ABSTRACT

LAYPEOPLE SERVING THEIR NEIGHBORS: IS IT MINISTRY?

by

Brenda H. May

Lay church members readily identify their participation in church mission to their neighborhood if their church institution initiates an outreach. This study examined how laypeople perceived their less formal or nonchurch organized service, neighborliness, and kindness toward their neighbors and determined if they considered these activities as missional. The neighborhood in which the study participants live includes a civic group with the mission of improving the neighborhood. Half of the participants in this study are active members of the civic group, giving these people a heightened sense of the impact of their volunteerism.

Semi-formal interviews were conducted with ten people who live in this neighborhood where they attend church. This qualitative study explored how laypeople regard their participation in the mission of the church, how they think of themselves as ministers, and whether they regard their interactions with their neighbors as ministry.

The results of this research exposed a disconnection for many of these lay people in understanding how their nonchurch-based service within their neighborhood fit into the mission of the church. In spite of purposeful and significant efforts, they were much less inclined to see themselves as ministers or in ministry unless their efforts took place on the real estate of the church institution. Many interviewees experienced epiphanies as they related their experiences during the interview and expressed feeling encouraged

about their efforts. This paper offers suggestions for evaluating congregational structure to support lay ministry better.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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To God be the Glory! He spoke to the ancient Israelites and he spoke to me:

> Shout and celebrate, Daughter of Zion!
> I'm on my way. I'm moving into your neighborhood!
> GOD's Decree. (Zech. 2:10, MSG)

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introducton

Although I purchased my fixer-upper in 1985 from an estate sale purposefully to live in a multiracial neighborhood, I have experienced White flight firsthand. I am the last White, owner-occupant to purchase a home on my street. My owner-occupant neighbors share with me the values typical of middle-class homeowners: to maintain our properties, to be friendly and helpful to each other, and to behave in ways respectful of the others around us. However, with the increase in foreclosures, flipping, and absentee landlords, we are experiencing a new class of neighbors, to the unsettling of us all. The newer neighbors do not have the same level of care for their rental homes. They do not regularly tend the lawns or repair windows, doors, and screens they have damaged since they do not own the homes. Trash and debris litter their yards and the street. Sometimes many more people occupy the homes than the occupancy permit allows, and behaviors can be loud and vulgar. Some of the long-time owner-occupants on the street are admitting their feelings of discomfort, in spite of sharing the same racial identity with the new neighbors, and are considering moving away. Certainly, my study was birthed from a high degree of personal interest—economically, socially, and missionally.

Cleveland Heights is an inner-ring suburb of over 46,000 residents, abutting Cleveland, Ohio. Priding itself in its diversity, it boasts of its historic architecture, unique commercial districts, a variety of restaurants, active arts community, and walkable neighborhoods (“Cleveland Heights”). The adjacent University Circle in Cleveland allows Cleveland Heights residents to benefit from the rich cultural offerings and world-

class education and health care at its doorstep. Many of the officers and members of the museums, Cleveland Orchestra, Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University, and University Hospitals reside in Cleveland Heights.

Once home to John D. Rockefeller, his extended family, and business relations, Cleveland Heights still displays features that recall that former era. A park on land that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. donated now sports recreation facilities. The large sculpted fountain from his estate graces the lawn of city hall. A housing tract bearing his name sits on land that he developed, and various pillars, stone walls, former horse stables, and other structures remain from family estates. The photos that grace city promotional materials feature some of the stunning mansions, cathedral-style churches, meticulously maintained local restaurant districts, and award-winning public architecture ("History/Architecture"). However, none of these fine features are housed in the neighborhoods.

The Noble, Oxford, and Caledonia neighborhoods are named for the elementary schools that define them. These three neighborhoods will be collectively referred to as the Noble neighborhood or Noble district for the main north-south street that runs through all three elementary school defined neighborhoods, Noble Road. These neighborhoods are home to smaller, single-family homes, modestly priced rentals, tinier lots, and utilitarian business districts. It is an area that began to experience the ill effects of predatory lending a decade before the national foreclosure crisis of 2008 (Woodbridge). The high foreclosure vacancy rate has created a downward spiral of vacant homes, copper pipe theft, investors who flip the homes or rent them to irresponsible tenants, lowered property values, and the flight of homeowners, regardless of race, to more solidly middle-class areas.

In 2011, I met with pastors of each of the seven churches in the neighborhood, hoping to find a way for the churches to work together to meet the needs of the neighborhood. While pastors agreed to the theory of working with other churches, they expressed hesitations about doctrinal incompatibilities. By the end of 2013, the project on which most could agree to work together was to gather quarterly for prayer walks.

The prayer walk effort continues, rotating the starting point among the participating churches. While attendance is low, between five to ten people, those who are regular participants have been constantly amazed at the unity among believers from various churches and the common threads of prayer topics that pair-teams of prayer walkers lift to the Lord.

In January 2014 a startling event propelled me to move in an additional direction. A neighborhood resident came home from work and chose to take a walk before dinner. At 5:30 p.m., it is dark outside in this latitude. Within a block from her home, she passed two young men whom she greeted. They did not return her greeting as they passed but turned and beat her, leaving her with broken facial bones. They did not steal anything, and she used her bloodied cell phone to call 9-1-1.

Previously, violence in this neighborhood and city was all between people who knew each other—domestic violence, youth or gang violence, and men at the local bars behaving aggressively towards each other, sometimes using guns. The bar incidents were exploited by the local news outlet to increase on-ine readership, which provided fodder for the growing region-wide perception that this neighborhood was deteriorating. One of the anonymous comments on the news outlet that characterized the denigration to which the Noble neighborhood was subjected states, “There was a time that part of Noble

Road was clean and safe, but that was many years ago. It's gone down the sewer now and it's long past being saved" (Ferrise, "Cleveland Heights Police"). Residents in the Noble area recognize the racial and socio-economic prejudice inherent in this quote.

The random attack against the woman produced a palpable fear. One neighbor responded by sending an e-mail to friends on her street and beyond, inviting them to her home to talk about her perception of rising crime in the city. Within a week of the attack, about thirty people gathered in her home, including the police chief and two council members (Ferrise, "Cleveland Heights Safety Meeting").

I learned of the attack and the meeting because the local newspaper was live-blogging the meeting. I introduced myself to the meeting leader as the leader of an association of neighborhood churches with whom I had already been working.

Within a few months, I became a coleader of the nascent neighborhood group, named Noble Neighbors, and we expanded the focus of the group from alarm over the specific attack and the perceived crime in the area towards considering how we could make positive changes. Our story is documented on the Web site www.NobleNeighbors.com.

Our first public event was a simple one, to pick up litter along the main street, Noble Road. Amazingly, fifty people showed up and gathered scores of bags full of litter. Amazingly, participants' attitudes changed from despair to hope over such a simple activity. Subsequent events and projects—real estate fairs, neighborhood-wide festivities, meet-the-candidates forums, a graduate program survey, the defeat of a proposed gas station/convenient store development, flower planting beautification, annual celebrations and monthly meetings—have all contributed to a radical change in attitude by the

neighbors, by city officials, and by people beyond the city that this area is a viable neighborhood on the rise.

Many of the neighborhood churches are represented in Noble Neighbors by parishioners who regularly participate and lead initiatives. Some of these church members have expressed to me stories of personal growth in understanding their own senses of Christian mission through participation in Noble Neighbors. Where they felt despair about their neighborhood, and also about their church in transition, they now feel great hope. Their faith is built up as they perceive positive, life-giving results from the works of their hands. They pray differently, spend their free time differently, and influence their congregations' choices of outreach activities.

I chose to study this change. The questions arising as I listened to their stories included discovering the change in heart and thinking regarding Christian mission of neighborhood residents who participate in Noble Neighbors and are members of neighborhood churches. I sought to learn if people thought differently about themselves as ministers as they became involved in local volunteerism, and I was interested in comparing the self-perceptions of these participants with other local church members who were not part of Noble Neighbors.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how lay church members in the Noble Road neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, grew in their understanding of themselves as ministers as each one chose to become involved or not to become involved in the Noble Neighbors civic group.

For many, ministers are professionals within the church who perform priestly duties on behalf of the laity. Readily identified are the duties of weekly church service oversight, sermon delivery, presiding over weddings, funerals and baptisms, and church board leadership. Practical service, for some, is not considered ministry, although it may be necessary to support a ministry, unless the practical service is performed by an ordained person. Social service activities in which laity volunteer are not necessarily regarded as ministry unless the lay member is on the staff of a parachurch organization. The line between what is ministry and what is merely service can be defined by the ordination status of the task worker.

When laypeople couple a theological understanding of ministry with their own activities, their faith is bolstered. With further encouragement, lay church members can experience God's will manifest on earth as it is in heaven, according to how Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:10, by seeing God multiply the works of their hands with the blessings that only God can deliver into the lives of those they are serving.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to determine how lay church members who live and worship in the Noble area of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, regarded the mission of the church and themselves as ministers. For those who became involved in Noble Neighbors, the research probed how their understanding of themselves as ministers has changed since becoming involved in Noble Neighbors as compared to those who chose not to be involved in the group.

Research Question 1

What theological principles guide the understanding of Christian mission expressed by laypeople who were interviewed in this study?

Research Question 2

What do laypeople in this study believe is their personal responsibility towards the goals of Christian mission?

Research Question 3

How has involvement in Christian mission of the laypeople in this study changed and/or continued in recent years?

Definition of Terms

Following are the definitions for the terms used in this project.

LayPerson/Laity

The laity are people who are part of a local church but do not have the recognition of ordination. While they may have leadership roles on a church board or in small groups, they are not considered pastoral leaders.

Church Members

Membership, for this study, means that the layperson identifies a particular congregation as his or her church. Membership may or may not be a legal, formal process. Membership is associated with a degree of ownership, a voiced commitment, and regular participation in one local congregation.

Noble Neighbors

Noble Neighbors is a voluntary group of people, mostly residents of the neighborhoods that abut Noble Road in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. The group formed in

January 2014 in response to a violent crime and has since expanded its focus towards improving these neighborhoods in a variety of ways.

Mission

Mission is the mandate that each participant believes the church and its members are charged to fulfill. It is the task or duty that Christians are assigned by God for the advancement of his kingdom. Mission is the reason why church members serve others through outreach efforts.

Ministry

Ministry is the service in which each church member engages in fulfillment of the mission mandate and in loving obedience to the Word of God. Laypeople may serve through established organizations such as their local church or parachurch organizations. Laypeople may also serve informally through purposeful interactions with others in obedience to Scripture.

Ministers

Ministers are people who engage in the activities that fulfill the mandate of mission. They believe they are charged by Scripture to serve the Lord by serving others. Ministers may or may not have an ordination that is recognized by a formal board of ordination.

Ministry Project

Ten participants were interviewed for this project. Five were members of churches in the Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, who live in the neighborhood and who became regularly involved in Noble Neighbors. Five were

members of churches in the Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, who live in the neighborhood but who chose not to become involved in Noble Neighbors.

Individuals were interviewed to determine their understanding of the mission of the church and themselves as ministers and what changes they perceived in their own understanding of themselves as ministers in recent years. The project sought to determine any difference between those who became involved in Noble Neighbors, a civic group working to change their own neighborhood, and those who live and worship in the Noble neighborhood but did not become involved with Noble Neighbors.

Names of potential participants were collected from the Noble Neighbors' database and were compared for residence and active local church participation. Since Noble Neighbors meet in church buildings in the neighborhood, Noble Neighbor members who are active in these churches are readily identified through the hosting services they have provided when the group has met in their buildings. Names of potential participants who are not active in Noble Neighbors were identified with the assistance of Noble Neighbor active members. Additional assistance was sought from a pastor of one local church to identify potential interviewees.

Interviewees were selected from these groups with additional demographic variations (e.g., age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, denominational affiliation) to provide a breadth of personal perspective. Volunteers were solicited from these groups, and face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Participants were contacted by telephone or face-to-face so that initial questions about the project could be addressed and resolved immediately. Participants were informed that the interviews were to gather information about their perspective of the

church's mission, themselves as lay ministers, and their practice of ministry. They were invited to have a one-on-one conversation with me while I used dictation and audio recording software to record the conversation. Participants were given the option of meeting in their homes or in my home. At my home, attention was given to hospitality and comfort. Interviewees were given a third option to meet at a local library, a space that provided relative privacy and sound isolation for the dictation and audio recording software to record properly. The interviews were conducted individually between 23 June 2017 and 7 July 2017 at homes in the Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Context

The people in this study were all residents of the neighborhoods along Noble Road in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. They all attended a church in the neighborhood. The churches represent a wide variety of theological perspectives within the American church. Each of the churches is struggling financially due to changing or diminishing membership. No church has a full-time clergy.

The neighborhood has experienced a slow decline over decades. Almost one-third of the homes have been foreclosed. The percentage of renters to homeowners has risen from 23 percent of the population to 31percent, and the median household income has not increased at a pace the rest of the city experienced (see Appendix C). Numerous factors have converged to create this environment. White flight in the 1970s and 80s, predatory lending in the 90s, and the housing market crash of 2008 have all contributed to this neighborhood's decline. Adding to the national trends, an active group of people has used social media, including the regional news outlet's opportunity for anonymous commentary, to spew derogatory, racially biased and elitist language about the

neighborhood. These social media postings, in particular, have contributed to a pervasive attitude both within the suburb and across the region that the Noble neighborhoods are crime ridden, have dilapidated housing and are full of residents with antisocial behaviors. Attracting new homebuyers and business investors is difficult in this climate.

Noble Neighbors' primary goal is to rewrite the neighborhood narrative. The group seeks to change the negative story towards a district that is known for the positive features that have always characterized it—parks, charming housing in a wide variety of styles, four public schools with their open playgrounds and athletic facilities, a library, churches, walkable business districts, and a regionally renowned police academy. People, of course, are the primary asset of any neighborhood, and this one boasts a racially diverse American population with a strong Nepali refugee presence and other people with international origins.

Neighbors who are long-time residents and members of neighborhood churches have experienced all these trends. Of these neighbors, some who have become actively involved in Noble Neighbors and attend a church in the neighborhood report experiencing a revitalizing of their faith through the practical works of neighborhood improvement.

Methodology

The primary instrument of study was a semi-structured, personal interview. The opportunity to hear personal stories gave insight into the interviewee's theology of church mission and its practical application in their lives. Background information was gathered on each interviewee, and a series of follow-up questions guided an approximately hour-long interview. Interviewees were asked to describe what they believed to be the mission

of the church, what their participation in that mission was, and how they are serving their neighbors in Christian mission. They were given opportunity to describe examples of their activities within this conversational format.

Data was collected using both audio and dictation software. Interview data was transcribed and charted in tables according to questions. Content was analyzed for key words and themes. Data was collated and analyzed for common themes and for outlier responses. The aggregation of the data was reported and reflections on the findings were described.

Participants

The interviews included people who both live in the neighborhood and who regularly attend a church in the neighborhood. Interviewees were further chosen from a group of these people who were involved with Noble Neighbors and from a group of these people who were not involved with Noble Neighbors.

Care was taken to select participants who had differing demographic representation (e.g., age, race, socioeconomic situations, and denominational affiliations). Most participants were already known to me, although not all. Assistance was sought from a local pastor for participants who were not involved in Noble Neighbors but who lived and worshiped in the neighborhood.

Instrumentation

The project design involved a postintervention, narrative interview research of the self-perceptions of nonordained individuals towards their own responsibilities in Christian mission. The participants were residents, church members, and, for some, involved with Noble Neighbors, a local neighborhood group. This project probed their

self-perceptions as they pertain to, or apart from, the activities in which they have already participated to improve their neighborhood.

The primary instrument of study was the semi-structured, personal interviews (see Appendix A). The opportunity to hear personal stories gave insight into the interviewees' theology of church mission and its practical application in their lives. Background information was gathered on each interviewee, and a series of follow-up questions guided an approximately hour-long interview.

Data Collection

The data collection was accomplished by ten open-ended interviews that were immediately transcribed using dictation and audio recording software. Additional questions beyond the initial interview questions were asked for clarification and expansion of answers. These probes provoked a storytelling atmosphere rather than simply a questionnaire-answering format.

A semi-structured interview with follow-up questions allowed for a clearer description of the interviewee's theology of mission and of his or her understanding of ministry. Following questions to gather hard data such as age, church affiliation, awareness of and/or participation in Noble Neighbors, open-ended questions allowed participants to describe, in their own words, their theology of Christian mission, their view of themselves as ministers, and the impact of their involvement in neighborhood service on their theology of Christian mission and on their view of self as minister.

Interviewees were given the option of being interviewed in their homes or in my home. Comfort was attended to with seating, lighting, and cat containment in my home. Interviewees were also given the option of meeting at a quiet public area such as the local

library. Local coffee houses would not provide the privacy needed for an open discussion nor the sound isolation needed for the dictation and audio recording software to be effective.

Data Analysis

Transcript analysis was performed for each interview. Transcripts were segmented from the time of the interview by research question. Texts were divided into tables of text segments. Coding was recorded in the second column of the table where responses pertaining to the questions were listed. All other extraneous language was deleted. Data was recorded in the third column as distilled phrases and concepts pertaining to the research questions (Creswell 244-45).

The interviews were further analyzed by words and phrases that indicated theological concepts, activities, and the interviewees' thoughts about themselves. Tables were constructed to compare responses to the same question with coding for themes (Creswell 254). Comparisons between common language or theological language usage and the subjects' formation influences determined any link with current church affiliation theology.

Charts compared responses of all participants and revealed patterns of theology, ministry involvement, self-descriptions as ministers, and participation in neighborhood ministry or service. Observations were drawn about the similarities and differences between the participants who were active in their local neighborhood group and those who were not.

Generalizability

For people who live in middle or upper-class neighborhoods and who attend churches in these neighborhoods, mission can be regarded as a ministry that one graces upon others, not towards people like themselves. For example, the churches in the southern end of Cleveland Heights collect offerings and seek volunteers for agencies and activities outside of their neighborhoods. Other people in this socioeconomic group are not perceived as needing ministry, either financial assistance or social services. Nonministry language is used for church activities within the congregation. Youth groups, affinity groups, classes, and programs are offered to members of the church and advertised on electronic signs for neighbors to attend. Ministry is seen as a one-way street of giving resources, time, and wisdom to others who are in need and who are most often located far away from the church building.

This viewpoint is markedly out of balance with the gospel. While Chrisitans are commissioned to be givers, healers, bearers of good news, and ushers of the graces of the kingdom of God, their posture is to be as servants towards *neighbors,* both metaphorical—as in fellow humans, and proximal—those with whom Christians share space. When Christians combine a servant posture with the profound knowledge that they are children of the King and have all his inheritance at their disposal, the very efforts to improve communities for the benefit of *all* become missional instead of merely civic. The only way Christians can become the preservative salt is to be thoroughly mixed in with the dough of humanity—local and global. Working in communities, setting priorities, and exhibiting godly treatment of all people turns Christian labors into light, revealing that the kingdom of God is growing on earth.

The difference in this understanding of ministry is the difference between *noblesse oblige* and partnership. The implied responsibility of the nobility to behave generously toward the underclasses still leaves the class system and its privileges intact. When Christians are in partnership with those *with whom* they are ministering, they seek to raise the living situations of all by being both a giver *and a receiver* of the gifts God offers the world. In neighborhood ministry, Christians cannot retreat to a safe, separate, elaborately appointed haven because they share the same neighborhood with those with whom they are working toward the same goal.

When Christians are missional in their partnership with their neighbors who may not share their theology, they have the opportunity to act as God does by affirming the preciousness of their neighbors, by recognizing the gifts that the Creator bestowed on them before they knew him, and by being an incarnational representative, demonstrating how godly processes succeed.

This study is intended to provoke a paradigm change in the life of each believer toward an understanding that every word, action, and attitude Christians exhibit has the potential of ushering in the kingdom of God. Words, actions, and attitudes are all tied to the mission of the church.

Theological Foundation

This study probed how a group of lay believers saw themselves in mission towards their local neighborhood. Several biblical themes bear significantly on their worldviews and their actions. Firstly, the radical change from the Old Covenant structure of an elite, priestly class towards the New Covenant's revelation through Peter that all believers are a new nation of royal priests trumpets the same movement that

contemporary lay believers must make as they transform in their understanding of themselves as ministers who are not ordained clergy (1 Pet. 2:9). Secondly, all of God's chosen people have a mandate, a mission to the world. Thirdly, Scripture offers examples of how this mandate is offered missionally to those who live near Christians as neighbors.

A Royal Priesthood

Priests are mediators between a deity and humans. In Genesis, the first priest who is identified is a pre-Covenant priest of *El 'Elyon*, God Most High, who initiates a meal foreshadowing the Passover meal and pronounces blessing on Abram, who, in turn, tithes to the priest Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). Writing under the New Covenant, the author of Hebrews reveals a wider God-point-of-view perspective on Melchizedek, declaring that Jesus was ordained under this order, which was not regulated by laws and human ancestry but by eternal, indestructible God power (Heb. 7:16).

The next priests mentioned in Genesis are Egyptian, where the Hebrews began to learn a human construct of priesthood while under Egyptian culture and rule. Midian priests are also referenced in Exodus in the person of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law and counselor. The Hebrews developed a priesthood before God gave Moses the commands and patterns for the Aaronic priesthood. Perhaps one may presume that the pre-Aaronic priesthood was modeled after the clerical cultures around them.

Therefore, one may read with amazement that God's first words to the Israelites about priests include, "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). God's intention from the beginning was for *all* his people to function as royal intermediaries to reveal his Glory to all the nations. God's training ground for how this kingly priesthood should function was not decreed until the entire community of

Israelites had consecrated themselves, received the terms of the Covenant, and learned how to worship God in a way that pleased him. Although God had already indicated that Aaron would have a special role, God did not begin his training program with the specific instructions for the dedicated priests until after the entire nation entered the Covenant. (Exod. 28:1-29:46).

Considering the postresurrection apostolic community, Peter restores the pre-Mosaic Covenant prophetic momentum and applied it to Christ-followers. God still intends for all his chosen people to be royal priests (1 Pet. 2:9). The early church leaders taught their community about this re-revelation by using human biology, large building construction, and familial relations metaphors to help believers understand what the church is and how it should function. Paul compared the individuals in the church to parts of the human body in 1 Corinthians 12. Each part, each person must function according to his or her gifts and purpose in order for this unit to thrive. Peter described the church as stones that are alive, together forming a space for worship in 1 Peter 2:5 right before he restores the royal priesthood declaration. John completed the picture of this unified nation of priests in Revelation with the epiphany that the nation of king-priests is to be as joyfully intimate with God as a bride and bridegroom are with each other (Rev. 2:9-12).

More than a millennium later, Martin Luther restored the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. It became one of the hallmark doctrines of the new, distinct movement in Christianity, the Protestant Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church embraced the concept and the language of the priesthood of all believers in its post-Vatican II reflective writings. This doctrine was universal in the Protestant and Roman Catholic Charismatic groups through which some study participants were influenced. In

Greater Cleveland, a fluidity of movement between local denominational expressions of the Charismatic movement contributed to a cross-pollination of doctrine. Study participants who experienced the Charismatic movement were young teens and adults at that time, in the early foundational years of spiritual formation. This combination of youthful faith and denominational barrier breaking is quite evident as an influencing factor in some of the study participants.

The Church's Mission

Readily, one might point to the Great Commission, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15, NIV), as the Church's primary mission. Scripture gives details and examples about how the Great Commission should be carried out. From the moment Israel was established as a nation under God's law, Israel was charged with being a witness that revealed God to the nations (Deut. 4:6-7). Through Israel's obedience to God's laws, his will and his ways were contrasted with other nations' social and spiritual habits. The contrast exposed God as good and the nations, with few exceptions, as evil. When Israel failed, God's character was further revealed as loving, patient, beckoning, but with justice. In those eras, Israel's behavior still revealed God's goodness, but to Israel's shame.

The initial mandate was to teach through example, by living the ways of God. Later in the national life, the teachings were verbal instruction as well as experiential. So powerful was this witness, and so effective was the revelation of God to people who were seeking the truth, that even during the Exodus, people who were not Hebrews are referenced in the Exodus story as choosing to join the Hebrews' journey as they followed their holy God.

When God walked on earth as a human in Jesus, he employed both experiential and verbal educational methods to help humanity understand both how to live and to talk about God and his kingdom. By the time the resurrected Lord pronounces the Great Commission, the nascent church receives a bit of a priority reversal. Preaching, or verbal instruction, seems to be the primary method of communication, perhaps due to a new focus of the teaching—to reveal heart postures that influence behavior (Matt. 5-7). The preaching must accompany congruent behaviors in order for the preaching to be most effective, persuasive, and revelatory.

The Church's Mission towards Neighbors

Congruent behaviors towards neighbors stem from redeemed heart postures. One must regard every other human with equal worth for receiving God's love in order to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). First introduced to God's chosen people in Leviticus 19:18, Jesus restored this concept, declaring it to be central to kingdom vitality and only second in importance to having a total devotion to God.

More pointedly for the study participants are passages that instruct God's people about blessing and serving their neighbors when the Israelites were the foreigners in the land. Drawing a parallel between New Testament concepts that the church's members are residents of a heavenly kingdom who are living temporally in an earth-bound realm, one can glean from the stories of Joseph and of the exiles principles that apply to Christians' service on earth. Joseph so proved his God-molded character in Egypt that he was raised to the second highest position in that land. Through his continual communion with the God of his fathers, Joseph was able to foresee famine disaster, avert it by careful

planning, and save his family nation from extinction. He prospered the kingdom to which he was originally sold as a slave.

Similarly, one finds a fascinating directive in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon. He encouraged the exiles to make themselves at home in the exilic land while living under God's principles. Jeremiah writes, "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7). Clearly, the exiles were not to take a position of opposition to the culture and government but, instead, to live in ways that demonstrate God's good social patterns for human interaction. More so, the exiles were to position themselves as a financial support for their host culture and to cause *them* to prosper.

