermining the pretension and hubris of human knowledge and human progress.

Along with von Loewenich, Paul Althaus and Moltmann found in the theology of the cross an answer to face in part the tragedy of such massive death and inhumanity of the world wars (Ruge-Jones, *Cross* 10). Moltmann specifically addressed questions of God's goodness and work in the world in which such inhumanity was carried out. God suffers, dies, and fully identifies with humanity at the cross: "[S]uffering is also in God himself" (*Experiment Hope* 78). Moltmann addresses the inhumanity of the Second World War when he writes, "God takes man seriously to the point that he suffers from the actions of man and can be injured through them" (76). One can see how he perceives this suffering in God as he writes, "In the cross of Christ, a rupture tears, as it were, through God himself" (80). Through God's pain in the sacrifice of Christ's death, true

hope is resurrected. Even the inhumanity of the Second World War is taken up into the crucifixion.

This pain of God, the pain of the Father in giving the Son into death, is at the center of Kazoh Kitamori's indigenous Japanese theology—also from the experience of the Second World War. The cross of Christ is a Trinitarian event “within God” (Moltmann, *Experiment* 81). Kazoh Kitamori writes, “God in pain is the God who resolves our human pain by his own. Jesus Christ is the Lord who heals our human wounds by his own” (20). In order for God to identify with and embrace humanity, God chooses to feel pain. One can only discover the essence of God from the word of the cross (47).

Gerhard Ebeling writes about the theology of the cross as the dynamic of Christian proclamation. Ebeling has been a dominant force with many theologians following his interpretation of Luther's work and life (Ruge-Jones, *Cross* 15). He, too, experienced the crisis of world war and Nazi Germany, having studied at Dietrich Bonhoeffer's illegal seminary at Finkenwalde. Ebeling maintains that the theology of the cross holds together the polarities of law and gospel, God's omnipotent hiddenness and unknowableness with God's revealed presence in the suffering Christ without resolving the tension (240). To relieve such tension would reduce God to a “household idol” rather than the “Lord of the world” (240). The proclaimed word of law and gospel keeps the dynamic alive so that the hearer goes through death and resurrection rather than arrives at a static faith of doctrinal propositions.

Gerhard O. Forde, an American Lutheran theologian born at the end of the two World Wars, follows Ebeling with an emphasis on proclamation (*Theology* 14). Along

the lines of Ebeling, the polarities of law and gospel dominate Forde's theology, for "[o]nly God can deal with God" (22). Forde takes Luther's Heidelberg Disputation as a grand discourse to the general state of humanity. The reader sits at Luther's feet in Forde's work *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*: *Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation of 1518*, as if Luther were speaking existentially today. The issues Luther addressed in the disputation are individualized and generalized into the plight of a human being before God.

Though these two theologians, Ebeling and Forde, approach Luther seriously and comprehensively, in the end, Regin Prenter's critique may apply well here, that Ebeling's and Forde's interpretation's of Luther separates the cross of Jesus from history, focusing rather on the existential element. This rendition of the theology of the cross removes Luther from the context of his social, political, economic, and religious setting (Ruge-Jones, *Cross* 25). Regin Prenter would have the theologian proclaim a word *of* the cross instead of a word without the historical cross or a cross without the word (*Luther's Theology* 7). The theology of the cross is not to be abstracted or generalized; rather, both history and existential experience are to remain united. A theologian must keep the theology of the cross in context, for Luther and the theologian's situation.

With this consideration in mind, Hall attempts to write a theology of the cross within a specific historical context and problem: Western Christendom's proclivity to a theology of glory or, in other words, triumphalism (*Cross* 17). Hall asserts that Americans believe strongly in their technical mastery of nature and possess official optimism in themselves. When it comes to faith and religion, Americans see the obvious material blessings of the nation and "see through them" (Luther, *Luther's Works* 31: 40)

to a belief that the nation's prosperity is a sign that God in general is on America's side (Hall, *The Cross* 50).

Though addicted to a theology of glory, prosperity, and blessing, American Christendom itself may not be alive and well. Eddie Gibbs sees that, though by outward appearances some major trends in Christianity in America seem to be working, underneath the exterior triumph hides a potential failure at Christendom's core. The new growth shown among megachurches is not new growth in Christianity; rather, it is a consolidation into big box warehouses from the smaller operations similar to the giants in retail business of the same churchgoing population. Indeed, these megachurches "have not made an impact" in reversing the downward trend in overall Christian church membership (11).

Christianity has shown outward vitality through some of these operations, but having a crowd does not mean one has disciples:

This consumer-focused approach to ministry successfully attracted crowds, but it has failed for the most part to transform lives or construct significant personal relationships that provide encouragement, spiritual growth, accountability and avenues of Christian ministry. The old adage "easy come, easy go" has proven very true in terms of many churchgoers, especially the boomer returnees. (Gibbs 12)

American evangelicalism has traded large numbers of worship attenders for authentic Christ followers.

Though building triumphalistic churches may still happen, Christendom itself appears to be having an identity crisis. The modern era is coming to a ragged end with no single master narrative believed by the majority in Western society. All is fragmentation and different perspectives (Robinson 17-18). Now Christendom's assumptions are being questioned. For generations, Christianity was tied to the American story of progress,

enlightenment, rationalism, and modernism. Now that the ties are fraying, some Christians lament the loss of power Christianity has displayed toward defining Western culture. Others have seen that the Christian church needs to repackage the propositional message, keeping the propositions the same but styling them in a more attractive way.

Some attempts are being made to pour a wine of triumphalism into new wineskins of postmodernism (McLaren 22; Bell 12; Slaughter 27). This approach, however, may be counterproductive. Instead of accomplishing the revitalization of Christianity, these authors and their attempt to repackage the faith may provide more fragmentation within Christianity. Additionally, the new wineskin of the emerging church still holds the old wine of triumphalism. What lies behind the crumbling of Christendom and modernity is a true sense that the wine of triumphalism itself has soured:

Could one perhaps say that what we call *postmodernity* is precisely the flowering of human skepticism concerning all triumphalistic systems, above all modernity itself—a skepticism that was brewing throughout the modern period, and was conspicuously vindicated by the failure of so many of those systems in the latter part of the previous century? (Hall, *Cross* 19)

Though the attempt to repackage Christianity for a younger generation rises from noble motivations and an assessment of Christendom's unraveling, if the wine of triumphalism is only watered down rather than changed to a theology of the cross, these attempts are apt to fail.

In Luther's day the Roman Catholic Church was immensely successful, with a huge complex being built in Rome. St. Peter's Basilica was impressive, enjoying an apogee of power, prestige, and prosperity; however, as Luther studied the Scriptures he began to question the underlying theology behind the enterprise. That theology did not fit

in with a crucified Messiah who came to welcome sinners and outcasts. Luther's theology brought him to conclude the following:

The peace, wealth and security enjoyed by the church are signs not of its success, but of its demise: the church is in greatest danger when it is rich, well-fed and powerful, and most blessed when it is poor, persecuted, and tempted. (Tomlin 189)

In fact, the problem with the Holy Roman Empire and Roman Catholic Church was not one of structural issues as much as of a theological misinterpretation of the gospel. For all of the medieval piety and romanticized versions of Christ's sufferings, the cross had been marginalized as an historical fact rather than as a present reality. Tomlin explains

Luther's conclusions:

If God's action in the present is continuous with his action in Christ, then the papacy needs to model itself upon the weakness and poverty of the cross, rather than on images of imperial power. The papacy's failure to do that simply betrays not just its moral deficiency, but its theological misunderstanding. (192)

What Luther asserted concerning the Roman Catholic Church of his day must now be said of the American Christian Church. Christendom has misunderstood the message of the gospel, evident in the mini-kingdoms it has built, from prosperity preaching to consumer living. Western Christendom has walked down the glory road rather than proclaimed the cross story (Forde, *On Being a Theologian* 5).

The basic tenet of Western nation states and Christendom has been an optimism in human progress and the ability to master the natural world technically, the foundation of the modernist worldview "while the experience of human beings within these societies ... is increasingly filled with intimations of humanity's apparent nothingness and the meaninglessness of the historical process" (Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* xxxi). The United States of America, the officially optimistic society is discovering that its glory is

only a phantom, though it keeps ignoring and covering up the reality of its emptiness. Unlike the theology of the cross, it cannot call a “thing what it actually is” (Luther, *Luther’s Works* 31: 40). America instead erects a façade of progress rather than face its own limitations.

In a similar way, two contemporary theologians, Vitor Westhelle and Philip Ruge-Jones, have developed the theology of the cross to speak to the specific culture and context of Western Christianity in light of the reality of the marginalized and suffering world. Ruge-Jones specifically places Luther in his sociopolitical and theological context, speaking a word of reformation that called for much more than simple redefinitions in theology. Luther called for the Roman Catholic Church to undergo reformation, indeed “institutional transformation” (*Cross* 79) in such a way that no aspect of society or church life would remain unchanged. Luther’s call came at a high price as he spoke a “dissonant word, a word that cannot be cashed into the system” (Westhelle 53), a word that risked his life for the sake of the gospel. Luther’s life exemplified the call for reformation and transformation.

Indeed, the theology of the cross inherently calls individuals and the whole church to reformation and transformation, to discontinuous change; however, throughout my reading on Luther’s theology of the cross and its interpretations, theologians intimated this connection but did not make this association explicitly. In observing the Lutheran church today, few, if anyone, are calling for reformation or transformation for the sake of the gospel. Too many Lutherans believe the Reformation *happened* rather than *happens*. I am compelled, therefore, to show the innate connection between a fully developed theology of the cross and personal and corporate transformation.

The cross calls the Church to die, first and foremost of all, to its illusions and quests for glory, to follow a crucified Messiah who served the poor, healed the sick, and gave himself completely for the world. This call to reformation will occur only when leaders follow the example of Luther who called out prophetically to a self-indulgent church with the law and gospel, the word of transformation. The church is facing a crisis of identity and purpose today, much the same as Luther's day. If the theology of the cross is proclaimed, no aspect of church life or its interaction with society will remain unchanged.

The Glory Road or Cross Story

Though people assert in the postmodern era that no master narratives exist any longer—a master narrative itself, exposing one of the Achilles' heels of postmodernism, Forde asserts two major meta-narratives run through religious systems. He elucidates these as the “glory road” and the “cross story” in his book *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*:

The most common overarching story we tell about ourselves is what we will call the glory story. We came from glory and are bound for glory. Of course, in between we seem somehow to have gotten derailed—whether by design or accident we don't quite know—but that is only a temporary inconvenience to be fixed by proper religious effort. What we need is to get back on ‘the glory road.’ The story is told in countless variations. Usually the subject of the story is ‘the soul.’ Philosophers speak of the soul being trapped in the world of matter, decay and death through some cosmic misadventure on the part of either the gods or mortals.... The way of return is by knowledge, *gnosis* that awakening of the soul to its immortal destiny and, consequently, behavior appropriate thereto—which usually means a purging or shucking off of the flesh and its lusts. (5)

This meta-narrative, that one's soul is immortal and indestructible, subtly attracts humanity to believe and to substantiate this belief through building up triumphalistic systems. Human beings want to deny the reality of death in whatever form they can.

Henry Wordsworth Longfellow exemplifies this tendency in his poem:

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!—
For the soul is dead that slumbers
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul! (13-14)

Though this meta-narrative runs through New Age and Eastern religious traditions, some Christian interpretations of the biblical story of the Fall and redemption inadvertently use it as the main story line. In this interpretation, Adam fell from a state of independent perfection, from purity of soul, and, through his fall he brought all humanity down. Human beings need to get back on that glory road: “Reparation must be made, grace restored, and purging carried out so that return to glory is possible” (Forde, *On Being a Theologian* 6). Like the classic “Four Spiritual Laws” diagram, the cross spans the chasm between God and humanity (“The Four Spiritual Laws”). In the diagrams, human beings walk over to God’s side. The diagram emphasizes human effort with God’s grace as a static part of the story. Forde can see how this use of the cross is possible: “The cross, of course, can be quite neatly assimilated into the story as the reparation that makes the return possible. And there we have a tightly woven theology of glory!” (*On Being a Theologian* 6). Human hubris easily sublimates the cross into its own system of human progress and human initiative.

The cross was never intended to be a part of the way but the only way, the totality of the story. Humanity subverts the cross by using it as a plus sign of what God adds to human effort in the return to glory. Through the cross, however, God attacks human

rebellion, that rebellion being spiritual pride and arrogance at taking some or all of the credit for salvation and life, taking on the role of God, claiming independence from God (Forde, *On Being a Theologian* 1).

The cross, though, will not be subverted. Christ's cross draws all humanity into the drama. Human beings become culprits in the story, participants who actively work against God and expose their guilt, as Luther states in his sermon *A Meditation on Christ's Passion*:

You must get this thought through your head and not doubt that you are the one who is torturing Christ thus, for your sins have surely wrought this.... Therefore when you see the nails piercing Christ's hands, you can be certain that it is your work. When you behold his crown of thorns, you may rest assured that these are your evil thoughts, etc. (*Luther's Works* 42: 9)

In the cross story, human beings live on "borrowed time," totally dependent on God's grace as God created them from the dust of the ground. Humanity was never in an independent state of inherent personal righteousness, never in control. Wanting to seek control, Adam sinned, and all humanity was bound to the word upon the first human beings: "for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen. 3:19). The Fall narrative of Genesis 3 displays the extent of human potential, the last word on the matter but for the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Forde, *On Being a Theologian* 9).

The cross reveals a God who in *essence* feels pain. God's wrath against sin is vented on the sinless Son of God. God takes pain into himself because he chooses to love beyond law and reason, justice and righteousness. Thus, the righteousness of God becomes God imputing righteousness on the unrighteous, another way of proclaiming the cross story (Kitamori 20).

The cross becomes the sum total of humanity's story through which all say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). The cross brings human pride to nothing as people receive all things by God's grace, a totally passive position. Forde points out that the root word behind passive is passion or suffering. He asserts that people suffer God's work of total grace upon them (*On Being a Theologian* 87). The old nature, which wants to take credit before God and others, is put to death. The new nature, which will receive God's grace freely, is brought to life.

A Christian never leaves the cross story behind; rather, the cross becomes the whole story. A word of gospel is not spoken so that a Christian can work hard to please God by laws, getting back what was lost so a Christian can get on with progressing in goodness. The gospel speaks the last and final word, the end of the law, the end of humanity's ways and the beginning of God's way with humanity.

To restate Prenter's observation, the proclaimed word and the cross must remain together, but not simply by preaching a word about the cross but the word *of* the cross. My experience in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been that most preaching in the post WWII era became simply a word *about* the cross. Sermon after sermon in Lutheran churches teach what happened to Jesus Christ upon the cross, explaining atonement in formulaic ways usually with these points in the message: (1) All are sinners in need of God's grace; (2) specific types of sins are spelled out that the hearers are prone to do, showing the sinful condition; (3) God sent his son to die for the sins of the world upon a cross; (4) believing Jesus is their savior, the hearers are forgiven so that they can live a life in praise of God; and, (5) hearers are encouraged not to worry about sinning but

simply to believe the message of the gospel and to keep living the same way they have always lived.

No death of the sinner takes place in this preaching. The cross has only a place in history as a formula for salvation. Human beings are not confronted with the word of the cross that puts their self-centered ways to death, including their quest for self-justification for all they do (Käsemann, *Perspectives* 16).

The word *of* the cross will never separate the cross of Christ from the cross of the Christian. It will proclaim the death of sinful humanity and any attempt human beings initiate to justify and perfect themselves, all attempts to excuse and control, so that Paul's assertions are true. Each Christian proclaims, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Everyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). The preaching of the word of the cross will keep the death and resurrection of Christ connected to the death and resurrection of the hearer.

I have summarized the difference between the this theology of the cross and the theology of glory in a comparative fashion in presentations for laity. This summary may help the theologian unfamiliar with the jargon to understand more fully the contrast (see Appendix M).

Change in View of the Theology of the Cross

Death and resurrection are the typical way God works in human life. Through death and resurrection God brings about transformation of individuals, churches, and even institutions. Described in this way, the theology of the cross has much to say concerning the way change is embraced and experienced. Luther's call to the church of

his day from the *Ninety-Five Theses* throughout his later writings was a call to “institutional transformation” (Ruge-Jones, *Cross* 79). “All life is a repentance and a cross of Christ,” stated Luther (*Luther’s Works* 31: 89). Thus, the church, the individual Christian, is daily called to change, to remember Christian baptism where the old nature has been drowned and the new life arises, another way to speak of daily repentance.

That call to repentance and reformation was heeded by only a few in Luther’s day. Fallen human nature innately avoids the cross. Likewise, congregations, systems, and individuals resist being changed. Systems display great inertia to keep the things in homeostasis and avoid suffering change. Justifications of the present, rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious, are made to keep things the way they have been. If change is accepted by a system, the organization or system changes in incremental ways.

Most organizations work with either developmental change or transitional change. Either way, change is gradual. Quinn says, “When most of us talk about change, we typically mean incremental change” (*Deep Change* 3). I perceive that the Florida-Georgia district made these types of changes in the past. The district added ministries to existing structures, refined and improved existing programs, maintaining a strong continuity with the past. This kind of change works well when systems are functioning and organizational goals are being met.

Anthony B. Robinson, speaking on the congregational level, states a truth that must be faced as well on the regional judicatory level for most mainline denominational entities: “Programmatic change is not enough. Restructuring is not enough. Neither will go deep enough” (12). Clergy receive countless mailings for the latest, greatest way to revitalize volunteers and turn around declining worship attendance. However, the change

faced by Protestant Christianity in the United States goes well beyond programs to what Robinson calls “culture change” (12).

What Robinson entitles cultural change, Quinn labels “deep change” in his book with that same title: “Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is a change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible” (3). Deep change or culture change goes well beyond what most churches and clergy usually imagine, for it welcomes discontinuity, even chaos, into the system.

Whatever the term used, a death and a resurrection needs to take place. The district leadership, both lay and clergy, needs to face reality, seeing and calling a thing “what it actually is” (Luther, *Luther’s Works* 31: 40). Ministry as usual will mean slow death. The district and congregations must die to the notion that they are accomplishing God’s mission, come to repentance before their Lord, and be reborn by his grace into the mission he has for them.

This deep change aligns with a theology of the cross, where the organization must die. Justifications and rationalizations that defend the status quo must be exposed as simply emotional resistance and an avoidance of the cross. Working through a period of chaos and death, a rebirth of ministry may occur. First the cross, then the resurrection—the theology of the cross calls for leading such transformational change.

Such a process can produce large amounts of anxiety in an organizational system and the individual leader. Quinn even asserts, “Deep change means surrendering control.... This is usually a terrifying choice, often involving a ‘dark night of the soul’” (*Deep Change* 3). Luther would call this dark night of the soul *anfechtung*, the battle a

Christian has facing an inscrutable, even arbitrary and hidden God while holding to the God revealed in Jesus Christ and the gospel.

Since the change process inevitably results in anxiety and pain within the organizational system, most leaders do not take the risk and call their organization forth to transformation. They are reluctant to travel into the wilderness of chaos, put to death the self-serving institutionalism of the organization. Human beings by nature are all cross avoiders who want things to be easy and comfortable. The wilderness of chaos and the death of the status quo bring human beings face-to-face with humanity's own finitude and impotence, weaknesses, and mixed motives. This kind of change means suffering.

Leaders face the temptation to avoid the pain of transformational, deep change. If the choice is made to avoid deep change, if the cross is avoided, the result is still death, only more slowly. Death is inevitable. It can be faced up front with the hope of resurrection, or it can be avoided with little hope for the future.

We must recognize the lies we have been telling ourselves. We must acknowledge our own weakness, greed, insensitivity, and lack of vision and courage. If we do so, we begin to understand the clear need for a course correction, and we slowly begin to reinvent our self. The transition is painful, and we are often hesitant, fearing that we lack the courage and confidence to proceed. We uncover a great paradoxical truth. Change is hell. Yet not to change, to stay on the path of slow death, is also hell. (Quinn, *Deep Change* 78)

To face death for the sake of resurrection for God's kingdom will take unconventional leadership. Leaders declare openly that change is urgent, not simply so some remnant of Christendom or status quo of the church survives. In fact, rampant institutionalism is another form of a theology of glory, an avoidance of the cross. Rather, the urgency for change must be founded upon the gospel of Jesus Christ for the sake of God's kingdom.

Leaders who will bring about transformational change will be disciples of Jesus Christ who have already been put to death time and again, and who have been raised into the new identity of Christ's resurrected righteousness, and who can see that only through the cross comes the resurrection. I believe the Florida-Georgia district of the LC—MS will need such leadership to lead this district through the change process needed to fulfill its mission. St. Paul spoke of such leadership in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

Paul here describes aptly a leader under the cross. The adequacy is in God. Courage is from outside of oneself. Faith is tantamount, that is, faith in God who can resurrect even when God slays.

Friedman speaks of a well-differentiated leader who has been grounded in purpose and mission, able to be clear about personal goals, unlikely to become lost in the anxiety of the system under change and capable of being a catalyst who reduces anxiety while still challenging the system (13). His description resonates with leaders who will guide their organizations through deep, transformational change, though he leaves the goals and clarity of a leader ambiguous. A Christian leader's goals are defined by the cross and correlate to God's kingdom goals. Christian leaders can be such non-anxious change agents when they face crucifying experiences and they die daily to self. Christian leaders then can be present for others and focus on God's kingdom goals.

Friedman states plainly that no one is easily self-differentiated in a system, but that everyone can grow in managing anxiety. Leadership is not about accumulating a

number of techniques. Rather, the “key is to work seriously on the disciplines required to become more emotionally mature; no gimmicks or techniques are going to effect change in the system. Change requires serious engagement in personal transformation” (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 55). In other words, leaders are called to grow in their intimate relationship with God through the temptations and trials of life, through word and sacrament, and to find themselves defined by God and God’s Word rather than by the emotional system of the congregations or regional judicatory. Then, remaining accessible, connected, and caring to other leaders is tantamount. Leaders become catalysts, per se, enabling change to happen at lower thresholds of impetus within the system.

The key to leading through transformational change is personal change and growth. No technique may be a substitute for personal growth in God’s grace:

Personal change is a reflection of our inner growth and empowerment. Empowered leaders are the only ones who can induce real change. They can forcefully communicate at a level beyond telling. By having the courage to change themselves, they model the behavior they are asking of others. Clearly understood by almost everyone, this message, based in integrity, is incredibly powerful. It builds trust and credibility and helps others confront the risk of empowering themselves. (Quinn, *Deep Change* 34-35)

This kind of leadership can be a very empowering influence in the transformation of congregations and the district itself.

The Cross Story in Leadership Development

Just as a theologian can develop theology according to the cross story or the glory story, a leader can use either storyline to underpin a leadership development theory. For example, J. Robert Clinton emphasizes six different stages of leadership development: sovereign foundations, inner life growth, ministry maturity, life maturing, convergence,

and afterglow (44). Clinton displays the way he views leadership development in his work:

God is developing the leader in two ways during this time [Phase III]. Through ministry, the leader can identify his gifts and skills and use them with increasing effectiveness. He will also gain a better understanding of the Body of Christ as he experiences many kinds of relationships it offers. (45)

Though Clinton does mention the place of trial in the inner life growth phase, he still assumes that the godly leader progresses from one developmental stage to the next, like a person climbing rungs of a ladder. A leader contains the capability to yield to God and slowly mature.

In reading Clinton's work, I did not discover the place for the cross in the leadership story. Its presence seems to be on the sidelines, or only one step along the way, left behind for more spiritual progress. He writes much more about human potential than about God's total work of grace. Clinton emphasizes what the human being does in order to become a more godly leader. Some of the credit, thus, can be attributed to the leader rather than to God. In this way, Clinton's leadership development model conforms more to the glory road than the cross story.

This critique may seem harsh of a Christian leader; however, the point behind this criticism is one that was also alive in Luther's day: the struggle over the place of the cross in the life of the Christian, whether the cross belonged in a person's life as only part of the way or the whole way. Luther asserted that it is the entire way. He broke with the church tradition accumulated over the years that "regarded the cross as contingent and incidental, and neither necessary nor typical of God's action" (Tomlin 78). Instead, Luther said the cross revealed "God and his characteristic way of dealing with believers"

(178).

Luther's understanding, however, does not mean that all the leadership principles espoused by the business world are automatically part of the theology of glory and must be avoided. Likewise, Christian books on leadership filled with the same business world principles do not make them any more *Christian* or any more useful. A theologian of the cross does not merely counter what is conventional nor simply work contrary to the mainstream. Luther clarifies the relationship between natural knowledge and theology in the twenty-fourth theses of the Heidelberg Disputation. He writes, "Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner" (*Luther's Works* 31: 40). Truly a Christian leader can gain much from secular and Christian resources, because a Christian leader will use these resources as one who has been crucified with Christ. Rather than trying to justify self—what Luther called misusing "the best in the worst manner" (40) for such a use defies God's work of justification, a Christian leader uses these resources to proclaim and live out the theology of the cross more effectively.

Clinton's work contains truth and principles that may add to leaders' understanding and effectiveness. However, people reading these kind of books tend to use them in the wrong way. The readers use them to plan out their own growth, to figure out a formula or prescription to gain God's favor, to assert themselves above others, to claim for themselves self-improvements and self-justifications, to boast about their growth, to even boast of their growth in humility, to avoid the cross, and to seek another way.

With the theology of the cross as the central point, humbled persons who give up all claims of virtuousness, utterly despair of themselves, and trust solely in Christ alone for all righteousness, wisdom, and goodness may gain much from the leadership methods espoused in these kind of books. Cross-centered leaders do not use these things for self-advancement or as ways to try to control God. Rather, these leaders use leadership techniques to serve others without concern for self. No leader accomplishes this growth plan perfectly, for no one ever moves beyond the cross. Daily, every Christian needs crucifixion through repentance.

A theology of the cross as leadership development will speak first of the death of the leaders, multiple times, when leaders comes face-to-face with their personal failures, foolishness, impotence, and self-centered sinfulness. For example, Christ put to death Paul foremost on the Damascus road. Each time Paul looked back at that event, he realized how he acted against God and how God in Christ spared him from death and met him for life. Moses faced his death when he was banished for murder and then encountered God at the burning bush. His cowardice was exposed and his self-will was put out of commission. Joseph existentially died when sold as a slave for his less-than-truthful and unflattering reports about his brothers, faced prison and isolation. Peter died to his impetuous, arrogant advising of the Christ when Jesus rebuked him. He died again when he saw Jesus after three times denying he even knew the Nazarene. When theologians of the cross study the Scriptures, they discover the cross appears everywhere in both Old and New Testament. “God saves ‘per stultitiam cruces,’ so that this becomes the foundational hermeneutical principle for the exposition of Scripture” (Tomlin 172). In this way, the cross becomes a theologian’s only theology.

Crosspoints in Leadership Development

Biblical leaders experience the cross all through their lives where the cross of Christ is applied, and individuals suffer the work of God upon them through the dynamics of law and gospel and through struggle, temptation, and trial. Biblical leaders are undone by God. Then God does his work through them.

Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas sampled leaders from the World War II and postwar generations and compared them to leaders who were born after the 1960's, trying to find common themes behind leadership development. One of these common themes they entitled "crucible events," times of suffering and trial in which leaders discovered a vocabulary of meaning that helped define their leadership story. Rather than avoiding these events, Bennis and Thomas discovered some leaders welcomed the hard work, which greatly increased the leaders' growth and influence. The analysis of Bennis and Thomas has merit but can readily be assumed into the glory road or the hero myth. Someone is bound for glory, faces struggles or crucibles, overcomes and is transformed by them, and reaches glory.

Instead of crucible talk that sees these events as part of a leader's development, I would reframe Thomas and Bennis' insights as crosspoints. God leads the Christian leader through cross and resurrection. Rather than bound for glory, a leader is bound for death, as a result of a leader's self-justifying ways. God intervenes through the cross, puts a leader's self-centered desire for glory and pride's insistence on its own way to death, and, by grace, raises a leader to new life and service.

The emphasis with crosspoints rather than crucible events is not on the person's character or competence but on God's grace, goodness, on God's intervention, and God's

work of salvation. Crosspoints follow the story of the Prodigal Son who is amazingly welcomed by the Father. A crosspoint is seen in the story of Saul on the road to Damascus who should have been slain for his enmity toward God but instead is saved. I believe crosspoints are found in the story of every Christian. The cross story becomes the only story as Christians are incorporated into Christ's death and resurrection through baptism. A Christian's identity becomes Christ's story of cross and resurrection.

Crosspoints rather than crucible events would be a better way to describe leadership development by the cross story—points in a leader's history where the leader experiences the cross being applied to the old human nature. Christian leaders are brought to a place of utter dependence on God's grace, and God transforms them by that grace. Crosspoints save Christian leaders from themselves, from their own will being done so that God's will may be done. Crosspoints become death and life points. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the crosspoint when he says Jesus bids a man to come and die (*Cost of Discipleship* 3). Luther also refers to the crosspoint:

Although He is the God of life and salvation and this is His proper work, yet, in order to accomplish this, He kills and destroys. These works are alien to Him, but through them He accomplishes His proper work. For He kills our will that His may be established in us. He subdues the flesh and its lusts that the spirit and its desires may come to life. (*Luther's Works* 14: 335)

God accomplishes his alien work, the law, putting to death the old nature in order to do his proper work, the gospel, raising to new life through Christ. Christian leaders experience this law/gospel dynamic many times through life as God brings to completion what he began in them through their baptism (Phil. 1:6).

Suffering's Role in Leadership Development

God uses the tool of suffering in leadership development. Suffering, however, is never to be self-chosen. When self-appointed, a person uses suffering as a tool to try to gain advantage rather than to die to self. Suffering, legitimately endured, is the cross of Christ applied. God may even appear to wear the mask of the devil, doing that which seems alien to a gracious God, as Luther experienced:

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil... through the cross works are dethroned and the Old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's. (*Luther's Works* 31: 53)

When leaders receive legitimate suffering, they learn what God intends for them, seeking a deeper purpose and a more profound faith, growing most readily in faith and love. Suffering's purpose is "none other than that of unfolding faith and making it assert itself" (von Lowenich 119). Suffering, therefore, serves God's greater purposes to bring about a growth in faith in the Christian leader.

Suffering is God's furnace to forge Christians into new people. As Quinn states, "To bring deep change, people have to 'suffer' the risks. And to bring about deep change in others, people have to reinvent themselves" (*Deep Change* 11). Instead of leaders reinventing themselves, I would shift Quinn's wording to leaders being transformed by God.

Robert B. McKenna, Tanya N. Boyd, and Paul R. Yost interviewed one hundred senior pastors to analyze what factors in their ministries caused the greatest amount of learning and character development. The situational factors that brought the most

learning were those that “pushed them to step to the edge of their comfort zones” (197-98), whether they led and managed their congregations through significant change or faced complexity and difficult issues. They drew closer to God. Specifically noteworthy, McKenna, Boyd, and Yost found that pastors learned most from negative results. This finding confirms suffering’s role in leadership development.

Rachel Sing-Kait Ting and Terri Watson studied the more extreme example of Chinese pastors who experienced persecution in Mainland China during the period from 1950-70. By interviewing nine Chinese pastors, they wanted to see what role suffering played in their spiritual development and growth. These pastors reported transformation after their time of suffering that Ting and Watson grouped under four themes: switching focus from self to the church, growing in humility and embracing one’s limitations, growing in their trust of God’s care, and redefining their view of suffering’s role. These pastors grew to believe that suffering is not simply inevitable for Christians but beneficial, that “growth happens only when suffering is met head-on” and “when suffering is avoided, growth is stifled” (208). Christian leaders will then embrace legitimate suffering when it comes, seeing that through suffering God can do his great purposes.

***Anfechtung* as a Special Form of Suffering**

One of the experiences of these Chinese pastors was suffering from spiritual isolation to the point where they felt abandoned by God. Luther summarizes this deep struggle in the Christian faith with the term *Anfechtung*. When Luther translated the Lord’s prayer into German, he used the word *Anfechtung* for Greek word *πρασμος*

(temptation) rather than the more common German word *Versuchung* (Madsen 108).

Versuchung was used by most Roman Catholic scholars at the time:

The chief objection to the Catholic understanding at this point is that “temptation,” as they use it, refers to a relationship between the individual and a moral code or an ethical *habitus*, while *Anfechtung* deals with a direct relationship to God, the Absolute. (Hovland 55)

Anfechtung is a key insight into understanding Luther’s theology of the cross as experienced by the individual Christian. When people experience *Anfechtung*, they may believe God is “playing and toying in a friendly manner with his own” (Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke* 53: 475-76). Sometimes, though, people may question God’s grace and presence wrestling with the “hidden God” against the revealed God who suffers for them in Christ (475-76).

Roland Bainton is even more descriptive in stating that *Anfechtung* “is all the doubt, turmoil, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit” (31) of Christians who may even question whether God is acting like the devil. The word can be more specifically defined as “the terror the individual feels in the moment he is confronted with some dark aspect of God. God may confront man as judge, as enemy, as tempter, as the hidden one and as the arbitrary one” (Hovland 48). These quotes reflect how Luther saw *Anfechtung* as the deepest, darkest form of trial and temptation. Not simply a struggle with a situation, or even a struggle with the devil, *Anfechtung* can be experienced as a struggle with God and the question of his goodness.

Jesus, himself, faced *Anfechtung* in Gethsemene and at the cross according to Luther (Bainton 47). As Luther identified with Christ in this suffering, he found hope and comfort. Christ brought salvation to humanity through his suffering the hellish torment of ultimate death in his separation from the Father at the cross. The true theologian does not

just accept this theology or doctrine of atonement. Luther wrote that a person “becomes a theologian by living, by dying and being damned, not by understanding, reading and speculating” (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 5: 163). A theologian existentially experiences the sufferings of Christ, personally wrestling with God’s character, face-to-face with God’s inscrutable ways:

Luther learned that the *Anfechtung* had stripped him of any soteriological resources or causal power within himself to save himself, and thus he had no claim upon God. The temptations force the believer to a humility, which is the basic insight of faith. (Ngien 32)

Through this suffering of *Anfechtung*, Christians become true theologians, being brought to the place of beggars, needy children, realizing how utterly they are dependent upon God’s grace for all things. In this way, *Anfechtung* is “the only way to get to theological truth” (Westhelle 36). Faith is transformed from mere speculation and theory into existential reality through such trial and temptation.

Thus, for Luther, faith is very concrete and particular. Theology, too, is not an abstract science. Rather, the development of a theology of the cross is “done by those afflicted, assailed, oppressed and on trial” (Westhelle 36). Luther speaks much more in his works of the “theologian of the cross” rather than a “theology of the cross” (*Luther’s Works* 31: 40), for Luther the theologian must be set right, made new, or justified before a theologian can speak plainly and truthfully of God. The theology of the cross is less of a system and much more of “a certain practice (*usus*); a way of doing theology, a disposition that grows out of that very experience of *tentatio*” (Westhelle 36). Theology, therefore, never becomes speculative but is always down to earth and part of the truly lived life.

This disposition of faith gives a leader the courage to take risks, to live from conviction and conscience rather than convenience. Leaders learn in private the true character of God and God's promises so that they can lead people who face the same struggles with humility and grace. They do not give simple, formulaic answers to the inscrutable ways of God; rather, they both empathize with their followers' plight while holding confidently God's promises and presence before them in the midst of their struggles.

The theologian of the cross is not fatalistic nor triumphalistic. Indeed, a theologian of the cross steps "into the middle of the battle against suffering" (Westhelle 36) to speak and live the promises of the gospel.

Humility in Leadership Development

Many Christian books on leadership promote the place of humility as an important virtue for a Christian leader. Humility, however, can easily become a step up the ladder of virtue, a meriting factor for God's grace. In fact, in medieval times, monastic orders saw humility as the highest virtue, the one that capped them all. Humble people could boast of their humility as the prerequisite for their acceptance or usefulness for God. Luther saw this definition of humility as subtle entrance for pride in the life of a Christian. He, therefore, distinguished between two different understandings of humility:

Therefore our humility is not the monastic kind, which is a pride and a humility in itself, not in Christ; it is the pretence of humility. Those who are most humble are in fact the most proud. But your humility should be the kind which does indeed have very great gifts but nevertheless fears God, because he judges in a wondrous manner. (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 25: 23)

Humility, therefore, must be defined as a human being before the living God. It does not look to itself or measure itself. It holds completely to the merits of Christ.

