

**ABSTRACT**

**THE BEST PRACTICES OF ATTRACTING AND MINISTERING TO  
NON-EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS IN MINNESOTA**

by

Randall Jay Cirksena Jr.

Ellendale, Minnesota, where I serve The Ellendale United Methodist Church, is caught between the sleepy town it used to, and wants to be, and the town it is becoming. It lies along a rural, small-town section of Interstate 35 in Southern Minnesota. Up until the past few years, it has been primarily populated by descendants of its European settlers. All of that has changed. Now, the greatest demographic of population growth is among non-European immigrants: Hispanic, Asian (Specifically Karen Peoples from Bhurma), and both Immigrant African/relocating African Americans.

The opportunity The Ellendale United Methodist church faces is to discover how to effectively reach out to these new people who are moving into our small town and the greater Ellendale area with the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

The church also wants to put a model in place that allows us to attract these new immigrant populations and also to equip them for leadership in our congregation and throughout our denomination and society, in the name and love of Jesus Christ.

This study focuses on seeking the best practices of attracting and ministering to non-European immigrants in Minnesota. To do so, the researcher sought results from two different groups, utilizing two different research questionnaires. The first group was the congregants of The Ellendale United Methodist Church in Ellendale, Minnesota. The second group was leadership from institutions around the State of Minnesota engaged in

attracting and serving non-European immigrants. The leaders included UMC and ELCA pastors, non-profit directors who lead food shelves, affordable housing initiatives, free health care clinics, college professors teaching on the subject, catholic charities, educational administrators, superintendents of schools, food production plant managers, human resource directors, and employee recruitment directors.

Perhaps the greatest lesson learned in this study was to immediately lose the notion that the researcher would learn how to teach others to assimilate non-Europeans into their respective institutions. That was the wise advice of one of the first college professors consulted regarding how best to proceed on the subject. The major findings from both study groups suggested that eliminating language barriers, facing potential population decline while being friendly and authentic, being poised to avoid decline while learning of other cultures beyond one's own, using non-traditional means of service and sacrifice for outreach, and above all being open-minded were all essential to attracting and ministering to non-European immigrants.

THE BEST PRACTICES OF ATTRACTING AND MINISTERING TO  
NON-EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS IN MINNESOTA

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by

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Some of my earliest memories of my childhood include the home where I was raised by my teenage parents Georgia C. Habiger and Randy Cirksena Sr. In that home were a number of items which reflected the faith they had in Jesus Christ. On their walls hung a picture of The Last Supper and a bronzed plaque of The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Mom often brought out a necklaced cross to show us. When held up to a light it revealed a miniaturized rendition of The Lord's Prayer. This was seen by holding it directly up to our eyes.

Mom and dad never forced their personal faith upon my sisters Rosalind and Rhonda, or me. They let their actions be their personal testimonies of how much they loved Our Lord Jesus. They were ferociously desirous of the fact that we may all live out our days to the best of our God given abilities. They were strict and wanted us to know we were always loved by them and by God. They reinforced an innate drive to do so at every turn they could.

My parents supported me early on in the course of the ministry. The emphatically believed it was my calling. It was not their calling. This was their way of letting me know that I did not need to push them or force Jesus upon them. Ironically, in the last 25+ years they have become very entrenched in the ministry of their snowbird church. The Oakhurst United Methodist Church fostered these two to become splendid servant missionaries of Christ, from the great Upper Midwest. Their quiet mannerly fellowship has set the standard for how I conduct myself both as a child of The Almighty and as an ordained United Methodist Pastor.

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## **Chapter One**

### **NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

#### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter One provides the framework for investigating the best practices the Ellendale United Methodist Church may learn and employ to meet people where they are in addressing needs of others, specifically non-European immigrants in Minnesota. The researcher provides a rationale for the project evolving from personal experience supported by research. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how results are collected and analyzed. To add support for this type of project, themes of the literature review and contextual factors are identified. Further discussion of the anticipated project results establishes the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

On January 1-1987, Bishop L. Bevel Jones III, and The Albemarle District Superintendent Lloyd G. Hunsucker, appointed me to serve the four churches of The Norwood Circuit of The United Methodist Church. The Norwood Circuit is in Norwood, North Carolina, of The Western North Carolina Annual Conference. Mt. Zion United Methodist, Greene Memorial United Methodist, Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, and Rehobeth Methodist Church comprised the Circuit.

