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ABSTRACT
A STUDY IN CHANGE:
ACTS 15 AS A MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION IN A PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH (USA) CONTEXT

by

Jeffrey Lyn Chandler

While at a Presbytery meeting, I found myself around a table with two ministers. Both had been in their respective churches for approximately five years. Listening to them, I could not help but hear the frustration they were experiencing as they attempted to lead their *new* congregations. The common mantra: “The church is not interested in changing: they have an aversion to change, especially the Session,” seemed to be accepted without question. Their sense of defeat seemed counter to the teachings of Scripture, particularly the experience of the early Church.

Looking at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, I was drawn to the early Church’s willingness to change on purpose, for a cause greater than their comfort. This willingness to change stimulated a process of discovery and possible influence on a local Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation.

The purpose of this research project was to help increase a local congregation’s Session’s awareness of and commitment to becoming more Christ-centered and outwardly focused. Through the use of organizational change theory and church transformational material, the research suggested the possibility of such a change even among the opinion leaders of the congregation.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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ACTS 15 AS A MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION
IN A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) CONTEXT

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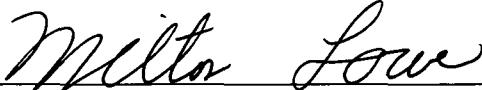
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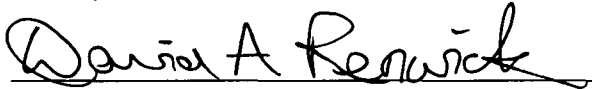
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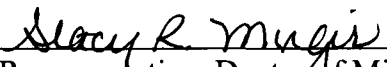
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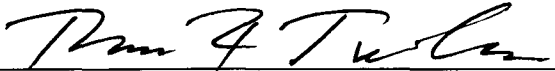
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ACTS 15 AS A MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION
IN A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) CONTEXT

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In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Ministry

by

Jeffrey Lyn Chandler

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Jeffrey Lyn Chandler

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Genesis of this Study

At a recent Presbytery meeting, I found myself sitting with four ministers around the dinner table. Two of them, pastors who had been at their respective churches for less than five years, expressed profound frustration regarding their churches unwillingness to embrace change. The other two, pastors with more than ten years tenure, ignored the frustration of their colleagues and instead focused their conversation on a recent round of golf. The latter two ministers seemed to have given up on the local church, while the former two were well on their way to burnout and disillusionment.

I contrast the above-mentioned conversation between ministers with the one I had with a young man at a local restaurant. Sitting across the table from Dave, I could hear the pain in his voice. A disintegrating marriage, dysfunctional children, and the domino effect of poor decisions weighed down both his shoulders and spirit. When encouraged to begin attending church, he laughed. “The church is stuck in the Dark Ages. It doesn’t care about me. It’s just a group of people concerned about themselves.” While his words were uttered in despair, I imagine they echo the sentiment of millions of people throughout the United States. Whether the perception is fair (or even true) is irrelevant. The sentiment described by Dave reflects the lens through which many Americans see the church (Kimball 25-27; Pew Research 7; Kinnaman 21-28). According the Dr. Jim Garlow, 60 percent of Americans believe

the church is irrelevant and two-thirds of ministers do not even believe their churches are making a difference in the world.

The burning question, for those passionate about the church, which must be addressed in order to respond to the despondency within and the exasperation of the broader world as it thinks about the church, is finding out what can be done to alter the church so that it emulates the life-giving community Jesus intended. Recognizing my inability to transform or change the entire church, it was my intent to seek to influence the leadership team of a local Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation. Within the pages of this dissertation, it is my intent to offer a biblically based paradigm for understanding the church that can effect change in the life of a local community (and have greater impact on the surrounding community).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation was to educate and initiate an observable process of change in the Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation toward accepting a Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry.

Research Questions

In order to facilitate this research, three questions emerged as needing to be addressed to reach any possible conclusions.

Research Question #1

What is the participants' current level of knowledge and understanding concerning the centrality of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church?

Research Question #2

What changes occurred in the participants' level of knowledge and understanding concerning the centrality of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church?

Research Question #3

How might the Session's change in understanding influence or affect the focus and behavior of the First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield, California?

Definition of Terms

In order to understand and navigate the project in this paper effectively, certain terms must be addressed.

Session

Throughout the history of the Presbyterian Church, in all of its manifestations, an emphasis on leaders (elders) being elected to serve as the spiritual and administrative leaders of a local congregation has helped define this expression of the Church. This board of elders (*presbuteros*) is called the Session. A Session consists of the ordained clergy (Ministers of Word and Sacrament) and the group of people selected by the congregation to serve as its elders. The number of elders and clergy vary according to each local congregation.

While the size of a Session varies, the rights and responsibilities of a Session do not. The duties of the Session are clearly defined in the *Book of Order*. "The Session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church" (G-10.0102). It goes on to list nineteen specific responsibilities a Session is required to

fulfill within the local congregation (see Appendix A). In that list, four responsibilities are of particular interest:

- a. The Session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church, . . .
- c. to lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the whole Church in the world, . . .
- g. to lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation in the communities in which the church lives and bears its witness, . . .
- j. to lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God.” (G-10.0102)

With these clearly defined roles, the challenge of change in a local congregation rests squarely on the shoulders of the elected or called members of a local Session. The very polity of my denomination requires change and renewal to be led out of this group.

Christ-centered and Outwardly Focused

For me, this term stems from the description of the triune God and the actions of the early Church in Acts 15. Like the early Church, Christ-centered and outwardly focused churches are internally strong—grounded in Christ and Scripture—but have a propensity to be oriented outside of themselves, directed toward others, particularly those in need (see Matt. 25:31-46.)

Over the last twenty years, many Western theologians and church leaders have raised their voices in support of the biblical paradigm for the church being more Christ-centered and outwardly focused. Noted Christian theologian and Bishop, Lesslie Newbigin, after returning from his service in India and with missions around the world, stimulated new interest in this challenge, which became popularized in two of his books (*Foolishness to the Greeks: Gospel and Western Culture*; *The Gospel in*

a Pluralist Society.). We also see others attempting to promote such a paradigm into the church. Two of the most popular agents of change have been Bill Hybels¹ and Rick Warren.² While many seek to influence the faithful to a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm, I found the work of Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson to be most helpful in the attempt to influence a local Session. Rusaw and Swanson offer four helpful characteristics descriptive of such a church. These churches “are convinced that good deeds and good news can’t and shouldn’t be separated” (24). They see these churches as “vital to the health and well-being of their communities” (25). Churches such as this type “believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living” (26). A final characteristic of this kind of church is that they are “evangelistically effective” (27). These four characteristics seem to be reflective of the life of Jesus and the expression of the early Christian church.

Cultural Factors

The North American context of the twenty-first century continues to evolve and shift. While most denominations grew out of the soil of modernity, the world around has discarded many of its concerns. The world of modernity, based on rationality and reason, produced what Dr. Darrell L. Guder refers to as an “autonomous self” (23). In modernity, the way this “self” most commonly expresses itself in the United States is by emphasizing personal rights and freedoms, consumerism, identity found through roles, and feelings, intuitions and desires (25-30).

¹ Bill Hybels is founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, founder of the Willow Creek Association of Churches, and author.

² Dr. Rick Warren is founding pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California and author of *The Purpose Driven Life* and many other books.

Dr. Guder's observations represent more than a shift in fashion choices and vocabulary. Instead, the occurring shift is at a much more elemental level—questioning how one can know or understand what is *real*. This shift is often labeled postmodernism. The casualties of this shift have been rationality, the concept of absolute truth, and the autonomous self.

The dilemma is brilliantly described by Guder:

The decentering of the modern self has left many adrift in the world without clear bearings or a satisfactory direction. This situation poses the pressing problem of reconceptualizing the nature of personhood in terms that hold together individuality and community. Postmodernity is searching for an individuality beyond the empty construct of Western individualism and for a community greater than the social forces that influenced it. (42)

The following list helps clarify elements of the ever-emerging world of postmodernism.

- endless choices made available by technology
- loss of shared experiences
- meanings conveyed as surfaces and images
- transient relationships
- plurality of approaches to sexual expression and experience
- increasingly two-tiered economy with many dead end jobs
- personal spirituality without the necessity of organized religion
- random violence and clashes between cultures
- feelings of anger or resentment because somebody's left us with the mess. (37)

These rapid changes in the ground-rules of culture can promote insecurity and anxiety among many.

Cultural anthropologists Dr. Robert N. Bellah et al. describe in even more dramatic terms the dilemma within U. S. culture. They identify four consuming problems in the emerging North American culture; two of them are of particular interest in this paper. The first issue deals with the crisis of civic membership:

The confident sense of selfhood that comes from membership in a society in which we believe, where we both trust and feel trusted, and to which we feel we securely belong: this is exactly what is threatened by a crisis of civic membership. It is not simply a matter of disillusionment with politics... It involves a more radical disengagement that is even more threatening to social coherence. (xi-xii)

The second critical problem they label declining social capital, utilizing a term made popular by Robert D. Putnam. Using his definition, Bellah et al. write, “[S]ocial capital’ refers to features of social organizations, such as network, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits” (xvi). The result of this social context is increased alienation, disintegration of trust, and the supremacy of self-interest. This cultural context proves an increasingly challenging setting to break through with the counter cultural message of the gospel, yet it helps to understand the trajectory of mainline churches in the United States over the last four decades.

Denominational Context

Over the last forty years, the Presbyterian Church has declined in membership and influence in United States. In 1964, the United Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Church (US) combined for 4,254,597 (Presbyterian Church USA Research Services, 2008, 9) active members on their rolls. When correlating the membership of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to the population of the United States in 1964, the membership of the Presbyterian Church represented slightly more than 2 percent of the total U. S. population. Over the subsequent forty years, the U. S. population has increased by more than 54 percent while the population of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the merger of the previously mentioned denominations

in 1983, has decreased by nearly 56 percent. As of 2004, the Presbyterian Church (USA) represents less than .8 of a percent of the U. S. population. The intention of this dissertation is not to delve into the reasons for this decline, rather, to assist in understanding the sense of malaise and/or despair that grips many churches and clergy within the denomination I serve.

This inverse relationship between the U. S. population and the membership of the Presbyterian Church (USA) reflects a greater disconnect between the membership of my denomination and the people in the surrounding culture. While the median age in the U.S. is 36.27 (2004) in the Presbyterian Church it is 58 (Asbury Theological Seminary Library. "Older Adult Ministries" 19 Feb. 2009.

<<http://www.pcusa.org/olderadults>>). The Presbyterian Church (USA) represents a wealthier, more educated, and less ethnically diverse population than do the adults in the general population of the U. S.

The decline of Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations is consistent with churches in other mainline denominations. "Too often we have circled our wagons, created little enclaves of piety and worship, built walls around our communities of faith, and invited people in only if they were willing to become like us" (Kallestad 10). The demographic gaps between the general population of the United States and the membership of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has promoted a significant disconnect that must be addressed if the Presbyterian Church (USA) is going to be effective in ministering in the generations ahead.

Congregational Context

While this dramatic disconnect proves generally true in the Presbyterian Church (USA), First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield (FPCB) struggles with similar issues. Founded in 1889, FPCB has ministered in the heart of downtown Bakersfield for 120 years. During this time, the demographics of the community have changed, while those of the church have not.

This variance can be seen in the variation in age, education, and income. FPCB's community is heavily populated with people in the generation labeled as Boomers (ages 48-65) while the Bakersfield community's fastest growing population is the generation called Millennials (ages 7-26). According to the Clerk of Session, nearly 70 percent of adults at FPCB have had some college education, while the Percepts Organization reports only 22.4 percent of the broader community does. Household income at FPCB is generally much higher than the average household income in Bakersfield of \$49,188 (see Appendix B). This difference is also manifest in the fairly homogenous nature of FPCB. While the majority of FPCB are Anglo-American, the community as a whole has a population of 45 percent Hispanics.

These differences create a barrier between the people of FPCB and the greater community of Bakersfield. Over the last fifteen years, FPCB has seen peaks and valleys of membership, yet overall stagnation describes the demographics of this faith community.

In light of this denominational dilemma of decline and culture of chaos, I have come to the conclusion that the hope of the church is not systemic change on a denominational level. Instead, my conviction has grown similarly to the clarion call

Hybels has championed for more than two decades: “The local church is the hope of the world” (*Courageous Leadership* 9). This emphasis on the local church means a congregation must prayerfully and humbly discover God’s special intention for them: why they exist and how they must change in order to accomplish God’s will for them and for the greater community they serve.

The *Book of Order*, attempting to elevate the local church and its role in the plans of God, makes a distinction between the catholic and “particular” church. The particular church is the local expression of God’s activity. The ministry is described as follows:

The particular church carries a vital responsibility in the mission of the church. There God’s people perform especially the ministries of worship, proclamation, sharing the Sacraments, evangelism, nurture, counseling, personal and social healing, and service. Without this basic ministry to persons, neighborhoods, and communities, and the support given at the congregational level through prayer, personnel, and money, any other significant ministry of the church becomes impossible. Congregations serve as essential mission arms of the presbytery and of the larger church. (G-7.0102)

The hope of the world does rest on the local congregation. Therefore, to assist the local church in becoming more empowered to realize and release this possibility into the world becomes elevated in importance. If a church is going to be empowered and released, it must initiate a process or innovation by which the leaders of a local congregation can understand and commit to change.

Description of Project

The five-month project included three critical components seeking to increase Sessions awareness of and commitment to a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm for ministry. Step one included a special Session retreat at which the

concept of this ministry paradigm was introduced. Step two consisted of a portion of the regularly scheduled Session meetings between September and January given to teaching on each of the four criteria of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. Step three required Session members to meet between regularly scheduled meetings with two other Session members (triads) where they discussed the implications of the specific marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church.

I trust this research and project will propel the Session (and eventually the entire community of FPCB) I serve forward in its journey to becoming the community of faith God intends it to be, genuinely reflecting its love for God and authentically expressing its love and concern for the people of Bakersfield, California.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the effect of a five-month equipping strategy through which the Session of FPCB participated. Developing and describing a Christ-centered and outwardly focused ministry paradigm provided a unique opportunity to delve into the impact and possible effect on the understanding of such a paradigm on members of Session at FPCB.

Analysis was qualitative and quantitative. Administered at the outset of the August 2008 Session retreat, Session members responded to a designed pretest. This pretest established the baseline of the Session's understanding of the four characteristics of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation. The Session took the same test a second time as a posttest following the five-month process. Each Session member took the pretest and posttest.

The second tool I utilized was of a qualitative nature; a semi-structured, two-question survey of each member of the Session. The purpose of these questions was to discover from Session members their priority for FPCB regarding the four marks and why they perceived this emphasis to be particularly important for this community of faith.

Participants

The participants of this study included every member of the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield in the classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011. The Session is made up of people nominated by the congregation's Nominating Committee (of which I am a member) and then elected by the congregation. The Session consisted of thirty men and women ranging in ages that represent the ages of the congregation as a whole. All members of the Session completed both the pretest and posttest. Twenty members of Session responded to the follow-up survey.

Variables

The dependent variables in this study were concentrated into two major areas. The first variable was the understanding and commitment of Session members to the four criteria for a Christ-centered and Outwardly focused church prior to the study. A second dependent variable was the observable change in understanding and commitment of Session members to these four criteria following the study.

The independent variable was expressed in the five-month process of introducing the Session to the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church and observing its impact on the Session members and possible influence on the congregation.

Instrumentation

The pretest and posttest is an instrument with sixteen questions, four questions focusing on each of the four characteristics of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. The questionnaire was developed over a three-month period of time. The questionnaire began with twenty questions focused on the marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church and was given to a group of six individuals who represented a possible population of Session members. These individuals answered the questions and were invited to offer input as to the clarity of what each question was asking. Their input altered and further shaped the instrument. This process was repeated two more times. The result was a questionnaire that provided a high level of clarity for those being asked the questions. This process provided a strong face validity to the questionnaire.

The semi-structured follow-up survey questions were designed in a similar manner. The two questions were offered to two different groups, both supporting their clarity and intent. These questions were concentrated on the impact this strategy had on the Session and its possible implementation into the life of the First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield.

Data Collection

Data collection began with the pretest being administered at the outset of the 2008 Session retreat. The sixteen-question instrument was given to all thirty members of the Session at the annual August retreat. There, they were asked to answer the questions honestly. The Session members were given fifteen minutes to answer, providing time to ponder their responses. At the end of the fifteen minutes, the group

was asked if they needed more time. No one responded in the positive, so the instruments were collected.

The posttest occurred during the January 2009 Session meeting following the five-month strategy implementation. At the outset of the Session meeting, the members were given the sixteen-question instrument again, this time on yellow paper. I once more offered the Session members fifteen minutes. After ten minutes, the participants obviously had completed the questionnaires. I collected them and continued with the meeting.

The follow-up survey occurred two weeks following the completion of the project. At the conclusion of the Session meeting, I informed the participants that a two question follow-up survey would be coming via e-mail. In two weeks, I send out an e-mail inviting the members of the Session to respond to the two questions. The twenty who responded did so via e-mail.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The delimitations of this study centered on the participants' involvement in the study. Recognizing many programs and strategies exist to attempt to direct a congregation in a similar vein as this study, it was important to establish one that was appropriate and indigenous to the local Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation. I did not attempt to evaluate if other methods or approaches were more or less appropriate.

While this study was birthed out of First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield, it possessed some similar homogeneous characteristics of other Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations across the country. The findings learned here may be of

assistance to other congregations with similar historical, demographic, and theological backgrounds.

Biblical and Theological Foundation

This call to becoming a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church is woven into the very fabric of the biblical witness. In this study, I focused my observations on Luke's account of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. At the pivotal moment in the life of the early Church, the leaders were challenged to make a difficult decision of how to deal with Gentile converts. The manner with which they struggled with the answer to this question provided the basis of the challenge to be Christ-centered and outwardly focused.

Coupled with this significant incident in Acts 15 of modeling the importance of change toward a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm for ministry is the theological doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity provides the foundation for a theocentric emphasis and understanding of ministry. Jesus highlights the heart of Trinitarian ministry and relationship when he offers his followers the Great Commandment:

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40, NRSV)

Through these biblical and theological emphases, one comes face to face with Jesus' priorities and the topic of this project.

Overview of the Study

This study intended to begin the process of education and motivation for a local Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation into a new and intentional paradigm of ministry, one that is theocentric and outward focused. Based on the biblical, theological, and historical literature of this dissertation, this paradigm has the potential of equipping people to understand and practice ministry and Christian faith in a more holistic and helpful manner.

The change theory and leadership literature provides the logic and foundation on which to approach and understand the dynamic of attempting to introduce a new innovation within an existing organization. Out of the insight gained from this literature, I devised an approach with the Session that will prove helpful.

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provided the establishment of the problem. Chapter 2 offers a review of relevant literature pertaining to becoming Christ-centered and outwardly focused. Chapter 3 defines the methodology of the project. Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study. The study concludes with Chapter 5 providing opportunity to discuss the implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE
Introduction

With the declining impact and influence of mainline churches, members and leaders are wondering: can change occur within a well-established organization and what kind of change should be pursued. The purpose of this dissertation was to educate and initiate an observable process of change in the Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation toward accepting a Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry.

The literature took me to the New Testament paradigm for a Christ-centered and outwardly focused community of faith. I particularly concentrated on the pivotal text of Acts 15 as a paradigm for creating such a community. In support of this biblical understanding, I discovered profound support in various areas of theological study. Two incidents in the history of the Christian church particularly support the significant role that church leadership plays in cementing the transformation necessary in becoming a Christ-centered and outwardly focused community.

The literature then challenged me to look at what can generate and sustain change in an institution. Everett Rogers, John P. Kotter, and Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro proved invaluable in assisting me in understanding modern change theory. The information garnered in this area of research led me directly to trends in leadership from Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton, Dale Galloway, Edgar H. Schein, and Ken Blanchard. When thinking how I might apply this gained insight to influencing change in a local Session, information from Patrick Lencioni, George

Cladis, and Charles M. Olsen proved insightful as they discussed the powerful partners in understanding the importance of team building in this process.

Support for Influencing Change in Leaders

When attempting to influence change in a congregation, the desired change must be grounded deeply in Scripture.

Biblical

The Bible is full of material pointing to the importance of change in the lives of the followers of God. Abram, at the age of seventy-five was asked to change his location in order to honor God (Gen. 12:1). After a life of deception and a wrestling match on the banks of the river Jabbok, Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28). The Mosaic Law and early prophets all attempted to urge the people of Israel to change their personal and national behavior.

In light of the fallible nature of humanity and the watchful eye of God, the *songbook of Israel* begged God for a change of heart (Ps. 51:10; 139:24). Foreshadowing the arrival of the Christ, later the prophets wrote of a different kind of change, deeper and more profound. Jeremiah imagined a new covenant, "like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt ... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jer. 31-33, NIV). Ezekiel writes of a necessary change coming: "And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart" (36:26, NLT). God desires to create in humanity a change for the better.

In the New Testament, Jesus called the people to a new way of living (Matt. 5-7). The Apostle Paul declares, “What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!” (2 Cor. 5:17). Later, he urged all of Jesus’ followers: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Rom. 12:2, NRSV). These are but a few of the many biblical texts ripe with expectancy for followers of God to be open and willing to change.

The very fact that Paul, Peter, James, and John wrote letters (that make up much of the New Testament) to churches suggests they understood that a church (more specifically, Jesus’ disciples) must be willing to change in order to fulfill the purposes of God. The challenge, when faced with this expectation to change, is to discover how and to what end this change can be realized.