Peter's second sermon occurred after he healed a lame beggar through the power of the Lord. He opened his audience's understanding to the truth that in God's kingdom demonstrations of God's loving power are to be considered normal. Then, Peter linked the enormity of this revelation to the Abrahamic-era revelation that God wants all nations to be blessed with this same power.

Overview

In Chapter 2, a theological framework for this study and a review of literature pertaining to this study topic is presented. Chapter 3 provides a detailed explanation of the design of this study, the research method, and the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the findings. Chapter 5 discusses the major findings and the practical application for this research to neighborhood churches and their members.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

The neighborhoods along Noble Road in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, contain single-family housing and apartment buildings. The 1920s and 30s brought a home building boom to the area that has a wide variety of architecture popular in that era—bungalows and craftsman style houses. The remainder of the neighborhoods were developed in the post-World War II era with colonials and ranch homes. The aging housing stock is constantly in some state of renovation as electrical, plumbing, and lifestyle upgrades are required.

The business districts reflect the same era of utilitarian architecture found in middle-class neighborhoods. The three business districts are about a mile from each other, in the sensibility of trolley-stop development. One could disembark from public transportation; stop into any of the small shops for food, housewares, or clothing; and walk home.

Particularly on the south end of the city, homes are larger and incomes are greater. Mostly developed in the early twentieth century, the mansions and business districts display stunning stone and brick architecture with restoration charm. Three business districts in this area have formed Special Interest Districts (SID) that assess themselves an additional tax with which they host district-wide events, contract for sidewalk snow removal, and install streetscape features to support the walkability attraction.

By contrast, the three business districts along Noble have no unifying merchants' associations, much less a SID. Businesses that last longer than a few months sell liquor,

offer carry-out food, or serve hair and nail care clients. In recent years, many people have tried to open clothing stores or ill-conceived restaurants. Those business owners have failed to form a viable business plan and have grossly underestimated the lack of foot traffic in these districts. The size of each district is smaller than the three districts previously mentioned in another part of Cleveland Heights. One is as short as only two blocks, which makes each district lack enough attractions to make them destinations.

New businesses owners and city planners have failed to comprehend and creatively reinvent the business atmosphere of the city in the face of national mega-trends for shopping. Gone are the four small groceries that once served the Noble districts. They are replaced by one Save-A-Lot discount grocery. Its business model is in sharp contrast to the experience model groceries just a short car ride away. Almost no one shops for clothing or shoes at small, locally owned stores. Very few stores can survive at local malls due to the recent growing preference for Internet-based buying. The Cleveland Heights mall, just across a wide boulevard from the Noble neighborhood, is almost vacant due to these trends.

Due to the property value collapse that started well before the national 2008 crisis, a significant number of homes in the Noble area were abandoned or have decayed. These homes were either demolished or flipped to rehabbers who meet the minimum standards for city inspection then rent the homes to low income tenants. The rental to owner-occupant ratio has risen rapidly from 23 percent rentals to now over 31 percent rentals (“Social and Economic Data”). While some new renters use public rent assistance vouchers, many long-term residents generalize by regarding all new renters with disparaging remarks about “Section 8” renters. Tensions are rising between long-term

owner-occupants and new residents, especially those with children, due to the cultural differences the two groups display about living in single-family homes. Newcomers are more transient, pay less attention to lawn and garden care, and have a lesser regard for the community in their behavior. Longer term residents are responding to the perceived community threat by being much less outgoing in welcoming new neighbors. The effect is one of isolation, suspicion, and even disparagement of the other group. Certainly, these attitudes tear apart communities.

These conflicts are not primarily racially targeted. Certainly, a layer of racial prejudice between some African-American and White neighbors exists, but more significantly, the conflicts are rooted in the values of middle class versus poverty class (Payne 37). While the new residents are overwhelmingly African-American, long-term African-American residents are heard referring to their new neighbors with disparaging and sometimes derogatory language that would be considered racially charged if a non-African-American used it. A more veiled tone was voiced by an African-American neighbor in his 60s who has owned his home for thirty years: “I don’t even try to get to know them anymore. They’ll be gone in a few months.” He was discussing the transience of occupants in several newly rented homes on his block. For many, the national climate of identity politics clouds the distinction between racial and class prejudice since the nation is, rightly, increasingly sensitized to listen for racial bias. However, recognizing the difference between racial bias and socioeconomic bias is a key factor when discussing the Noble neighborhood redevelopment.

Seven church buildings are located in the Noble area, all with Protestant congregations. The neighborhood was home to a very large population of White Roman

Catholics forty years ago with three parishes on the perimeter of the neighborhood's geography. So significant was the population that the local public school's PTA developed a neighborhood directory that included phone numbers for police, fire, the public schools, and all the parochial schools. With White flight and the drop in Roman Catholic membership, all three of these church properties have been sold to Protestant congregations.

For the congregations that remain, almost every one is struggling with attendance and financial solvency. Most are exclusively African-American, two are predominantly White, and one is multicultural in membership and leadership. Their age demographics are trending the same way as most national church membership statistics: They seat predominantly older and retirement-aged people in their services. While the church leaders are certainly aware of each other's presence, almost no efforts are made for communication or coordination between them. Some members, however, have found fellowship across church membership boundaries in shared local ministry activities. Noble Neighbors, started in 2014 as a civic group working to improve the neighborhood, includes several people from the neighborhood congregations who have found both a missional call and a civic responsibility in its activities.

Macro trends certainly impact this neighborhood. John A. Collins describes the generational conflict, and, interestingly, his voice comes to our era from forty years earlier. Without knowing that this article was written in 1978, a reader might quite understandably assume the piece was more contemporary. Collins' descriptions of perceptions that "the members of the younger generation think only of themselves, and want nothing more than a cushy job and influence" (271) was penned well before the

popularity of reality TV shows. These television shows have fostered the contemporary culture that convinces youth that all they needed to do for success is to belt out someone else's lyrics over-passionately, to dribble a ball with panache, or simply to be famous for being famous. The newest generation is like the former ones who want to have a cushy life and to wield influence without the job, without the work needed to be the next star, phenom, or famed one.

Collins' article describes the devastation wrought on local communities because of bank disinvestment known as *redlining*. While legislation, regulation, and community relations efforts have shifted the financial landscape since 1978, other types of redlining impact neighborhoods. Collins asserts, "[E]ven churches practice redlining" (277). His late 70s observation about denominations that concentrated building resources in areas that had growing affluence proved to be astoundingly prophetic in hindsight. The 80s and 90s gave rise to the megachurch movement, targeted largely at suburban wealth pockets even if the church campus was located in urban areas.

Heights Community Congress identifies another redlining practice that effectively caused the property values to plummet in the Noble area. Capitalizing on the current trend for prospective homebuyers to shop for new homes on the Internet, Zillow.com uses the GreatSchools rating and reporting system to identify public schools. What is unclear without significant research is that the numbers and stoplight-colored green-yellow-red graphics are produced by a business with a bias:

> NewSchools [is] a California Venture capital firm that invests in charter schools and markets educational technology. GreatSchools licenses its ratings to Zillow and earns revenue each time a viewer links to Zillow.com. The financial ties between GreatSchools and Zillow are not disclosed on Zillow's listings. (Day 28)

Viewers will need to be reflective to note that no charter schools or even private schools, so very prominent in Cleveland's eastern suburbs, are rated on Zillow's site.

Obvious to every American is the emotional response that the stoplight colors provoke. Everyone understands that green means *go*, yellow means *caution*, and red signifies *stop* when these colors appear together, particularly in the circle shape used on the Zillow site. The message that is communicated to prospective homebuyers is likewise *go*, *caution*, or to *stop* looking at homes in particular areas. The Noble area suffers from this very biased, redlining practice (Day 28).

The context for each of the participants in this study is the housing devaluation and social change in the neighborhood. The participants are long-term residents in the Noble district and attend one of its churches. These people are living and breathing the challenges of this neighborhood.

The Priesthood of All Believers

This study assumes the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, or universal priesthood, a central tenet for Protestants. All believers have equal access to God with only Christ as their mediator. Based on 1 Peter 2:5 and 9, Protestant theologians regard the account of the Jerusalem temple's barrier drape, which separated worshippers from the Holy of Holies, splitting at the moment of Christ's death, as the symbol of the radical change in which all believers now may enter into God's most holy presence. (Matt. 27:50-51).

The tenet asserts that since all believers in Christ are priests, all believers have both the authority and imperative to minister to one another and to assume intercession for unsaved people in both prayer, facing toward God on behalf of the unsaved, and in

deed, demonstrating love toward unbelievers on behalf of God. Martin Luther championed this doctrine that became a foundation for the Protestant movement. The Roman Catholic Church affirmed the theology, based in Peter's teaching, at its Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, commonly known as Vatican II.

This study considered the internalization of the Priesthood of all Believers doctrine by the study subjects and solicited examples of how the subjects viewed their actions in alignment with the doctrine. The study sought to determine a difference in subjects' stated belief about themselves as ministers and their activities in mission. The following authors reflect on the application of the doctrine in contemporary church life.

Marlene Wilson, in 1983, used a 1976 quote from Oscar Feucht as she reflected on the role of the laity in churches and the challenges of mobilizing them for service: "In most churches the laity belongs chiefly to the audience and is engaged in what we call church housekeeping. Unfortunately the layman's own congregation may have given him this limited image of himself" (17). This audience role is fostered by the metaphors and self-visions that church leaders have of the local church institution. Wilson quotes Albert McClellan's observation of the unwritten mission statements of churches:

> At times the churches have regarded themselves as Noah's ark of salvation, fortified camps, God's minorities, spiritual fellowships, ecclesiastical societies, temples where God lives, family clubs, and in many other ways. These half-true notions grow out of the experience of Christians in their environment. Most of these concepts are based on an understanding of the church as a place to go or an organization to belong to. These are "come structures" in contrast to "go structures." (17)

While she identifies cultures in local churches that hinder laypeople as ministers, Wilson's work is focused on how to recruit volunteers from this audience base for institutionally initiated tasks and to retain them effectively rather than releasing people

into ministry through their own growing understanding of their spiritual gifts and callings.

Laypeople who are formed in an institution that is inward focused, serving primarily the people that come into its doors, will regard their role as servants of the Lord quite differently than those who attend an outward reaching community. Mac Hulslander laments the loss of this revelation:

> There was a great loss when the Christian church divided itself into clergy and lay categories. To be sure, there were necessary and justifiable reasons. There remains, however, amidst a prevailing amnesia, a lingering nostalgia among some laity for what our ancestral faith community had achieved: a kind of "radical egalitarianism" within the church." (Hulslander 30)

This study considered this nostalgia, a yearning for the flourishing of a dormant seed of active, power-filled faith.

Vatican II and Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Protestant American church members in the twenty-first century may fail to recognize how much influence the Roman Catholic Church has had on mid- and late-twentieth-century Protestant teachings about the priesthood of all believers. In the interim years between Vatican II and the early twenty-first century, Protestant churches have sought to distance themselves from their Roman Catholic heritage due to national and international breaking news stories in the late twentieth century about sexual abuse of children in Boston and beyond, high mortality rates at slave-asylums for unwed mothers in Ireland, and complicity with the Nazis on a variety of issues.

Nevertheless, one is compelled to consider the impact of Roman Catholic writings, starting with Vatican II (1962-65). It produced the *Apostolicam Actuositatem* or Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. In it, the laity were recognized as key participants

in the mission of the church, "spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption" ("Decree") being validated by their baptism and confirmation. Nonordained church members may participate through individual or institutional activities as volunteers or as professionals.

On the heels of Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal exploded in the United States. In Cleveland, Ohio, prayer meetings and covenant communities formed of laity, nuns and monks, and clergy as newly faith-infused participants joined together to seek God's presence and blessing and to live together in service to the "least of these" (Matt. 25:40). A Roman Catholic high school was host to a large prayer meeting that included as many as eight hundred people, mostly but not all Roman Catholic, singing in the Spirit and prophesying. One covenant community in Akron, Ohio, lived in a large central city home and cared for severely disabled household members. Another in Cleveland, Ohio, lived in the central city and ministered to the poor. Certainly influential were meetings and communities that grew rapidly in nearby locales such as the Word of God community in Ann Arbor, Michigan ("Who We Are"), prayer meetings at the University of Notre Dame, and in Steubenville, Ohio.

Many Roman Catholic participants struggled with the conflicts between their new relationship to Christ through the Holy Spirit and the extra-biblical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Some chose to leave the Roman Catholic Church and join the numerous nondenominational churches that were forming at the time. Some of this study's participants experienced both these influences and the deep inner conflicts that resulted in a decision to leave the Roman Catholic Church.

Certainly lasting friendships formed during this Charismatic Renewal era in Northeast Ohio, and whether people chose to remain in fellowship under the authority of the Roman Catholic Church or not, friendships continued beyond denominational boundaries. In this study, therefore, I considered what Roman Catholic authorities were reflecting and writing about the laity in ministry since Vatican II.

The most influential documents cited by Roman Catholic authors following the Vatican II decree on the apostolate of the laity were *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity*, "Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium," and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry.* These were works of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and they provided the official church position and directives on the issues of lay ministry.

In *Called and Gifted*, the bishops reflected on the fifteen anniversary of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity in 1980. They saw the document first as a call to adulthood with a spiritual parallel of increased knowledge, maturity in relationships, and sense of responsibility that members were expected to exhibit in their emotional and intellectual growth. The ongoing struggle to live a life of holiness was recognized with the assertion that one's success was keenly tied to practicing the liturgy of the church. The bishops agreed that all Christians are called as ministers and pointed to Romans 12:4-6 to acknowledge and affirm that each minister's gifts are uniquely bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Service to the world with these gifts was predominantly the purview of the laity. New roles had opened within the walls of the church, too, especially for women. In addition to service on boards, councils, and committees, a newly emerging opportunity was the ecclesial minister role. A final reflection noted that the needs of community were

changing now that laypeople were taking on larger roles of responsibility and ministry. Those who fostered the formation of community had to take into account the graces and sensibilities that people who live in nuclear families, instead of religious communities, bring to the community. The document welcomed the changes that were in motion for laity and for the church.

Fifteen years later in 1995, "Called and Gifted for the Third Millenium" was published as a reflection on the fifteenth anniversary of *Called and Gifted* and the thirtieth anniversary of the "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity." The document opened with a quote from the Decree, "[The Lord] sends them on the Church's apostolate, an apostolate that is one yet has different forms and methods, an apostolate that must all the time be adapting itself to the needs of the moment..." (No. 33), which set the tone for a discussion on needed adjustments. The changes it offered were based on fifteen years of input from laity who reflected and responded to the first *Called and Gifted* document.

Wonderfully, the first point was an affirmation of the lifestyle that nonordained, nonreligious Roman Catholics lead. The term *religious* for Roman Catholics refers to persons who have taken vows, most often of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and who live in community with others who have taken the same vows. Priests may or may not live communally since some parishes only have one clergy member on staff. Lay Roman Catholics were celebrated for their understanding of intimacy with Christ due to their marriages and family relationships. They were also affirmed as having spiritual mission, even in secular occupations.

Suffering, in all human experiences, was validated and regarded as formative for compassion and ministering hope to others. While not being specific, the bishops humbly acknowledged that some of human suffering had come from within the church, further validating the laity's unique position to minister. Small groups were encouraged, including ones defined by affinities such as ethnic heritage or profession as an important vehicle for spiritual growth.

While celebrating the increasing liturgical role of ecclesial ministers, including conducting worship in the absence of a priest, the bishops revealed the lack of resources to train and support these staff members with a livable wage. A final section on the Call to Christian Maturity included a unique combination of topics—caring for children, encouraging continuing education, having an openness to work with non-Roman Catholic Christians and even others beyond the faith to achieve ministry objectives, encouraging laypeople to participate in the church institution, and expressing gratefulness that laypeople were indeed doing so ("Called and Gifted").

"Called and Gifted for the Third Millennial" certainly did signal a deeper, richer understanding of the life challenges of the laity and of the richness that they uniquely brought to the work in and through the church. This affirmation functioned as a booster stage rocket fuel, propelling the acceptance of laypeople as partners in the mission of the Roman Catholic church and releasing them to live their nonreligious lifestyles to the Glory of God.

Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry, published in 2005, forty years after the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, presented a significantly different tone from the United States

Conference of Bishops. While continuing its recognition and affirmation of the role of the laity in the church, the document placed the doctrine and practice firmly within the institution as its introduction established clearly:

> The following components provide the structure of the document:
> - Theological foundations for lay ecclesial ministry
> - Discernment and suitability for lay ecclesial ministry
> - Formation of lay ecclesial ministers
> - Authorization of lay ecclesial ministers
> - Policies and practices in the ministerial workplace. (5)

Considering that this document was published toward the end of the Roman Catholic Church scandals of the late twentieth century, the bishops' reevaluation of all sorts of venues in which people labored and spoke in the name of the church is notable in the context. Laypeople in ministry on behalf of the church was just one group that needed clear boundaries for behavior and message.

Of note was the interesting order of themes in *Co-Workers*, Immediately following the theological foundation was the need to erect boundaries: "Determination of suitability for lay ecclesial ministry" (31). Even before these ministers received Formation and Authorization, the church hierarchy expressed the need to determine if people passed background checks, performed well on psychological assessments, and attended mass more often than the Sunday obligation required.

Significant ink was devoted to the layperson's rightful place in the church hierarchy under the bishop, the priest, and the deacon. Lay ministers may have obtained a much higher position of authority within their secular professions, but even when employing the skills of those professions in service of the church, lay ministers were bound to a linear hierarchy.

Co-Workers provided brief discussions on formation issues and methods: "Human Formation considers psychological and physical health and a 'mature sexuality' in which one lives according to church doctrine as well as having an understanding of criminal legal consequences for certain abuses" (36). Spiritual formation, intellectual formation, and pastoral formation theory, which included leadership and stewardship skills, and methods were briefly sketched in this guide. The document concluded with a reaffirmation of lay ministry being enfolded in the doctrine and hierarchy of the church, including an official recognition with rituals and certifications.

Reflections of Local Priests and LayPeople

For the subjects of this study who have a Roman Catholic background, Vatican II was easy to cite as a significant turning point in their church experience. As children, they witnessed changes in how the Mass was performed, such as the liturgy now being spoken in English and the priest now facing the congregation. As youngsters they may not have understood the significance without the repeated explanations from their parents, Roman Catholic school teachers, and other older church members who often identified the changes and offered personal interpretation.

Considering how the Vatican II changes regarding the laity were being discussed by leaders in local churches and Roman Catholic universities became useful. Their language, interpretations, and observations more closely matched the conversations in American Roman Catholic households than the treatises officially published by Rome and the Council of Bishops in the United States.

Leonard Doohan, writing about fifteen years after Vatcan II, offers observations on the shift that was taking place regarding the laity. He reflects that the documents

produced by Vatican II signaled a powerful shift, but he cited the Chicago Declaration of Concern in 1978 regarding how the messages about the laity "have all but vanished from the consciousness and agendas of many sectors within the Church" (11).

Doohan offers a scholastic approach to his reflections. The first chapter subheadings on theological analysis detailed his laser focus as he sought reasons for the Chicago Declaration of Concern's vanishing implementation of Vatican II: Theology of Instrumental Ministry, Theology of Ecclesial Presence in the World, Theology of World Transformation, Theology of Laity and Ecclesial Restructuring, Theology of Self-Discovery for Laity, and Theology of Laity as Integrally Church. In this sequence of topics, one can clearly see a pyramid structure of philosophy in which each topic provides the foundation for the subsequent and narrowing focus of his thesis. His conclusion is that the biblical foundation for supporting the laity in ministry is not only sufficient but integral to the very definition of Church.

The practice of releasing the laity was, however, much more conflicted. In Doohan's next chapter, his assessment of the laity at that time, he notes incomplete teaching about the efficacy of their spirituality that hindered their release into ministry both from the clerical view—laity do not have depth of spirituality—and from the laity's view—only the trained priests or religious have authority to minister. Doohan responded to this observation that the church was a family and needed all its members to be in proper, growing, maturing relationship with each other in order to grow.

Doohan's reflection on the history of the church's turmoil over the *all the baptized* concept, the shorthand phrase for Vatican II's declaration that all who are baptized in the church have the spiritual authority and obligation to minister, was

instructive for today's corporate self-reflection. Three historical trends still impacted contemporary church posture. First, the dualistic philosophies of the ancient Greeks found their way into church doctrine and polity by eventually cementing a clergy class that was distinct from the material-based existence. The church adopted this imbalanced regard for those who were appointed as spiritual leaders, regardless of corporeal behavior, and disregard for those who lived in families and worked outside the church (42-43). Second, monasticism was a logical outgrowth of this dualism within the church. Community members who disassociated themselves from family life and engaged in other forms of material denial were regarded as laudable for spiritual maturity. They were viewed as engaging in a lifestyle of martyrdom long after the early century persecutions were diminished (95). Third, Doohan identified the institutionalization of clerical groups as a completion of the movement that moved the early church into its current hierarchical form (96).

The trends in the late twentieth century church were challenging the long-standing divide between clergy and laity. Doohan identified four trends that were putting pressure on church structure:

1. An increasing understanding of church as a community, not just individuals in faith groups. The community of the church was necessarily multidimensional in its gifts, interests, and focuses. Individuals brought their life perspectives to the community and contributed to the shaping of that community.

2. An incarnational trend. Christians were involved with healing, animating, and transforming the world through activities that were not necessarily initiated by the church

leadership. They were being the body of Christ by their faithful witness in education, in politics, and in industry.

3. A service-oriented trend. Believers were putting their faith into action through their giving of time and energy as well as financial resources to fill local needs.

4. A liberational trend. Doohan defined this trend as having an emphasis on healing, a prophetic challenge to society, and new attitudes of creativity, imagination and hope (105-10).

Dr. Zeni Fox is another voice that stood in the gap between Roman Catholic clergy and the laity. She is a professor of pastoral theology following a career in parish-based Christian education whose primary focus was on the laity in the Roman Catholic Church and how they lived their baptismal call ("Zeni Fox"). Lay ecclesial ministry, for Roman Catholics, began to emerge after the Second Vatican Council. Fox, at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Seton Hall University, had been studying, tracking, and advocating for lay ministry since the 1960s ("Overview"). Fox has written several books on the laity and authored documents for the Council of Bishops.

Her doctrinal perspective is that the Second Vatican Council taught a new consciousness of the responsibility of all members of the church to share in its life and mission. This posture of shared responsibility opened the principle of collegiality that emerges from a communion model of the church. Fox sees that Vatican II's emphasis on the roles of the laity was particularly focused on the renewal of the temporal order, earthly life, but included the church, spiritual life not bound by material matters (*Laity*).

Fox's reflections on the emergence of lay ministry since Vatican II were useful for this study. They helped explain events, trends, and opportunities that influenced the

study subjects who identified as Roman Catholics for a period of time. Fox notes, "In the 1960s the role of the director of religious education emerged, followed by that of the youth minister in the 1970s, and multiple additional roles in the years since, including that of director of liturgy" ("Overview" 185). In the 1980s lay ministry formation programs included non-degree and academic degree programs. As nonclergy started to assume roles in the local parishes that were previously assigned only to ordained leaders, they began to be recognized and celebrated: "In the early years, there was a spontaneous development of rituals celebrating lay ministers as they completed programs in dioceses and graduate schools" (186). These authentication events gave a firmer foundation for acceptance of lay workers as valuable and contributing leaders within the community.

Certainly the theology of the movement developed in tandem with the growing practice:

> [An] important theological contribution was made by Thomas O'Meara, in 1983. Because his starting place is a vision of ministry as "the theology of grace" which views God's presence in the world as the source, milieu and goal of ministry, his vision is a schema of concentric circles to picture the ministry of the Christian community. (Fox, "Overview" 186)

Leadership was at the center. A second circle encompassed ministries such as peace and justice, health and aging, counseling, liturgy, education, evangelism performed by full-time professional ministers (186). By the mid-80s some thinkers in the Roman Catholic Church were willing to regard laypeople with significant esteem and the church was trending toward the view of itself as the community that Doohan identified.

Thought Leaders in the 70s, 80s, and 90s

Looking back upon the writings and prophetic voices of the previous decades and in the generation before provides an important lens about the study participants who were

formerly Roman Catholics. Perhaps *micro-era* might be a better term in this rapidly changing social environment. Viewing how God was moving in hindsight may be easier than understanding his work in the present, although hindsight is not without its own rose-colored glasses or dark lenses. Reflecting on what the prophetic voices were asserting and then measuring those assertions against the state of today's church, one begins to see subtle oppositions to the nurturing and growth of those prophetic utterances into fully matured movements. Some of the challenges to the growth of the new word of God are cultural changes produced by technology development and influence. Some challenges have to do with political or international circumstances. Some challenges come from within, a resistance to change and growth by God's own people.

Only one of the participants is a young person. The rest, certainly, were influenced by the fresh, prophetic words of the Lord spoken during their coming of age. The massive American cultural shifts that took place influenced each of the study participants and are still impacting how they conduct their lives today. This section describes what some of the voices were saying that may have influenced the interviewees in their young adult lives in the church as they internalized the role of the laity in the church.

Robert Greenleaf was a thought leader in the mid-twentieth century. He worked for AT&T in management and leadership development and founded the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, originally named The Center for Applied Ethics, in 1964 ("Robert K. Greenleaf Biography"). Although he does not self-identify as a theologian, he draws upon Scripture and other Christian writers in forming his position on servant leadership. He acknowledges the following:

> When Martin Luther advocated a priesthood of all believers he gave us one of the greatest ideas of this millennium. [One of the] significant events of our time came last year when, at the 500 anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther (1483), the Roman Catholic Church formally acknowledged the greatness of Luther's contribution. The recent substantial movement toward the larger involvement of laypeople in the churches attests the impact of Luther's work on contemporary Catholic thinking. (Fraker and Spears 260-61)

Through the Center for Servant Leadership, Greenleaf applied the theological principle of servant leadership to industry and to governance.