At that time, I was still a full-time student at Duke. I was also the Area Coordinator Head Resident for two dormitories on Duke's East Campus and worked part-time for Special Events Services at Duke. I was blessed to be plentifully employed such

that I could, with God's help—and the help of The Duke Endowment, pay for my graduate school education at Duke.

I was very fortunate to serve the Norwood Circuit. When I started, the congregations held Sunday School each week and only worshiped two Sundays a month. Within the first year, the parishioners and I worked together to worship-every Sunday, meaning that I led worship and preached three times each Sunday. It was a grand experience for me to-visit the homes of the people I served. Since I left, all those churches now have their own pastor.

While still in North Carolina, I served as the Associate Pastor of The Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church, Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, of the North Carolina Annual Conference. That was an exciting church to serve as it was poised to experience dramatic growth as it became enveloped by the Greater Raleigh, North Carolina metropolitan area. It did experience growth that accounted for a split and became First United Methodist and Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Churches.

My final appointment in North Carolina remains one of the most impactful experiences of my life. I served both the Pleasant Grove and Ashpole Center United Methodist Churches, and it was an extreme blessing to serve those two Native American congregations of The Lumbee Tribe. They taught me patience, tolerance, worship enthusiasm, and flexibility. The year I left, they each became their own independent “station” churches: meaning they each had their own pastor, no longer sharing any other pastor.

Since the Fall of 1993, I have been a pastor on “Honorable Location.” I had the opportunity of serving the First United Methodist Church in Lindstrom, MN, the



Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. The Southern Prairie District Superintendent, Phil Strom, inquired about my interest in potentially serving as a part-time pastor here in Southern Minnesota. I could never have foreseen what a blessing lay ahead of me. He and Bishop Bruce Ough, and the Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference appointed me to serve The Ellendale United Methodist Church in 2014. It is one of the greatest highlights of my adult life.

As I begin my ninth year as the Pastor of the Ellendale congregation, I look back to count the number of funerals I conducted in my first eight years. Perhaps the most striking phone call I received as a Pastor was when a current parishioner called to tell me her sister, Millie Crabtree Paulson, had passed away. I asked Allie repeatedly, “Did you just tell me that Millie passed? Did you just say your sister passed away?” I was shocked both by the suddenness and the fact that this matronly pillar of the Church was gone. Her death awakened a finality of death that I had not experienced before as a church Pastor.

By “finality,” I mean it was very sad, but it also signaled a different era for the congregation. Millie is the first of a generation of siblings and cousins that grew up in the church to pass away. She was the kind of woman who knew everything about the church and what needed to be done before anyone else. Millie was larger than life for this small rural congregation.

As I mentioned earlier, many folks in the congregation are related. Many of the congregants are the fourth and fifth generation of the original and founding Pastor’s family. Millie was one of four daughters, and her mother was one of seven grandchildren of the founding family. Her death marked the beginning of the passing of the remaining remnant of the founding families.

This caused me to examine our numbers as a worshipping congregation. Our worship attendance is somewhere between 40–75. With the number of funerals we experience, I know that numbers-wise, we could be declining. Yet we are not. Instead, we have maintained our numbers and grown in worship attendance. However, there are many post-age 55 worshipers and members. Many folks will pass away in the next 10–35 years.

I pondered this reality not only from a purely statistical point of view but also from a long-term desire for a movement of the Holy Spirit to increase the numbers of folks who will be a part of our communion in years to come. Most pastors have challenges that occur repeatedly and block their ministries in significant and detrimental ways.

Millie's death thrust me to the center of a passionate puzzle. How could my church thrive within a changing demographic? We needed to spread the grace of the Holy Spirit to younger citizens and different populations. The Ellendale United Methodist Church needs to be unafraid to welcome people very different than the blue-eyed blondes who sit in the pews each Sunday. I asked the Holy Spirit to open my heart to appreciate the new diversity and be an effective leader for this change.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Like many small towns across the United States, Ellendale, Minnesota, is caught between the sleepy town it used to be and the town it is becoming. It lies along a rural section of Interstate 35 in Southern Minnesota. Descendants of its European settlers populated the greater southern Minnesota area until the past few years. All of that is changing. Now, the most significant demographic of population growth is among non-

European immigrants: Hispanic, Asian, and both immigrant Africans and relocating African Americans.