For the most direct and specific example of change in the church in all the New Testament, the book of Acts proves most significant and defining. There, one sees the disciples transformed from fear-filled to faithful followers (Acts 1-4). In this book, Saul was changed from antagonist to Apostle (8:1, 9:1-19). Most relevant for this study, however, is the change of the church from being inward focused to outward focused.

Delving into the book of Acts, I believe God intends the church to be a community open to Holy Spirit-guided change for the purpose of welcoming strangers into life-changing faith in and through Jesus Christ. This openness to change, initially resisted by some, that eventually empowered the church to a position

of relevance to the greater world of the first century and transformative in the lives of disciples from every nation.

While scholars disagree on the date Acts was written, Ben Witherington, III and James D. G. Dunn date it sometime in the eighties CE. While no internal evidence exists regarding the specific identity of the author, as early as the second century this book has been attributed to Luke (Fernando 21). William V. Larkin adds an additional detail regarding the author when he observes Luke “was a traveling companion of Paul” (17). This additional detail offers clarity as to how the author knew so many specific details regarding Paul’s life and ministry, particularly from chapter 13 to the end of the book.

The book of Acts continues the story of God’s work following Jesus’ resurrection. Beginning with the ascension, Luke weaves together a series of stories based upon the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the fledgling church. Allowing them to increase the influence of Jesus beyond “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In his introduction, Dunn writes, “It tells of the beginnings of Christianity with a vigor and vividness which often leaves the new reader breathless” (ix). In the scope of the story, Acts chapter 15 serves as the pivot point, the turning point for the whole book. Here, the Church—not without a measure of difficulty—willingly changed for the sake of God’s mission in the world.

When looking at the entirety of book of Acts, the significance of chapter 15 clearly stands out. “It is no exaggeration to say that Acts 15 is the most crucial chapter in the whole book. Marshall is right to note that this chapter is positioned both structurally and theologically at the very heart of the book” (Witherington 439). Here,

the ministry of the church is put to the test. The grounds on which a person enters the household of faith; ritual observances (keeping the Mosaic Law) or the grace of God, becomes the most critical issue for the early Church.

In chapters 1-12, Peter and the Jerusalem believers stand out as the focal point of the church. In chapters 16-28, the focus clearly shifts to the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles. Chapter 15 provides a vivid example of the need for the church to be willing to change according to the guidance and grace of the Holy Spirit.

For the previous sixteen years, the church had accepted the reality of Gentiles being converted when they were in small numbers (Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 240). These conversions produced confusion: specifically regarding the obligation of Gentile converts to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses, or not. While their numbers were small, the question garnered little attention from the church at large. As the Apostle Paul and Barnabas had more and more impact in Antioch and surrounding areas, with both Jews and Gentiles, the problem heated up. Paul and his supporters argued for a change in the understanding of the role of the Mosaic Law while others wanted to cling to the traditional understanding (24).

Chapter 15 begins, “Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (15:1). While the Apostle Paul seemed to question the motives of some in this group (Gal. 2:1-10),³ Luke assigned no malice to the intent of this faction in the church. In fact, earlier in Acts (10:45), Luke referred to them as “circumcised believers.” Paul and Barnabas, having seen the Spirit of God move

³ Scholars debate about whether the events in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 are homogenous. John Stott and James Dunn argue they are not. I, however, am more convinced by the discussion of F.F. Bruce, 231; Ajith Fernando, 351; and Alan Cole and Leon Morris, 16.

mightily in the lives of Gentiles, became frustrated by what they perceived as an unjustified burden being placed on these non-Jewish converts. The frustration increased to the point that the debate became heated (Witherington 450). In fact, the disagreement intensified to the point that the church in Antioch realized a formal decision must be made by the leadership of the greater church; Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to pursue a solution (Fernando 415)

As Luke records the events of the Jerusalem Council, those in opposition to change made their case first. “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses’” (Acts 15:5). Dunn reminds the reader that one should not be surprised at the presence of Pharisees:

Pharisees were attracted to the new movement, while still characteristically Pharisaic in their emphasis on doing the law... [This] presumably indicates how conservative as regards the law the Jerusalem church was ... that circumcision was simply part of a whole package is the assumption. (200)

The decision to change both theology and practice is a difficult one. The change promoted by Paul represents a significant paradigm shift. For years, “Israel demonstrated its relationship [with God] through obedience to the Torah” (Strong 198). Unfortunately, as David K. Strong points out, “The Gentiles of Antioch, on the other hand, possessed an unenviable reputation for immorality” (198). This struggle for change did not occur behind closed doors. Witherington argues that the ensuing debate was understood by Luke as having occurred in public (453).

After the debate raged for a while, “Peter stood and addressed them” (Acts 5:7b, NLT). Interestingly, Ajith Fernando suggests that Peter interrupted his

missionary work to come and be a part of this critical council meeting in Jerusalem. He stands first in support of the younger Paul who had earlier publicly rebuked him, (416; see Gal. 2:11-21). Peter chooses to remind the listeners of his experience in leading Cornelius, the Gentile, to faith more than a decade earlier in Acts 10:1-11:18 (Strong 201). While I have not read anyone who suggests this, I wonder if by this time Peter's story, which has now been repeated for a third time in the book of Acts (10:24-45; 11:4-18), had become a part of the early Church's lore, its tradition.

The foundation of Peter's argument does not rest on his experience with the Cornelius event alone. What is most significant for Peter's change in position was the imparting of the Holy Spirit and the human response to these events. "The decisive factor, however, was that God had given the Holy Spirit to them 'just as he did to us'" (Dunn 201). The impartation of the Holy Spirit is the theological foundation for Peter's argument: "And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us" (Acts 5:8-9, NRSV). Since God accepts the Gentile converts, we should not add any additional expectations (15:10-11).

"In the face of Peter's cogent theological reasoning *the whole assembly became silent* [original emphasis]. The groundwork for setting the issue in favor of Paul and Barnabas has been laid" (Larkin 221-22). Turning to the incredible work God had been doing in and through the Gentiles, Paul argues from his experience the same thing Peter does. If God is at work through signs and wonders in the lives and hearts of the Gentiles, the church should not get in the way (Strong 202). Remember the identity of the one making this argument. Paul, steeped in the ritual law of Israel,

rigorously trained in the Torah, and so zealous he stood by in approval while Stephen was martyred (Acts 8:1), argues something radically different. He willingly sets aside his tradition, his heritage, and a portion of his identity in order to promote and follow God's activity in the church and its mission to the world.

Finally, James, the brother of Jesus, speaks. I imagine that members of the *sect of the Pharisees who believed* were on edge. Peter, while being sympathetic to this change in policy, had shown limited personal investment in the change of policy and practice (Gal. 2:11-13). Paul and Barnabas' position was already clear. These *circumcised believers* may have hoped for support from James:

The decisive voice in the meeting...lay neither with Peter nor the delegates from Antioch but with *James*. This may have been due partly to the position... and partly also to the fact that he was regarded as a champion of a conservative Jewish outlook. (Marshall 251)

James, after affirming Peter's comments, focuses on Scripture. Interestingly, he quotes Amos 9:11-12 based upon a Septuagint translation (Witherington 457).

Witherington addresses questions about the veracity of James actually saying these words. He concludes that Luke utilized a letter referencing the conditions of the change in order to write his account (458). The significant point at this juncture of the text is that James is seen as the arbitrator for the entire church and he helps the fledgling community of faith move forward. Strong writes, "The conclusion is clear: What must change first is not one's culture but one's faith in Christ" (203).

Ultimately, the church struggled with the changes. The multicultural, pagan society and those converted to faith in Jesus Christ presented challenges the Church was unprepared to address. Unable to resolve the conflict on their own, the members and missionaries needed the wisdom and guidance of the recognized leaders of the

whole church. James and the assembly of elders were the only ones imparted with the power either to resist or accept the proposed change. Ultimately “the Jerusalem church embraced the Gentile mission, a decision that enabled the church to continue growing to the ends of the earth. In the process, Luke prioritizes mission over cultural constraints” (Strong 197).

When looking at this pivotal moment in the life of the early Church, the community of faith becomes clear: The church moving forward in God’s plan required the leadership to commit to being Christ-centered and outwardly focused. Peter, Paul, and James found themselves throughout this process of discernment and decision concerned with cooperating with God’s activity in the lives of the Gentiles. Their unbending commitment to being centered on God’s activity in the world allowed them to make decisions based not on personal preference but on the work and will of the triune God.

In conjunction with being Christ centered, the decision of the Jerusalem Council altered the point of reference for the Church shifting it to being outwardly focused. Instead of promoting the status quo or supporting the existing, well-defined power structure and form, the early Church resolved the issue of conflict through the lens of those standing on the outside. Peter set aside his earlier sense of piety in order to welcome the outsider. Paul argued against his historical and educational bias in favor of those not yet in the household of faith. James concluded barriers that excluded the Gentiles must be removed.

Like the early Church, for the sake of the world, the church of the twenty-first century must again define its ministry and life through a Christ-centered and

outwardly focused priority. This change must be grounded in the deep theological roots of the Christian faith.

Theological

When looking at the theological foundation for promoting an openness to change into a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church, numerous theological concepts can be helpful—kingdom of God, eschatology, soteriology. However, for the parameters of this paper, I begin the discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity. Building on the doctrine of the Trinity, I directed my attention to the theology of the Incarnation. Finally, I turned my attention to ecclesiology, looking at God’s purpose for the Church. While myriads of pages have been written on each of these subjects, it was my intent to focus only on limited key elements I perceived relate most directly to my topic.

From the beginning of the book of Genesis, there seems to be a nuance of Trinity. From the threefold nature of creation, to the plural or royal *we* in 1:26a, to the divine messengers of Genesis (16:7; 21:17; 31:11) there seems to be a hint of the one God amid a plurality of persons (Letham 17-19). Through the unfolding witness of Scripture, the nature of God becomes more clear though humanity will always only see dimly. John 1:1 sets the theological foundation for the preexistence of Jesus while John 10:30 establishes a more direct connection. The Church, in its effort to understand and express this concept of one God in three persons, finalized the concept of the *Trinity* at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Dr. Stephen Seamands properly states, “The doctrine of the Trinity has been described as the grammar of the Christian Faith” (11).

Though officially adopted by the Church and critical for much theological discussion, for most Christians this doctrine remains a “riddle—how can something be one and three—a puzzle since it seems irrational, and an enigma because even if you understood it, what practical value does it have... Christian leaders haven’t advanced much beyond this either” (Seamands 10). I believe the doctrine of the Trinity is extremely important. “It describes the God whom we love and serve” (Bolsinger 23). In his book, Seamands describes seven essential components of the internal relationship in the Trinity: “Relational Personhood, Joyful Intimacy, Glad Surrender, Complex Simplicity, Gracious Self-Acceptance, Mutual Indwelling, and Passionate Mission” (18-19). He then goes on to describe these characteristics of God and their implication for the church. In the final chapter, Seamands offers this perspective:

God is therefore in his very essence a missionary. To be sure, the church is an instrument of God’s mission, but God’s mission precedes, initiates, defines, and sustains the church in mission. Consequently, there is not mission because there is church; there is church because there is mission already—the mission of the triune God. (161)

His insight provides the basis for a two-pronged foundational understanding of God’s character and nature. God is centered on knowing and relating to God’s self (theocentric) so too is God concerned with his creation (outwardly focused). Since these reflect God’s priorities, every church must understand and commit to these same core values.

Equating Jesus with God weights the doctrine of the Incarnation as extremely significant in Christian thinking and understanding. John 1:14 reads, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a

father's only son full of grace and truth." The text indicates that God adjusted or changed God's very identity in order to reconcile humanity. Philippians 2:5-7a further clarifies this important concept:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

Jesus modeled throughout his ministry the value and importance of adjusting his comfort and position for the benefit of the lost, the lonely and the least.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch express the power of the Incarnation well:

When we talk of the Incarnation with a capital *I* we refer to that act of sublime love and humility whereby God took it upon himself to enter into the depths of our world, our life, and our reality in order that the reconciliation and consequent union between God and humanity might be brought about. (35)

God willingly set *personal* comfort and identity aside in order to serve and save humanity. For the church, a new paradigm is modeled and elevated as the one out of which it should function. The church must let go of the pining away for the past. The church must release its fear of the future. Instead, love and service require the church to set its comfort and identity aside for the sake of the people for whom Jesus came, died, and rose again.

The Incarnation becomes the motivational and experiential base on which the church develops its self-understanding and mission. The Incarnation offers the church the doctrinal anchor to adjust and change, not for its own *good*, but for the sake of the lost world that God so loves (see Luke 15).

Understanding the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation promote a search for an awareness of the church and its mission in the world. In the *Book of*

Confessions, numerous documents affirm the Reformed Tradition's historic understanding of the Church. The Second Helvetic (Latin for *Swiss*) Confession, written in 1561, offers a standard expression of the Reformed view of the Church. Heinrich Bullinger, the author of this document, asked the question, "What is the Church?"

The Church is an assembly of the faithful called or gathered out of the world; a communion, I say, of all saints, namely, of those who truly know and rightly worship and serve the true God in Christ the Savior, by the Word and Holy Spirit, and who by faith are partakers of all benefits which are freely offered through Christ. (*Book of Confessions* 84)

Bullinger properly places the identity of the Church in the hands of the God who gathers and calls the faithful throughout the world.

Living within a historical context in which nearly everyone claimed to be a Christian, the Reformers struggled with the distinction between church attendees and the very *elect* of God, what many referred to as the *true* church. Following the lead of Augustine, Reformers tended to contrast the visible against the invisible Church. While Bullinger penned the confession in 1561, the Scottish Parliament ratified their understanding of Church through the adoption of the Scots Confession a year earlier. In this confession, a more pragmatic approach to defining the Church was utilized. They opted to define Church based on three critical *notes* or marks:

[F]irst, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed himself to us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts; and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished. (*Book of Confessions* 19)

This definition of the Church became most widely acknowledged and accepted by Presbyterians. The true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, and ecclesial discipline rightly ministered were the benchmarks by which Presbyterians historically conceptualized the Church.

The difficulty with this understanding is what is missing from this definition. Dr. Shirley Guthrie properly comments, “This classical description of the true church says nothing about the church’s having a *task* or *mission* [original emphasis] to fulfill” (364). Without mission or service and an emphasis on preaching and sacraments (discipline always seems to be dropped in practice), the Church too easily becomes inward focused. The critical issue becomes propagating the institution and the well-being of the people already on the church’s rolls.

Recognizing this blind spot, the Presbyterian Church (USA) began, relatively recently, to address this deficiency. In 1967, the United Presbyterian Church in the US adopted its first new confession in three centuries. The significant new component this document added to the *Book of Confessions* was the inclusion of mission. Based on 2 Corinthians 5:19, Part II of this Confession (357-62) devotes itself to the church’s mission and its equipping. In the opening statement of Part II THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION it states a missional component for the church:

To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as his reconciling community [emphasis mine]. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God’s message of reconciliation and shares his labor of healing the enmities which separate men from God and from each other. (Book of Confessions 9.31)

This *new* confession offers a clear exposition regarding the responsibility of the church to extend its healing activities beyond its own benefit for the purpose of impacting the hurting world all around.

Later, by adding the 1934 Barmen Declaration⁴ to the *Book of Confessions*, the Presbyterian Church (USA) began to embrace a broader understanding of the mission of the church. In debate leading up to this important German Confessing Church document, many were convinced that “German Christian” theology betrayed the church’s commission to the world (Rogers 178). The Barmen Declaration serves as a healthy corrective:

The church’s commission, upon which its freedom is founded, consists in delivering the message of the free grace of God to all people in Christ’s stead, and therefore in the ministry of his own Word and work through sermon and sacrament. (*Book of Confession* 8.26)

The document keeps centered the issue of the Lordship of Christ along with the church’s mission in the world.

Darrell C. Guder further pushes the traditional reformed understanding of the church. He declares, “Bishop Newbigin and others have helped us to see that God’s mission is calling and sending us, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church in our own societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves” (5). With this broader understanding of the church and its mission, the local church can be empowered to live into this outward focused community, seeking to emulate the character of God.

⁴ Written in response to the rise of Hitler and the German church’s inability to distinguish itself from the government, faithful pastors and theologians gathered, prayed, and penned this theological declaration. Heavily influenced by Karl Barth, this document establishes the foundation for a missional understanding of the Church in society.

Historical

The book of Acts is not alone in pointing to the critical role church leadership plays in changing the ethos and values of the church's mission. Other moments in the history of the church offer similar lessons. In an effort to reflect the universal nature of this central issue in the life of a the church, I want to direct our focus on two other moments in the church's history where a willingness to change by established church leadership resulted in the expansion of God's kingdom and the growth of the church.

Roughly four hundred years following the Jerusalem Council, another disciple was seeking to reach out to a strange people. Instead of Gentiles, Patrick sought to reach out to the Celtic people. The story began while young Patrick lived in northern England. At the age of sixteen, a band of Irish raiders invaded, imprisoned, and sold young Patrick as a slave to a local Irish king (Bevans and Schroeder 120). While captive, Patrick experienced three dramatic changes in his life: (1) . He fundamentally connected with God while herding cattle for his captors; (2) he came to understand their customs; and, (3) he developed a profound love for the Celtic people (Hunter 13-14). Six years after his capture, he escaped and gained his freedom.

After gaining his freedom, he chose to return to the people for whom God had planted a deep love in him. For twenty-eight years, Patrick and his growing band of followers worked tirelessly, sharing the good news with these *barbarians*. The success was phenomenal. George G. Hunter, III estimates that by Patrick's death around AD 460, he and his band of missionaries had planted more than seven hundred churches, ordained a thousand priests, and influenced more than thirty of the Irish tribes for Christ. His effort with the Celtic people proved a point of contention

with the British church that had sent him. Instead of support, he experienced ridicule and abandonment (22-24).

For the next two hundred years, the Irish church and its monastic movement grew in influence and numbers. Their success was tainted by a conflict that existed between the Irish monastic order and the Benedictine monastic order. This conflict was finally resolved when the church was called together at the Council of Whitby in 664. There, a decision was made that favored the practices of the Roman Benedictine monks. This decision, instead of having a negative impact, unexpectedly became something positive:

However, the continual coalescence of and interchange between these two rich Christian traditions produced such a new creation that Dawson states, "it was in Northumbria that Anglo-Saxon culture, and perhaps the whole culture of Western monasticism in the Dark Ages, achieved their climax at the beginning of the eighth century." (Bevans and Schroeder 124)

While Hunter pits the conflict between the church and Patrick as negative and the eventual collapse of effective ministry with the Celtic people, Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder seem to present a different view. For them, the church coming together in conflict forced both the Benedictine and Irish monastic orders to change. While the Irish monastic community was required to alter the date they celebrated Easter and adjust to the Benedictine organizational structure, the peace between the two groups allowed collaboration of effort and strategy. The decision by the Council of Whitby to promote change with the local Irish monks, on behalf of the peace and unity of the church, resulted in a time of incredible influence for the combined Anglo-Saxon monastic movement.

A second moment in the history of the church stands out to me. Moving out of the Dark Ages with the discovery of the New World and the opening up of trade with Asia and Africa, the Church experiences a renewed interest in missions (Bevans and Schroeder 171). Unfortunately, in 1492 the lines between church and state were unclear. This lack of clarity produced a system of missions where the interest of the church and the interest of the state were difficult to decipher. Reinforcing this confusion, according to Bevans and Schroeder, the goals of this new missionary effort were “conquest, settlement, and evangelization” (175). Most are familiar with the abuses this paradigm of mission inflicted on indigenous peoples: slavery, forced conversion, decimation of cultures.

Amidst this horrific approach were voices seeking to practice mission in a more honoring and helpful manner. Bartolomé de Las Casas proved to be a pivotal figure. Having been witnessed to by the Dominican priests and having personally witnessed the cruel treatment of the indigenous peoples, he became a champion for changing the way the Catholic Church understood and practiced missions. Bartolomé’s tireless energy and efforts influenced Pope Paul III. In 1537, the Pope issued a papal bull titled *Sublimis Deus*. This statement is considered the most important papal statement on the fundamental human dignity of indigenous people (Bevans and Schroeder 176-77). In fact, this papal bull powerfully and positively influenced numerous pioneers of mission in Asia for the Roman church: Francis Xavier, Alessandro Valignano, Matteo Ricci, Robert De Nobili, Alexandre de Rhodes, and the establishment of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith or SCPF (183-92).

Observing these two historical examples serves to highlight the important role leadership plays in changing a culture of a church. Like Peter, Paul, and James, the Council of Whitby and Bartolomé de Las Casas utilized their influence to shift the bearing and practice of the church in their day from being inward focused to outwardly focused.

Toward a Christ-centered and Outwardly Focused Church

Recognizing the biblical, theological, and historical premise for a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church, one is pressed when trying to define the concept measurably. While a number of excellent approaches are available, each attempting to create a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church (e.g. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*; Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*; Kallestad, *The Passionate Church*), I think Rusaw and Swanson provide four broad-based characteristics that may easily translate into any church, regardless of its theological or contextual setting, and offer possible criteria by which to measure success in this endeavor.

The first characteristic is that such churches “are convinced that good deeds and good news can’t and shouldn’t be separated” (Rusaw and Swanson 24). One only needs to look at Jesus’ ministry and the behavior of the early disciples to realize the accuracy of this first characteristic. In John 6, the story of Jesus feeding the multitudes (vv.1-13) becomes the basis of Jesus proclaiming the good news of him being the bread of life (vv. 26-40). The same thing occurs with Peter and John. On their way up to the temple, the apostles are used to heal a crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-

8). This miracle becomes the platform out of which they are able to share the good news with the onlookers (3:11-26).