The essay that launched Greenleaf into prominence was published in 1970, "The Servant as Leader." He used biblical principles to assert that good leaders must be servants foremost. At first his work focused on individual character qualities and skill sets, such as listening well to team members, employing emotional skills of intuition and foresight, and being pragmatic when measuring progress. In subsequent years, Greenleaf applied these principles to institutions, both secular and religious, and to the governing of whole societies ("Robert K. Greenleaf").

A collection of Greenleaf's reflections was published in 1987 from his papers that were donated to the Andover Newton Theological School archives. In them, he contrasts the servant leader with the character and qualities of authoritarian leaders: A servant leader persuades rather than manipulates, and a servant leader leads by nurturing the one he or she is serving. Greenleaf is reflective of his own growth as a servant leader. He uses the term *seeker* to indicate his awareness that his personal growth is a journey (Fraker and Spears xiii). The ancient, biblical principles that Greenleaf translated into the secular workplace found new life in more recent church-based leadership development.

Another thought leader of the 70s was Gabriel Fackre. In his insightful article, Fackre argues that ordained pastors, whom he calls "ministers of identity," have

kerygmatic and liturgical responsibilities for "keeping alive the memories of the faith community [and] preserving the Body from amnesia" (Hulslander 32). By contrast, the "ministers of vitality"—that is, laity—"give life and movement to the forms of the ministry of identity, saving the body from nostalgia" (32). This use of the term *minister* signaled a movement towards an equality between the laity and clergy, albeit their roles are quite distinct and apparently not to be shared.

An interesting development followed these trends from the 70s. As churches embraced the theology of the expanding roles of the laity, some sought to determine how to implement this growing liberty. Diane Detwiler-Zapp and William Caveness Dixon wrote from their "experience with lay pastoral care in the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Wayne, Indiana" (ix). This book gives tools to counselors who were preparing for ministry but also for other counselors with spiritual perspectives. In interesting parallel to the writings of Roman Catholics who distinguish clergy from laity by ordination regardless of professionalism, these authors regard ordained pastors as trained professionals and laypeople as untrained but well-meaning. Examples demonstrate pastors discerning accurately and giving appropriate care, whereas laypeople were sensitive and caring but do not evaluate situations accurately. They were engaged in the "well-meaning busywork of a few pious do-gooders" (18). The contrast between descriptions of clergy in the ministry at First Presbyterian Church and the laity is strikingly linear. Clergy always seems to exhibit professionalism in attitude and skill while the laity are portrayed as inept.

Checklists and models are intended to help professional pastors train laypeople to have appropriate boundaries and limits and to assess situations properly. The book pays

only a brief nod to the theology of lay ministry and spends the bulk of its pages with techniques for organizing caregiving teams, providing training seminars, hosting weekend retreats, and providing oversight. The hands-on focus all but bypasses the spiritual growth process.

Wilson draws on Greenleaf's work. The volunteers she targeted were the laity who work in churches: "The servant/leader is a servant first, to whom followers grant leadership after they have been well served" (150). He or she must be someone who listens, empathizes, focuses to persuade rather than to coerce, exercises patience, and one who "believes that only in community is a individual healed and made whole" (151). These are just a few of the traits Wilson names in her extensive list about characteristics of a servant/leader.

Wilson combines the servant leadership character qualities with Oscar Feucht's premise that the "church is not an agency to be served, but a workforce to be deployed" (17) as she develops her handbook on volunteerism. She notes many problems with volunteerism within the church: Most volunteer jobs in the church are not clearly defined and job descriptions are almost never written. Tradition often squelches new and creative ideas and approaches. Time and talent inventory sheets have helped officially reject people's gifts. Clergy and lay leaders alike often are very poor delegators. Wilson also found that it "is often difficult for members to describe what they are good at, what they are tired of doing, what they don't like to do, what they want to learn, where they are being led to grow," (23) and when they need to take a break from their volunteer committments. She found the need to train the laypeople to be more self-aware in addition to training them for the volunteer task.

Four areas need to be examined if church leaders want to improve managing time and talents of people, Wilson proposes. Leadership is the first area that needs to be examined. Wilson's discussion of leadership types are labeled Boss, Expert, Doer, Hero Martyr, Abdicrat (i.e., keeps the title without doing the job), and Enabler. Motivation, the need for achievement, need for power, and need for affiliation, is the second focus for evaluation. Third, she advocates examining the climate of the organization, including relationships, rewards, warmth/support, conflict, physical setting, identity, standards, and creativity/risk. Finally, congregational expectations are the fourth area that she targets for examination. With more reflections on the science of organizational systems and how that impacts church activities, Wilson offers that "slots" must become ministries, "members" must become unique individuals, "oughts and should" must become "may I's" of love and "turns" must become opportunities to share many gifts (24-26).

This method of drawing upon emerging marketplace studies of organizational leadership and motivating volunteerism had a significant influence on the church in the later part of the twentieth century. Each of the principles is sound as one generalizes information on volunteerism. However, very little in either work discussed the spiritual formation of the volunteers or how they perceived their callings to respond to pleas for help. In these schemas, the volunteers were implementing someone else's vision and direction. While admirably advocating for improved working environments for volunteers and even for recognition for the creative gifts they bring, the laity were not released to initiate their own ministries nor were they supported to minister in the nonchurch-bound arenas in which they travel. Without the prophetic release, Wilson's

and Detwiler-Zapp and Dixon's ways of thinking became little more than a treat-your-volunteers-better message.

Hulslander is a commissioned minister in the United Church of Christ (UCC) and serves as director of CLAY: Clergy and Laity Together in Ministry, Inc. In his reflections on the difference between the theology of the laity and the practice of his denomination, he offers an insightful observation:

> The United Church of Christ (and its predecessor denominations) participate in the same "medieval mentality" that has placed a higher value on clerical commitment over lay. To be sure the United Church of Christ has purposefully and steadfastly sought to bridge the distinctions, but more—much more—remains to be done. The issue is put in perspective by the comments of Dr. David Preus, former President of the American Lutheran Church (now part of the ELCA), in an address to that denomination some years ago. He asserted that, of the three great pillars upon which the Protestant Reformation was based—justification by grace through faith, the authority of the scriptures for faith and practice, and the priesthood of all believers—only the latter has yet to claim the same loyalty and prominence as the first two. We have been left with an "unfinished reformation." Our ongoing domestication as laity is a contributing factor to this state. (30)

Hulslander's term *domestication* catches the eye of laypeople who are actively growing in the Lord. He expounds upon it in a way that resonates in those who have been subject to its culture:

> I have chosen the term "domestication" cautiously. While affirming it as justifiably descriptive, I acknowledge it also has a pejorative connotation. A domesticated animal or person is, after all, a tamed one, and taming seems to suggest external control or directing. A domesticated person or animal is no longer unpredictable or unmanageable. Any sense of being passionate, free-spirited, or even inner directed, would seem uncharacteristic. Domestication further suggests some loss of identity. Domesticated animals are usually gathered into flocks or herds where individuality becomes stifled. When we speak or treat laity as one huge, generic or homogeneous group, we risk contributing to this loss of identity. In fact, a tremendous diversity exists among us—especially in relation to ministry. Finally, we come to the noun, "domestic," which Merriam-Webster simply defines as "a household servant." (30-31)

This juxtaposition of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the concept of domestication of the laity provides an alarm into the discussion of how laypeople think of themselves in ministry and why they think the way they do.

Hulslander continues to expose the classism that the clergy-laity divide has within its foundation and the implication for devaluing the laity and disempowering the work they perform in faith by contrasting the insidious *domestication* posture with the doctrine of the UCC denomination:

> A foundational piece is our UCC Constitution, which states: The United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls the whole Church and every member to participate in and extend the ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the Gospel in church and society. The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts and equipping members for Christian service. (Article V, Sec. 17). (31)

The implication is that every member, ordained formally or not, has both the privilege and the responsibility to be in communion with the Lord so that each member can grow into maturity in ministry.

Hulslander offers deep insights in which he distinguishes between volunteerism, which supports the institutional equilibrium, and the unleashing of the Holy Spirit's power when laypeople walk in their calling. The institution needs to support the work of the laity who spend 95 percent of their lives outside of the church institution. "Structures for the discernment, recognition, validation, affirmation, support, and accountability" (37) must be developed for this *laos*, these called ones. For laypeople who have dared to believe in the calling on their lives, Hulslander's assertions are soul feeding. The isolated layperson who is domesticated to serve only the institution will find recognition of his or her calling in his works, even if the political structure does not validate it.

For the layperson who knows the calling of the Holy Spirit in his or her life, Hulslander gives hope by contrasting current restrictive practices with the vast hope that lies in the heart of the God-pursuing believer. He explains the frustrations for which the laity have had inadequate words, that their gifts are not developed in the context of the church, that their calling is unrecognized and so invalidated, and that they fight a battle on two fronts—both the world that is resistant to the good news that Jesus is the Savior and the church that is resistant to the good news that Jesus has redeemed the laity from the world systems.

Congratulations is due the UCC for its work as an institution recognizing the call on all believers to minister. They have identified weaknesses in their system and are moving toward a more accurate function and regard of lay ministry.

Growth is not linear, neither in human development nor in the life of the church worldwide, and so, in what seems like a step backwards, this study must consider a mid-90s writing about laity. Dennis E. Willliams and Kenneth O. Gangel believe that all Christians should be involved in service. They briefly look at Mark 10:43-45 to validate the mandate to serve as a spiritual service. A paragraph acknowledges that spiritual gifts and lists are given in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:11-16, and 1 Peter 2, but training discussions are centered around practical applications. No list of what the gifts are appears in the discussion on how these gifts are identified and developed. Practical leadership is defined as the ability to organize and administer. That organizing alone was called ministry. A chapter on effective recruitment has lists and charts of tasks that included teaching children, serving as a printer or video technician, landscaping,

singing as a soprano, or doing drama makeup. Spiritual gifts are not linked with these task titles.

In a chapter on stopping the attrition of volunteers, they state, "When we place volunteers in areas for which God has gifted and equipped them, we minimize the problem of burnout, disenchantment with the church, and disappointment with the ministry" (75). However, gifting seems to be defined as *good at a task* and *liking to perform a task.* The authors did not discussion how the gifts of the Spirit bore on ministering through a task. Except for church language and occasional references to Scripture, this work could be applied to any volunteer-based endeavor.

This work leaves one with a question, especially in contrast to Hulslander's article, of what should be different in the church. One is provoked to ponder how being part of the body of Christ makes one see oneself as a minister instead of merely a volunteer. While practical tips are needed, lay members are certainly not viewed in Williams and Gangel's book as ministers of God's grace, only of his works.

In other writings of the 90s, the American Roman Catholic bishops studied lay ministry from a fresh perspective, publishing a document in 1999:

> The document affirmed these lay ecclesial ministers as a gift of the Spirit to the church and emphasized the importance of a communion of vocations. It rooted lay ecclesial ministry in the sacraments of initiation and special charisms of the spirit. (Fox, "Overview" 187)

The study demonstrates refining of the Vatican II doctrine that released the ministry of the laity. The Roman Catholic Church continues to monitor its progress with encouraging lay ecclesial ministry and is refining its practice.

Craig L. Nessan, writing as an Evangelical Lutheran pastor in 1999, placed his perspective of the laity within his theology of the local body of Christ. He offers that the

theology of each congregation forms its identity, which in turn informs its mission. Nessan starts with three New Testament words that should characterize all congregations. These words are *kerygma* (proclamation), *koinonia* (fellowship), and *diakonia* (service).

Nessan places the compulsion to serve within the liturgy:

> [C]ontrary to the prevalent notion that the liturgy is repetitive and boring, there are treasures buried here that the uninitiated cannot begin to discover. Contained in the historic order of Christian worship is an agenda for congregational ministry to last an eternity. (12)

He builds his argument methodically upon the basic elements of Christian theology—the nature of sin, the need for salvation, and Jesus' identity and efficacy before Nessan turned to the role of the church. Nessan asks what are the most important tasks of the church and answers by pondering what the gospel is and how to communicate it. Following discussions on the sacraments and on confirmation, he finally turns towards mission and stewardship before a brief eschatological consideration.

Clergy and laity, as distinct social orders, are not a focal point of this work. Instead, the congregation is seen as a single body that functions with its many members exercising their unique gifts and callings. One gets the sense that this walking, breathing, organic being is serving the world though its deep communion with the Lord. With its work grounded in worship of the Trinity and in fellowship with others who are as securely connected as distinct body parts, the social ministry in which the church engages flows with the power of the grace of God. Every member of the body of Christ without exception regarding ordination status, age, gender, or cognitive or physical abilities is invited to participate in this life creation. This theology of the congregation reminds one of the bride and bridegroom imagery used throughout the Bible as the metaphor for how

God longs to relate to his church. This love intimacy of the entire congregation ministering from its deep communion with the Lord produces new life in the world.

By jarring contrast, William H. Willimon seems to eliminate completely the need for any laity with spiritual gifts. While he intended to encourage career pastors in all the aspects of their professions in which each must function, the backhanded message is that pastors are superheroes and all spiritual gifts are deposited with them.

A scan of chapter titles reveals this mentality: The Pastor as Priest, The Pastor as Interpreter of Scripture, The Pastor as Preacher, The Pastor as Counselor, The Pastor as Teacher, The Pastor as Evangelist, and The Pastor as Leader. These chapters are followed by Interlude: Failure in Ministry. One either develops an ego so large that he (Willimon almost always regards pastors as male) believes he is ethically invincible or he experiences a flaming burnout.

No member of his congregation is referenced as being in ministry partnership in this book. No one else is needed to perform ministry except this messianic-complexed false shepherd. If nothing else, Willimon's work reveals the insidiousness of the clergy-laity class system at the dawning of the twenty-first century.

In all, one readily finds much more literature about what people should think and the way to manage the laity at the end of the twentieth century than articulation of how any laypeople grew in their own sense of anointing and ministry. This subject is emerging for both the Roman Catholic communities and the Protestant communities. In the meantime, some are paying attention to this slow reveal: "For the lay ministers themselves, their work is widely experienced as good in satisfying and respected and a source of information by parishioners, the pastor, and other staff" (Fox, "Overview" 187).

Supporting laypeople in ministry, not just volunteerism, is key to the expansion of the ministry of the whole church. The studies about laity that are emerging now will be critical for the church's future in ministry.

An aside might be necessary for some to explain why I am considering the Roman Catholic position so significantly in this study. I am proposing is that the Roman Catholic Church is more influential on Protestant churches than a cursury glance identifies. Because of the hierarchy and clearly defined structures and broad width of offices and agencies, including higher education, the Roman Catholic Church can afford to be more methodical in its approach to studying an issue. It can include a breadth of consideration about an issue and has the institutional resources to support a continuing study over decades. The Roman Catholic Church is producing documents that reflect deep thought, careful study, and unquestioned prayerfulness. Protestant readers may need to humble themselves to glean the wisdom from the institution in which the Lord is still present.

Voices about Lay Ministry in the 2000s

Voices in the early twenty-first century carry widely differing reflections on the experience of laypeople in ministry. Fox, who has monitored and written about this movement for decades from within the Roman Catholic Church in America celebrated its bishops' newest document published in 2005. In her overview of the work, she notes that it seeks to integrate further lay ministry into the life of the church:

> Theologically it affirms the call of laity to ministry and grounds all ministry in the Trinity. All the baptized share in the mission begun by Jesus…. Central to the life of the church is relationality—the Father, Son, and Spirit to each Christian and all Christians to one another. Collaboration, therefore, has theological significance. (Fox, "Overview" 188).

The challenge becomes how to integrate theology into practice.

In her observations of the practice of the laity in ministry, Fox notes an increasing number of lay ecclesial ministers in parishes—directors of religious education, youth ministers, pastoral associates, and liturgy and music directors. Outside of the church institution, lay ministries are in health care institutions, colleges and universities, and Roman Catholic charities, so institutions and organizations are starting to form around lay ministry. This rise in lay ministry is largely due to the decline of parish priests and religious sisters that has caused the church to respond with openness towards lay ministers (Fox, "Overview" 185).

Fox also observes that vowed religious communities are at the forefront of developing structures to foster collaboration with laity (Fox, "Overview" 5). That history was centered in the monastic life in medieval Europe. As Europe shifted to an urbanized life, the religious community moved outside the cloister. Today, laypeople are serving in leadership roles in parishes, hospitals, social service agencies, and educational institutions. Parish ministers support the life of the institutional church.

In Fox's *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways toward the Future*, she reflects further on the progress that the Roman Catholic Church has made. *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* was still the foundational resource that affirmed and legitimized lay ecclesial ministry. An evidence of this legitimization was that the Roman Catholic Church was establishing national certification standards for competency for lay ecclesial ministers for certification and accreditation. Fox asserts that the accreditation helps people understand what a particular ministry requires and what knowledge and skills are needed to be qualified for that ministry. The archdiocese of Chicago has established a five-step process. Call from God, training and preparation, certification, call by the bishop, and

commissioning are the steps toward a specific ministry. In characteristic Roman Catholic form, the laity was placed within the hierarchy of the church polity and under the authority of the local bishop. Protestant readers may need a cue to view this hierarchical placement with a generosity, that this role for laypeople is a new position of esteem within the hierarchy and that it is offered the prayer, protection, and resources of the bishop's office.

Fox includes the reflections of several other writers in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry.* Each author views the arch of movement in the Roman Catholic Church on the issue of lay ministry with a particular lens. Fox reveals that Richard Gaillardetz is careful to distinguish ministry from discipleship. In his example, if a person goes to feed the homeless he or she is not being minister. He or she is merely being a disciple. If the same person organizes the effort and provides leadership *and* resources "he [or she] is being called forth by the community to serve any formal and public way any ministry for which he [or she] will be held accountable" and that is what gives the individual the liberty to call that work ministry (Fox, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry* 32).

Fox observes that Emil A. Wcela places lay ministry in the context of sacraments, not the sacrament of ordination but the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, or within a theology of Jesus as both Savior and Lord (*Lay Ecclesial Ministry* 33). He does state that women's roles are restricted in ministry, but he does not define the restriction and makes no scriptural reference to support his position (50).

Fox considers that Edward P. Hahnenberg asserts that *Coworkers in the Vineyard of the Lord* is a response to a reality that was already present (*Lay Ecclesial Ministry* 69). People were already acting as administrators without being recognized as being lay

ministers. He tracked the movement in church posture, noting that in the past, being a minister was a way of life for religious. Then, when religious community membership declined, performing ministry became the realm of lay ministers by necessity. Now laypeople represent a new way of being a minister and thinking about ministry and are given validity as lay ministers (71).

Other authors Fox reviewed saw a need to clarify roles and create polity. One looked at the Roman Catholic practice of canonization and offers that the church should look to the saints for examples of lay ministers (*Lay Ecclesial Ministry* 123). Another, Juliana Casey, believes that ministry is service to people in the name of the church (149). This assertion deserves a closer look for its parallels to Protestant church culture.

Protestants may be reluctant to admit that service in the name of the church is reflected in Protestant culture, too. A concept often heard by believers in this study's geography is that the layperson's job is to invite others to church. The implication may be that a new attender would gain a revelation of the kingdom of God during a church service, but the real misdirection is that church members are not inviting people to Jesus because they see that responsibility as belonging to the professional—the pastor.

Maureen R. O'Brien also studied how Roman Catholic lay ministers began to identify themselves as ministers as reported in her work. She offers this view of the growth process from the institution's point of view:

> In the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, the designation "lay ecclesial ministers" is increasingly employed to describe an emerging group among the faithful. Many are originally hired by their pastor after extensive volunteer church service; however, lay ecclesial ministers are typically differentiated from other church members by more extensive training, articulation of a self-understanding as one called by God into ministry, a degree of formal church recognition (some are "commissioned" or "certified" for ministry), professional status, and level

> of leadership responsibility. Not ordained to the priesthood, with the majority being women, married men, and others not eligible for ordination, they are nevertheless assuming increasingly significant and varied responsibilities. Their titles include director of religious education, pastoral associate, youth minister, director of evangelization, liturgical minister, and others. Thus lay ecclesial ministers comprise a kind of intermediate, but ambiguously defined, subset of church members. (212)

Uniquely, O'Brien sought to measure how laypeople in some aspect of Christian service identified themselves as ministers. She demonstrates that techniques of theological reflection and use of reflection conversation partners were effective in causing these people to regard themselves as ministers, even if their church polity structure did not fully support such a designation or office. Each person was able to identify their service activities and attitudes within a scriptural context, or at least with scriptural principles. This newly emerging identity articulation was rooted in motivation and character display rather than in task identity. This last aspect of scriptural motivation and character display were key factors in this study.

In light of all this cultural and polity shifting and resistance within churches of all denominations, one is not surprised that Julia Duin authored a book with a screaming title, *Quitting Church,* in 2008. Duin considers the generation of people who experienced powerful life transformations in their youth and early adulthood during the 1970s. Even if a person was not in the center of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal or the Protestant version, the Charismatic movement, where all sorts of cultural norms were upended in gatherings that were characterized by displays of the supernatural presence of the Lord, many experienced the campus ministries of Intervarsity or Campus Crusade for Christ as life changing. These groups helped establish life patterns for young believers who

prioritized personal and group Bible study, committed to social service mission activities, and sought life partners with similar beliefs and values.

Duin studied what happened to these fresh-faced idealists in subsequent decades as they settled into careers, raised families, and joined local churches. She recognizes that a movement of the Holy Spirit has waned, but attributes the cause of that waning, at least in part, to the structural changes that churches made in the wake of the 70s revivals. Megachurches were beginning to arise and, with them, church services where attenders participated as passive audience members for the two hours that they all focused on the stage. Marketing became commonplace with Christian bookstores opening in church lobbies. Technology moved from a supporting role in sound amplification to a starring role with video, lighting, and sound effects features.

Going to church was not merely a dry experience. It became life depleting as this generation of faith-filled, expectant believers were marginalized to be valued by the lowest common denominator—attendance and financial numbers. People who continued to deepen in personal devotion to the Lord were increasingly displaced for younger leaders offering shallow sermons following faddish trends. Single, midlife adults were especially displaced, and, most pointedly, women were relegated to the fringe in this culture that celebrated young males.

Stories illustrate how single people were demeaned or marginalized yet were sought for their volunteer service. Priorities in church life centered around serving the needs of families, and the single person was expected to serve sacrificially toward that goal. Duin notices that women were marginalized for leadership positions in conservative-culture denominations and that some women were not comfortable

supporting liberal theology institutions. The dilemma of embracing a conservative theology left them rejected on a variety of fronts.

The church in the United States is suffering tremendously from its lack of ability to recognize and repent of its life-sapping posture towards laypeople because of its syncretism with the world. The good news is that the church across the globe is still wrestling with the issue of laypeople in ministry. Graham Ward, through his lens of the Church of England, gives his theological reflection on the origins of lay ministry in 2013. Ward observes that the modern trend toward separating human activity into discrete disciplines removes the body of Christ from engaging itself in the professional world.

In medicine, law, education, and governance, the church has abdicated its authority to others who are considered impartial and value free. This assertion is a falsehood, of course. The world is not value free. The danger in such compartmentalization is the damage it does to human souls, Ward warns. An integrated worldview serves to discipline our desires and galvanize the church to action. Therefore, laypeople are uniquely qualified to reveal Christ to the world:

> The church, however, is not primarily an institution. It is first of all the primordial fellowship of the body of Christ. Seen this way, a renewed emphasis is placed on the full distribution of ministries, in which every lay member bears a part. The church is "made to appear"through the exercise of these roles within the body of Christ. This "labor" is nothing less than the performance of Christ within the other social bodies to which Christians belong. This performance makes every Christian a theologian. The lay Christian is particularly well placed to exemplify a theology that is worked out in action and behavior as well as words. And this is the layperson's gift—they can move among the other secular bodies without being marked as such as "ecclesial." As such, they are at the forefront of the relationship between the public life of the church and the civic life of society: the city of God and the secular city. (223, 330)

With the assertion that every Christian is a theologian, Duin joins the chorus of people challenging the traditional class duality of clergy and laity in the church.

Duin observes that the people in churches, particularly women, who were not being allowed to serve in positions that matched the caliber of their gifts and skills found ways to serve the people of the world outside the institution of their church (142). Ward offers a prophetic voice to answer Duin's lament with his call to send forth the laity from the context of the body of Christ (Ward 332-33).

African-American Church History

The Noble Neighborhood has a mixed racial demographic. Participants for this study were selected to mirror the racial mix. In this section, the history of African-American church development regarding the priesthood of all believers doctrine during the lifespans of the study participants is considered to gain insight into their development.

Several significant historical events occurred during the lifetime of these participants. Nationally, the Civil Rights Movement spanned 1954-1968, including the United States Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. The Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas ("History—Brown v. Board"), declaring that segregated public schools were unconstitutional, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the bombing of the church in Birmingham, Alabama, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Locally, in 1968, Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes became the first African-American mayor of a major American city, the Cleveland Public Schools began court-ordered busing of students in 1973 to integrate the schools, and White flight and housing integration impacted population movements in neighborhoods. African-Americans gained

political power in the city of Cleveland and its eastern suburbs along with economic power through increasing professional employment opportunities.