One might question how to define humility and how to proclaim and teach about it. Once again the descriptions of humility's role and place in the Scriptures can turn into the prescription of what one has to achieve or what one first has to do in order to please God. Descriptions turn into prescriptions, laws, and more laws. These prescriptions turn people in on themselves to look at their own resources rather than to God (Forde, *On Being a Theologian* 62).

Indeed, Luther discovered that humility is not "something" to attain or gain, but actually is "nothing but nothingness" (von Loewenich 132), so that all glory is given to God and God's grace. von Loewenich expands this understanding of humility when he writes, "Like faith, humility is not one virtue among other virtues, but is, in the first instance, a renunciation of all virtuousness.... Humility is awareness of the fact that we cannot stand before God on the basis of our virtues" (129). A person stands before God solely on the merits of Christ.

Luther saw that the Virgin Mary was a great example of true humility but not in the way that many in his day described her as virtuous. Other theologians saw her as attaining or having a righteousness of her own. Luther saw her as an example of what faith really means, especially as she sings the Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke:

For how should such pride and vainglory be attributed to this pure and righteous Virgin, as though she boasted of her humility in the presence of God? For humility is the highest of all the virtues, and no one could boast of possessing it except the very proudest of mortals. It is God alone who knows humility; he alone judges it and brings it to light; so that *no one knows less about humility than he who is truly humble*. (original emphasis; *Luther's Works* 21: 313)

In fact, Mary shows the way of humility as she stresses God's work in regarding her in her low estate. Luther would place the emphasis on God's regard rather than on Mary's humility:

Hence the stress lies not on the word "low estate," but on the word "regarded." For not her humility but God's regard is to be praised. When a prince takes a poor beggar by the hand, it is not the beggar's lowliness but the prince's grace and goodness that is to be commended. (*Luther's Works* 21: 314)

Thus, Mary exemplifies humility by magnifying God rather than herself, by focusing on God's work rather than her position, by claiming nothing for herself but what God gave her.

One does not attain humility; rather, one's pride is stripped away and the nothingness that is left is called humility. As Luther states: "All must be stripped away from us, to leave us with God alone" (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 2: 302). That stripping away is the Christians' crucifixion, their undoing, their death to the belief in their own merit, and their demise to any claim before God. Humility is done to Christians rather than something that Christians do themselves: "God first humbles and condemns before he saves" (Tomlin 157). God condemns with the law and takes people to hell. God then raises people through the gospel to new life.

In any leadership development program, Luther's understanding of humility implies one must be very wary of turning the system into a track of virtuous progress that would lead to a false sense of self-righteousness or grandiosity. If one did so, Christian leaders would then be trusting in their own selves rather than in God. Nothing is more damaging than to be proclaiming a gospel of grace while living by a law of merit. In that

case, the message the church *really* is broadcasting is one of success as does the rest of the world.

The Practice of Confession in Leadership Development

Much leadership literature seems to advise leaders to discover themselves, to do what is naturally in them, to express themselves, to find their giftedness and their potential, and to release it. Leaders improve by learning more about their innate gifts and abilities. The authors spend little time in these books on what needs to be killed or what needs to die from humanity's old nature. A theology of the cross assumes that much desire for advancement stems from pride and selfish ambition rather than noble causes. This pride does not need to be expressed or even channeled into noble pursuits. It needs to be crucified.

As stated previously, crucifixion can come in the form of suffering under trials and temptations. Crucifixion also comes under the call to repentance and mutual confession. Luther writes about the importance of confession:

[T]he faith which leads to righteousness does not arrive at its goal of righteousness, that is, salvation, if it does not arrive at confession. For confession is the principal work of faith by which a man denies himself and confesses before God and thus he both denies and confesses to such an extent that he would deny his own life and all things rather than affirm himself. For in confessing God and denying himself he dies. For how can he deny himself in a more forceful way than by dying in his confession of God? For then he forsakes himself in order that God may stand and his confession of Him. (*Luther's Works* 25: 411)

Confession before another human being is a most "painful and humbling prospect ... for in confession the sinner suffers a death of pride, of selfishness, and of misplaced trust. In this way confession evidences faith as an essential aspect of justification" (Masden 121-

22). Rather than avoid the cross, Christians need to increase their practice of confession before one another, precisely because it is painful and humbling.

Bonhoeffer writes in *Life Together* that the breakthrough to a full fellowship occurs through confession (110) because confession allows each to be a sinner:

Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride. To stand there before a brother as a sinner is an ignominy that is almost unbearable. In the confession of concrete sins the old man dies a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother. Because this humiliation is so hard we continually scheme to evade confessing to a brother. (111)

In the Lutheran church private confession has become voluntary, and thus most Christians have avoided it altogether. I have rarely met a church professional in my denomination who has a brother or sister confessor. Instead, confession remains corporate, generic, and ritualistic. Pastors have not been consistently encouraged to place themselves under the cross before another Christian through private confession.

Mutual confession is one aspect that needs to be revitalized in a cross-centered leadership development program. As part of the structure of small learning groups, a facilitator of a group of pastors may request each pastor finds a one-to-one, same gender, confessing relationship. Modeled by the mentor leading the group, being open and vulnerable about the difficulty and benefit of such a relationship, the facilitator may encourage and bring about more growth by this one aspect than by all the topics discussed and books read.

The greatest growth I have received over the past ten years has been in such relationships, some in small groups and others in one-on-one relationships, by finding a brother who was also under the cross (Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* 118) to whom I can confess and hear the word of forgiveness and the tender guidance of love and truth.

Ecclesiology and the Theology of the Cross

Under the cross of Christ Christians find themselves as equals—equally guilty, equally sinful, and equally forgiven and freed. Paul states the outcome of this radical equality when he writes about the individual's place within the body of Christ, the Church. The cross abolishes the distinctions between Gentile and Jew, male and female, and slave and free (Gal. 3:28). Mutuality and egalitarian ministry remains.

Hendrik Kraemer wrote that a theology of the laity can only be rightly expressed within a theology of the church (74). I would take his thought a step further. Ecclesiology will only be full and free of all inappropriate uses of power and politics when ecclesiology grows out of a theology of the cross. A crucified Christ calls into being a cruciform community. As Hall states, “[A] theology of the cross that does not translate at once into an ecclesiology of the cross would be a contradiction in terms.... Lutheran and other Protestant settings can talk about the theology of the cross while contenting themselves with a church of glory...” (*Cross* 173). Theology is lived out through the community of saints, which is propelled to be a fellowship of the cross.

The New Testament, with its emphasis on the cross of Christ, describes very little place for hierarchy in church ministry and structure—no first-class and second-class members. Rather, Christ commissions all members in the ministry of the gospel, though functioning in different ways. At the end of the book of Romans, Paul lists numerous Christians involved in a variety of ministries with great fluidity in the ministry descriptions. The founding of the church in Corinth illustrates the egalitarian nature of ministry in the body of Christ. Not many of the Corinthian Christians were wise or influential or from noble birth before they were called (1 Cor. 1:26-31). God designed the

body of Christ in this fashion so that God's grace manifests itself in mutual ministry among all members.

Elsewhere, Paul speaks of some members of the church as overseers (*episkopoi*) and deacons (*presbuteros*), but not by divine right or special status. Rather, these leaders are also under the authority of the crucified one. The terms *clergy* and *laity* were used of all God's people in the New Testament. Clement of Rome in AD 95 first used the term for layman in the sense commonly used today. In contrast "Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) and Irenaeus (ca. 115-200) properly portrayed the layperson as truly being a priest. Tertullian (ca. 160-230) noted that baptism could be regarded as the ordination of the laity" (Garlow 56). James L. Garlow concludes from these observations, "There is a legitimate distinction between clergy and laity today, but it is functional; it is based upon *what one does*. It is not ontological, that is, based upon *what one is* or one's essence" (original emphasis; 57). Clergy and laity are to be partners in ministry, servants together, having a mutual gospel ministry. Congregations may authorize pastors to oversee the sacraments and gospel ministry of the church, but the ministry of the gospel remains the responsibility and task of the whole congregation.

In Luther's day, the Roman Catholic Church was extremely hierarchical in nature, claiming the sole authority to interpret Scripture. The priesthood was set apart ontologically from the laity as the only ones to administer the sacraments rightly. In this context, Luther radically redefined the Church "as the gathered community, rather than the hierarchical leadership" (Ruge-Jones, *Cross* 108). In 1520 Luther wrote in his pamphlet *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* that "all Christians whatsoever really and truly belong to the religious

class, and there is no difference among them except in so far as they do different work” (*Martin Luther: Selections* 407). Every member is a part of the same body with no hierarchy of distinctions appropriate. All Christians are consecrated as priests when they are baptized. Bishops are to be partners in ministry. Priests will have specific functions; however, the authority of the gospel and sacraments belongs to the community of faith. Luther would be so bold as to say, “Therefore, a priest in Christendom is nothing else but an officeholder” (*Luther’s Works* 44: 129). Thus, the priesthood includes all baptized Christians for Luther: “For whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast to be already consecrated priest, bishop, and pope” (129). With assertions like this, Luther would agree with Garlow that there are only functional differences between the office of pastor and members of the congregation.

Luther offers a hypothetical example of a group of Christians stranded in a desert without an episcopally ordained priest among them. Luther insists the gathering of Christians could elect one from among them to be a priest. Indeed, this one would be truly a priest “as though he had been ordained by all the bishops and popes in the world” (*Luther’s Works* 44: 128). Westhelle makes poignant observations from Luther’s example. The Reformation springs forth in the desert as a new formation. As the gospel is proclaimed and taught, it transforms all aspects of the fellowship of believers by its own power (108). Luther does not claim human autonomy like the Enlightenment or some right to anarchy. He claims the gospel contains its own legitimacy, “the very powers that the hierarchical ecclesial system of his day had organized within orders of privilege” (109). Luther does not even qualify the gospel power of the assembly with the exceptional nature of circumstances in this hypothetical example. Indeed, “he vindicates

a radical catholicity” of the people of God and insists that this priest is fully a priest (109).

The institution of the Lutheran church has sublimated this part of the Lutheran heritage into the needs for stability and control within the LC—MS. The Missouri Synod reluctantly agrees with Luther’s statements on the functional nature of the office of the public ministry but often practices a clericalism and ontological distinction between the pastoral office and the ministry of the baptized people of God.

Within the LC—MS, however, some theologians and leaders recognize the need to be open to a more functional and flexible approach to the pastoral ministry.

Elucidating some of the implications of the priesthood of all believers, Robert Schmidt presented at a 2007 theological conference in the Texas District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

What would happen if we again saw the purpose of the professional, yes, stipendiary clergy to equip elders for word and sacrament ministry? Using language from the confessions we know that our present pattern of theological preparation is not by “divine right.” Rather it is a human arrangement and as it has been changed in the past, it can be changed again. Using the Biblical pattern of ministry we would see the chief purpose of full-time seminary graduates is not to do congregational ministry as much as to teach others to do the ministry. This means teaching others to preach, to baptize, to administer the sacrament, to call on the sick and dying, to do the work of the ministry. Now the goal of the parish pastor would not be to “stay in the saddle” but to work oneself out of a job. (3)

I have been dismayed when observing power politics within the Christian church, not that they occur, for sinful people will always be trying to find advantage over each other, but that constituencies justify politics by scriptural proofs. These proofs, upon a thorough inspection, are thinly veiled forms of self-justification. Some pastors and laity in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod place the pastoral ministry above the laity, removing

from the laity any function of gospel ministry and reserving the rights for themselves. Others militantly push congregationalism and an American-styled, one person-one vote mentality in which they demand that democracy is a New Testament right. The power of the congregational meeting strips all leaders, especially pastors, of any influence or authority. Thankfully, the vast majority of members and pastors do not agree with these two extremes, though they are sometimes confused how laity and clergy are to work together.

One can see in both a sacerdotal and a congregational view of church ministry and structure an emphasis on power instead of love, position rather than service, and rights instead of obligations. A theology of the cross will see the triumvirate of faith, hope and love as central to its living out the cross's implications: "faith (not sight), hope (not consummation), and love (not power)" (Hall, *Cross* 33). When theologians and laity promote their stance on the issue of the proper role of pastor and people from Scripture, they often portray their view of ministry in terms of rights, coercion, power, and entitlements.

The cross redefines all terms, especially terms such as power (Hall, *Cross* 85). The cross even redefines the Trinity. George Cladis sees the inner working of the Trinity, or who God is at heart, in terms of *perichoresis* from the Gospel of John. The circle dance of the Trinity becomes a pattern of how Christian ministry is to be lived out in the team-based church. This mutuality and egalitarian pattern in the Trinity is to be seen in staff relations (3) through teamwork and subsuming hierarchical distinctions to the purpose of mission and outreach. Cladis writes perceptively, yet the ministry can be focused even more clearly by the cross: "There was a cross in the heart of God before

there was one planted on the green hill outside of Jerusalem” (Dinsmore 232). The cross centers the understanding of Trinitarian *perichoresis*. As Moltmann says, “There is an inner criterion of all theology, and of every church which claims to be Christian, and this criterion goes far beyond all political, ideological and psychological criticism from outside. It is the crucified Christ himself” (*Crucified God* 2). The cross revalues all answers to questions about ministry and mission, laity and clergy. What Cladis finds true for the church staff or the team of leaders applies to the whole ministry of the body of Christ. The church reflects the grace received through the cross. The people of God are put to death and brought to life so that their relationships to one another are not based on rules, power, position, or rank. Rather, they are based on grace and grace alone and what motivates God’s grace, who God is at heart—unlimited compassion (Hall, *Cross* 22).

God’s love suffers with the world, a love that moves God to do the unthinkable, the unreasonable. A love that can only be revealed and not reasoned from nature is seen in the “crucified God,” a term Luther dared to use (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 1: 614). A crucified ministry, therefore, is characterized by comprehensive mutuality among the members, great compassion for one another, and a willingness to bear the burdens of each other. The people of God may construct some semblance of hierarchy for the sake of mission and ministry. In Corinth the weaker and less seemly members were given positions of honor and respect—the reverse of the world. James calls the Christians in his New Testament letter to show no partiality, especially to the wealthy (Jas. 2:1-10). Thus, the church needs continually to evaluate hierarchy and structure in view of the gospel and mission, ensuring it expresses as best as possible the ministry given to the whole body of Christ.

To the world that values productivity, possessions, and power above almost all else, the church structured in this way appears foolish. Henri J. M. Nouwen states that leadership in the church will seek to be purposely irrelevant, which then allows leaders “to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the glitter of success, and to bring the light of Jesus there” (*In the Name* 35). Church leaders need to exemplify how Christians value one another without thought of advantage or power, dignify one another, and refuse to give in to rankism (Fuller 8) or any other *ism* that may lurk in the ministry of the church. As leaders model God’s unconditional love and compassion, the members will grow in their love for one another.

A crucified ministry translates into a church that finds its glory in service to the world, its ministry of proclaiming the gospel. Such ministry, Ebeling states, will open the church to the vulnerability of persecution:

The Church is spiritual, as long as it regards itself as hidden in this life, and does not place its trust in earthly instruments of power, but realizes that it must be persecuted, and that the most dangerous temptation is the temptation not to be persecuted and to live in safety. (Ebeling 106)

Living in safety today often means withdrawing from interaction with culture and community, keeping things the way they are inside the church’s walls for the sake of its current members, and preserving the past—the opposite of Luther’s call for reformation. “He wanted a gospel that drove people into the world, not away from it; that opened their eyes to what was there” (Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* 116).

Cruciform churches engage their communities in areas where society tries to hide its problems. Cruciform Christians see the suffering in the world tied into the suffering of Christ and his cross. As Christians see the suffering of the world, they possess “a new way of being in the world with others” (Ruge-Jones, *Word* 89). Where society

marginalizes the weak and people cover over problems, the church seeks to expose the issues and serve the people struggling on the margins. Nouwen calls this perspective a Christian's "downward mobility," for Christian "service requires the willingness to enter into a situation, with all the human vulnerabilities. [For] only by entering into communion with human suffering can relief be found" (*Wounded Healer* 77). As Christians embrace the pain of this world, they bring the possibility of new life (Ruge-Jones, *Word* 86). Through the Christian church, the community can experience the hope of resurrection but only as the church willingly bears the cross of service.

Congregational Revitalization

After studying congregational revitalization, George Barna asserts that church turnarounds are rare. He states, "In many cases, trying to revitalize a declining church is probably a wasted effort" (15). Barna advises Christian leaders to let the dead bury their own dead and start new congregations. Schaller, being more optimistic, describes moving an existing congregation off of a plateau as very difficult (*44 Steps* 113).

Though countless books and articles have been written concerning turning around a declining congregation, much of the work appears anecdotal. These books describe the experience of individual pastors turning around specific congregations (e.g., Robinson; Wood; Collier; Ficken). The qualitative analysis within these works makes logical sense. The authors' analysis creates a good starting point for understanding a leader's response to congregational life and how to navigate the culture and to make a turnaround happen.

Other writings on revitalization efforts focus upon a systems approach to congregations based partly on Peter M. Senge's work, Bowen theory, or innovation theory espoused by Everett M. Rogers (e.g., Rendle; Steinke; Friedman; Nelson and

Appel; Roxburgh and Romanuk). I agree with this systemic approach, though these writings cite little qualitative research. Numerous helpful books have been written on leading change within business, nonprofit organizations, or churches (e.g., Kotter; Nelson and Appel; Rendle; Bridges), emphasizing change theory and system dynamics. These books are helpful frameworks that go beyond simply analyzing different ways to view organizations (e.g., Schein; Bolman and Deal). Still other authors describe the need to plan the future of organizations courageously and strategically. They cite anecdotal evidence and qualitative analysis of various conversations with business leaders (e.g., Kouzes and Posner; Quinn, *Building*; Kotter).

Other literature has studied growing and large congregations and found principles working for these churches (e.g., Barna; Schaller, *Mainline Turnaround*). These principles are then advocated for the smaller or declining church, though these principles may not produce the same results in such a situation. In fact, some church leaders are advocating that churches stop adopting programs from megachurches because they are not easily generalized to all congregations. The emerging church movement is seeking to find more culturally relevant and personalized ways to reach pre-Christian people. (e.g., Slaughter; Bell).

Herrington, Creech, and Taylor wrote about their experience with a cluster of Baptist churches around Houston, Texas. Their work is insightful and helpful, focusing on systemic factors. They cite clergy functioning and family of origin issues as important factors in church and clergy revitalization. They call for lifelong learning among clergy and a renewal of mission by the congregation. Once again, much of their work is

categorized as qualitative analysis. They display little quantitative research to reinforce their assertions.

Many church consultants share advice for church revitalization; however, C. Kirk Hadaway has found that “little research has been conducted to test the advice given” (182). Though institutional factors (internal factors to the organization) affect the growth of a congregation, researchers have correlated them weakly to such growth.

Hadaway researched Baptist churches that had been stagnant in worship attendance for five years before they broke out of that plateau. He compared this group to churches that remained on a worship attendance plateau. Hadaway used multiple discriminant analysis to plot the differences between these two groups of churches. He discovered that the age structure scale of a congregation, the size of the church (smaller churches, in fact, are easier to turn around), a sense of optimism among breakout churches that growth can occur, and goal setting in the area of growth and evangelism were strongly correlated to breakout growth. Hadaway concluded that goal setting and evangelism were, in fact, “the two most important actions” a congregation can undertake to get off a plateau (191).

Thom S. Rainer studied thirteen congregations he called breakout churches and identified different characteristics of their senior pastors that helped them lead these churches to grow significantly. These congregations were demographically diverse in nature to add to the generalizability of Rainer’s findings. He discovered that less than one percent of all pastors fit into the highest form of leadership (50). Churches and pastors may not be able to duplicate Rainer’s findings because of this one factor.

Many of these factors reinforce my perspective that to turn around a congregational decline or to get a church off a worship attendance plateau, one must first reinvent the pastor. At the same time, the congregation must start behaving differently like setting goals for growth, creating accountability, and focusing on the people outside of the current membership. The pastor and leaders in the congregation must experience repentance, renewal, death, and resurrection. The Transforming Churches Network attempts to address all of these requirements for renewal.

Regional Judicatory Revitalization

Borden, in his work in the American Baptist Church of the West (ABCW), wrote extensively of a comprehensive turn-around plan for a regional judicatory (*Hit the Bullseye; Direct Hit*). He and his colleague, Kaiser showed how leaders can change an entire regional judicatory culture and create new life cycles for many congregations in a short, five-year period of time.

Borden writes that within a five-year period from 1997 to 2002, the ABCW went from 239 congregations with 37 percent growing in worship attendance to 215 congregations with 72 percent growing. The average attendance went from one hundred in worship to 188 in worship. The ABCW closed some very small congregations during these five years that helped both of these statistics; however, the region showed a dramatic increase in worship attendance and spiritual vitality. Over eleven thousand new people attended churches in this regional judicatory between 1997 and 2002. Between 1.2 and 1.5 million new mission dollars were raised each year. The churches baptized six thousand individuals between 1999 and 2000 compared with eight hundred baptisms in 1997 (*Hit the Bullseye* 26).

A district-wide turnaround requires courageous leadership district level similar to what Borden and Kaiser exemplified. The district board of directors and executives need to be “women and men of vision, who think missionally, and who can articulate and implement strategies for effective and systemic change” (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 17). They need to have both wisdom and courage, for they will face challenges from numerous fronts as they set forth a proactive growth agenda. Some pastors will argue that the pastors’ divine call is being undermined by calling for their accountability. Some laity will argue that congregational autonomy is being undermined by the centralizing of power in the pastoral office. Friedman, in his studies of congregational systems and organizations, states, “[T]he resistance that sabotages a leader’s initiative usually has less to do with the ‘issue’ that ensues than with the fact that the leader took initiative” (2). In other words, theological reasons for resisting change are often rationalizations why change does not need occur, a reaction to the initiative of leaders.

In reality, no change is necessary in the theological position of the LC—MS to implement plans for congregational and clergy revitalization. In fact, the theology of the cross gives great impetus to make changes and plans in order to return to Lutheran Reformation roots. However, different constituencies in the LC—MS may brew a theological storm as resistance to TCN mounts from pastors and congregations who are fearful of the change. The leadership of the district will be wise to prepare for this likely reaction.

District President of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of the LC—MS Bob Newton has written extensively on the area of pastoral accountability. Though not advocating a change in theology, Newton encourages a reframing of the divine call to

include the community around a congregation, the people who are not members yet. That is, the pastoral call is not simply to care for the members of a congregation but to shepherd a community, searching for the lost as Jesus did. Currently the LC—MS calls the pastor accountable for the shepherding the members, for rightly administering the sacraments, and for preaching the word of God faithfully. Newton advocates adding the accountability for seeking and saving the lost in the church’s demographic setting (11-14).

TCN

Discontinuous or transformational change, in most cases, takes an outside, trained consultant to catalyze that process for the congregation. Intervention may be a better word to describe the process rather than consultation (Borden, *Direct Hit* 99). Using a consultant, a church can “slingshot” forward quickly through change, as the consultant “helps embed and implement the new DNA” of missional outreach more readily (Borden, *Direct Hit* 101).

For TCN to be effectively implemented, the Florida-Georgia District must train a core group of consultants/interventionists. I experienced a week of training in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 24 through 28 October 2007, and another training in Orlando, Florida, from 10 through 14 September 2008 where Borden presented much of his work in the ABCW and subsequent consultation work with thousands of congregations. The Florida-Georgia district took Borden’s work and has begun to adapt it to the culture and polity of the LC—MS.

Leadership Development

TCN develops leaders through establishing learning communities of church professionals and initiating a coaching relationship for each TCN pastor. These two aspects help clergy to grow in their leadership. Pastors also establish a learning community of lay leaders within their congregation so that clergy begin to function as mentors themselves.

Learning Communities for Church Professionals

Borden believes that 10 to 15 percent of pastors have the natural leadership gifts to achieve a turnaround in their congregations, slightly higher than Rainer's analysis. Regardless, the vast majority of pastors need help to transform their congregations. Pastors can learn leadership behaviors even if they do not possess them innately (Borden, *Direct Hit* 98). The Transforming Congregations Network uses this belief as a founding principle of its work.

Each pastor in TCN joins a learning community that helps support the pastor to model, speak, and motivate the implementation of vision and mission and to develop lay leaders around them (Borden, *Direct Hit* 117-19). TCN creates a whole new way of doing ministry from the typical approach held in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Adult Learning

In studying adult learning, Ruth Deakin Crick and Kenneth Wilson discovered seven dimensions one must consider for an adult to learn comprehensively (366). Each area includes irreducible feelings, thoughts, and actions that run deeper than simply a learning style. Crick and Wilson elucidate these seven areas as follows:

- *Changing and learning*—the learner's sense of him or herself as changing and learning over time

- *Meaning making*—the learner’s capacity to integrate information and to engage with what really matters personally
- *Critical curiosity*—the inclination to want to get beneath the surface of things
- *Creativity*—risk taking, playfulness, lateral thinking and intuition
- *Learning relationships*—interdependence in the past and present, rather than dependence or isolation in learning
- *Strategic awareness*—awareness of one’s own learning thoughts, feelings and processes and the capacity to manage them
- *Fragility and dependence*—a learner who is stuck, static and passively dependent. (366)

Crick and Wilson assert the importance of focusing upon the process of learning itself, encouraging students to be aware of these seven dimensions and reviewing how they are working through all seven areas (367). The facilitators of learning communities in TCN will wisely implement these seven dimensions of adult learning so that the pastors will grow comprehensively rather than simply in one or two areas.

How pastors learn from experience has been little studied; however, McKenna, Boyd, and Yost discovered that many pastors use an ideal or a role model to develop a perspective of lifelong learning. Pastors they interviewed stated humility most frequently as the most important quality to possess so they were open to learning (197). Most pastors chose to learn from circumstances. They had the choice to turn away from learning or to embrace it. Quinn makes much the same analysis when he asks whether a person is problem solving or purpose finding (*Building the Bridge* 163). That is, a person has a decision whether to try to resolve pain and anxiety quickly in a situation (problem solving) or to embrace the pain and learn deeper purpose questions. Quinn sees the choice to seek purpose rather than comfort as part of the fundamental state of leadership. In other words, many pastors may experience the same event, but only a few will learn from it. Adult learning involves reflection time so that people can find purpose and

meaning beyond simply solving problems.

Clergy, however, lack time for reflection in their schedules. Gary William Kuhne and Joe F. Donaldson observed five evangelical senior pastors for a week each for a total of 254 hours. They discovered that these pastors did not devote extended time to any single issue. Half of the pastors' activities lasted less than five minutes. The pastors appeared biased toward live action with their days filled with fragmented, brief contacts. Though Kuhne and Donaldson's methodology of direct observation provided a clear understanding of what these pastors really did, that direct observation may have altered the pastors' typical work schedule. Additionally, Kuhn and Donaldson only observed a limited sample of two Methodist and three Baptist pastors, placing into question the generalizability of their findings.

Regardless of the limitations of their study, Kuhn and Donaldson make a reasonable conclusion: In order to improve professional competence, they recommend that pastors embrace more reflection time. The learning communities in TCN need to include time for reflection so that pastors are transformed rather than simply informed.

Coaching

TCN has added the component of coaching pastors to Borden's model for regional judicatory transformation. Coaching becomes one of the most influential ways pastors change their behavior, grow in their courage, and improve their skills. TCN pastors in the Florida-Georgia district have contact with their coach approximately once a week. Some of these contacts occur by phone or e-mail, but at least once a month the coaches are present with the pastors at their ministry settings. I asked questions of the effectiveness of the coaching relationship in my research interviews.

William H. Berman and George Bradt created a construct for executive coaching. This construct helps a would-be coach and the one to be coached agree how to define their relationship. The construct follows two continua: directive to indirective and short to long-term. Berman and Bradt summarize four styles of coaching: facilitative coaching, executive consulting, restorative coaching, and developmental coaching.

TCN utilizes a form of directive coaching similar to facilitative coaching described by Berman and Bradt; however, TCN has lengthened Berman's and Bradt's time frame to a two-year commitment. Facilitative coaching best fits leaders who take on new challenges. TCN pastors potentially face the new challenges of leading a congregation to adopt a new structure, leading a church to set new goals for outreach, and recruiting new leaders to advance the mission of the congregation to the community.

Alan Deutschman shares the stories of companies and organizations that have defied the common trends of status quo by making significant changes. His research, through interviewing individuals and observing these organizations at work, concluded that force, fear, and facts does not change people, even if death may be a real consequence of not changing (12-13). Deutschman discovered three different keys to change: relate, repeat, and reframe (14-15). TCN coaches first learn to relate and care about their client pastors. They are encouraged to pray regularly and fervently for them. With a relationship established, TCN coaches can be directive with pastors, catalyzing change in the pastors' professional functioning. By calling the pastors to repeat the new behaviors over months of time, pastors develop a new set of missional habits. Finally, through their learning communities, TCN pastors will reframe their concept of what pastors do and how they engage the mission field.

Steve Ogne and Tim Roehl write of a new paradigm for coaching leaders within the church that includes the four Cs: “[C]larifying his or her *call* to ministry and cultivating personal *character* so that he or she can transform his or her surroundings by creating authentic *community* and connecting with the secular *culture* in a redemptive way” (original emphasis; 29). All four Cs are important for TCN coaches; however, as Ogne and Roehl state, “Most Christian leaders need to be held accountable to engage the culture with the gospel because they would rather hang out with Christians” (48). TCN places a priority on pastors engaging the community as missionaries because pastors neglect this area easily.

Systems Theory

When the leadership of a congregation is united in focusing on mission and vision, many great things can happen: “If the congregation is not focused on its mission, it will focus on something—perhaps the budget, the past glory days, or the pastor’s performance” (Steinke 73). In addition, when a system such as a congregation is challenged to change—suffer even to facing its crucifixion to the way things are—the anxiety of the congregation increases dramatically. The most immature, reactive people will arise and try to sabotage any progress.

Suffering happens to all leaders who challenge an organization to change. Leaders should not be surprised when, after a change is accomplished, they experience a backlash against them. Friedman writes poignantly about such resistance:

Self-differentiated leadership always triggers sabotage which is a *systemic* part of leadership—so much so that a leader can never assume success merely because he or she had brought about change. It is only after having first brought about change and then subsequently endured the resultant sabotage that the leader can feel truly successful. When the sabotage

comes, this is the moment when the leader is most likely to experience failure of nerve and seek a quick fix. (247)

In these times leaders must become resolute: “In anxious times,” more than peaceful times, a congregation needs the “wisdom, integrity, patience, and faithfulness” of its leaders (Steinke 97). Leaders, in fact, become the immune system for the body of Christ, keeping the infections of selfishness and self-service at bay by continually pointing to the mission and vision of the congregation so it remains or becomes more outwardly focused.

Leading Change in a System—Strategies for Diffusing Innovation

Though TCN was adopted unanimously in convention in 2009, and the futures committee observed a consensus among the delegates about the urgency for change in the Florida-Georgia district congregations, the resolution’s adoption gives no guarantee that TCN will transform the district. Each congregation within the LC—MS possesses a high level of autonomy in the synodical structure. The district TCN leadership can appropriate much from the arena of business innovation and change.

District leaders do well to heed Kotter’s insights on eight critical reasons why change processes fail:

- 1) Too much complacency
- 2) Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition.
- 3) Underestimating the need for vision, a clear compelling picture of the future.
- 4) Under-communicating the vision.
- 5) Permitting obstacles to block the new vision
- 6) Failing to create some short-term wins.
- 7) Declaring victory too soon.
- 8) Failing to anchor changes firmly into the corporate culture. (4-14)

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Florida-Georgia district exhibit Kotter’s critical reasons why change fails. All eight of these critical reasons need to be addressed by district leadership.

Indeed, a number of inherent realities are working against the adoption of TCN. The LC—MS by its nature as an institution inclines to make incremental change and resists the hard work that deep change entails. Though the tendency of the LC—MS resists change, leaders may utilize strategies to overcome such resistance. For example, Everett M. Rogers discovered that if 16 percent of an organization's constituency adopts an innovation, the organization reaches a threshold that propels the innovation forward (280). In Figure 2.1, the innovators and early adopters constitute the needed 16 percent. These groups hold the key to diffuse a change or product throughout an organization. Roger's work helps the leaders of TCN create strategies for its adoption.

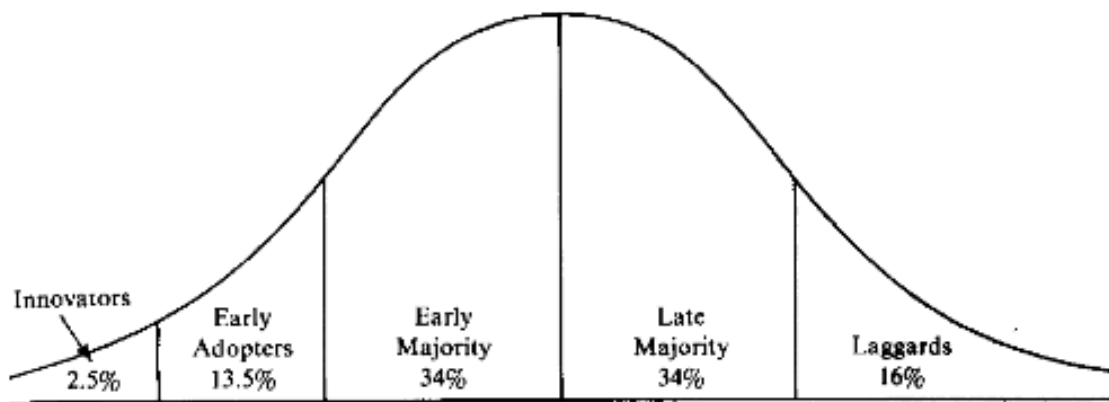


Figure 2.1. Bell curve of innovation.

The Florida-Georgia district is composed of 193 loosely connected congregations and ministries across two different states. Though some pastors and church professionals identify with the district beyond the walls of their congregations and schools, the majority of congregational members has little connection to the district. The laity (for lack of a better term) will only consent to the Transforming Churches Network if they recognize a

great benefit to their congregation. Most of the laity care little about the health or growth of the district. Many laity are concerned with mission work, but they focus their concern on specific ministries and outreach. Few members have a high level of loyalty toward the institution or hierarchy of the district or synod.

The church professionals must adopt the innovation first and foremost of all. Church professions have the most connections to the district and other Lutheran ministries beyond the congregation. Church professionals also possess the largest influence within their congregations even when they do not believe they had such a level of influence. Little will happen in any congregation if the pastor and key members of the staff do not promote and model missional change.

Under the LC—MS system of governance and structure, the local congregation governs fairly autonomously. Resolutions passed by district or synodical conventions are advisory in nature for the local congregation. Theological matters are much more binding; however, synod has struggled to define the boundary between theological resolutions and practical ones. Even the synodical and district presidents possess few coercive powers. They have more positional influence. Any adoption of change within the LC—MS occurs, therefore, through free market forces. Leaders must sell changes and innovations rather than tell congregations to change.

The social/cultural climate within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod works against the diffusion of any innovation such as TCN. As a conservative denomination, theologically and politically, the church body has attracted people who are conservers by nature over the decades. Quinn states, “The choice of slow death is ... especially common in conservative, ‘don’t rock the boat’ cultures” (*Deep Change* 18). In other

words, the bell curve of innovation that has a somewhat even distribution in society is weighted toward the laggards and late majority groups within the LC—MS. Few individuals whom Rogers would define as innovators and early adopters remain in the denomination.

The loose connections between congregations, the synodical structure of congregational autonomy, and the social/cultural climate in the LC—MS obstruct the adoption of the TCN innovation in the district. Other issues, however, improve the possibility of TCN's expansion. For example, the Florida-Georgia district adopted a policy-based governance model for its board of directors, giving the district president and the board a reasonable amount of authority to initiate staffing and budgeting priorities for the TCN.

Presently, the membership of the Florida-Georgia district is homophilous. Most congregations and leaders hold similar beliefs and many members have a similar level of education. The vast majority of members fall into the middle to upper middle-class economic bracket. Though the district aspires to become more diverse socio-demographically and ethnically, its current homophilous condition creates an advantage to TCN's development (Rogers 305). As the Florida-Georgia district gains the same diversity as other states' populations, diffusion of an innovation will become more complex. In the meantime, the district's homophily aids TCN's growth.