For too long, the two theological wings of the church (conservative and liberal) have successfully bifurcated the expectation of doing good deeds and sharing good news by all would-be followers of Jesus. This conflict between doing and sharing has hindered the people of God from living into God's plan for them and for their influence on the hurting world around them.

John Stott expresses a high value for the church to keep both doing and sharing as priorities for followers of Jesus:

As partners the two belong to each other and yet are independent of each other. Each stands on its own feet in its own right alongside the other. Neither is a means to the other, or even a manifestation of the other. For each is an end in itself. Both are expressions of unfeigned love. (Stott 27)

This approach is consistent with Rusaw and Swanson's call, "good news and good deeds are, after all, the summation of Jesus' ministry" (24).

The second characteristic of such churches is their conviction that they are "vital to the health and well-being of their communities" (Rusaw and Swanson 25). The apostle Paul challenged the members of the early Church to "if possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18, NASB). The writer of Hebrews urges the church in a similar vein in Hebrews 12:14. This attitude of being a blessing to the community, of course stems from the earliest portion of the Judeo-Christian understanding of God's covenant. Abraham was blessed so he (and his descendants) would be a blessing to the nations.

Too often, the church has been more obsessed with its own blessing (and the blessing of those inside the church) than with its impact on those in the surrounding culture. This misplaced priority has created a perception by many that the church (and Christians in particular) does not care, and thus maybe the God of whom they speak does not either.

The third characteristic of these churches is their belief “that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living” (Rusaw and Swanson 26). One needs only remember the words of Jesus: “[T]he Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). In Mark’s gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (Mk. 9:35). The writer of 1 Peter urges the early Christians with these words, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Pet. 4:10). Service and Christianity have always been theologically, biblically, and historically connected.

Dr. Rick Warren promotes a similar value when, in his book *Purpose Driven Life*, he describes his “Purpose #4: You Were Shaped for Serving God” (227). There, he challenges the reader to discover their S.H.A.P.E.,⁵ discussing the importance of a person’s S.H.A.P.E.

The final characteristic of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church is “evangelistically effective” (Rusaw and Swanson 27). The Apostle Paul and Barnabas were powerfully effective in ministering to the Gentiles. In fact, their very success prompted the Jerusalem Council in chapter 15 of Acts. In Acts 2, Luke informs us,

⁵ S.H.A.P.E. is an acrostic by Dr. Rick Warren to describe a person’s unique design by God. It refers to a person’s “Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience,” all of which help shape one to serve God and others.

“And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b). Ten chapters later, Luke again records, “The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). When the Church is Christ-centered and outwardly focused it grows both in spiritual maturity and in numbers.

When taken together, these four characteristics help instill a clear direction for a congregation in putting action to their faith and promoting healthy mechanism of accountability for the Christians to grow in their expression of both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These four marks promote the values and priorities God expressed in and through the incarnation and ministry of Jesus.

When looking at the Presbyterian Church (USA), I recognize that local congregations are being called to emulate this biblical, theological, and historical model for church life. However, many of them are ill equipped and have few models to turn to for help.

Given the statistical data, the overall decline in attendees and membership within the denomination, change is required. A new approach to ministry must be birthed. This call to change, however, is easy to identify but difficult to implement. In order for change to occur, the local congregational leaders (most often the pastor) must grasp the basic advancements in understanding the arena of change and innovation theory. A rudimentary understanding in this area equips and empowers a pastor and leadership team to move forward wisely in promoting the kind of change being advocated in this dissertation.

Change Theory

Over the last forty years, much has been written about change and change theory in organizations. Reviewing the literature, a consensus of thought on numerous elemental concepts has developed. Prior to discussing these concepts, a basic understanding of the components resistant to change within an organization is helpful.

Approaches to Change

I have heard people comment on negative people and closed-minded organizations as the fertile ground for resistance. While I agree humans have a propensity to resist change, too often the resistance to change one encounters in an organization results from behavior or lack of behavior on the part of the agents of change themselves.

In looking at more than four hundred decisions made over the last two decades, Professor Paul C. Nutt offers his analysis as to why decisions fail in an organization. He notes three common blunders along with eight corresponding traps for failure. The three blunders he defines are failure-prone practices, premature commitments, and misuse of resources (4-6). While these blunders are more easily understood in the business sector, they also relate well to what occurs in the life of a local church.

In a church often a commitment to the way things have always been done results in continuing the patterns currently plaguing it. In a rush to resolve a current dilemma (e.g., declining church attendance, limited ministry participation), the church is quick to reach out for a new program or ministry opportunity. Commitments are made. Often these commitments are made without a thorough assessment of the

dilemma (see Table 2.1). Like most organizations, the church tends to misuse its resources. First, failing to recognize their resources fully, and second misappropriating them based on the *tyranny of the urgent* instead of according to the gifting of the people of God and their appropriate deployment. These blunders inevitably result in eight common traps represented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. How Blunders Prompt Traps

Traps	Failure Prone	Premature Commitments	Misuse of Resources
Failing to take change by reconciling claims	Support for claims and its arena of action assumed by the decision makers	Acceptance of first claim (or claimant) that seems important	Failure to look for hidden concerns or considerations and the more pressing claims that they suggest
Ignoring barriers to action	Power and persuasion used to implement decisions	Action taken before social and political forced understand	Interest and commitments of stakeholders go unexplored
Providing ambiguous direction	Directions assumed and never clarified	No acknowledgment of a concern without offering a remedy	Little time spent to identify desired results
Limiting search	A quick fix or adoption of what others are doing	Pressure for answers makes the conspicuous solution seem timely and pragmatic	Little spent on a search for ideas or for innovation
Misusing evaluations	Evaluations used to measure costs, ignoring the benefits	Defensive evaluation used to justify the conspicuous solution	Money spent defending ideas and not in exploring their risk
Overlooking ethical questions	Values behind ethical questions overlooked	All decisions are seen as ethically neutral	No time or money spent on uncovering values
Failure to learn	Failure to see how perverse incentives operate to cover up outcomes	Expectations demand good outcomes	Few resources used to learn or to do so without removing perverse incentives

Source: Nutt 24.

While some of these traps are more directly associated with the business sector, many apply directly to the church. The Session of a congregation must

understand the common causes for failure in order to reduce the chance of them occurring or reoccurring.

While Nutt focuses on the causes of failure, Kotter focuses his attention on eight common errors present in organizations resistant to change: allowing too much complacency, failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition, underestimating the power of vision, under communicating the vision by a factor of ten (or a hundred or even a thousand), permitting obstacles to block the new vision, failing to create short-term wins, declaring victory too soon, and neglecting to anchor change firmly in corporate culture (4-14). While he writes in a business context, many of his ideas ring true in the church as well.

Error #1, *allowing too much complacency*, often plagues a church trying to change. Kotter further clarifies this error:

By far the biggest mistake people make when trying to change an organization is to plunge ahead without establishing a high sense of urgency in fellow managers and employees. This error is fatal because transformations always fail to achieve their objectives when complacency levels are high. (4)

Most people in the church fail to realize the existence of any serious problems. While denominations send disturbing data (often creating dismay) and depressing demographics that reveal a greater disconnect, ultimately ignoring the dilemma altogether. Without a sense of urgency, motivation to change quickly evaporates.

Error #2, *failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition*, is another problem in the church. Change requires a high level of investment of people, but it must include the right people. "In successful transformations, the president, division general manager, or department head plus another five, fifteen, or fifty people with a

commitment to improved performance pull together as a team” (Kotter 6). In looking at Clarence E. Rempel’s experience at First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas, I observe one of the weaknesses of his experience resulting from this mistake:

“ongoing tension was experienced in sorting out the role of the Church Board and the Vision Community” (131). One must include the existing power structure if a sense of urgency is going to be identified and maintained. Sometimes, a pastor thinks he or she can manufacture the needed elements of change on his or her own. Again, Kotter’s insight proves helpful: “Individuals alone, no matter how competent or charismatic, never have all the assets needed to overcome tradition and inertia except in very small organizations” (6).

Error #3, *underestimating the power of vision*, continues to be a problem in most churches. Many churches and their boards fail to realize that “vision plays a key role in producing useful change by helping to direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people” (Kotter 7). While Proverb 29:18a is often quoted, “Where there is no vision, the people perish,” few people actually believe it. Business leaders, however, recognize that “without an appropriate vision, a transformation effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing, incompatible, and time-consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all” (Kotter 7). Clear vision is imperative to promote change.

Error #4, *under communicating the vision by a factor of ten (or a hundred or even a thousand)*, follows error #3. If the leaders are unaware of the power of a clear vision, they will likely under present the message of change to the broader community. For transformative change to occur, all the members of the congregation

will be required to make a variety of sacrifices. If the vision fails to be visible on an ongoing basis, the congregation will not likely be willing to make those sacrifices. (Kotter 9).

Error #5, *permitting obstacles to block the new vision*, is another common barrier in the church. While people become excited about a new idea or initiative, the leadership often fails in limiting or removing the institutional roadblocks. This failure to remove roadblocks often results in members of the congregation feeling disempowered. (Kotter 10).

Error #6, *failing to create short-term wins*, is a failure I have experienced in most churches of which I have been a part. I began to be aware of the power of short-term wins while visiting Willow Creek in the Spring of 2003. Bill Hybels regularly lifts this priority in his church (*Volunteer Revolution*). When I arrived at a weekend service, it happened to be what would be labeled “Volunteer Appreciation Sunday” in my denomination. The leadership team spent the majority of the service naming and celebrating the many short-term wins in each ministry department. I had never seen anything like it. Hybels and the leadership team at Willow Creek seem to understand that “without short-term wins, too many ... give up” (Kotter 10).

Error 7, *declaring victory too soon*, may not be one of the errors of most churches I have observed.

Error #8, *neglecting to anchor change firmly in corporate culture*, however, is another critical error in most churches. In the final analysis, change is only realized when it becomes “the way we do things around here,” Kotter expresses it this way: “Until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are always

subject to degradation as soon as the pressures associated with a change effort are removed” (14). With the frequent movement of pastoral staff in my denomination, this anchoring process becomes difficult. Too often, the forces of resistance merely wait for what they perceive as the inevitable departure of the senior pastor.

In both Nutt and Kotter, reoccurring ingredients for failure are identified: rushing to decisions without enough and appropriate information, failure to listen to the voices of the stakeholders, and, once a decision is made, an inability to reevaluate.

In the process of attempting to redirect the Session of a local church into a Christ-centered and outwardly focused community, the pastor and leadership team must understand and appropriately attend to these common ingredients for failure.

Change agent must also realize that any change process is not as simple as step 1, step 2, and step 3. Rather, it is a complex process with starts and stops that result in a nonlinear but a progressive direction toward intended goals (Burke 64).

In Rogers’ research relating to the process by which farmers adapted to various changes in Collins, Iowa and subsequent research projects, he identified four elements necessary in the diffusion of an innovation: the innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems. In addressing the change of direction in the Session of a church, these same ingredients seem particularly relevant.

Innovation

Innovation has the following definition: “1. The act of introducing something new. 2. Something newly introduced.” While this definition provides the parameters by which an innovation is recognized, Rogers provides a critical clarification in regards to innovation being adopted in the context of a congregation: “An *innovation*

[original emphasis] is an idea, practice, or object that is **perceived** [emphasis mine] as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (12). Innovation can be understood as the introduction of new technology, information, or an implementation strategy. In discussing the church, this holistic concept of an innovation is critical to understand.

Introducing a Christ-centered and outwardly focused strategy is not a new idea as I have already described biblically and theologically. Becoming a community with this priority requires the introduction of strategies, practices, and emphases, which fall into Everett Rogers’ definition of innovation. In order for an innovation to be attractive to the “individual or unit of adoption,” Rogers discusses five characteristics that promote the adoption of an innovation (14-16).

First, an innovation must have a perceived *relative advantage*. In other words, the idea must be better than the idea it supersedes. The way the idea is perceived as *better* can vary (e.g., financial, social, efficient). The greater the level of perceived *relative advantage* the more rapid the possibility of adopting the innovation.

Second, an innovation must have a certain degree of *compatibility*. The innovation must fit into the values, past experience, and needs of the group. When a chasm exists between the innovation and the values or goals of an organization, inevitably a high degree of resistance is experienced. In order for such an innovation to take root, an organization must adjust its values.

Third, the innovation’s relationship to *complexity* affects the rate of adoption. When an innovation is perceived as being too complex, many people will simply ignore the possible benefits of the innovation. If the innovation is perceived as simple, or easily accepted, the rate of adoption will increase.

Fourth, an innovation's *trialability* factor plays a key role. If the innovation can be tested on a limited basis, this raises the potential for adoption. "Ryan and Gross (1943) found that every one of their Iowa farmer respondents adopted hybrid seed corn by first trying it on a partial basis" (E. Rogers 16). This ability to have a test changes reduces anxiety and uncertainty regarding new innovations.

Fifth, the innovation must be *observable*. The greater community must be able to perceive the benefit of the innovation. The issue of visibility allows the innovation to be seen by a broader range of people, which increases the possible adherents. It also stimulates support by those who have discussed the possible adoption of the innovation.

Communication Channels

Everett Rogers defines *communication channels* as, "the process by which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding" (18). This exchange of information related to the innovation becomes critical in its diffusion into the target community. These communication channels become critical.

According to Rogers' research, acceptance of an innovation is grounded in less scientific ways:

Most individuals do not evaluate an innovation on the basis of scientific studies of its consequences, although such objective evaluations are not entirely irrelevant, especially to the very first individuals who adopt. Instead, most people depend mainly upon the subjective evaluation of an innovation that is conveyed to them from other individuals like themselves who have already adopted the innovation. (18-19)

In order for adoption of the innovation to occur, the broader community requires regular communication and clear application of the innovation.

If communication and application are required, those promoting the change must be aware of the kinds of people needed in this task of major organizational change. Malcolm Gladwell provides helpful information regarding this point. In his numerous anecdotal experiences regarding the diffusion of an innovation into the culture, he identifies three critical types of people necessary in the communication channel to make an innovation take off. He labels them *connectors*, *mavens*, and *salesmen*.

Utilizing Stanley Milgram's experiment⁶ discovering how people are connected, Malcolm Gladwell refers to this first group of key people who serve as catalysts for change, the *connectors*. Connectors are "people who link us up with the world ... who introduce us to our social circles—these people on whom we rely more heavily than we realize—are Connectors, people with a special gift for bringing the world together" (38). Their importance does not simply reside in the number of people they know. though they know more than the average person does, the type of people they know help maximize their benefit. Their connections are with a wide range of people. They have a tendency to like everyone with whom they come into contact: "They manage to occupy many different worlds and subcultures and niches" (48). Connectors are important players in this process of major change.

⁶ In the late 1960s Stanley Milgram sent out a chain letter to 160 residents of Omaha, Nebraska. The purpose of this letter was for each person to sign his or her name on the packet and send it to someone he or she thought would most likely be able to get the information to a stockbroker in Boston, Massachusetts. Milgram discovered people were able to make the connection in less than six steps. This project is the source for the common idea of six degrees of separation (Gladwell 34-36).

The second category of people Gladwell identifies are *mavens*. “The word *Maven* comes from the Yiddish, and it means one who accumulates knowledge” (60). Just as people are needed to make connections with other people, *mavens* are needed to help connect people to new ideas or innovations. *Mavens* are information brokers. They are vociferous collectors of information about all types of subjects. What sets this group of information gatherers apart is that they are not simply passive collectors of information they serve as distributors as well:

What sets *Mavens* apart, though, is not so much what they know but how they pass it along. The fact that *Mavens* want to help, for no other reason than because they like to help, turns out to be an awfully effective way of getting someone’s attention. (67)

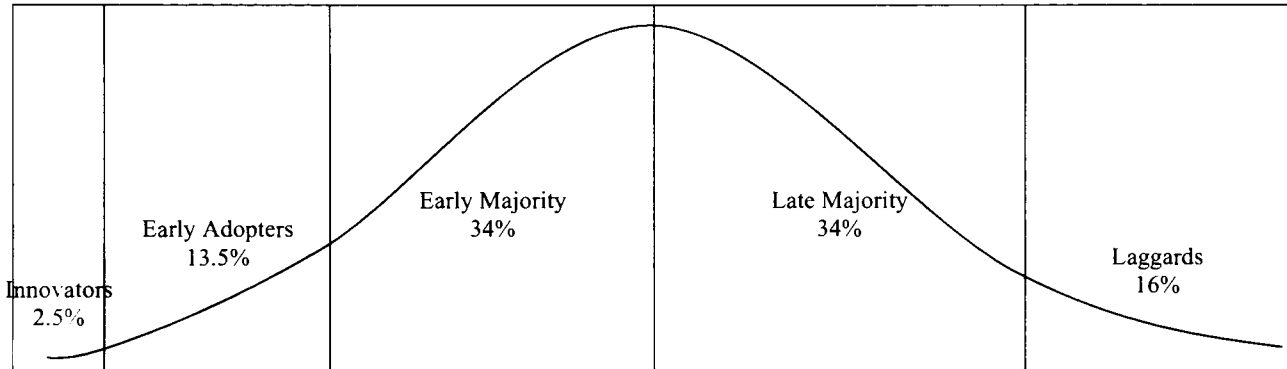
Mavens serve an important role in moving a community toward understanding and adopting a new innovation.

In the change process, *mavens* serve as a sort of data bank for new information and innovations and *connectors* are the social glue who hold everything together. A third group necessary in this process, too—the *salesmen*. The *salesmen* possess the necessary “skills to persuade us when we are unconvinced of what we are hearing, and they are as critical to the tipping of word-of-mouth epidemics as the other two groups” (70). The *salesmen* are able to create an emotional connection with people providing confidence and assurance that the innovation is worth the risk. To be successful in making a major change, all three types of people must be present.

Time

Pastors, like any leaders, desire that their followers adopt the new idea or innovation quickly. Often, they fail to understand of the role time plays in the process. In the unfolding process of *connectors*, *mavens*, and *salesmen* working

together to create that *tipping point*, it takes time. In addition, time serves an invaluable ingredient for an innovation to become accepted in the desired population. Everett Rogers created a widely accepted categorization of adopters. He labels them innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Each of these adopter categories represent a percentage of the population of the given community into which the innovation is introduced. This chart visually depicts how the adoption process is a sequential process.



Source: Everett Rogers 281.

Figure 2.1. Adopter categorizations.

The innovators represent only 2.5 percent of the population. These are the adventuresome people who are willing to take risks and possible setbacks in order to try something new. These folks are often thought of as outsiders as they tend to connect with people in other social and professional contexts who hold similar ideas. This group of people can be the seedbed out of which new ideas or new ways of doing things can be grown (E. Rogers 267-98).

The early adopters, in contrast, are people who are well respected, insiders in the target community. These are the people to whom the rest of the community looks for their opinion. They tend to be well connected within the group of people trying to be influenced. This group is essential for any innovation to take hold and permeate into the fabric of the target community (E. Rogers 267-98).

The early majority may not be as influential as the previous group, but they provide the weight to tip the innovation into the mainstream. Representing a third of the community, they are willing to adopt a change fairly early but are not gifted to lead the charge for change (E. Rogers 267-98).

Late adopters are more skeptical. They are interested in the pragmatic benefit. They want to be assured of the value of the proposed change before they embrace it. They need the first half of the community to influence them and finally push them into adoption (E. Rogers 267-89).

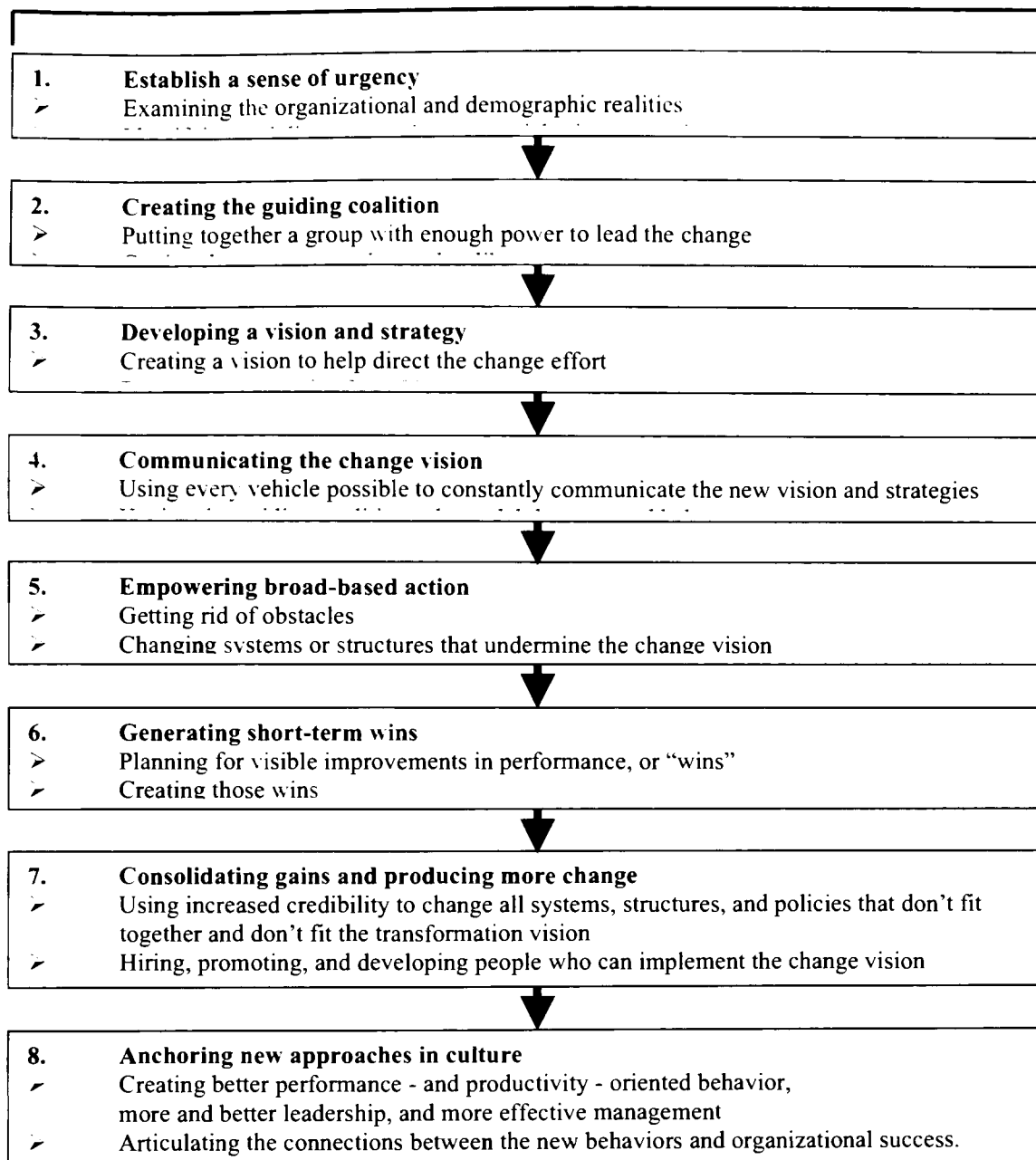
The final group Everett Rogers identifies is the laggards. This group generally has a high degree of investment in the way things are already going. They often lack the resources (e.g., intellectual, financial, creative) to move forward. Because of their limitations, they perceive a need to be extremely cautious (267-98).