I serve the Ellendale United Methodist congregation. The church wishes to discover the most effective outreach to new people moving into our small town and the greater Ellendale area. Sharing the love and grace of Jesus Christ is both a difficult challenge and an exciting opportunity.

We also want to establish a model that allows us to assimilate these new immigrant populations and equip them for leadership within our congregation and throughout our denomination and society. Failing to do so in the name and love of Jesus Christ will get in the way of the church membership being what it needs to be.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the research was to discern the best practices for churches and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1**

In the opinion of pastors, laypeople, school officials, professors, company HR directors, and directors of organizations, nonprofits, and free clinics, what are the best ways to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities.

#### **Research Question 2**

In the opinion of pastors, laypeople, school officials, professors, company HR directors, and directors of organizations who serve immigrants, nonprofits, and free

clinics, what barriers inhibit the ability to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?

### **Research Question 3**

What are the best practices for churches and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?

Currently, the Ellendale United Methodist Church has the opportunity to worship and fellowship with a healthy cross-section of persons from the very young to a more graying population. The reality is that the bulk of the missional work in the local church is being carried out by constituents who are well beyond 50 years of age. It is not that the younger folks are unwilling to do the work when asked. It is that we have yet to invite and equip younger folks to positions of leadership and mission more readily.

At first glance around the sanctuary on any given Sunday morning, one easily sees that we are almost 100% White Anglo-Saxon descendant worshippers. There are a minimal number of non-European folks who attend the church. We have had an occasional guest or been blessed to have a small number of beautiful children born of multi-racial couples whose non-European parents do not yet attend our church.

### **The Biblical and Theological Imperative of The Great Commission**

Matthew 28.16-20 spells out the biblical and theological imperative of The Great Commission:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth

has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of The Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (*The Oxford Annotated Bible: The New Revised Standard Version* Matt. 28.16-20)

Our small, vibrant, willing United Methodist congregation of worshiping believers is called to do the same. One of the things we started doing in the past months is to print the question “Who is not here?” in our worship bulletins. I asked for this to be done so that we would be reminded of the Great Commission each Sunday. “Who is not here, and “How do we get them here?” are burning missional questions. The Gospel provides no wiggle room to avoid the Great Commission but commands us to address and fulfill its warrants.

John Wesley, God’s instrument who initiated the Worldwide Wesleyan Gospel Movement in the 1700’s, writes: “The Church changes the world not by making converts but rather by making disciples.” (Disciple Blog, 9/2012) The Bible instructs to make disciples wherever we can and may. Wesley believed so strongly in the need for discipleship that he wrote: “I am more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again.” (Core Disciple Blog, 9/2012)

Considering this, Wesley felt that the making of disciples hinged upon the effectiveness of many small groups for discipleship called: Societies, Classes, and Bands. Out of these small discipleship groups, Wesley drew 1 in 10 into leadership positions to go out and disciple others.

The job description of those who looked after societies and classes was: preach, teach, study, travel, meet with bands, attend classes, exercise daily and eat sparingly. (Core Disciple Blog, 9/2012) Wesley's goals for the entire process were godliness, goodwill, spirituality, and service to others. This system produced a new kind of citizen at a period of history when crime and every form of public sin were rampant. Through these men and women, God reformed the church and the society in which they lived. We have the same opportunity at The Ellendale United Methodist Church.

The State of Minnesota indicates that the most significant population growth in the next 20-50 years will be amongst non-European constituents. Meanwhile, projections suggest that European Minnesotan populations will decline over the same period. It is a timely opportunity to examine best practices that aid in fulfilling The Great Commission here in Minnesota and in the local church.