During the past fifty years, the African-American church in America has been understandably focused on nationwide political and social change. Strong leadership, almost exclusively male, produced a united community that spoke with one voice. Rev. Dr. Marvin A. McMickle in *Pulpit & Politics* gives an important reason for why the voice of the Black preacher has been so strong. He observes that White America never had to rely solely upon its clergy for community leadership. White leadership spans across disciplines of "law, business, finance, publishing, the military, philanthropy, and higher education" (118). In contrast, White preachers did not need to be politically and civically active. The jobs were already filled. One cannot fail to notice, then, that McMickle's *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage* is dominated by male leaders. Most of those who are listed in this encyclopedia are famous for their opposition to the dominant culture. The challenge is to find someone who is listed for another attribute in his encyclopedia.

McMickle uses the term *preacher/politician* to characterize African-Americans who are involved in politics. Although the professional opportunities in most fields have opened wide for African-Americans, particularly in Cleveland, Ohio, leadership for the African-American community was still largely centered in the church. In the realm of political analysts, McMickle describes how the term *public intellectual* is reflected in African-Americans. He observes that when African-Americans are called upon to offer an opinion on national politics on Sunday morning talk shows, they should more

accurately be called *public theologians* for the frequency with which the commentators come from African-American seminary staffs (*Pulpit* 150).

R. Khari Brown links sermon techniques to the formation of the community in solidarity: "System blame [theory] suggests that structural forces, such as a history of oppression, unfair laws, or lack of policy attention are responsible for racial inequality" (Smith 317). Brown views this commonly used technique as quite effective for holding together the African-American church community under its strong male leadership. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is difficult to discern in this cohesive community with a voice largely focused on politics and macro-level social change.

What is evident locally in the Noble neighborhood is that church attendance trends mirror national mainline denominational trends. Congregations are characterized by an aging population that still identifies with the culture of a prior generation, strong central male leadership. All other activities take place with the approval, if not the initiation, of the pastor leader. Pastor tenures are for life, and congregations function well under the clearly defined structure.

This characteristic of strong central leadership does not at all imply that the congregation is passive or weak. In this local neighborhood, many strong and godly African-American women and men are living exemplary lives, praying diligently, serving their community, and proclaiming their faith in Jesus. These believers are indeed priests and they are functioning within their culture's community. This perspective helps to explain some of the responses by the participants in this study.

Neighborhood Churches and Faith-Based Neighborhood Organizing

Considering specifically how churches should relate to their neighborhoods, one finds several thoughtful voices. Robert Moss proposes that neighborhood churches need to dispel two myths: first that church success is measured in attendance numbers and financial numbers and, secondly, that the goal is to reach autonomy. He regards both these positions as counterproductive, at best: "In what ways can you numerically report love, mercy, compassion, and grace incarnated through relationships in the neighborhood?" (xviii). He asks how to measure the power of the gospel in forgiveness received and relationships restored. Instead, Moss views the very nature of God as being in community and asserts that a neighborhood should be changed by the presence of a Christian congregation. Moreover, if the church is truly in relationship with its neighbors, then *it* will be changed by interaction with them. Moss places this value within the perichoretic nature of God. The mutual love between congregation and neighborhood reveals the love of God. Congregations must not act like door-to-door salesmen, interacting only to extract something from the neighbors, but they must live in mutual respect in their context.

A practical expression of Moss's perichoretic concept is observed by Drew Dyck. He describes the mission of a church in urban Dallas as ministering wholistically. These church members established their presence in the neighborhood after the neighborhood deteriorated following the national real estate collapse of 2008. They believed their first job was to survey the remaining community for what the people valued. Then they built a local cultural center to focus on art, music, community, and commerce. They were ministering to their community as humans first and relying on the Holy Spirit to

evangelize. Dyck describes their approach to relationships as having a different focus from traditional evangelism: "Our conversations are not driven by an I-have-to-get-this-person-saved agenda" (88). Instead, they are seeking to be faithful to the Christian witness in a very post-Christian society. Building relationships was the foundation of all their work and just living alongside their neighbors was their method.

When a person wants to begin a relationship with Jesus, new believers are baptized and more traditional measures of spiritual growth are applied. For daily interactions, they regarded themselves more as missionaries who must learn the culture and build relational trust before they have permission to speak deeply into someone's life. They did not measure their success the way suburban churches do, by picking low hanging fruit. Instead, success was based upon community impact. They taught people how to follow Jesus by living Jesus' ways before them. Building a community of faith this way takes time for relationships to develop.

A caution in regards to this style was offered by J. Todd Billings. Billings criticizes this contemporary urban ministry philosophy for placing the emphasis, and even the onus, for salvation on the ministry worker. Attending a workshop on urban ministry, Billings heard teaching about moving into a neighborhood to immerse oneself among the people. While how-to techniques were described for adopting a second culture, adopting the culture appeared to be the end goal. Billings observed that those who employed this incarnational model believed that they were the ones who made Christ present in the world, not the Holy Spirit. Those who adopt the motto, *you and I may be the only Jesus people meet* exemplified a critical miscalculation. He asserts that

Christians are not the initiators of ministry. God is the initiator of ministry, and that Christians should submit to his leadership and direction for activity:

> The burden of incarnation—and revelation—is on the shoulders of the individuals. Such a theology often leads to burnout. In spite of its motive to be relational and evangelistic, this approach functionally denies the adequacy of Christ's unique incarnation and the Spirit's work as the supreme witness to Christ (John 15:26). We forget that we are not equipped to represent Christ to the world without being united, as a community, to Christ through the Spirit. (60)

The posture of acknowledging the Spirit as the one who does the persuasive work of evangelism is quite freeing for Christians. One needs to be faithful to joyful obedience in prayer and acts of grace and watch for God to bring new birth in individuals.

Another interesting snapshot into people who live and worship in the same neighborhood is introduced in a study by Jill Witmer Sinha et al., who looked at where people lived in relationship to where they worshiped. Unsurprisingly, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jewish congregations, which define their congregations geographically, were most likely to have the highest percentage of congregants who live within a ten block radius of the church building. A greater predictor of whether the congregation is a resident one is if the pastor also lives nearby. White congregations in stable neighborhoods tended to be more residential, the term used for people who live near the church they attend. Black congregations tended to be commuter, often returning to a city church from the suburb. Their faith identity was based in their congregational relationships and not as much within their neighborhood. Long-term home ownership correlated with resident churches, but resident congregations had the highest percentage of poor people (245).

This pattern is certainly evident in the neighborhoods of Greater Cleveland but not as clearly in Cleveland Heights for resident congregations. Greater Cleveland still has pockets of ethnic groups that moved here a few generations ago and established Roman Catholic churches. In that light, one notices that none of the three Roman Catholic churches that surround the Noble neighborhood exist today. Within the past twenty-five years, all three buildings have been sold to Protestant congregations, signaling the migration of a large neighborhood population out of the city.

Greenleaf was a proponent of servant leadership being applied to the workplace. While not writing as a theologian, this thinker who applies biblical principles to practical life offers some very poignant assertions. Greenleaf regarded the pastor of center city church as a leader of the whole community, not just the congregation. He charged the churches to make an extensive study of the community assets—other churches, nonprofits, and other institutions purposefully building relationships with the leaders or trustees of those other institutions. He calls for an expanded view of the priesthood of all believers, borrowing this term, to encompass ecumenism as well as nonfaith-based leaders (Greenleaf 260-62).

The role of the pastor and the like-minded members of the central city church congregation was to foster leadership in the community, to expand the number of trustees, and to nurture these leaders for the future. Greenleaf recognizes that a radical reorientation must take place for a church to become this mediating institution to the community. After all, he looked at the state of churches in his generation and, with colleagues, observes, “[L]eadership may be trained in theology and in management, but their calling is to serve those who pay their salaries” (Greenleaf 259). Therefore, the

entire congregation must covenant together in its mission to raise the quality of life in its neighborhood.

Greenleaf's exemplar for a pastor with such a community leadership orientation is John Frederic Oberlin for whom Oberlin College is named, located in the county adjacent to Cuyahoga County where the Noble neighborhood is situated. Oberlin College has much esteem in Northeast Ohio for its history of being the first college to accept women and African-Americans as students in full standing:

> In 1767 assumed the pastorate of a church [in Alsace-Lorraine] that served several small communities in an area known as Stone Valley. At the start of his pastorate residents were impoverished, demoralized, and uneducated. He left a transformed community when he died in 1826. He was the moving force in building five schools in the first kindergarten. He introduced new farming methods, inspired a savings bank, brought in a cotton goods industry, and saw to it that roads were built. Oberlin accomplished all of this plus personally providing much of the medical care in the communities in carrying out his normal duties as pastor. (Greenleaf 268)

The description focuses on Oberlin as a leader. One may need to read between the lines to see the rest of Greenleaf's proposition—that the church became a covenant body of leaders who work to improve the community.

Another illustration of how a church reached its community came from Japan. A Roman Catholic Church adapted the government neighborhood association structure to make his parish more intimate. Dennis J. Geaney describes that the priest, Fr. Spae, developed monthly meetings in geography-based groups that included prayers, a hymn, and a New Testament reading and discussion. The group agreed on a group task for each month. Tasks emphasized mercy, providing for the needy and contacting prospective catechumens. Roman Catholic parishes learned that they were more effective both practically and politically when they were organized in small groups that participated in

the same economic and political activities as their neighbors. Through these efforts, they were able to witness to Christ:

> [T]he layman is a man of the world with a mission in the world of work, politics, family life in the other areas his life touches. His mission is not to help snatch others from this world, but to be, with the church's divine helps, the leaven in the world. (33)

This organization of small geographically based groups within the parish that had both fellowship and a common task goal proved very effective in reaching the community.

Walker Moore, as an MDiv student, attempted to organize the community for political and social action at the Waco Community Development Corporation. While he was successful with a handful of residents, the project was short-lived. Most residents did not want to join in activities resisting drug dealers for fear of retaliation or because they were drug users themselves.

Moore found more success reaching the adults through the children. In coordination with two neighborhood schools, the Parent Engagement Project, was formed. Learning walks have allowed many parents to participate in their children's education. Together they have improved safety around the school, have a bilingual computer class for parents and children, and are improving children's test scores. More parents are participating in PTA.

Later, this community organizer helped mobilize five pastors of local churches to dream about what two neighborhood schools could become. They hosted an event, the Back to School Bash, that involved seven churches, both schools, and three neighborhood organizations. This event propelled the neighborhood into thinking about possibilities and there is a growing sense of pride (Moore 7-8).

Ryan Dale Thompson offers, “It is often assumed that faith produces works, but this study suggests that the opposite is true—one’s works bring one’s faith to maturity” (iii). He studied people who volunteered with Stephen Ministries. Thompson found that these volunteers matured in their faith as they served in this lay program as caregivers. He coupled this observation with self-perception theory. This theory asserts that as people observe their own behavior performing, in this case, caregiving tasks, their personal philosophies align with their activities.

Eleanor S. Morrison offers the perspective that if the church leaves the care of the people in the congregation to the hired few, the congregation suffers. This church is training people to be caregivers, pastors to each other, primarily through deep listening skills. She describes having a personal conversation with a woman who was trained in these skills, and although this discussion was not in a pastoral context, Morrison described feeling deeply ministered to by the friend who had internalized her training and had gifted it in friendship (27-28).

James Anderson of the Cathedral College of the Laity in England pursued the issue of why so many lay ministry training programs end up with the trainees seeking ordination. He uncovered “the corporate culture of the gathered church“ and pointed to “an elaborate system of heroes, rites, rituals, legends and symbols” (Hulslander 34) that are all used to maintain the institution of the church. This culture contrasted significantly when compared to Paul’s metaphor in 1 Corinthian 12 that the church to the human body with all its differing by essential functions.

Hulslander continues to expound about the differing but essential members of the body of Christ by noting that lay ministers engage theology not from an abstract,

academic approach but from real life experiences. Since laypeople have a different point of engagement for theology than pastors, the questions that are formed and the application of biblical truth is inductive. Therefore, support structures are critical for laypeople to solidify identity apart from the kingdom of this world and to be accountable via the plumb line of the word of God. Laypeople's ministry can be very serendipitous, and so preparation is not nearly as focused as structured ministries and mutual covenant partners in ministry can propel growth (39-40).

Scott Roley, a White man, sought to minister to an historic neighborhood of African-American people close to downtown Franklin, Tennessee. Even though it was so close to the thriving city center, this neighborhood, called Hard Bargain, still exhibited echoes of its post-slavery, Southern heritage. Its African-American residents in the Jim Crow era would have been in walking distance to downtown for their jobs to serve Franklin's White population. The modest housing, poorly maintained streets, and feeling of being an odd island in this community bore witness to its past. Roley moved here to work on neighborhood improvement and racial reconciliation. In the process, he found a wealth of wisdom and energy in the neighbors he came to serve. Roley credited John Perkins for inspiration in both racial reconciliation and community development. Eventually, a church was started in this neighborhood with a multiracial leadership team (Roley and Elliott 183).

Richard R. Broholm describes the frustration some laypeople feel when they attempt to engage in ministry and look for support from the church. He posits that in order for laity to be able to act on their sense of calling to minister within society's

structure, the church needs to confirm the calling to validate the ministry and support the continuing conforming to Christ and empowering in ministry (176).

Each of these stories of churches interacting with their neighbors provided food for thought when comparing the activities of the Christians and the churches in the Noble neighborhood. Several of these stories detailed church support for economic development and community building, realms that Ward would have celebrated. Runnnig as an undercurrent in some of these stories is the message that one must move toward ordination in order to be fully accepted by the church for the community work efforts. Another subtle undercurrent is the message that being ordained means being regarded as a less savvy organizer, one who is a bit removed from the reality on the ground. Laypeople in mission can stand in this gap as people who do have their feet on the same ground as the rest of the community and as people validated by their local church communities for being worthy representatives of the kingdom of God.

Social Science Voices

Some of the leaders of Noble Neighbors are Christians who may or may not worship in the neighborhood. Each person brings his or her own theology into the work of this civic group, and where we have found common ground in biblical values of building community through our own sacrificial investments into it, we are experiencing such success that others are emulating us. One must also recognize the voices outside the communion of saints that are affecting how we are seeking to build community. These sources also influence the Christians in Noble Neighbors so they are considered here.

First, a look at theorists who are studying human interaction within communities is considered here. Peter Block has written some seminal works about community, and

his principles are widely discussed among community builders in Greater Cleveland. He looks at creating connectedness by moving away from isolation and self-interest as key to transforming communities. He asserts that communities need to shift their attention from focusing on the problems to mining the community for its assets and then building upon them. For the Noble area, we consider the churches to be assets and are working to partner with them for the revitalization of the neighborhood. This new way for the churches to interact with the neighborhood is helping to "create a future that is distinct from the past" as Block would identify (1). The Noble district has certainly experienced Block's observation of decaying neighborhoods: "The existing community context is one that markets fear, assigns fault, and worships self- interest" (37). The future for the community, therefore, needs to be characterized by cooperation, interdependency, and inclusion.

Cleveland Heights suffers from another of Block's observations: "One aspect of our fragmentation is the gaps between sectors of our cities and neighborhoods; businesses, schools, social service organizations, churches, government operated mostly in their own worlds" (2). This fragmentation is painfully evident in the 2017 Master Plan that the City of Cleveland Heights created, which has no reference to any congregation or religious institution within its borders, and the city is full of well established synagogues, churches and parochial schools ("Master Plan").

John McKnight and Block focus on the shift from being a citizen to being a consumer. Post-World War II culture choices, including the prevailing sentiment of dissatisfaction cultivated by the advertising industry, has infected communities. Instead of deficit mindfulness, McKnight and Block believe that people need to develop gift-

mindfulness, creating abundance in community rather than in consumer goods. Interestingly, McKnight and Block reference Greenleaf. Greenleaf acknowledges the Bible's influence in his writings, but McKnight and Block do not acknowledge how many of their principles are biblically based.

Malcolm Gladwell has several insights that bear on the revitalization of the Noble neighborhood. He compares social change to the behavior of viruses in the human body and in populations using the "Broken Windows" social theory. This theory proposes that neighborhoods begin to decay rapidly when simple repairs and upkeep practices are not maintained. For example, a broken window that is not repaired in a timely manner signals that people do not care. It then becomes a permission giver for other repairs to go unattended. Crime rates increase in these areas because of the prevailing visual environment that signals no one is paying attention (141).

New York City applied this assumption first to maintaining its subway system and then used it as a guiding principle in law enforcement. Within five years, homicides dropped a whopping 65 percent. Gladwell explains that "somehow a large number of people in New York got 'infected' with an anti-crime virus in a short time" (8). Capitalizing on the proposition that epidemics are contagious, Noble Neighbors began an effort to pick up litter and call the city to enforce codes on problem properties. Just three years in to the effort, several residents have noted that the neighborhood looks and feels better.

Gladwell looks for the points at which changes tip, or suddenly cascade, into rapid change. He illustrated this concept with White flight and the percentage of African-Americans moving into the neighborhood, which produced a rapid increase in Whites moving out. He applied this theory to fashion trends and disease epidemics.

Certain types of people are critical for social epidemics. Gladwell identifies Connectors, those who have a special gift for bringing together lots of people from different worlds and subcultures. Mavens are people who accumulate high-value social knowledge and pass it along. They are information brokers who share what they know and train others. Connectors are glue and Mavens are databanks. Recognizing these social skills and capitalizing on them is critical for the revitalization of the Noble neighborhood.

One person who is doing just that is Shamayim Harris, or Mama Shu, in a Detroit neighborhood. She is taking the most devastated area in the city and is creating a community of people working together for mutual support. Her first task was just to clean up the vacant lots and then create a park in one of them. She has acquired one house that she has renovated into "The Homework House" to support kids during after-school hours. She has a vision for creating an eco-village on the surrounding blighted land and is opening a business incubator for women-owned small businesses ("Many Colors").

The built environment and its current state of repair and functionality, are significant factors in the perception of the neighborhood. New Urbanism, a concept that challenges city designs of the industrial era, offers a critical mirror to the Noble neighborhood. By virtue of its age, it already contains many features that put it in a good position for revitalization (Bliss).

Jeff Speck describes the New Urbanism guiding principles with which one designs cities around health, wealth, and sustainability. Walkability is a key component, defined as useful walk, safe walk, comfortable walk, and interesting walk. These features already exist in the Noble neighborhood, which was developed during the trolley car era. Small business districts are less than a mile apart, and riders would not have needed to

walk more than a half-mile after getting off the streetcar, shopping for goods, and walking home. The challenge to every neighborhood like this one is that the types of businesses that used to anchor these districts have been displaced by corporate big-box grocery stores or online shopping habits. The Noble districts have yet to reinvent themselves in this new commerce era.

Ali Madanipour asks four questions for regenerative urbanism:

1. Can innovative clusters of science and technology or arts and culture be created through the design and development process?
2. How far can these new places be embedded as an integral part of the local economy, establishing mutual linkages rather than hierarchical and disconnected relations?
3. Is urban design involved only in the development processes committed to raising land and property values, which would gentrify the area, or does it also have a role to play in providing useful spaces for the wider community?
4. Should the economy be given the driving seat and all other political and cultural considerations pushed to the background? (125-26)

Each of these factors leads to questions we must ask regarding the revitalization of the Noble business districts. Clearly, the built environment impacts the social structure of a city. Noble's newest populations are international refugees and impoverished American populations that have moved here from adjacent communities. The Noble community is wrestling with how to serve its newest residents without continuing to lose property values.

Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson's research about demographic trends offers important considerations for the Noble district. While the norm a few generations ago was for a homogeneous community of families, the trend is towards diversity of age and ethnicity and mixed-use buildings to serve these populations. Demographic changes are headed towards households with no children. Indeed only 27 percent of households in

2000 in metro areas *including s*uburbs, contained children. Dunham-Jones and Williamson also share some significant discussions on changing big box stores and malls by retrofitting them, a factor that impacts the Noble neighborhood because of a dying mall just outside its borders (18, 35).

Ray Suarez compares several cities, one of them Cleveland. He describes what drove the history of racial change:

> [T]he forces behind white flight were in part malign: redliners, pain peddlers and blockbusters. Banks redlined. Builders didn't build where the demand was and instead set off to create new demand elsewhere. Churches were silent from the pulpit. Industries fled from unions, minorities, work rules, and high wages. First the federal government subsidized "greenfield" housing, then built the highways to get you there. (17-18)

His chapter on The Church and the City is quite informative. While he focuses mostly on the geographically defined parishes in the Roman Catholic Church, he notes that they stabilized populations by subsidizing their schools for their changing populations. Suarez observes that the neighborhood can change significantly ethnically, but the church leadership remains disproportionately representative of the old population.

His reflection on Cleveland was written twenty years ago. The center city is almost unrecognizable from the late 90s due to considerable recent investment. However, the periphery still needs support and the problems from the center city have moved increasingly into the inner ring suburbs, and one of those suburbs is Cleveland Heights (Suarez 157-87).

Suarez does leave this community organizer with a nagging thought of what happens when the tax abatement expires. For Cleveland Heights, tax abatement has been an ill-managed economic tool that is currently leaving the city with some very depressed

property values. The new development imagined for the Noble neighborhood includes using public funding, but management of the public funds needs to be done sustainably.

Theological Foundation

This journey began with a vision for the churches in the neighborhood working together to reach the neighborhood for Christ. Each church already had an outreach asset. One church holds a monthly food give-away in partnership with the Cleveland Food Bank. Another church has a well-established day care. A third church hosts a weekly young men's basketball and Bible study program. Another is well-known for accepting people who are suffering from their poor life decisions and walking with them into emotional and spiritual health. A fifth church is marked for its foundational biblical principles teaching program.

My original idea was to ask churches to coordinate their ministries and, in doing so, support attenders who needed to access social service programs offered by another congregation. For example, church members of one congregation could be encouraged to access the childcare services offered by another congregation. Young men could be encouraged to join the mid-week basketball Bible study. Together, congregational leaders could assess the needs of the neighborhood and agree which congregation has the best capacity to offer, for example, financial literacy classes, or a healthy relationships workshop, or worship music seminars. Churches in the neighborhood could be much more effective, especially in light of Psalm 133, which gives particular encouragement for the concept of uniting churches for ministry:

> How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!
> For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over
> Aaron's head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his
> robe.

> Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion.
> And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting. (NLT)

God gives a unique anointing to those who live together in harmony. It flows from top to bottom and carries the intercession efficacy of the high priest. The office of high priest was the holiest office in Israel, and God promised the same blessing of spiritual authority to all believers as they dwell in unity. The authority of the high priest intercessor was the greatest authority before God under the Mosaic covenant. In that office, the high priest was the only one who could stand in the presence of God and intercede on behalf of a sinful people. The high priest could call upon God's character of mercy and his delight to give new life into lives that were scorched with sin and pain.

This psalm remarkably couples the anointing of the high priest with God's abundant, benevolent response. The anointing is a shared, community-in-unity privilege. Likewise, God's response is community-wide provision. Harmony produces blessing in the natural, temporal realm as well as in the eternal realm. Mount Hermon represents both a strategic location for early warning of military activity and productivity and provision. Mount Hermon is the highest elevation in Israel that served Israel's military in both ancient and modern times. Because of its height, it is a tremendous geographical asset for capturing moisture in rain or snow that is distributed in alternating seasons. Israel's food production is closely tied to this mountain range. The whole community is blessed with peace and provision with Mount Hermon's height and water resources.

For the Noble neighborhood, this coupling of unity and peaceful prosperity is eye opening. This neighborhood is experiencing increasing gun violence and decreasing average household income. Noble needs to be full of people poised toward peace. Noble

residents need jobs with which they can contribute to the health of the community. Logic might dictate that church leaders would embrace the truths declared in Psalm 133, but the movement toward cooperation has only been slight. When they do grab hold of unity in the Lord, the promise of the last verse awaits: The Lord will pronounce his blessing. More than temporal safety and provision, it is life eternal. Noble needs its church leaders to gain prophetic insight into this psalm and to act accordingly.

Interestingly, the work of unity among churches is taking place through its members at a greater significance than through the leaders. Among Noble Neighbors' regular meeting attenders, about one-third also attend a church in the neighborhood. Another third of attenders also meet regularly with their community of faith outside the neighborhood. For those who live, worship, and labor on behalf of the whole community, the Bible has some wonderfully encouraging passages, especially when regarded through the hermeneutical lens of application, internalization, and hope for the promises to be fulfilled.

Jeremiah 29:1-7, the prophet Jeremiah's letter to the Hebrew exiles in Babylon, provides a heart posture for Noble residents who worship in the neighborhood and are working to improve the neighborhood. While contemporary American Christians do not regard themselves as exiles *to* their American neighborhoods, some of them describe their relationship with planet earth as *not my home* and they are looking forward to an eternal home in the New Jerusalem described in Scriptures. The parallel, then, is found with the exiles who were looking forward to prophesies of their return to the land of Israel being fulfilled and contemporary Christians similarly looking forward to the promise that the temporal heaven and earth will pass away and that Christians will join

Jesus in the new home that he has prepared. The New International Version renders Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 this way:

> This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.
>
> This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (NIV)

Christians who embrace this passage as a directive for how they are to live their lives in this era and in this world note carefully the specificity in the examples the prophesy offers for how to live in Babylon. The exiles were to regard themselves as integral to the vitality of the city, even though it was governed by non-Israelites. They were to invest in real estate, position themselves for an extended stay, and provide for their own needs. They were expected to remain in their exiled location so long that they would increase in numbers with additional generations. Moreover, God, through Jeremiah, directed the exiles to work toward international peace and contribute to an increasing GDP in the city where they were exiled. God specifically linked the financial growth of the exilic city to the stability of the Jewish people.

Likewise, some Christians who live in the Noble neighborhoods take great encouragement from Jeremiah's letter to the exiles. They have purchased homes in the neighborhood and have raised families here. The real estate value collapse for the whole neighborhood has made this Scripture more compelling because their home values have dropped with all the rest. The prophetic link between the neighborhood's prosperity and

the prosperity of believers in Christ is quite clearly and practically entwined. Therefore, some of these believers couple their public perennial garden creation with their faith that the promise of God to the ancient exiles still remains applicable to this generation of this-earth-is-not-my-home people. They are also coupling their faith about these garden efforts with the new knowledge of the Broken Windows social theory that links beautification to crime reduction (Gladwell 182).