Clergy Vitality

The futures committee of the Florida-Georgia district conducted a survey of clergy that discovered pastors sensed high levels of isolation. That disconnection may correlate to experiencing burnout. In a study using numerous interviews and panel

discussions of LC—MS clergy, Alan C. Klaas and Cheryl D. Klaas discovered poignantly in 1999 that about 30 percent of LC—MS pastors loved their work and look to complete their ministry years prior to retirement, while another 30 percent were “ambivalent about their ministry” (47). Another 20 percent were “on their way to burnout” with the final 20 percent in “advance stages of burnout” (47). The methodology Klaas and Klaas used to conduct their research encouraged pastors to over report symptoms of burnout; however, no other study has been specifically carried out within the LC—MS to counter their findings.

A 2002 survey by Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary found clergy burnout due to feeling “incompetent in determining priorities among the competing values and ideals that guide their ministries” (Jenkins 12). Though feeling deficient in the area of time management, few clergy were using any continuing education time to train in goal setting or time management.

Most notably, Michael Jenkins found that “62 percent [of pastors] do not ‘have disciplined or scheduled times for study,’ and 51 percent do not have ‘disciplined or scheduled time for prayer.’” Only 41 percent have a mentor, with only 22 percent making use of a more intense form of a spiritual director. Less than 31 percent of clergy join mentoring groups that actually hold each other accountable and offer support and transparency for mutual confession (24).

Pastors avoid the cross by isolating themselves, displaying an unwillingness to be open and honest. They do not expose their weaknesses and failings, fearing vulnerability. As a result, clergy within the district may look strong but they are becoming weak.

The lack of vitality among clergy also appears to be connected to systemic issues: conflicted congregations with poorly defined roles, responsibilities, accountability, goals, and lines of authority. Kaiser uses the metaphor of a football team playing a game. In the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod pastors and congregations are unclear who is to call the plays for the team, what it means to win at the game, and who are the players on the field. Kaiser asserts that churches are best engaged in mission when pastors are the coaches and are held accountable for goals by a small board of directors (the management). Members act as players on the team accomplishing the works of ministry. Churches win when worship attendance increases and pre-Christian people are disciplined in the faith (25-64).

Not simply pastors, but all church professionals have the need for clarity in growth goals and support for growth plans. Mark Brink, the district executive for education, surveyed one hundred Lutheran school principals, twenty-two early childhood directors, and forty-four directors of Christian education in late 2006 and early 2007. He asked questions of their professional development. Nearly half of those who responded had over ten years of experience in their ministry.

He discovered that 21 percent of respondents believed that their congregations did not expect them to grow in professional development and 86 percent did not have a professional development plan in place. Nearly 60 percent did not have yearly performance reviews.

Brink discovered a correlation between unhealthy and conflicted working environments with the lack of accountability, expectations, and support for professional growth and development. Church professionals who perceived themselves to be working

in unhealthy environments were 40 percent more likely to report no annual review process, 12 percent more likely to have no professional growth plan, and nearly twice as likely to state that their church had no expectation for professional growth for them. Over half, 52 percent, stated that they thought they were working in an unhealthy church and school system. I conclude that all church professionals are facing environmental burnout issues (Brink 1-4).

Analysis of TCN's Alignment with Luther's Theology of the Cross

Numerous aspects of TCN are already aligned with Luther's theology of the cross and its subsequent progress. Few aspects of TCN contradict a cruciform theology; however, TCN appears to lack a fully developed theology of the cross at present. In this analysis, first, I highlight areas where the theology of the cross is experienced in TCN. Secondly, I suggest the enhancements that can make TCN more consistent with Luther's insights.

The emphasis on community outreach in TCN fits well with Luther's understanding that grace and discipleship inherently belong together so that "a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian" (*Luther's Works* 31: 371). A congregation is not living fully as Christ's church unless it is serving its community. A transformed, cruciformed church will put "the needs of a broken world ahead of our own" (Bliese and Van Gelder 30). The church will love its "neighbors more" than the members love their church. A people of the cross will set aside its own agenda, needs, fears, and biases for the sake of mission (30). TCN emphasizes this focus on outreach and those outside of the congregation well.

Many TCN consultant teams prescribe a day of repentance and a process of envisioning for a church in the final report to the congregation. A corporate call to repentance as seen in TCN fits well with Luther's understanding of reformation, humility, and the cross. Pastors, leaders, and people need to take seriously the renunciation of all self-justifications and virtues, being humbled before God's word. Congregational days of repentance for the forsaking of a church's calling frees a congregation to be gospel centered rather than binding its energy to countless attempts to justify itself about how good and faithful it is doctrinally.

Death through confession, however, must be followed by resurrection. The law that calls the church "what it actually is" (Luther, *Luther's Works* 31: 4) must be followed by a word of God's forgiveness that displays what God actually does. TCN leaders must proclaim to the congregation a word of hope and peace. This gospel word resurrects a congregation to be motivated by grace rather than guilt. When people are shown God's amazing grace, they can then respond in love to their loving Savior.

The emphasis on discontinuous change within the TCN framework also fits in well with Luther's theology of the cross. Luther called the church of his day to radical transformation for the sake of the gospel. TCN calls for discontinuous change for the sake of the gospel mission of a congregation. In both instances, few things remain as they were. The Reformation altered church structure, the role of laity and clergy, the focus of churches, the social structure in society, the understanding of Christian vocation, the relationship of family and marriage, and even the political landscape. TCN is not as ambitious; however, churches that enter into TCN may change their structure, the ministry descriptions of pastors and staff, the budgetary allotment to mission and

outreach, the style of their worship services, and other aspects held sacred by congregational members. In these ways TCN shows alignment to Luther's cruciform theology.

However, in other aspects TCN lacks a fully realized theology of the cross. For example, TCN does not stress private confession and absolution in its learning communities. TCN also does not embody a concrete, down-to-earth explication of the gospel. Finally, TCN leaves the role of the word and sacraments undefined and thereby implies they are secondary to transformation. Luther would assert they are God's means for transformation. These aspects, however, could be remedied.

The Florida-Georgia district could strongly encourage pastors to begin practicing private confession. Luther had a down-to-earth understanding of the nature of the gospel. The gospel comes from outside of self, confronts the sinner, puts to death and raises to life. Private confession concretely practices this down-to-earth gospel. People do not baptize themselves, commune themselves, or forgive themselves. People receive that word and the sacrament from someone else. Pastors can model Luther's understanding in their learning communities and coaching relationships.

The district could also concretize the role of the gospel in transformation through emphasizing the word and sacraments among the fellowship of believers. Instead of containing an idea, a word *about* the cross, TCN must carry the word *of* the cross as Prenter stated. Lutheran theologians have long emphasized the following:

Salvation, in fact, depends on Jesus coming in concrete ways to individuals, to communities, and to the whole world. Now the secret of Jesus' real presence is this: the way he freely comes to people today through the proclamation of his word, the celebration of the sacraments, and the life and witness of the Christian community. (Bliese and Van Gelder 39)

Luther tied the word of the cross “to the concrete coming of Jesus in Word, Sacrament, and Christian community” (30). Instead of only ministry methods, church growth strategies, organizational change, or demographic realities, TCN needs to incorporate into the fabric of its process and structure the down-to-earth Word in material/deliverable form. Baptism as a daily dying and resurrection calls Christians to live for others. The Lord’s Supper feeds Christians for service in the world. The district TCN leadership needs to place the sacraments central in what the pastors learn and discuss together. In fact, TCN can write a portion of the learning community curricula on the topic of the Christian’s calling in baptism, Christ empowering for service in the world through the Lord’s Supper, and the necessity of people hearing through human witness the divine word. This curriculum would align TCN much more strongly with Luther’s theology of the cross.

Beyond TCN, the means of grace (e.g., word, sacraments, and Christian community) must be freed from captivity within Lutheran congregations. Currently the means of grace remains captive in the cage of clericalism, tribalism, ritualism, and the pride of our theological heritage (Bliese and Van Gelder 42-44). All Christians must be seen as bearers of the word, empowered to proclaim and profess the gospel rather than delegating the total ministry of the word to church professionals. Lutherans must be convinced once again of the power of the gospel.

I believe the whole denomination may face crucifixion and resurrection of its cultural and class-centered baggage. Lutherans often function as if heritage, class, cultural history, and ideological agreement are the center and purpose of the congregation. Christ, instead, claims the center. He calls the church to center on the

gospel, not theological prowess, grace, not systematic doctrinal clarity, and the cross, not human endeavor. Few denominations are filled with more pride for theological prowess than Lutherans (Bliese and Van Gelder 44). This pride shuts the denomination off from considering change or reform, ironically in the church body of the Reformation. The result has been the opposite of what Lutherans espouse in their theological heritage, that the gospel has full course through all things.

With these changes to TCN in its current state, the Florida-Georgia district can lead the way for the LC—MS toward church and clergy revitalization in line with the theology of the cross. This revitalization will be accomplished by God’s grace for the sake of God’s mission and kingdom.

Theology of the Cross as a Conceptual Framework

Through this literature review on the theology of the cross, I have created the following as a conceptual framework that informed my interview questions and protocol. Though this framework informed my questions and protocol, I was sensitive to emergent issues that challenged or contradicted my conceptual assumptions. Like other researchers, I entered the field with a perspective from the literature review but attempted to let the transcripts bring about their own interpretation (Bloomberg and Volpe 98). Still, this conceptual framework provided a beginning sorting structure to initiate coding.

Theologians of the Cross

Theologians of the cross will display a number of the following characteristics as they live out the gospel and lead others to follow Christ into the mission field:

- They experience “crosspoints” in their lives, times when they are put to death or die to self, to be resurrected. These events often appear as an existential crises or dead

ends. Often after the experience of a death, theologians of the cross express a time of hope and renewal in ministry.

- They live out their faith in the midst of temptation and trial. Theologians of the cross struggle in agonizing ways with a form of *Anfechtung*. The dynamic of law and gospel is lived out rather than conceptualized.

- They engage in lifelong learning. They are teachable and humble enough to learn from others. They keep growing in faith and service and intentionally develop themselves and their skills. They practice spiritual disciplines for the sake of growing in God's word.

- They develop accountable relationships for confession of sins and mutual support. They have humbled themselves to be transparent about their own failings with other Christians. They seek to be accountable to other Christians within the body of Christ they serve.

- They readily verbalize that God receives the glory, decreasing their importance in ministry. They express the centrality of God's work in them personally and in the body of Christ.

- They willingly risk their reputation, status, and job security (maybe even their lives) to speak the word of the cross to others. They show courage in the midst of opposition or challenge and continue to lead God's people to further ministry and mission work.

- They focus upon reaching others with the word of the cross. They continue to compel themselves and their congregations to be missional and outward focused.

- They describe things as they really are. They are straightforward about the reality of their ministries, not justifying or rationalizing shortcomings in mission. They also express a critical assessment of human potential and true hope in God's promises and abilities.

Cruciform Congregations

Cruciform congregations will display many of the following characteristics as they engage in mission and service to their community and world:

- They prioritize the needs of others outside of their fellowship over their own comfort. Members place other members' needs before their own. Likewise, congregations willingly undergo the difficulty of change for the sake of outreach and mission. Congregations may even risk their own institutional strength to reach others for Christ.
- They intentionally grow their members in faith and service. Members actively engage in study and learn through serving others. They are not content to know certain facts of theology but continue to grow in God's word and readily make use of the sacraments as their lives are transformed.
- They make servant-leadership an explicit value. They exemplify egalitarian relationships and a deep sense of mutuality in ministry. Every leader is seen as a servant to others and a servant of the gospel.
- Promote the priesthood of all believers. They verbalize that the ministry of the gospel is for the whole congregation. Each member understands his or her role in ministry and is actively engaged in serving others with the gospel.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

As stated earlier, the worship attendance statistics from the 193 congregations in the Florida-Georgia district showed that worship attendance declined in 121 churches, thirteen were on a plateau, and only fifty-nine experienced growth between 1998 and 2007. By general observation, many churches have lost spiritual vitality and a missional stance in their communities. Past attempts at changing this stagnation or downward trend have not proven effective. These attempts have been add-on programs and narrowly focused strategies. Many clergy among these churches also need revitalization.

The Transforming Churches Network began to address these issues in its revitalization strategy. TCN's plan began to develop with the goal of renewing churches and clergy. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to explore the TCN initiative in the Florida-Georgia district as a means to assist pastors and congregations in revitalization and to examine ways in which the theology of the cross is related to this process. The research explored the revitalization of the congregations by measuring any changes in reported statistics considered symptomatic of increased congregational vitality: average worship attendance and number of adult confirmations post enrollment in TCN (see Appendix B). The research studied the revitalization of pastors and congregations through interviews with seven participating clergy, each clergy's coach, and two lay leaders within each of the congregations.

Irving Seidman states, "Every research method has its limits and its strengths" (130). Thus, after analyzing the five different qualitative analysis methods that John W.

Creswell describes, I chose to follow the hermeneutic phenomenological approach most closely (78-79). Phenomenology, according to Max van Manen, is “the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth or richness” (11). Since the focus of this research has hermeneutical elements of experience, the phenomenological approach aligns itself with this inquiry. In the interviews the pastors answered questions concerning the meaning of their experience with TCN in light of Luther’s theology of the cross. Whether the clergy saw the correspondence, they did give me insight to the meaning and significance of undergoing the TCN change process (23). In addition, the interviewees answered questions about the meaning behind the experience of TCN, the way congregations experienced change and to what level. All of these questions fit into a phenomenological approach.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions were explored in this study.

Research Question 1

Have participating TCN clergy experienced revitalization and, if so, how?

The three different interview protocols developed for this research focused on the changes in behavior and attitudes of the participating clergy as well as the depth of meaning they experienced through the TCN revitalization process to help answer this research question. The first protocol was developed for the clergy. In it I asked the seven pastors about their time spent in prayer, devotions, and other spiritual disciplines, time spent in mutual consolation or private confession, and time spent developing leaders within the congregation. Additionally, the clergy shared with me their sense of revitalization and level of spiritual vitality. These questions focused on the changes the

clergy made and how they interpreted those changes. They also were encouraged to interpret their experience in light of Luther's theology of the cross.

A second interview with the coach of each of the seven pastors asked the same questions to gain another perspective on the changes in behavior, attitude and vitality of the TCN clergy (see Appendix I). The coaches' observations helped confirm the pastors' perspectives on their change and revitalization. A third interview protocol used many of the same questions so that two lay leaders from each of the seven TCN congregations could answer questions about the pastors' changes in behavior, attitude and vitality from the lay leaders' perspectives (see Appendix J). The second and third protocol helped to fill out the clergy and congregations' experiences with revitalization.

Research Question 2

To what extent have participating TCN congregations experienced revitalization as seen in average worship attendance, adult confirmations, and a perceived shift in church culture toward outreach post enrollment in TCN?

The TCN process includes a comprehensive assessment of the congregation's health. A group within the congregation prepared the congregational self-study rubric. This rubric took approximately three months to complete data in the following areas: (1) history and description, (2) demography, (3) school/early childhood education (where applicable), (4) community study, (5) beliefs and practices, (6) official documents, and (7) an assessment of the life cycle vitality of the congregation (see Appendix C).

After the adoption of the prescriptions by the congregation, the pastor was to supervise the compilation of worship attendance, adult baptisms, adult confirmations, the number of first-time visitors, the development of new leaders, the number of outreach-

focused small groups, and the number of new mission initiatives post enrollment in TCN in these monthly reports (see Appendix B). This data was to provide helpful evidence pointing to revitalization.

Only one of the seven congregations completed these monthly forms on a regular basis. Once I discovered this lack of data, I requested this data from each of the seven churches for the years 2007 through 2010 but was still unable to obtain reliable statistics from congregations. Ultimately the data collected in this research came from the LC—MS Web site, which records reported statistics in two areas (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7, pp. 128 and 129) of worship attendance and adult confirmations.

In addition, I believe the statistics do not describe the full account of the church's revitalization experience. In fact, revitalization may be perceived prior to the any statistical trend registering growth. A shift in the cultural attitudes within a congregation may predate a change in worship attendance or adult membership gains. This cultural shift, both behavioral and attitudinal, was sought within the twenty-six interviews.

In each of the interviews, participants responded to questions about how they saw revitalization in their congregation and its mission. They expanded on the meaning and context about the changes that their churches underwent post enrollment in TCN. The answers to these questions helped me understand more fully if and how revitalization began and to what extent it was experienced.

Research Question 3

Have the participating clergy seen TCN aligned with Luther's theology of the cross, and, if so, in what ways?

Alignment between TCN and Luther's theology of the cross was seen in the literature review of Chapter 2 through the themes of death/resurrection experienced as discontinuous or transformational change, in the call for repentance corporately and individually, in the emphasis on lifelong learning, in the coach-pastor relationship that includes accountability, and in the emphasis on spiritual disciplines such as prayer and private confession.

At the end of the literature review, I summarized a conceptual framework on the theology of the cross in two areas: (1) the theologian (clergy) of the cross, and (2) the cruciform congregation. This framework aided me in looking for key indicators of the experience of the theology of the cross as when coding and analyzing the interviews.

Further, during each interview I explained a basic understanding of Luther's theology of the cross before asking the interviewees whether they saw evidence of this theology in the TCN process, both personally and congregationally. Lutheran pastors, most likely, possess a bias in favor of Luther's theology. Therefore, avoiding references to Luther upfront in the interview protocol and initially asking questions that pointed to some key indicators of the theology of the cross being experienced, such as the death/life and discontinuity/continuity metaphors for the transformational change process, the research protocol attempted not to lead the interviewees in answering more favorably than they would normally. Once initial conversations covered these areas, I further enunciated Luther's theology of the cross using more weighted theological jargon and recorded how pastors, coaches, and leaders perceived any congruity between this theological insight and their experiences through TCN participation.

Leonard Schatzmann and Anselm Strauss write, “It is sometimes very useful to tell informants—perhaps obliquely—about propositions that one is beginning to pull together” (79). Thus, through speaking about Luther’s theology of the cross directly to the clergy, I sought validation of my conceptual framework in relation to change and TCN in most of the interviews. A few participants even reiterated a statement that Schatzmann and Strauss made: “I never thought of it that way before” (79). This statement gave some affirmation that my connections were correct for the interviewee while giving the interviewee new insights into the TCN experience.

Participants

A total of seven congregations participated in this research study. Four interviews were conducted for each congregation: the pastor, the pastor’s TCN coach, and two congregational leaders. Three of the congregations were recruited from the central Florida TCN cluster that underwent consultation 12-14 September 2008. A congregation in the area was added to this cluster after their consultation weekend 15-17 May 2009. The pastor from that church joined the central Florida learning community in February 2009 prior to that weekend. Three congregations from the second pilot cluster in the south Florida were recruited for interviews. This cluster began with the consultation weekend 6-9 February 2009. All seven of these churches agreed to the TCN prescriptions generated by the consultation teams.

The pastors in south and central Florida clusters formed learning communities so they would have less than one hour of travel time to their monthly, daylong meetings. Clusters are not statistically relevant for the research.

The criteria used to recruit congregations for TCN consultation and involvement included (1) a plateau or decline in worship attendance for two or more years, (2) willingness and readiness of the pastor to participate, and (3) willingness and readiness of the congregational leadership to be involved.

Though more than seven congregations have adopted the TCN prescriptions, these seven churches are among those who have been in TCN for the longest time in the Florida-Georgia district. In addition, all seven churches retained their pastors throughout this process. These additional criteria in selecting the seven congregations helped me gain a deeper insight into the full experience of TCN as a potential revitalization tool. All seven clergy initially contacted for this research agreed to participate. Their coaches all agreed to be interviewed as well. The pastors helped recruit two laity from each congregation. The laity also agreed to the interview. Congregations are coded in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Congregational Codes

Congregation	Area	Average Worship (2008)	Date of TCN Acceptance
Church 1	South Florida	390	29 Mar. 2009
Church 2	South Florida	291	29 Mar. 2009
Church 3	South Florida	85	31 Mar. 2009
Church 4	Central Florida	452	15 Feb. 2009
Church 5	Central Florida	69	9 Nov. 2008
Church 6	Central Florida	180	22 Nov. 2008
Church 7	Central Florida	170	15 Nov. 2008

Instrumentation

Churches generated their baseline statistics through their self-study (see Appendix C). Of particular importance were the statistics on worship attendance, adult confirmations, and adult baptisms for the previous five years. Though the churches were to continue to record three statistics post adoption of the TCN prescriptions and submit information on all new mission initiatives, outreach-focused small groups and first-time visitors, the seven churches failed to submit these report forms to the district office. Once I discovered the lack of monthly statistics, I ultimately turned to the LC—MS Web site.

Interview Protocol 1

I developed an interview protocol that focused on the clergy's experience of TCN. It included three different foci: (1) a set of questions concerning clergy behavioral changes in terms of spiritual disciplines and missional activities, (2) a set of questions about changes in the pastor's and church's perspective toward ministry and mission, and (3) a set of questions related to how the pastors experienced change and its relation to the theology of the cross (see Appendix H). I conducted these face-to-face interviews in January and February 2011. The average length of pastoral interviews was seventy-two minutes and three seconds.

Interview Protocol 2

I conducted a second interview in person with the coach of each of the seven pastors, asking the similar questions to gain another perspective on the changes in behavior, attitude, and vitality of the TCN clergy (see Appendix I). The coaches' interviews lasted on average forty-five minutes and forty-six seconds. The coaches' observations gave the research a level of triangulation to verify the accuracy of pastors'

comments on their revitalization (Denizen and Lincoln 46-47). One coach was contracted to work with three of the seven pastors I interviewed. Thus, I had five coach interviews. For this coach's interview, I divided his answers into three documents according to the three differing pastors for coding purposes.

The district TCN leadership recruited coaches from the LC—MS clergy roster, some retired and others actively serving churches. The coaches attended a weekend seminar where they received training in directive coaching techniques. TCN gave the coaches materials to guide each of the coaching sessions with their assigned pastors.

Interview Protocol 3

I designed a third interview protocol for two lay leaders from each of the seven TCN congregations. This survey asked questions about the pastors' changes in behavior, attitudes and vitality from the lay leaders' viewpoint. I also asked for their observations whether TCN helped the congregation change to become more missional (see Appendix J). These interviews gave another form of triangulation to verify the responses of coaches and pastors (Denizen and Lincoln 46-47). The lay leader interviews averaged thirty-six minutes and forty-five seconds in length.

I spent approximately three weeks traveling through Florida to accommodate face-to-face interviews with all twenty-six participants in January and February 2011. To set up the interviews, each pastor and coach received a letter of introduction in November 2010 that explained my research. A week later I phoned the pastors to schedule a ninety-minute block of time for the interview. Having previous rapport with the coaches, I phoned each of them and set up the face-to-face interviews, also requesting ninety minutes.

While scheduling the in-person interviews with the TCN pastors, I requested the names and contact information of all lay leaders on the church's governing board and any lay leaders involved in the clergy-led learning community. Some pastors gave me a large list of potential interviewees, up to ten, while others only two or three names. From the list of leaders, two were randomly e-mailed, requesting that they participate in the third interview protocol. These interviews occurred during the same period of time I was visiting the congregation's geographic area and interviewing the pastors, asking the lay leaders for approximately forty-five minutes.

Since most pastors did not give me an extensive list of potential lay leaders to interview from their congregations, the selection process for these interviews contained some bias slanted in favor of the pastor and the amount of change the pastor experienced. I was hard-pressed to overcome this issue being dependent upon the pastor's initiative in gaining this list. Even with a larger list of lay leaders, this bias possibility remained.

Pre-Interview

I have been involved in the development of TCN in the Florida-Georgia District from its inception in 2007, receiving training as a consultant through two weekend events and participating in four consultant teams at four different churches. I also attended a directional coach training session in the spring of 2009 in Orlando. This training aided me in generating pertinent questions for the interview protocol (Denizen and Lincoln 42-43). Having visited a number of these churches previously and been part of consulting teams, I was also able to check what I heard "against that experience" (Schatzman and Strauss 68).

Once generated, the coordinator for TCN in the Florida-Georgia district reviewed the rough draft of the three interview protocols. His comments helped form refine the questions. I administered a pretest of the interview questions for interviews 1 and 2 to two pastors who have been trained as coaches of TCN-enrolled churches. These coaches were not coaching any of the clergy in the seven congregations of this research. Feedback from these two coaches helped refine the interview protocols even further. These two coaches received the questions by e-mail. One responded to me over the telephone and the other did so face-to-face.

Variables

The primary variable in this research was the TCN intervention and the attempted church revitalization experienced as a result of enrollment in TCN. In analyzing the seven churches, I looked at the age and location of each church as potential factors that influenced the experience of revitalization. When reviewing the seven pastors, I considered the length of the pastor's ministry in the present congregation, the years of experience in pastoral ministry, and the level of credibility perceived by the congregation each pastor possessed. These various factors seem to be main contributors for the depth of experience in revitalization.

In fact, the level of trust between congregational members and clergy, the pastor's credibility, appeared to be a significant factor in whether each church engaged this process wholeheartedly. Credibility is seen as a combination of the perceived character and competence of the pastor (Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility* 21) along with the length of time the pastor has been in the congregation. Pastors may be competent and have good character but be relatively new to their congregations and still have low credibility. A

pastor needs all three criteria to some extent: competence in pastoral skills; character formation as a Christian role model, and a reasonable length of time in the congregation to have the needed credibility. Since pastors were held more accountable after adoption of TCN but also given more authority, pastors with lower credibility seemed to have more difficulty leading their congregations through the change process.

Data Collection

All interviews of coaches, clergy and laity occurred within the months of January and February 2011 in a face-to-face setting. Pastors, coaches, and lay leaders were told that all answers were confidential and would not be referred to in the data analysis of this research by anything more than general geographic location. The conversations were recorded digitally and a dictation software program, Dragon Dictate for Macintosh, was utilized concurrently for the sake of accuracy in transcription. As promised, once the dissertation was complete these recordings and transcripts were destroyed.

I had the appropriate interview protocol before me as I interviewed each participant, though some questions needed clarification for individuals on occasion. Any rewording or clarification of the questions was nondirective so that they did not influence the content of the resultant answers, holding to as neutral and nonjudgmental of a stance as I could (Fowler and Mangione 33) while being highly supportive of whatever opinion or viewpoint the interviewee expressed.

In addition to these guidelines, I recognized the need to listen on at least three levels: (1) what the person is saying, (2) what the person means, and (3) how the process and substance of the conversation interrelate (Seidman 78-79). In this way, the questions

varied from the protocol to probe deeper to gain more understanding of the interviewees' experience with TCN, growth, and change.

The LC—MS Web site provided what statistical data was reported to them from these congregations. Though some congregations report faithfully, others do not. The data received from the web site, therefore, remains relatively reliable. One of the seven congregations, however, had no variation in the data reported for numerous years, leading me to infer that they simply repeated statistics from one year to the next.

Data Analysis

I used content analysis for the qualitative data. To help manage the amount of qualitative data that was obtained through the interviews and to correlate it to the quantitative data received concerning the congregations, I employed a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called Dedoose (Saldaña 23). Coding the transcripts from all the interviews went much more smoothly and more consistently than without the software. A Dedoose trainer tutored me so that I better managed and analyzed the data.

Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe highlight “seven personal attributes all qualitative researchers should possess, particularly for coding processes.” One must display perseverance, be able to handle ambiguity, show flexibility, be creative, remain vigorously ethical, and possess an extensive vocabulary (28-29).

David Allan Rehorick and Valerie Halhotra Bentz write, “The phenomenologist learns to recognize, then set aside, the myriad assumptions, filters, and conceptual frameworks that structure our perceptions and experiences. This process can never be complete as each new situation and horizon embodies change” (11). A researcher

attempts to bracket preconceived notions. In this research such preconceptions of pastoral ministry, change, the theology of the cross, and TCN were bracketed so that the data could speak for itself from as objective of a position as possible. Since no one is a clean slate and since I discovered a number of insights through the literature review on the theology of the cross, the conceptual framework at the conclusion of Chapter 2 was used for coding purposes. The result was a synthesis of approaches.

First, the transcripts were “pre-coded” by highlighting what seemed to be “codable moments” (Saladaña 16). Then I read “through the data and highlight [ed] significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide[d] an understanding of how the participants experience[d] the phenomenon” (Creswell 61). After this step, I then began to create a conceptual map from the different codes, comparing this conceptual map to the conceptual framework that emerged from my literature review on the theology of the cross. Finally, a hybrid of the categories emerged as the coding framework.

To verify my coding, five clergy unrelated to the research and participating congregations took two coding tests through Dedoose so that I could compare my coding to theirs. The two tests had thirty-six different excerpts and nineteen codes from which each pastor could choose to use on each excerpt. The resulting pooled kappa agreement quotient averaged 0.865 for the code application test for pastors. Similarly the pooled kappa agreement quotient averaged 0.856 for the code application test for congregations (see Table 3.2).

Dedoose code-specific application results are reported using Cohen’s kappa statistic, a widely used and respected measure to evaluate inter-rater agreement as compared to the rate of agreement expected by chance—based on the coding behavior or

each rater (Cohen 36-47). Dedoose adopted the pooled kappa, rather than a simple average of kappas across the set to summarize rater agreement across many codes (De Vries, Elliott, Kanouse, and Teleki 272-82). Though a variety of ways to evaluate the weight of Cohen's kappa value could be employed, Dedoose uses the following criteria for interpreting them: $<.50$ = poor agreement, $.51-.64$ = fair agreement, $.65-.80$ = good agreement, and $>.80$ = excellent agreement. Thus, both of my coding tests resulted in an excellent agreement, adding validity to the data analysis.

Table 3.2. Pooled Kappa Coefficients from Five Clergy

Clergy	Congregation Code	Pastor Code
Clergy 1	.82	.86
Clergy 2	.86	.90
Clergy 3	.86	.84
Clergy 4	.89	.89
Clergy 5	.85	.89

Limitations and Generalizability

The futures committee intended that church and clergy revitalization would be duplicated in most of the congregations that enroll in TCN across of the Florida-Georgia district. Borden worked with numerous congregations under a host of different denominations and structures in various demographic and cultural contexts, and reported growth results in many circumstances. Thus, the findings of this research could be generalized to different church settings. However, limits may exist to their generalizability.

The quality of each coach and the different consultant teams may vary and cause differing results in the TCN process. To attempt to counter the variation in the quality of coaching and consulting, each coach and consultant underwent training, and was requested to use the same manuals and methods. Some of the differences in personality and skill from team to team and coach to coach were mitigated as a result of the training.

Pastoral or staff changes during the TCN process may interfere with results generated. The pastors complete an initial survey concerning readiness and intent prior to selection as a TCN church. The pastor was requested to stay in place for at least five years, preferably for many more, to ensure the possibility of success with the revitalization. In this research I only chose churches that retained their pastors through the process.

The congregational recruitment process for TCN could limit the generalizability. In fact, the early stages of adoption within the Florida-Georgia district attracted congregations farther toward decline than the average congregation in the district. Thus, revitalization became more difficult. In addition, each congregation recruited showed a willingness to participate and displayed more eagerness to change. Other churches may be less willing and therefore experience less revitalization.

Other intervening variables may include the relational health of clergy families and the personality style of the pastors. If pastors are more open to change, they may be more prepared to lead change in their congregations. If pastors' families are healthier, that support system may mitigate some of the other environmental factors that pastors face that could increase the likelihood of burnout.

Potentially the most significant variable is the demographic shift south and central Florida faced during the time of this research intervention. Many of the participants commented on the economic downturn in their communities with numerous church members moving out of the area or out of the state as a result. The statistical data for worship attendance, could easily have been affected by these trends independently of the TCN intervention. Churches that are experiencing more demographic stability as well as those experiencing increased population growth may vary from the results reported in this research.

Additionally, congregations and denominations that are similar in polity and theology to the LC—MS may find the results the most applicable. Churches under a more inflexible, hierarchical structure may discover results are not as easily reproduced, while churches able to change their structure more readily may revitalize more quickly. Denominations or congregations with a poorly defined doctrinal understanding of the gospel and mission of Jesus Christ may find the results are not as easily reproduced. Churches that also have a very low view of the pastoral ministry and place much of the authority into the congregational assembly rather than in any leadership may also find these findings hard to match.

I have observed on occasion that the method of data collection for church statistics may vary from church to church. Even within an individual church, the method of counting worship attendance may be done differently with various degrees of accuracy.

Those interviewed may have given answers divergent from what they truly believe or practice. Pastors may have wanted to appear more transformational and inflate

the descriptions of their transformations and habits. The lay leaders may have been biased in favor of the pastor, since the pastor was part of the selection process for the participants for these interviews. The laity may have also colored their evaluation of the congregation's level of change, wanting their churches to appear more transformational and missional. The coaches as well may have slanted their descriptions of their coaching skills in this regard; however, my experience with the coaches displayed an honest self-critical assessment of their roles and expertise. By interviewing the pastor, the coach, and two lay leaders from each participating congregation, I attempted to cross-reference the perceptions of growth and change.

I believe I obtained good rapport with each participant. First, being a pastor myself, I received fraternal acceptance by the clergy, coaches, and pastors. The lay leader participants also accorded me respect. More importantly, I worked to give each person interviewed a sense of comfort so they could be transparent and frank in their answers. I tried to be supportive and encouraging to all answers and perspectives that were given. In addition, the research covenant signed by all participants spelled out how nothing said in the interview was intended to cause any harm to the participants and their congregations. The participants could refuse to answer any question without prejudice or bias. Everyone I interviewed answered all questions posed to them.

Ethics

As previously stated, each participant in the research signed an informed consent document prior to the interviews (see Appendix K). I read the form to each participant and witnessed each signature to ensure the participants understood its contents. I assigned pseudonyms to all churches and participants, using these within the content of

the research findings and descriptions. I gained verbal and written permission to record each interview, specifying that I would destroy the digital record and written transcripts taken from them six months after completion of the dissertation. I shared no information with participants from other interviews. No ecclesiastical authorities within the Florida-Georgia district or the LC—MS had access to any confidential information discovered in this study. These items were detailed in a research covenant signed by those interviewed and me (see Appendix L).

All twenty-six interviews followed the research guidelines. Five pastors were recruited to review my research transcripts and take coding application tests to verify my work and analysis. I have compiled the research findings and presented them in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

After their TCN consultation weekend, the board members of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, a mission congregation struggling with a huge building debt, met to discuss the next steps in the process. The meeting did not go the way Pastor Bart Hampton expected. He had gained hope and direction from the consultation, yet, three of the prominent board members reacted to the weekend differently. They said, according to Pastor Hampton, “This isn’t what we need. This doesn’t solve our money issue.” The conversation from these board members devolved according to Pastor Hampton:

There’s no way. We need to ask the district for something else. They need to give us better help, something different than this. This isn’t going to work. There’s no way.... We’re running out of money. We’re going to close by Christmas. We need to tell pastor that he needs to be looking at a call so he can get a job for Christmas, because he’s got to support his family. It’s going to be ... a month and a half down the road,... we’re going to be closed.

The conversation ended. They had a prayer and the board members left. Pastor Bart stayed behind. “I was just *guttet*,” he said, but he remained “un-paralyzed” by that meeting. Hampton stopped one of the lay members before he left and asked if he would stay and talk:

So we stayed in my office. We talked for three hours that night. And I said, “What in the world just happened here? What, what happened?” And he ... described his ... thoughts or observations about it. And I said, “You know we have a vote on this TCN stuff coming up in six weeks and whether we’re going to move in this direction.” I said, “I don’t honestly think that we have six weeks to wait to make a decision because I think that the time is now for action, not six weeks down the road to let this all stew and get worse. And I think ... when we have a vote we’ll vote to close the congregation. I think that’s probably where the vote’s going to end up going, ha ha, in six weeks, um, so let’s start gathering. Let’s meet on Sunday evening with those people around the church that you think might be willing to still work and develop a coalition of ... the un-

paralyzed to put this stuff into action and not believe ... that this is the end.”

Pastor Bart thus formed “a coalition of the un-paralyzed,” which then worked toward implementing the TCN recommendations at a quickened pace. They worked on the constitutional changes and the vision, getting everything done expeditiously. Pastor Bart said proudly: “We had our entire vision meeting before we had our TCN vote [laughing].... When we actually had our final, our voters’ meeting, we ratified a brand-new constitution and bylaws, [laughing] to change to the accountable leader model.” The vote was also unanimous in favor of TCN adoption.