#### **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS:**

1. European: Anyone who identifies, or is identified, as being from European American Heritage.
2. Non-European: Anyone who identifies, or is placed, as not being from European Heritage.
3. Constituent/Worshiper/Disciple: Anyone who attends or participates in church activities, member, or non-member, in a local Christian Congregation.
4. The Great Commission: The invitation and/or directive that Jesus Christ of Nazareth gave His followers to love others as they would love themselves and make disciples.
5. Discipleship: Discipleship.com defines it as, "discipleship means lifestyle-being disciples of Jesus Christ and making disciples of Christ.

6. John Wesley: The person God used to start the Methodist Movement worldwide.
7. “Where they are”: The practice of meeting and accepting others, and learning of their culture, beliefs, thoughts, values, mores instead of imposing one’s upon them.
8. Open Mindedness: A conscious, deliberate, and intentional decision to consider and see others’ thoughts and views as valid to the point where one may even allow them to impact their own.

For this project, the researcher chose to work with clergy and lay people who serve and attend Protestant (inclusive of LDS and KHJW), Roman Catholic, non-denominational churches large and small in cities, small towns, and rural settings throughout Minnesota. It includes secular institutions that successfully increase numbers and meet needs. The researcher purposefully does not highlight any racist or white supremacist-focused congregations. These are decisions based on the ministry issue the researcher wants to address and the purpose he wants to achieve.

This project draws from extremely varied categories of literature. These categories include sources that chronicle the emergence of non-European immigrant groups in Minnesota since about 1999. It includes others that immigrated earlier than the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, such as Hispanic, Vietnamese, and Hmong. They highlight the myriad of racial, religious, social, economic, and even political nuance that these immigrants bring. In general, most of the sources focus on immigration and immigrant

groups. They implore anyone seeking to work with immigrant groups first seek to understand the group's culture, and respective experiences. Personal histories are defined by their country of origin, the United States, and Minnesota.

The *Oxford Annotated Bible's New Revised Standard Version* is the most often relied-on source which also support the launching of the study project. These set the foundations for the greater understanding of the Christian Doctrines: Human Depravity, God's Grace, Necessity of Faith, and the Inspiration of The Scriptures. These doctrines set forth the Theological Disciplines of Service and Sacrifice as Evangelism subsections. The study of these resources helps the church work with, understand, and serve the current and emerging immigrant groups within the reach of The Ellendale UMC, and any institution which seeks to do so in the State of Minnesota.

This study is aided by interfacing with leadership amongst some of the Minnesotans who work directly with immigrant groups and leaders that seek to understand better and support their life's journey here. Some are leading nonprofits that assist new citizens who have come to Minnesota. They highlight the work and understanding of non-European immigrants who are living in our state's neighborhoods, cities, small towns, and rural areas. These professionals also helped the project by recommending other scholars' research. The researcher also consulted nonprofit organizations work with immigration issues such as citizenship, family dynamics, healthcare, education, psychology, community, racism, bigotry, navigating the legal community, legal issues, religious practices, and access to public institutions.

### **Research Methodology**



In addition to the literature review, two different sets of questionnaires were utilized in data collection for this project. The first was a paper questionnaire directed to worshippers of The Ellendale United Methodist Church. It was disseminated at the church in person. The second was an online questionnaire which was e-mailed to the participants.

The researcher sought to discover if the local congregation was aware of the future of population growth in Minnesota. He inquired if they see a need for growth in the numbers of people worshipping with us and if they understand that the numerical worship growth needs to come from meeting others, including non-European immigrants, where they are. The researcher sought to determine if the congregants care and can be invested in these issues.

The online questionnaire was utilized to learn from the subjects responding the best practices which worked in meeting people where they are and in terms of their needs. This included what has not worked for them as they have attempted to do so. The researcher also inquired about what, if given the opportunity to do so, they would like to try additionally or differently than they have already done.

The researcher consulted the Ellendale United Methodist Church's worship attendance statistics. He utilized the two questionnaire surveys. The worshippers who completed the questionnaire were required to attend worship at least once in the last two calendar years: 2021 and 2022. They were also 18 years of age or older.