The significance of these categorizations, while not exhaustive or completely representative 100 percent of the time, is that they highlight the importance of time in the adoption process. The minister who attempts to push a new idea or ministry before people have had an opportunity to understand and begin to adopt the concept for themselves do so at the desired innovation's peril.

Social Systems

A social system is defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in problem solving to accomplish a common goal. I attempted to influence the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Bakersfield in my project. In a Presbyterian Church (USA), the Session is the critical social system. Understanding its role in the process of transformation is helpful.

While differing from Rogers' approach toward change, Kotter's business paradigm serves as a helpful and complimentary strategy for change. Based on his research and experience, he elevates an eight-stage progressive process for major change in any organization (see figure 2.2).



Source: Kotter 21.

Figure 2.2. Eight-stage process of creating major change.

Figure 2.2 serves as a simplification of the process Kotter outlines in his book. For Kotter, each of these stages is critically important (no shortcuts). Like Everett Rogers and others, change takes time. To ignore any one of the steps is to court

disaster. In the best possible scenario, an organization follows the process in the order in which he presents them (1-31).

James Egli does a helpful job in translating these eight stages and their implications into the context of attempting to provide major change within a congregation.

Kotter's first step, *establishing a sense of urgency*, provides a foundation on which an organization desiring to change can build. Both Kotter and Egli emphasize this point:

Christian leaders guiding a church through change should realize that simply waiting for something with a sense of urgency is often not enough. Sometimes urgent situations go unrecognized by members. A pressing need for change can be proactively created through leadership initiative. (Kotter 6)

While creating a sense of urgency can be difficult for some ministers to recognize, Dr. Ronald G. Havelock in his research on change theory in education comments, "All human systems are unfulfilled, incomplete or lacking in some ways" (55). The challenge for a minister is to prayerfully pay attention to these areas of need and imagine how an innovation may offer assistance.

The second step, *creating a guiding coalition*, highlights the importance of teams in the change process. Some pastors think that they have the clout and position to bring about change on their own. Change in an organization always includes teams of people. Choosing who is on this change team is critical. Kotter recommends that you find the right people, build trust, and develop a common goal (67).

These keys to building the right team are consistent with Gladwell's argument. Finding the right people, of course, is critical. Kotter spends quite a bit of

time clarifying the difference between leading and managing. He recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of both. In building the coalition, team, or Session, including a mix of people and gifts is important: managers, leaders, conceptual people, and pragmatic people, older and younger. In the church, identifying the range of gifts in leaders and managers can be a challenge. Egli makes a helpful suggestion: “Look at their [potential leaders] past experience. Look for individuals who either in the church or in other areas of their lives directed and successfully initiated new endeavors” (8). This suggestion is helpful when designing a team.

The third step, *developing a vision and a strategy*, effectively flows when the prior two steps have been attended to properly. Egli’s warning is helpful: “Many change agents anxious to get to the task at hand attempt to start at stage three. This is a big mistake!” (9). Kotter makes a distinction between a vision statement and mission statements. The vision statement is usually a paragraph long and includes the direction and some specific components in accomplishing the goal. The vision statement is in contrast to what he refers to as the mission statement that is the short memorable device Warren defines as vision. Regardless of how one defines it or how long one makes it, Kotter identifies six characteristics that make a vision statement effective: imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable (66). Warren identifies a list of characteristics he believes are critical in *The Purpose Driven Church* and are particularly relevant to the life of the church. He lists Scripture, symbols, slogans, stories, specifics, the key being, “It is important to personalize them” (111-14).

Normally, a vision statement is generated by a single individual. This person provides a starting point for the *guiding coalition* to begin designing, crafting, and *wordsmithing* the document. Egli further clarifies a strong vision statement:

The vision must be compelling. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:8: “If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?” A vision statement must motivate and direct. If it doesn’t, go back to the drawing board. (10)

Having a single voice producing the vision statement provides a clarity for the primary issues facing an organization.

When urgency is present, the right team is in place, and the motivating vision created, *communicating the change vision* should come naturally. This communication step is often overlooked or ignored dooming any possible change. Too often, as people who have worked hard on the creation of the vision, they forget that others have not been so involved. The truth is, if one wants to communicate the vision to the larger congregation, it must be the task of both the Session and pastor(s) to communicate tirelessly on this subject. Egli transforms Kotter’s guidelines of communication for the church:

1. **Simplicity:** Avoid theological and technical jargon.
2. **Use metaphors:** A simple word picture can communicate a thousand words.
3. **Multiple forums:** Use many different communication channels including the pulpit, meetings, newsletters, bulletins and informal meetings and contacts. If there are seminars, books, or videos that explain the new approach that you are implementing utilize those, realizing that different people will respond to different channels of communication more readily.
4. **Repetition:** Remember all of us need to hear new ideas multiple times before they soak in. How many times did you hear the gospel before you personally responded? Don’t expect people to understand and respond to ideas the first time they are presented.
5. **Leadership by example:** The pastor and key leaders must “put their money where their mouth is,” so to speak. If the new ideas are truly

important to them they must invest their own time and energy there, or people will assume change is not really a priority.

6. Explanation of seeming inconsistencies: IF some things in the church conflict with the new changes, yet it is not time to change them, communicate the reasons honestly and openly or people will get mixed messages.

7. Give-and-take: the most powerful communication is two-way. Listen to people's concern, questions, and suggestions. Listening will improve both your communication and your new ideas. (10-11)

These guidelines offer more clarity for unique conditions within a church context.

With the right vision cast before the right people, the fifth step, *empowering broad-based action* is next. Often people support the direction and new goals established by the leadership of an organization. However, they either do not understand what needs to be done or roadblocks exist in the very system.

Responsibility rests on the Session (leadership team) to be proactive in their thinking and attentive in their listening to be aware of potential roadblocks. Key leaders need to be trained in order to help the transition be successful. The leadership team must be prepared to confront individuals undermining the direction. According to Dale Galloway, this issue of confrontation is often a step ministers and boards overlook at their own peril (Egli 11; Kotter 101-10).

These initial five steps are critical in initiating change in a social system, yet they serve only as the starting point. Changing the fabric of the system requires the extra mile of steps six through eight.

Step six, *generating short-term wins*, provides early successes for systemic change in the social setting to become institutionalized. The value of these *wins* rests on their ability to communicate to the people making the sacrifice that their adjustment is furthering the cause of the organization. The *wins* provide affirmation

to the most heavily invested in the organization. Another benefit *wins* provide is an opportunity to hone the strategies and tweak the vision statement. They also minimize the concerns of the detractors (Kotter 127-28; Egli 13). The key to making these *wins* effective is to base them on substance and to stay away from gimmicks. Short-term wins, however, do not assure the change seeping into the core of an organization.

Step seven, *consolidating gains and producing more change*, Kotter recognizes that short-term gains can be wasted if the momentum is not utilized to make the necessary changes to take the next steps in implementation. Kotter states five points in looking at this section (143). Egli transfers the ideas into the context of the church world:

1. More change, not less: Now is not the time to relax. The guiding coalition must use short-term wins to tackle larger and more difficult change.
2. More hope: Additional leadership should be mobilized and perhaps additional staff must be added to support new changes.
3. Leadership from the top: The pastor and key leaders must continue to clarify the vision and keep urgency levels up to see change through to its destination.
4. Leadership from below: As change is increased at this point in the process, leadership for specific areas and new projects is delegated to members with leadership and management giftings.
5. Reduction of peripheral systems: At this point inconsistencies in your administrative system may become apparent. Where it is advantageous, systems should be streamlined to keep efforts focused on the key vision and priorities. (Egli 14)

These changes become so critical because, as Kotter points out, “Irrational and political resistance to change never fully dissipates. Even if you’re successful in the early stages of a transformation” (132).

These steps lead to the final step in Kotter’s approach to transformational change in an organization. Step eight, *anchoring the new approaches in the culture*,

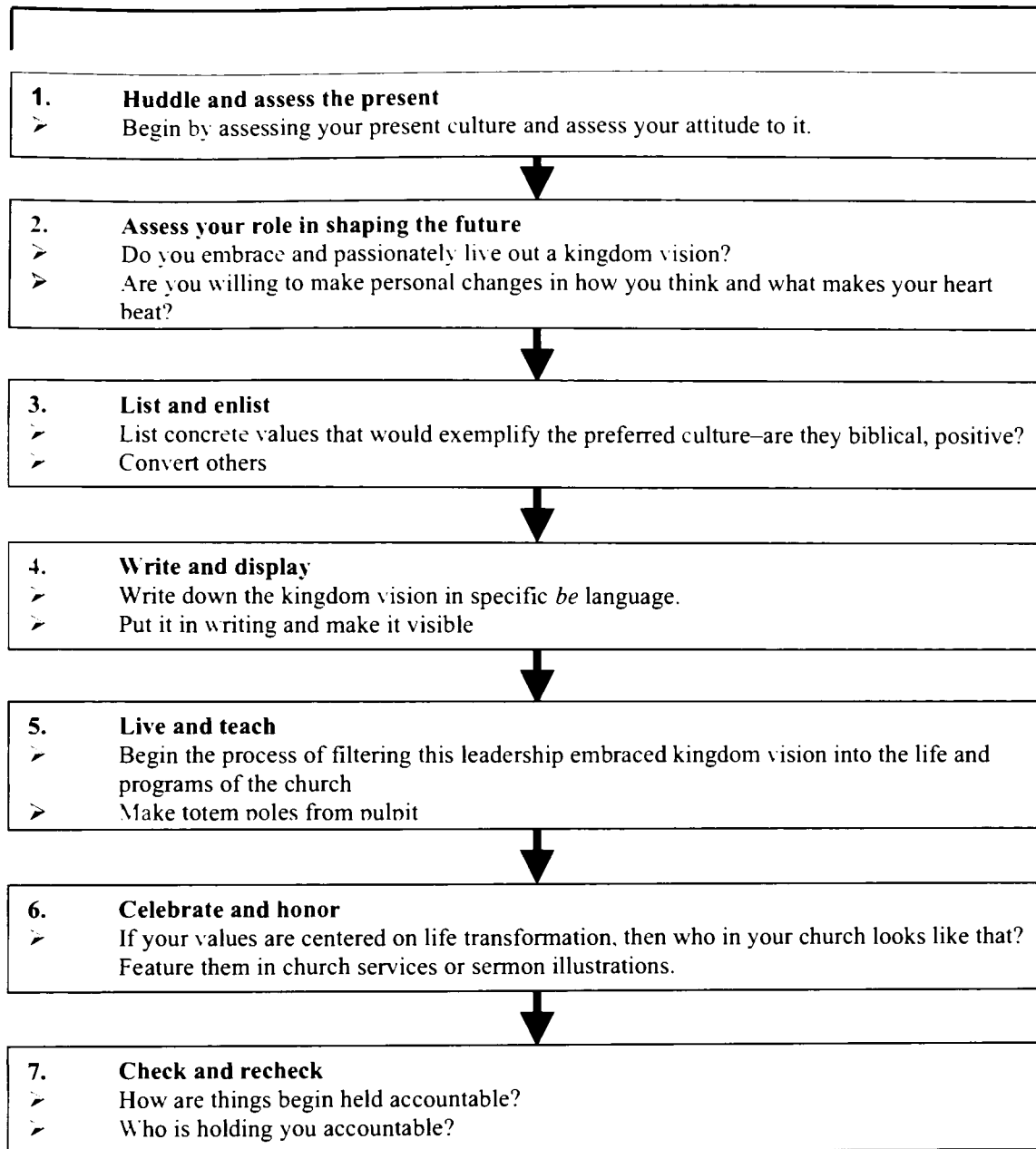
grounds the change into the fabric of the institution. “Culture is the most important social reality in your church. Though invisible to the untrained eye, its power is undeniable” (Lewis and Cordeiro 3). Kotter warns of a destructive mentality that has been widely circulated over the last fifteen years. He describes it this way:

The biggest impediment to creating change in a group is culture. Therefore the first step in a major transformation is to alter the norms and values. After the culture has shifted, the rest of the change effort becomes more feasible and easier to put into effect. (155-56)

Leaders who hold this attitude do so at their own peril.

Whenever possible, one should root the major change in the existing culture: “[T]he core of the old culture is not incompatible with the new vision, although some specific norms will be” (Kotter 151). Lewis is more direct: “The right culture can be built by starting with what you already have” (9). Egli helpfully narrows Kotter’s process down to four ingredients: talking about it, aligning the old culture while embracing the new, eliminating leadership and staff that does not fit the new paradigm, and promoting those who best fit and support the new culture (Kotter 157; Egli 16).

In looking how change theory might apply directly to a local congregation, Lewis and Cordeiro offer their own perspective on the transformational process. The similarities between their approach and that of E. Rogers and Kotter is evident (see Figure 2.3).



Source: Lewis and Cordeiro 53-64.

Figure 2.3. Seven-step process of changing a church's culture.

Each of these models points to the possible diffusion of an idea into an organization. When thinking about change, Rogers' fourfold components are critical: the innovation, channels of communication, time, and the shift in a social system.

Leadership Theory

Understanding that being Christ-centered and outwardly focused reflects the nature and character of God, that it authentically describes what the church was made to do, and understanding foundational elements of change theory led me to ponder what role do a leader has in congregational change and how a leader might become better equipped to assist in this process.

Schein suggests that the manner in which a leader transforms an organization is through grafting the leaders' "beliefs, values, and assumptions" (245) into the greater community. This process of grafting occurs through a process he calls embedding. He lists six major ways leaders can embed these ideas into their groups: what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis; how leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises; how leaders allocate resources; deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching; how leaders allocate rewards and status; how leaders recruit, select, promote, and excommunicate (246). If one is going to successfully lead a congregation into change, awareness of these embedding devices is critical. Henry Cloud, commenting on successful people, states that such people "rarely take any action without considering the future implication[s]" (71). Moving forward demands an awareness of the allies one has in introducing an innovation.

The greatest ally a leader has is the unique set of strengths, gifts, talents, and experiences that he or she brings to the challenge of leading. A traditional understanding of pastor limited this advantage by establishing a set of expectations he or she were tasked with facilitating in the life of a church. William H. Willimon book, lays out the many roles a clergyperson is to fulfill: pastor as priest; pastor as pastor; pastor as interpreter of Scripture; pastor as preacher; pastor as counselor; pastor as teacher; pastor as evangelist; pastor as prophet; pastor as leader; pastor as character; and, pastor as disciplined Christian. While he elevates the importance of laypeople, fundamentally, he understands the role of pastor as fulfilling all of these functions. With the challenge of accomplishing all of these tasks, a pastor has little chance of being an effective agent of change within a declining, discouraged church. For too long, pastors have tried unsuccessfully to perform these many roles.

Instead of focusing on the myriad of expectations that many have of a pastor, a more productive strategy is to discover the unique set of gifts and talents a pastor brings to the role of the pastorate. Buckingham and Clifton argue, “you will excel only by maximizing your strengths, never by fixing your weaknesses” (26; Warren *Purpose Driven Life* 234-48). Too many people attempt to lead by focusing on their areas of weakness. Instead, celebrating the unique manner in which God has formed and shaped a person proves a more effective leadership approach. This shift in focus produces freedom and excellence in the pastor and empowers the church community to live into the strengths God has given them corporately. This shift does not offer leaders permission to neglect inherent weaknesses they possess. Instead, it requires

leaders to elevate areas of weakness to the extent that they will not impede or hamper the purpose and goal of their respective faith community.

To accomplish a shift in the understanding and exercise of leadership requires a great deal of humility, sensitivity, and patience. Following Jesus' leadership approach, the Session (and congregation) must fully realize the depth of commitment and love the pastor has for them in order to promote this new paradigm of leadership. Jesus patiently waited for three years for his disciples, and even then they failed to understand fully the shift to which Jesus was calling them. The day of Pentecost, and more completely in Acts 15, helped the disciples to realize Jesus' call for them to be Christ-centered and outwardly focused.

Team Building

The challenge of introducing an innovation into an organization such as the Presbyterian Church (USA) provided a challenge. The clear constitutional guidelines as to the roles and responsibilities of a Session coupled with the *de facto* operating procedures that have occurred over time creates a challenging environment in which to promote change. A second challenging factor in introducing change in a Session is the assortment of people on the Session: each member's motivation, experience, and expectation will be different. These variables cause me to agree with Schein's observation that leaders must "learn to decipher cultural cues" (170). Simply diagnosing the variables is not enough; the pastor must be able to adjust strategy and approach based on the variables. This flexibility and awareness is particularly important when dealing with the members of the congregation serving on Session.

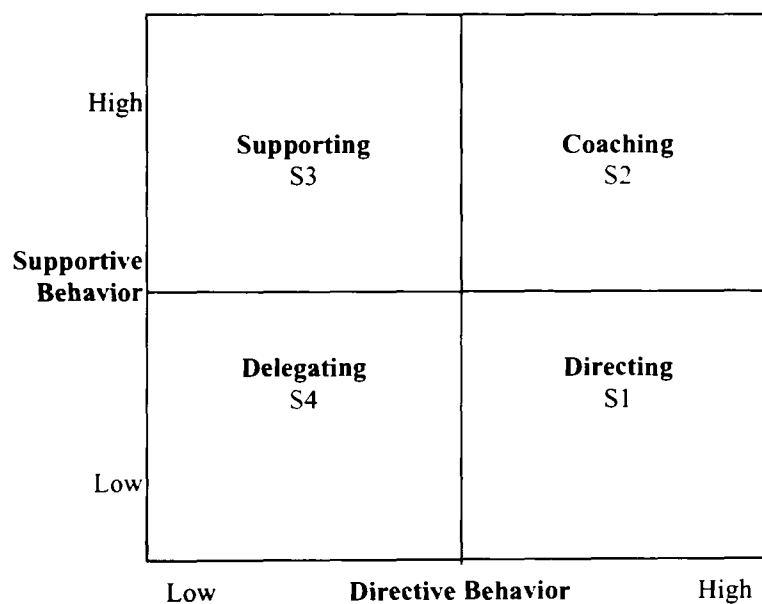
In regards to parenting, a rigid, mono-approach will prove ineffective with multiple children. Each child responds differently to the variety of stimuli used to shape and influence the child's development. Likewise, the same holds true for the volunteer leaders in a church. As one seeks to promote change within a group, one must be knowledgeable and flexible to accomplish the desired goal. While defined differently by different authors, a consensus has been developed regarding a four-phase process for group dynamics has evolved.⁷ What the pastor must take into consideration when introducing innovation into a group is the phase nature of change (discussed earlier) and its unique role in equipping others to journey through these stages. This journey must be tailored to the people with whom one is seeking to introduce an innovation.

Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard developed an approach to leading people that seems appropriate in looking at groups. With the variables mentioned previously, a leader must be aware that a *one-size-fits-all* approach does not work. Hersey and Blanchard have identified four common modes of leading others. They initially labeled them as telling, selling, participating, and delegating (149-73). Situational Leadership II alters the titles of the modes to the following: directing (S1), coaching (S2), supporting (S3), and delegating (S4).

Directing is characterized by the leader defining roles and telling people what, how, when, and where to do various tasks. *Coaching* still requires the leader to generate most of the direction. In this mode, two-way communication and

⁷ Thelan and Dickerman (1949)—developed forming, conflict, harmony, and productivity
 Bennis and Shepard (1956)—dependence, interdependence, focused work, and productivity
 Tuckman (1965)—forming, storming, norming, and performing
 Fisher (1970, 1974)—orientation, conflict, emergence, and reinforcement
 Schein (2004)—formation, building, work, maturity

explanation is utilized in order to create support by the follower into the desired behavior. *Supporting* allows the leader and follower to share in the decision-making process. The leader serves as more of a facilitator and communicator. Finally, in the *delegating* mode, the follower is given the responsibility to carry out the plans according to his or her judgment, deciding the how, when, and where questions (153-54). Figure 2.4 informs the leader as to the type of leadership approaches available to influence and shape others. the real brilliance of the Hersey and Blanchard's approach is the correlation between leadership style and the needs of the people one's trying to lead.