This dramatic incident reported by Pastor Hampton and Holy Spirit Lutheran illustrated poignantly the possible death/resurrection experience that occurred at times through the revitalization effort of TCN. Each of the seven congregations in this study experienced TCN and the call for revitalization differently. Though this incident at Holy Spirit Lutheran was more dramatic than most, other churches and pastors likewise experienced a death/resurrection event, some multiple times through the course of the TCN process.

Purpose and Problem

This chapter reports the data gathered from the twenty-six interviews conducted in the months of January and February 2011 of lay leaders, pastors, and their coaches as they experienced both the difficulties and the opportunities the TCN intervention brought their ministries and congregations. As stated previously, the worship attendance statistics from the 193 congregations in the Florida-Georgia district indicated a decline in 121 churches. Thirteen were on a plateau, and only fifty-nine experienced growth between 1998 and 2007. By general observation, many churches have lost spiritual vitality and a

missional stance in their communities. The Transforming Churches Network began to address these issues in its revitalization strategy. TCN's plan began to develop with the goal of renewing churches and clergy.

The purpose of this research, therefore, was to explore the TCN initiative in the Florida-Georgia District as a means to assist pastors and congregations in revitalization and to examine ways in which the theology of the cross is related to this process. The research explored the revitalization of the congregations by measuring any changes in reported statistics considered symptomatic of increased congregational vitality: average worship attendance and number of adult confirmations post enrollment in TCN (see Appendix B). The research studied the revitalization of pastors and congregations through interviews with seven participating clergy, each clergy's coach, and two lay leaders within each of the congregations.

In this chapter I first profile the participants in this study, which includes four subgroups, is reported. After this profile, the data is related to each research question. Under each research question two or more findings from my analysis are included. In total seven major findings evolved from exploring the three research questions. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the major findings.

Profile of Participants

The participants in this study include four subgroups. The seven pastors are elucidated. Five coaches were mentors for the seven pastors. Fourteen lay leaders, two from each of the churches, are profiled. Finally, the seven congregations are described.

Participating Clergy

The seven participating clergy all engaged in the revitalization process through the TCN consultation weekend, through the adoption of the prescriptions after the weekend, through the monthly meetings of the clergy's learning community, and through engagement with their coaches. Table 4.1 profiles the seven participating clergy.

Table 4.1. Profile of Participating Clergy (Fictitious Names Used)

Name	Ordination Year	Installation Date	Year of Birth
Garrett Schmidt	1980	1/19/03	1956
Gordon Reynolds	1999	8/17/08	1971
Randy Herzog	1976	9/9/01	1950
Bart Hampton	2004	11/28/04	1971
Gerry Burns	1994	1/24/99	1968
Chris Tomsen	1976	10/22/06	1949
Zachary Hillst	1976	6/17/90	1950

Age, ordination and installation. The clergy averaged twenty-two years in ordained ministry. The pastor with the least ordained clergy experience had six years while three clergy had the most with thirty-four. The pastors varied more in the length of their tenure in their current congregation. Reviewing the dates when they were installed as pastors in their current ministry to the date of the TCN consultation weekend of the congregations, the length of ministry ranged from a low of nine months to a high of eighteen years and eight months. The average was six years and eleven months. The average age of the clergy was nearly 51 years. Two were the youngest at 39 years old while the oldest was 61 years of age.

Gender, education and other experience. All pastors within the LC—MS are male as a matter of church doctrine and practice. They also attain a minimum of a master's of divinity degree. Some of the participants had additional education and experience with a variety of continuing educational programs.

Participating Congregations

The seven congregations range in both size of worshiping congregation and age since they were established. The youngest congregation was established four years prior to the TCN intervention with the oldest congregation eighty-nine years since it started. The average age of the congregation studied was just over twenty-one years of age. The size of the congregations varied from an average worship attendance in 2008 of sixty-nine to a high of 452 with the average of 234.

The settings of these seven congregations fell into three categories. Two of the seven congregations were located in small cities with between thirty and forty thousand residents. Two congregations were in inner-city or urban settings. Three congregations were in suburban settings of a metropolitan area.

The TCN consultation teams listed five concerns for each congregation as part of the conclusion from the consultation weekend. Nearly all these reports noted a lack of a clear or compelling vision that helped the congregation align its ministries. Most consultant teams also noted a lack of outreach efforts or lack of coordination of outreach. Governance and structure were highlighted in all seven, with a need both to streamline decision making as well as to provide appropriate accountability for pastor and staff. Three of the seven had a struggle with finances in some form. Two displayed a lack of

leadership development among the laity. Beyond these concerns, the TCN teams discovered unique challenges in each ministry. Table 4.2 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.2. Table of TCN Concerns for Each Congregation

Concern	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of clear focus or vision	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lack of outreach			x	x	x	x	x
Governance/Structure	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Finances/Stewardship	x			x			x
Leadership issues	x				x	x	
Worship issues	x	x					
Need for reconciliation		x					
Pastoral leadership		x					
No comprehensive ministry plan						x	
Facility expansion questions			x				
Children/youth ministry			x				
Assimilation							x
School ministry				x			
Small groups					x		

All churches were called to engage in an envisioning process that included learning about their community and developing an externally focused vision statement. Each church also was charged to address its governance and structure, so that the structure would align accountability and responsibility with a view toward empowering the pastor and leaders to move the congregation out in mission. Likewise, the other prescriptions for each congregation dovetailed with the list of concerns.

Participating Coaches

Five pastoral coaches were contracted to coach the seven clergy. Because all were LC—MS clergy, they were all male. They ranged in years of experience in pastoral ministry from a low of twenty-two to a high of fifty-two years. Along with a Master's of Divinity degree, each coach had a master's degree or doctorate of ministry degree. Table 4.3 highlights the participating coaches.

Table 4.3. Table of TCN Coaches

Coach	Year of Ordination	Professional Training
Coach 1	1958	Master's
Coach 2	1972	Doctor of Ministry
Coach 3	1979	Doctor of Ministry
Coach 4	1969	Master's of Sacred Theology
Coach 5	1988	Master's

Participating Laity

The fourteen laity, two from each congregation, varied in the length of their membership and the leadership positions they held. Eight of the participant laity were female and six were male. Four were part-time or full-time paid staff members of their congregational ministries. Three were members of their congregations with no current leadership positions. Three others were current presidents of their congregations. Three more were on the governing boards and one was an elder. The laity's length of membership ranged widely. The most recent became a member in 2009. The participant with the longest membership joined in 1985. The average length of membership was 14.6 years (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Table of Participating Laity

Layperson	Year Joining Church	Position	Gender
Lay 1	2000	Board of Directors	Female
Lay 2	1986	President	Male
Lay 3	1996	Board of Directors	Male
Lay 4	1993	Board of Directors	Female
Lay 5	2007	Staff	Female
Lay 6	1989	Elder	Male
Lay 7	1996	President	Male
Lay 8	2001	Member	Female
Lay 9	1986	Staff	Female
Lay 10	2006	Member	Male
Lay 11	1985	Staff	Female
Lay 12	1999	President	Male
Lay 13	2009	Staff	Female
Lay 14	2000	Member	Female

Research Question 1

Have participating TCN clergy experienced revitalization and, if so, how? To answer this research question I asked the clergy, their coaches, and their lay leaders about the pastors' spiritual vitality and the level of change they have seen in the pastors since TCN was introduced to the congregations.

Major Finding 1

The clergy interviewed experienced varying levels of revitalization. Some pastors experienced significant change and spiritual vitality while others showed a lesser level of change and even spiritual diminishment. A correlation became evident between the level of personal change a pastor experienced through TCN and the level of their spiritual vitality. Those clergy who changed less tended to experience less spiritual vitality. Those

who experienced moderate to high levels of change also appeared to have higher levels of spiritual vitality (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Table of Clergy's Change and Spiritual Vitality

Pastor	Change Experienced Scale 1-10	Spiritual Vitality Scale 0-5
Pastor 1	5.44	3.57
Pastor 2	8.00	4.33
Pastor 3	4.67	3.00
Pastor 4	4.00	0.00
Pastor 5	7.00	5.00
Pastor 6	6.50	4.90
Pastor 7	4.00	0.00

In two of the clergy, I observed a spiritual diminishment through the TCN process. Chris Tomsen's coach reported his decrease in vitality:

[W]hen you experience resistance and especially covert resistance, when you're trying as hard as you can in good faith, um, and then the reality of the resistance ... becomes clear, sometimes you, you experience, um, despair, that, "I can't do anything! I'm wondering if I'm even any good at this. Should I even still be a pastor?" And that, that's just devastating. So it's not humility, but it's just terrible discouragement.... [Y]ou question yourself and whether you're even ... cut out for this any more.

While this discouragement could produce resilience and a death/resurrection moment, for Tomsen it brought about a spiritual diminishment. Tomsen stated, "I need to find a better balance because stress takes its toll. So I need to find a closer walk with God, perhaps. So that I draw more strength on him, as opposed to me." Thus, Tomsen realized he was spiritually depleted but had not found a way to be rejuvenated at the time of the interview.

One of Gordon Reynolds' lay leaders stated, "[I]f anything, the ... TCN process at some points maybe ... has put a damper on" his vitality. Reynolds has "backed off a lot" on taking risks and making changes. He's "tightened up a lot on this one." He's assessing things differently. He states, "[N]ow that I've got a mortgage and two kids, you know, [chuckle] or you know maybe just more of an awareness of what can go wrong, I feel like I'm slowing down a bit more." Reynolds became more reserved with less vitality as he engaged in the TCN process.

Five of the seven clergy, however, did experience a moderate to high level of revitalization through the TCN process. Randy Herzog's coach summed up this finding: "[T]he one thing that [Randy] has repeatedly said to me is this has really, um, rejuvenated his desire even to be in ministry. That's good. I mean, to me that would be, that's a win." A lay leader from his church stated that Herzog's "enthusiasm showed" for what TCN could do. He now "finds a lot of joy in being out in this community.... [H]e comes back with lots of fun stories." Instead of coasting into retirement, he now has a passion for ministry.

The revitalization has not happened without its drawbacks. When I asked directly about his spiritual vitality, Herzog stated, "Oh, it's much better, you know, and ... I really do find a lot more joy in my work.... [T]he negative part is I'm exhausted." He's physically exhausted, emotionally spent, but spiritually vital "most of the time."

Zachary Hillst's coach stated, "[Hillst] is probably one of the top five people I know in terms of spirituality as opposed to religiosity and theology. Deeply spiritual, well read in spiritual areas, values the diversity of spirituality." TCN did not provide a change in Hillst's spiritual vitality; instead, TCN became another opportunity to grow spiritually:

[T]his has impassioned me in a way that that's been nice.... It makes me passionate about what I want to do. I know I want to stay here God willing. I think the congregation is willing for that to happen. And challenging [Lord of Life] to think out-of-the-box, serve outside of the box, be outside of the box, I find that that fun.

Hillst has sustained his spiritual vitality through many ups and downs in ministry. TCN became another opportunity for growth and renewal.

Similar to Hillst, for Gerry Burns spiritual vitality was strong even before TCN, though he was in “a bit of a funk” according to one of his lay leaders:

And in pre-TCN there was a, he was in a definite funk, in a low point,... wondering if he was doing the right thing here, wondering if there were, there were conversations just wondering,... “Should I be here? Should I not be here?... [W]here is this really taking me?” TCN gets introduced, and ... there is turmoil that comes with that, when making changes, right? And ... again there is probably little self-doubt creeping in on ... him. As a result of that and ... at the same time TCN is ramping up PLI is ramping down in his life. He takes a trip to Thailand. He gets a little refreshed, all about the same time. So there's a ... crossing point at this point in time. This side of the Thailand trip, I can see, and I only speak for me, a rebound and a growth, that part of it probably is TCN.

Gerry Burns, though a bit spiritually diminished prior to TCN, found within the TCN initiative an opportunity for renewal.

Another of Burn's lay leaders, though, said, “He's always been that way. He's still is very strong and ... sincere and that's why I think I love him the way I do” (Sandra Jones). Burns assessed his spiritual vitality himself: “I think my spirituality has been a strength in my world in general.” TCN brought, though, a benefit to him. He said, “God used TCN to continue to build that spiritual vitality. It didn't start something, but it did give it some direction for that period of time.” Gerry stated that TCN also helped give him freedom for ministry:

What's neat about it is that I can walk a way from this office at two o'clock in the afternoon without feeling guilty.... I'll go home and be with

the kids and go, “Well, I could be at work.” Because I’ve added my hours up and I try to shoot for a 48 on paper. And then I know I’ll work those. So that I don’t feel guilty, so that’s been really helpful and TCN helped me to get a good grasp on that.

For Gerry Burns TCN has added balance and boundaries. He is able to empower members in ministry rather than feel compelled to do most of the ministry himself. For Hillst TCN has added a bit more vitality to an already good level of spiritual resilience. These two pastors exemplified what TCN can do in revitalizing the spiritual stamina of clergy.

Major Finding 2

The level of change observed by participants in clergy and their spiritual vitality corresponded rather closely with the level of change observed in congregation. In five of the seven congregations, the data showed nearly a one to one correspondence. Two congregations experienced more change than the pastors. In Figure 4.1 the size of each bubble plot relates to the level of spiritual vitality exhibited in the clergy. This level of spiritual vitality, too, became highly related to the level of change in both clergy and churches.

Pastor Herzog rated the level of change he experienced at an eight, just a little higher than his congregation, Joy Lutheran, because as he explained, “I’m out there doing it all the time.” One of Herzog’s laity has observed a shift in the culture, more people being involved in ministry: “I’d say everybody is getting more involved, you know, and this is what I think TCN has done.” She was quick to add on, “Of course, pastor’s part of it too.” She rated his level of change a bit higher than the congregation, confirming what Pastor Herzog stated himself.

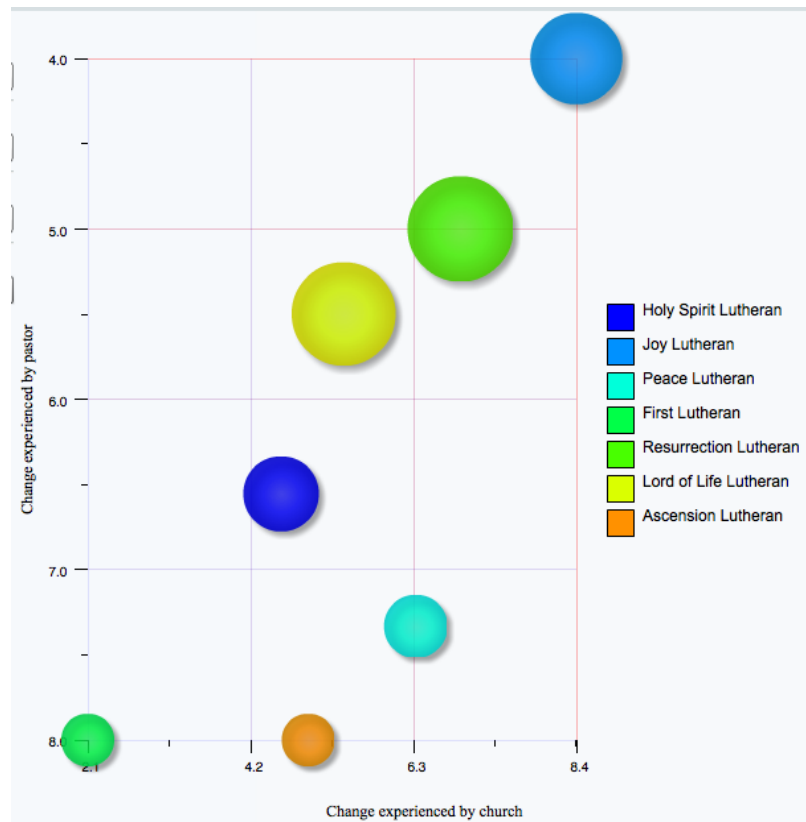


Figure 4.1. Change experienced and spiritual vitality.

The changes at Holy Spirit Lutheran were not as dramatic; however, the correspondence between the level of change of the pastor and congregation still remained aligned. One of Pastor Hampton's members thought that Pastor Bart changed a bit more than the church: "[H]e's had to ... adjust a lot more things that I think haven't flowed down to ... the church level." Hampton evaluated his growth as possibly "even a little ... more ... than the total congregation." He saw a shift in his spiritual growth during TCN: "I'd say initially when we were, when we first got in TCN, I'd say my ... walk with the Lord was probably as close to it was back in the high school days when I was growing ... like a weed." With this said, he still noticed that his spirituality "comes and goes with ... intensity," throughout the time of TCN.

Doris Ruprecht, a member of First Lutheran Church said, “I don’t think anything changed to be honest with you.... I saw things being run the same way. Nothing’s changed at all.” That lack of change also corresponded to a lack of spiritual vitality and growth on the part of Pastor Chris Tomsen. Ruprecht does not blame the pastor for the lack of change in the congregation. She assessed how First Lutheran handled TCN:

I don’t think it went very well, because it’s an old congregation. I think, the seventy, eighties, nineties, that’s most of the members here.... [I]t’s like, you know, you’re in your family and you’re going to tell your grandpa to change after he’s done this so many years, and so many decades like that? It’s not gonna work.

She noticed that Pastor Chris “has things that he’s set in his ways too. And sometimes he won’t change either.” At the same time she sees much good in Pastor Chris: “I think that for him he wants, he’s a really good person, he wants to see the church grow and flourish and he’s like a man of God.” Though she sees him as a godly man, Pastor Tomsen has been unable to get any change to take place.

At Peace Lutheran the amount of change experienced by the pastor was not as high as the level of change in the congregation. Pastor Garrett Schmidt’s coach did observe a perceptible shift in the congregation: “You know, they’ve had a number of activities where they’ve invited the community for and have done things in the community, so, so um in a measured way it’s happened for them.” However, when Gordon McCoy reflects on Pastor Schmidt’s growth through the TCN intervention, he surmised, “[T]o be charitable I’m not sure much has changed with [Garrett].” Pastor Schmidt reflected much the same sentiment. He rated the change in the congregation on a scale of one to ten, with one being minimal and ten being extreme, at a level of seven or eight, while his personal change was more around a four or a five: “The congregation has

had to change a lot more.” That change was seen by Ryan Schultz, a leader at Peace Lutheran:

[I]t’s the old story of the events do better at change than words.... [I]t was one of these things where things started to get better.... [Y]ou could sort of sense ... at worship that people would be ... maybe ... lingering a little longer when they ... shared the peace and they would see people across the aisle and they’d make an effort to shake hands and you would know.

He agreed that this was an attitudinal shift, or a cultural shift, or even a climate shift. “I think the congregation saw there was a better way, that there was a more friendly way and ... in fact, they enjoyed it.” The congregation, therefore, in this instance changed more than the pastor.

Research Question 2

To what extent have participating TCN congregations experienced revitalization as seen in average worship attendance, adult confirmations, and a perceived shift in church culture toward outreach post enrollment in TCN? To answer this question, I obtained the appropriate statistics from each congregation and compared them pre-and post-TCN enrollment.

Major Finding 3

No congregation showed statistically significant evidence for increased worship attendance or adult confirmations. However, most of those interviewed observed a cultural shift within their congregation as a result of TCN. Table 4.6 displays the insignificant growth in average worship attendance for all seven congregations.

Table 4.6. Average Worship Attendance 2007-2010

Congregation	2007	2008	2009	2010
Church 1	410	390	385	390
Church 2	290	291	290	310
Church 3	85	85	85	90
Church 4	450	452	403	391
Church 5	67	69	67	67
Church 6	172	180	175	170
Church 7	251	170	170	165

Gordon McCoy summed up what the cultural shift looked like for a number of the congregations:

I think that there's a realization that the attractional model is no longer working, and you need to be externally focused with community based uh servant evangelism. It's not just being externally focused, uh, but it's externally focused for being on the mission of God. It's that your not just involved in social ministry. You're serving and caring for people with an eye towards sharing Christ with them. And, and I think that or to the extent that people's eyes get opened to that that's a huge, huge accomplishment.

McCoy observed this shift at Joy Lutheran, Pastor Herzog's church. Anecdotally, McCoy observed an increase in the number of baptism, of visitors in worship, and of worship attendance for Christmas Eve.

For Pastor Herzog this cultural shift "happened pretty quickly." He described his understanding of what took place in the congregation:

I think they were people of faith who really believed that this was sent for our ministry to, to make a difference in the community. They really bought into the vision statement and ... I really mean that. When we came up with the vision statement, and we had this long thing, printed in bulletins and nobody knew it. I said we need some[thing] short so that people remember it and then I started having people say it every Sunday.

And ... it's amazing, [laughter] 'cause I do this, and I put to one side and they say "serving Christ." And I put to the, this and they say "serving others" and I do this and they all yell "changing lives." And if they don't say it loud enough I make them do it again. You know and I want them to be excited about this. And ... it's been ... pretty overwhelming, the response we've gotten.

Herzog is exhilarated at the level of cultural shift he has seen in his congregation. Table 4.7 shows the statistics for adult confirmations with very little evidence for a numerical change, reinforcing the finding that no statistically significant shift has taken place in any of the seven churches. Though a statistical change has not occurred to date in Herzog's church, every interviewee from Joy Lutheran testified to the cultural shift through their words, demeanor, and attitudes.

Table 4.7. Adult Confirmations 2007-2010

Congregation	2007	2008	2009	2010
Church 1	10	36	19	19
Church 2	1	1	1	2
Church 3	6	6	6	6
Church 4	10	10	1	22
Church 5	7	7	7	7
Church 6	8	2	0	0
Church 7	1	0	0	0

Joy Lutheran did not simply see a change in attitude. Indeed, they saw an upswing in members involved in outreach to the community. For example, the congregation adopted a local elementary school. Twenty-four members showed up to be trained to be mentors to children. When the trainer from the school came to orient the volunteers she said that she had never seen such a large group:

[W]e ended up between the people who were mentors and we have office help who go over and help the ladies in the office. We have people who work in the media center. We have people who are aides in classrooms. We have a woman with the service dog who goes over and, and with the kindergartners and first graders and that kind of stuff. And so last year we were probably up in the thirties pushing forty volunteers over there every week.

In addition, Joy Lutheran adopted “two nursing homes, and the third Sunday of the month” they take their “kids choir” to sing to the residents to a “standing room only” crowd. Pastor Herzog shared his excitement:

I have a group of ladies that they leave every Monday morning, I saw ‘em this morning, pulling out of the parking lot. They go to the cooperative feeding program and the feed hungry people and they help with a shower program.”

Herzog also glowed when reporting about the children’s choir singing for the holidays in the community:

I mean we did two Sundays at the [local] Mall.... [W]e had music bouncing off store windows. And people came.... [W]e hand out little fliers about our Christmas Eve worship service. And ... we did Christmas at [an outdoor shopping center],... which is ... filled with stores that are high end, and .. we got ... a half an hour slot at nine o’clock at night. And the hundreds—I mean as far back as you look down the street—people just coming, ‘cause it was loud.... [P]eople kept coming and coming and coming and at that the end [the choir director] just said ... “[W]e’re from [Joy] Lutheran Church ... and [on] Christmas Eve, we’re having services at 5, 7 and 9 if you’d like to hear more.... [I]t was kind of neat.”

According to Herzog’s coach, this past Christmas Eve saw an increase of about two hundred in worship. Joy Lutheran’s outreach came to fruition.

Though less dramatic, an additional five congregations expressed that a cultural shift had taken place through the TCN process. Sandra Jones spoke about the shift at Resurrection Lutheran Church: “Whereas before there were three or four of us doing it all and now we have all of these other people. So, it’s just fabulous.” Donald Rasmussen

said, “With TCN coming here and being adopted by so many people, it’s a fresh of breath air [sic]. Things really began to move along again.” Luther Furmann, Pastor Gerry Burns’ coach, noticed that Resurrection Lutheran was “outwardly focused” prior to TCN, but “now they’re using the term outwardly driven.... That determines what ... they are to be about all the time.” Like Joy Lutheran, Resurrection Lutheran showed definite signs of a cultural shift toward mission.

With this cultural shift at Resurrection Lutheran, Donald Rasmussen was extremely hopeful concerning the future:

The Father has had his hand in this place the whole time. Okay? He, he’s grown it. He has let it stagnate for whatever his reason is,... but ... I truly believe that we’re on the edge of another level of greatness however that’s defined at [Resurrection]. I don’t see this being a fifteen thousand [member] megachurch, but I can see it becoming the beacon in the community as we defined it through ... TCN.

The cultural shift has given Resurrection Lutheran a trajectory toward future mission work and a deep hope in what God will work through the congregation for the sake of his kingdom.

Though a degree of a cultural shift was seen at Ascension Lutheran as well, those interviewed questioned whether this shift would be permanent or make any noticeable change. Morgan Wismar, Pastor Gordon Reynolds’ coach, noted that Reynolds came to Ascension to be an outreach pastor: “That was his goal with [Ascension], was to turn them to be more interested in reaching the community with the gospel and that was his determination.” Though this was Reynold’s aspirational goal, Wismar saw that goal as wishful thinking. Wismar added: “[M]aybe this TCN is not the instrument or the medium that he wants or needs to affect this.” Wismar expected to see more progress made in

outreach. In his frustration as the coach, he was considering resigning when I interviewed him.

The lay leaders at Ascension seemed to be a bit more optimistic than Coach Wismar. Karl Billings estimated that “the culture is slowly changing within the church.... We’ve changed the focus from looking inward to outward.” Though, he noted, “[W]e have a lot of room to grow.” Robert Schilling stated that Ascension Lutheran would not have done anything “had it not been for that impetus to ... get up and get going [and] do something.” The congregational leadership has begun asking different questions. The focus has shifted. Schilling states his assessment of their progress:

Now we still have a lot of work to do.... [W]e’ve ... got the congregation looking outward and we’ve started looking at everything we do.... Now what’s the mission? Now back to the very beginning what is the mission of the church? What’s the vision of the church? It’s looking outward within the [local] community, the [regional area] community.... [S]o everything we do if it doesn’t align with that mission and, then, we really make the decision in the board meetings, is that something that we want to spend our money and time on?

Ascension Lutheran’s cultural change began with the shift in what questions the leaders asked. Whether that cultural shift takes hold depends upon the actions of the pastor and leaders in the near future.

One congregation, First Lutheran, displayed no perceptible level of change. As stated previously, Doris Ruprecht, one of the lay leaders saw now perceptible change in the congregation. Likewise, Mark Vanderbilt, another lay leader, said, “It’s been ... tough enough to change any church. Hard, really hard, when you have ‘This is the way it’s done. This is the way we’re going to do it. It’s always been done.’” Though for “the most part most people agreed ... we are here to serve our community, you know. And ... through that ... we’ve done things, that ... began to put more emphasis on community,”

not much has changed at all: “[T]he shift that we know we need to make from an ... old congregation and doing things ... that way because it’s always been done that way, has been a difficult shift and hasn’t happened.” Tomsen’s coach reinforced the laity’s perspective. Gordon McCoy said, “I know, for [First Lutheran] it seems like nothing has changed. Yeah, in some ways there’s just out and out resistance.” This old, established congregation in a gentrified area struggled to make any change at all. I heard the resignation in the voices of all the interviewees.

Despite the reality of the resistance and inertia to the status quo, Pastor Tomsen was somewhat hopeful. He observed some “small steps.” Tomsen said, “We are in a very challenging place to serve for a lot of reasons. But the bottom line is that I am still hopeful.” Tomsen had a goal in mind:

I want to keep the place afloat long enough and help them see the potential of becoming a mission outpost. And if they do, the next pastor that comes on board he’s prepared to lead ... [this] congregation as a mission outpost, he’ll be ready to run. And of course that’s what I pray will happen. Because I think this is a congregation strategically located and as such we don’t have a lot of them like this one.

Tomsen sees some hope, but his hope is tempered. He only hopes to get the congregation ready for the next pastor who might be able to make the necessary changes so that the church can engage its mission field.

Major Finding 4

The congregations that displayed the greatest cultural shift were those with clergy that had a high level of credibility among the lay leaders interviewed. Three factors seemed to be at play in determining credibility: perceived character, perceived competence, and length of tenure in the congregation. These three together were coded

and weighted to determine the correlation between pastoral credibility and congregational cultural change.

Clergy who were present in the congregation for a short time before the TCN intervention appeared not to have built up enough credibility going into the intervention. This played a key factor in two congregations. The length of time between the pastor's installation into these two congregations and the TCN adoption was two years five months and only eleven months. Figure 4.2 displays the relationship between pastoral competence and congregational change, competence being a major factor in a pastor's credibility.

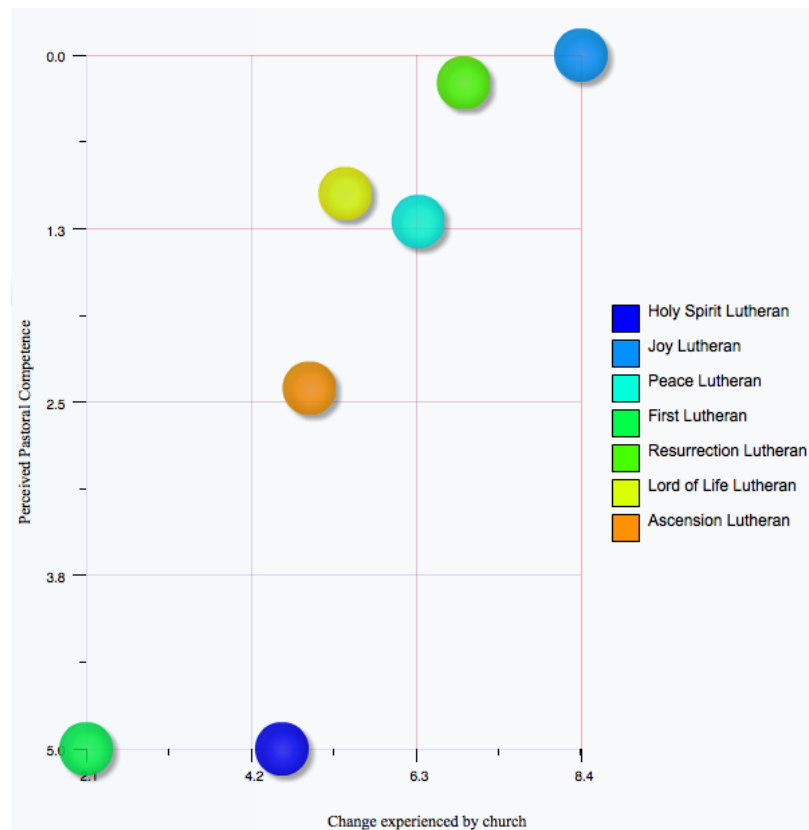


Figure 4.2. Pastoral competence and congregational change.

Chris Tomsen came to First Lutheran under unusual circumstances. Typically in the LC—MS, a congregation initiates a call process for a pastor. After possible interviews and a congregational vote, a pastor receives the call and decides whether to stay in his present church or to accept the call. Tomsen, however, moved to Florida for reasons within his extended family. He then contacted the district president for possible work as a pastor in a congregation with a need. He became an interim pastor to First Lutheran and commuted from outside of the community. He admitted, “I was never really equipped to serve as an interim pastor. So that was ah, you know, one strike against me right there.” The congregation, however, chose to call him after some time even though, Tomsen says, “I was not the ideal candidate as I had been [in my younger years].” As stated previously, First Lutheran showed minimal change if any at all through the TCN process. Tomsen hoped for a different result, but admitted that other people had more influence in the congregation than he had. His short time within the congregation and the unusual circumstances that brought him to First have worked against him establishing the needed level of credibility.

Pastor Gordon Reynolds was at Ascension Lutheran only eleven months before the church joined in with TCN. The result of the short tenure was summed up well by Reynold’s coach:

I think the, that turning the power over to the pastor was, was obviously a big issue for them. He was relatively new. I think he’d only been there, like six months. And this is a pretty old congregation, with some people who’ve been around there a long time.

One of Reynolds’ leaders commented, “[F]rom a leadership perspective, he’s very young.... [H]e’s not had a lot of ... leadership exposure to a lot of things that a business

leader would have.” Reynolds’ lack of perceived experience work against him taking the lead in changing the congregational culture.

The perception of a lack of earned credibility in these two congregations contrasts strongly with the high credibility of other pastors in their congregations. Three pastors had an exceptionally high level of credibility, both in character and competence, while at the same time they had an average tenure in their congregations of thirteen years, with a range from nine to nineteen years.

When the coaches, leaders, and pastors were asked to rate on a scale of one through ten the level of cultural change that had taken place in these congregations, the average rating was between 5.3 and 6.9. These were three of the four churches with the highest level of change experienced.

Pastor Herzog used his level of credibility with the congregation, in fact, to lead the change TCN brought to Joy Lutheran:

I asked them if they would trust me. And I’d built up a trust relationship with the congregation. And they voted yes. And the people said, “We really believe this place is that important to us that we need to make some changes.”

Herzog recognized the relationship between his credibility with the church and the ability to lead change. He displayed a willingness to risk that credibility to make what he saw were necessary changes.

A leader confirmed Herzog’s sense of credibility:

Pastor [Herzog] is the one though, when ... he likes something you know it and he liked this program and he could see that we could do this.... This is what we’re meant to be doing and when he was able to preach that, teach that and he’s a ... shepherd and so ... we are following and ... I think it all boiled down to that. I don’t think that this program could work at all if the pastor wasn’t one hundred percent ... willing to ... lead it and go forward in and to work hard at it.

Herzog's credibility was high. One of his members commented that, "He does so much more than any other pastor I've ever knew [sic]." She related that one member states often in public, "'You can't leave until I die' [laughter]." Herzog has been able to capitalize on his credibility and bring significant cultural change in his congregation.

Pastor Burns seemed to have the highest level of credibility with his congregation of all the participating clergy. One of his lay leaders passionately related his assessment of Pastor Burns:

I have said over and over that we have a called individual here. You know ... there are people [who] are called in this and people who feel called to ministry. Okay, the Spirit works in this man. You can see it from time to time.

Another church leader stated that Burns has "always been that way." She continued, "I mean, he's been a very good inspiration for my family and there's a lot of families out there, the youth, and he's never too busy." Burns has used his credibility to begin to change his church's culture.

Not only did Pastor Burns have a history of being a spiritual shepherd, but the leaders could see him grow into more effective ministry. Burns has changed along with his church. One leader witnessed firsthand the growth Burns has experienced:

Even as we [have] seen him grow and now get over forty, he still has an ability to identify and has not lost that, that gift.... I believe he's probably going to be able to transition and begin to deal with an older generation because he's going to be moving into that.

Burns' credibility will aid him through life and ministry transitions. He does not call his church to change without expecting himself to change even more.

Likewise, Pastor Hillst had a consistent credibility within his congregation, Lord of Life Lutheran. Having the longest tenure of the three pastors, Hillst remained

consistent and was much loved. His coach stated, “What’s remained the same is that wonderful pastor heart and partner.... That congregation loves him. And he respects that love.” One of his members echoed this sentiment: “[Pastor Zachary] has always been one of those people that’s just very spiritual and I never saw a decline.” Another member summed up the general atmosphere of Lord of Life Lutheran’s ministry: “It’s a wonderful church, a wonderful pastor and we’re blessed.” The years of ministry that Pastor Hillst has given to Lord of Life has been well received and had granted him the leadership credibility to move the congregation forward through revitalization.

Peace Lutheran Church displayed a reasonably high level of cultural change while the pastor had a fairly high level of credibility. However, in analyzing the comments behind the pastor’s credibility, I noticed high and low marks from different people. The comments were conflicted. Indeed, the level of conflict Pastor Schmidt faced at Peace Lutheran through the TCN process was fairly high. Ryan Schultz, a strong supporter of Pastor Schmidt, evaluated the conflict and criticism of Pastor Schmidt by saying, “[H]e has to return to his basic strengths ... and start to deliver more. In other words, he’s getting a bad rap by being evaluated on a lot of stuff he isn’t very good at.” Vivian Carlson, another supportive member stated, “[I do not] know what the problem was with him.” She reported that people were unhappy with his leadership but she could not make sense of their reasoning. She added, “He’s a great pastor.” Conflict erupted over Pastor Schmidt’s leadership through the TCN process. He became a focal point because they believed he would not initiate the changes they wanted to see. Pastor Schmidt remained resolute and hoped through the process of patiently enduring personal attacks to gain more credibility.