The priesthood of all believers doctrine was originally presented to the freed Hebrew slaves before the Aaronic priesthood was established. Exodus 19:5-6 reveals God's intention for the entire nation: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The promise to become this kingdom of priests is conditional; it is predicated on obedience. The Israelites failed to remain faithful, so a new covenant was established.

Under the new covenant, Peter revives an ancient vision, but with a new twist:

> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:
> "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone,
> and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.
>
> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:4-10)

In Peter's exposition, the chosen people do not have any conditions placed on the promise. Instead, the new kingdom of priests is established solely because of God's mercy extended because of the people's belief in the Christ of that mercy. Ancient Israel was destined for this privileged position, but due to their rejection of the prophetic message, they were no longer eligible under the Mosaic covenant.

The building material metaphor interspersed around Peter's first mention of "holy priesthood" and his next reference to a "royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) reveals a structure in the making. It is just as solid and certain in today's generation as the impressive temple with its massive foundation that Peter's generation visited.

Isaiah's prophecy provides another example of practical applications for carrying out the duties of the priesthood of all believers. The promise it carries is astounding in light of the neighborhood work going on by believers:

> Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
> to loose the chains of injustice
> and untie the cords of the yoke,
> to set the oppressed free
> and break every yoke?
> Is it not to share your food with the hungry
> and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
> when you see the naked, to clothe them,
> and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
> Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
> and your healing will quickly appear;
> then your righteousness will go before you,
> and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
> Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
> you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
> If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
> with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
> and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
> and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
> then your light will rise in the darkness,
> and your night will become like the noonday.
> The LORD will guide you always;

> he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
> and will strengthen your frame.
> You will be like a well-watered garden,
> like a spring whose waters never fail.
> Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
> and will raise up the age-old foundations;
> you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
> Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (Isa. 58:6-12)

For the believers in the Noble neighborhood, the theology of this passage is not interpreted with lexicons and commentaries. Instead, it is quite practical. Those who perform the work of advocacy, food distribution, housing provision, and clothing giveaways are promised to be revealed as righteous, to be answered by God when they call upon him for help. Some people in the neighborhood do point fingers and talk maliciously. The contrast between how poorly the maligners are regarded in the community and how well those who are working on behalf of the community are viewed is evident. Isaiah's prophetic truths show up on NextDoor.com in the way community members who are not involved with Noble Neighbors respond to those who speak maliciously. The malicious ones are rebuked and the right-living ones are appreciated. The reputation across the city for Noble Neighbors is stellar. It is regarded as "the best thing going on in the city" by council members (Ungar) and by the staff of the local community-building nonprofit (Basu).

Christians in Noble Neighbors know without a doubt that the work of their hands is causing their righteousness to shine. The reference to a well-watered garden with a constant source of refreshment is quite encouraging in light of the neighborhood beautification effort. The Christian workers in the beautification effort have found their faith to be greatly encouraged in the final verse of this pericope: "Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called

Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings" (Isa. 58:12). This hope, that the neighborhood's broken wall will be repaired and the streets will be restored to peace and prosperity, in tandem with Jeremiah 29's promise, propels so many people to invest so much time and resources for such an extended period of time into neighborhood improvement.

The investment in the neighborhood, for Christians and non-Christians alike, can most succinctly be described as service. Without a doubt, it is sacrificial, voluntary giving. Christians will be encouraged to consider the concept of servant in the Scriptures. A survey of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-3; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) would certainly be a rich study. To connect closely to the neighborhood group, a glance at the sometimes disputed fifth Servant Song in Isaiah 61 is precious:

> The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
> because the LORD has anointed me
> to proclaim good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
> to proclaim freedom for the captives
> and release from darkness for the prisoners,
> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
> and the day of vengeance of our God,
> to comfort all who mourn,
> and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
> to bestow on them a crown of beauty
> instead of ashes,
> the oil of joy
> instead of mourning,
> and a garment of praise
> instead of a spirit of despair.
> They will be called oaks of righteousness,
> a planting of the LORD
> for the display of his splendor.
> They will rebuild the ancient ruins
> and restore the places long devastated;
> they will renew the ruined cities
> that have been devastated for generations. (Isa. 61:1-4)

Certainly, this passage has its greatest fame as the chapter that Jesus quoted in the Nazareth synagogue and applied to himself (Luke 4:16-21). Without a doubt, Christians recognize that the passage applied to him, but those who describe their inspiration from this pericope apply it to *themselves* with the same hermeneutic that Peter used—Jesus was the first and Christians follow with the same anointing. In Peter's hermeneutic, Jesus was the first stone and the one from whom all others are measured to fit. He was the first to offer the perfect sacrifice. In this same spirit, Christians have spiritual sacrifices to offer that are acceptable.

For neighborhood servants, the similarities and variances between the Isaiah 61 verses and the Isaiah 58 passage are encouraging. With Isaiah 58, the opening verses describe acceptable spiritual sacrifices, likened to fasting, which yield freedoms and provisions for fellow citizens. In Isaiah 61, similar activities are performed with supernatural anointing, the same anointing that Jesus accessed. A particular joy for Noble Neighbors who are Christians is the recurring theme of plantings—this time an oak tree—which displays God's splendor. Again, the promise is proclaimed about the neighborhood-wide blessing: "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated, they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations" (Isa. 61:4), that the work of hands and hearts will be restoration and renewal *for generations*.

James A. Rimbach offers a very rich reflection of how the Isaiah Servant Songs should shape believers' understandings of themselves as the Lord's servants. The servant leader is present throughout biblical history in the form of patriarchs, prophets, monarchs, and individuals. The New Testament is unsurprisingly dominated by stories of the perfect

Servant, Jesus. In contrast to the lowliness that one associates with servants, especially when the Scripture translations employ the more pointed term, slave, one needs to view a servant of Christ as a privileged position. In light of covenant theology, the Sovereign God has entered a covenant exchange with all the honor, power, glory, and wealth of eternity and has taken believers' weakness, duplicity, selfishness, ignorance, sickness—one can go on and on from here—and has given Christians his vibrancy. This exchange is not a good deal from the human side where believers bring such poor resources to the table, but it is a glorious covenant that brings his beloved back to him from God's point of view.

The servant, then, is a very entitled position, so long as one abides in the vine. In contrast, the false shepherd or false prophet is deserving of the worst hell for wounding the children of God. The servant of Christ has the great joy of partnering with the Lord in divine mission, sharing both his sufferings and his victories to usher the kingdom of God into the earth more fully each day.

The economy of this kingdom is polar opposite to that of this world, Rimbach explains. Wounding brings healing. Success can be measured in sacrifice. Bearing wrongs instead of counting them is rewarded. The servant of the Lord is helped by the Lord he or she serves. He or she is enabled and empowered through the Lord and has been chosen precisely because of the innate weakness within. This Lord equips and trains the servant with a very personalized curriculum.

Rimbach makes an assertion that all believers must internalize: "One becomes a servant of Yahweh by choice—Yahweh's choice" (18). This call is from the womb and is lifelong. The calling is centered on the purposes of the caller who shares the glory with

the servant (18-19). Much can be gleaned by a study of the Servant Songs, both about the character and nature of the Messiah and about the Christian's position and posture as a servant. Rimbach has given the church a wonderful gift with his article.

Wilson shares some observations about those who are called to serve the Lord as priests. She notes an interesting distinction among those who were called:

> [Some were] "called out" (ordained) to perform certain functions such as administering the sacraments and preaching the word, but 99 percent of the priesthood is unordained laity. Ministry is the work of the whole priesthood, and it involves being called by the Holy Spirit to do six things: proclaim, teach, worship, love, witness, and serve. (15)

Understanding this aspect of the priesthood, the critical function of the unordained laity, perhaps will help contemporary laity regard their efforts with more esteem.

An unordained person ministers with a set of tools that are given by the Holy Spirit. Certainly the tools include the ones in the lists in Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12, and the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11, the same gifts that are given to those whom the church ordains. The human body metaphor used in 1 Corinthians 12 is particularly instructive for this study. The church, both globally and locally, must learn to support every member in order for it to express the body of Christ fully. In America, people have an inordinate esteem for the up-front ministers who publicly lead by speaking or with music. American Christians may be challenged that 1 Corinthians 12:22-23 asserts that the church places its esteem on the wrong parts of the body of Christ. The *weaker* parts are indispensable. The church needs to consider why something weak would be indispensable. In American society, as in the American church, weakness is regarded as defective and with the generosity of the Lord, be made to grow strong. In

Scripture, however, the less honorable parts should be honored more and the unpresentable parts need special modesty.

One does not need to meditate on Paul's human body metaphor very long to consider that the heart is so vital that it must be shielded and protected with a rib cage and musculature. Tiny body parts, such as the pituitary gland or the thyroid have phenomenal responsibility for regulating the human body. Just a small step further into Paul's metaphor shows that it explodes the institutions that domesticate the laity. This revelation causes an honest person who meditates on these verses to consider where the real heartbeat is in the pews and who might be the vital regulator in the congregation.

Certainly, ministry to the marginalized is central to the heart of God. The Beatitudes offer encouragement for the diversity of people in the neighborhood:

> God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
> God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
> God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.
> God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.
> God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
> God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.
> God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.
> God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (Matt. 5:3-10, NLT)

Looking for these qualities in people whom God chooses to bless and encouraging them to know God and to worship him in these situations makes this sermon become a guide to developing ministries that will be blessed by the Lord. The Noble district census data reveals that those who need help and, without a doubt, those who already exhibit the characteristics that God will bless are present in the neighborhood. Any ministry team that offers its service to the neighborhood in humility must recognize a population that

exhibits the heart postures that Jesus describes lives here. The job will not be to assume that all the people are morally destitute and completely without God but to walk alongside them in their journey and to grow closer to the Lord with them.

Research Design

I used personal interviews purposefully so that the conversation would be casual and relaxed. I preferred the interviewee to speak using his or her own words. Within a conversation, interviewees express their thoughts, perspectives, hesitations, and points of confidence more readily than with, for example, a questionnaire. Follow-up questions helped clarify points that the interviewees made. The interview process also legitimized the interviewee's point of view (Sensing 103).

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was a personal, semi-structured interview (see Appendix A). Interviewees were encouraged to tell personal stories. This provided data into their theology of church mission and an example of how each person put his or her theology into practice. The background information each participant provided and follow-up questions each answered gave a more complete understanding of how their theology matched their actions (Sensing 107). Transcripts of the conversations allowed for charts to be constructed for comparison between participants' answers (Merrill and West 132-33).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability for research on human subject depends upon the consistency of the data within, in this case, the interview data rather than if the interview can be reproduced

(Sensing 219). Findings should be trusted even though a biographical interview style is used for data collection. The consistency of that data makes it dependable.

Reliability can be established with an audit trail. The process of collecting and analyzing the interviews included dictation and audio recording software. Follow-up questions clarified vague answers. Each interviewee was offered the option for member checking, to review his or her answers and to add or change their responses (Creswell 267). Census data information also provided consistency with descriptions that interviewees offered of the neighborhood. Readers of the study will find "thick descriptions," a detailed analysis that provides reliability for the transcription data (Sensing 222).

Summary

The priesthood of all believers may be a foundational doctrine for all Christians, but its practice is not nearly as clear as the articulation of the doctrine. All who accept the concept agree that those who identify as Christians must be involved in the Great Commission, to go and make disciples of all people. Where the doctrine meets the practice is where the challenges lay.

For Roman Catholics, laypeople in ministry are clearly placed within the hierarchy of church governance structure. The writings in official church documents since Vatican II demonstrate how the church is placing lay ministers in its structure for oversight and accountability. These documents also consider how to foster and support lay ministry, especially within church-established institutions such as hospitals, schools, and social service agencies. The obligation to be more purposeful and clearer in subsequent documents seems to be driven, in part, by necessity. Fewer ordained priests or

members of religious orders are available to fill the positions of administrators and leaders within these institutions. Additionally, in light of several decades of scandals about church authorities, the Roman Catholic Church has needed to create more sufficient oversight policies and practices for the nonchurch authorities who now hold positions of significant power. Laypeople who are not professionals in these fields are most supported in ministry when they are serving these institutions or the outreaches of a local congregation. Very little is offered for laypeople who want to initiate ministry apart from an institution-sanctioned effort.

The Protestant voices in this study seem to be wrestling with this issue from polar positions. One position is academic or theoretical. Church function is analyzed and reflected against Scripture or other writers, and change of posture is proposed. The other position is based in practical application. Theory is acknowledged, but the greater focus is on how-to advice for organizing people around tasks. Writings in the new millennia reveal that Protestant churches have not yet developed a life-producing model. While one bishop wrote to encourage the pastors under his oversight about the breadth of the spiritual gifts they must employ in their professions, a lay church member laments how many people are leaving churches because they can find no place to exercise their growing spiritual maturity within the institutions.

Where the priesthood of all believers doctrine is being walked out for Protestants is in the stories of neighborhood churches that include socioeconomic development in their outreach efforts. The people who are ministering in these situations are wrestling with different questions than the questions than the issues that are pondered in the polar positions previously mentioned. Instead of wondering why church leaders are so reluctant

to change their attitudes towards laypeople, or how a local church can get enough laypeople to volunteer and be satisfied with their assigned task, the neighborhood church community builders are challenged with how to demonstrate God's acceptance of all people while wondering where the limit should be on what non-Christian activities are hosted on their properties. They are trying to figure out how to speak gospel truth in the midst of all their gospel-inspired good works. These are very different questions that come with the intersection of theory and practice.

Scripture is clear. God desires all his people to function as priests. Wonderfully, he has given a different combination of gifts to each person and invites all his followers to learn how to fit together in the body of Christ. The heads of the church cannot say to the remainder of the body, "We have no need of you," and expect to see the kingdom of God grow. Each one must mature into the gifts and tasks that the Lord has assigned.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how lay church members in the Noble Road neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, grew in their understanding of themselves as ministers as each one chose to become involved or not to become involved in the Noble Neighbors civic group.

Laypeople internalize a theology about who is a minister and act accordingly. This study assumed the validity of the priesthood of all believers and sought how this doctrine is worked out in the lives of the study participants. Some recognize ministers only to be ordained, professional people. Others extend the definition to include laypeople.

While all of the participants live in the same neighborhood, only half of them are involved in a newly formed local civic group. The group's purpose is to revitalize the neighborhood. This new group provides an opportunity to study if the participants regard their neighborhood revitalization activities to be ministry and if they regard themselves as ministers while they are engaging these activities.

Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

The research questions were designed to probe (a) any significant difference between the way the interviewees believed the church performed its mission and the way individuals partnered in that task, and (b) what, if any, theology supported that distinction for them. The study used the participants' choice to become involved in the neighborhood group as an illustration of how they believed they should participate in the mission of the

church. The interview questions helped them articulate the reasons for their actions or inactivity.

Research Question #1

What theological principles guide the understanding of Christian mission expressed by laypeople who were interviewed in this study?

For some, the mission of the church is a corporate (i.e., American large business corporations), hierarchical endeavor in which a layperson has little investment beyond funding. For others, mission is both corporate, in the shared activity sense, and personal. These people invest with both time and resources. This question probed an additional aspect that distinguished the subjects' financial support and volunteerism in a secular endeavor from similar activities performed with faith in Jesus Christ.

The interview questions asked were

What is the mission of the Christian church?

- How should church members participate in the mission?
- Can you name any Scriptures or Scripture stories that illustrate what the Christian mission is?
- Do you have any other words that would help others understand what the mission of the church is?
- How would you distinguish Christian mission from other kinds of mission?

Research Question #2

What do laypeople in this study believe is their personal responsibility towards the goals of Christian mission?

This question considered if laypeople regard their roles as very minute within a

worldwide denominational system with very little expectation for personal involvement in the mission or if subjects espouse that their efforts are in partnership with God and the church and that their obedience to a specific, personal directive is imperative. Variations on the extremes of nonaction due to feeling inconsequential versus significant immersion were expected.

The interview questions asked were

How do you participate in the mission of the church?

- Do you consider yourself a *minister*?
- If so, how do you understand the term as it applies to you?
- What other word(s) would you use to describe yourself in service to others?
- Do you have any goals for change or growth as a person involved in Christian mission? If so, what are they?

Research Question #3

How has the involvement in Christian mission of the laypeople in this study changed and/or continued in recent years?

Subjects were solicited from two groups. Both groups had in common that they were people who lived in the same neighborhood and regularly attended a church in the neighborhood. The variable was that some subjects were active participants in the Noble Neighbors civic group and some subjects were not active participants, although they were aware of the group. Follow-up questions probed how their choice to be involved in the local civic group had influenced their personal growth regarding their role in Christian mission. Participants were not specifically asked about their Noble Neighbors participation after the demographic data was collected unless they initiated the discussion

so that their responses would be solely from their perspective without any prompting from the interviewer.

The interview questions asked were

How has your involvement in Christian mission changed and/or continued in recent years?

- Have you changed and/or continued with the organizations you support? If so, why? Is there an event or issue that caused you to change and/or continue?
- Have you changed and/or continued which people you invest in? If so, why? Is there an event or issue that caused you to change and/or continue?
- Can you identify any personal changes or growth as a result of your recent choices and changes and/or continuance? Can you tell me about what provoked the changes in the way you think about yourself and what you are choosing to do differently and/or to be continued?
- Are you ministering or doing any Christian mission in your neighborhood? How is that choice impacting how you think of yourself as a minister?

Ministry Context

The participants of this study all live and worship in the Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio. It is the northeast quadrant of the city and spans approximately two square miles. Longer-term residents have experienced slow but persistent changes towards decay. The business districts have vacancies and properties in disrepair. Homeownership has declined and rentals have increased. Some homes are in disrepair and the standard for lawn maintenance has declined. Property values have plummeted, starting in the 1990s, and were even more severely impacted by the national crisis of

2008. The City of Cleveland Heights has been in financial crisis, particularly in recent years, and has needed to slash department budgets and personnel to balance its budget. It has responded to the loudest criticizers regarding planning and development. This activism has provoked several publicly funded projects in the other sections of town, to the neglect of the Noble neighborhood's infrastructure.

Residents who have joined and continue with Noble Neighbors, a citizen's group formed in 2014 to improve the neighborhood, have all responded to the question, "What can we do to improve our neighborhood?" The citizen-led efforts range from litter pickup, to city council meeting attendance, to election forums, to a design charrette and district-wide festivals. The efforts are effective for drawing attention to the neighborhood, changing the narrative from racial and socioeconomic bias towards talk of vibrancy in unity, prioritized planning from the city, and a local Community Development Corporation. This study explored the momentum of this citizens' effort in the lives of residents who are local church members.

Population and Participants

Subjects were solicited as a purposeful, homogeneous sampling from the geographic area of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, in the quadrant of the city north of Mayfield Road and east of Taylor Road (Creswell 214-16). All subjects lived in this neighborhood and attended a church that is within these neighborhood boundaries. None of the subjects performs a clergy role in his ro her church although some may have had other leadership roles within their congregations. Half of the subjects were active participants in the Noble Neighbors civic group that has banded together to improve the neighborhood. Half of the subjects were not active in the Noble Neighbors group but may have had some

knowledge of its existence and its activities. Care was given to include subjects of differing races, genders, and ages.

Participants were approached personally by phone call or face-to-face conversation. Each individual was informed about the Doctor of Ministry study and was asked for a personal interview regarding his or her perspective on Christian mission. Participants were asked to meet informally in a home for an interview and conversation. The participant and I were seated across from each other at tables so that only I could see the computer screen that displayed the transcript of the dictation application.

Design of the Study

For people who feel called to ministry and who choose to pursue that calling via denominational ordination, a prescribed path for intellectual and spiritual growth is clearly laid before them. For others who may likewise believe they are called by the Lord to serve him but who do not or cannot engage an official ordination path, the process of growth into ministry is significantly less clear and certainly less recognized.

The study considered how the layperson who is making lifelong, personal investments into an ever-deepening spiritual relationship with the Lord see him or herself in ministry. I sought to explore how laypeople grow in their understanding of themselves as ministers who are called and approved in the kingdom of God apart from earthy ordination. Questions were designed to determine how they see their efforts of practical service as *spiritually* effective in building the kingdom of God and how they combine a very robust faith with their volunteerism in the name of the Lord.

This study explored the growth of several individuals who have a lifelong commitment to the Lord and to their churches. Their common situation is that they live

and attend church in the same neighborhood where they serve as volunteers. Half of the study participants also volunteer in a civic group, Noble Neighbors, that is working to improve the neighborhood. The study compared those who are also involved, Noble Neighbors, with others are not involved in the neighborhood group to learn any differences between how these two groups viewed themselves as ministers of God.

The project design was a postintervention, narrative interview research of the self-perceptions of nonordained individuals towards their own responsibilities in Christian mission. The primary instrument of study was semi-structured, personal interviews (see Appendix A). The opportunity to hear personal stories gave insight into the interviewees' theology of church mission and its practical application in their lives. Background information was gathered on each interviewee, and a series of follow-up questions guided an approximately hour-long interview (Sensing, 107).

Residents of the Noble neighborhood in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, who also attend a church within the neighborhood boundaries were asked, in a qualitative, semi-structured interview, about their view of themselves as ministers. Particular attention was given to the difference between study participants who had joined a local neighborhood group and those who had not to determine if the participation in the local neighborhood group impacted the study participants' understanding of themselves as ministers.

Participants were solicited for interviews from local church membership and, for half the group, from additional active participation in Noble Neighbors. Interviews occurred one-on-one in homes. The interviews were recorded with dictation and audio-recording software.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used was a semi-structured, researcher-designed personal interview instrument (see Appendix A). Basic information was obtained about the subjects: current age, race, gender, length they lived in the neighborhood, the age at which each one identified himself or herself as a Christian, church affiliation, the length of time each has they attended his or her current church, positions of service/leadership each have held in this congregation, and active participation in Noble Neighbors. A semi-structured interview solicited personal reflection that formed the basis of the study. Questions were designed to be open-ended with follow-up probes to help clarify or elicit expansion of answers.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability is determined and established for research if its findings can be trusted and replicated. The goal of this project was to produce reliable, valid findings that may be valuable for further research and actions. Regarding the interviews, one way to identify reliability is to determine if the responses to the interview questions are consistent with the data that was collected (Sensing 219).

Ten participants were interviewed who both lived and attended churches in the Noble neighborhoods of Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Five of these interviewees also participated in a local neighborhood group, Noble Neighbors. Reliability was established based on the consistency of the data collected in response to the interview questions. Interviews were collected using dictation and audio-recording software. The audit trail is found in the processes of collecting and analyzing the data. Themes emerged through the

coding process and were the result of the consistent and credible answers that the interviewees offered.

Interviewee responses about the neighborhood environment in which they lived and some served through the neighborhood group also included agreement with census data information. “Thick descriptions” allowed readers to follow the analysis of the transcriptions (Sensing 222). Following the initial data analysis, participants were asked to review the findings concerning their interviews to determine accuracy. This member checking provided an additional layer of validation (Creswell 267).

Data Collection

The initial effort was to identify potential interviewees who attend churches in the Noble neighborhood where they also live. This task was accomplished through personal knowledge of these individuals and through consulting church leaders. This list was compared with the Noble Neighbors member list to determine how many people who live in the neighborhood where they worship also participated in Noble Neighbors.

Interviewees were called on the telephone or were approached in person to request their participation. Interviewees were informed that this interview was part of the dissertation research for a Doctor of Ministry degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. They were informed about the project’s purpose. Interviewees were invited to have a one-on-one conversation with me around these questions. They were informed that the interview would be recorded using dictation and audio-recording software and, although their answers would be part of the study, their identity would be kept confidential (Seidman 55). Permission was obtained to use the material in the study with the assurance of confidentiality of any sensitive material (see Appendix B).

The data collection was accomplished by ten open-ended interviews that were immediately transcribed using dictation and audio recording software. Attention was given after the interview to make sure the software auto-correction function indeed recorded what the subject spoke. Care was given for the comfort, privacy, and confidentiality of the interviewee. Additional inquiries beyond the initial interview questions were asked for clarification and expansion of answers. These probes provoked a storytelling atmosphere rather than simply a questionnaire-answering format (Frey and Oishi 94).

A semi-structured interview with follow-up questions allowed for a clearer description of the interviewee's theology of mission and of his or her understanding of ministry. Following questions to gather hard data—for example age, church affiliation, awareness, and/or participation in Noble Neighbors, open-ended questions allowed participants to describe, in their own words, their theology of Christian mission, their view of themselves as ministers, and the impact of their involvement in neighborhood based ministry on their theology of Christian mission and on their view of self as minister.

Interviewees were given the option of being interviewed in their homes or in mine. If they chose to go to my home, attention was given to hospitality with beverages. Comfort was attended to with seating, lighting, and cat containment. Interviewees were also given the option of meeting at a quiet public area such as the local library. Local coffee houses would not provide the privacy needed for an open discussion nor the sound isolation needed for the dictation software to be effective.

Data Analysis

Transcript analysis was performed for each interview. Transcripts were segmented from the time of the interview by research question. Texts were divided into tables of text segments. Coding was recorded in the second column of the table where responses pertaining to the questions were listed. All other extraneous language was deleted. Data was recorded in the third column as distilled phrases and concepts pertaining to the research questions.

The interviews were further analyzed using search functions in word processing software for words and phrases that indicated theological concepts, activities and what the interviewees thought about themselves. Tables were constructed to compare responses to the same question with coding for themes (Creswell 250-54). Comparisons between common language or theological language usage and the subjects' formation influences determined any link with current church affiliation theology. Comparisons between activities in the local neighborhood and theological foundations determined any link between how subjects thought about themselves as ministers.