### **Type of Research**

This is a pre-intervention project in that it sought to discover best practices for meeting the needs of non-European immigrants where they are. It can be used by this

local congregation, and any other institution in Minnesota, to inform their engagement of immigrants, should they choose to do so. It used a mixed method research: both qualitative and quantitative, combined. It utilized both a paper questionnaire and an online confidential survey and questionnaire.

### **Participants**

Participants came from two different groups. The first group as those who have worshiped in person with the congregation in the last two calendar years. This qualifier indicates a dedication to the worship life of this local church. The subjects also had to have been at least 18 years old. The second group was made up of church leaders, educational leaders at local high school and district levels, educational professors working in the discipline of immigration, directors of nonprofits, and free health care clinics.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments are multi-question questionnaires and surveys. The worshiper questionnaire collected data which will tabulate the respondents' attitude towards church growth, outreach, immigration, and immigrants. It also gauged their open mindedness to change. It was a paper questionnaire.

The meeting-people-where-they-are questionnaire was an online survey. It was accessible via a link that can was either e-mailed or posted online. It sought feedback as to what has worked, what has not worked. It will also inquire as to what respondents may do differently, or additionally, then what they have already done, or may begin to do.

### **Data Collection**

The worshiper questionnaire was be a paper document which the Pastor/Researcher personally handed out at the Ellendale United Methodist Church. It was handed out beginning at the end of November of 2022 through the middle of January 2023. The Pastor/Researcher was the only person handing out the document, and he personally collected them when they were either completed or the process was abandoned. Participation was completely voluntary. The intended number of participants for this research tool was at least 20 respondents.

The meeting-people-where-they-are questionnaire was emailed to School District Superintendents and school principals, Directors of nonprofits, College Professors, and Directors of free medical clinics. In addition, ELCA Synods, Roman Catholic Diocese and The United Methodist Minnesota Annual Conference agreed to disseminate it to their pastors and priests. They sent it out in electronic newsletters, mass clergy e-mails and posted it on synod, diocese and Annual Conference and District clergy message boards. I sought at least 20 respondents from this questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

The local church questionnaire provided data for both a qualitative and quantitative analysis. It provided a demographic look at the age of this local congregation by five-ten-year incremental age groups. It offered a glimpse into the mathematical aging of the respondents if no significant changes occurred. Given life expectancies, it provided a snapshot into the congregation's future based upon age.

With the encouragement of my research tool mentor, Dr. Karla Devlin Lassonde, I included 14 questions in the first section. This allowed respondents to answer yes or no

and to choose from multiple choice options by circling one answer which is offered and which corresponds to the desired response.

The second section of the questionnaire had respondents rate their agreement or disagreement with a series of seven statements of Actively Open-minded Thinking. Each respondent rated their response to each statement on a 1-7 scale, where 1 indicated “complete disagreement” and 7 indicated “complete agreement”. This data was used to gauge each respondents’ attunement to actively open-minded thinking.

The third section highlighted data analysis utilizing an “Intellectual Humility Scale.” Each respondent, based upon their disagreement or agreement to 22 statements, was asked through their responses’ data analysis to “Describe (themselves) yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you, and roughly your same age.” Each respondent rated their response to each statement on a scale of one (complete disagreement) to seven (complete agreement).

The second questionnaire offered respondents the opportunity to provide data analysis from written responses in three different sections. First, the tool encouraged a response in writing as to what was working in their contexts in response to the following question: “What has worked in meeting non-European when they are invited to your institution?” Second, the questionnaire requested respondent responses in writing to the question, “What has not worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to your institution?” Third, the subject provided an answer to the following question, “If all barriers and/or limitations were eliminated, given what you know now about your institution, what of the following options might you employ in your work to meet non-European people where they are?” This included “I would do the

following to meet non-European people where they are. Select ALL that apply.” The respondents selected from 32 options of actionable items. In addition, the questionnaire asked, “If there are any areas of support that you might offer not mentioned above, please describe here.” This question allowed the respondent the option of further input.

### **Generalizability**

This study may not immediately transfer to all other settings in the near term. Population changes may come slower in some geographical regions than others. Yet, in the long term, it can be transferred and used in a variety of settings and/or contexts which will be in flux like that of the Ellendale United Methodist Church’s geographic footprint. Eventually most locales in the USA will experience either traditional population stagnation amongst one racial ethnic group or another, thereby giving way to the immigrants who continue to come. The increase of immigrants coming here shows no sign of subsiding any time soon.