Holy Spirit Lutheran appears from Figure 4.2 to be a statistical outlier. When reviewing the transcripts of interviews at this congregation, I discovered very little talk concerning the credibility of the pastor, positively or negatively. The two lay leaders and the coach didn't comment on that as a factor in the TCN intervention. Though the figure plots the pastor's credibility extremely low, more research would be needed to see if that were truly the case. At the time of the interviews, I failed follow up to ask pointedly about the pastor's credibility.

Major Finding 5

The congregations that displayed the greatest cultural change were those that were located in suburban areas while those in urban and small town settings experienced less cultural change. Three congregations reside in the suburbs of larger metropolitan areas. These three showed consistent cultural shifts.

In Figure 4.3 the size of each plot is determined by the level of resistance to change exhibited in the various locations. Those churches in urban areas displayed the highest level of resistance. Those in the suburban areas showed the least. In addition, the congregations in small cities showed the lowest level of mission priority while those in urban areas seem to exhibit some desire for mission. Comments from these urban congregations were often made in the context of survival. The urban churches seemed more aware of their need to reach out, though they resisted changing. As one lay leader stated, "I think they all truly in their own way care about the church and would love to see it here for a hundred years, but I think they're at their retirement age." Though the urban church saw a need to focus outward, some members were concerned that the

church would possibly become “too outwardly focused to take care of the people” who were current members.

The suburban churches did not voice that same level of tension between caring of current members and outreach. Pastor Zachary Hillst stated that at Lord of Life Lutheran Church the cultural shift was “getting into our DNA.” Everet Morris, Pastor Hillst’s coach, saw the cultural shift occurring around two areas: “Well I think that in the whole refocus ... to outreach, the whole realigning of their government, those are big changes. To do some of these community events and all that they’ve done, is a big change for them.” Lord of Life typified the suburban church experience of TCN in this study. It had shifted its culture in ways that were becoming irreversible.

Suburban churches, however, had not arrived at a fully developed culture of missional outreach. For example, Lord of Life Lutheran is still in the process of becoming an outwardly focused ministry. Laura Nguen, a lay leader, stated this perspective aptly:

I think we have, we’re still in the process of changing the mindset of the church.... [H]as that changed in every single area to be the actions that are already in place? No. Has it changed a lot of things that we are doing? Yes. Is there room for us to continue to change? Absolutely. Do I think that we’re on the right track? Absolutely. And I’m probably very hard grader.

The suburban congregations had more human resources to make these changes and to adapt to a new governance structure. They were more resilient to the transformation. Members were open to considering a new way of outreach and ministry. Thus, the suburban churches displayed a greater level of cultural shift than either the small city congregations or the urban churches.

Congregations located in small cities were less likely to voice a mission priority, though they did experience more change on average than the urban congregation. Pastor Gordon Reynolds summed up where he saw his church during our interview: “Currently I see it on the path of slow death.” With the changes they had undergone at Ascension, they had not gotten to the heart of the issues. They had not become missional overall.

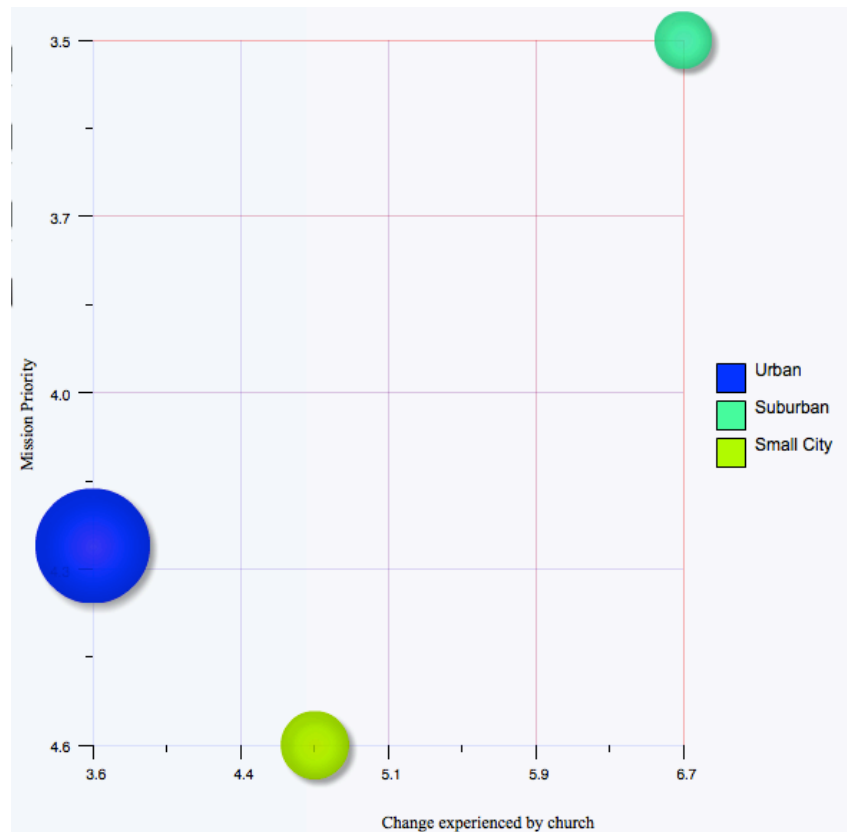


Figure 4.3. Location and level of change.

Reynolds' coach, Morgan Wismar, reinforced this assessment:

I think if the goal of TCN is to—the expression that's used—is to change the culture of the congregation, to begin to think about outreach as prime, instead of in reach as prime. I don't have any sense that that has happened, although there's been a little good news.

At Holy Spirit Lutheran, another small city congregation, Joshua Gomez evaluated their level of change:

[W]e have the steady members and ... we have that atmosphere of, you know, kind of everybody knows everybody, walk around, shake the hand, "How you doing?" and "What's going on with the kids?" It's got that small kind of homey church, but we're just not getting any bigger. It's not expanding to anybody else.

These two churches, both in smaller cities, displayed more resistance to becoming missional than the churches in the suburbs of metropolitan areas. They showed incremental change but still held on to a small church and small town mindset.

I did not ask why they thought the change happened more slowly for them, but the data from the interviews discloses that change was indeed slower. Figure 4.4 illustrates this point. The size of each bubble plot corresponds to the tag of comfort seeking expressed in each congregation. The x and y axes display two characteristic issues in churches that had a lack of a missional, outreaching culture: dying or declining experiences even after TCN adoption and inward focus rather than an outward focus toward their communities.

The urban congregations were the most likely to show declining and dying experiences, a high level of seeking comfort, and an inward focus. Ryan Schultz, a dedicated and enthusiastic leader at Peace Lutheran shared that a minority of members "would just vote in a heart beat, 'Let's just go back to the way it used to be.'" Another member of Peace Lutheran stated that "people were happy with things here pretty much.... [T]here was no real ... need ... or exploration for how to do outreach and how to bring more people in." Gordon McCoy, the coach for Peace Lutheran's pastor summed up culture of the congregation:

Well, in order to die to yourself, you know you have to die to your own wants and preferences and needs and what satisfies you. And, in general for the, the, the organization, um, I think it's been mixed at [Peace].
(Gordon McCoy)

Despite this resistance to change, Peace did show some attempts at outreach. The culture had shifted more through TCN than it had prior. Both the pastor and lay leaders are hoping the path they have begun to navigate will lead them to greater transformation in the coming years.

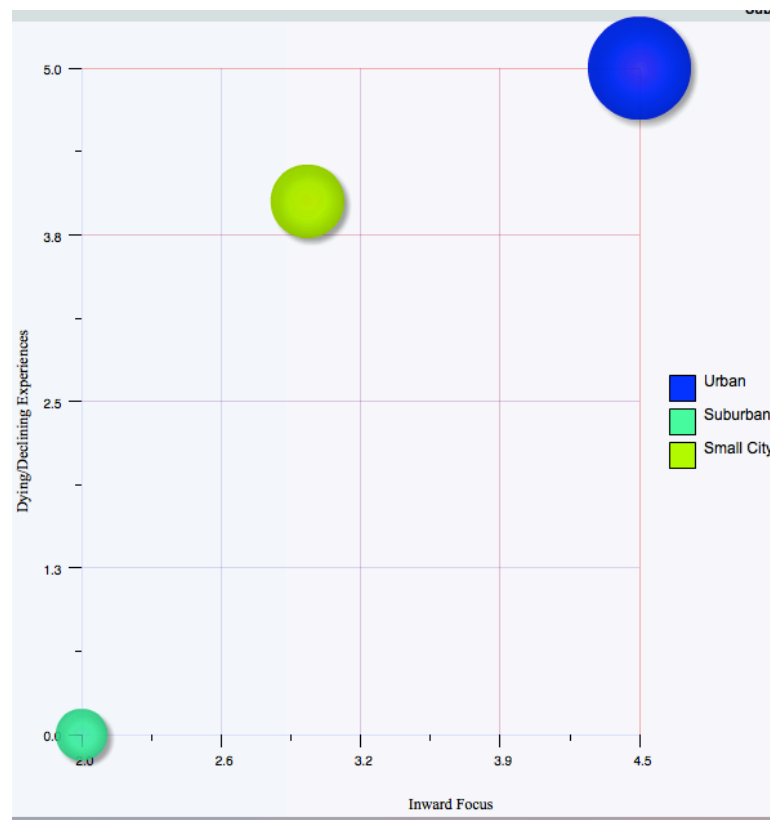


Figure 4.4. Location and level of declining experiences.

For First Lutheran the results were not mixed but much more uniformly in favor of no change and no outreach. Gordon McCoy, also the coach for First Lutheran and its

pastor, stated that Pastor Tomsen “was willing to die, but the congregation was unwilling.” Mark Vandervelt, one of the members of First Lutheran stated, “We know that we need to shift to new and different.” He has observed, however, nothing really seems to change even when they attempt to change:

The new people come in, disappear. The young people come in, disappear. You know, and that’s what I noticed seems to be happening is the old people stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, and other new, the new people come in and they leave.

Doris Ruprecht, reflecting on First Lutheran’s unwillingness to change, was concerned that change will only happen when the older generation currently running the ministry dies out. By then the church may not survive. She asked, “What’s to take over if it’s dead?” Doris bluntly voiced what all interviewees had mentioned about First Lutheran. Because of the intractable nature of the church’s culture its leaders had little hope for its future.

Research Question 3

The third research question in my research focuses upon the hermeneutical understanding of the change process by the participants: Have participating clergy seen TCN aligned with Luther’s theology of the cross, and, if so, in what ways? Through the interview protocol I asked in a graduated process the participants’ framework for understanding change, risk, and suffering.

Major Finding 6

The clergy expressed an alignment between Luther’s theology of the cross and their experience in pastoral ministry. Some of them experienced it prior to their current congregation while they pastored another church. Randy Herzog experienced a “crosspoint” in his previous congregation when he was reaching many new people. The

church was growing substantially. Longer-term members who “didn’t like that” came to him and asked, “When is this gonna stop?” Herzog responded, “When everybody’s been saved.” He summed up his seven and a half years in that church by saying, “It was a tough ministry.” The crucifixion Herzog underwent at that ministry was exemplified in a difficult meeting:

We had had a really bad meeting at church one night. And the treasurer of the congregation came to my office and cussed me out, and threw the keys of the church at my head and I ducked and it hit the wall behind my desk. And the phone rang, and it was [the vacancy pastor of Joy Lutheran]. And so I ... came down here for an interview just for a weekend to get away. And I had no intention of moving to Florida.... And everything I still wanted to do in ministry was here.

He accepted the call to Joy Lutheran. In reflecting on what he learned from previous difficult experiences, Herzog stated that he “used to let that stuff bother” him when he “first started in ministry” but now, he stated, “I just choose not to let it bother me anymore.” The experience with change at Joy Lutheran became a joy. Herzog became a catalyst for the change to an outwardly focused congregation. The experience of the cross in his previous call grew Herzog to help his current congregation undergo cultural change.

Pastor Zachary Hillst experienced the theology of the cross very personally as he related the struggle of his wife’s major illness. His wife was nearing the end of her treatments when they “actually started the process” of working through a potential building campaign. They “ended up not building the church.” Laura Nguen, a member of Resurrection Lutheran stated that the culmination of the illness and the cancelation of the building program had a cumulative effect on Pastor Hillst. He related that grief and experience:

And in the fall of 2008, not to proceed with building the new sanctuary after six years of trying to make it happen. After spending three quarters of a million dollars on architect fees, permitting, design, redesign. It was awful. And the angst and anger and distrust and frustration and, and whose at fault? And again, what could have been just this implosion of, “We’re going to crucify Hillst and anybody else that had anything to do with this.” You know, by the grace of God that did not happen. But it was clear to our vision focus had been building,... so in that sense TCN kind of came along at a good time.

Hillst aptly articulated his experiences: “God has had his hand in all of this stuff including the putting to death in order to bring to life. And sometimes, Lutherans we don’t want to say that God’s doing that.” The resulting resurrection began with the adoption of TCN and the beginning work of reaching out to the community. Hillst could articulate Luther’s theology of the cross well in his experience.

Other pastors expressed an alignment with Luther’s theology of the cross in their experience of TCN. For example, in the opening example in this chapter, Pastor Hampton underwent the experienced of being “gutted” in which the church and his ministry underwent a death and resurrection. Hampton experienced a betrayal and a falling away in the early part of TCN. He started to question himself: “Why are you here? What’s, what’s going on?” Hampton could interpret his sufferings in light of Paul and Jesus:

And to see that, I mean, there’s a fellowship in sharing in the suffering because this is just part of the way it is. I mean, Paul, he experienced significant suffering and even rejection of his ministry altogether. That’s Paul!

Hampton recalled reading a book by Alan Nelson entitled *Broken in the Right Place*. He learned from it “how God crushes us and makes us go through suffering in order to increase our capacity for him to use us.” Hampton has been broken or crucified a number of times. He recalled experiences in high school that humbled him as well as experiences in campus ministry where he needed to step up and do things he felt unqualified to

accomplish. Despite feeling inadequate God worked through him. Hampton was able to relate each of these experiences to the theology of the cross.

Still other pastors were awaiting a crucifixion or dying for their congregation.

Gordon Reynolds stated the need frankly:

One of the things I've said repeatedly to those who will listen is one of the best things that could happen is this church could be foreclosed on. You know, if it particularly serves the greater synod's interest.... You know, if that's what it's going to take for us to finally get over our petty internal squabbles and have to move on to something else and actually live a Christian life, you know. Take they my wife, good, fame, child, and wife, you know, we've been singing it for years

Though Reynolds has seen the need, nothing dramatic has taken place. He saw his congregation "still in the process of dying both metaphorically and literally." Reynolds elaborated the need for a death/resurrection experience at his church:

M]y sense has been all along that we really need to give up our identity as [Ascension] Lutheran Church, as the congregation currently knows it... with a certain type of building, with a certain worship style,... because quite frankly there is a real possibility that they're not physically going to be here in three years.

The only way to resurrection for them was through a death; however, TCN had not made enough of a difference to turn around the ministry. Without such a death/resurrection happening, Reynolds was unsure how the future would unfold at Ascension. Reynolds agreed that they were in the middle of experiencing the theology of the cross and hoped for resurrection.

Most of the pastors interviewed, therefore, articulated the theology of the cross in their pastoral experience. For some the cross experience came through TCN itself and the change that was encouraged. For others it had occurred prior to TCN in either personal circumstances or in previous pastoral ministry.

Major Finding 7

Though the seven pastors interviewed expressed alignment between their experience and Luther's theology of the cross, few of them prior to the interview had connected the theology of the cross to their experience through the change process. That is, few could see that the cost of bringing a church into a more missional posture toward the community meant bearing the cross for pastors, risking reputations, sacrificing more, and leading by example, undergoing personal change even more so than the congregation. Indeed, they did not see the congregation's growth contingent upon their growth and leadership.

The pastors did not recognize God's typical way of working in the Christian life. Though the cross and resurrection were central in their preaching and teaching for the way of salvation, they did not see what Luther discovered that God chooses to work with Christians the same way he worked with Jesus Christ.

When Resurrection Lutheran decided not to build the new sanctuary after spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on plans, Pastor Hillst saw it as an obstacle to growth rather than part of God's plan for his growth and his church's maturity. The narrative of American triumphalism stated that if the church built it, the people would come. When they did not build it, Pastor Hillst and the congregation were not sure what to do. They had focused on the building for so long. They had lost sight of the mission.

In retrospect, however, Hillst did see God at work through these events. He stated, "God has had his hand in all of this stuff including the putting to death in order to bring to life. And sometimes, Lutherans we don't want to say that God's doing that." He recognized the tendency to avoid the cross. In the interview Hillst articulated Luther's

theology well; however, when he commented on what still needed to change at Resurrection, he knew he should be tackling “the staff, the budget.” His wife told him, “Well you really haven’t pushed that much.” He has shown reluctance into picking up the cross of leadership, risking his reputation, jeopardizing his comfortable relationship with his staff, for the sake of mission. Hillst’s coach said, “[Zachary] needs to continue to grow about being the leader and it’s okay to be the leader and challenge your people and challenge your staff. It’s okay to do that.” Though Hillst saw the theology of the cross at work in some ways, he was reluctant to interpret his need to change his leadership approach as cross avoidance.

Pastor Hillst articulate the theology of the cross well. Others came to speak of it only after I explained Luther’s theology in the interviews. When it was articulated more fully, the pastors began to see a new hermeneutic for understanding their struggles and leadership:

And I, one of my goals I guess as pastor, beyond trying to figure out how to die myself, is how to facilitate a death here at the congregation without destroying it. Because I think there has to be a distinction between. There has to be a willingness to take up the cross, which says, you know, we’re not going to do things the way we’ve always done it.

[I] probably need to ... undergo a rebirth or transformation personally so that my own DNA changes in terms of my personality and ministry. Before I can probably look to God being able to use me of and instrument of transformation.

So, when I talk about dying, for me there is this production mode and there is this: I want to be loved, want to be accepted, even though I know that my love and my acceptance from God is supposed to be everything that matters. And for the success or the significance of the ministry of the church, my being not transparent is just going to be a stumbling block.

The word dying and death come out a lot in my conversations about what [Peace] does to me [Laughter] ... and then the conviction that, okay, so if it kills me, it kills me. It’s still the right thing to do.

[I]f you're going to do what's right and good you will suffer, because our Lord did. Jesus was killed because what he was doing was right. And his people down through the centuries have been killed for doing what is right. And it just never did dawn on me that if I did what was right, it might kill me. In the past I've done what was right, and I was big enough to pull it off in spite of all, you know. Here, you know, the question of my survival was, I mean, physically and in every other way....

These interpretations and insights came toward the end of each interview after I elaborated Luther's theology more fully. The death/resurrection paradigm gave the pastors a lens through which to see their struggles and risk taking actions for the sake of mission.

Summary of Major Findings

I discerned seven major findings from the coding of the twenty-six interviews:

1. The seven clergy experienced various levels of revitalization through the TCN process. Two pastors expressed a level of spiritual diminishment while five showed a range of spiritual vitality from 3.0 to 5.0 on a 0 to 5 scale.
2. The level of change experienced by the clergy corresponded to the level of change experienced by the congregation. Five of the seven congregations displayed a nearly a one-to-one correspondence while two congregations showed a higher level of change than for their pastors.
3. Though no congregation showed a statistically significant change in worship attendance, baptisms, or confirmations, in six of seven congregations the leaders, coaches, and pastors expressed a cultural shift in the direction of becoming more missional.
4. The churches that displayed the strongest cultural shift were led by pastors with the highest level of credibility.

5. The churches with the strongest cultural shift were located in a suburban setting.

6. The seven pastors expressed alignment between their experience and Luther's theology of the cross. Some had undergone a death and resurrection prior to their present church, some underwent death and resurrection in personal circumstances, and some had experienced it through the TCN process.

7. Though the seven pastors interviewed expressed alignment between their experience and Luther's theology of the cross, few of them prior to the interview had connected the theology of the cross to their experience through the change process.

These seven major findings are further analyzed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Luther's theology of the cross as a paradigm for clergy and church revitalization was explored through the literature review and the twenty-six interviews conducted and analyzed from the seven congregations involved in the Transforming Churches Network in the Florida-Georgia District of the LC—MS. Some of the findings were anticipated prior to the interviews and their analysis. Other findings were unexpected. More research can be done to explore the value and depth of the theology of the cross as a framework for understanding change and growth. The following represents a synopsis of the discoveries about the interplay among the pastors, congregations, and dynamics of change through the TCN process.

Major Findings Explored More Deeply

In the data I identified seven major findings that helped flesh out how the clergy and churches experienced revitalization through the TCN process. In reflecting more thoroughly on these seven findings and viewing them as a cluster or constellation of findings, I discovered three over-arching axioms from my research.

Axiom 1—Pastor as Key to Congregational Revitalization

First of all, I found that the pastors that were deemed the most credible by their congregations were able to lead their congregations to the greatest level of cultural change. I also found in five of the congregations a one-to-one correspondence between the level of change observed in the pastors and the level of change observed in the churches. Thus, the pastor is a key if not the key to congregational revitalization.

Borden comes to the same conclusion in his work with the American Baptist Church of the West. He summarizes “that the biggest human factor in the process of transforming a dysfunctional congregation to a healthy one is the leadership ability of the pastor” (*Hit the Bullseye* 17). Quinn emphasizes “continuous personal change” as the leadership factor that makes the greatest difference (*Deep Change* 34). That is, leaders first need to embrace change before they can expect their organizations to undergo change. Herrington, Creech, and Taylor underscore this axiom as well in their work with Baptist churches in the Houston, Texas, area. They state, “Change requires serious engagement in personal transformation” (Herrington, Creech, and Taylor 55). My research reaffirmed these conclusions from my literature review.

The TCN process is highly dependent upon the pastor’s commitment and involvement. When pastors have high levels of credibility and are willing to embrace the change and challenges a process such as TCN brings to a church, the response of a congregation becomes more positive and cultural change is more likely to take place, moving a congregation into more missional outreach to its community. Joy Lutheran exemplified this trend. Pastor Randy Herzog enthusiastically embraced TCN while at the same time possessing a high level of credibility in the congregation. He used that credibility to lead his congregation to embrace its community. One of his lay members stated how Herzog brought this about in his church:

Pastor [Herzog] is the one though, when ... he likes something you know it and he liked this program and he could see that we could do this.... [H]e is always been the leader especially financial wise saying to people ... God blesses ministries. He says that a lot and we are in the right path doing this kind of work. This is what we’re meant to be doing.... [W]hen he was able to preach that, teach that and he’s a ... shepherd and so ... we are following and ... I think it all boiled down to that. I don’t think that

this program could work at all if the pastor wasn't one hundred percent ... willing to ... go forward ... and to work hard at it.

Joy Lutheran with Pastor Herzog leading, showed the greatest level of change, rating itself an 8.4 on a scale of 1 through 10. It also exhibited the highest level of embracing change rating itself 7.3 on a scale of 1 through 10.

Conversely, when pastors were more ambivalent about their involvement in TCN, congregations were less likely to embrace the change. Congregational leaders in this situation voiced some concern about TCN as well. For instance, Ascension Lutheran Pastor Gordon Reynolds stated that he started "questioning why" he "should be involved in the process." He elaborated his concerns with TCN:

I mean ... what really happened with me on an internal, theological, angst level was ... I didn't really value some of the historical positions of the synod until I questioned them from this level.... [S]o that was a good thing, but it caused some angst. "Why am I doing something that I now realize is somewhat contrary to my values?" I can see the pragmatic side, but there's ... the other side of that, too. So, there's been that angst.

Reynolds' leadership perceived this struggle and questioned TCN's effectiveness:

It appears and don't really have great insight in it, but I think he thought he was going to get more support from his coaching ... specifically the personal coach even from the TCN program than he's got. That drove a little frustration. And so in the process, somewhere in the middle of the process, he started backing down from, well maybe this TCN isn't a good thing, 'cause he was selling and pushing it really hard ... first ... came on board and the board supported because we needed to do something to change.... [I]t was as good ... idea as any at the time. Yeah, and so we've had to encourage him to keep going as well.

Ascension as a result displayed the second lowest level of embracing change of the seven churches studied with an average weight per code of 4.3 out of 10. It also rated itself on the level of change at 4.9 on a scale of 1 through 10.

Implications of axiom 1. As a result of discovering such a strong correlation between the pastor's position in the congregation, his leadership and commitment to a change process, I assert that any TCN intervention ascertain the credibility of the pastor in the congregation and the pastor's willingness to embrace the change such an intervention intends to bring. When the pastor and congregation align together for mission, a cultural shift is much more likely to take place.

Credibility again is the combination of the pastor's character and competence at ministry tasks (Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility* 21). Credibility, however, can only be built over time. Pastors can also lose credibility when they do not live into their calling. When pastors do not deliberately continue learning and do not undergo *crosspoints* through engaging in private confession or other spiritual disciplines, they jeopardize their credibility and ability to lead the congregation out into mission.

Recommendations based on axiom 1. Since pastors are key to a church revitalization process, I would recommend anyone undertaking a process such as TCN in a church create a readiness test for the pastor and lay leaders to see the revitalization attempt's likelihood of success. This test would include a section asking the pastor to assess his personal commitment to the process. Specifically the test would ask the pastor to elaborate on his willingness to face resistance, criticism, and even conflict while going through the process. Firstly, an assessment would attempt to discern the pastor's "self-differentiation" as discussed by Friedman since pastors who initiate change within a congregational system can expect sabotage in a variety of forms where people even unconsciously attempt to keep the system in homeostasis (247). Secondly, this assessment would poll the congregation and their perception of the pastor's credibility in

terms of experience, competence, and character, since Kouzes and Posner have shown these factors determining the influence the pastor will have in leading change (*Credibility* 21).

In addition, I would recommend that prior to the revitalization process a consultant or team of consultants would interview the pastor and lay leadership, informing them of potential challenges and rewards for being part of the process. Just as Jesus called his disciples to “count the cost” (Luke 14:25-35) prior to following him, this process would prepare the leadership of the church of the possibility of bearing the cross for the sake of mission. In no instance should a revitalization process be marketed as a quick fix or a painless solution for an inward-focused congregation. Instead of making the entry into a TCN revitalization process easy, the standards for entry into it may need to be raised. Friedmann would agree with this type of challenging talk to pastors and congregations (247). Robinson, likewise, would call any church leader to seek no quick fixes, rather than challenging growth or adaptive change (12). With this upfront discussion, a team of consultants would be truly theologians of the cross who call “the thing what it actually is” (Luther, *Luther’s Works* 31: 40).

Since a pastor’s credibility is key to leadership influence and the pastor is key to a church’s revitalization, I believe the LC—MS should invest in continuing educational curricula that focus on a pastor’s key competencies and character traits. Currently the LC—MS does not require any continuing education for its clergy. In fact, at the last convention of synod in the summer of 2011, many restructuring issues were passed but not the implementation of a continuing education system for pastors. Though the required yearly pastors’ conferences in each district of the LC—MS do contain some continuing

education, they vary greatly in their quality. Likewise, the monthly circuit meetings (seven to twelve congregations located in relative geographic proximity) of clergy throughout synod are to have continuing educational components, many pastors miss these meetings, and they often lack anything more than a perfunctory Bible study and worship service.

Even when pastors engage in continuing education within this denomination, the vast majority of it is academic in nature, potentially enhancing a pastor's skills or competency. I have not discovered a concerted effort given to character development issues anywhere across the synod. Having spoken to judicatory office holders and executives, though, the LC—MS like other denominations has struggled with clergy who lose their credibility altogether through moral lapses.

The circuit structure of the districts needs to be revitalized. If it cannot be revitalized so that circuits function as collegial faith formation groups, then the circuits should be put to death. A new organization needs to take its place. This new structure would be a cluster of pastors similar in focus and mission to the learning communities within TCN. Pastors would be engaged in both character and skill formation. They would grow in knowledge, skills, and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. Most of the seven pastors interviewed in this research expressed that the best part of TCN was their learning community. I believe the TCN learning community format and structure could be adapted to meet the need for the leadership development of pastors.

An overture submitted for the 2012 convention of the Florida-Georgia District by the district's board of directors calls the district president to organize a task force to study and create a structure for continuing education among church professionals (see

Appendix N). The president of the district has already approached me to be on a task force for implementing this resolution. I hope to promote a structure that focuses on both competence and character, that encourages lifelong learning, that creates a culture of mutuality among the church professionals so that they become a community under the cross.

The theology of the cross will become a foundation upon which to build this structure. The seven dimensions of adult learning discovered by Crick and Wilson will need to be part of the infrastructure (366). Times of reflection on these seven dimensions, asking the church professionals how they see themselves learning in these seven areas, would be a way to reinforce the learning itself. Private confession and other spiritual disciplines could be readily included in such a continuing education system. Pastors could be encouraged to contract with a pastoral coach to grow even stronger. Mutuality and interdependence could be highlighted qualities that align with a cruciform clergy. Bonhoeffer's seminal work *Life Together* based on his time with the illegal seminary at Finkenwald models many of the aspects of such continuing education.

Axiom 2—Churches Experiencing Cultural Change Prior to Statistically Significant Change in Membership Trends

None of the seven congregations studied showed a statistically significant change in worship attendance or adult confirmations at the time of the interviews. In six of seven congregations, however, the leaders, coaches, and pastors expressed a cultural shift in the direction of becoming a more missional church. Though more follow-up to this research would be needed to discover the validity of this axiom, the data hints that the revitalization process first starts with a cultural shift from inward focus to outward focus

for the sake of mission. When the cultural shift is established strongly, a statistically significant change in worship attendance and other numbers may occur but is not guaranteed.

This perceived cultural shift may actually be the adoption of innovation according to Rogers (see Figure 2.1, p. 82). That is, the early adopters and innovators voiced their excitement and support for the transformation of the congregation with a large percentage of the early majority joining the cultural change. I would anticipate, if Rogers is correct, the late majority would start voicing the same optimism and mission priority next. Finally the statistical shift may come with the large majority of the congregation now engaging in new missional and outreaching behaviors.

Implications of axiom 2. Often one sells a turnaround strategy based on the guarantee that it will result in an increase in a church's membership trends such as worship attendance. When the focus is on statistics such as worship attendance, it may not emphasize the underlying culture that needs to change. Thus, nothing really changes. *The congregation* is what can be changed in a church. The members cannot change their environment per se. Focusing on creating a more missional culture can help keep the focus on something the congregation and pastor can accomplish. The results are a more faithful and fruitful church in line with God's will for his people to be in mission. When faithfulness and fruitfulness increase, statistical trends may follow.

A proper application of the theology of the cross to the congregation would result in this focus of congregational transformation. As Ruge-Jones states, "The word of the cross offers us a new way of being in the world with others" (*Word* 89). The congregation would see itself as a servant of the gospel to the world, doing all things for

the sake of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:23). The church is in the world for the sake of the world rather than for the sake of institutional growth or membership gains.

Recommendations based on axiom 2. A consultant that is offering a revitalization process to a congregation, therefore, may want to avoid promises of worship attendance growth or solutions to budget shortfalls. Rather, the consultant may want to emphasize the increase in faithfulness to God's calling of the congregation, how the congregation may serve more people and share the gospel more effectively with others, and how the vitality and health of the congregation may increase through a revitalization process.

Faithfulness does not mean complacency. Reform and renewal are an ongoing process as "the Christian community permits itself to undergo a continuous crucifixion" so that it can befriend those who face crucifixion and suffering in this world (Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* 154). The church takes on Christ's form in the world, the "form of a servant" (Phil. 2: 6) and then can speak to people's struggle with ambiguity and "contradiction into all their earthly existence" (Rupp 208). As the church undergoes the changes resulting in being faithful to a crucified Messiah, it may see an increase in membership or worship attendance, but these statistical trends cannot be guaranteed. Faithfulness, service, and growing more fully into the fullness of Christ are tantamount (Eph. 4:15).

Axiom 3—The Need for Luther's Theology of the Cross to be Taught More Fully

Reflecting on Major Finding 6 and Major Finding 7, the seven pastors understood the centrality of the cross and resurrection to the gospel proclamation, but they did not see what Luther discovered about the connection between the Christian and Christ.

Tomlin writes of this succinctly as he sees the cross “now reveals God and his characteristic way of dealing with believers” (Tomlin 178). The pastors struggled with trying to figure out how the glory road and the cross story worked together in their calling (Forde, *On Being a Theologian* 5). Most of them preached a word *about* the cross rather than the word of the cross (Prenter, *Luther’s Theology* 7).

The theology of the cross is not to be something someone else does but what the individual experiences. Through one’s experience of death and resurrection, be it daily repentance and renewal or events that become *crosspoints*, one can lead by exemplifying what God’s typical work is and how it then serves others. St. Paul enunciates existentially this reality: “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (2 Cor. 4:10). Luther aptly states that a person becomes a theologian through temptation, meditation and prayer (Luther, *Selected Writings* 9). A real life lived under God’s grace in a broken world is the life of faith.

Though Quinn states the connection between suffering and growth, that to “bring about deep change, people have to ‘suffer’ the risks” and leaders have to “reinvent themselves” (*Deep Change* 13), this connection is not obvious to many pastors. They do not see the positive role of suffering, that suffering promotes “unfolding faith and making it assert itself” (von Lowenich, 119). Suffering is to be avoided or minimized.

Upon further reflection, I do not recall in my seminary education having this connection between suffering and growth explained in any form. The proverbial story line that was taught seemed to be one of two different formulas. For those who were more mission minded and evangelical, the story line was the following: If one becomes professionally competent and mission focused, one’s congregation will grow. For those

more conservative in Lutheran circles bristling at church growth techniques, the story line was the following: If one remains faithful in the administration of the gospel in word and sacrament, then one need not worry about growth. God will take care of it. No professor or church leader talked of the cost of leading a congregation, in pastoring people into deeper discipleship. No one mentioned the crucifixion of the Christian pastor as a typical way of God's work to bring about the cruciform congregation. The cost of discipleship was avoided.

In addition, underlying this cross-avoidance, the historical founding of the LC—MS remains alive, its genius and pathology (Friedman 21). The battle between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, between keeping doctrine pure and missions, continues to this day. Both sides, however, seem to be in agreement overall. Everyone wants to avoid the existential death of the pastor and the congregation. Thus, the underlying way the LC—MS functions avoids the cross.

Truly, the theology of the cross is a thin line in Christian circles, one that is not much loved (Moltmann, *Crucified God* 3). When comprehended and confessed, however, this thin line plumbs the depths of human experience and taps into a deep well of hope for pastors facing resistance and difficulty in the midst of leading a congregation into the mission field. The seven pastors resonated with the death/resurrection paradigm and could see it working out in their lives personally, professionally and corporately.

Ting and Watson's research of Chinese pastors who underwent experiences of persecution reinforced the role of suffering in leadership development. They found it a tool in God's hands to bring about personal transformation, growth in humility, self-less focus upon God's kingdom and church, deeper trust in God's care and even a reframing

of suffering's purpose for the pastor. After my limited research on seven pastors who did not undergo such extreme suffering, I concur with Ting and Watson that suffering can produce growth when "met head-on." When it is "avoided, growth is stifled" (208).

A theologian is made, according to Luther, by "by living, by dying and being damned, not by understanding, reading and speculating." (*D. Martin Luther's Werke* 5: 163). Christian theologians experience their death and resurrection existentially through the law and gospel, but also through suffering and humbling events. I called these events *crosspoints* in my literature review.

A church is conformed to the image of Christ in the same manner. As Cousar states, "The church whose theology is shaped by the message of the cross must itself take on a cruciformed life if its theology is to carry credibility" (186). Luther and the Lutheran tradition strongly witness to this theology; however, American, consumer-driven society with its inherent "triumphalism" (Hall, *Cross* 17) seems to deceive even pastors into comfort seeking rather than purpose finding (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 191).

Implications of axiom 3. Pastors need to be taught the connection between their experiences in ministry and the theology of the cross. They need to be given permission to voice their struggles, angst, suffering, temptations, and sacrifices in light of Christ's passion and death so that they can see how God is conforming their lives to Christ and increasing their faith in Christ (Prenter, *Spiritus Creator* 50-51). Pastors can gain hope through their *crosspoints* because of God's promise and Christ's resurrection. This insight does not come naturally. It needs to be taught and understood phenomenologically.