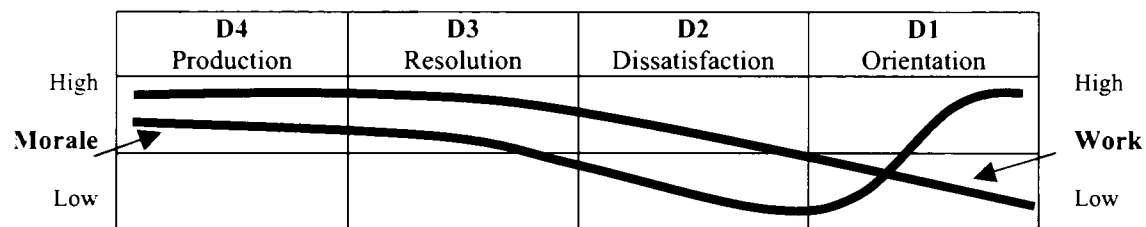
Source: Holsinger.

Figure 2.4. Situational leadership II style.

James Holsinger helpfully explains the relationship between situational leadership and the phase group development. He points out that often a group's resistance to change correlates to their perception of their competence (their

perception of how well they can produce the desired innovation) and their commitment (how much they buy-in to the desired innovation). Figure 2.5 provides a visual example of the relationship among these factors.

The phases of group dynamics are connected to the leadership style necessary to produce the most effective climate to implement the desired innovation. During the D1 phase, the leader will be required to be more directive for the team (S1). As confidence and competence increase, the level of directive decreases as coaching (S2), supporting (S3), and delegating (S4) become more useful as the group moves toward the D4 phase.

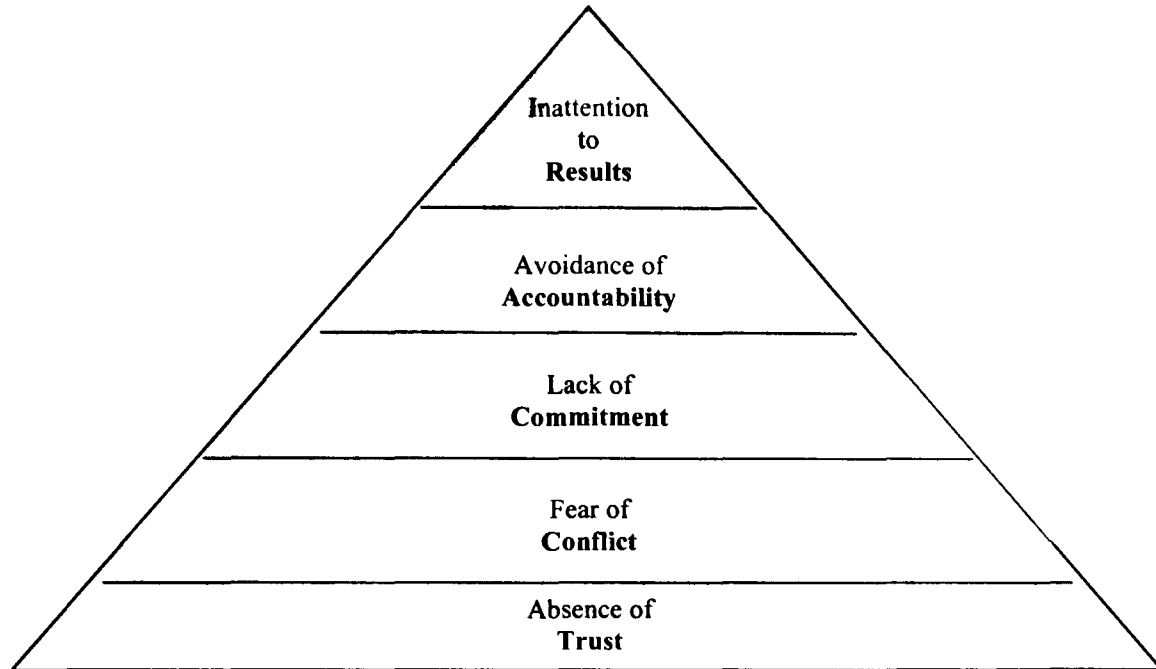


Source: Holsinger.

Figure 2.5. Matching group development phase to leadership style.

One other piece that is helpful in understanding how to equip the Session to be successful in its adoption of the innovation (Christ-centered and outwardly focused), will be to grasp roadblocks that occur in moving a team forward in the phase development of an innovation. Lencioni provides a constructive approach to understanding these barriers. He calls them the five dysfunctions of a team. While providing a leadership fable to illustrate his five dysfunctions, his story and explanation resonated with the experience I have had as pastor and staff person over the years.

The absence of trust, the first and foundational dysfunction, stems from a Session's unwillingness to be vulnerable and open to one another regarding individual strengths, weaknesses, and fears. This lack of trust promotes an environment where the group is unsure as to the veracity of what people are thinking and saying. This lack of trust feeds the second dysfunction, fear of conflict. Due to the lack of trust, teams are unwilling and incapable of engaging in heated, passionate discussions regarding ideas and decisions. Instead, the Session members guard their comments and attempt to get their point across (if they feel strongly enough) through subtle suggestions and inferences. This fear of clear and honest communication feeds the third dysfunction, lack of commitment. If Session members have not engaged the subject matter, shared their concerns, or expressed their excitement, they will inevitably have little or no commitment to the decision. A lack of commitment feeds into the fourth dysfunction, the avoidance of accountability. If members of Session lack are without a high level of commitment, they will lack clarity regarding both what and whom to hold accountable. The final dysfunction, inattention to results, is promoted by the previous errors. Because of the lack of accountability, commitment, engagement, and trust, team members will have no clear set of results for which they are looking or expecting. (Lencioni 188-99; see Figure 2.6).



Source: Lencioni 188.

Figure 2.6. Five dysfunctions of a team.

While any one of these dysfunctions can be a hindrance to a group moving forward, the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the pastor (leader) to remove these roadblocks. Expressing these dysfunctions in a proactive and positive light will prove most productive. A healthy team or Session is one that exhibits a high level of trust (vulnerability); a willingness to engage in conflict centered around ideas (not personality); a high degree of commitment to the expressed goals; a high degree of accountability; and, a high degree of focus on the desired outcome.

While Lencioni's insight appears straightforward and simple on paper, reality proves much more difficult. The proliferation of books and seminars on this very subject suggest more difficulty than simply implementing a diagram into a Session.

Change and health require a higher degree of commitment from the leader than it does of anyone else on the Session. If the leader models such behavior (Schein's embedding principle) a greater possibility of creating such a team exists.

Summary

The literature reminds us that an established community of faith to be open and willing to change. The biblical and theological traditions of the church point to the priority for change while the writers in change and leadership theory offer a guide to help realize this change. The literature also offers hope and insight for a pastor. While the process of change is complicated and difficult and requires a high degree of commitment it can be done as long as one leads with humility, grace, and patience.

Everett Rogers and Kotter remind us that change for its own sake is not a worthy goal. However, change that produces something *better* than the status quo is compelling. Creating a community that embraces a commitment to becoming a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation is worthy. This new Christ-centered and outwardly focused community reflects the passion and priorities of the triune God. This new paradigm, however, is a shift in the functioning of most sessions and congregations in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The introduction of this new *innovation* will require time and intention on the part of the pastor.

In this study, I am not suggesting simply a new program or strategy, rather, I am suggesting a heart transformation of pastor and Session in the hopes of empowering the local church to become all God intends for it to be. Like Olsen, I am convinced that "the most opportune place to exert influence for transformation is at the heart of the life of the church—the official board" (xvi).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Often Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations have a functional default toward being institutionally centered and inwardly focused. The major concern and attention is concentrated on those who are already inside. Looking at the literature review reveals Scripture promotes a very different set of priorities. The Lord desires for the church to be centered on Christ and focused on those who are on the outside. In order to shift the focus of a church, change must be effectively introduced into the relatively closed church system. The kind of change hoped for, in the Presbyterian system, is most effective when initiated by the Session, the elected leaders of the congregation. This study utilized the combination of biblical and theological understanding coupled with change and leadership theory to initiate change within a Session.

The process began by observing the current ministry climate, values, and practices. The observation was accomplished through informal, semi-directed, open-ended interviews with three selected opinion leaders in the congregation (see Appendix C). The result of these interviews revealed a long history of First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield commitment to the authority of Scripture and the centrality of Jesus Christ. This assessment by long-time members and opinion leaders caused me to shift the emphasis to being outwardly focused.

Problem Restated

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has become increasingly distant and alien to the culture in which it exists. The population of my denomination is older, more educated, and ethnically more homogenous than the towns, cities, suburbs, and urban settings in which it exists. In my denomination, the weight of decision-making regarding the local mission of a congregation rests in the hands of the elected elders, those serving on Session. Sessions are filled with godly, well-intentioned people, and my research informs me that with an intentional, measured process they are able to become more aware of and transformed by the introduction of the innovation of and outwardly focused paradigm in their lives and in the life of the congregation they serve.

Purpose Restated

The purpose of this dissertation was to educate and initiate an observable process of change in the Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation toward accepting a Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry.

Research Questions

Out of the concerns and convictions developed from my research, three questions naturally arose.

Research Question #1

What is the participants' current level of knowledge and understanding concerning the centrality of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church? In order to introduce an innovation into a system, one must have a clear understanding of the current structures, values, and priorities of a community. If one does not

possess this level of contextual understanding, the challenge of creating a sense of urgency among the population for the respective innovation (E. Rogers 14-16) will become daunting.

Gaining this initial information also provides the agent of change to sidestep some of the common “traps” in promoting change described by Nutt (24). This understanding is particularly relevant when looking at *trap #2*, “Ignoring barriers if action,” and *Trap #4*, “Limiting Search.”

A clear understanding of where the leadership knowledge and understanding of the four marks will assist the change agent in designing a strategy for moving forward and initiating process of change for the Session.

Research Question #2

What changes occurred in the participants’ level of knowledge and understanding concerning the centrality of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church?

In order to help solidify an innovation and help it become normalized, one must recognize the change in people’s understanding of Christ-centered and outwardly focused and their commitment to this end. Change is not a static event; it requires constant assessment. Lewis and Cordeiro reiterate the importance of checking and rechecking (63-64). Awareness of the changing opinions and attitudes of decision makers in the congregation allows the change agent to modify instructions and clarifications in a manner most effective for members of Session. This need for regular evaluation offers insight into applying Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership grid: the role of supporting, coaching, delegating, and directing.

Research Question #3

How might the Session's change in understanding influence or affect the focus and behavior of First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield, California? Bill Hybels, in describing his influence on Willow Creek Community Church, highlights six ingredients of creating change in an organization; one of them is a leader's "ability to see a preferred future" (*Courageous Leadership*, 151). In promoting a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm, leaders must be aware of the possible implications for the local congregation and for the surrounding community.

Design of the Study

This project was a program for assisting a Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation to increase its understanding of and commitment to a Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry. This quasi-experimental study utilized a pretest and posttest questionnaire as well as a follow-up semi-structured survey to gauge change in the thinking of the Session members.

The project included several elements. The tools utilized to measure change in the Session's understanding and commitment to being Christ-centered and outwardly focused were (1) a sixteen-response questionnaire pretest and posttest, and (2) a semi-structured two-question follow-up survey given to the members of the Session.

The devices to influence change in the thinking of and commitment to being Christ-centered and outwardly focused included three critical events. The initial input to increase the Session's understanding and commitment was a four-hour Session retreat in August 2008. There, the innovation of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused was first introduced. Reinforcing this innovation occurred at each of the four

regularly scheduled Session meetings from August to December of 2008. A third aspect involved monthly, informal meetings with the triads of Session members to (1) reinforce the monthly highlighted “mark of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused” congregation, (2) consider potential effect in the life of the Session member and his or her area of ministry responsibility in the church, and (3) deepen relationship and strengthen trust among Session members.

In this chapter, I begin with the profile of the participants. After understanding who was a part of the population, I move on to discuss the tools used to measure the change. With this clear understanding, I conclude by describing the opportunities to introduce new ideas into the minds of the Session members.

Profile of Participants

The population of the study consisted of the thirty elders serving on the Session of First Presbyterian Church Bakersfield. The nominating committee of FPCB, after evaluating the 960 possible candidates, selected these people based on criterion from Scripture (see 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1) and requirements from the *Book of Order* (G-6.0200-6.0300). The nominating committee brought forward a slate of nominees, and at an annual congregational meeting the members elect a class of elders. Participating in this study were the elders from the class of 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Together, these thirty people made up the Session during the period of this study. This group consisted of six women and twenty-four men. While weighted more heavily for men than is representative of the whole congregation (approximately 61 percent female and 39% percent male), the make up is balanced in other areas of

representation. This population represented a balanced representation of people from our three unique worship services (eleven first service attendees, eight second service attendees, and eleven third service attendees).⁸ The range in ages of the Session, fairly represents the adult population of the congregation: four were between the ages of 25-40, seventeen between the ages of 41-55, seven between the ages of 56-70, and four with ages of 71 or greater.

These Session members are highly active in FPCB, recognized for their high degree of influence and deep commitment to FPCB and all its ministries. The entire population participated in the pretest and posttest. While only twenty responded to the semi-structured surveys following the project that constitutes 67 percent participation.

Instrumentation

I utilized two main instruments in this process of influencing a Session to understand better and commit to a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm of ministry. The use of the Session members' sixteen-response questionnaires and semi-structured follow-up surveys allowed me to gauge the shifts in the Session's understanding and commitment to the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation.

The Questionnaire

Instrument one was the sixteen-response questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to measure the attitudes of Session members toward the innovation of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm of ministry. When measuring

⁸ The first service is a traditional Presbyterian service made up of an older demographic of the congregation. The second service is an informal service that has children's Sunday school running simultaneously, making it filled with newer members and attendees. The third service is a contemporary, band-driven, service made up of highly involved Baby-Boomer and Buster generations.

attitudes, a Likert-type instrument is considered helpful (Patten 34). This is an instrument consisting of statements that produce a response from the participant. Their responses are rated on a measurable scale. My questionnaire used a one to five scale. Respondents circling one indicated strong disagreement to the statement while circling five represented strong agreement. Written in a manner making it easy for respondents to react to the sixteen questions, the survey promoted honest answers from the respondents.

The Session responded to the questionnaire twice during the course of the project. The initial presentation occurred at the August Session retreat to provide a foundational basis of understanding for the population regarding the innovation being introduced. The pretest measured the Session member's awareness of and commitment to the idea of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation prior to the project. Administering the test at the end of the project allowed me to ascertain any change in the Session member's understanding and commitment to the Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm.

The sixteen responses correlated to the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. Addressing the understanding and commitment to mark #1, "Good news and good deeds can't and shouldn't be separated," responses #1, #5, #9, and #13 were most helpful.

Table 3.1. Questions in Response to Mark #1

Response #	Questions
#1	“The church’s primary mission is to preach the good news.”
#5	“The church’s primary mission is performing good works.”
#9	“Good works are the most effective way of sharing God’s love.”
#13	“First Pres. Bakersfield must choose between good news and good works.”

The understanding and commitment to mark #2, “Churches hold the conviction that they are vital to the health and well-being of their communities” was addressed through the following responses.

Table 3.2. Questions in Response to Mark #2

Response #	Questions
#2	“The church essentially exists to support the needs of its own members.”
#6	“The church’s influence is predominantly focused on the people in the pew.”
#10	“A local church can change an entire community.”
#14	“First Pres. Bakersfield is vital to the health and well-being of the people of Kern County.”

The understanding and commitment to mark #3, “Churches believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living” was addressed through the following statements.

Table 3.3. Questions in Response to Mark #3

Response #	Questions
#3	“Everyone in the church has been given gifts by God to share with the world (those outside the church).”
#7	“Special credentials are not necessary to serve and minister for Christ.”
#11	“Serving others is a natural response to knowing Christ.”
#15	“Ministry at First Pres. Bakersfield is best accomplished through the activities of the pastors and staff of our church.”

The understanding and commitment to mark #4, “Churches are evangelistically effective” was addressed through Responses #4, #8, #12, and #16:

Table 3.4. Questions in Response to Mark #4

Response #	Questions
#4	“Evangelism is better accomplished through other branches (denominations and/or para-church organizations) of the church.”
#8	“Sharing the good news cannot effectively be measured.”
#12	“Evangelism is not as important as it once was in the life of the church.”
#16	“Evangelism is not as important for Presbyterians as other Christian disciplines.”

The questionnaire also provided some demographic information that was used to determine variances among men, women, and different age groups. However, for the purpose of this study, I focused on the overall perspective of the entire population, because I had 100 percent participation.

Follow-Up Survey

Instrument two of my project was a semi-structured survey given two weeks following the posttest response questionnaire. The purpose of this device was to discover which “mark of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church” was considered the greatest priority for the future of FPCB among members of Session.

The two questions provided an opportunity for simple but direct responses from the Session members. The first question was straightforward and simple: “Which mark do you feel needs the most attention here at First Presbyterian Church?” The second question was really a follow-up to explain their position. My hope with this follow-up question was to see if patterns or themes existed in the Session members’ responses.

This follow-up survey offered the participants another opportunity to ponder the four marks and strengthen their investment to this innovation its impact on the future mission and ministries of FPCB.

Process to Influence Change

The introduction and development of the innovation of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused to Session centered on three events: the 2008 Session Retreat, regularly scheduled Session meetings, and informal triad meetings between the regularly scheduled Session meetings.

Session Retreat

The annual Session retreat occurred on 23 August 2008 in the Annex of the First Presbyterian Church Bakersfield, a room the Session does not use for its monthly scheduled business meetings. The setting was casual, comfortable, and convenient to the church's coffee bar. This setting combined to provide a relaxed environment where the Session appeared focused and ready for the unfolding events of the day.

The retreat began with the administration of the response questionnaire. Each Session received a blue copy of the pretest and responded quickly and honestly to the sixteen statements. After collecting the questionnaires, the retreat continued.

Following the administering of the questionnaires, the Session prayed and worshiped together. A concentrated time of teaching (see Appendix D) followed. The focus on this instruction centered on introducing the Session to the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation. The interactive teaching experience was lively and engaging with twenty-one (70 percent) of the members participating with comments and/or questions.

Following the instruction, the Session divided into groups of three (triads). The triads were self-selected groups with two requirements: each class (2009, 2010, 2011) needed to be represented, and one could not be in a triad with someone on the ministry team on which they were serving. This process resulted in triads consisting of people less familiar with one another, creating a need to develop and build trust.

After being formed, the triads responded to a series of questions they had been given to ponder and discuss. The purpose was to help them become better acquainted

and begin to discuss their observations regarding the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation.

Regularly Scheduled Session Meetings

The four subsequent Session meetings reinforced each of the four marks. I utilized the first thirty minutes of the Session meetings to delve more deeply biblically and theologically into the each designated mark. For the Session of FPCB, it was imperative to ground each mark in a biblical text. In each month, I highlighted at least three texts to illustrate the point (see Appendix E).

Following the interactive instruction, the Session met in their triad groups to discuss the specific mark and its potential impact on the life of FPCB.

Informal Triad Meetings

These meetings occurred throughout the weeks following each regularly scheduled Session meeting. These triads normally met in the FP Café during off hours. The comfortable chairs and informal setting provided for uninterrupted and confidential conversations among the group members. The time was intentionally informal and intended to focus on the thoughts and potential impact of the particular mark on their lives as followers of Jesus. The questions asked at each triad meeting were the same, but the personalities and experience of each group moved the conversations in many directions (see Appendix F).

In this setting I was able to utilize Hersey and Blanchard's work on Situation Leadership (Holsinger) by interpreting my role as influencer of the group, intentionally choosing to support, coach, delegate, or direct.

The complications of travel schedules, poor weather, and the holiday season hampered these groups from always meeting.

Development of Study

Based on the criteria established in the literature review surrounding the defining characteristics of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation, the survey was developed: (1) Good deeds and good news cannot and should not be separated; (2) the church's existence is vital to the health and well-being of its community; (3) ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living; and, 4) these churches are evangelistically effective.

The semi-structured survey questions following the study were developed in order to understand the possible implications of this Christ-centered and outwardly focused ministry on the lives of Session members and on potential impact on the congregation as a whole.

Variables

The dependant variables in this study are concentrated into two major areas. The first variable was the measurement of understanding and commitment of Session members to the four criteria for an outwardly focused church prior to the study. A second dependent variable was the measurement of understanding and commitment of Session members to the four criteria for an outward-focused church following the study.

The independent variable relates to the impact of the six-month study on the Session members' perception and experience and its possible influence on the rest of the FPCB congregation.

Instrumentation

The posttest and pretest was an instrument with sixteen questions, four questions focusing on each of the four characteristics of the Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation in concert with the work of Rusaw and Swanson. This questionnaire presented to the Session was the result of a two-step process.

The process began with the creation of twenty questions that I believed related to the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. The questions were divided according to marks, five questions for each mark. While these questions were independent of one another, they uniquely addressed elements of the four marks that might help discern a change in understanding or commitment.