Charts compared responses of all participants and revealed patterns of theology, of ministry involvement, of self-descriptions as ministers, and of participation in local ministry, particularly with Noble Neighbors. Observations were drawn about the similarities and differences between the participants who were active in their local neighborhood group and those who were not (Merrill and West 132-33).

Data from the interviews revealed initial theology about mission and ministry. Descriptions of ministry activities exposed attitudes and beliefs about the interviewee's own understanding of self as minister and of the efficacy of his or her efforts.

Demographic differences might have been able to explain nuances in theology and application, except the sampling was not large enough to make definitive observations. Therefore, the link between demographic data and theological or application nuances became an interesting option for future study.

Ethical Procedures

Several steps were taken to ensure the protection of the identity of the study participants. Each participant was given an informed consent form to sign and date (see Appendix B). In it, the same information was communicated that was relayed at the initial in-person or telephone conversation point of contact. Each participant was asked to volunteer to be interviewed for a research project on how laypeople view themselves as ministers. Their answers were to be used in a dissertation, but their names would be confidential. Only I would know their identity. Interviews were all conducted privately.

Specific consent was also sought for the process of having the interview recorded with dictation and audio recording software. No known risks were evident for this interview process or for the publication of the confidential interviewee responses . The final draft of the dissertation was made available to all interviewees.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how lay church members in the Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, changed their understanding of themselves as ministers as each one chose to become involved or did not choose to become involved in the Noble Neighbors civic group.

The term *minister* is loaded with cultural context. For some, a minister is a professional who functions as the executive leader of a local church. The minister leads the congregation in spiritually oriented gatherings and presides over other official, and sometimes legal, matters. Members of the congregation may serve in a variety of capacities such as in a social service capacity, with practical skill work, or in spiritual leadership, but for some Christians, these capacities are never considered ministry. For others, ministry is a term that readily applies to laypeople. The distinction these will make between their service and the activities of the clergy regards duties reserved only for priests. This study considers how laypeople understand ministry theologically and attends to how their theology of ministry is linked with the service activities they engage.

Participants

Ten participants agreed to be interviewed for this research project. They were contacted by telephone or with a face-to-face conversation. All of them live in the Noble area neighborhoods of Cleveland Heights and attend churches within those boundaries. Five identified themselves as active participants in Noble Neighbors, a civic group started in 2014 for the purpose of improving the neighborhood. Four are not participants in

Noble Neighbors, although one of them did co-organize a recent activity. One identified his affiliation as half-way and wants to return to more regular attendance with the group (see Figure 4.1). I am known to each of the participants as a resident of the neighborhood and as a member of a neighborhood church. To many, I am also a friend, which lent a conversational feel to the interview format.

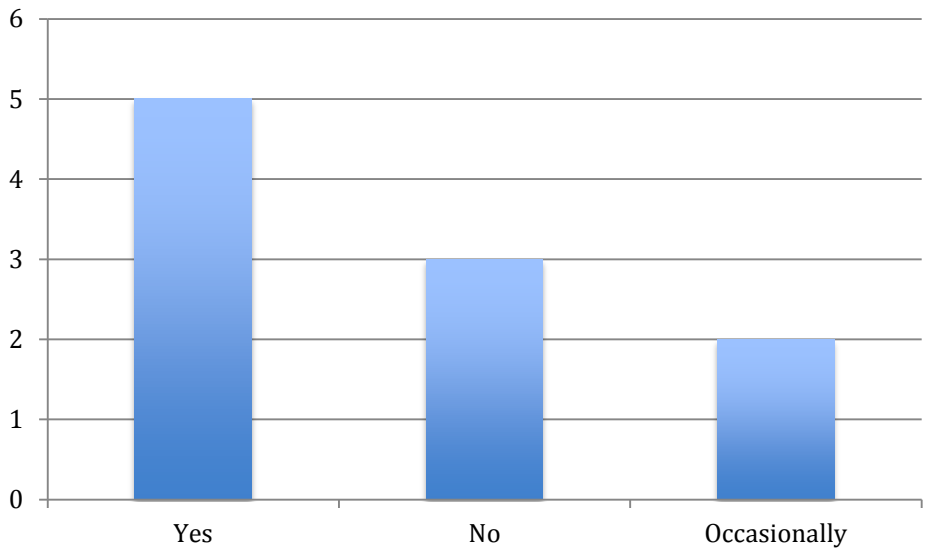

Figure 4.1. Participant identification with Noble Neighbors.

Participants' ages ranged from 27 to 92. Half of the participants were in their 60s. Two of the participants were in their 50s, and one was in his 70s (see Figure 4.2).

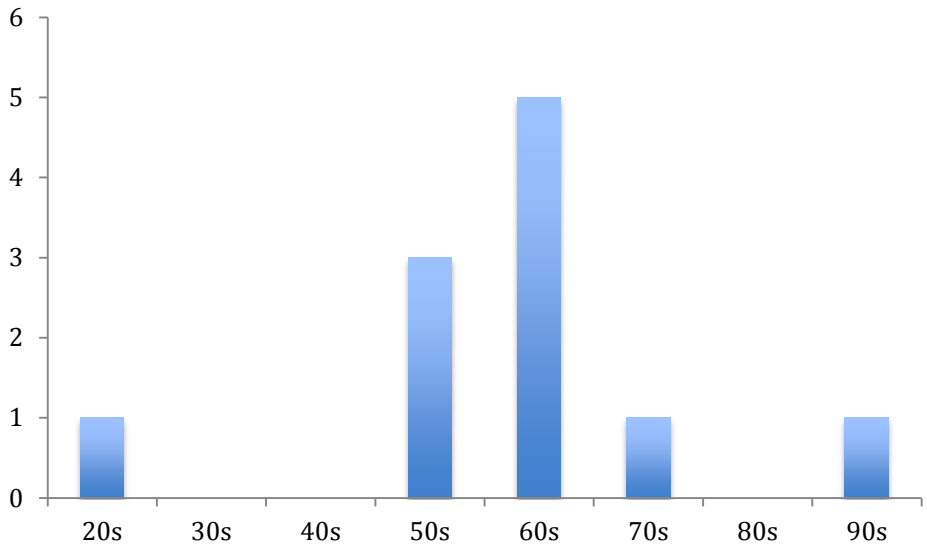

Figure 4.2. Age of participants.

Half of the participants identified as African-American or Black. The other half identified as Caucasian or White (see Figure 4.3).

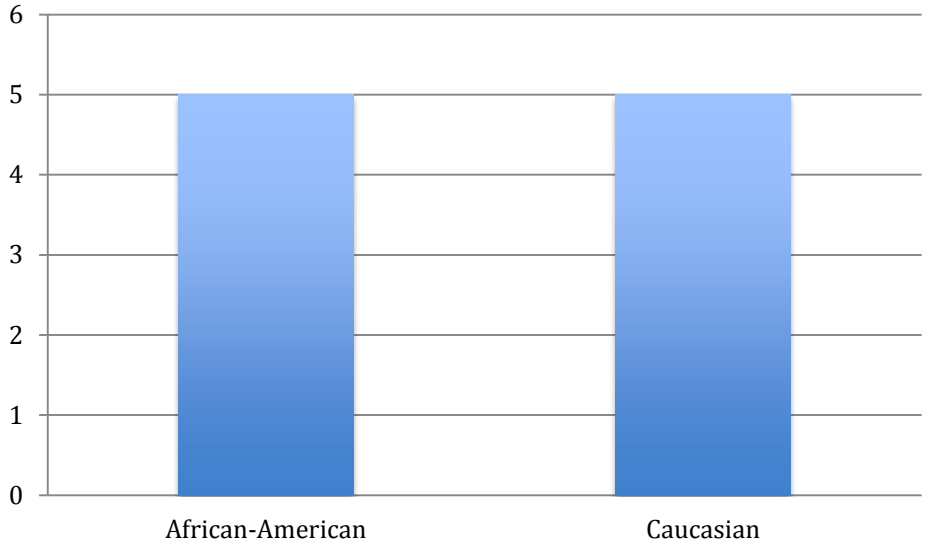

Figure 4.3. Race of participants.

Eight participants were women. Two were men (see Figure 4.4).

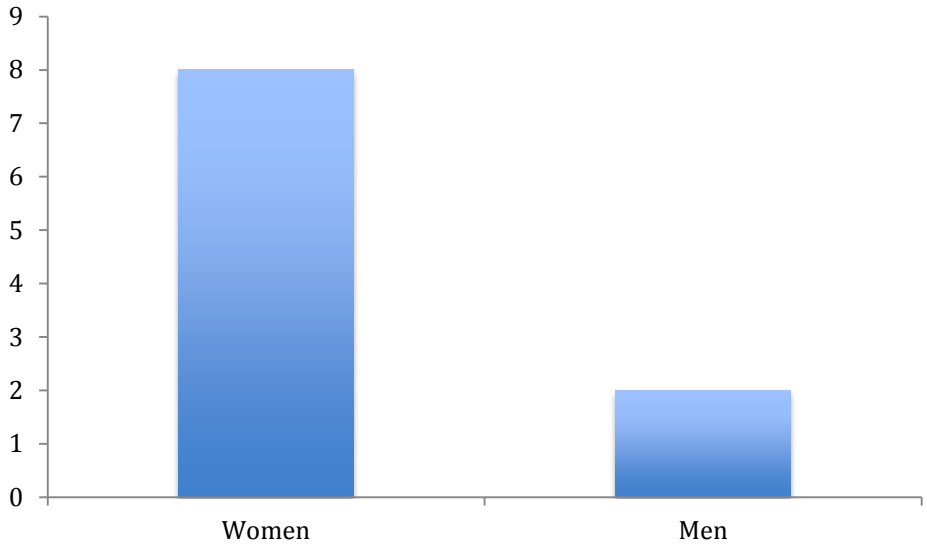

Figure 4.4. Gender of participants.

The length of time participants lived in the neighborhood ranged from twenty-seven years to forty-three years. Local church affiliation longevity ranged from sixteen to thirty-six years. Letters represent each of the participants (e.g., A, B, C; see Figure 4.5).

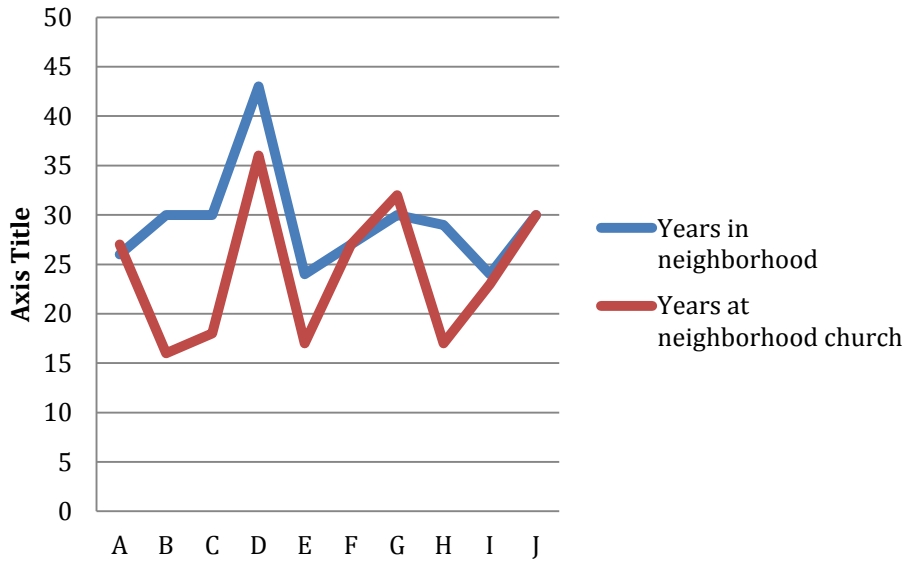

Figure 4.5. Years of residency versus years of local church attendance.

Seven participants belonged to Bethel Church of Cleveland Heights, associated with the General Baptist Conference, now called Converge. This congregation is multiracial. Two were from Church of the Master, an American Baptist Church and a predominantly African-American congregation. One was from Noble Road Presbyterian Church, a Presbyterian USA congregation and a predominantly Caucasian congregation (see Figure 4.6).

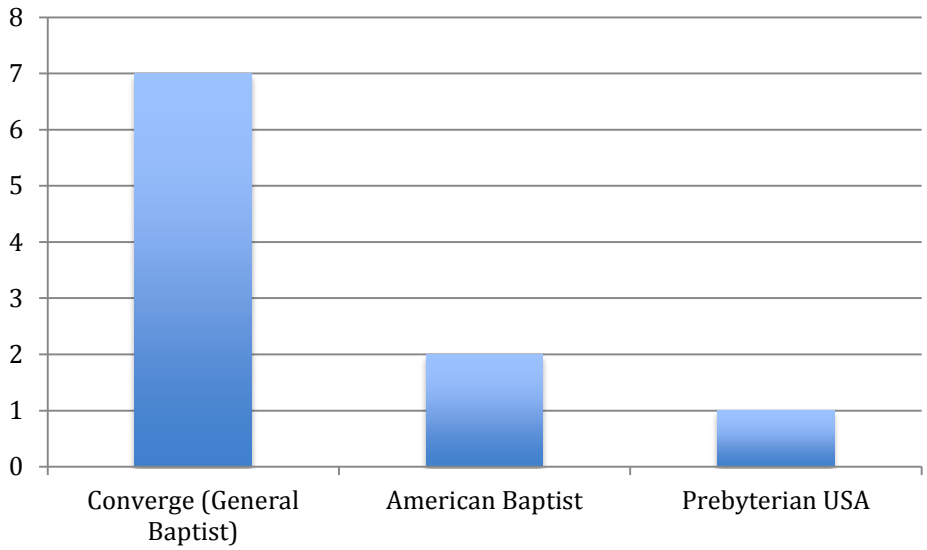

Figure 4.6. Denominational affiliation.

Additionally, nine of the participants identified the age at which they first professed their faith in God or in Jesus Christ. Two were young children, aged 4 or 5. Two were preteens. Three were teenagers, and two expressed that they grew up in the church. Of these, seven pointed to a time later in life when they experienced a significant new commitment to follow the Lord with more focus. Three were in their teens. Two were in their 20s, and two were in their mid-30s when they made their commitment or recommitment.

All of the African-American participants began life in families that were affiliated with Baptist churches, regardless of which part of the United States was their birthplace. One participant's family of origin made a comparatively slight denominational shift to an African Methodist congregation before returning to Baptist-affiliated congregations for the remainder of her life. One African-American participant's family changed to a

predominantly White evangelical congregation for a significant period before joining the multiracial, Baptist-affiliated congregation.

The Caucasian participants experienced more varied church and doctrine affiliations. Two started life in Roman Catholic families. Both considered their age of salvation to occur during their Roman Catholic affiliation years, although the circumstances that led to the decisions were significantly different. Both of these participants joined an almost exclusively White evangelical church after leaving their Roman Catholic congregations. One moved next to the multicultural Baptist church in the neighborhood. The other spent several years in predominantly White nondenominational churches before joining the multicultural Baptist church.

Another Caucasian was born into a Lutheran family. As a young adult, she attended a nondenominational church before joining the multicultural Baptist church in the Noble neighborhood. A fourth Caucasian has only attended the multicultural Baptist Church.

The fifth Caucasian started life in a Congregational church before the family changed to an Episcopal church when she was a child. As a young adult, she pursued Transcendental Meditation while also attending some Christian-led functions. She and her husband joined the neighborhood Presbyterian church early in their marriage.

These interviewees have served their local churches in significant capacities. Their descriptions have been grouped into four categories: administration, people-oriented work, choir/worship, and service. Administration included serving as secretary of finance, treasurer, and a member of an administrative committee that was a decision-making body. People-oriented work included being on a ministry team that reached

people within or outside the church, Vacation Bible School involvement, and Sunday school or Bible study teaching and leading. Three participants cited choir participation as an example of serving within the church. Service encompassed kitchen work, buildings and grounds work, and decoration. Figure 4.7 shows the number of different positions held by each participant. The zero through 10 column represents the number of service tasks each participant identified.

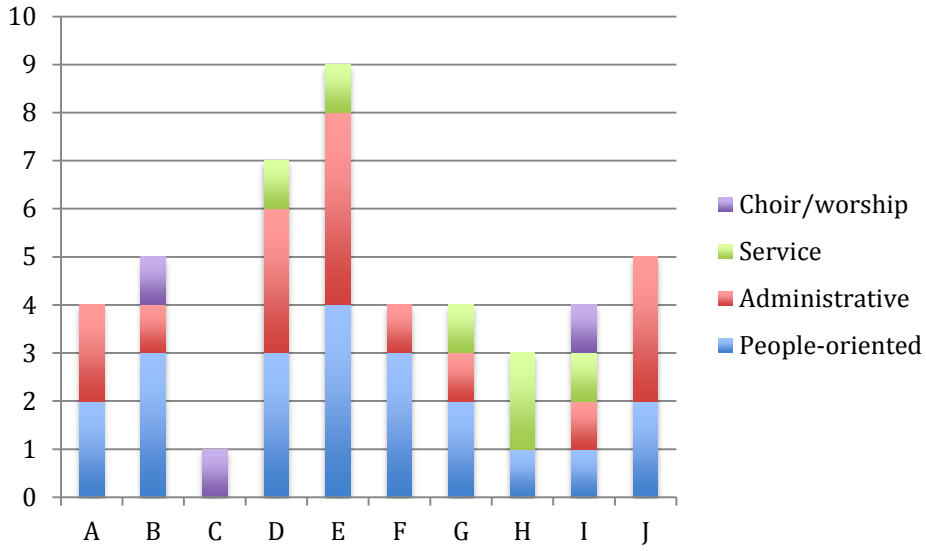

Figure 4.7. Congregational service.

Research Question #1

What theological principles guide the understanding of Christian mission expressed by laypeople who were interviewed in this study?

Understanding of Christian Mission

The first set of interview questions were aimed at learning the participants' understanding of Christian mission. Participants were asked to describe the church's

mission. In follow-up questions, participants were asked for Scriptural support for their understanding of mission, for descriptions of mission activities, and for synonyms. They also were asked to distinguish between Christian mission and the mission of other organizations.

The mission of the Church was largely described with *tell* and *do,* or *show* language. Nine of ten participants said mission involved telling people about good news or the gospel and salvation in Jesus or as evangelizing. Seven of the ten described demonstrating the gospel message through meeting needs of people and by a lifestyle that exhibits the character qualities of Jesus.

Additional language was used to indicate both the local and global mission of the church and techniques that included building relationships, baptizing, and following the teachings of Jesus. Heart postures of love, acceptance of others, and grace were included.

How Church Members Should Participate

Participants stated that church members are to participate in the mission of the church in ways described in Table 4.1. *Telling* and *sharing* involve oral communication. *Serving* and *helping* involve action. Some participants used more than one descriptor for participating in the mission of the church.

Table 4.1. Responses for How Church Members Should Participate in the Mission of the Church

Participation	%
Telling/Sharing good news	90
Serving/Helping	70
Financial support	20
Building relationships with people	20
By lifestyle and attitudes	20
Investing in a relationship with God	10

Scriptural Examples of Christian Mission

Eight of ten participants cited Scriptures that they believed demonstrated the mission of the Church (see Table 4.2). Most of the participants described Scripture stories or used a common title, such as the Great Commission. Two cited the Bible book and chapter where their examples were found.

Table 4.2. Scriptures Cited by Participants That Illustrate Christian Mission

Participant	Scriptures	Key concepts participants cited
A	Matt. 28:18-20 Matt. 10:35-38 Matt. 5:14-16	Great Commission Harvest is ready Let your light shine
B	Rom. 8:22-38 John 3:16 Deuteronomy John 1:1-5	Nothing can separate us from the love of God For God so loved the world (unclear what reference) Word was made flesh
D	Jer. 29:1-23 Isa. 58:6-12 Isa. 61:1-7 Eph. 6:10-20	Letter to the exiles Fast that produces freedom Set captives free, heal, good news for poor Armor of God
E	Mark 2:3-5 Luke 10:15-21 Acts 9:26-28	Lowered friend though roof for Jesus to heal Good Samaritan wasn't a Christian leader (metaphor) Barnabas defends Saul
F	Isa. 61:1-7 Acts Jas. 1:27 Luke 15:1-3	Set captive free All of it Acceptable religion: Care for widows and orphans Lost sheep
G	Matt. 28:18-20 Luke 10:25-37	Great Commission Good Samaritan
H	Matt. 28:18-20	Great Commission
I	John 3:16	For God so loved the world

Regarding the two participants who are not represented on the chart, participant C referred in general to Bible study and understanding the teachings of the Bible. Participant J named the New Testament in general but described knowing Scripture as "not my strength."

Additional Language for Christian Mission

When asked for additional words to describe the mission of the church, participants responded overwhelmingly with language about meeting needs of people with seven of the ten using synonyms for these activities. Of those, two had additional verbs—to encourage, to teach, and to demonstrate. Three of these seven participants used language to describe *telling* or speaking the gospel message. Three described the message

to be told: freedom, eternal life, and community. One did not specify telling as a verb, but she did describe the message to be told: forgiveness, love, this good life, eternal life beginning now, and Jesus as the perfect Lamb of God.

Two people described on whom the mission was to focus--those who were poor, hungry, in prison, and "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40). The other person referred to "the nations" and international people who are in this locality either temporarily (as students) or permanently (as refugees). Half of the people described attitudes or postures such as love, purpose, hope, care, sacrifice, or midwifery (as a metaphor).

Christian Mission as Distinguished from Other Mission

Eight of the participants distinguished the mission of the Church from other organizations' missions by using the name of Jesus or God. God or Jesus at the center provided power. The work was impactful beyond human capacity, and it involved building a relationship with God or Jesus. For the other two participants, God was implied. One focused on studying the Bible and the other spoke about saving the soul in addition to meeting practical physical needs. Building a relationship with God was also important to this person who likewise described demonstrating love unspoken.

Research Question #2

What do laypeople in this study believe is their personal responsibility towards the goals of Christian mission, and why?

The second research question probed how the participants engaged in the mission of the church and how they regarded their activities in a spiritual context. A biblical but culturally charged term, *minister,* was employed to provoke deeper reflection about how each named himself or herself immediately following the description of his or her own

participation in the ministry of the church. Participants were then offered the opportunity to use alternate language to describe their activities. Finally, these interviewees were asked to describe personal goals in the context of their involvement in Christian mission. One of the preliminary questions for data collection asked participants about their service or leadership in their local congregations. To the degree that the data question gave them an early opportunity to think of themselves as servants, the reflection answers they offered for the questions that followed either agree or contrast with their responses.

How Interviewees Participate in Christian Mission

As interviewees described how they participated in Christian mission, eight of the ten used language indicating that they helped others who were not members of their congregations. The helping descriptions included a range of activities: hospitality, financial support, behind-the-scenes support for outreach activities that others led, and relationships with nonbelievers. Three mentioned more specifically targeted populations for their mission activity: international individuals who are currently residing locally, youth and children, and women who have been badly hurt and abused. The interviewee who identified hurt and abused women as the target ministry population described in more details the activities in which she engages to reach these women. She uses therapeutic touch and is purposeful about befriending them. One additional interviewee described her relationship with God as key for determining which activities to pursue.

Three of the interviewees described how their engagement in missional activities came from a clearly internalized motivation. One of these declared she was called to reach her target population. Another talked about her internalization of Romans 12:15, to "mourn with those who mourn," as the heart posture she takes toward her target

population. The third of this group did not describe any specific activities but only her heart posture. “Purposefulness” was her immediate response, adding “a life dedicated, it is like the air I breathe” for how she perceives her missional lifestyle.

The two who did not describe activities answered the question about how they participate in Christian mission with descriptions of congregational life. Group activities included Bible study, prayer, and Sunday morning service. Other examples these interviewees described how they participated in mission included submitting to the pastor’s leadership and joining others in financial support. One of these talked about putting herself “in the way of God,” both as a positive and a negative attribute. She said it could mean both blocking God’s movement or it could be flowing with God’s movement toward blessing people.

Not one interviewee described *telling* or talking about the gospel at this point in the interview, although some implied it. One person specifically declared that he was not preaching. Others implied *telling* through descriptions of Bible study groups for international students, serving youth and children, attending Bible study groups, or ministering to abused women.

Interviewees’ Self-Perception as Ministers

The term *minister* evoked prompt responses followed by modifying reflections. Eight of the ten declared that they were not ministers. Ministers, in their definitions, were professionals whose roles were most closely associated with *telling*, preaching, and up-front leading, including public speaking to a sizable group. Of the two interviewees that unequivocally acknowledged that they *are* ministers, one modified her answer with “I’m a lay minister.” One interviewee of the eight who stated, “no” responded “yes” initially

with the caveat that all Christians are responsible for Christian mission but added the "no" answer because she associated the term with pastors. Two more of the eight started with the "no" answer before modifying to "yes." In each case, the "yes" answer carried its validation in that they helped others.

Nine of the ten described that they have a ministry to others or used the expression "I minister" to others followed by a brief description of helping activities. For some, the reluctance to call themselves ministers was explained by having family members who are ordained, by distinguishing public speaking activities from their helping activities, or by reserving the title for the leader who planned large, church-based activities with multiple volunteers.

Alternate Language for *Minister*

Terms that interviewees applied to their Christian mission activities did include some *telling* descriptors. One respondent called herself a "teacher" to describe how she identified herself as a minister. In interesting contrast *evangelist* and *teacher* were terms used by a respondent who declared unequivocally that she was *not* a minister. Helping, supporting, or serving language was used by four of the interviewees as alternate terms for their Christian mission involvement. Six interviewees used relational language for their alternate words. Most participants used nouns to describe how they thought of themselves as ministers: "I am a mentor"; "I am a bridge or connector"; "I am a friend"; and, "I am a midwife." Some turned verbs into nouns to describe their view of themselves in Christian mission: "I am a stand-by-er," and "I am a walk-along-side-er." One focused on the verb form of "love" for her response.