Recommendations based on axiom 3. The theology of the cross needs to be more thoroughly taught in pastoral preparation within the LC—MS and applied to practical theology rather than simply a systematic category used to analyze someone else's theological system. In my literature review, I was unable to find anyone who had written about the down-to-earth nature of this theology as Luther enunciated it for leadership development. No one seemed to apply it to the area of congregational and clergy revitalization. When the areas of missional outreach and church revitalization, however, are seen through the lens of the theology of the cross, a helpful hermeneutic can develop that allows pastors and congregations to undergo the stresses and difficulties of change for the sake of mission and to serve their communities for whom Christ died.

As Luther's theology of the cross initiated the Reformation in Europe, calling the whole of Christendom to align its practice with this theological insight of a crucified Lord and Savior, the theology of the cross today calls for reform in the practice and functioning of the American Christian church, which too often is triumphalistic. This re-Reformation has widespread implications; however, I would focus my comments on the formation of clergy within the Lutheran church body to keep this insight more in line with the scope of this study.

Currently the LC—MS seminary education is based on the German university model of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with some adjustments to the American university system. The focus is primarily upon academic qualifications and secondarily on pastoral skills and practices. Faith formation is neglected or assumed. Luther states, "A man becomes a theologian by living, by dying and being damned, not by understanding, reading and speculating" (*D. Martin Luther's Werke* 5: 163). Seminary

should then be aligned with truly living, existentially dying and sacrificing, and undergoing the trials and temptations of *anfechtung*. Currently the LC—MS seminaries are more aligned to understanding, reading, and speculating.

As stated previously under the implications of Axiom 1, pastoral formation could be seen as a lifelong process in collegial groups in which both experienced pastors and those seeking the pastoral office are joined together for study, reflection, prayer, and private confession. These clusters could be scattered around the country so that seminary students could retain a connection to their churches and live within the mission of local congregations. Through the entire formation process, these pastoral candidates could be involved in active mission and ministry work. The academic aspects of the seminary education could be taught by some of the current professors over the Internet in various fashions. These professors could be given more time for research and for involvement in church and ministry life. Rather than two seminaries in the LC—MS, the denomination could have forty or fifty seminaries. Churches would then create the criteria for character and competence qualifications of the clergy. This system would be a church-and-mission-based theological education more aligned with Luther's cruciform theology.

Post-seminary education could also include an emphasis on the theology of the cross. In the winter 2011, I was honored to be the main presenter at the regional pastors conference for Georgia and northern Florida for the district. The presentation focused on much of the research in this study (see Appendix O). The fifty pastors received this presentation heartily; however, upon reflection I perceive some inadequacies in how I formed the presentations. The two-day retreat was heavily focused upon theory and academics. Little time was given for reflection and spiritual practices.

Ideally such retreats on the theology of the cross would include time for private confession and absolution, time for reflection and journaling, time for coaching and mentoring, and time for some form of practice and then reflection upon that practice. Each pastor could leave the retreat with a growth plan and a partner who would follow up on that plan. I estimate this kind of retreat would take about a week's time but would be much more effective in bringing about revitalization and transformation.

Additional Implications

TCN as presented in this research may need to undergo change itself in order to adjust to the realities of different congregations. The model of intervention as outlined in the TCN consultation weekend and subsequent coaching and training of the pastor fits best with a congregation in a suburban setting with a lead pastor who has a fairly high level of credibility. These churches and pastors seem to have the right cluster of characteristics to handle an intervention of the magnitude of TCN.

Other churches did not fair as well. Pastor Chris Tomsen asked me if anyone had developed a paradigm for urban congregations to undergo revitalization. He had not found one. Urban congregations face unique challenges that are not easily addressed through the typical TCN process. Thus, an implication for TCN is to change itself and adapt to the realities of different congregational settings such as urban or small town.

Limitations

I had anticipated that the findings of this research could be generalized to different church settings; however, limits may exist to their generalizability. These limits include the socio-demographic environment of each church, the way interviews were

conducted that biased results, and the polity and structure of LC—MS congregations compared to other denominations.

The most significant variable appeared to be the demographic shifts south and central Florida faced during the time of this research intervention. Many of the participants commented on the economic downturn in their communities with numerous church members moving out of the area or out of the state as a result. Though churches may experience the cultural shift within the congregation in similar ways, churches that are experiencing more demographic stability as well as those experiencing increased population growth may show statistically significant changes in their membership and worship attendance trends.

Though I requested each pastor give me a pool of names from which I would pick two laity to interview, five of the pastors did not give me such a pool. By default I interviewed two individuals in these churches who were more specifically selected by the pastor. This selection process could have biased the results in favor of the pastor and his ministry. In order to avoid this pitfall in future research, a researcher could enter a congregation for a few weeks and conduct more interviews as a field researcher with laity without the pastors playing the role of gatekeeper.

As stated at the outset, congregations and denominations that are similar in polity and theology to the LC—MS may find the results the most applicable. Churches under a more inflexible, hierarchical structure may discover results are not as easily reproduced, while churches able to change their structure more readily may revitalize more quickly. Denominations or congregations with a poorly defined doctrinal understanding of the gospel and mission of Jesus Christ may find the results are not as easily reproduced.

Churches that also have a very low view of the pastoral ministry and place much of the authority into the congregational assembly rather than in any leadership may also find these findings hard to match.

This research, however, even with its limited study of seven churches, may have contextual generalizability for other congregations. Churches that find themselves aligned with the fundamental context of these seven congregations may discover that their experience with a revitalization process similar to TCN could anticipate similar results. Churches can learn from some of the findings of this study to design their revitalization strategies and prayerfully, courageously engage in the process for the sake of mission and outreach.

Unexpected Observations

I did not anticipate that the location of a congregation would correspond so strongly to the level of change experienced. I expected that both small city congregations and suburban churches would respond similarly while the urban setting may be less conducive to change. This sample of seven congregations is too small to make a strong conclusion whether the demographic location is a determinative factor.

Additional Recommendations

This research on Luther's theology of the cross as a lens through which to view clergy and church revitalization is merely a starting point for what could be productive discoveries. I would recommend more research that both broadens and deepens the work conducted here. An in-depth study could be done on the phenomenology of experiencing change in terms of death and resurrection, both for pastors and for congregations. The research I conducted merely begins to explore this phenomenon. Likewise, a more in-

depth study of any one of these seven congregations could show more thorough qualitative results as to how a church undergoes cultural change. At the same time, a comprehensive study of more congregations involved with TCN could show if the patterns and observations made from this small sample of seven churches is, in fact, generalizable.

Though I could infer from the data that a dynamic relationship corresponds between the level of conflict experienced in a congregation and the level of cultural change perceived by the congregation, I was unable to decipher a correlation between these two factors. Too many other variables seemed to be at play. Intuitively I believe that conflict is inevitable in a change process and exacerbates any underlying conflicts a congregation is chronically experiencing in its life together. The issues hinges on how conflict is managed and resolved by a congregation as to whether conflict will be detrimental to cultural change or whether it can even catalyze more cultural change toward mission and outreach. All seven congregations referred to the experience of some level of conflict through the TCN process. Some experienced minimal conflict while others faced acute conflict. Some church systems seemed to manage their conflict well. Some conflict became distracting. Still other conflict seemed to become destructive. Thus, more research with a more focused interview process on the experience of conflict within a change process could be fruitful.

Other factors to be explored include congregational life cycles and the likelihood of cultural change at different points on that cycle, the change style or personality type of each pastor and how it relates to congregational change, a comparison of various methods for intervention in congregational life that may result in varying degrees of cultural

change, and the difference polity and structure of a congregation make upon the effectiveness of a change process. All of these areas could become a complete study and research project in themselves.

Though I am still not as pessimistic as Barna in his assessment of transforming an established congregation (15), turning around a plateaued or declining congregation is at best difficult from this research. A cultural shift needs to take place first and in many of these churches did occur. However, the statistical turnaround in worship attendance and other factors were not evidenced. More research could be conducted to follow up on these congregations to see what has changed in the time since these interviews were conducted. I would hope that a statistically significant change has resulted in all the congregations but especially those who registered the largest cultural shift.

Personal Implications

The theology of the cross is a lived theology, seeing one through the cross and resurrection of Christ, experiencing the cross/resurrection paradigm as God's typical way of working in the Christian's life. Thus, I cannot conclude this study without some reflection on the personal implications of all that I have learned.

I have found the need as a result of this study to contract with a pastoral coach who has given me insights into how I can move from being a utilitarian pastor into a missional, transformational pastor. The coaching, only begun a few months ago, has humbled me into seeing how difficult change can be. I have also discovered how necessary a death and resurrection are for my ministry. As Quinn states repeatedly, the leader first must change before the leader can expect the organization to change (*Deep Change* 103).

Thankfully the circuit of pastors with whom I am involved have begun working through some of the books recommended by TCN. The seven of us have formed a learning community. We are meeting monthly and have begun growing closer together through this process. At the same time, a cadre of mission-minded LC—MS pastors began a movement to support and collaborate with sacramental church leaders to initiate mission-planting developments. They invited my staff to consider becoming a catalyst congregation for the north Florida region. The change that I seek in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is the change I hope to undertake myself through a group of pastors such as my colleagues in the circuit.

Finally, this study has convicted me of the importance of lifelong learning. My congregation and staff have begun a path of mutual, collaborative learning in various ways. Though I have much more growth to undergo, I am thankful that we have started down this course. Currently beyond the theology of the cross, we are discovering the importance of reconciling relationships and peacemaking, the implications of the Trinity upon Christian community, and the great hope we have in God's future through the study of eschatology. I am grateful to be part of a staff and congregation that values lifelong learning.

Postscript

I was honored and humbled by the congregations and those I interviewed through this research process. I gained a deep level of respect for leaders who expressed a desire to see their congregations be part of God's mission to their community and by pastors who struggle to care both for members and challenge them to reach out in mission. The

analysis I offer cannot replicate the realities of their struggles nor trivialize the difficulties of turning around plateaued or declining congregations.

I am more convinced as a result of these interviews and research that God's work in Jesus Christ is typical of his work with his people today that through death and resurrection God brings about his purposes in his people. Luther's insight through what he called the theology of the cross is needed for God's church today and its hopeful revitalization.

APPENDIX A

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT CONGREGATIONAL REVITALIZATION

To the 30th Regular Convention Overture 2009:1.1
Florida-Georgia District Floor Committee 2
June 12-14, 2009

2009:1.1 “To Support Congregational Revitalization”

Whereas, the District president in 2006 directed the formation of a futures committee to assist the District in pursuit of the vision that “every congregation is a church in mission and every member is a Missionary”; and

Whereas, the work of this committee has resulted in a pilot initiative whining the District targeted at the revitalization of congregations for mission, utilizing the Transforming Congregations Network, known as TCN; and

Whereas, initial response from the TCN pilot has been encouraging; and numerous congregations around the District are requesting involvement with the revitalization effort; and

Whereas, the District Board of Directors has identified as a critical ministry target the development of leaders who are visionary ;and committed to equipping and empowering others in fulfilling the church’s role in God’s mission, and the TCN initiative focuses on developing lay and called workers to lead their congregations in revitalization; therefore

Be it Resolved, that the Florida Georgia District in convent ion urge its Board of Directors and District President to seek to expand the involvement of congregations for revitalization through the Transforming Co0ngregations Networks with a goal of having 50% of the District’s congregations engaged in revitalization by the 2015 convention.

Adopted by the District Board of Directors,

Date: January 28, 2009
Secretary: Rev. Pat A. O’Brien
President: Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael, Jr.

APPENDIX B

TCN MONTHLY TRACKER

[illegible]

APPENDIX C

SELF-STUDY EXAMPLE

History and Description (Information Adjusted for Anonymity)

1. Essay on history attached
2. Staff list attached
3. List of people who oversee areas of ministry attached
4. Building and Land
 - a. Hosanna Lutheran purchased 10 acres in 1990, built a 40,000 square foot building to house Hosanna and Open Arms. The loan was for \$2.3 million, which included remodeling an existing building and new construction.
 - b. In 1998, Hosanna acquired another adjoining 10 acres for \$400,000.
 - c. In 2006, the mortgage loan was refinanced to borrow an additional \$300,000. The purpose was to spend \$150,000 on needed repairs for the building, and another \$150,000 for a new youth/office building. The total loan balance is now \$ 3,000,000.
 - d. The church has 75 paved parking spaces. We also have a gravel “landscape” area that allows us to park about an additional 30 vehicles if needed.
5. Organizational Structure:
 - a. CFO type governance
 - b. BOD: 5 persons. BOD oversees operations of the church. Church administrator reports to the BOD on areas of facility, finance, HR and administration.
 - c. Board of Elders: Approximately 12 men who are charged with the spiritual concerns of the congregation. Appointed by the Pastor.
 - d. Strategic Planning Committee:
 1. Reports to the BOD. Charged with long range vision casting.
 2. Direct Open Arms Strategic Planning Committee, led by Marcia Jones. This group looks at long range vision and planning for OA.
 - e. Other committees: HR committee is not operational, Building and Property is not operational. These would report to the BOD.
6. Mission and Vision statement attached.
7. Self study attached
8. Information provided by Randal Tornquist, TCN & Strategic Planning and Ann Auburn, Church Administrator, and member of Strategic Planning & TCN committees.

1. School

- a. Christian Child Development Center

- Full Time Infant thru PreK
- Half Day (“Church PreSchool”) age 2,3 and PreK
- ASP elementary school age
- Summer Camp, elementary school age
- b. Meryl Blank, Program Director
Venita Dawn, Director of Operations
- c. Current enrollment 165. Has varied over the past 10 years from 150 to 200
- d. Staffing: fully staffed. Co-Directors, Office Manager, Teachers, Cook
- e. Staffing policy: there is a comprehensive Staff Handbook specific to the school
- f. Budget: The budget for Open Arms is handled separately. There are common expenses that are related to the Church budget.
- g. 2009 Total budget is \$1,085,115
- h. Licensed by Department of Early Care & Learning
 - a. Awarded (continuous) Center of Distinction since 2007
 - b. Awarded 2008 Program of the Year
- i. Open Arms directors report to the Church Administrator. Administrator reports to the BOD
- j. Tuition varies based on the age of the child, and the program in which the child is enrolled.
- k. Student population, in percentages
 - a. Students who are members of church: three percent.
 - b. Students who are members or active at another church: sixty-six percent.
 - c. Students who are unchurched or underchurched: thirty percent.
- l. Over the years we have had varying degrees of outreach to Open Arms families. When the church opened in 1997 there was a significant church outreach to OA, and as a result, the church attendance and membership grew. In recent years, there has been minimal targeted outreach to Open Arms.

2. Worship

- a. Worship times are 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday mornings
- b. Contemporary—designed around a theme—music, video, preaching: all relate
- c. No hymnals
- d. No liturgies used
- e. Service outline is printed in the bulletin. AV systems shows music, creeds, service outline power point, etc.
- f. Yes, used for music, video clips, sermon outlines, Lord’s Prayer, Creeds
- g. Planning: Pastor, Dir Worship Arts, Elders, Creative Worship Team
- h. Usher, Music/Drama, altar guild

3. Worship Attendance

- a. Average Weekly Attendance: 160

- b. 40 percent 9:30, 60 percent 11:00
- c. No seasonal variation
- d. No seasonal members

4. Other Items

- a. Recent Conflicts: Pastor—wife employed by church, reported to her husband. The Pastor attempted to give her increases in hours, benefits and monetary compensation without the involvement of the BOD. Then the pastor acted unprofessionally when the BOD wanted to review the act and declined it.
- b. We have designed a youth/office building. The building is currently on hold due to finances.
- c. Missions include monthly contributions to district, Circuit Outreach Council and MUST ministries (local shelter/pantry/job training).
- d. Friendly and warm, contemporary worship, focus on children and youth – especially through Open Arms Ministry

5. Completing Report:

Randal Perry: Chair, Strategic Planning Committee & Elder

Former: BOD president

Strategic Planning Committee, including:

Wendal Carter, Chair OA strategic planning

Ann Auburn, Church Administrator

Venita Chase, Church Secretary

Congregational Information

- 1. Charts attached
- 2. Yes, we have small groups. Eight are currently active
- 3. Median Age is probably 42
- 4. Early years: Open Arms, friendly, contemporary, invited by friend

Recent years: Contemporary, friendly, moved from another Lutheran church in area, transferred in from out of town

5. Sam Corbin, BOD President/6 years/transfer/reason unknown

Parker Robinson, BOD VP/10 years/transfer/unknown

Fanny Meyer, BOD Treasurer/10 years/Open Arms

Jack Price, BOD Secretary/5 years/transfer/unknown

Harlan Hart, BOD Elder Rep

Carl George, Head of Elders/7 years/transfer/moved to area

George Lange, Elder/12 years/

Bob Walters, Elder/4 years/unknown

Landon Fresno, Elder/11 years/Open Arms

Zeek Tyce, Elder/9 years/transfer/unknown

John Moody, Elder/13 years/transfer/unknown

Randal Perry, Elder/14 years/ planted this church

Jack Laroche, Elder/10 years/ELCA member/moved to area

Darren Rodgers, Elder/1 year/transfer/LCMS website

Paul Louis, Elder/13 years/unknown

6. Receipts and Expenditures

Year	Revenue	Expenses
1998	178,900	177,583
1999	232,310	262,275
2000	299,293	308,262
2001	359,082	282,890
2002	607,586	237,174
2003	604,920	80,749

2004—929,177568,429* rec'd large gift \$300,000

2005—716,224725,655

2006—755,910728,748

2007—669,300693,142

2008—569,245687,316

7. Top Giving Units

\$24,400 \$13,098 \$12,000

\$10,400 \$10,010 \$ 9,035

\$ 7,920 \$ 7,700 \$ 7,345 \$6,885

Total: \$108,793 Percentage of total giving 30 percent

8. Total number of giving units: YTD 2009: 158

Average amount given per unit 2009 \$1,925

Our Community

1) We serve a suburban middle and upper-middle class community. Many residents commute downtown.

2) Members of church who reside within 1 mile of church: 15 percent (est)

4 miles of church: 50 percent (est)

3) We are located in Westphalia County. We are located in America City, and are close to other suburbs.

a) The community includes the older towns of America City and Layton, and we have a few members originally from the area. The majority of our members are from other areas of the county. Growth over the last nine years has been approximately 41

percent. Many professionals have moved into the area from other parts of the country.

Many residents work in the big city.

b) The population in a ten mile radius of the Church is 485,000

c) Income levels: Average household income in a 5 mile radius is \$93,890

d) 30 percent Bachelors, 11 percent Masters/higher, 60 percent white collar, 15 percent blue collar

e) 80 percent Caucasian, 11 percent Black or African American. The predominant religion is Baptist. There is a growing number of non-denominational churches.

f) Median age 36

g) Last nine years 42 percent population growth, 2010 projections 17 percent

h) N/A

4) The square mile surrounding our church is completely residential. There is an elementary and middle school very close to our property. Several subdivisions are in the immediate area, some stand alone houses.

Beliefs and Practices

1) Core values:

a) Worship Arts: we strive to reach unchurched members of the community by bringing down barriers through music, drama and audiovisual resources.

b) Children & Youth

c) Prayer

2) Mission Statement Attached

3) Other commitments or practices:

- a) Synodical issues—none. We are on the left of the spectrum
- b) Social issues jobs, raising families, marriage
- c) Financial commitments large mortgage (facility plus additional land) paid staff
- d) Missions: New Orleans

Documents: Attached

History and Description

Hosanna Lutheran started meeting in 1993 with a combined effort of First Lutheran, and Abiding Savior Lutheran Church. We started meeting with rent-a-pastors and pot lucks in Cheatham Hill Community Center, then at a school and then rented a space in a strip mall off of Dixie Highway with about forty people.

Pastor Murray Stutter was called in June 1993. He developed a plan to start an Open Arms Center and church. Suitable land was searched for following a demographic study, Open Arms business plan, and approval from District. LCEF funded the project and we secured ten acres and a build/remodel plan for about 2.4 million dollars.

We closed the land deal and moved to current location in 1997. Open Arms, a 200+ student Christian Child Development Center, opened in August 1996. The congregation met in an auditorium on site until the multipurpose sanctuary was completed in the fall of 1996.

Many founding members split with Pastor Stutter and congregation over worship style before the move to our current location. Over forty members remained and were committed to children and family ministry, contemporary worship style, life groups and

making our biggest focus reaching out to Open Arms families and trying to get them to try Hosanna.

The church grew with many young families and children throughout the late 90s. The ministry was characterized with “meals to go” for Open Arms families, commuter breakfasts, worship coffee house settings, and life groups and had an Acts 2 feel. The church purchased an additional ten acres in 2000 that is adjacent to current property.

Pastor Stutter accepted another call to California in 2001 and the church moved into transitional phase with Pastor Lawrence serving as interim pastor. During interim phase, problems arose with women’s role in worship. Several people left the church due to this issue. It continues to be an issue to the present day.

The attendance wavered some but held steady until our call of Pastor Bob Furlow in 2002. Some of the tenets of Hosanna remained: contemporary worship style and life groups. However, young family ministry, a focus of community type outreach (freedom days/commuter breakfasts), and intentional outreach to Open Arms seemed to wane during this period. The pastor did not avail himself to Open Arms, youth, and children events.

The church grew well between 2002-2007 with many involved leaders, new ministries like drama and continued life groups. It grew to about 300 worshipers by about 2006.

In 2004, with the encouragement of the Pastor, the Board of Directors agreed to hire the pastor’s wife in a part time role as lead of Children’s Ministry. Over the next two years, the pastor was not objective with his wife’s skills or performance as she alienated some of the Open Arms staff, Hosanna Lutheran church staff members, and other

ministry leaders. The pastor then brought to the Board of Directors a recommendation to hire his wife full time, call her, and give her retirement benefits at least two different times. The Board denied this recommendation twice. After the second decline, the pastor seemed to have a personal vendetta against these Board members, forced several of them to resign, and finally took it to a congregational vote. A full time extension for her was not approved. He continued to push the issue until 2008 when he accepted a call in September. There was a definite conflict over his last two years, and many members were hurt or left, and positive, energizing ministry was not being accomplished. Attached list of staff shows significant turnover problems. Please note that during pastor's time, there was an unusually large turnover with youth leaders.

In 2006/2007, twenty or so new members (aged 50+) came from a different Lutheran church.

Derrick Johnson was called as Youth DCE in 2007.

Throughout 2008 while using rent-a-pastors and elders to conduct services, church attendance, offerings, and membership declined.

In January 2009, Pastor Bernie Mack agreed to be Interim Pastor. Worship Arts ministry, leadership, life groups, and staff seemed to stabilize and be re-energized.

A call committee has been formed to call a new pastor.

The Board of Directors has authorized adoption of TCN to help refocus, self-study, and provide recommendations on ministry concentrations.

Hosanna Lutheran Paid Staff History

Pastor

First Pastor 1993-2001

First Interim 2001-02

Second Pastor 2002-08

Second Interim 2009-Present

Secretary

First 1993-8/2006

Second 6-8/2006

Third 9/2006-8/2008

Fourth 10/2008-Present

Financial Admin (LH & OA)

First Administrator 1999-2000

Second Administrator 1/2001-12/2001 (LH ONLY)

Third Administrator 2002-10/2008

Administrative Assistant

First Assistant 8/06-6/2008

Church Administrator

First Church Administrator 2003-07

Second 2008

Third 10/2008-Present

Worship Leader

First 1999-2002

Second 2003-3/2008

Third 4/2008-Present

Youth Leader/Youth Pastor

First 4/2003-10/2003

Second 10/2003-12/2003

Third (intern) 12/2004-6/2005

Fourth 6/2005- 2006

Fifth 8/2006- 3/2007

Sixth (volunteer) 2007

Seventh 2007-Present

Children's Ministry Leader

First 1998-2000

Second 2001-2004

Third (pastor's wife) 2004-2006

Fourth (Intern) 2006 3mths

Fifth 8/2006-5/2007

Sixth (volunteer) 2008- present

Open Arms Director

First Director 1996 – 6/1998

Second Co-director 6/98-12/98 & Second Co-director

Third Director 1999

Fourth Director 12/1999- 11/2000

Fifth Co-Directors 2001-Present

THE OPEN ARMS® INSTITUTE

To Foster and Guide Lutheran Church Planting and Gospel Outreach

with Childcare Ministry

CONSULTATION REPORT

PREPARED FOR

HOSANNA LUTHERAN CHURCH

AND

OPEN ARMS CHRISTIAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

AMERICA CITY

by

Consulting Team

2006

Introduction

This report is presented at the request of Hosanna Lutheran Church. It is prepared after an on-site visit over a period of three days, in addition to several pre-visit telephone interviews. In the course of that time, I conducted the following activities:

- Conferred extensively with the Co-Directors.
- Visited the classrooms and observed the caregivers and children at various times of the day.
- Made note of the visual and aural environment, safety/security factors,

playground, and other spaces used by staff and children.

- Observed the visibility and accessibility of the center from the perspective of the general public, and reviewed the procedures for checking in and checking out.
- Reviewed curricular materials and the instructional process.
- Examined the financials as reported, and became acquainted with the financial procedures.
- Inquired about the relationship between the church and the Open Arms ministry.
- Visited with pastor and other staff members.
- Examined the promotional materials, including Parent Handbook, brochures, fee schedules, and other forms.
- Visited with teaching staff to gain their perspectives on the program.
- Observed parents during drop off and pickup time to note their interaction with staff and children.

This report is presented to all at Hosanna Lutheran Church who are responsible for the ministry of the Open Arms Christian Child Development Center. We sincerely hope that you will find it beneficial as you endeavor to strengthen the ministry of Open Arms, so that God's precious Word of grace may effectively touch children and families of your community, for the glory of God and for their spiritual well being.

Observations

1. **Open Arms—Promise or Problem** Open Arms Christian Child Development Center (OA) occupies a wonderful and unique position, filled with opportunity and growth potential. Paradoxically, it is also at a crossroads where care must be exercised to review its place and its mission in the ministry of Hosanna Lutheran Church. The center will either continue to languish and possibly fail, or it can gain new direction and purpose for its role as an arm of the congregation's Word and Sacrament ministry.
2. **OA Needs a Tie with Hosanna** The directors of OA operate with almost complete autonomy, and with very little support outside of their own clientele. They lack sufficient oversight, accountability, guidance and direction from the congregation. Hosanna needs to establish a direct line of authority from the

congregation's governing body to OA. This would likely be a separate Board or committee, or even something as informal as a task force. It seems inconceivable that OA would not be provided for somehow in the Constitution or Bylaws of the congregation. If it is there, the relationship should be reviewed and strengthened, or re-established. If not, it must be added. It is worth noting that almost every issue that is currently problematic for OA could have been addressed and in many cases resolved if this line of authority were in place.

3. **A Governing Board's Role** No congregational board can manage the day-to-day operation of a large childcare ministry. The approach, therefore, must be in the form of policy-based management. Under this form, the responsibility of a childcare governing body should be to:
 - Set and review policies for the entire operation of the program and its function as a ministry of the congregation.
 - Secure the services of qualified director(s) and charge them with the full responsibility for the success of the program.
 - Set operational and performance goals with the directors.
 - Set and review bounds within which the Directors must conduct the program. Examples: The Open Arms ministry may not function independently of the Word and Sacrament ministry of Hosanna Lutheran Church. Open Arms board members cannot exercise authority individually, but solely through the concerted action of the entire board.
 - Evaluate directors and the operation of the center against respective job descriptions and operational and performance goals.
 - Review and advise on matters of day-to-day management, but refrain from final decisions thereon.
 - Serve as liaison between Hosanna and OA. **(Note: The Open Arms Institute has available for members a document detailing the formation and function of a policy-based childcare ministry governing board.)**

It can hardly be over-emphasized. The Directors of OA need a voice, and a place to use it. They need goals, and someone to help establish them. They need support and direction. They need boundaries.

4. **Revenue Levels** The OA pricing and fee structure should be reviewed and evaluated. It appears that the fees are not consistent with the higher quality of services offered (low student to teacher ratios, highly paid long time staff, program quality, facility). When compared to other centers in the area the OA rates are significantly lower than those of comparable quality. Even with the rate changes proposed on the "Area Pre Schools and Day Cares Price Comparison" prepared November 2005, the rates will continue to be on the lower end AND a

full year behind competitors. It is important to remember that the cost of providing quality, Christian childcare is very high. We cover those costs only with tuition, and are not substantially funded or supplemented by other sources. When tuitions are not enough to cover expenses, the choices are very limited:

- Scale down the quality and lower program expenses;
- Increase tuitions to cover the cost;
- Supplement the income with grants, contributions, fundraisers, or congregational mission support;
- A combination of any/all of the above.

5. **Marketing**—OA is not being marketed to the best advantage. A separate committee or team, operating under the auspices of the governing board, should address the following:

- Develop and execute a plan for promoting the OA mission and image within the congregation and the center itself. The goal should be two-fold: Secure the enrollment of member children; and, secure the wholehearted support and good will of the entire congregational membership.
- Develop and execute a plan for promoting the OA mission and image within the community at large, and the childcare community of the District and Synod.
- I noted a very well done Web site. However, other factors and venues should be attended to. These include: signage; marketing pieces; Hosanna's newsletter; Sunday bulletin; neighborhood journals; newspaper articles and ads; social and fundraising events that bring neighbors and guests onto the property for food, fun, and learning; "member" tuition rates for families who are members of neighboring Lutheran congregations.

6. **Developing Ties with the Congregation**—The relationship between OA and Hosanna has already been addressed in the above recommendations. Currently, it leaves much to be desired. The two bodies perform as two completely separate missions and ministries, with little respect or support for the other. There seems little genuine interest in the ministry of OA by Hosanna, or of Hosanna by OA for that matter. Each goes about their perceived missions independent of the other, yet connected by a physical space and financial obligations that they are forced to share. A member admitted that they "don't care anymore" about OA or what goes on down there. This is someone who once cared very much and had invested much of herself in the start of both OA and Hosanna. It feels like OA is nothing to Hosanna but a hoped for source of revenue. And when that falls short, it is a burden. Apparently, the only time Hosanna wants to hear from OA is the end of the month to see how they did financially. The pastor and a governing board will need to take the lead in relating to the ministry of OA. Then more of the congregation might become interested once again and more supportive of the

tremendous opportunity for sharing the Word that is present in the OA center.

7. **Staffing/Labor**—At different times of the day and from day to day, the center goes from being understaffed to overstaffed. The schedule for staff should be reviewed to eliminate staffing overages. The overages aren't long, but over time they add up to some significant costs. On the other hand, when the center is short staffed due to sick leave or vacation, other staffing arrangements must be made for coverage. Either call in a substitute (It isn't easy) or ask someone already there to stay longer. However, overtime must be avoided or limited as much as possible. It comes at extra cost, but these costs can usually be avoided by having hired sufficient staff on a part-time basis to provide the flexibility needed at all times. When running a quality program it is essential to have that familiar face caring for the children and greeting parents who may already be unnerved by the absence of one of their regular teachers. It is much more comfortable for them to see someone whom they are familiar with. Directors should not be in the classrooms to cover staffing shortages and ratios except in rare emergencies. While it is important for the Directors to spend time in the class rooms, it should be for supervisory purposes as prescribed in their job descriptions and responsibilities.
8. **Administrative Roles and Compensation**—The Directors of OA are currently compensated within industry standards for their positions. However, the Administrative Assistant compensation is notably higher than most others with the same level of responsibility in the industry. In fact, her salary is more in line with what a typical Assistant Director would be making. An administrative team of three for a center of this size is not unreasonable, but it is a consideration, especially if we include the portion of the salary for the payroll and financial accounting which is paid by the center. The total cost of administrative overhead must be carefully watched along with every other expense. A good director will have it well in mind, and strive to build a front office team with the combination of gifts needed for the entire task. But these gifts need to be provided without exceeding appropriate budget levels. It will do no good to have the finest management team if there is nothing to manage because the program failed financially. Another consideration is that the center wants to be positioned for GROWTH. However, the usual arrangement of a single director, an assistant director, and a receptionist/administrative assistant has proven successful in many, many situations. Somehow, the salary outlay for management should be brought more in line with the norm.
9. **The Pastor's Role**—I became very concerned about the role Pastor Furlow holds in relation to OA. He made it quite clear to me that when he was called to Hosanna, part of the arrangement was that he would have no responsibility to or for OA beyond chapel on Wednesdays. The Directors agree he does a wonderful job with the children on these occasions, but there is very little contact with the children or their families beyond that by anyone from Hosanna. The pastor and the congregation are therefore ignoring one of the finest avenues of Gospel outreach available to a congregation. This would be nearly inexcusable were it not for the fact that more than one congregation has been known to make this error.

When the family of God, a Christian congregation, opens its home to those who do not yet know the warm fellowship of the body of Christ, and then turns its back upon those lost ones as they traverse its hallways, playgrounds, and parking areas, how will they answer their Lord for wasting the opportunity to draw someone new to the glorious peace and joy Jesus obtained for them by his sacrifice?

10. Pastor Furlows wife is the **Director of Children's Ministry for Hosanna**. There is clearly some tension between her and the Directors of OA over use of space and the many facets of that problem. Who cleans up? What can be displayed, and where? What items may be used by both? Who will pay to replace something broken or used up? The pastor may be caught in the middle of this, and it is not an easy position. Certainly he must be objective in his approach, despite the pressures involved. No doubt, both the OA Directors and their colleagues in the other children's ministries have legitimate issues. These can be resolved among well-meaning Christians, it has been shown time and again. But perhaps some hearts need to be turned, on either side, before resolution can be reached here.
11. **Neither of the OA Directors are members of Hosanna**, or connected to its ministry in any way beyond OA. They have not consistently made it to weekly staff meetings. It must become a priority for at least one of them to attend every meeting of the ministry team. Of course, these staff meetings must include time for the director to share and be a full partner of the Ministry Team for Hosanna. It was reported that more than once their time on the agenda was missed because they were late and pastor had to rush out of the meeting to make it to chapel on time. It would seem that this arm of ministry, probably the single largest budget item of the congregation, should receive a prominent place in the eyes of the entire church staff. But they must earn that honor by their regular attendance and by demonstrating their concern for the course of the gospel among all the congregation's ministries of the word.
12. **Enrollment**—It is reported that OA Hosanna lost ten to fourteen Pre-K children to the newly established lottery funded program last fall. These were children that OA had not expected to lose and had budgeted to have enrolled. In addition, several other options for families with young children now exist in America City that weren't there when OA opened. This makes for a very competitive environment for OA. There is space available in virtually every classroom, which has led to some inefficiency in staffing, with resulting excessive costs. It is necessary, therefore, to regroup the children on site at any given time, within permissible guidelines, to maximize ratios. It may be necessary for the present also to increase ratios to the higher state allowance. Somehow, the costs of staffing must be reduced. This is the largest budget item. Unless it is addressed, little progress can be made. However, combining age groups would only be a short-term answer, because it will have a negative impact upon your perceived program quality. In an area like America City, you may not be able to afford to do that. There are too many other options for families. This means your only alternative is to fill the spaces that you have in the groups now existing. Back to the importance of marketing. It is not a new thing to lose children through

attrition to public schools or other programs. It shines a spotlight on the quality of your care and on the variety of your program offerings. Do you need to open more classes for twos and threes, mother's morning out, a half-day pre-school, or extended care? The attrition also raises the importance of every potential contact. Each phone call and each tour are critical. Make certain that each enrollment inquiry call is handled with the goal of scheduling a tour. The goal for every tour is to turn it into an enrollment. Some staff members are likely more gifted for this than are others. The approach must be positive and upbeat. A smile, a warm and welcoming tone, a confident manner are very significant in winning the heart and mind of a prospective parent. It begins with a sense of assurance that Open Arms America City is indeed the best place for that next family. If this assurance is presently a little hard to acquire, then everyone must set to the task of making it so. It almost seemed like the directors simply felt, "We are here and if they want our kind of program then they will enroll, if they don't, they won't." This is a fraudulent notion. Anyone in sales will despise the thought. The directors need to be more aggressive in selling the wonderful quality program that they have created and are offering.