Step two consisted of gathering a group of six people (reflective of a member of the Session) to complete the questionnaire. Part of their task was first to answer the question. After they answered, they were invited to describe what they believed the question was seeking to discern. With the input from this group, the twenty questions were adjusted and changed. This was repeated two other times with a different selection of six people. This process allowed me to produce a sixteen-question instrument capable of observing change in Session members' knowledge and commitment to being Christ-centered and outwardly focused.

The follow-up semi-structured survey questions were designed to be simple, straightforward, and open-ended. The two questions were created to discover the

impact of this strategy on Session members and the possible priorities of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm being introduced into the life of FPCB.

Data Collection

Data collection began with the pretest being administered at the outset of the 2008 all-Session retreat on 23 August. The Session retreat began with the administration of the test. The questionnaire was passed out to the participants with the instructions to be honest. They were given fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire. At the end of fifteen minutes, participants were asked if they needed more time. With no further time needed, the instruments were collected.

The posttest occurred during the Session meeting immediately following the six-month focus on becoming a more Christ-centered and outwardly focused church on 27 January 2009. Again, the questionnaire was given to the participants. They were given fifteen minutes to complete the instrument. After ten minutes, the participants completed their questionnaires and passed them in to me.

At the end of that session meeting, Session members were prepared to receive follow-up survey in two weeks. An email was sent to all participants with the two-question survey. The e-mail invited them to offer further input in the process. The participants e-mailed me their responses, all of which I received up until late February 2009.

Generalizability

Though this study was directed at the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield, the hope is that both the logic and strategy could be generalized to other Presbyterian Church (USA) congregations. The content of the curriculum and the

process of communication may prove effective in many congregations of similar demographic design.

Data Analysis

The results of both the pretest and posttest response questionnaire were inserted into a Microsoft Excel spread sheet. The data was categorized by dividing the Session responses according to gender and age. The sixteen responses were assigned a column. The values determined by the respondents were placed in the column, added up, and then divided by the number of participants. This system provided an aggregate score for each response.

When recorded, I subtracted the posttest results from the pretest results giving me the ability to discern any shift in understanding and commitment to the specific responses. I determined only responses with a change greater than .25 indicated an observable shift in understanding and commitment.

The final two-question response from Session members was sent out via an email. Their input was put into a Microsoft Word document where a word search was initiated to discover if any major trends or themes existed in the responses.

Ethical Procedures

One of the concerns in doing a study such as this one is groupthink. This is defined as “a process by which a group can make bad, faulty or irrational decisions” (Carey 1). In order to minimize groupthink, I took certain steps. First, I assured the response questionnaires were administered with total anonymity, allowing each member of the Session to respond according to her or his own attitudes toward the given statement.

A second tool to minimize groupthink was the use of Session triads so the group of thirty could not impose a change of attitude on individuals, allowing for smaller groups to interact on the given subjects.

A third way to garner honest input was to provide an open environment where participants asked clarifying questions, expressed disagreement, and offered up their perspectives on each of the four marks. This intentional design resulted in lively conversations and input that would be hard to categorize within the scope of this project.

A second area of concern regarding ethical procedures related to the arena of confidentiality. When designing a study, one wants to maximize honest input. The promise and confidence in confidentiality promote honest answers. By eliminating the need for one's name and assuring that each person's questionnaire was collected at the same time, Session members had a high level of confidence their specific responses to each question were unknown to the researcher.

A final area of concern related to the fact that I was the one doing the research. A possible conflict between my role as pastor, friend and researcher existed. This initial tension became obvious to me when, as the questionnaire was initially distributed at the annual retreat, one member of Session jokingly asked, "Do you want the right answer?" In an effort to promote honest and clear answers, I intentionally highlighted the four marks and the value of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused. This intentional focus on the material instead of personality or position seemed to pay off as the process moved forward. The participants appeared less concerned with the elements and became more focused on the content. Whenever

doing a study of this kind, awareness of potential conflicts promotes appropriate caution for more accurate results.

This chapter on the methodology and design of the research project along with the Appendixes creates a paradigm by which I was able to record a change in understanding and commitment among the participants of FPCB to the four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

When looking at the life of Jesus and the challenge of the early Church, a profound love for those outside of the household of faith is evident. A natural byproduct of this love was for the church to maintain its Christ centeredness and continue to become outwardly focused. In Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, he called his disciples to be witnesses "in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:42). While clear in Scripture, the North American church often lacks concern and passion for the lost. The pressures of life, coupled with the comfort of the familiar, serve as significant hindrances against the church being Christ-centered and outwardly focused. Most people within a local congregation are loving and well intentioned Christians. However, church leadership often fails to equip and inspire the congregation toward this Christ-centered and outwardly focused paradigm because of their own lack of understanding and commitment to this priority of the Lord.

Purpose Restated

The purpose of this dissertation was to educate and initiate an observable process of change in the Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation toward accepting a Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry.

Profile of Participants

The population of the study consisted of the thirty elders serving on the Session of FPCB. The nominating committee of FPCB, out of a pool of 968 candidates, selected these thirty people based on criterion from Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-;

Tit. 1:6-9) and requirements from the Book of Order (G-60106 and G-6.0303). After prayer and discernment, the nominating committee brought forward a slate of names into nomination for the congregation's consideration. At the annual congregational meeting in June, a class of elders was selected. Participating in this study were the elders from the classes of 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Together, these thirty people made up the Session during the period of this study. This group consisted of six women and twenty-four men. This population represents a nearly balanced representation of people from our three unique worship services (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Session Breakdown by Worship Service

Time	Number in Worship	Number of Elders
8:30 a.m.	217	11
9:45 a.m.	146	8
11:00 a.m.	218	11

The range in ages of the Session fairly represented the adult population of the congregation: four were between the ages of 25-40, fifteen between the ages of 41-55, seven between the ages of 56-70, and four aged 71 or older (see Figure 4.1).

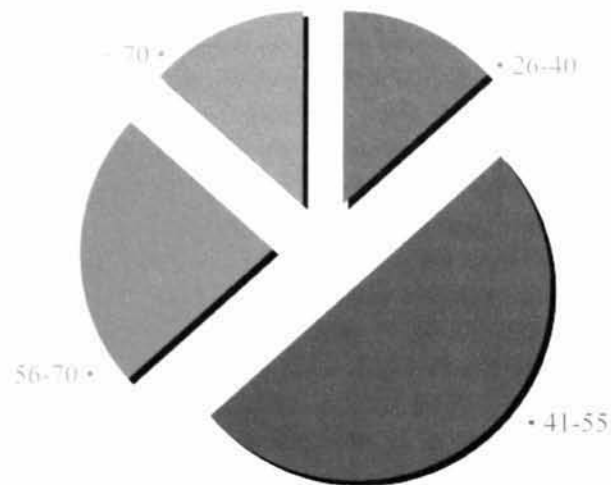


Figure 4.1. The Session by age.

These Session members represent active participants in the life of FPCB. Their high level of involvement and support of the ministries of FPCB positions them to have influence on the friends and members of First Presbyterian Church, Bakersfield.

Research Question #1

What is the participants' current level of knowledge and understanding concerning the centrality of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church?

On 23 August 2008, the thirty elders and three pastors gathered on a Saturday for the annual Session retreat. We began the meeting with prayer, followed immediately with the administration of the questionnaire. The findings of the pretest revealed a baseline of understanding for the Session of FPCB (see Figure 4.2).

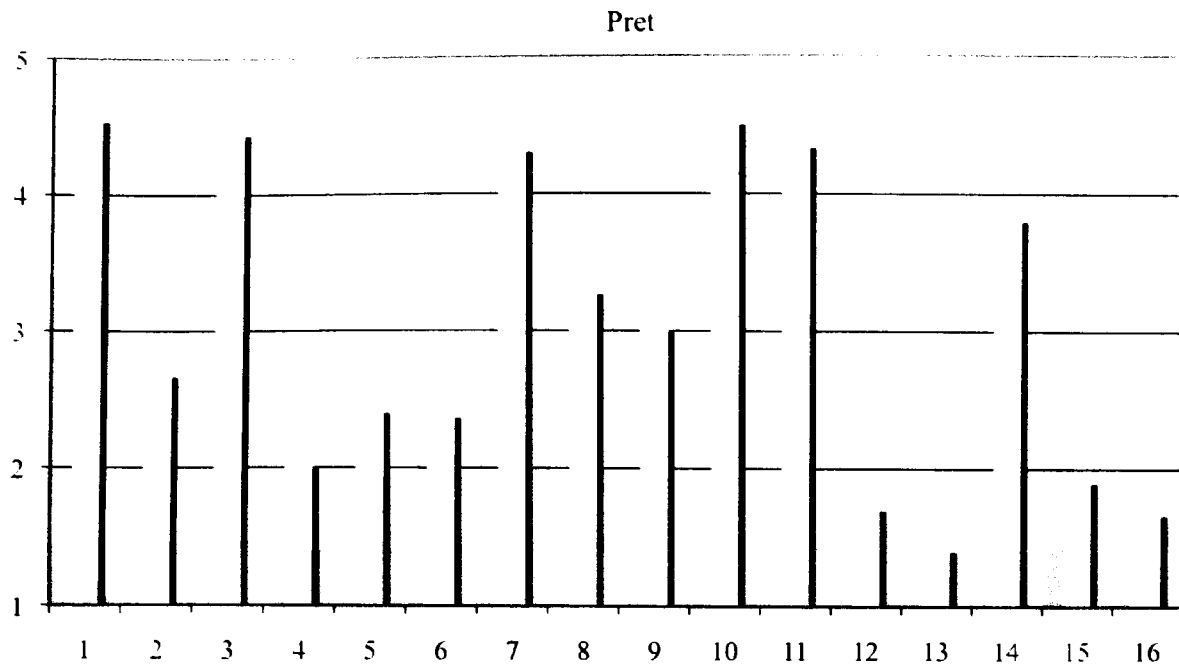


Figure 4.2. Results of pretest questionnaire.

Pretest Mark #1

Their responses to the four questions pertaining to mark #1 revealed a level of understanding and commitment to importance of both good news and good deeds.

In question one, where they were asked to respond to the statement, “The church’s primary mission is to preach the good news,” their response leaned heavily toward “strongly agree,” with a score of 4.57. In fact 93 percent of respondents answered with either a score of 4 or 5. (see Appendix G). The standard deviation for this question was 0.86.

In question five, where they were asked to respond to a similar statement emphasizing good works, “The church’s primary mission is performing good works,” the average score was 2.43. Here, 10 percent reacted with a score of 4 or 5. The standard deviation for this question was 1.10.

In question nine, Session members responded to the statement, “Good works are the most effective way of sharing God’s love. The Session was divided in their response—37 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed while 33 percent agreed or strongly agreed. The standard deviation for this question was 1.16.

For question thirteen, “First Pres. Bakersfield must choose between good news and good works,” respondents provided a more clear response. The average score for this question was 1.43. The Session expressed an 89 percent level of disagreement. The standard deviation for this question was 1.00.

In the questions clustered around the issue of mark #1, questions one and thirteen particularly elicited the strongest responses; the first in support and the later in opposition (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Responses Related to Mark #1 Pretest

Question	#1	#5	#9	#13
Score	4.57	2.43	3.03	1.43

Pretest Mark #2

The responses to the four questions pertaining to mark #2 suggested a conviction that FPCB exists for a greater purpose than merely its own members. The elders of FPCB expressed agreement that the church, specifically FPCB, should be vital to the health and well-being of the greater Bakersfield community.

In question two, “The church essentially exists to support the needs of its own members,” the elders gave it an average score of 2.7. The Session recorded a 50

percent level of disagreement, while only 27 percent agreed. The standard deviation for this question was 1.24.

In question six, “The church’s influence is predominantly focused on the people in the pew,” the respondents responded with greater clarity—13 percent indicated a score supporting this statement while 67 percent expressed disagreement. The standard deviation for this question was 0.93.

Question ten, “A local church can change an entire community,” produced one of the strongest responses. Most participants, 63 percent, marked strongly agree. The average score was a 4.54. 3 percent of the population expressed disagreement with this statement. The standard deviation for this question was 0.82.

Question fourteen, “First Pres. Bakersfield is vital to the health and well-being of the people of Kern County,” was responded to with an average score of 3.83. The 63 percent of respondents marked a score suggesting a level of agreement, while 10 percent disagreed (see Table 4.3). The standard deviation for this question was 1.09.

Table 4.3. Responses Related to Mark #2 Pretest

Question	#2	#6	#10	#14
Score	2.7	2.4	4.54	3.83

Pretest Mark #3

The elders’ responses to the questions relating to mark #3 offer a clear understanding that God calls all the members of a church to be engaged in and ministering in its community.

Question three, “Everyone in the church has been given gifts by God to share with the world (those outside the church),” revealed a grasp of this mark for a Christ-centered and outwardly focused congregation. The average score was 4.47—67 percent marked strongly agree while only 3 percent strongly disagreed. The standard deviation for this question was 0.94.

Question seven, “Special credentials are not necessary to serve and minister for Christ,” surprised me. The average Session score was 4.43. Session members strongly agreed with this statement at 63 percent, while 10 percent expressed any disagreement with this statement. The standard deviation for this question was 1.09.

Question eleven, “Serving others is a natural response to knowing Christ,” also provided a clear expression of Session’s understanding. The average score here was 4.37. Session members, at 60 percent, marked strongly agree on their questionnaire. The standard deviation for this question was 0.96.

Question fifteen, “Ministry at First Pres. Bakersfield is best accomplished through the activities of the pastors and staff of our church,” offered Session members’ an opportunity to express their understanding of the *priesthood of all believers*. The average score was 1.93. On this question 3 percent of the respondents expressed any agreement with this idea (see Table 4.4). The standard deviation for this question was 0.94.

Table 4.4. Responses Related to Mark #3

Question	#3	#7	#11	#15
Score	4.47	4.33	4.37	1.93

According to their responses, the Session appeared to have the greatest attitudes toward mark #3. Understanding the importance of the entire community to be engaged in the work of God in the world is the greater challenge. This was a strong starting position as FPCB seeks to become more Christ-centered and outwardly focused.

Pretest Mark #4

The responses to mark #4 suggested an overall understanding of the importance of evangelism in the life of the congregation.

In question four, "Evangelism is better accomplished through other branches (denominations and/or parachurch organizations) of the church," the responses indicated an awareness of the responsibility of evangelism to occur within the life of FPCB. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the elders expressed some level of disagreement with this statement, while 10 percent had any agreement. The standard deviation for this question was 0.96.

Question eight, "Sharing the good news cannot effectively be measured," produced a fairly neutral response. The average score was 3.03. The largest percentage of respondents, 33, marked a "3" on their questionnaire. The standard deviation for this question was 1.24.

Question twelve, "Evangelism is not as important as it once was in the life of the church," produced a level of disagreement. The average score for the Session was 1.73. More than two-thirds (70 percent) of elders of FPCB strongly disagreed. The standard deviation for this question was 1.28.

Question sixteen, “Evangelism is not as important for Presbyterians as other Christian disciplines,” also experience strong opposition. Again 70 percent of the Elders responded by circling “strongly disagree.” The average score was 1.70. The standard deviation for this question was 1.26.

Table 4.5. Responses Related to Mark #4 Pretest

Question	#4	#8	#12	#16
Score	2.03	3.3	1.73	1.7

The pretest defined an existing healthy understanding of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. The Session responded most passionately to mark #3. This corroboration suggested the strongest understanding and commitment to the idea of the importance of all the members to be engaged in ministry.

Implementation of the Innovation

Over the next five months, there were opportunities for the Session to delve biblically into the innovation of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused, centering on the described four marks. This process included biblical texts and opportunities for the triads to discuss the implications of these marks on their life and in the life of FPCB (see Appendix F). In addition to the monthly teaching, the Session triads met during the month to discuss their thoughts on these marks.

In these meetings, members of Session engaged one another, challenged each other, and began to imagine what it would look like in their own lives to be more Christ-centered and outwardly focused.

Research Question #2

What changes occurred in the participants' level of knowledge and understanding concerning the centrality of being a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church?

After five months of meetings and discussions amid the regular gatherings, the posttest was administered at the 27 January 2009 meeting. The test was administered and the results were tabulated the following day (see Appendix H).

When looking at the sixteen responses in the questionnaire, the Session's responses in the posttest varied on every question. In five of the responses, the Session strength of disagreement increased. Eleven of the responses indicate a greater agreement with the statement. While all sixteen responses varied, six responses experienced a shift of greater than .25, which appeared to be a significant change (see Appendix J). Figure 4.3, below provides a visual example of the changes in response from the pretest to the posttest.

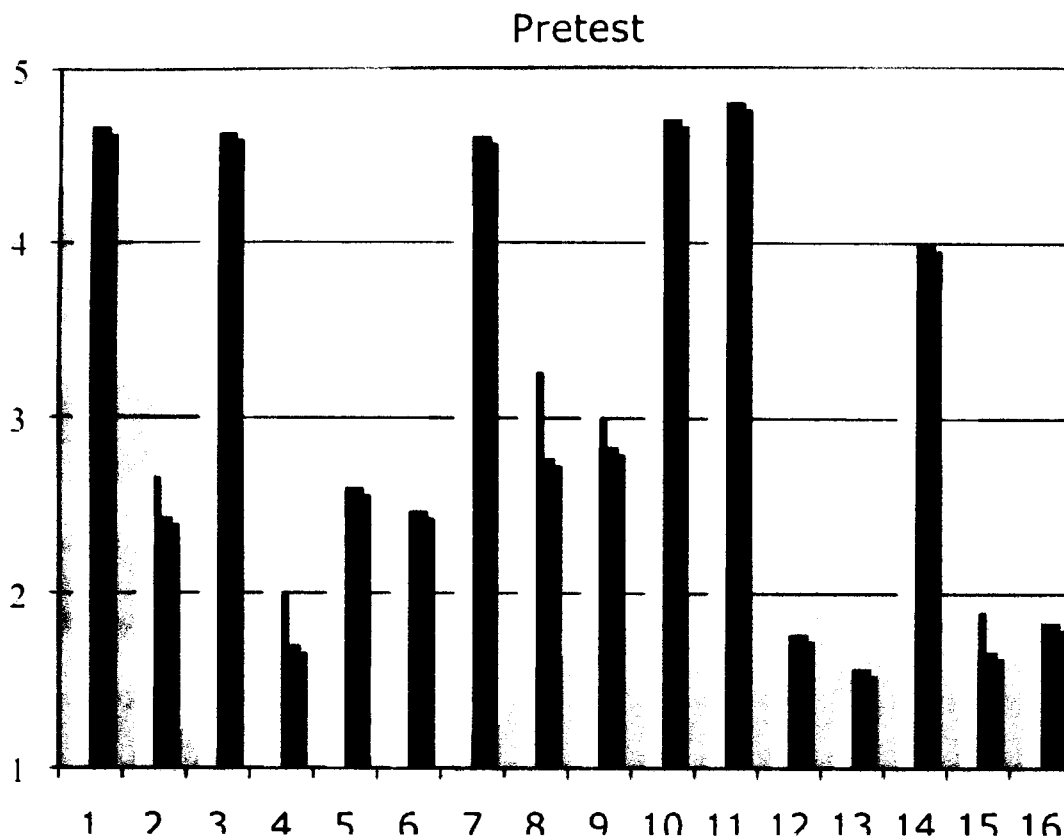


Figure 4.3. Comparing pretest and posttest responses.

Posttest Mark #1

In the posttest, the Session slightly strengthened their existing commitment to the challenge to have good news and good deeds connected.

In question one, Session members continued to express their commitment to the good news being a “primary mission” of the church. The respondents agreed 100 percent of the time with either agreed or strongly agreed with the role of the good news. The standard deviation for this question was 0.48.

Question five reflected an increase by the Session of their support for “good deeds.” This statement saw a 5 percent adjustment by respondents to this question.

Now, 20 percent of the Session indicated agreement of some kind. The standard deviation for this question was 1.13.

Question nine revealed the Session backing away from its earlier minor support of “good works” being the most effective way of sharing God’s love. The posttest saw a lowering of support to 2.83. The standard deviation for this question was 0.79.

Question thirteen, commenting on FPCB choosing between good news and good works, saw a slight movement toward neutral. The average posttest score was 1.57, an increase of support of only .14 (see Table 4.6). The standard deviation for this question was 1.04.

In reviewing the Session’s response from the pretest to posttest, mark #1 saw an insignificant change in either understanding or commitment.

Table 4.6. Responses Related to Mark #1 Posttest

Question	#1	#5	#9	#13
Score	4.67	2.6	2.83	1.57

Posttest Mark #2

When looking at being vital to the health and well-being of a community, the Session again seemed to see only a slight increase in understanding and commitment.

In question two, the respondents disagreed more strongly that they exist “to support the needs of its own members.” The score went from a 2.7 to 2.43. Only 10

percent offered any level of agreement with this question; earlier the number had been 27 percent. The standard deviation for this question was 0.82.

In question six, the change was nearly unperceivable. The original score was 2.4 while the posttest was 2.47. This change in score and spread of percentage of responses appears insignificant. The standard deviation for this question was 0.90.

Question ten, where the Session was asked if they believe a church can change a community, they responded even with more support having a score of 4.7. This level of agreement assured that all of the Session voted in agreement, while 70 percent marked strongly agree. The standard deviation for this question was 0.47.

Question fourteen continued to show a trend toward agreement that FPCB should be vital to the health and well-being of the people in Kern County. Respondents marked with strong the agreement levels of 80 percent. While in the pretest that group represented only 63 percent the elders (see Table 4.7). The standard deviation for this question was 0.83.

After looking at these responses, the Session of FPCB appears to have slightly increased its understanding and commitment to becoming vital to the health and well-being of the community.