Personal Growth Goals for Ministry

Nine of the ten study participants stated clear goals for growth regarding their involvement in Christian mission. Six expressed the goal of continued spiritual growth as key to their increasing effectiveness in Christian mission activities. One mentioned an additional goal of gaining new practical, professional skills so that she could be more effective with her target ministry population. Three participants centered their goals on building relationships more effectively. Two of these voiced that their personal spiritual growth was tied to effective relationship building.

Two interviewees presented activity goals such as being more proactive and changing how they engaged in certain activities. A third centered her spiritual and practical goals on the target population, stating, "They are waiting for me." One participant framed all her goals within her congregational life. She expressed the goals as hopes that her congregation would be more purposeful about reaching its neighbors, especially the youth and the refugee populations in the area. The tenth study participant did not express goals more specifically than, "I want to do what I do better."

Two participants only used terms that described personal growth as their understanding of themselves in Christian mission. One described relating to the pastor and congregation and her pursuit of maturing in Bible knowledge. The other used "disciple" and "seeker." She also used "listener," "observer," and "peacemaker" in the active senses of the terms and tied these words to her background in social work. The implication was that her well-developed skills in listening and observing behaviors contributed to her effectiveness as a peacemaker.

Research Question #3

How has the involvement in Christian mission of the laypeople in this study changed and/or continued in recent years?

The questions asked of participants were ordered to lead them from thinking generally about changes they have made in their support for Christian mission into a reflection on the personal impact of those changes. For some, life changes impacted how they supported Christian mission, such as reducing physical labor service due to aging or the need to care for aging parents. For others, changes were tied to preferences for having personal connections with missionaries or for local mission organizations. A final question provoked a reflection on how their understanding of themselves in Christian mission was expressed toward their neighbors and in their neighborhood. A discussion about involvement in Noble Neighbors was not initiated here although it was a data point much earlier in the interview conversation. It was discussed only if the participant included their understanding of Christian mission with involvement in Noble Neighbors.

Changes in How Interviewees Financially Support Christian Mission

The first question in this section asked the participants to describe changes they have made regarding their support of organizations. Six of the participants cited changes they made toward supporting smaller organizations and ones with which they had a personal connection. Of these, five moved toward more locally connected organizations. One of these and an additional participant cited supporting international ministries, but the connection was more personal. The participants either knew the missionary personally or felt a specific point of compassion regarding the country the mission was targeting. Two participants are only supporting their local church as an expression of

Christian mission. Four participants described personal or family changes as a factor in why they have made changes in the organizations they support. For example, one participant who formerly supported a national ministry that focused on young children has stopped sending financial support since her children are now adults. She has shifted her giving towards an international ministry that mirrors her compassion for the people in a dictatorial country. Another participant formerly supported more non-faith-based professional organizations, but now targets his financial giving exclusively towards Christian ministries.

While two participants described changes away from supporting social agencies that do not express Christian mission in their agencies' mission statements, one interviewee was an outlier from all others. She described change toward supporting organizations such as St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and towards the Public Broadcasting System. She stated, "God will take care of the big Christian organizations." She is choosing to support St. Jude's and the Public Broadcasting System because of the good works they do for the greater community.

Changes in How Interviewees Support People in Christian Mission

Interviewees were asked to identify changes they have made in the people they support. Four stated they have not changed the people they support. They each had descriptions of life patterns in which they supported local and internationally located people. Of the six who described change, three cited transitions in family needs as a reason for their focus to move either toward serving family needs or away from family focus due to emerging adulthood for their children. Three of the participants who described changes in the people they support cited a purposeful increase in focus towards

their neighbors or neighborhood. Their reasons included a natural maturing process that grew a greater neighbor awareness and recent activities initiated by Noble Neighbors for which they perceived a significant personal investment.

Personal Growth Due to Changes and Choices about Christian Mission

The next question in this group was designed to learn if participants could identify personal growth as a result of their choices to change where they gave financial support or how they invested in other people. The personal growth participants described resulted *in* changes rather than resulting *from* their changes in financial support or how they invested in other people.

Seven of the participants responded with examples that demonstrated awareness of personal growth regarding Christian mission financial or personal investment choices. Of these, three described that they recognized a growing wisdom that each tied to their journeys of maturing or aging. This growing wisdom and maturity was giving each participant the liberty to be more targeted with his or her financial giving and more purposeful about the activities in which he or she engaged. Certainly, some of the choices reflected decreases in physical ability to perform ministry tasks. Other changes from one giving target to another reflected a desire to impact an effort that included people or a place closer to where the participant lives or to invest in a ministry that more closely reflects his or her interests. These three participants responded that their growing maturity caused them to give more to local mission activities, to give their international support funds to missionaries they know, and to spend more time helping their neighbors.

The other four participants in this group identified spiritual or psychological growth that precipitated the changes they made about how they invested in people. They

all described shortcomings in their character that they were actively working on improving. One was praying for more opportunities to talk with people about the Lord. Two others were in a season of repentance for newly revealed sin conditions, and one recognized that she had recently made significant strides (spanning recent years) in reducing her judgmental attitudes. These participants recognized that their spiritual and psychological health and maturity were tied to their effectiveness in Christian mission. Their new choices for whom to support resulted from their own personal growth and deepening relationship with the Lord. Each of these four participants was reaching out more purposefully to minister to others because he or she was facing and overcoming inner spiritual or psychological challenges. These interviewees did not offer reflections on the changes they made regarding financial giving.

For the remaining three study participants, one did not respond and the other two could not identify growth that was connected with their recent change in support for organizations or people. The two who could not identify growth expressed that they had never thought about this aspect of growth before and that they did not feel they had enough time to do a meaningful reflection during the interview. Both of these had responded “yes” to the previous two questions, noting that they had changed organization and people support. One noted that she had redirected her financial giving due to her children entering adulthood. She also is the one who had expressed an increasing awareness of her neighbors and wanted to reach out to them more. She tied both of these changes to her own maturing and entering a new stage in life. The other participant who could not identify personal growth also had children who were now young adults. For this woman, her significant efforts to be involved as a volunteer in the schools when her

children attended the local schools was no longer a priority. The investment changes she identified in previous questions were tied to social issue efforts that her church congregation supported.

Participants' Christian Mission in Their Neighborhood

When asked if participants were ministering or doing Christian mission work in their neighborhood, five connected their responses to their church building. They were either inviting people to their local church service or other church leader-led activity, reaching their neighbors by volunteering in a church-led activity, ministering to the members of their church who live in their neighborhood, or using the occasion of a civic-oriented meeting within their building to offer hospitality and perhaps influence visitors to think positively about their congregation.

Two interviewees specifically cited their involvement in Noble Neighbors as evidence of their ministry to their neighbors. One of these again cited Jeremiah 29, the letter to the exiles, a chapter she cited earlier in the interview, as her motivation for investing finances and considerable volunteer time toward beautifying the neighborhood. She knew that her deeds were opening up opportunities for conversation and explained, "You know, they don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

The other five participants claimed they were not performing any mission in their neighborhood but changed their posture as they described purposeful attention to neighborhood youth and building relationships with neighbors through acts of helpfulness and thoughtfulness. One man described at length his attentiveness to single women, particularly single mothers, who live nearby. He offered home repair advice and assistance, loaned significant sums of money in emergencies (and was careful to say he

was always paid back), and mentored the teenaged sons of the single mothers. Even so, he was clear that he did not regard these activities as ministry: "That's just the way I was raised. I was raised in a Christian home." He used this statement to explain why these activities were not ministry. Another participant refused to identify her significant neighborhood activity as Christian mission but associated it with her job, her church's outreach efforts, and her involvement in Noble Neighbors.

Other responses of the interviewees that demonstrated neighborhood Christian mission were varied. Three people identified litter and trash pickup as ministry to their neighbors. Two of these three were involved in Noble Neighbors where this activity is encouraged. The third was influenced by one of the first two participants to see litter and trash pickup as a significant neighborhood improvement activity. One participant cited her choice to shop locally as missional. Nine of the ten used language that described relationship investments with either next-door/nearby neighbors or individuals in the larger neighborhood context in the stories they chose to share while answering this question.

Summary of Major Findings

Only some of the participants in this study clearly associated their view of themselves in ministry with their involvement in Noble Neighbors. The study did, however, reveal some significant information about how laypeople regard themselves in Christian mission, and it exposed reasons why they think the way they do. The interview process provided a point of reflection for several participants who began to be transformed in their thinking as they were being interviewed. These interviews also provided a tiny window into the enormously rich ministry lives of these participants.

The major findings are

1. Laypeople have difficulty identifying their nonchurch based activities as ministry.

2. Laypeople have difficulty identifying their activity as ministy if it does not involve *telling* or declaring the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

3. Laypeople are very reluctant to call themselves ministers but much more readily identify that they have a ministry.

4. Many laypeople are very reflective and can readily identify personal goals in connection with ministry.

The greatest contribution of this study is found in the stories of the participants and with the epiphany process some experienced during the interview. These observations are truly rich, but more subjective, and so they will be discussed in Chapter 5. For the moment, the aggregation of the interview data has provided significant insight, the meaning of which will be explored in the next chapter. Observations on the impact of demographics will also be discussed later.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

A neighborhood group has coalesced in the Noble quadrant of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, to work toward revitalizing the neighborhood. Cleveland Heights, Ohio, is an inner-ring suburb of Cleveland and has suffered some of the same social and economic challenges as the central city. Some of the members of this neighborhood group, Noble Neighbors, are residents of the neighborhood, and also attend a church in the neighborhood. Some of these people have expressed a positive growth in their faith due to their work to revitalize the neighborhood, and they are encouraged when they see links in Scripture to the work they are doing.

I chose to study this change, this growth. As I heard their stories, several issues emerged. I listened for the growth in their hearts and thoughts regarding Christian mission in neighborhood residents who participated in Noble Neighbors and were members of neighborhood churches. Patterns began to be revealed that they were changing the way they thought about *themselves* as ministers. How they identified their own growth regarding how they think of themselves in Christian mission and the degree for which they were setting goals for themselves in Christian mission were additional themes.

The purpose of this study was to examine how lay church members in the Noble neighborhood of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, changed their understanding of themselves as ministers when each one chose to become involved or did not choose to become involved in the Noble Neighbors civic group.

Difficulty Laypeople Have in Identifying Their Nonchurch Institution-Based Activities as Ministry

Study interviewees readily identified their participation in ministry if it was centered in the real estate (i.e., church building) and the institution (i.e., congregational life) connected with their faith. If the activity was a church-sponsored Vacation Bible School, for example, it was listed early in the conversation as ministry participation even if the interviewee's task was serving behind the scenes in the kitchen. They knew it was necessary support for the collective mission of teaching children about Christ. Helping tasks, such as administrative duties, buildings and grounds service and infant care, were all readily listed in random order with more spiritually overt leadership roles, such as serving as a Sunday school teacher, Bible study leader, church board member, or a deacon. For activities outside the building and beyond the initiation of the institution, several study participants at first described their participation in Christian mission as inviting people to the real estate for an institutional sponsored event.

However, when asked about ministry to their neighbors, which involved similar helping activities and even very significant gifts of time and financial resources, participants indicated reluctance, and in one case refusal, to identify those gifts as ministry. Even if the subjects described that they gave of themselves because they are Christians, still they were reluctant to call it ministry, at least early in the interview. "It's being neighborly"; "It's the way I was raised"; and "It's just the right thing to do" were their explanations for their kindnesses, caring and investments.

Participants' perspectives echoed Oscar Fuecht's assertion that the church institution has kept the laity in the position of being an audience and this position gives

the layperson a limited view of himself or herself (Wilson 17). This differentiation also reflected the type of writings and leading that is going on in the 70s and 80s in the church and was exemplified by Wilson's and Detwiler-Zapp and Dixon's handbooks for how to manage volunteers. If this model is what the study subjects internalized in their early adult years, then Hulslander, writing in the same era, is prophetically insightful when he laments the fact that the most descriptive term he can use to describe how the church had developed its laity is *domesticated*: "Institutional wellbeing appears to be threatened when laity move outside the gathered church to incarnate Christ's body present in the world" (34). This study begins to reveal the struggle that the participants felt as they upset their own institutional well-being with their neighborhood service.

This perspective that ministry occurs primarily in the church building and is valid if initiated by church leaders is one view of lay participation in ministry that hinders growth of effective ministry for laypeople. The Scriptures are full of examples of ordinary people doing ministry for the Lord. If one regards, for example, Peter solely as a great apostle, then one misses the human frailty he exhibited so clearly in front of Jesus during his training years. If one does not expect ever to attain the stature of Peter, or any other named servant of God, then one never expects to experience such transformational growth. If one's definition of Christian maturity is that one must be faithful to attend (almost) every Sunday worship service and midweek Bible study, give money to the church, and be busy working to support all the church functions, then one has the same hermeneutical lens that the 92-year-old study participant has. She has been faithful to "live a Christian life" for nigh onto a century, but she did not recount to me one story of transformation either in herself or another person.

Instead, if one believes that "the spirit of the Lord is upon *me,*" as two of the participants quoted from Isaiah 61, to advocate, heal, help, and set people free, then one grabs hold of the promises in Isaiah and counts them as his or her own. These participants know that the Lord is the initiator of ministry and that much of the work happens off the real estate of church property. Therefore, they more easily grab hold of faith and expectation that God is at work in everything they do in partnership with him. The study participant who described her part in the mission of the church as being "like the air I breathe" saw that every decision she makes every day is impactful for the growth of the kingdom of God. She described decisions about purchases, choices about how to spend her time on Saturdays, and trash pickup in the neighborhood as having eternal impacts. Her smallest acts are met with the greatness of God's grace to open up new avenues for God's love to flow in other's lives. If lay believers do not couple their faith with their works, with the confidence that even their smallest acts of care open a pathway for God to grow his love in another person, then they do not access the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. When faith is paired with works, an avenue is opened for God's power well beyond human effort.

Each of the study participants identified that the difference between the mission of the church and the mission of any other organization is that Jesus is central to the mission of the church. Additionally, many described that other organizations may do good work (e.g., cancer research, professional associations, food banks, and disaster relief were cited), but the works they do are in human effort and do not carry the message of eternal life that Jesus offers. Those human-effort-based organizations do not operate with faith in

the power of God to multiply the acts of grace they offer. Faith-filled believers do have that power propelling their works exponentially.

Even though participants identified the Jesus difference between Christ-based efforts and human-based organizations, when participants described their own efforts, they made a distinction between their actions toward their neighbors and similar activities conducted *within* their church institutions. Clearly, they regarded their own efforts having lesser or little value compared to the service they performed on the real estate and within the institution of the church.

Difficulty Laypeople Have in Identifying their Service as Ministry If It Does Not Involve Declaring the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ

Every interviewee identified telling people about salvation in Jesus Christ as the mission of the church. Six of the ten added some aspect of works that would demonstrate the love of God to people. They voiced a sense that their actions, which indeed had demonstrated the love of God, were somehow of lesser importance or not significant enough to be called ministry. During several interviews, participants either denied that they were involved in ministry outside the church oversight or it was downplayed. They used qualifying language in describing their activities, such as, "Well, I guess,…" and, "I just,…" or "Is this what you mean?" However, only one participant maintained that position by the end of the interview. Several of the rest seemed to have an epiphany during the interview in which they began to recognize that their actions were indeed ministering the love of Christ to their neighbors. Three of the interviewees thanked *me* for the interview, explaining that they had never told anyone some of these things. They expressed feeling uplifted in their faith about their neighborliness. One interviewee even

jokingly told me that he should pay me for the interview because it was so therapeutic even though no remuneration exchanged hands.

Hulslander offers an insight: "There remains, however, amidst a prevailing amnesia, a lingering nostalgia among some laity for what our ancestral faith community had achieved: a kind of 'radical egalitarianism' within the church" (30). When this insight is layered against the insights that were observed during these interviews, I perceived an inner yearning for validation for differing kinds of gifts. Without that validation, these interviewees were not daring to believe that their acts of love carried kingdom efficacy.

These interviewees were like the sheep in Matthew 25:34-40 who did not understand that their acts of help, kindness, provision, and friendship were ministering to the Lord himself. The question, "Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty?" was asked in incredulous response to Jesus' invitation to take their inheritance. Jesus then opened their understanding to perceive that their acts of mercy toward others were received by Jesus as gifts toward himself. Some of these study participants seemed to experience this same revelation during the course of our interview. They began to understand that their neighborly acts of compassion were indeed ministry, actions that were worthy of kingdom value.

Absolutely, all believers are charged to "go and tell" (Matt. 28:7), and the challenges around telling need to be gracefully acknowledged and met with wisdom. Several study participants expressed their discomfort with confrontation. They did not want to appear confrontational in their evangelistic style because they believed it would turn people away from the Lord. They also did not want to be on the receiving end of confrontation and suffer embarrassment, feeling like a failure, or wanting to avoid the

people they were trying to win for the Lord. These issues need to be addressed, too, with opportunities to share experiences within the congregation of faith and to practice telling the good news to each other.

The church would do well to eliminate the gerund *witnessing* from its vocabulary and return to a more biblical perspective of being witnesses. Witnessing is often coupled with a prescribed script for sharing the gospel. To the extent that the script has been written apart from the actor, one must assume a false persona to try to persuade a listener. Theater producers use the term,"willing suspension of disbelief" (Hooks), meaning that an audience is willing to pretend for the next few hours of the dramatic presentation that they are looking into a house or viewing the forest that the scenery is trying to portray, and that the actors are the characters they are playing. This suspension of disbelief works well for theater, but it is disastrous for Christians adopting someone else's script for sharing the gospel. Instead, each believer needs to consider what he or she has witnessed and prepare to tell *that* story. The stories these study participants told me during the interview of their relationships with the Lord and how he is changing their lives *are* their points of witness to how good, gracious, and loving God is.

Reluctanance of Laypeople to Call Themselves Ministers Rather Than to Identify That They Have a Ministry

The term *minister* was almost always associated with a professional who is paid by the local church to speak and lead activities within the congregation. This term is associated with the real estate and the institution of the local church—the building and the governance. Since none of the interviewees was on their church's staff, none of them identified that he or she was worthy of the respect and deference given to ordained

pastors. In interesting contrast, nine out of ten interviewees were willing, either at this early point in the interview or at a later point where they began describing their activities and their visions of themselves in service to others, to state that they had a ministry.

For all of these, the ministry they described was some form of outreach, especially a helping or befriending action. One used the term *called* to describe her work with international students. Two others stated that all Christians have responsibility in mission. Overwhelmingly, the participants described helping people who are *invisible* or *on the fringes* of the remainder of the church body. These invisible people whom the interviewees described were not the quintessential street people or strung-out-on-whatever people.

These invisible, fringe people were neighbors, coworkers, friends and classmates. They were living invisible lives in the sense that their point of need for the love of God was not as obvious as an addict lying on a sidewalk. These folks were working at jobs, living in homes, going to school, and conducting life, at least in the visible light, quite successfully. The *fringe* factor, then, was that they were on the outskirts of God's love and outside the real estate of the church buildings, and these interviewees brought them into God's love, even for a moment.

The reluctance to allow themselves to be called ministers or to use a similar term was illuminated further in the alternate terms they used for themselves. *Helping, supporting, bridge, willing,* and *friend* do not carry the esteem that *minister* does for these participants. Therefore, the expectation for anointing or power or any other form of divine intervention from the Holy Spirit that was assumed for the professional was not expected for them. The lack of expectation for the Holy Spirit's presence was also

evident in the qualifying, almost excuse-giving language and vocal tones many used at first when describing their activities. Vocal tones became much more bold for several interviewees as they continued to describe their activities and seemingly were making an inner connection for the first time that these actions were indeed ministry—demonstrations of God's love, purposefully provided to extend kindness. The process of telling their stories appeared to reveal to them that their actions of grace and mercy had indeed opened avenues of God's love. The encouragement that this epiphany provided emboldened them even in the recounting.

O'Brien sought to measure how laypeople in some aspect of Christian service identified themselves as ministers. She demonstrates that techniques of theological reflection and use of reflection conversation partners are effective in causing these people to regard themselves as ministers, even if their church polity structure did not fully support such a designation or office. The interview process seemed to tap into this technique by providing an opportunity for reflection at the intersection between theology and practice and seemed to validate O'Brien's research.

Eight participants, all lifelong Protestants, answered *no* at first to the question about regarding themselves as ministers. All but one modified his or her answer by the end of the interview. All of the African-Americans answered this question *no*. The one person who did not modify his answer into the common, "Yes, I have a ministry," was African-American. This initial *no* answer for all eight of these participants can be explained by the interchangeable terms *pastor* and *minister* used in all their denominational contexts. Unlike the two participants who had Roman Catholic heritages, the eight life-long Protestants had no additional *priest* language to differentiate the

ordained class in Protestant churches from laypeople who are ministers. The unanimous initial *no* response for the African-Americans is most likely tied to Protestant language use rather than to racial differences.

For another point of reflection, the two women with Roman Catholic backgrounds who were Caucasians are the only two who unequivocally were willing to call themselves ministers. This willingness reflects the language of their original theological context. Liturgical Ministers and Eucharistic Ministers are terms used for laypeople performing service to the congregation. *Priest* is the term used for the ordained class of men in the Roman Catholic Church. One can understand, then, that these two women in the study could so easily apply the term to themselves. They are using the term *minister* to describe themselves in service to their neighbors, which is not an activity performed on the real estate of their current church nor an officially recognized activity initiated by the church leadership. These women have used their comfortableness with the term being applied to laity and have adapted it to their current non-Roman Catholic situation.

The Abiilty of Many Laypeople to Be Very Reflective and Able to Identify Personal Goals with Respect to Ministry

Eight of the ten interviewees could readily describe goals they had for themselves in the context of ministry. This discussion of goals is another conversation in which most had not engaged before, but their responses were certain and were offered without needing much time to think. These people *wanted* to grow in the Lord and in ministry. Most expressed goals for personal spiritual growth with the purpose of being more effective in ministry. A few described specific skills they wanted to gain to be more effective in ministry. Some of the participants described their goals with detail and

specificity that indicated they have thought about these issues at length and already are working on their goals.

This finding is critical for understanding the humble, open, ripe posture that these hearts hold. The finding that laypeople are reluctant to call themselves ministers and the observation that, therefore, they are not accessing the power of the Holy Spirit should be coupled with this finding about personal goal setting. Affirmations and reflections with trusted partners or spiritual mentors could make significant, immediate differences for laypeople.

Leaders of congregations would do well to mine these goals that their lay members are making. These goals reveal where the Holy Spirit is moving. Congregants who are affirmed in their gifts and goals and who can see how these gifts and goals complement others' gifts and goals could find themselves more propelled to invest in a vision that is borne from within the congregation and not imposed on them from the professional minister. The consideration of goals is where the priesthood of all believers meets the lists of spiritual gifts.

Nessan states that each congregation forms its identity, which in turn informs its mission. His theology of the congregation starts within the liturgy and the gathered congregation in united adoration of the Lord and moves outward from there for ministry. This theology lends itself to a birthing metaphor: When a congregation, as the Bride of Christ, is worshipping the Lord in unity, new life is birthed with both the characteristics of the Lord in all his holiness and the particular culture of the congregation in all its nurturing.

Paul encourages his mature believers to continue to press on in Philippians 3:13-15. Paul's service to the Lord at this point in his life is exemplary, but he recognizes that he has more to attain, so he sets his goals toward those things. Likewise, in spite of the retirement age of almost all the interviewees, they are setting their goals toward continuing maturity in the Lord and bearing more fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. The study participants have the same mind that Paul had, to press on for all that the Lord has called them to do. The church should be honoring these elders—their wisdom, their grace perspectives, and their long-range views of the arc of life. Their life in the kingdom of God so defiantly contrasts the kingdom of this world that exalts youthfulness and celebrates its indiscretions. Churches would do well to examine themselves to see where they have adopted this upside-down value, especially in light of preferences for the latest entertainment industry technologies in contemporary church services. These interviewees have retired from their careers, but they are moving forward with even greater focus in the kingdom of God.

In another point of reflection on this finding, an interesting detail surfaced. The two women with Roman Catholic backgrounds voiced goals that involved their communities: wanting to serve the community more and wanting their church to develop a clearer community focus. The six study participants who had almost exclusively Baptist backgrounds voiced inward-focused goals: to grow in their relationships with the Lord, to deal with sin that was newly revealed in their hearts, or to study the Bible more. Some of these also expressed growing spiritual and practical skills so they would be more equipped for outreach.

While this goal-setting distinction does give cause to stop and ponder, and perhaps an observation may be made about the difference between the Roman Catholic culture and the Baptist culture, this observation should be qualified with a few more details. Both of these former Roman Catholic women are recent retirees, are lifelong singles, and have no children. Perhaps these demographics in addition to their religious heritage combine to give each of them a more acute attention to issues of community.

Implications of the Findings

Several modifications could be implemented in the local churches that could quickly change the culture of each church and propel the lay study participants into more effective ministry. Adjustments need to occur on both sides of the lay-clergy equation for the Spirit to have greater liberty in these churches. Churches will need to prepare well for the changes that may upset entrenched church culture.

Local Church Remediation

Albert McClellan's observation that churches are "come structures" in contrast to "go structures" (Wilson 17) is evident in these participants' interviews. In spite of clear demonstrations of spiritual maturity, most of these participants had an invite-people-to-church orientation to their responsibility in mission that overwhelmed the significant kingdom work they were doing in their own neighborhoods.