13. **Program**—The program that I observed leaves much to be commended. The children were experiencing positive activities throughout the day, from the warm greetings upon arrival to the wonderful and appropriate lesson plans that were being carried out, to the big hugs on their way out. It should not be difficult for the program to achieve accreditation by NAEYC, NLSA (National Lutheran School Accreditation), or other recognition. It would be very helpful in persuading prospective parents to enroll their child.
14. **Budget and Finances**—The directors have little input in the preparation of their operating budget. One of them seems very capable of doing this for them and preparing their monthly financials. But this leaves the directors with little invested in the creation of the budget and thereby leaves them with little ownership of it. It also fails to force them to plan ahead toward some realistic growth goals for the fall. The suggestion here is that the budget, or at least the budget writing process, be used as an opportunity to set some realistic growth goals and create a motivation for action in some other areas, specifically marketing.
15. **Concordia Plans Services—the Big Rock**—If it is true as reported that the church is enrolled in the Concordia Plans and has two staff members registered, but does not offer the benefits plan to OA staff, this may be the most significant issue of all to be dealt with. This exposes Hosanna and OA to enormous financial consequences if Concordia Plans Services chooses to make an issue of it. The Concordia Plans require that if a congregation is enrolled in the benefits plans, all eligible staff must be offered the benefits. OA, as a ministry of the congregation, is not in any way exempted from the rules of participation in the plan. Therefore, Concordia Plans Services may at any time require not only that eligible Open Arms staff members be enrolled, but that premiums be remitted for a back period as may be specified. We cannot, therefore, condone or encourage the practice regarding benefits as it exists at Hosanna Lutheran Church. We can, however, affirm that to our knowledge those centers which do offer a benefits package to

their staff also manage, with some difficulty, to handle the cost within their budgets. But the cost of benefits is “a big rock” in the financial condition of the center. The **Open Arms Director’s Guide** offers important advice about handling the cost of a benefits package. It requires careful hiring of staff, careful grouping of children, and careful assignment of teachers to avoid the pitfalls. The **Director’s Guide** is available by request to members of the Open Arms Institute at no charge. Some good news related to this issue is that if OA is not offering a benefits package to any employees, and if the center is still experiencing some financial challenges, then there has to be a lot of room for improvement through the careful management of the center. Under the existing circumstances, the financial picture ought to be very bright. Consequently, it should be relatively easy to bring about some improvement.

16. **The Directors could benefit by associating professionally** with other directors and “getting out” into the world of childcare. The Open Arms Institute offers annual Leadership Conferences for this purpose. The districts of the LC—MS also offer regional, and sometimes local, conferences and workshops. The Florida-Georgia District has such a conference coming up in Houston on **February 7-9**. Information on the conference may be found at the district Web site. The next Open Arms Leadership Conference is scheduled to be held at Concordia University in Mequon, Wisconsin **August 3-5, 2006**. Registration information will be mailed to all Open Arms centers when it becomes available.

Conclusion

Open Arms Christian Child Development Center at Hosanna Lutheran Church in America City is a ministry still fully deserving of the name Open Arms. The administrators and staff of this center have a high level of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the care and growth of the children enrolled. The Christian education offered here is generally of the finest quality throughout.

But there are concerns related to the center and its relationship with the congregation that cast some doubt about the center’s future status and viability. The primary concerns among the staff and congregational leaders relate to the center’s financial status. While these concerns are justified and can be dealt with as recommended above, we find that the center’s relationship with the congregation and its role under the

ministry of Word and Sacrament must be of equal or greater concern.

A willing attention to the suggestions contained in this report can be significant in restoring this ministry to the role and status it once occupied for the congregation.

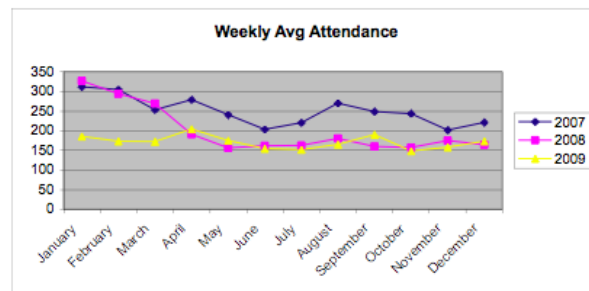
Directors and congregational leaders are invited to be in touch with the undersigned regarding any questions or clarifications, which may be needed. We consider it a privilege to have been asked to consult with Hosanna and its Open Arms center. We pray that our gracious Lord may cast His blessing upon the time spent in America City, and also upon the observations and suggestions in this report.

In the Savior's name,

The Consulting Team

Attendance, Weekly AVG

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2007	312	305	253	279	241	203	220	270	249	243	202	221
2008	327	294	269	191	156	162	163	180	160	157	175	164
2009	186	173	172	204	175	155	152	165	190	148	158	173



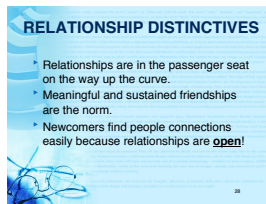
APPENDIX D

TCN CHURCH TRAINING PRESENTATION


2/11/12

RELATIONSHIP DISTINCTIVES

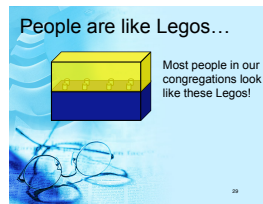
- Relationships are in the passenger seat on the way up the curve.
- Meaningful and sustained friendships are the norm.
- Newcomers find people connections easily because relationships are **open**!



People are like Legos...



Most people in our congregations look like these Legos!



People are like Legos...



Most guests look like these Legos!



The Third Place



Place #1
Place #2
Place #3

RELATIONSHIPS (3RD PLACES)


- The larger the church, the more 3RD places need to be created
- Interest groups and triads
- The goal is to move people from visitor to disciple
- Churches grow as groups multiply



Take the Car for a Spin!

Debrief:

- How easy is it for new people coming into your church to make new friends?
- What are some ways that you personally can fill your lego with undisciplined friends?
- What are some potential Interest Groups you might start?

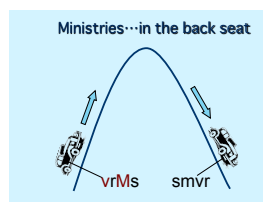


Lunch Break

45 Minutes



Ministries...in the back seat



MINISTRIES DISTINCTIVES

- Ministries are in the back seat on the way up the curve.
- Ministries support the vision.
- Ministries are the hands (the doing part of the Vision)



2/11/12

MINISTRIES

- Start with consumer: "If I come to the congregation, what will it do for me?"
- Start where people are and take them where God wants them to be.

CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

- Worship
- Relationships
- Care
- Meet family needs
- Education
- Preaching
- Well-kept facilities
- Financial stability

Group Work on CSI Chart

On the top 2/3rds, review the last 12 months of the congregation's life. List:

- The top five financial expenditures.
- The 5 most frequent events.
- The top five accomplishments.

2 Key Questions..Peter Drucker

- What business are we in?
- How is business?

Discussion Questions

- Is the business we identified in our church different than the business that Jesus said we should be in? How so?
- How is business in actuality compared to what we would like it to be?
- Today, who is our customer?
- According to Jesus, who should our customer be?
- What can we do to improve?

Structure...in the driver's seat WRONG!!!

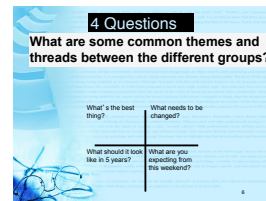
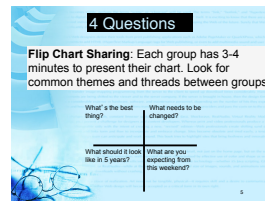
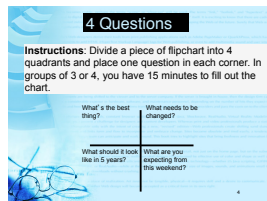
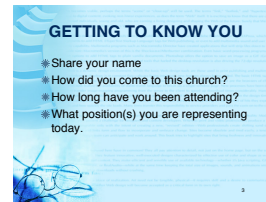
STRUCTURE DISTINCTIVES

- Structure is in the back seat on the way up the curve.
- Structure holds the body together.
- Structure allows the proper management and coordination of the Vision.

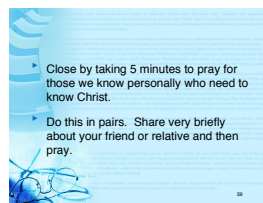
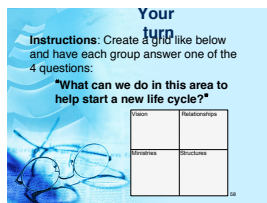
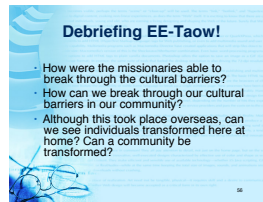
Leadership

- Bureaucratic:** (Responsibility — Authority = Safe but not Effective)
- Autocratic:** (Responsibility + Authority — Accountability = Effective but not Safe)

2/11/12



2/11/12



APPENDIX E

TCN PRESCRIPTION EXAMPLE

Anonymous Lutheran Church Consultation

2009

Introduction: It has been a privilege to work with the pastor, leaders, and congregation of Anonymous Lutheran Church. Everyone has been helpful and provided us with all the information that was required for us to conduct this consultation. Our prayer is that God will use this report to motivate the congregation to do great things for God in this community.

Strengths

Family: The members of Anonymous Lutheran Church are blessed with a strong sense of family where individuals feel accepted, cared for, and loved. The friendliness and commitment to each other is demonstrated by the way they meet each other's needs physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Location: The members of Anonymous Lutheran Church have been blessed with a great location in the mission field. God has given the congregation a great opportunity to reach the surrounding neighborhood while at the same time being easily accessible to those from other communities in the region.

Longing for Spiritual Renewal: Anonymous Lutheran Church is a congregation that has shown a longing to know God's will for the future. There is a deep desire for spiritual renewal that will motivate the congregation to honor God.

Community Involvement: Anonymous Lutheran Church is a community-focused ministry. It has a definite commitment of being involved with ministries that address the human care needs of its neighbors. Reaching out in the name of the compassionate Christ to those who are hurting has been a hallmark of the congregation's focus.

International Missions: Anonymous Lutheran Church is committed to mission work beyond their community. They have demonstrated a strong devotion to international missions. The congregation supports missions by praying, gathering offerings, and sending teams equipped for ministry.

Concerns

Great Commission and Vision: Anonymous Lutheran Church has been active in mission work in the community. However, the lack of a clear and compelling God-honoring vision has adversely affected the overall ministry of Anonymous Lutheran Church and has kept its ministries from reaching their potential in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Structure/Finances: The structure of Anonymous Lutheran Church divides authority from responsibility and provides for no accountability. It impedes the accomplishment of an outward-focused mission and is stifling the growth of the congregation. The financial health of the school and Anonymous Lutheran Church impacts the vitality of their membership. An inconsistent implementation of a unified budget between the school and the congregation has contributed to a general confusion about the financial realities facing the ministry.

Leadership: The lack of vision negatively impacts staff alignment and job descriptions. There is little teamwork among staff. The senior pastor and staff need additional training to assist them in becoming strategic and accountable to the ministry vision.

Children and Youth: We have observed a need for a more comprehensive children and student ministry at Anonymous Lutheran Church that is in line with the Great Commission. There is a desire among the congregation for deeper biblical teaching, more engaging worship, and more opportunities and activities to disciple this age group.

Property Enhancement: The property and facilities of Anonymous Lutheran Church exhibit a dated and worn appearance. With no apparent comprehensive plan for enhancement and maintenance, this is a discouragement to worshippers, guests, and potential school families.

Prescriptions

Mission & Vision: The senior pastor will call the congregation to a Day of Prayer. The purpose of this Day of Prayer is twofold. First, the congregation will confess its failure to fulfill the Great Commission with regularity and consistency. Second, the congregation will pray for God to move in the hearts of the leaders to produce a vision of a changed community, where thousands are encountering the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Day of Prayer needs to occur by ----- 2009. Additionally, Anonymous Lutheran Church will participate in the district's visioning process. This process will include community surveys and community-based focus groups. The congregation will gather for a day of prayer and reflection to develop an outward-focused vision for the community. This Vision Day process will be led by a District consultant and held no later than ----- 2009. Following the Vision Day process, the senior pastor and staff will develop a vision statement. This statement will be shared with the congregation by ----- -- 2009.

The vision statement will be used to produce four net-fishing events to be completed by - ----- 2010. As many members of the congregation as possible should be enlisted to participate in the net-fishing events. The first of these events needs to occur by ----- 2009.

The vision statement will be used to conduct a vision audit of all ministries of the congregation. This audit includes the school, all ongoing church ministries, and worship services. The purpose of the audit is to determine how each ministry in the church fits into the vision of making more disciples for Jesus Christ. Ministries that do not fit that mission must be changed and brought into alignment with the vision, or be discontinued. This vision audit of all ministries needs to be completed by ----- 2009. This audit will be repeated within 12 months of the completion of the first audit.

Structure/ Finances: The president will lead the congregation in suspending those articles of the constitution and the bylaws that describe how the congregation functions in its ministries

by a 2/3rds majority vote. These articles, by vote of the congregation, will be put in abeyance for three years. At the end of the three years, the congregation will vote either to return to the original articles or to adopt new ones that are written to reflect how ministry is being done at that time.

The congregation will vote to suspend the appropriate articles by adopting this report.

Once the articles are suspended, the church will adopt an Accountable Leader Model of governance. In this new model of governance, there will be a Board of Directors of no more than seven people, including the pastor. These seven will sit on the board to represent an outward-focused mission and the new vision when it is adopted. Their role will be to govern the church. The pastor's role will be to lead the church. The role of staff members will be to manage the church. The role of the members will be to conduct the ministry of the church.

Upon suspension of the current articles, an interim Board of Directors will be appointed by the pastor. The congregation will elect the new Board of Directors to their office by ----- 2009.

In addition, the pastor will complete a review of the congregation's financial condition, including its financial relationship with the school by ----- 2009. Ministries will be required to operate in a positive cash flow, as soon as possible. Ministries continuing to operate in a deficit after 12 months of the adoption of this report will be eliminated.

Staffing: Ministry descriptions will be reevaluated and rewritten to align positions with the new vision. Each staff person, with the assistance of the pastor, will set annual goals, which will contribute to the ministry fulfilling its vision. This will be completed by ----- 2009. Each staff person will be evaluated semi-annually to determine the effectiveness in reaching the goals that have been set. The ministry will provide the pastor with a coach of his selection to assist him to be more focused and effective in implementing the congregation's vision.

The pastor will make extended site visits to at least three outward-focused churches in the region. This will help him learn what is required to lead this ministry to its next level of ministry.

The ministry will pay for the coaching and expenses related to the congregational visits. These visits will be completed within the next 12 months.

Children and Youth Ministry: The senior pastor will initiate an evaluation of the current children and student ministries. He will assemble a team to assist him in visiting and assessing a minimum of three successful area ministries. He will develop and implement a plan, including hiring appropriate staff, which seeks to produce creative and engaging ministries to these age groups and their families both within Anonymous Lutheran as well in the surrounding community. This process will be completed by ----- 2009.

Property: The ministries of Anonymous Lutheran have been richly blessed with a facility and property that has wonderful possibilities for a variety of ministries and outreach. In order to improve appeal to guests of the congregation, a minimum sum of \$20,000 will be utilized to acquire the expertise of an interior decorator and carry out enhancements of the narthex, restrooms, and community areas entering the sanctuary within three months from congregational approval of this consultation.

The congregation will vote on accepting or rejecting this report by ----- 2009. If the report is accepted, the Florida-Georgia District commits to walk alongside Anonymous Lutheran Church for a minimum of two years to help with the implementation of this report.

Conclusion: We want to thank you for the opportunity to consult with you. We believe your best days as a congregation are ahead of you.

The Consultation Team Members

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE OF LEARNING COMMUNITY LESSON

Learning Community I

Creating Ownership

Personal Check-in

Facilitator Instructions: Take a few minutes and isolate a story or a passage about a biblical leader who had to overcome resistance. Be ready to share your thoughts on these questions:

- What impresses you about this biblical leader?
- How did he/she seek to overcome resistance?
- Which leadership lesson or principle from the story or passage challenges you the most as a leader?

Sharing Question:

What is one thing that you would appreciate prayer for as it relates to the ideas and concepts you have been exposed to in this learning community? In other words, how can we help you in prayer today?

*As a group, spend time praying for the needs that were shared around the room.

**20-30
minutes**

Book Review Debrief:

***Direct Hit* by Dr. Paul Borden**

1. On the bottom of page 17, Borden argues for two major causes of inward-looking churches. Which one best describes your current situation and why?
2. Which “Barriers to Leading Change” listed on pages 20-22 are true for you and your church? Why?
3. Borden argues that “Leadership behavior is a practice, not a gift.” Do you agree or disagree with this and why?
4. Of the leadership behaviors listed on pages 30ff., which behavior(s) could you strengthen and how would you do it?
5. Which Vision tactics from Chapter 3 would you like to try and how will you do it?
6. Which tactics for creating urgency (Ch. 4) would you like to implement and how will you do it?
7. Borden suggests that a pastor will need to transition from a “chaplain” to a “leader” over time.

Do you agree or disagree with this argument and why?

8. The *Direct Hit* approach utilizes “outside help” as a part of the revitalization process. What could the risks and benefits be for your church and for you personally in getting outside help?

9. What are three of the most important insights you have gained from reading *Direct Hit*?

Case Study: For the First LC

Facilitator Instructions: Give pastors 15 minutes to work through the case study worksheet on their own. Answer the questions in the “Case Study Report.” Ask each pastor to post their ideas on a piece of flipchart which they will present to the rest of the group. Bring the group back together and give each pastor five to ten minutes to present their “first pass” of the significant issues that the case study is facing. This is meant to be a brief orientation to the group and will be built on in the future.

Case Study Template: For all Future LCs

The purpose of the Case Study exercise is twofold:

** To provide the pastor with a reproducible tool that he can use with his key lay leaders to assess and monitor health issues related to the church.*

**To allow other pastors to resource the case study pastor through peer mentoring (problem solving, sharing of ideas, and constructive feedback).*

For the case study format to be effective, the case study pastor needs to take time (by himself or with key lay leaders) to prepare a case study report.

Typical case study segment (45-60 minutes in length)

1. Hand out the case study report (1-2 pages in length) and allow everyone time to read over it carefully. The pastor is meant to respond to the eight core case study questions (see next page).
2. Case study pastor walks the group through his report. This is not a time to brainstorm but to simply clarify the core issues the church is facing.
3. The group offers ideas, feedback, observations, questions, and concerns with the purpose of helping the pastor think more deeply about core issues that need to be addressed.

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- a. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.
- b. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?
- c. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?
- d. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What

are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long-term?

- e. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.
- f. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?
- g. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?
- h. What are your plans for the next three months?

Learning Activity: “You want me to do what?”

With a partner, take a couple of minutes to share about a time when you had to make a change that you really didn’t want to make. Specifically, talk about

1. What made the change so difficult or challenging for you?
2. What kinds of things did the “required change” tap into mentally and emotionally for you?

Learning Activity: Creating Ownership

Facilitator Instructions: Draw the groups’ attention to the article below entitled “Creating Ownership.” Ask them to read slowly and to underline key thoughts and principles as they go. After everyone has finished ask the discussion questions at the end of the article (either in pairs, triads, or as a group):

Creating Ownership

Leadership maxim on resistance: When you encounter resistance it’s wise to pay attention. Or stated differently, when you encounter resistance but do nothing, hoping it will go away on its own, you’re waiting for a time bomb to go off.

Push back, lack of follower-ship, questions, no buy-in, criticism—these are all part of being a leader. They can best be summed up in one word: resistance. Let’s face it, people and organizations find it difficult to change. There can be a number of reasons why people resist change, but one thing is clear: wise leaders pay attention to resistance. When people fail to follow, either passively or actively, leaders need to look for clues and seek to address the pockets of opposition. Inactivity or inattentiveness on the part of a leader regarding resistance can severely arrest the change process in the life of the organization.

10 Reasons People Resist Change

They:

1. Don’t see the benefit

Some oppose change because they just don’t see the benefit of changing. They might say, “I’m

fine the way I am,” or “I don’t understand why we should change.” The problem for these people is that they have not fully embraced the possible benefits of making a change. They have not been persuaded. The preferred future just doesn’t seem very compelling to them.

2. Feel like they will lose something

Change is about costs and benefits. A part of the nature of change is the reality of loss. Adjustments that are made in an organization require that some people may lose position, influence, or control.

3. Don’t agree with you

People may nod their heads at the meeting, but deep down in their hearts they have no intention of following your lead. Leaders can’t please everyone nor should they. Some decisions that leaders make regarding direction, goals, or the future may be quite unpopular. Unfortunately, some who oppose change never voice their opinions and stay underground with their discontent.

4. Don’t see the problem

This group of resisters are frustrating because they just don’t see it. They don’t acknowledge that a change is needed because they are apathetic. Deep down they either don’t care or have not picked up a sense of urgency about the issues at hand.

5. Are going to wait and see

Others resist because they have been down the change path before and they got burned. Their strategy is to hold their breath and wait for the whole thing to blow over. They have seen people get excited about change before, only to lose their enthusiasm two months later. These folks have decided that it’s best to sit on the sidelines and simply wait and see how serious everyone is about changing.

6. Don’t feel confident to change

Some are resistant to change because they are intimidated by the very thought. If asked, they would tell you that they don’t have the skill or knowledge necessary to do what is being asked of them.

7. Are afraid of failing

Change is also spelled r-i-s-k. Some resistance is related to the fact that a portion of the people are afraid to fail. Their favorite motto is, “If I do nothing then I can’t fail.”

8. Fear the unknown

This group’s favorite motto is, “We’ve never done it like this before.” It is more comfortable to stay unchanged than to venture out into unknown territory. Staying in the boat is far better to this group than trying to walk on water.

9. Fear too many changes at the same time

Leaders can sometimes make the mistake of initiating too many changes at the same time. People can get buried or frustrated by all that is being asked of them. When too many “growth opportunities” are foisted upon people, resistance is likely to develop.

10. Have personality differences

Some people are not wired for change. They like predictability, stability and steadiness. Some resistance is simply rooted in personality differences. This group of resisters needs time to get “used to the idea” before they will buy in to the change initiative.

Tips for Creating Ownership

Tip #1: Involve people from the beginning.

If people have their fingerprints on the ideas, goals, and plans that a church develops, they will be much more likely to own it. Involving people from the beginning takes time and patience on the part of a leader, but it pays off down the road.

Tip #2: One thing at a time.

Leaders are notorious for loving change and trying new approaches to ministry. We must remember though that those who are following us are not nearly as “addicted” to new methods as

we are. If the ship keeps changing course, the sailors are going to get frustrated. With that in mind, choose your changes carefully. And when you are asking people to invest energy into an initiative give it your best and fullest attention as a leader.

Tip #3: Communicate often.

Many a fine vision of a preferred future has died on the vine due to under-communication. We fool ourselves into thinking that the people get it. We come down the mountain with the stone tablets in our hands and announce the new day and we deceive ourselves into believing that we have “communicated the vision.” Overcoming resistance to vision is an ongoing, relentless leadership challenge. So keep people abreast of what’s going on. Highlight advances, celebrate breakthroughs, and weave your vision into your sermons. Whatever you do, just keep talking about it.

Tip #4: Use case studies of other churches who have changed.

People are inspired by stories of changed lives. One of the best ways to handle “push-back” is to point to successful transformations. Sometimes a good, old-fashioned field trip, where your people get to talk with another church about changes that they have made, will do the trick. Or perhaps, it could be through a training series produced by any number of churches around the country. The key is to overcome resistance by inspiring and motivating your people with case study churches and leaders. Transformation is possible!

Tip #5: Expose people to new ideas.

There are times when resistance can be overcome by exposing a person to new ideas. Consider purchasing your favorite book, DVD, or CD in bulk quantities and handing it out to scores of people. Infect people with the disease through exposure to great ideas, great churches, and great leaders. Chances are, if you found a resource helpful, someone else will probably find it helpful. So don’t keep it to yourself. Get that powerful information into the hands of others and watch resistance go down.

Tip #6: Have open forums (small groups, classes, meetings).

In the business realm, companies form focus groups of customers to gain their opinions. Church leaders would be wise to pulse their “customers” from time to time in small gatherings. This is different than the typical annual meeting. Forums are small groups, Sunday school classes, and gatherings in a home where the express purpose is to talk about ideas, opportunities, questions, and concerns. This is a time for leaders to ask questions and listen. Leaders will discover valuable information in an open forum, and it will also alert you to potential problems that may be under the surface. Getting resistance out into the open in a safe, non-threatening group setting can go a long way toward overcoming resistance.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which four ideas from “Creating Ownership” stood out to you and why?
2. What principles from the article are you most challenged by and why?
3. What are your strengths and weaknesses in how you typically handle resistance?

Learning Activity: Resistance Role Play

Facilitator Instructions: This works best with groups of three people. The purpose of the role play is for individuals to practice the six tips for overcoming resistance. In each group:

- One person is the resisting layperson
- One person is the leader being resisted
- The other person is an observer

Each time there is a role play session, a new scenario should be selected from the list below. Give each role play session three to four minutes. The person playing the leader should try to use as many of the 6 tips as possible in working with the “resisting layperson.”

Scenario #1: The layperson does not like the recent shift toward contemporary music in the Sunday service.

Scenario #2: The layperson is frustrated by the emphasis on reaching out when there are so many pastoral care issues not being addressed.

Scenario #3: The layperson does not believe the church should build a new facility.

Scenario #4: The layperson does not want to join a small group.

Scenario #5: The layperson thinks that less money should be given to outreach projects.

Learning Activity: Me and Resistance

Facilitator Instructions: This is a time for individuals to work through resistance in their own lives and brainstorm ways to address it. Give each person ten minutes to work through the assignment on their own then pair them up to discuss their answers.

1. In what ways are you experiencing resistance from others right now or in the recent past?
2. What are some of the root causes or reasons for the resistance?
3. In what ways have you tried to remedy the situation?
4. Which of the “10 reasons people resist change” are you personally experiencing? Why?
5. Which of the 6 tips for overcoming resistance would you like to implement?
6. What steps do you need to take in the next 30 days to “lean into” resistance so that it can be overcome?
7. What needs to change within you, for you to be a leader who overcomes resistance more consistently?

Homework and Wrap-up

Facilitator Instructions: Close out the session by highlighting the homework assignment.

Homework Assignment:

1. Over the next few weeks be intentional with resistance. Go out of your way to spend time with some of the difficult people in your ministry area. Look for opportunities to lean into resistance rather than avoid it. Follow through on the reflections you generated on the “Me and Resistance” exercise and act on them. Be prepared to report in next time about how you handled your resistance opportunities.
2. Make it your goal to pray daily for a few people in your sphere of relationships who need Christ. Come prepared to discuss how you are personally engaging the community and how you are overcoming the ongoing challenges you face in being outreach oriented. Fill out the “Me and the Harvest” worksheet prior to the next meeting.
3. Read Andy Stanley’s book *Visioneering* and come prepared to discuss the Book Review Questions (see next page).

Book Review Questions

Visioneering by Andy Stanley

1. In what ways do you agree with Stanley's claim that "Visions are often born in the soul of a man or woman who is gripped by a tension between what is and what should be"?
2. With this tension in mind, what's bothering you? What is the solution?
3. In what ways are you inspired by Nehemiah's visioneering capabilities? How can you grow to be more like him as a leader?
4. What will you need to give up in order to pursue your vision?
5. What are the possible risks of you pursuing your vision?
6. What criticism or backlash might you get from others?
7. What distractions (good and bad) are you susceptible to that could cause you to lose momentum?
8. What actions could you take that, if done consistently, would provide the greatest potential for the vision's success?
9. Of the 20 "vision building blocks" listed on page 16, which are your top five and why?
10. What are the three most important insights from the book that you would like to implement?

LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?
2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?
3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?
4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?

Learning Community I—Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?

APPENDIX G

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APPENDIX H

QUESTIONS USED FOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

Please briefly tell me your pastoral ministry history to the present.

What led your church to enter into TCN?

How long have you been involved in TCN? When did your congregation adopt the prescriptions? When did your learning community begin? When did your congregational learning community begin?

Describe your experience with the consultation weekend.

Recall your experience leading up to the adoption of the prescriptions.

Describe your experience with the coaching aspect of TCN.

Describe your experience with the learning community.

What, if anything, has changed in your congregation as a result of involvement in the TCN process?

What has remained the same?

What, if anything, has changed for you professionally? What has changed, if anything, for you personally?

What, if anything, have you learned through TCN that you otherwise don't think you would have learned?

Have you experienced professional growth or increased competence in pastoral/missional practices? If so, please describe.

Has there been a change in spiritual vitality as a consequence of TCN involvement? If so, how and of what sort?

Has there been a change in your priorities and time management as a result of TCN? If so, how and of what sort?

How much time did you spend last week in prayer? In devotional reading? In community outreach (time in the community with the un-churched)? In any other spiritual discipline like fasting or private confession? In professional growth/learning (books, journals, etc.)? How does this compare to the way your week went pre-TCN?

To what would you attribute any positive changes since involvement in TCN? Any negative changes?

Have you seen any change in your willingness to take risk and face the unknown as a result of TCN? How about for your congregation? Please describe an illustration of this, if you can.

Can you recall any suffering or personal difficulties you have faced through the TCN process? If so, please describe the situation or situations.

Has the TCN process humbled you in any way? If so, how would you describe it?

Please rate the level of change your congregation experienced through TCN, 1 being minimal or gradual and 10 being radical or discontinuous. Elaborate.

Now please rate the level of change you have experienced with the same scale.

Have you seen a need to die to anything in order for new ministry to be resurrected? In other words, what, if anything, did your congregation have to stop doing and what resulted? Describe both the difficulties of this and the joy of it.

How about for you personally?

Luther understood the theology of the cross to be that God is known through suffering and the cross rather than any other method or approach. God works the same way in our lives as he did in Jesus Christ, through putting to death and raising up. Have you seen the cross at work in your ministry as a result of TCN? If so, please describe.

Does anything still need to change in your church? In yourself? If so, what?

What would you like to add to this interview so that I understand more fully your experience with TCN and how it has or has not brought about revitalization for you and your congregation?

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONS USED FOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

What led the church of the pastor you have coached to enter into TCN?

How long has the pastor you coach been involved in TCN? When did the congregation adopt the prescriptions? When did the learning community begin? When did the pastor's congregational learning community begin?

How far along is the pastor's congregation with the prescriptions adopted? What has been easy about them? What has been difficult?

How has the coaching gone?

How has the learning community developed?

What, if anything, has changed in the pastor's congregation as a result of involvement in the TCN process?

What has remained the same?

What, if anything, has changed for the pastor professionally? What has changed, if anything, for the pastor personally?

What, if anything, has the pastor learned through TCN that you otherwise don't think he would have learned?

Has the pastor experienced professional growth or increased competence in pastoral/missional practices? If so, please describe.

Has there been a change in spiritual vitality of the pastor as a consequence of TCN involvement? If so, how and of what sort?

Has there been a change in the pastor's priorities and time management as a result of TCN? If so, how and of what sort?

How much time did the pastor spend per week in prayer? In devotional reading? In community outreach (time in the community with the unchurched)? In any other

spiritual discipline like fasting or private confession? In professional growth/learning (books, journals, etc.)? How does this compare to the way the pastor's week appeared to go pre-TCN?

To what would you attribute any positive changes in this congregation and pastor since involvement in TCN? Any negative changes?

Have you seen any change in the pastor's willingness to take risk and face the unknown as a result of TCN? How about for the congregation? Please describe an illustration of this, if you can.

Can you recall any suffering or personal difficulties the pastor faced through the TCN process? If so, please describe the situation or situations.

Has the TCN process humbled the pastor in any way? If so, how would you describe it?

Please rate the level of change the congregation experienced through TCN, 1 being minimal or gradual and 10 being radical or discontinuous. Elaborate.

Now please rate the level of change the pastor has experienced with the same scale.

Have you seen a need for the pastor's congregation to die to anything in order for new ministry to be resurrected? In other words, what, if anything, did the congregation have to stop doing and what resulted? Describe both the difficulties of this and the joy of it.

How about for the pastor personally?

Luther understood the theology of the cross to be that God is known through suffering and the cross rather than any other method or approach. God works the same way in our lives as he did in Jesus Christ, through putting to death and raising up. Have you seen the cross at work in the pastor's ministry as a result of TCN? If so, please describe.

Does anything still need to change in this church? In the pastor? If so, what?

What would you like to add to this interview so that I understand more fully your pastor's experience with TCN and how it has or has not brought about revitalization for him and his congregation?

APPENDIX J

QUESTIONS USED FOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 3

What led your church to enter into TCN?

How long has your pastor and your church been involved in TCN? When did the congregation adopt the prescriptions? When did the learning community begin? When did the pastor's congregational learning community begin? Are you a part of that learning community?

How far along is the congregation with the prescriptions adopted? What has been easy about them? What has been difficult?

How has the learning community in the congregation developed?

What, if anything, has changed in the congregation as a result of involvement in the TCN process?

What has remained the same?

What, if anything, has changed for the pastor professionally? What has changed, if anything, for the pastor personally?

What, if anything, has the pastor learned through TCN that you otherwise don't think he would have learned?

Has the pastor experienced professional growth or increased competence in pastoral/missional practices? If so, please describe.

Has there been a change in spiritual vitality of the pastor as a consequence of TCN involvement? If so, how and of what sort?

Has there been a change in the pastor's priorities and time management as a result of TCN? If so, how and of what sort?

How much time did the pastor spend per week in prayer? In devotional reading? In community outreach (time in the community with the unchurched)? In any other

spiritual discipline like fasting or private confession? In professional growth/learning (books, journals, etc.)? How does this compare to the way the pastor's week appeared to go pre-TCN?

To what would you attribute any positive changes in this congregation and pastor since involvement in TCN? Any negative changes?

Have you seen any change in the pastor's willingness to take risk and face the unknown as a result of TCN? How about for the congregation? Please describe an illustration of this, if you can.

Can you recall any suffering or personal difficulties the pastor faced through the TCN process? If so, please describe the situation or situations.

Has the TCN process humbled your pastor in any way? If so, how would you describe it?

Please rate the level of change the congregation experienced through TCN, 1 being minimal or gradual and 10 being radical or discontinuous. Elaborate.

Now please rate the level of change your pastor has experienced with the same scale.

Have you seen a need for this congregation to die to anything in order for new ministry to be resurrected? In other words, what, if anything, did the congregation have to stop doing and what resulted? Describe both the difficulties of this and the joy of it.

How about for the pastor personally?

Luther understood the theology of the cross to be that God is known through suffering and the cross rather than any other method or approach. God works the same way in our lives as he did in Jesus Christ, through putting to death and raising up. Have you seen the cross at work in the pastor's ministry as a result of TCN? If so, please describe.

Does anything still need to change in this church? In the pastor? If so, what?

What would you like to add to this interview so that I understand more fully your pastor's experience with TCN and how it has or has not brought about revitalization for him and his congregation?

APPENDIX K
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

John D. Roth is a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary of Wilmore, Kentucky, who wishes to interview me as part of his research project on the Transforming Churches Network in the Florida-Georgia District of the LC—MS. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes. There are no direct benefits, risks, or compensation to me for participating in this study.

John Roth will be making his best possible effort to guarantee every possible protection, including the following:

1. I am under no obligation to be interviewed if I do not wish to do so.
2. I am not obligated to answer any of the questions. I may decline to answer any or all of the questions, and I may terminate the interview at any point.
3. If there is anything that I do not wish to have quoted, I may say at any point during or after the interview what I wish to have kept “off the record” and it will not be quoted.
4. If John Roth decides to use any portions of this interview in subsequent publications, that he will send me a copy of the portions of the interview, including any quotations and paraphrases that he decides to use, for my editing and written approval. I will have the right to edit the material and he will only use the material that I have approved.

Based on reading this form (Check one):

_____ I agree to be interviewed.

_____ I do not agree to be interviewed.

Name of Participant Signature Date

Email address Phone Number

John D. Roth
1801 NW 5th Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32603
352-376-2062

APPENDIX L
RESEARCH COVENANT

John D. Roth, a Doctor of Ministry student at Asbury Theological Seminary of Wilmore, Kentucky, has reviewed with me the following items concerning confidentiality and the use of the interview he conducted as part of his research project on the Transforming Churches Network in the Florida-Georgia District of the LC—MS:

5. I give John Roth permission to digitally record this conversation for research purposes. John Roth agrees to properly dispose of this recording within six months of the completion of the research project.
6. John Roth will share no information from this conversation with any ecclesiastical authority in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
7. John Roth will be the only person who knows the specific identity of the congregations and people interviewed in this research. He will do his best to keep the identity of congregations and persons anonymous in his descriptions of the interviews and research.
8. No one's interview or responses to questions will be shared with anyone else interviewed.