Table 4.7. Responses Related to Mark #2 Posttest

Question	#2	#6	#10	#14
Score	2.43	2.47	4.7	4

Posttest Mark #3

With the introduction of the innovation of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused, an increased commitment and understanding of the Session of FPCB in regard to their belief that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living was measured.

Question three in the posttest reveals an increased agreement by members of the Session with the average score now of 4.63. Following the introduction of the innovation, 93 percent of the Session members agree with this statement, 70 percent strongly agreeing. The standard deviation for this question was 0.61.

Question seven also reveals an increase of support for the need to have **no** special credentials to serve and minister in Christ. After the introduction of the innovation, the average score was 4.6 with 96 percent agreeing with this statement. The standard deviation for this question was 0.56.

Question eleven, believing that serving is a natural outgrowth of knowing Christ, saw 80 percent of the Session marked strongly agree, while in the pretest support for this idea leveled out at 60 percent. The standard deviation for this question was 0.41.

Question fifteen, asking if ministry is best accomplished through the pastors, the Session increased its disagreement with this statement. In the posttest, the average score was 1.67, a decrease of .26 (see Table 4.8). The standard deviation for this question was 0.66. The Session disagreed with this statement with 90 percent expressing a lack of support. This shift in the opinions of Session members continues

to support one of the key ingredients of the Protestant Reformation—*the priesthood of all believers*.

This third mark, which in the pretest the Session expressed strong understanding and commitment, saw an increase in the posttest, too. This mark experienced the second greatest overall increase in commitment.

Table 4.8. Responses Related to Mark #3 Posttest

Question	#3	#7	#11	#15
Score	4.63	4.6	4.8	1.67

Posttest Mark #4

The positive movement, as registered in the responses of the Session, continued with mark #4. In this fourth mark, the Session expressed the largest degree of movement from pretest to posttest.

In question four, stating that evangelism is better accomplished through other means than the local congregation, the Session disagreed. With an average score of 1.7, the Session shifted by .33. In the posttest, 57 percent of the Session marked strongly disagree and a total of 84 percent expressed disagreement. The standard deviation for this question was 0.99.

Question eight also revealed a shift in attitude. The idea that evangelism could not be measured decreased in support. In the posttest, the average score of 2.77 reveals a swing in opinion of .53. The Session moved from slightly agreeing with this statement to slightly disagreeing. The posttest saw 43 percent express a certain level

of disagreeing while previously only 40 percent agreed. This question revealed the greatest swing in the Session's responses. The standard deviation for this question was 1.33.

Question twelve, stating evangelism is not as important as it once was, remained virtually the same. With an average score of 1.83, the variation of .04 seems inconsequential. In the posttest, 76 percent of respondents expressed disagreement while previously the number was 77 percent. The standard deviation for this question was 1.17.

Question sixteen, stating evangelism, is not as important to Presbyterians as other spiritual disciplines, received a slight shift toward agreement. In the posttest, the average score was 1.83 while in the pretest it was 1.7. The percentage of Session members who disagreed remained high at 73 percent while 10 percent expressed agreement. The standard deviation for this question was 1.03.

Table 4.9. Responses Related to Mark #4 Posttest

Question	#4	#8	#12	#16
Score	1.7	2.77	1.77	1.83

Summary of Questionnaire Responses

The information provided from the pretest and posttest indicates that the two marks with the greatest movement were mark #3 (*churches believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living*) and mark #4 (*churches*

are evangelistically effective). These numbers indicate an increased commitment and understanding of Session and will help promote a shift at FPCB from an institution centered and inward focused to a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) strong historical commitment to ordination may skew a local congregation to believing that ministry is what happens through the ordained staff people. The result may be that many in the congregation abdicate personal responsibility of being involved in God's activity in the world. By recognizing the importance of everyone's participation may enliven the ministry opportunities, ideas, and impact of the people of FPCB on the greater Bakersfield community.

At numerous triad meetings, when this element of the innovation was being discussed, elders expressed their expectation for the minister to preach good sermons because "that's how people are going to come to faith" as one Session member said. For many, the entire weight of God's work at the church seemed to rest on their understanding of the role of clergy. With a shift in this attitude toward a more biblical one, Session members seem to be increasing in their understanding of the *priesthood of all believers*.

Similarly, the Session growing in their understanding of mark #4 is very encouraging. Increasing the Session's sense of expectation of evangelistic effectiveness is quite a step for elders at FPCB. In response to unfortunate abuses by other evangelistic churches in town, FPCB has created an almost a *hands-off* attitude toward evangelism. The church ultimately expects little or nothing in this arena of

discipleship from its members, not even having a ministry team or committee specifically responsible for evangelism.

This increased commitment and understanding may prove helpful in moving the focus of ministry from the institution centered to a more Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry.

Research Question #3

How might the Session's change in understanding influence or affect the focus and behavior of the First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield, California?

After the six-month process of introducing the innovation of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused, certain events suggest God moving the Session in a particular direction.

The two-question survey coupled with input from the monthly triad meetings provided a sense of priorities and direction for members of FPCB Session. The two-question follow-up survey confirmed the input garnered from the pretest and posttest.

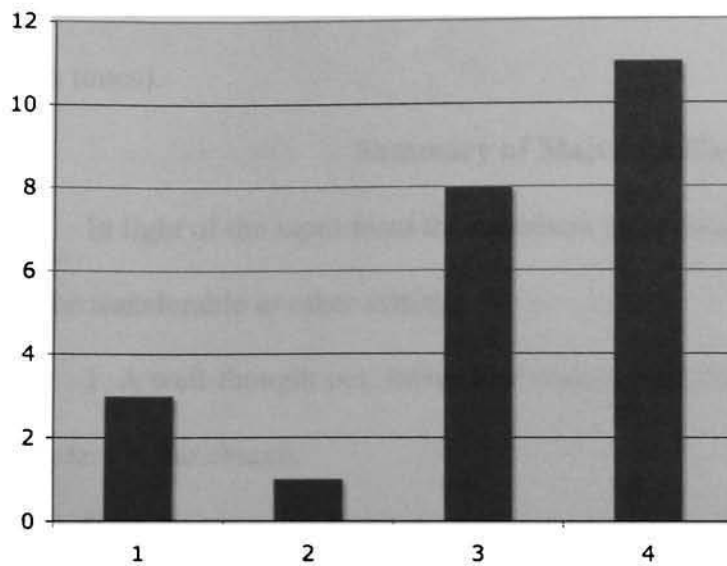


Figure 4.4. Four marks prioritized

Out of the twenty-three respondents asking, “Which of the four marks do you believe FPCB needs to focus most on?” the feedback was overwhelming. Eleven Session members indicated “being evangelistically effective” was the primary mark on which FPCB needed to focus. Eight elders prioritized the importance of “ministering and serving are normal expressions of Christian living.” Three respondents believed mark #1, “good news and good works can’t and shouldn’t be separated,” expressed the greatest priority for FPCB. One lone respondent answered mark #2. Among those who responded, marks #4 and #3 proved to be the greatest priorities for the future of FPCB.

In the answers they offered to the second question, “Why” Session members repeated only two phrases. The first related to being in “the heart of downtown” as a motive for being evangelistically effective (referenced three times). The other

reoccurring comment related to the interconnected nature of these marks (referenced seven times).

Summary of Major Findings

In light of the input from the members of Session, three important findings may be transferable to other settings.

1. A well-thought out, intentional process can influence change in the attitudes of leaders in the church.

2. A Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) can increase its awareness and commitment to being Christ-centered and outwardly focused.

3. The observable change in the Session toward becoming more Christ-centered and outwardly focused can impact the broader church community.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Sitting at the Presbytery meeting, listening to the clergy's lack of concern and perception that the church could not change, the Lord planted in my heart a desire to discover if a community of faith, known for its resistance to *new things*, could change.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation was to educate and initiate an observable process of change in the Session of a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation toward accepting a Christ-centered and outwardly focused approach to ministry.

Looking at the biblical witness, I was drawn to the book of Acts, the very foundation of the Church. When looking at Luke's account, I was drawn to the story of God changing the direction (against culture and religion) of Christianity from being a subset of Judaism to being a stand-alone faith, capable of embracing and impacting the lives of men and women regardless of their culture of origin. Acts 15, the original Jerusalem Council, paints the picture of the importance of leadership in shifting and shaping the future of the church. Looking at certain moments in the history of the church, changing the heart of leaders impacts the expression of the church (Hunter; Bevans and Schroeder).

This value of change from the early Church led me to look at change theory. E. Rogers, Kotter, and Lewis and Cordeiro proved invaluable in helping me understand the elements and movement of change among people within an organization and, more specifically, among a church community. Rusaw and

Swanson offered the specific marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church that helped establish the benchmark against which to measure change within a church community, specifically a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation.

The research invited the challenge of introducing this innovation into the context of a church within a declining denomination to promote a “new” future. This study suggests that the challenge is indeed worth the risk!

First Presbyterian Church Bakersfield and its Session of thirty offered a wonderful context to measure the possibility of shifting attitudes and opinions of the opinion-shapers and leaders of a local church. This community proved to be prayerful, thoughtful, and incredibly helpful throughout this process. Instead of being resistant to change, I found them to be inquisitive, biblically grounded, and willing to be led.

This study began with the hypothesis that churches, regardless of how long they have been in existence or how resistant to change their reputation may suggest, are capable of increasing their awareness of and commitment to becoming more Christ-centered and outwardly focused. In the literature review, Rusaw and Swanson’s book offered helpful insight into what Peter F. Drucker calls, “the most important cultural phenomenon in American society in 30 years.” Rusaw and Swanson wonderfully contrast inwardly focused churches with outwardly focused churches. Within their text, they provide a helpful paradigm—four marks of a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church. After assessing the situation at FPCB, I designed a process of introducing this innovation by incorporating the lessons of change theory from Rogers, Kotter, and Cordeiro.

The findings from Chapter 4 indicate that subtle movement in both understanding of and commitment to two of the four marks occurred after the introduction of the innovation and process of education and participation among the members of the Session of FPCB. Anecdotal evidence also offers clues that a shift toward a Christ-centered and outwardly focused church has begun to manifest itself in the larger congregation as a whole. The success of this project can be directly linked to the cultural-change process based on diffusion and change theory outlined in Chapter 2.

Major Findings

The research proved helpful in establishing a direction for the future of First Presbyterian Church, Bakersfield.

Innovation Effecting Change in the Leadership of Organization

When I arrived at FPCB, I was warned of their commitment to the past and their tendency toward wanting to do their “own thing,” the way things have always been done. This attitude, however, was not my experience. Rogers expresses the power of introducing an innovation. The experts propose that the success of an innovation being adopted is dependent upon its relevance to the culture in which it is being introduced and the compelling potential of a future that is more appealing than the status quo (E. Rogers 195-202; Kotter 18-22). Observations made by anthropologists confirm this approach to influencing new organizations. In order to be effective missionaries, pastors enter their churches as learners who seek to understand the greater culture and the culture of their congregation (Ramsay; Whiteman).

I found this insight incredibly important in shaping this project. Recognizing, early on, the Session's existing strong commitment to being Christ-centered prevented unnecessary confusion. This awareness positively shaped the way I developed and presented the ideas of this innovation to members of FPCB Session. Cognizant of their existing commitment and understanding, I leveraged this commitment to highlight how Christ centeredness expressed itself in the church through a greater emphasis on outward focus. The strength of the doctrine of the Incarnation and Trinity (both highly relational in nature) assisted the Session in an honest openness to being more outwardly focused.

During the six-month process, the introduction of the innovation to the Session prompted a change in tenor and format of the monthly business meetings. The Session members appeared more engaged while discussing spiritual issues. They requested longer participation on issues related to spiritual matters, and they actively participated in the triad break out opportunities. This participation resulted in a more cohesive community of thirty, a sense of moving together toward a future of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused, and a community of prayer and support that had not been previously evident. One Session member said, "I feel like Session is beginning to discover what it means to be the spiritual leaders of First Pres and how we might impact our city for Christ."

Session Adopting Change in Understanding and Commitment to Being Christ-centered and Outwardly Focused

After shaping the innovation, I pondered how I could create a process that would unfreeze (Lewin; E. Rogers) the status quo. I thought about the hindrances to change in an organization (Kotter; Nutt). I was particularly aware of (1) the need to create a sense of urgency for a change, and (2) the need to create a group that would have a deep commitment to the change. This understanding influenced the group I sought to change (Session of FPCB) and the manner in which I presented the information to Session at the original retreat (see Appendix X).

The research from Chapter 4 suggests the process resulted in an increase in commitment to and understanding of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused. This support is visually represented in Figure 4.3 (p. 86), where Session members prioritized their increased commitment to marks #4 and #3. In a culture where evangelism is typically under-expressed, this shift is significant. In fact, at FPCB, the church has no active committee or ministry team specifically committed to evangelism. The shift in commitment to this idea of being *evangelistically effective* proved the most surprising, but, the change emphasizes the power of an innovation being communicated.

Looking back at the process, Lewis and Cordeiro's emphasis on "List and relist," "Live and teach," and "Celebrate and honor" proved to be influential in supporting the change. During monthly Session and triad meetings, participants focused on the specific mark being highlighted at that meeting. In the triads following the Session meeting, participants imagined how the mark could shape FPCB and their

own faith-life. Incorporating members of Session throughout the process, keeping the marks in front of them regularly, and celebrating experiences where the leaders creatively attempted to exercise the new mark served this project and the Session well.

This strategy was never more evident than in the discussion of mark #4. Session members asked numerous questions about what evangelism meant biblically and how it might express itself in the confines of their respective professional lives. This dialogue resulted in people, normally averse to evangelism, creatively imagining and expressing the gospel in a manner relevant to their cultural context. Sensing their interest, I challenged them to consider prayerfully whom God might want them to *evangelize*. As a result, each Session member identified at least one person with whom he or she might share his or her faith. This challenge prompted a number of experiences centered on faith that otherwise would not have occurred.

Similarly, in mark #3, Session members were interested in how they might encourage more people to express their involvement in ministry and mission both in and outside the church. Long discussions and time of prayerful consideration expanded the Session's creative involvement in serving people in our community (both inside and outside the church). "Celebrate and honor" appeared to influence increased commitment and activity. During Session meetings and in the triad meetings, people shared opportunities where they opted to serve more intentionally.

Anecdotal Observations

The most exciting elements of this process were the numerous anecdotal observations on how this innovation of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused

is manifesting itself in the life of the congregation and its ministry. As Session members were challenged to consider prayerfully with whom the Lord might be calling them to *evangelize*, I was directed to extend the same challenge to the congregation as a whole. On 8 January 2009, at the congregation's "Night of Renewal," each member was asked to consider with whom the Lord might be directing them to share their faith. Those in attendance were invited to take a rock, indicating the person's name, and to pray for an opportunity. The result has been amazing. As of the writing of Chapter 5, eleven people (non-Session members) have shared a story about the "rock" for whom they have been praying. In each case, opportunities were presented for conversations to move toward spiritual issues. Seven times these people have invited the person to church; in each case, the persons have attended.

Had the Session not been challenged in these four marks, this new openness to evangelism would never have occurred in the life of FPCB. This idea of sharing the good news seems acceptable (while not easy). The Session continues to struggle with the implications of this new value, and how being *evangelistically effective* might be expressed at FPCB.

A second anecdotal evidence of a shift occurring in the life of the greater congregation was the February membership class. There, twenty-seven visitors and long-time attenders became new members at FPCB. The class consisted of first-time followers of Jesus and twenty people who were making a recommitment to serving Jesus. This new members class was the largest in recent memory.

Another indication of these marks infiltrating our congregation has been the increased involvement among our members in their activity in serving the poor. One small group that had no mission involvement in our community prior to January 2009 felt the call to be more engaged with their community. They were provided an opportunity to partner with a ministry in Bakersfield, California, called *The Flood*. This ministry feeds the hungry and homeless each Saturday night. This group's decision to serve has resulted in more open communication among the small group members, increased their love for the people of Bakersfield, and stimulated within them a more vibrant faith. One of the members said, "I feel like my faith is growing dynamically. My relationship with Jesus is really making a difference."

Implications

The good news in all of this relates to the breaking down of the myth that a congregation or leadership team of a church is unwilling or unable to change. My project suggests that people are willing to change. If the goal is clear, the participants empowered and educated, and the message consistent, people are willing to go where the Spirit of God might be leading.

Limitations

When evaluating the project, I found a number of confounding influences. First of all, members of the Session possibly possess a greater interest in the health and well-being of the local congregation. This preexisting commitment may have skewed the willingness to change when confronted with the challenge of the status quo among Session members.

A second limitation was the questionnaire measurement device. The questionnaire could be enhanced with a larger number of questions. The increased data points would strengthen the support or opposition to four marks. This process would also require a greater pilot program to hone the questions for greater internal reliability.

A third limitation centers on the number of respondents. While the thirty respondents represented the entire population of the FPCB Session, the group was still too small to assess the reliability of responses accurately. Broadening the population to include other opinion leaders within the church and exercising this project with multiple Presbyterian Church (USA) Sessions to increase the population would be helpful.

Unexpected Observations

In the midst of discussing change and the importance of being Christ-centered and outwardly focused, the Session was presented with a challenge. In 2008 following the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), members of Session were approached by people in the Bakersfield community and within FPCB to discuss decisions made at the biennial meeting in San Jose. This process of addressing the issues raised at the General Assembly led the Session on a journey of listening and discovery.

While initially, many were uncertain about taking the risk of making any change, they decided to pray and ponder what God might be saying. They initiated a process of discernment. As a result of paying attention to the vision God has for FPCB, the Session unanimously decided (with 92 percent support of the

congregation) to make a change. They petitioned the Presbytery of San Joaquin for dismissal from the Presbyterian Church(USA). This openness to change is a result of this year-long process.

Recommendations

I think three recommendations for further study might prove invaluable. First, I can see the benefit of lengthening the process to a year-long experience. While six months proved helpful, at times it felt artificially accelerated. A longer time period would provide more opportunity to delve into not only the conceptual ideas of these four marks, but it would offer more time to imagine the application within the specific context.

Second, I can see the benefit of focusing ones attention on only one of the four marks. By trying to introduce all of the marks, the attention and interest of the participant intensifies or decreases. This more focused approach would require, during the planning stage, to designate which of the four marks to be most significant to the specific community.

Finally, another possibility would be to use this same information within a larger group of ministers. I can imagine this approach becoming a leadership experience for a group of ministers within a Presbytery or within a specific municipality. This focus on ministers might stimulate within them concepts and ideas of how they might influence their local congregations toward being more Christ-centered and outwardly focused. Participation in such a study might also rekindle an interest in utilizing their influence to empower their specific local congregation.

Postscript

Looking back on this project, I am grateful for the experience. I am unaware of another minister within my Presbytery concerned about empowering their congregation to be more Christ-centered and outwardly focused. I walk away from this project aware of a Session's willingness to shift and adjust for the sake of faithfulness and for the gospel. I ended more enthused and optimistic of a local congregation's ability to change.

This experience has already shifted my attitude and priorities within my congregation. I am now moving the Session to a second stage: the implementation of these marks into the life of FPCB. Having prioritized marks #4 and #3, the Session will embark on the challenge of codifying and measuring how they might be grafted into the life and practice of FPCB.

I am also excited about the possibility of sharing this information with other leaders in the Presbytery of San Joaquin. I have been contacted by the Presbytery Executive asking for more information and the implications on smaller churches in the surrounding communities.

APPENDIX A

RESPONSIBILITY OF SESSION IN *BOOK OF ORDER* G-10.0102

The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular therefore has the responsibility and power

A. to provide opportunities for evangelism to be learned and practiced in and by the church, that members may be better equipped to articulate their faith, to witness in word and deed to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and to invite persons into a new life in Christ, in accordance with G-3.0300;

B. to receive members into the church upon profession of faith, upon reaffirmation of faith in Jesus Christ, or upon satisfactory certification of transfer of church membership, provided that membership shall not be denied any person because of race, economic or social circumstances, or any other reason not related to profession of faith;

C. to lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the whole Church in the world, in accordance with G-3.0000;

D. to provide for the worship of the people of God, including the preaching of the Word, the sharing of the Sacraments, and for the music program, in keeping with the principles in the Directory for Worship, and to appeal to the presbytery for a duly trained and authorized elder under the provisions of G-11.0103 in those extenuating circumstances where an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament is not available to meet the needs for the administration of the Lord's Supper;

E. to provide for the growth of its members and for their equipment for ministry through personal and pastoral care, educational programs including the church

school, sharing in fellowship and mutual support, and opportunities for witness and service in the world;

F. to develop and supervise the church school and the educational program of the church;

G. to lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation in the communities in which the church lives and bears its witness;

H. to challenge the people of God with the privilege of responsible Christian stewardship of money and time and talents, developing effective ways for encouraging and gathering the offerings of the people and assuring that all offerings are distributed to the objects toward which they were contributed;

I. to establish the annual budget, determine the distribution of the church's benevolences, and order offerings for Christian purposes, providing full information to the congregation of its decisions in such matters;

J. to lead the congregation continually to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God;

K. to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session;

L. to instruct, examine, ordain, install, and welcome into common ministry elders and deacons on their election by the congregation and to inquire into their faithfulness in fulfilling their responsibilities;

M. to delegate and to supervise the work of the board of deacons and the board of trustees and all other organizations and task forces within the congregation, providing for support, report, review, and control;

N. to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including employment of non-ordained staff, with concern for equal employment opportunity, fair employment practices, personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff, including all employees;

O. to provide for the management of the property of the church, including determination of the appropriate use of church buildings and facilities, and to obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect the facilities, programs, and officers, including members of the session, staff, board of trustees, and deacons;

P. to maintain regular and continuing relationship to the higher governing bodies of the church, including

(1) electing commissioners to presbytery and receiving their reports; sessions are encouraged to elect commissioners to the presbytery for at least one year, preferably two or three;

(2) nominating to presbytery elders who may be considered for election to synod or General Assembly;

(3) in both the above responsibilities, implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness to ensure fair representation in the decision making of the church;

(4) observing and carrying out the instructions of the higher governing bodies consistent with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U. S.A.);

(5) welcoming representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;

(6) proposing to the presbytery and, through it, to the synod and the General Assembly such measures as may be of common concern to the mission of the whole church;

(7) sending annually to the stated clerk of the presbytery statistical and other information according to the requirements of the presbytery.