In notable contrast, one participant who readily regarded herself in ministry described attending a well-respected, large evangelical church during her early years when she was transitioning from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism. At first, she had opportunities to contribute to the life of the congregation with her folk guitar skills and in Bible study group leadership. She counts those years as very formative. Soon, however,

the congregation changed pastors and "everything became more professional." Her guitar skills were no longer considered adequate. Leaders, who were mostly male, were only appointed if their style was well polished, and she believed, "I don't have a place in ministry anymore." With a heavy heart, she eventually left this congregation, joined one in the Noble neighborhood, and has held significant positions of leadership there.

The church in America needs to take a long, hard look at its Sunday morning service. If the church service is completely scripted, if only professionals perform up front, and if all the lighting, sound, and video technology are focused on the platform, then one does not *need* any of the congregants to be there, except for the collection of the offering. Now that some churches have online giving or lobby ATM-style kiosks for giving, the Sunday morning performance can happen without any audience present at all. These contemporary worship elements cause one to consider what the purpose of the worship service is and what type of worship is pleasing to God. One wonders if the corporate service has any place for the presence of God since God's presence usually implies a disruption of the script.

Other considerations should be given to how the church leadership evaluates the effectiveness of its worship service in contributing to the maturing of its members and why these study participants who have decades-long associations with their churches still are sitting passively in their pews with no place to exercise their growing spiritual gifts within the Sunday morning service. Other points of evaluation may be to determine if these participants are being evaluated and encouraged in their spiritual growth without a place in the life of their congregations for them to talk about the voice of the Holy Spirit within them, causing them to imagine doing exploits for God and daring them to believe,

and if anyone in church leadership has had a one-on-one conversation with them about the deep brooding of the Holy Spirit within.

Clearly, all these study participants had conversations with leadership about *service* within the church, and the list of the positions they have held is impressive, but all these positions served the institution of the church. Without a doubt, all these institutional positions were good and healthy things to do. One must notice that the study participants who pursued ministry borne of their own Holy Spirit-shaped hearts all found expression outside of the real estate—the ministry to international students, the neighborhood beautification efforts, the outreach to the invisibles, and their financial support choices.

What a contrast exists between the Sunday morning services that these study participants attend and the gatherings that Paul described in 1 Corinthians 14: 26-33. Paul's direction for how services should be conducted included everyone coming ready to share. This directive implies preparation by every member, not just the up-front leaders. Every member is expected to participate, to bring a gift of song, insight, or testimony, or to be spiritually sharpened and ready to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to prophesy. This instruction flies in the face of the current American trajectory towards megachurch and even merely large church gatherings. The larger the population at the church gathering, the more need to control the performance in this American church culture.

Paul's instruction again makes one question what is the purpose of the Sunday morning gathering. Church leaders need to consider who is being served when the church gathers, how the leaders measure growth in the audience members of the performance, and how leaders bless and release their lay members to exercise their spiritual gifts.

Leaders should carefully consider the human body metaphor Paul uses in both 1 Corinthians 21 and in Romans 12. Sunday morning services should not be only expressions of one body part—the voice. Meditation on Paul's writings could lead church leaders to imagine how one should function in a worship service if one is not a voice but is a hand, or foot, or lung, or thyroid. Paul's human body metaphor seems almost to demand that corporate worship should resemble a dance with the entire body gracefully expressing its adoration-of-the-Lord choreography with the diversity that its unified anatomy includes.

Layperson's Response

To be sure, the shortcomings for laypeople being involved in ministry that are identified in this study represent two sides. I have just discussed that the church institution misses the mark and causes the laity to remain domesticated. The other side is that the laity enables the institution to be professional clergy oriented because the laity has abdicated its biblical responsibility. Where the laity lays the responsibility for the spiritual direction of a congregation entirely on the shoulders of one person (or a staff), then the laity feel much less compelled to search the Scriptures for themselves for God's wisdom and direction in this rapidly changing world. Laypeople may believe that God's authority rests solely on the shoulders of the pastor; therefore, they do not take up the mantle of prayer. People with this mindset do not need to wrestle with discomfort, feelings of inadequacy, or fear of rejection in order to be better equipped for sharing the good news when the laity assigns the task of salvation of souls to professionals.

Laypeople may receive unquestioningly the institutional training that turns them into consumers asking, "What's in it for me?" One can easily remain on the periphery

and enjoy association with a congregation that garners community respect, but on the periphery, one can easily step outside and arrogantly criticize. This posture raises the issue of false humility.

False humility is a point of partnership with ministry bottleneck. While claiming Bible verses to support its posture of being humble in the Lord, false humility is really arrogance in disguise. It claims not to be good enough to lead or share or perform, but in reality, it prohibits the Holy Spirit from demonstrating God's strength through our weakness. This is another form of abdication that allows the laity to remain comfortably seated in the pew. The laity, too, then, has much to repent about in this American church dance of clergy-laity.

Returning to consider the participants in this study, within these folk are precious deposits from the Lord. None of them are consumer-driven people regarding their churches. They are all involved, taking a variety of service roles through their years in the congregation. Almost all of them described their personal devotional lives of prayer, Bible study, and reading, and they all see the need to continue growing towards effectiveness in ministry. The issue, then, is how to partner with saints such as these to support their growth and call forth all that the Holy Spirit is bringing into maturity.

One can see room for repentance all around, in the sense of the word meaning *to turn*. The turning needs to be toward the Lord and towards the joy of his revelation of how his kingdom is ordered in contrast to the world's governance. The turning needs to be toward, for example, 1 Corinthians 12 which considers carefully how each member of the body of Christ functions. When churches gain a more perfect understanding of the

mind of Christ for each other, structures, programs, and administration fall into proper place.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by its hyper-local nature. While the study has yielded a depth of information that can be transferable to other congregations, it is a snapshot of a very unique group of people. This group is skewed demographically in several ways. These study participants were overwhelmingly in or near their retirement years. They each have been part of their congregations for no less than sixteen years. Eight of the ten were women. The size of the population sample was quite small.

Most of the participants were members of the same neighborhood church. Their recent change in leadership and the envisioning that the new pastor is undertaking was evident in their responses. Some referred to the same Scriptures on which a recent sermon series centered. A few of these people recently had attended the same conference, which had a profound impact on their view of their own spiritual lives.

Still, all these limitations should not be cause to dismiss these stories that should be mined for the tremendous riches they hold. Several of these study participants stated that they had never shared some of these things with anyone else. These were not confessions of darkness within that needed deep healing and deliverance. These were honest, humble stories of how they loved their neighbors. Church leadership should begin new ways of mining the riches in their congregations and building ministries based on the lodes they discover. Sunday morning could be designed to be a service of thankfulness for what the Lord had done during the week, a swell of worship for God’s goodness demonstrated once again to the people of the congregation, and a warfare of praise and of

intercession and a fellowship of the variety of body parts all functioning together towards being the sanctuary of living stones. The world needs the people of God to stop playing church and instead be the church.

Unexpected Observations

I did not expect to be so blessed hearing these stories. Some expressed to me that they were blessed to tell their stories, but repeatedly, after the interviews were over, I sat in awe of the Lord and his loving, tender work in the lives of these individuals. Each one has such wealth deposited within. Just hearing their stories inspired new creativity for me as I encounter my own neighbors. I have known several of these study participants for years and, for some, decades, so I expected to know how many of them would answer the questions. What I did not know was how many acts of kindness some of these have been quietly extending for years towards their neighbors. The kingdom of God advances on their grace.

Another unexpected observation was the way these people answered the questions, which seemed to reveal their spiritual gifts. For example, the man who cited the friends who tore open the roof to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus and who talked about Barnabas' advocacy of Saul is himself a man who would make whatever sacrifice he could to see Jesus minister to another with such tender love and encouragement. The woman who identified Jeremiah's letter to the exiles and Isaiah's passage about ministering healing, deliverance, and freedom to people has a prophetic sense of every action she takes. The man who so quietly and willingly has given so many resources to single women neighbors has the gift of service in abundance. The young woman who is

ministering to international students has a keen sense of where social justice and the gospel of Jesus Christ meet. Perhaps she has an apostolic gift in her.

The most significant story to be told lies beyond the quantifiable data. These interviewees are long-term Christians with decades of church membership and unwavering commitment to living Christian lifestyles. A diamond mine of wisdom and biblical knowledge is in these participants, as well as abundant grace that they extend to others because each has experienced God's grace extended to them.

Unsurprisingly, each participant expressed feeling inadequate or having insufficient skill to minister to others. Their language regarding those with speaking ministries, or up-front leaders was full of admiration, respect, and honor. By contrast, their speech regarding their own efforts, especially efforts of helping was pronounced with lower, quieter tones and with language signaling a much lessor regard for those activities. Certainly, one needs kitchen workers during an outreach, but their long hours, hard work, skilled task, and people management skills were insignificant in their eyes compared with the ones who were working the crowd.

Several participants described their best efforts as the invitations they extended to others to come to church. They seemed to believe that the best thing they could do was to get their neighbors into the church building for an event or service. The implication was that the task of actually sharing the good news and the oversight to receive the good news rested primarily, if not solely, on the shoulders of the professional up front.

Regarding the issue of telling someone anything about Jesus, three interviewees stated directly that they do not want to be "pushy" in any way. Others implied it, but few had figured out how to speak about their faith at all. Most pointed back to their definition

of the mission of the church—telling people about salvation in Jesus Christ and the implication that one is leading a listener to a decision—as the only good news language that would count for the mission. The only other language for telling was inviting people to attend a church event.

Apparently, these people are still under the influence of well-intentioned gospel-sharing techniques that were widely taught decades ago such as the "Four Spiritual Laws" or the "Roman Road to Salvation." With these methods, the message was succinct, biblically based to the point of quoting Scripture and were specifically designed to ask, even demand, a listener to make a decision within the fifteen-minute conversation. Success was measured only in the quantity of decisions for Christ. I do not intend to disparage the content of these techniques. The clarity of message they provided is laudable. Instead, the concern is the emphasis on technique over relationship and the marked lack of understanding for the prevenient grace process whereby most of these interviewees accepted the Lord for themselves. Almost all of them, regardless of church doctrine at that time in their lives, placed an emphasis on a point, or two points at which they made a decision toward the Lord.

A note is needed about the racial demographics of the study participant group. Its fifty-fifty, African-American/Caucasian percentage mirrors the neighborhood. Seven of the ten study participants are members of the only multiracial church in the neighborhood. Another study could mine how these people of differing races have grown in faith together, but for this study, one must note where racial heritage is reflected in the priesthood of all believers doctrine.

Four of the five African-American study participants all came of age within African-American churches during the Civil Rights era. Church governance in this era was dominated by strong, male leadership uniting their local church with the national, prophetic movement ushered into America by the Civil Rights leaders. Leadership was well respected and given significant respect within the community. Laypeople, including these study participants, were active in this church-led movement in unity with their leadership. While racially Caucasian, I recognize that I stand on the shoulders of the leaders of the Civil Rights movement who opened doors for women in nontypical careers as well as paths for people of color.

The study participants still exhibit deference to the Civil Rights era's leaders/followers relationships in their deep respect for their current pastors and their reluctance to call themselves ministers. The oldest African-American participant could not identify herself as initiating any service other than acts of hospitality—welcoming newcomers. The next oldest participant refused to use the term ministry to describe his significant service towards his neighbor. Their perspectives reflect the leader-dominant church structures of their youth and young adulthood.

The African-American participant who did not come of age in an African-American church came of age in the same large, quite dominantly White, evangelical church as the Caucasian study participant who found the need to leave when her talents were no longer good enough. Comparing how each of these women responded to that church governance style in their young adult lives is interesting. The African-American woman is the one who had the vision to open a home to minister to battered women. Her hesitancy to call her dream a ministry reflects the dominance of *professional* leadership

in that church as well as the leader/follower dynamic she experienced as a child in an African-American congregation she attended.

The Caucasian woman was a Roman Catholic during this era and was influenced by the movement of the Holy Spirit in that denomination on the heels of the Vatican II declarations. Both attended the evangelical church in their young adulthood and both are now members of the multiracial congregation in the Noble neighborhood. Clearly, each brought a vestige of his or her religious roots with them into the interview.

I noted some subtle differences between how the African-American and Caucasian participants responded to certain questions in the interviews. The Caucasian participants were more likely to be involved in the Noble Neighbors group. Four of the five interviewees identified with Noble Neighbors were Caucasian. This demographic mirrors the attendance ratios of Caucasians to African-Americans in the Noble Neighbors group. The fifty-fifty racial ratio of participants mirrors more closely the neighborhood demographics. The scope of this study does not extend to determine why these ratios are so out of balance, but they signal an opportunity for future study. I would begin looking at where the African-Americans *are* taking leadership in the neighborhood both politically and spiritually. Issues of how each generation interacts in multicultural circumstances would be another point of investigation.

The African-Americans in this study had a significantly more homogeneous religious background than the Caucasians experienced. Again, beyond the scope of this study, but a point to consider is the age of the participants and that almost all of the African-Americans in this study came of age just before or during the Civil Rights era. The youngest African-American in this study is the one who attended a predominantly

White evangelical church during her coming of age. She was a child when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, and her attendance at the predominantly White evangelical church reflects the boldness of her parents to live beyond cultural color barriers.

Regarding the Caucasian participants, the two formerly Roman Catholic women are the same age. Their Roman Catholic heritage in Vatican II is evident in their interviews. Both have rich personal devotional lives and are generous toward serving others with significant sacrifice. Two other Caucasian women who have roots in Caucasian-dominated churches reflect the cultures of their youths. For one, the *submission of women to men* teaching that was common in some circles during her young adulthood is evident in the way she has struggled in her marriage and under weak church leadership. The other woman points to the Transcendental Meditation religious influence in her young adulthood. This participant was the woman who could not name any Scriptures relating to mission. Her experience-based orientation to spirituality contrasts the Bible-centric orientation for others in this study. The fifth Caucasian woman was raised in the multiracial church. One can readily understand, then, that she has a dominant world view and ministry orientation towards international students. She grew up in a multiracial church and has friends who have Asian, African-American, Central American, and European mixed-race heritages.

A note also needs to be made about the correlation between the participants' view of themselves in ministry to their neighbors and participation in the Noble Neighbors civic group. The interviewees who do participate in Noble Neighbors were more likely to identify their activities in the neighborhood as ministry. These participants focused on community building efforts as examples of ministry work. Noteworthy are the specific

examples some offered. Two of the five who are Noble Neighbors identified trash pickup as a ministry activity. Noble Neighbors' leaders link neighborhood beautification with crime reduction research, which may explain why these participants link trash pickup to ministry. Participants who were active in Noble Neighbors included relationship building, either stated or implied, as part of their personal goal-setting discussion. Two of the participants in this group are the former Roman Catholic women who focused overtly on relationship building.

Study participants who did not identify with the Noble Neighbors civic group were less likely to identify their neighborhood activities as ministry. Three of these five modified their position after they talked about acts of kindness and service they offered to their neighbors. Participants who did not identify with Noble Neighbors were more likely to cite inner growth as their personal goal.

The correlation between identification with the civic group Noble Neighbors and the willingness for participants to identify their neighborhood activities as ministry is present but not definitive. Other factors weigh more significantly on participants' willingness to identify their activities as ministry. Race, gender (neither male identified his service to neighbors as ministry), theological heritage, and age all seemed to factor into each participant's response. The study sample is too small to be generalizable, but the participants who are active in Noble Neighbors were more likely to recognize their efforts in this civic group are a form of kingdom ministry.

Recommendations

Each generation has its revelation deposit from the Lord to internalize and to pass on to future generations. Across Church history one can see God laying stone upon stone as he restores ancient truths to contemporary populations. The restoration of the priesthood of all believers during the Protestant Reformation, the liberty for married people to serve as clergy through the Anglican movement, holiness through the Wesleyan movement, the release of the power of the Holy Spirit in the Great Awakenings, new liberties for women in ministry, and unities across denominational and racial boundaries are just a few of the list of major movements that God has given to distinct generations. To be sure, church history is not nearly as linear as it would be if each generation learned from the previous generation and continued growth to maturity in the kingdom of God. Sadly, church growth is not characterized by all the people of God embracing God's truth for its own generation, either. The church has needed to repeat lessons throughout history and has suffered tragic setbacks in some eras. Nevertheless, each generation is marked by an emphasis.

In light of this generational movement, one takes notice of so many people writing over the past few decades about the deficits in the way the church in America and abroad is treating the laity. The body of Christ seems to be living in a moment where the church must learn to look more like 1 Corinthians 12 than like the Mosaic hierarchies of Deuteronomy. Further study could examine congregations that exhibit this celebration of the various gifts in the Body of Christ more clearly than the churches in the Noble neighborhoods exhibit. Searches could be undertaken for examples of church services that function well as *Go* churches in comparison to *Come* churches. The local churches

could begin to take small steps, such as allowing time for testimonies on Sunday mornings or encouraging several people to pray during services instead of just the one leader offering a pastoral prayer.

This army needs to be mobilized. At least in these study participants, the army is well equipped with knowledge, but it does not have much practice using the weapons of its warfare (2 Cor. 10:4). It does not have a clear path for advancement within the ranks or for recognition of its special services. As a result of this inaction, all of creation is groaning in eager anticipation for the children of God to be revealed (Rom. 8:19).

For people who feel called to ministry and who choose to pursue that calling via denominational ordination, a prescribed path for intellectual and spiritual growth is clearly laid before them. While denominations may vary quite widely on what constitutes that path, all have some points of measurement for the candidate's character development, for intellectual comprehension of biblical concepts and denominational polity, and for spiritual integrity and growth. The approval of the denominational leaders and acceptance into their exclusive fraternity is marked by ceremony and title. Certainly, an undercurrent issue of financial compensation is coupled with spiritual leadership—an issue that bears on this study's participants for their lack of remuneration for mission work.

For others who may likewise believe they are called by the Lord to serve him but who do not or cannot engage an official ordination path, the process of growth into ministry is significantly less clear and certainly less recognized. Traditional American denominational structure makes distinct delineations between clergy and laity. In the extreme, although tragically quite common, the laity function in ways similar to sporting

or concert audiences. Their value is counted for their population size and for the financial contributions they make to keep the institutions alive by funding staff and structures.

In many local churches, the laity are important cogs in the institution, but the volunteerism for which they are sought are in what are often considered nonspiritual roles such as event organizing committees or buildings and grounds crews. These types of roles do not carry the same esteem as roles that involve a measure of Bible literacy and spiritual mentoring. While some may be recruited for roles as Sunday school teachers or small group leaders, current trends are to support those roles with printed and video material so robust that the leader does not need to invest more than familiarizing himself or herself with the day's materials in order to be an effective group host and facilitator. Volunteers are not necessarily sought for their spiritual authority and biblical knowledge but for work ethics that will ensure that the task gets completed or the group experience is a positive one.

Church structures need to be reexamined to answer whom this structure really serves. The role of the pastor needs to be more clearly defined so that it reflects the biblical definition—only one office of the fivefold ministry (Eph. 4:11). This focus means the church needs to determine how the other four—apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers—should be recognized and function within the local church. The church needs to consider how it will recognize the gift so prevalent in these study participants—the gift of helps. Leaders need to reflect on this gift that seems to be dismissed as insignificant to

learn something new about why the gift of helps is called a *spiritual* gift. Christians need to consider how it is that the gift of helping reveals the kingdom of God.

If the church is going to function more like the 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 body of Christ, then it needs to do a deeper job of identifying, training, and celebrating spiritual gifts than merely employing multiple question surveys. Spiritual gifts require spiritual discernment. Gifts that are placed within the body require a community that functions in life-giving communion with each other. A healthy, strong body can accomplish amazing feats. A sickly body with lame, unused members hanging from it might be a horrific sight but perhaps a more accurate metaphor for a church that only assigns and allows its up-front person to access the power of the Holy Spirit.

Churches need to start new conversations. Christians can be conversation partners who affirm others' expressions of kindness as kisses from the Holy Spirit to woo the invisible people to Jesus. Leaders could encourage someone's faith to not only reach out more but to believe that Jesus is stepping into that space with them and is giving each minister the privilege of partnering with *him* in *his* ministry. Congregations can look together for the doors that God opens. All believers should be attentive to the gifts that are maturing in one another.

Laypeople might ask fellow church members where the Holy Spirit is moving in them. These questioners should be prepared to be amazed to hear that their fellow church members do have an answer. Leaders, lay and ordained, can create a culture within their churches of practicing gifts, raising questions, expressing inadequacies, and praying for one another as well as for those whom God has yet to bring into the church family. Churches that engage these practices will worship God together with the awe that all these conversations reveal.

Postscript

My neighborhood groans for the children of God to be revealed. The Noble district needs every believer in this neighborhood to use his or her spiritual gifts with skill and discernment. Christians have the power of the Holy Spirit available to them to turn this neighborhood into a dwelling place for the Lord, an oasis for the thirsty, a celebration dance of God's mercy. This transformation will happen much more fully and quickly when the believers who are here gain the eyesight to see how God is working through them. No gate of hell can stand against God's lovingkindness.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW

Data Questions:

Age

Race

Gender

How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

How old were you when you became a Christian?

What church do you attend?

How long have you attended your current church?

What positions of service/leadership have you held in this congregation?

Are you active participants in Noble Neighbors?

Interview Questions:

1. From Research Question #1: What theological principles guide laypersons' understanding of Christian mission?
    a. What is the mission of the Christian church?
        i. How should church members participate in the mission?
        ii. Can you name any Scriptures or Scripture stories that illustrate what the Christian mission is?
        iii. Do you have any other words that would help others understand what the mission of the church is?
        iv. How would you distinguish Christian mission from other kinds of mission?
1. From Research Question #2: What do you believe is your personal responsibility

towards the goals of Christian mission?

a. How do you participate in the mission of the church?

i. Do you consider yourself a *minister*?

ii. If so, how do you understand the term as it applies to you?

iii. What other word(s) would you use to describe yourself in service to others?

iv. Do you have any goals for change or growth as a person involved in Christian mission? If so, what are they?

2. From Research Question #3: How has your involvement of Christian mission changed in recent years?

a. How has your involvement in Christian mission changed in recent years?

i. Have you changed which organizations you support? If so, why? Is there an event or issue that caused you to change?

ii. Have you changed which people you invest in? If so, why? Is there an event or issue that caused you to change?

iii. Can you identify any personal changes or growth as a result of your recent choices and changes? Can you tell me about what provoked the changes in the way you think about yourself and what you are choosing to do differently?

iv. Are you ministering or doing any Christian mission in your neighborhood?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Laypeople in Christian Mission

Hello!

As we've spoken, I am working on a project that will be published in a dissertation towards a Doctor of Ministry degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. I have asked you to volunteer to be interviewed for the project. Please be aware that you may withdraw your participation at any time.

The purpose of this study is to learn how people who are not pastors think about themselves when they consider the mission of the church.

Following a few demographic questions, you will be asked open-ended questions about what you believe and your answers will be recorded using dictation and audio software. I will interview you at my home, your home, or another place that is quiet and acceptable for both of us. You will be able to review your answers as the software has recorded them at the end of the interview.

The answers you share will be confidential. No one but me will know your identity. I will assign you a letter to designate your interview. These confidential answers will be published in the dissertation. A line in the acknowledgements of the publication will indicate the participation of all those who were interviewed.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this study. The expected benefits are that the information you and others share will offer new insights for how the church can further its mission.

Your signature on this consent form indicates that you are aware of the nature and purpose of the interview procedure and that you are willing to participate.

Signature	**Date**

APPENDIX C

RENTERS VERSUS OWNER-OCCUPANTS IN THE NOBLE AREA

OF CLEVELAND HEIGHTS

County	Census Tract	Total housing units, number, 2012 5-yr est (ACS 2012 5-year)	Total housing units, number, 2012 5-yr est (ACS 2012 5-year), Margin of Error	Owner occupied housing units, %, 2012 5-yr est (ACS 2012 5-year)	Owner occupied housing units, %, 2012 5-yr est (ACS 2012 5-year), Margin of Error	Renter occupied housing units, %, 2012 5-yr est (ACS 2012 5-year)	Renter occupied housing units, %, 2012 5-yr est (ACS 2012 5-year), Margin of Error	Total housing units, number, 2010 5-yr est (ACS 2010 5-year)	Total housing units, number, 2010 5-yr est (ACS 2010 5-year), Margin of Error	Owner occupied housing units, %, 2010 5-yr est (ACS 2010 5-year)	Owner occupied housing units, %, 2010 5-yr est (ACS 2010 5-year), Margin of Error	Renter occupied housing units, %, 2010 5-yr est (ACS 2010 5-year)	Renter occupied housing units, %, 2010 5-yr est (ACS 2010 5-year), Margin of Error	Total housing units (100 percent count), number, 2000 (Census 2000)	Owner occupied housing units, %, 2000 (Census 2000)	Renter occupied housing units, %, 2000 (Census 2000)
Cuyahoga	1401.00	705	± 22	83.44	± 8.11	16.56	± 8.55	715	± 26	73.99	± 10.14	26.01	± 10.45	713.55	86.10	13.90
Cuyahoga	1403.01	1108	± 31	73.55	± 7.58	26.45	± 8.98	1126	± 33	70.73	± 10.34	29.27	± 11.19	1079.00	78.50	21.50
Cuyahoga	1403.02	1193	± 36	76.48	± 5.63	23.52	± 6.89	1176	± 37	73.62	± 6.65	26.38	± 8.28	1155.00	78.27	21.73
Cuyahoga	1404.00	1487	± 61	71.15	± 4.75	28.85	± 6.93	1470	± 69	66.36	± 5.51	33.64	± 8.26	1476.00	73.16	26.84
Cuyahoga	1405.00	1631	± 43	61.26	± 6.47	38.74	± 7.20	1651	± 55	59.89	± 7.79	40.11	± 8.06	1632.00	67.24	32.76
Cuyahoga	Total	6124	Average	73.18	Average	26.82	Total	6138	Average	68.92	Average	31.08	Total	6056.00	Av. 76.65	Av. 23.35

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