It may be that lessons from this study can be applied to more demographic changes which may come. Meeting people where they are does not apply only to population growth or immigration. It can be applied to any institutions’ mission, viability, or need for change. It is significant in the end as it allows people to do unto others as they would want others to do unto them.

### **Project Overview**

This study concentrates on spreading God’s Love to immigrant communities through acts of service. Chapter 1 introduces the project’s purpose and historical underpinnings. Chapter 2 details the Literature Review supporting the concept. Chapter 3

contains the Research Methodology for the project. Chapter 4 includes the analysis of the evidence for the project. Chapter 5 shares major lessons from the project.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER**

Chapter 2 contains a Literature Review of the research relevant to the purpose of this project: The research aims to discern the best practices for Minnesota churches and other institutions to minister to non-European people and immigrants into their respective communities.

#### **Biblical Foundations**

##### **Insights from Biblical Theology: Acts 6.1-7**

From the earliest efforts to spread God's grace and grow the number of believers, a laser-like focus is required. Commitment to the task as the highest priority successfully achieves the desired results. Acts 6.1-7 relates an example of Jesus's disciples' determination to remain loyal to their work of the Great Commission.

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among you seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task. While we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the Word. What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word

of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6.1-7)

A saying I have heard often that applies to many settings and institutions, including The Ellendale United Methodist Church, is “If you always do what you’ve always done, you always get what you’ve always gotten.” Researchers found the printed phrase in *The Milwaukee Sentinel* of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1981. At that time, the term was attributed to Jessie Potter, who was the speaker at the seventh annual Woman to Woman conference.

These words of wisdom apply to The Ellendale UMC as it assesses the results of how it has carried out its ministry for over 100 hundred years and determines how it will position itself for the next 10 to 30 years. Specifically, how will the Ellendale UMC address the reality of what its ministry can do to meet the needs of those who currently are not being served within their communion: non-European immigrants coming from all around the world to Minnesota?

### **The Supreme Calling**

Before I address the reality of the opportunities within the grasp of the Ellendale UMC, it is vital to set both the Theological and Doctrinal foundations upon which they are built. The book of Acts provides a presentation model of understanding and potential action. The theology of Sacrifice and Servitude as Evangelism is perfectly emulated and deeply rooted in the Christian doctrines of:

1. The Fundamental Belief of Human Depravity
2. The Doctrine of God’s Grace



3. The Doctrine of the Necessity of Faith
4. The Essential Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture

*The Fundamental Belief of Human Depravity*

The fundamental belief of human depravity is that human sin finds its roots in Genesis 3.6: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate” (NSRV).

Here is where sin and death were introduced to the creation. Physical death was ushered into the human experience. Prior to this, humanity was perfect and made in the image of God. There was to be no death. As Paul writes, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned – sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned where there is no law” (Rom. 5.12-13).

It was sinfulness that separated humanity from God. When people recognize their sinfulness, it is like the Psalmist laments in Psalm 51.5: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your abundant mercy blot out all my transgressions.” We are sinful to the core, as 1 John 2.15-16 admonishes, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world, desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

John Wesley left little doubt as to the importance of both the doctrine of human depravity and the need for humans to acknowledge the doctrine before they can be open

to God's restoration. His characterization of the human condition is unflattering and leaves no room for negotiating one's way out of this condition without God's help (Bebop). Ephesians 2.1-2 echoes, "You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient." This is the beginning of recognition that humans have sinned. People are not to cleave to the things of this world. They cannot rectify their sinfulness without God's acting mercy.

Recognition and acceptance of the doctrine of human depravity is essential to allow believers to share it with others. It is a natural, two-sided spiritual sword because it convicts people to see that they are helpless against the natural human propensity to sin. Accepting one's own defenselessness against sin inspires people to care about the same condition they encounter throughout their lives. It is a catalyst of care for the souls of others. It allows Christians to care for others in the same manner as they care for their souls. Who can better lead others to accept this condition than those who have already recognized their own sinful depravity?