Q. to establish and maintain those ecumenical relationships necessary for the life and mission of the church in its locality;

R. to serve in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline;

S. to keep an accurate roll of the membership of the church, in accordance with G-10.0302, and to grant certificates of transfer to other churches, which when issued for parents shall include the names of their children specifying whether they have been baptized, and which when issued for an elder or deacon shall include the record of ordination.

APPENDIX B

PERCEPTS DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

<u>AREAS OF RESEARCH</u>	<u>BAKERSFIELD, CA</u>	<u>U. S.</u>
Current Population	314,097	301 million
Population 5 Year Population Change	8.4%	4.6%
Largest Lifestyle Group	Middle American Family	Middle American Family
Non-Anglo Population	60%	34%
Fastest Growing Racial/Ethnic Group	Hispanics & Latino	Hispanics & Latino
Households with No Faith Involvement	44%	35%
Average Age	32.9	37.3
Average Household Income	\$49,188	\$66,670
Single Parent Households	40%	30%
College Graduates	14%	24%

Source: Percept. Claritas/NDS, Census Bureau (v08a1)

APPENDIX C

GAINING MY BEARINGS

Interviews with Three Long-Time Members

The members were selected by asking ten Session members who they believed I should speak with to gain the best sense of history of First Presbyterian Church Bakersfield. The names of three people were quickly identified among the list of names offered.

The one woman and two men were more than delighted to meet with me. The interviews were limited to 45 minutes and took place in the interviewee's respective home on the same afternoon.

The Questions: Designed from input by Clark Cowden (the Executive Presbyter of San Joaquin Presbytery), Lewis and Cordeiro, and the Ryberg Consulting Group:

1. What story represents God's work in the life of First Presbyterian Church?
2. In your opinion, what is the most important activity in the life of our church?
3. Who is FPCB trying to reach?
4. What are the church's strengths?
5. What are FPCB challenges?

These interviews occurred on 19 October 2006.

Interview #1

1. The story of the \$4 million campaign to purchase the city block and build out facility in 1990.
2. The most important activities in order of emphasis: Worship, Sunday school, and global missions.
3. The people of Bakersfield who are most like us. "We can't reach everyone."
4. In order given: (a) Pastoral leadership, (b) dedication to the Bible, (c) musical talent (specifically Dr. Provencio), and (d) the financial resources of the congregation.
5. "Being downtown is both a strength and a weakness. It's a weakness because many people feel it's too far to drive to get involved."

Interview #2

1. The story of the Great Adventure. God took our congregation and miraculously provided the financial resources to purchase the neighboring block of property, build the buildings, and close "G" street, with no financial debt. "God is good!"
2. The most important things FPCB does in order: (a) Christian education for ALL ages, (b) Sunday morning worship, (c) "becoming a family," and (d) our commitment to Scripture and prayer.
3. We need to do a better job of reaching out to the young families. "We have a responsibility to help these young people to walk with the Lord."
4. The strengths of FPCB: (a) our worship services ("we provide excellent services of "traditional," "contemporary," and "blended" styles), (b) our children's ministry, and (c) our dedication to staying in the heart of downtown ("we're here to influence the city").
5. Reaching the "young people."

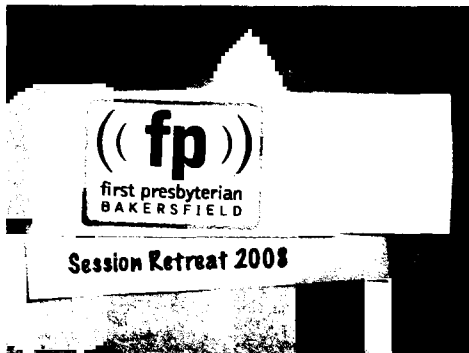
Interview #3

1. The intentional decision to stay in downtown Bakersfield when the other churches moved out into the suburbs. This was a decision bathed in prayer and grounded in a sense of caring for the city.
2. The most important activity is worship. "People need to connect with God on Sunday morning to give them the strength to walk the whole week."
3. "I don't know that we have a 'target' group we're trying to reach."
4. Strengths: (a) Intelligent Christian education opportunities, (b) wonderful music that guides our worship services, (c) strong commitment to world missions, and (d) pastoral and Session leadership.
5. "It saddens me, but I think the changing culture seems un-interested in the church. We must do better helping people connect to our church."

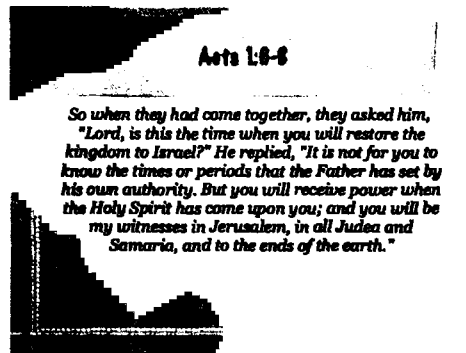
APPENDIX D

SESSION RETREAT TEACHING POINTS

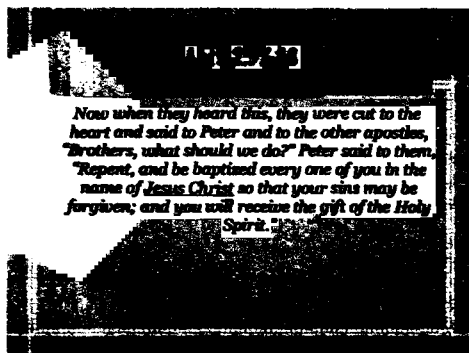
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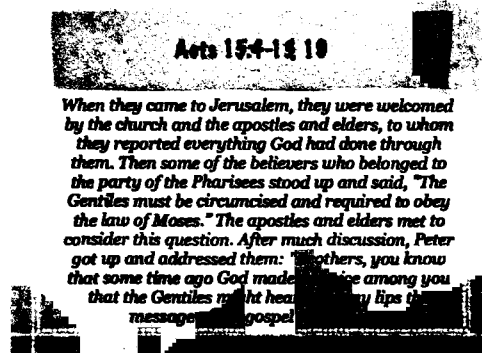
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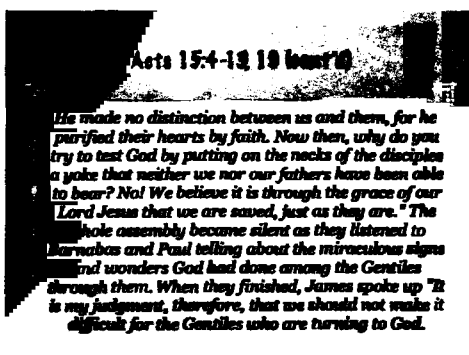
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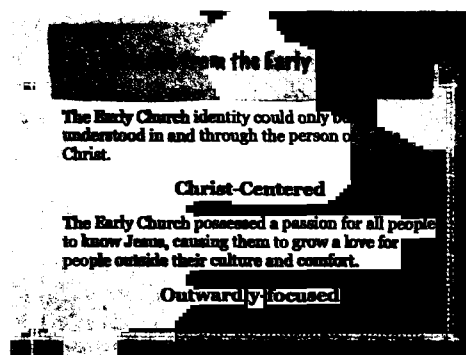
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Slide #5



Slide #6



Slide #7

Four Marks of a Christ-centered & Outwardly-focused Church

1. Churches are convinced that **GOOD NEWS** and **GOOD DEEDS** can't and shouldn't be separated.

Slide #8

Churches are convinced that _____ and _____ can't and shouldn't be separated.

Acts 3:4-7 (NIV)

Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

Slide #9

Four Marks of a Christ-centered & Outwardly-focused Church

1. Churches are convinced that good news and good deeds can't and shouldn't be separated.
2. Church holds the conviction that they are vital to the **HEALTH** and **WELL-BEING** of their communities.

Slide #10

Church holds the conviction they are vital to the _____ and _____ of their communities.

Romans 12:18 (NASB)

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Hebrews 12:14 (NRSV)

Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Slide #11

Four Marks of a Christ-centered & Outwardly-focused Church

1. Churches are convinced that good deeds and good news can't and shouldn't be separated.
2. Church holds the conviction that they are vital to the **HEALTH** and well-being of their communities.
3. Churches believe that ministering and serving are the **NORMAL EXPRESSIONS** of Christian _____

Slide #12

Churches believe that ministering and serving are the _____ of Christian living

Matthew 20:28 (NRSV)

... the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV)

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

Slide #13

Churches are **effectively**

Acts 2:47b (NRSV)
And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 11:21 (NRSV)
The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord.

Slide #14

Four Marks of a Christ-centered & Outwardly-focused Church

1. Churches are convinced that good deeds and good news can't and shouldn't be separated.
2. Church holds the conviction that they are vital to the health and well-being of their communities
3. Churches believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living
4. Churches are **EVANGELISTICALLY** effective

Slide #15

Questions in your mind...

1. How long have you attended 1st Pres. Bakersfield?
2. What do you have a passion for at 1st Pres. Bakersfield?
3. What do you perceive God may be saying to First Pres. Bakersfield?
4. How may we be more intentionally Christ-centered and outwardly-focused?

APPENDIX E

SESSION TEACHING EXPERIENCES

Marks of a Christ-Centered and Outwardly Focused Church**#1—GOOD NEWS & GOOD DEEDS can't and shouldn't be separated**

Luke 9:10-17 (NIV) ¹⁰ *When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. ¹² Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." ¹³ He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." ¹⁴ (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." ¹⁵ The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. ¹⁶ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. ¹⁷ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.*

Acts 3:4-7 (NIV) ⁴ *Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.*

James 2:14-18, 26 (NRSV) ¹⁴ *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. ²⁶ For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.*

Marks of a Christ-Centered and Outwardly Focused Church

#2—Church holds the conviction that it is vital to the HEALTH and WELL-BEING of its community.

#1—Good news & good deeds can't and shouldn't be separated

Verses:

Gospels:

John 8:12 (NIV) *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

John 20:31 (NIV) *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*

Pauline Epistle:

Romans 12:18 (NASB) *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”*

General Epistle:

Hebrews 12:14 (NRSV) *“Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”*

List 5 ways 1st Pres functions as if our existence is vital to the health and well-being of our community

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Marks of a Christ-Centered and Outwardly Focused Church

#3—Churches believe that ministering and serving are the NORMAL EXPRESSIONS of Christian living

#2—Church holds the conviction that is vital to the HEALTH and WELL-BEING of its community.

#1—Good news & good deeds CAN'T and SHOULDN'T be separated

GOSPEL:

Matthew 20:28 (NRSV) “[T]he Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Luke 1:74-75 (NLT) “We have been rescued from our enemies, so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness forever.”

PAULINE EPISTLE:

Galatians 5:13 (NLT) “For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love.”

Ephesians 6:7 (NIV) “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.”

GENERAL EPISTLE:

1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV) “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

IN YOUR TRIADS:

- What motivates you to serve here at 1st Pres? In our community?
- Why do people say “no” to serving?
- What are common hindrances to serving?
- What might we do to promote a spirit of service with our members?

Marks of a Christ-Centered and Outwardly focused Church

#4—Churches are EVANGELISTICALLY effective

#3—Churches believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living

#2—Church holds the conviction that they are vital to the health and well-being of their communities

#1—Good news & good deeds can't and shouldn't be separated

GOSPEL:

John 1:40 (NIV) *“Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.”*

Matthew 9:9 (NLT) *“As Jesus was going down the road, he saw Matthew sitting at his tax-collection booth. ‘Come, be my disciple,’ Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.”*

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES:

Acts 2:47b (NRSV) *“And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”*

Acts 11:21 (NRSV) *“The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord.”*

PAULINE EPISTLE:

1 Corinthians 3:6 (NLT) *“My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow.”*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE EVANGELISTICALLY EFFECTIVE?

- Not notches on belt—instead creating environment where sharing what God is doing in your life is normal and natural
- Not about rehearsed presentation—instead a dynamic presentation flowing from relationship with God and with other person

IN YOUR TRIADS:

- In what ways do we/have we promoted evangelism at 1st Pres?
- How have you been challenged in this way over the last four months?
- In what ways have you grown in your sharing your faith?
- Why might our congregation be afraid of this expression of faith in our world?
- How might we better promote an openness to evangelism among our body?

APPENDIX F

TRIAD QUESTIONS

Triad Meeting #1

Good news & good deeds CAN'T and SHOULDN'T be separated

Questions:

1. When you think of being “Christ-centered and outward focused” what sticks in your mind?
2. How might this impact you, your life, and our life at First Presbyterian Bakersfield?

General Observations consolidated from groups:

Comments regarding Question 1:

- These marks appear biblical.
- This will require much better communication from leadership to the people of First Presbyterian Bakersfield
- This is a shift from what we've always done. We've always expected people to come to us. This requires we imagine going to those beyond the walls of our church.

Comments regarding Question 2:

- This will require I look at the people all around me differently.
- You're challenging us to be willing to take a risk in faith sharing.
- I have never intentionally shared my faith before. I am afraid.
- This is a challenge beyond just a new program; we excel at children & youth ministry.
- We need to become more friendly and inviting to others, if visitors are going to stay and grow with First Presbyterian Bakersfield.

Triad Meeting #2:

Church holds the conviction that they are vital to the HEALTH and WELL-BEING of their communities

Questions:

1. Specifically, how is First Presbyterian Bakersfield perceived in the surrounding community?
2. How does your faith in Jesus impact your relationships in our community?

General Observations consolidated from groups:

Comments regarding Question 1:

- First Presbyterian Bakersfield cares for the community.
- First Presbyterian Bakersfield gives financial resources to the needs of our community.
- First Presbyterian Bakersfield seems to focus on the wealthy and successful in our community.
- First Presbyterian Bakersfield is the “pink” church downtown.
- First Presbyterian Bakersfield is a friendly church, but we aren’t willing to take it the next step.

Comments regarding Question 2:

- My faith is one of the key reasons I donate time and energy in the community.
- I desire to help shape Bakersfield into a safe and more positive city.
- This challenge to share my faith with people in my *sphere of influence* has caused me to rethink my role in Bakersfield.
- I want to show that I’m Christ’s disciple by how I conduct business; with integrity.

Triad Meeting #3:

Churches believe that ministering and serving are the NORMAL EXPRESSIONS of Christian living

Questions:

1. What is your perception of the members of First Presbyterian Bakersfield's understanding of their role?
2. In what ways are you serving Christ in our church and in our world?

General Observations consolidated from groups:

Comments regarding Question 1:

- Some at First Presbyterian Bakersfield believe serving is the expression of *super* Christians.
- Some at First Presbyterian Bakersfield are uncertain how they can serve in the church.
- Some at First Presbyterian Bakersfield are deeply committed to serving (out of love for Jesus), but many are unsure.

Comments regarding Question 2:

- Beyond serving as an elder, I participate in other areas, too.
- I have had opportunity to share my faith with the person God has placed on my heart.
- I am trying to discover what serving the world means, what it looks like.
- I have never taken risks in my faith like I am now. Keep pushing us.

Triad Meeting #4:

Churches are EVANGELISTICALLY effective

Questions:

1. As you have pondered being *evangelistically effective*, how do you think the First Presbyterian community might respond?
2. As you have prayerfully engaged the person/people God has placed on your heart, what has been the impact?

General Observations consolidated from groups:

Comments regarding Question 1:

- Some at First Presbyterian Bakersfield will be concerned with the development of a “notch in your belt” mentality.
- Some at First Presbyterian Bakersfield will be wary of a focus on hyper-emotionalism.
- Some at First Presbyterian Bakersfield will feel empowered and motivated to become more evangelistic.
- The people of First Presbyterian Bakersfield will need help, modeling, and encouragement regularly to make this move.

Comments regarding Question 2:

- This has been one of the scariest things I’ve done, but I’m glad I’m being encouraged to do it.
- I have always thought this was the task of others.
- I feel like my faith is more alive; I’m thinking about it more than ever before.

APPENDIX G

PRETEST RESULTS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	5	2	5	2	3	2	5	3	2	5	5	1	1	4	1	1
2	4	1	3	3	1	2	5	4	2	4	5	1	1	4	2	1
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24	5	5	5	2	1	2	5	5	2	4	2	1	1	5	2	1
25	5	1	5	1	1	2	5	1	2	5	5	1	1	5	1	1
26	5	3	5	2	3	1	5	3	5	5	5	1	1	5	1	1
27	5	2	4	4	2	4	5	2	3	5	5	4	2	5	3	4
28	5	5	5	1	1	3	5	5	5	5	5	1		5	1	1
29	5	3	5	2	3	3	5	3	4	5	5	2	2	4	3	1
30	5	4	5	3	3	4	5	5	3	4	4	1	1	5	3	1
Avg	4.6	2.7	4.5	2.0	2.4	2.4	4.3	3.3	3.0	4.5	4.4	1.7	1.5	3.8	1.9	1.7
Sdev	0.86	1.24	0.94	0.96	1.10	0.93	1.09	1.24	1.16	0.82	0.96	1.28	1.00	1.09	0.94	1.26

APPENDIX H
POSTTEST RESULTS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	5	3	4	2	1	3	4	3	2	4	5	2	4	4	2	3
2	5	3	4	2	2	1	5	5	3	5	5	1	1	3	2	3
3	5	2	5	1	1	1	5	3	1	5	5	1	1	5	1	1
4	5	2	5	1	2	3	5	3	3	5	5	3	1	5	1	1
5	4	3	5	2	1	2	5	5	2	5	5	1	1	5	2	1
6	5	1	5	1	2	2	4	3	3	5	5	4	1	4	2	2
7	5	3	5	1	3	2	5	3	3	5	5	1	1	4	2	1
8	5	3	5	1	5	2	4	2	3	5	5	1	1	4	1	2
9	5	2	5	3	1	2	5	1	3	5	5	1	1	2	1	3
10	5	3	5	2	3	2	5	3	2	4	5	1	1	4	2	1
11	5	3	5	2	3	2	4	2	2	5	5	1	1	4	2	1
12	5	4	5	1	3	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	2	4	2	5
13	4	2	3	1	4	4	5	1	4	5	5	1	1	5	1	3
14	4	2	5	1	4	2	5	1	4	5	4	1	1	3	1	1
15	5	4	4	1	4	2	3	3	4	5	5	2	3	4	3	2
16	5	3	5	1	4	3	5	1	4	5	5	1	1	5	2	1
17	5	2	5	1	3	2	5	2	2	5	5	1	1	5	2	1
18	4	1	5	2	3	3	4	2	3	4	4	1	1	4	1	1
19	4	2	4	4	3	2	4	2	3	4	4	2	2	4	2	2
20	4	2	4	4	3	2	5	5	2	4	5	3	3	4	3	3
21	5	2	4	1	1	4	5	3	2	5	5	4	2	2	1	3
22	5	4	5	4	2	3	4	5	2	4	4	2	1	3	3	1
23	4	1	5	1	4	4	5	1	3	4	5	1	1	4	2	1
24	5	3	5	1	3	3	5	4	4	5	5	1	5	3	1	1
25	4	2	5	1	3	4	5	2	3	5	5	1	1	4	2	1
26	5	2	5	3	1	1	5	5	3	4	5	1	1	4	1	4
27	3	2	5	3	3	2	5	3	4	4	5	1	1	4	2	1
28	4	2	4	1	3	2	4	1	4	4	4	4	1	4	1	1
29	4	2	3	2	2	1	4	2	3	4	4	1	1	4	3	1
30	4	2	4	2	2	2	4	3	3	4	4	1	2	4	1	1
avg	4.6	2.4	4.6	1.8	2.6	2.4	4.6	2.8	2.9	4.6	4.7	1.7	1.5	3.9	1.7	1.8
sdev	0.57	0.81	0.62	1.01	1.10	0.93	0.57	1.33	0.80	0.50	0.45	1.09	1.01	0.78	0.69	1.10

APPENDIX I**VARIANCE IN SCORES****OVERALL RESULTS**

PRE TEST (August
2008)

Mark #1	Mark #2	Mark #3	Mark #4
4.57	2.7	4.47	2.03
2.43	2.4	4.33	3.3
3.03	4.54	4.37	1.73
1.43	3.83	1.93	1.7
11.46	13.47	15.1	8.76
2.87	3.37	3.78	2.19

POST TEST
(January 2009)

Mark #1	Mark #2	Mark #3	Mark #4
4.67	2.43	4.63	1.7
2.6	2.47	4.6	2.77
2.83	4.7	4.8	1.77
1.57	4	1.67	1.83
11.67	13.6	15.7	8.07
2.92	3.40	3.93	2.02

VARIANCES

Mark #1	Mark #2	Mark #3	Mark #4
0.10	0.27	0.16	0.33
0.17	0.07	0.27	0.53
-0.20	0.16	0.43	0.04
0.14	0.17	0.26	0.13
0.21	0.13	0.6	-0.69

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