The parties below agree to the above listed items:

Name of Participant Signature Date

John D. Roth Date

John D. Roth
1801 NW 5th Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32603
352-376-2062

APPENDIX M

THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS AND THEOLOGY OF GLORY COMPARED

Theology of the Cross vs. Theology of Glory

Theology of Glory	Theology of Cross
Looks on the invisible things of God as if they were clearly perceptible in those things that have actually happened or have been made.	Comprehends the visible and manifest things of God through suffering and the cross.
Calls evil good and good evil. Sees the cross as foolishness and a stumbling block.	Calls the thing what it actually is. Sees the cross as the wisdom and power of God.
With a theology of glory humanity will misuse the best in the worst manner.	With a theology of the cross humanity receives the best even in the worst circumstances.
The law says, "do this," and it is never done.	Grace says: "Believe this and everything is already done."

Theology of the Cross vs. Theology of Glory

Theology of Glory	Theology of Cross
Human beings, though flawed, are capable of knowing God directly	Human beings are so curved in on themselves that they cannot see God directly or clearly.
One can rise to meet with God through mysticism, moralism or philosophical speculation.	All human ways to God are broken. Only through Christ can God be known indirectly.
God is understood through nature and "makes sense."	God is hidden and known only through the cross and suffering.
Good things come to good people. Bad things are to happen to bad people.	Good things come to bad people by God's grace and free choice. This can only be believed because of the cross.

Theologian of the Cross	Theologian of Glory
Lets God's law put self to death and welcomes accountability to others	Avoids accountability under the law by scapegoating, blame shifting, claiming a victim status when inappropriate or other means
Engages in lifelong learning	Settles for little learning, believing one has arrived
Seeks out a private confession relationship with another Christian	Keeps confession general and distant
Sees life's goal as self-expenditure and mutuality in community	Sees life's goal is self-attainment and self-possession
Embraces legitimate suffering	Avoids suffering or seeks it out for the sake of self
Humility is defined as the renunciation of all virtuousness	Humility is defined as a virtue itself, something to possess or attain
Seeks to bring about egalitarian and functional relationships of servants based on love	Seeks to climb the hierarchical structure based on power and rights
Bases pattern of Christian life on the understanding of Trinitarian mutuality and community, a God of self-expending, self-giving community and gospel	Bases pattern of Christian life on monarchical monism, a God of self-possession, power and law

APPENDIX N

CONTINUING EDUCATION OVERTURE

To Encourage Continuing Education for Church Professionals

WHEREAS, in 1997 the Florida-Georgia District in convention passed Resolution 2:97:01 entitled “Continuing Education” stating “Resolved, that The Florida-Georgia District in convention reaffirm the intent of the Synod in convention and encourage professional church workers to seek twenty hours of continuing education per year; and be it further Resolved, that pastors, teachers, congregations and district administrative units work together at the local level to develop an annual growth plan for continuing education and that adequate funding support and non-vacation time on behalf of professional church workers be made available”; and

WHEREAS, Lutheran school educators and administrators who are state credentialed are to engage in continuing education on a yearly basis to retain their credentials; and

WHEREAS, life-long learning is a matter of faithful Christian stewardship and one of the FL-GA District critical target descriptors on leadership development; and

WHEREAS, few church professionals in the LC—MS have formal continuing education plans despite resolutions like 2:97:01 being passed in district conventions; and

WHEREAS, the need is greater than ever for continued learning to engage a rapidly shifting culture and world so that church professionals are equipped to lead their congregations; therefore be it

Resolved, that the President of the Florida-Georgia District oversee the development and implement a system by the next district convention that establishes an expectation that all professional church workers serving in the Florida-Georgia District will be engaged in life-long learning; and be it further

Resolved, that the structure of this system includes a reporting mechanism so that all church professionals report their growth plans and CEU’s to it; and be it further

Resolved, that congregations be encouraged to develop policies for continuing education that include appropriate levels of funding and non-vacation time for church workers to accomplish their goals; and be it finally

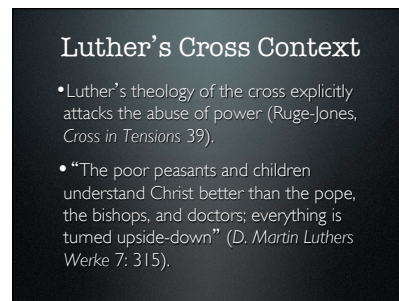
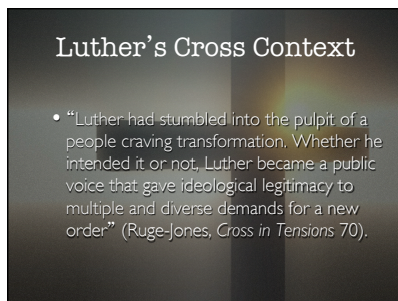
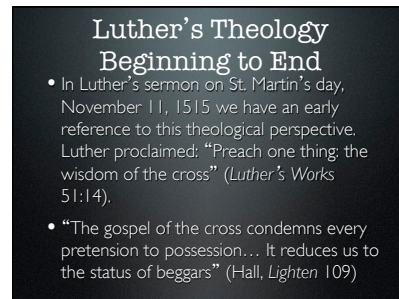
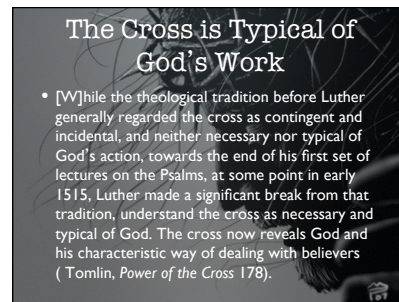
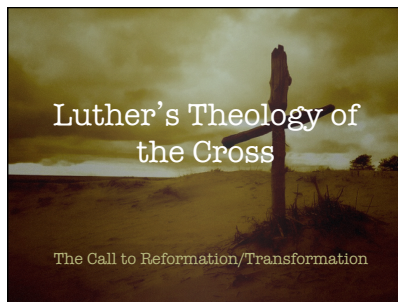
Resolved, that this structure once in place in the Florida-Georgia District be promoted as a model throughout the LC—MS by bringing it through overture by this district to the next convention of the LC—MS.

Signature of President or Chairman

Signature of Secretary
Board of Directors, FL-GA District LC—MS

APPENDIX O

THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS PASTORAL RETREAT PRESENTATION



Luther's Cross Context

- The Church was also an exploiter. On its huge estates it held the peasants in feudal dependence and fleeced them not infrequently with the same indifference with which the secular feudal lords exploited their workers (Brändler, *Martin Luther* 99)

Luther's Cross Context

- The Fuggers, a handful of European firms like theirs, and their investors became incredibly wealthy through this system of loan and collection... Between 1511 and 1527, the Fuggers, more than doubled their holdings every two years (Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions* 50)

The 95 Theses

- "Throughout the theses, the importance of institutional transformation asserts itself in Luther's accusations" (Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions* 79).
- "All life is repentance and a cross of Christ" (*Luther's Works* 31: 89).

The 95 Theses

- 43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than the one who buys indulgences.
- 45. Christians are to be taught that the one who sees the needy and passes that one by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.

The Heidelberg Disputation

- Luther was invited by Staupitz to debate the areas of sin, free will and grace, specifically being warned to avoid the whole area of indulgences.
- Yet, the whole Disputation flows out of the controversies surrounding the 95 Theses and its attacks on the unjust practices of the Church.

The Heidelberg Disputation

- The *theologia crucis* is not finally about the content of theology, but is primarily concerned with how the theologian goes about understanding the things of God. Luther is proposing a way to do theology much more than specific doctrinal concepts (Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions* 99).

God's Typical Way

- Luther made a significant break from that tradition [in that he came to] understand the cross as necessary and typical of God. The cross now reveals God and his characteristic way of dealing with believers (Tomlin, *Power of the Cross* 178).
- Luther urges that God's way with Christ must be God's way with the church now. A purely historical knowledge of Christ's death and sufferings is soteriologically useless, without the corresponding experience of death and suffering in the present (Tomlin 188).

Cross Critique of the Roman Church

- The peace, wealth and security enjoyed by the church are signs not of its success, but of its demise: the church is in greatest danger when it is rich, well-fed and powerful, and most blessed when it is poor, persecuted, and tempted (Tomlin *Power of the Cross* 189).
- If God's action in the present is continuous with his action in Christ, then the papacy needs to model itself upon the weakness and poverty of the cross, rather than on images of imperial power. The papacy's failure to do that simply betrays not just its moral deficiency, but its theological misunderstanding (Tomlin 192).

The Passion of the Christ and Antichrist



Sharing in Sufferings

- "The 'theology of the Cross' means not only that Christ's humanity and extreme humiliation are the way by which we know God... The Christian man and the Christian Church must also share the sufferings of Christ, that 'form of a servant' which brings an ambiguity and contradiction into all their earthly existence" (Gordon Rupp, *Righteousness of God* 208).

Shape of the Church

- "For there is, on the face of it, nothing more dissimilar to the throne of God than the people of Christ, since theirs does not seem to be a kingdom but an exile, and they seem not to live, but always given up to death, not to glory, but put to shame, not in riches, but put to extreme poverty, as whoever wants to be a sharer in this kingdom is forced to experience for himself. For the ornaments of the Christians are their poverties, tribulations, ills..." (D. Martin Luthers Werke 57: 107).

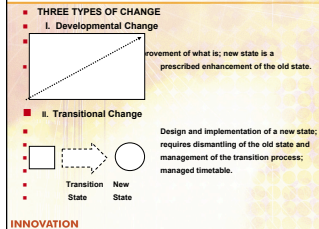
Cruciform Church

- "Only as the Christian community permits itself to undergo a continuous crucifixion to the world can it be in the world as the friend of those who are crucified" (Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* 154).

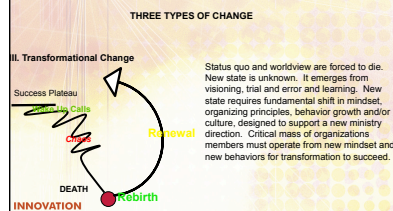
Death and Life

- “Jesus promises in the word of the cross nothing less than death and nothing more than a glorious new life. All things are made new as we see and live in the new reality Jesus reveals to us” (Ruge-Jones, *Word of the Cross* 90).

Types of Change



Types of Change



What kind of Change?

When most of us talk about change, we typically mean incremental change.

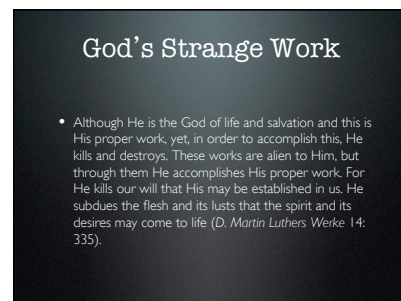
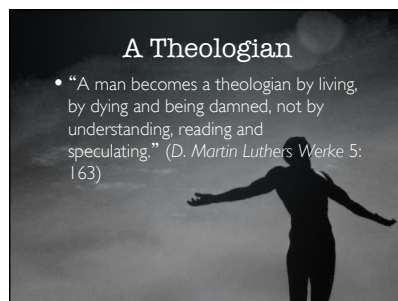
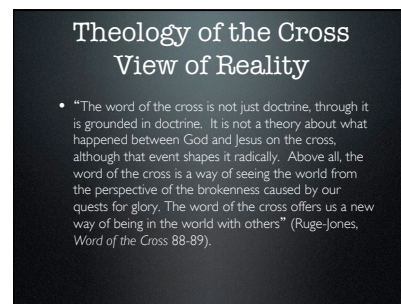
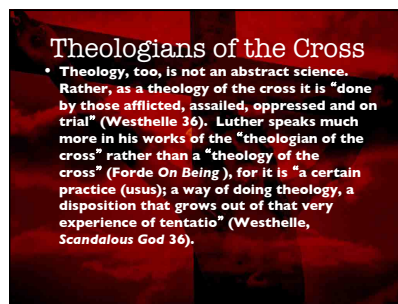
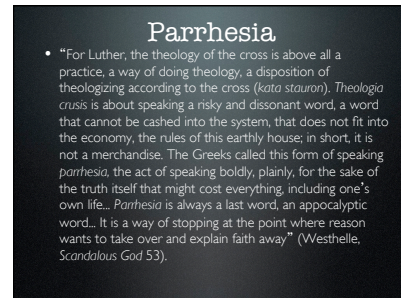
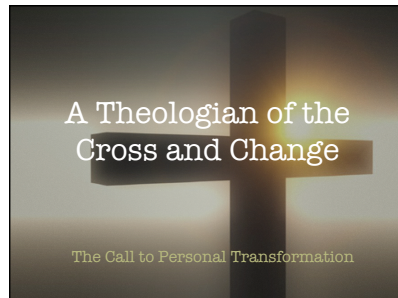
Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is a change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible (Quinn, *Deep Change* 3).

Discuss and Pray

- What hit you in the presentation?
- With what kind of change are you most comfortable?
- What needs to change in your ministry?
(Not your church, nor others, but yourself)
- For what do you need prayer?

Luther's Theology of the Cross

The Call to Reformation/Transformation



- "Despair ends on the cross of Jesus because pride ends there as well; the rebel's presumption as well as the arrogance of the devout, alienation from God together with holy places, foolishness at the same time as the illusions of those who think themselves wise. Before God who humbles himself, self-transcending man comes to an end; even the mask of Christianity cannot save him. The dying Son of God does not give life without killing; he pardons but as judge; he glorifies us by humbling us to the deepest degree; he illuminates by confronting us inexorably with the truth about ourselves; he heals by placing us among the poor in spirit... All this can be brought down to a common denominator: the justification of the ungodly is for Paul the fruit of Jesus' death, and nothing else. And this means *regnum dei* on earth" (Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* 45-46).

Luther's Cross Context

- Sin for Luther is possibly best defined as "Self-Justification."
- A theology of glory is any method of self-justification in part or in whole.
- It is a way of speaking and believing that covers up reality and the "way things really are."

- Justification means trying to make something straight or to bring it into line - for example, we justify the text we are typing on a computer when we enter the command that straightens up one or more of its edges" (Warner, *Bonds that Make Us Free* 27).
- Self-justification... is like putting on glasses to make our crooked behavior appear straight. (27)

- In the effort to make our wrongdoing seem right, we struggle to portray ourselves in our ongoing personal story as worthy of approval and respect. The very fact that we need to struggle for approval proves that we do not approve of ourselves. Having to convince ourselves of something means we do not really believe it. That is why we contort ourselves grotesquely, lose sight of who we really are, and tangle ourselves pathetically in a complicated falsification of our lives (Warner, *Bonds that Make* 37).

Means of Self-Justification

1. Better Than: "I work harder than..."
2. Worse Than: "I can't do anything right..."
3. Martyr complex: "Look at how much I give..."
4. Victim of: "Look at how you treat me..."
5. Must be seen as...

Being a Victim

- There is a very big difference between portraying oneself as a victim and actually being a victim.
- To the extent that we are actually being victimized, we bear no responsibility for the bad things that are happening to us. But we are responsible when we present ourselves as victims in order to excuse or justify ourselves.

Victimizers

- By making victims of ourselves, we accuse and abuse other people. We make them out to be heartless victimizers, and that is a very victimizing thing to do to them (Warner, *Bonds that Make Us Free* 66-67)
- Often we will do almost anything to hang on to our victimhood, even if it means destroying something we treasure (67).

Fooling Ourselves

- But generally speaking, other people are not taken in by our self-deceived, counterfeit actions. Those who are not self-deceivingly stuck in their own accusing thoughts and feelings will see our public presentation of ourselves for what it is - an insecure, self-conscious, anxious striving to make a point about ourselves that is always a bit excessive, like bad acting. And even those who are deep in self-deception themselves will pick upon our accusing attitude and will interpret it in the worst possible light... They will tend to perceive it not as defensive but as offensive and will readily take offense (Warner, *Bonds that Make Us Free* 106).

The Real Agenda

Behind these public goals, however, reside operative goals that often override the espoused public goals. The operative goals are usually congruent with the interests of the dominant coalition (Quinn, *Deep Change* 91).

Who is the dominant coalition in the FLGA District or the LCMS?

What are the operational goals they espouse?

Self-Sealing Logic

The logic was thus not only sound and sacred, it was what Chris Argyris would call "self-sealing." That is, it could never be challenged, discussed, or tested.

Virtually every dominant coalition, in every organization, has a sacred and self-sealing model. It represents the most sacred of common belief patters because it justifies the present behavior of the most powerful coalition. It justifies the current equilibrium and limits change to incremental rather than transformational efforts (Quinn, *Deep Change* 92-93).

Self-Sealing Logic

What are some of the articles of self-sealing logic in the Synod? (Realize that these will be across the board from "liberals" to "conservatives" and "church growthers" to "liturgists," etc.)

What self-justifying tactics do you see in operation within synod?

What self-justifying activity have you witnessed within the clergy?

Tough Love for Pastors

- Too often in many denominations a seminary degree and ordination are simply union cards guaranteeing someone a position and the title of leader (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye*).

Call a Thing What it is

- We must recognize the lies we have been telling ourselves. We must acknowledge our own weakness, greed, insensitivity, and lack of vision and courage. If we do so, we begin to understand the clear need for a course correction, and we slowly begin to reinvent our self. The transition is painful, and we are often hesitant, fearing that we lack the courage and confidence to proceed. We uncover a great paradoxical truth. Change is hell. Yet not to change, to stay on the path of slow death, is also hell (Quinn, *Deep Change* 78).

Looking Deeply

The real problem is frequently located where we would least expect to find it, inside ourselves. Deep change requires an evaluation of the ideologies behind the organizational culture. This process happens only when someone cares enough to exercise the courage to uncover the issues no one dares to recognize or confront. It means someone must be enormously secure and courageous. Culture change starts with personal change. We become change agents by first altering our own maps. Ultimately, the process returns us to the "power of one" and the requirement of aligning and empowering oneself before successfully changing the organization. (Quinn, *Deep Change* 103)

Humility

- "God saves us when we are at the stage of humbleness, brokenness, and depravity because that is when God reaches us; and not because we have made our way down there, but rather because we are no longer in denial over our condition... Humility is not a technique to get God's grace... it is rather the admission of one's wretchedness; it is about being plain and honest to ourselves and the world by naming things for what they are" (Westhelle, *Scandalous God* 54-5).

Out of Control

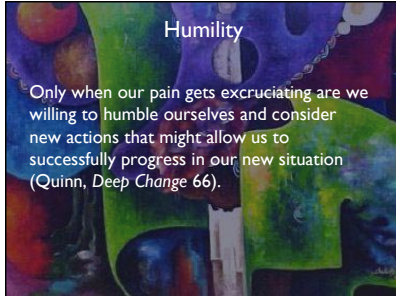
"Deep change means surrendering control... This is usually a terrifying choice, often involving a "dark night of the soul" (Quinn, *Deep Change* 3).

Unfolding Faith

- Suffering's purpose is "none other than that of unfolding faith and making it assert itself" (von Lowenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* 119).

The Role of Suffering

- This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil... through the cross works are dethroned and the Old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's (Luther's Works 31: 53).

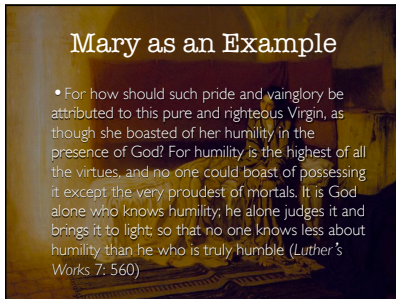


Humility

Only when our pain gets excruciating are we willing to humble ourselves and consider new actions that might allow us to successfully progress in our new situation (Quinn, *Deep Change* 66).

True Humility is Nothing

- Therefore our humility is not the monastic kind, which is a pride and a humility in itself, not in Christ; it is the pretense of humility. Those who are most humble are in fact the most proud. But your humility should be the kind which does indeed have very great gifts but nevertheless fears God, because he judges in a wondrous manner (*D. Martin Luthers Werke* 25: 23).

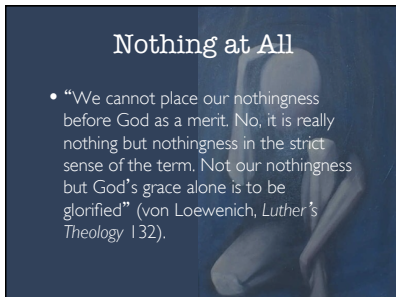


Mary as an Example

- For how should such pride and vainglory be attributed to this pure and righteous Virgin, as though she boasted of her humility in the presence of God? For humility is the highest of all the virtues, and no one could boast of possessing it except the very proudest of mortals. It is God alone who knows humility; he alone judges it and brings it to light; so that no one knows less about humility than he who is truly humble (*Luther's Works* 7: 560).

Renouncing Virtue

- “Like faith, humility is not one virtue among other virtues, but is, in the first instance, a renunciation of all virtuousness... Humility is awareness of the fact that we cannot stand before God on the basis of our virtues” (von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* 129).



Nothing at All

- “We cannot place our nothingness before God as a merit. No, it is really nothing but nothingness in the strict sense of the term. Not our nothingness but God's grace alone is to be glorified” (von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology* 132).

Burn Out

There are people who know how to lead, who understand deep change and the enormous investment of energy and resources that are necessary, yet they cannot bring themselves to initiate the process. There is no energy left. They are victims of burnout. So they continue to go through the motions, finding it difficult to discover interest and relevance in their work. What they need is deep change at a personal level, a reinvention of their professional role, a revolution in their priority list, a recognition that maintenance is production and that their “absolute musts” really “must” be delegated to someone else.

Burn Out

Few people are very good at reinventing themselves. They often choose the destructive alternative of staying very busy. It may not be effective behavior, but it has the effect of a good narcotic. It diverts attention from the real issue and temporarily saves them from having to tackle and resolve the actual problem (Quinn, *Deep Change* 20).

Clergy Survey

- A 2002 survey by Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary found clergy burnout due to the time crunch. Clergy "felt incompetent in determining priorities among the competing values and ideals that guide their ministries." (Jenkins 12) Though feeling deficient in the area of time management, few clergy were using any continuing education time to train in goal setting or time management.

- Most notable was that "62 percent do not 'have disciplined or schedule times for study,' and 51 percent do not have 'disciplined or scheduled time for prayer.'" Only 41 percent have a mentor with only 22 percent making use of a more intense form of a spiritual director. Few clergy are in mentoring groups that actually hold one another accountable and offer support and transparency for mutual confession (less than 31 percent) (Jenkins, "Great Expectations" 24).

Transformation

We transform the organization by transforming ourselves (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 69).

Here is a surprising point: recognizing our hypocrisy is a source of power... Accepting the truth about our hypocrisy helps us to transform ourselves and others (*Building the Bridge* 24).

Something that few people ever clearly see -- the incongruity of asking for change in others while failing to exhibit the same level of commitment in themselves (*Deep Change* 32).

Reform - Renewal

- "Progress is nothing other than constantly beginning. And to begin without progress is extinction. This is clearly the case with every movement and every act of every creature" (*Luther's Works* 4: 350).
- [One must] "constantly progress, and anyone who supposes he has already apprehended does not realize that he is only beginning. For we are always traveling, and must leave behind us what we know and possess, and seek for that which we do not yet know and possess" (*Luther's Works* 4: 342).

- One key to successful leadership is continuous personal change. Personal change is a reflection of our inner growth and empowerment. Empowered leaders are the only ones who can induce real change. They can forcefully communicate at a level beyond telling. By having the courage to change themselves, they model the behavior they are asking of others. Clearly understood by almost everyone, this message, based in integrity, is incredibly powerful. It builds trust and credibility and helps others confront the risk of empowering themselves (Quinn, *Deep Change* 34-5).

Never Standing Still

- "Consequently the whole life of the new people, the people of believers, the spiritual people, consists only of longing, seeking and praying with the sighing of the heart, with the spoken voice and with the work of the body, to be justified, right up to the moment of death; it consists of never standing still, never having apprehended, never setting oneself any works as the goal of righteousness to be attained, but constantly looking forward to righteousness as though it were always to be found outside oneself, while one lives and exists oneself always in sin" (*Luther's Works* 56: 264).

Discuss and Pray

How have you experienced change in your life? Has it ever been like a death and resurrection? If so, please share.

What self-justifications do you see in yourself?

How has suffering functioned in your spiritual growth?

Do you have a growth plan? If so, share a little about it.

For what do you need prayer right now?

A Theologian of the Cross and Change

The Call to Personal Transformation

Church Revitalization Cross and Resurrection

A Cruciform Community in Mission

The 95 Theses

- The theology of the cross, however, is not restricted to the area of personal faith. Luther, as a matter of fact, has elaborated it most explicitly in the context of the matter of indulgences. This link shows its potential for criticism of Christian ecclesiastical life (Vercruysse, "*Luther's Theology of the Cross*" 9).

Church Transformation

- Luther's call to the church of his day from the 95 Theses throughout his later writings was a call to "institutional transformation" (Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions* 79).
- "All life is a repentance and a cross of Christ." (*Luther's Works* 31: 89).

Reforming the Lutheran Church

- "The means of grace (Word, Sacraments and Christian Community) must be freed from captivity within Lutheran congregations. Currently it is often captive in the cage of clericalism, tribalism, ritualism, and the pride of our theological heritage" (*Evangelizing Church* 42-44).
- Few denominations have filled with more pride for our theological prowess than Lutherans (*Evangelizing Church* 44). This pride shuts us off from considering change or reform, ironically in the church body of the Reformation.

Conservator Organizations

- **"The choice of slow death is ... especially common in conservative, 'don't rock the boat' cultures" (Quinn, *Deep Change* 18).**

Organizationally Speaking...

Organization and change are not complementary concepts. The process of formalization initially makes the organization more efficient or effective. As time goes on, however, these routine patterns move the organization toward decay and stagnation (Quinn, *Deep Change* 5).

Church Compromised

- "The church has made peace with society's economics, embraced its psychology, and granted legitimation to its standards of morality" (Cousar, *Theology of the Cross* 176).

The Bottleneck at the Top

In fact, it is often the people at very high levels who become the invisible resisters. As result, (sic) an organizational transformation never follows a clean, top-down process. It is, instead, a social movement in which commitment spreads (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 9).



The Pastor's Cross

- To have a cruciform church it takes a crucified pastor.
- The pastor calls the congregation to die to self for the sake of mission
- This often evokes resistance
- If a pastor defines self by approval, performance or appearance needs, he may pull back from calling the congregation to mission.

Control and Comfort Needs

We work very hard to preserve our current ego or culture. To give them up is to give up control. Normally we work hard to avoid the surrender of control. Instead, we strive to stay in our zone of comfort and control. Given the choice between deep change or slow death, we tend to choose slow death (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 6).

We espouse a desire to create new results while in fact our primary desire is to stay in our comfort zone (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 21).

Focus of Congregation

- “If the congregation is not focused on its mission, it will focus on something – perhaps the budget, the past glory days, or the pastor’s performance.” (Steinke *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* 73)

It Takes a Leader

When internal and external alignment is lost, the organization faces a choice: either adapt or take the slow road to death. Usually the organization can be renewed, energized, or made effective only if some leader is willing to take some big risks by stepping outside the well-defined boundaries. When this happens, the organization is lured, pushed, or pulled into unknown territory. The resulting journey through the unknown is a terrifying experience, with the possibility of failure or death a reality rather than a metaphor (Quinn, *Deep Change* 5).

Leadership is Key

- We have observed that the biggest human factor in the process of transforming a dysfunctional congregation to a healthy one is the leadership ability of the pastor. This factor is also characteristic with church planters. The most effective plants are ones with the most effective leaders (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 17).

The Self-Differentiated Leader

- Self-differentiated leadership always triggers sabotage which is a systemic part of leadership – so much so that a leader can never assume success merely because he or she had brought about change. It is only after having first brought about change and then subsequently endured the resultant sabotage that the leader can feel truly successful. When the sabotage comes, this is the moment when the leader is most likely to experience failure of nerve and seek a quick fix (Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve* 247).

Crucified Leader

- “I mean someone who has clarity about his or her own life goals, and, therefore, someone who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about. I mean someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence. I mean someone who can manage his or her own reactivity to the automatic reactivity of others, and therefore be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing. It is not as though some leaders can do this and some cannot. No one does this easily, and most leaders, I have learned, can improve their capacity” (Friedmann, *A Failure of Nerve* 13).

Outside the Box

"Excellence, however, never lies within the boxes drawn in the past. To be excellent, the leaders have to step outside the safety net of the company's regulations, just as the therapist had to step outside the safety of the traditionally defined role. To bring deep change, people have to "suffer" the risks. And to bring about deep change in others, people have to reinvent themselves" (Quinn, *Deep Change* 11).

How to be a Crucified Leader?

- The "key is to work seriously on the disciplines required to become more emotionally mature; no gimmicks or techniques are going to effect change in the system. Change requires serious engagement in personal transformation" (Herrington, Creech and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey* 55).

Tough Love

Tough love is particularly important in times of deep change. If we want to change and organization, we must help people cope with the dread of uncertainty. The role of the leader is to provide the integration of tough and love that empowers people to move forward (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 187).

He is simply making clear that a caring individual relationship does not supersede the collective good. High-performing systems tend to be productive communities. In high-performing systems, people both live values and produce outcomes. Both are necessary (188).

We do not get into the transformational state by "learning" the concepts. We get there by committing to higher purpose (191).

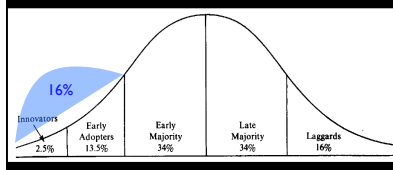
Developing Leaders - Self Change

All change is self change (Quinn, *Building the Bridge* 197).

Organizations don't change significantly unless someone inside the organization changes significantly...The real problem is human commitment and courage (200).

In transforming organizations, we do not reach everyone. We reach a few. If we create a critical mass, that is enough to being to move the organization. As it moves, still others change. Yet seldom do we reach everyone (203).

Diffusion of Innovation Bell Curve



Cruciform Church

- "The church whose theology is shaped by the message of the cross must itself take on a cruciformed life if its theology is to carry credibility" (Cousar, *Theology of the Cross* 186).

The Powers that Be

- [M]any congregations are led by a handful of people who have gained the position by default... The result is a strong and often organized passive-aggressive attack against any leader who wants the congregation to become active in fulfilling the Great Commission (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 27).

Dysfunctional Congregations

- Dysfunctional congregations... despite all their rhetoric about sacrifice exist more for those who already rule the congregation than for those who are on the outside (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 68).

Healthy Congregations

- Healthy congregations are defined by sacrifice. They exist more for those who are currently not a part of the group (analogous to persons from another nation) than for those who comprise the current congregation. They are missional in their nature and, as a result, outwardly focused in orientation. They organize themselves to accomplish mission and are willing to change any organizational structure that inhibits the accomplishment of that mission (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 68).

Cruciform Church Serves the World

- “[Luther] wanted a gospel that drove people into the world, not away from it; that opened their eyes to what was there, rather than assisting them to look past what was there” (Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* 116).

Outreach

- A church transformed will mean “putting the needs of a broken world ahead of our own. It will mean loving our neighbors more, even, than we love our church. It will mean setting aside our own agendas, our own fears, our own prejudices, our own needs” (Bliese and Van Gelder, *The Evangelizing Church* 30).

Cultural Change

- Programmatic change is not enough. Restructuring is not enough. Neither will go deep enough. Most clergy and church leaders get half a dozen mailings each week that describe the latest, hottest, and newest program for congregational renewal. Some of them are quite good. But few of them get to the level of change in the culture of the congregation. (Here I am using the term “culture” in an anthropological sense to mean the thick network of symbols, language, and behaviors that characterize and define a human community.) The challenge we face in the historically mainline Protestant churches is the challenge of cultural change in this latter sense (Robinson, *Transforming* 12).

Conflict, Suffering, Outside Help

"Deep change throughout a system means sacrifice and suffering for everyone. It also means engaging in real conflict. It is not very pleasant" (Quinn, *Deep Change* 95).

Organizations are coalitional. The dominant coalition in an organization is seldom interested in making deep change. Hence deep change is often, but not always, driven from the outside" (Quinn, *Deep Change* 96).

TCN

- A strong consultant who does interventions well can slingshot the congregation through the change process, saving a number of years of investment and thereby ensuring that the change will actually take place. Continued support by a competent outsider also helps embed and implement the new DNA even more quickly" (Borden, *Direct Hit* 101).



Holding Congregations Accountable

- "Holding congregations accountable means holding the leaders of congregations accountable. Tremendous change can occur in a short amount of time when both the pastors and lay leaders are in agreement about making changes and are committed to not allowing individuals within the congregation to drive wedges between them collectively or individually" (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 53-54).

Transformation

- ▶ This transformation came about because we focused, in a new way, on the local congregation as the basic unit of mission, while emphasizing the importance of leadership.
- ▶ Denominations will not reform from the top.
- ▶ Until denominations focus on the local congregation in a new way and embrace true leadership they will continue to become more irrelevant and lose even more support from the adherents within and the observers without (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 27).

- We believe that if local congregations are not strong and healthy the national denomination is dead, even if it has enough endowment to continue.
- If we really believe that the local congregation is God's basic and primary unit of mission in the world, then neither we, nor our national denominational entities exist to demand anything of local congregations. Instead we exist to enhance their mission.
- Regions exist primarily as catalysts for congregational 1) reproduction and 2) transformation while 3) helping local congregations direct mission dollars (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 31).

Mentoring Program

- ▶ A mentoring program for staff members was created to learn how to consult with congregations.
- ▶ The basic model of consultation followed this format:
 - ▶ The congregation was assessed through the use of one or two specific tools we decided as a region to adopt.
 - ▶ A region staff member spent a weekend with the congregation dealing with the results surfaced by the assessment tools.
 - ▶ A region staff member met each month with the pastor, board, and/or other leaders to implement recommendations coming from the consultation.
 - ▶ This lasted for a minimum of one year.

Life-Long Learners

- ▶ A final implication is that the key role of judicatory staff is to lead pastors and laity to become life-long learners.
- ▶ To do this staff members themselves must be such learners.
- ▶ This means that the majority of staff meeting time, the majority of pastoral cluster time, and the focus of a large portion of the financial investment of the region must be on training, training and more training (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 33).

Mentoring Clusters

- ▶ We knew that when pastors go to large training events they seldom ever change.
- ▶ In light of this phenomenon we designed much of our training in clusters to provide hands-on ways to implement pieces of a recent training event that required the pastors to report at the next cluster meeting about how they had implemented change in their local setting (Borden, *Hit the Bullseye* 51).

Confession Humiliation

- Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts. It cuts a man down. It is a dreadful blow to pride. To stand there before a brother as a sinner is an ignominy that is almost unbearable. In the confession of concrete sins the old man dies a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother. Because this humiliation is so hard we continually scheme to evade confessing to a brother (Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* 111).

Three R's of Change

- Alan Deutschman in his book *Change or Die* shares the stories of companies and organizations that have defied the common trends of status quo by making significant changes. His research through interviewing individuals and observing these organizations comes to the conclusion that force, fear and facts will not change a person, even if death may be a real consequence of not changing. (12-13) Rather, the three keys to change are: relate, repeat and reframe. (14-15)

Three R's of Change

- TCN coaches will first of all learn to relate and care about their client pastors. They are encouraged to pray regularly and fervently for them. With a relationship established a TCN coach can then be directive in bringing about changes in the professional activities of the TCN pastors. Repeating over months of time a new set of habits, such as, connecting with people outside of the Christian church in the community and disciplined prayer, the TCN pastors will make significant changes. Finally, through their learning communities, TCN pastors will reframe their concept of what a pastor does and how to engage the mission field.

8 Reasons Change Fails

- Too much complacency
- 1. Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition.
- 2. Underestimating the need for vision, a clear compelling picture of the future.
- 3. Undercommunicating the vision.
- 4. Permitting obstacles to block the new vision
- 5. Failing to create some short-term wins.
- 6. Declaring victory too soon.
- 7. Failing to anchor changes firmly into the corporate culture (Kotter, *Leading Change* 4-14).

Discuss and Pray

- How would you describe your readiness to undergo church revitalization after this presentation?
- 1. What if any barriers or issues do you see in your congregational setting that resist such transformation?
- 2. What would be the next step for your revitalization?
- 3. What would be the next step for your congregation's revitalization?



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