God provides people with two notable examples of depraved humans who exemplify this doctrine: King David and Saul of Tarsus (who becomes Paul). King David lusted for his neighbor, Bathsheba. The King ordered Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to the front of the war, and so he died in battle. David did this so he could have Bathsheba to have as his own. It was a sinful act. Upon acknowledging his own sinful state, David writes this plea to The Lord in recognition of his own depravity:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. (Ps. 51.10-14)

Saul, a chief sinner amongst sinners, was a notorious Christian persecutor. His epic sinning not only lends another example of a depraved human being who came to see himself as such. Saul came to experience the salvation of Jesus Christ. He encountered the risen Christ, on the road to Damascus in Acts 9:

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so if he found any who belonged to the Way, men, or women, he might bring them to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing, so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days, he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9.1-9)

Saul was granted salvation from his sin, and Jesus renamed him, Paul. Later, he is used mightily in the work of the Kingdom.

Paul's salvation is an unlikely conversion story in human history. It reveals that as believers care for others' spiritual and daily living needs, they never know to who and

how they may serve as a balm. Christians should never doubt that God will use them and, in turn, touch the hearts of those they help-

*Great Grandfather Finds Salvation.* My great-grandfather, Jay Stewart, was a nominal church attendee. He was not against the church or God. He just had not committed to God as others in his life and family had. He was a farmer, born and raised in the Northeast quadrant of the state of Iowa. He and my great-grandmother raised seven strong children. They lost their farm during the Great Depression. Jay also ran a small company to build roads during that era. He was more concerned about working than his presence in the church.

As he aged, Jay became ill with heart difficulties. His daughter-in-law, Zylpha Tyrrel Stewart, attended to him. Zylpha was kind and gentle, as she had been for all the years that she had been married to Jay and Mae's eldest child, Harry. The daughter-in-law's care proved to be the setting under which God gave Jay his own road to Damascus experience. Zylpha, in her tenderness, cared for Jay's bathing, clothing, and feeding at home. Concurrently, she addressed his spiritual needs.

In those last hours and days of Jay's life, because Zylpha blessed Jay with loving care, she was able to lead Jay to accept the love of God. This "hardened," "strong work ethic" man finally accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

I share this because of the reality that Jay, my great-grandfather, for the rest of his short life experienced. He offered praise for his salvation. Zylpha's service to Jay, plus the sacrifice of her time, illustrate the evangelism of the Kingdom. Jay did not enjoy the length of ministry that Paul did, but he experienced the assurance of salvation in life—a modern conversion experience not unlike Paul's.

During the remainder of his life, Paul experienced the necessity of the remaining doctrines of God's Grace, The necessity of faith, and the inspiration of Scripture. His life and teaching about them are integral to our continued exposition. Both David and Paul, among all the saints, recognized their depravity and need for salvation. Both persons illustrate the Doctrine of God's Grace working amid their new relationships with God.

### **Theological Foundations**

#### **The Doctrine of Grace**

I gained a clarified understanding of The Doctrine of Grace in an undergraduate religion class at St. Olaf College taught-by the late Harold Ditmanson. He provided me with a vastly expanded knowledge and understanding of the definition of Grace.

Ditmanson's description gave the impression that Grace is the most undeserved, best gift in life. His words echo in my mind, "...it is clear that the grace of God signifies the incredibly generous and utterly unexpected action he (God) took in coming in Christ to this world of sinful men (people)" (Ditmanson 19). His words remind that God, in the form of Jesus Christ, poured Himself into human form to redeem all humanity: A gift that none deserves.-God gave Grace to humans regardless of their depraved condition.

Another side of the gift of God's Grace is that it is essential for our salvation. Our God, whom Paul describes as holy in Titus 1:2, "...in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began—", desires to love people despite God's hatred of sin. Paul describes God's hatred of sin in Romans 1.18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth."

The overwhelming love of God is the lifeblood of God's Grace because humans cannot do what they do not deserve, and yet God does it. God extends God's unmerited favor toward humanity. This truth is detailed in Ephesians 2.8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not of works, lest anyone should boast." He taught that it was equally at work within people as much as it was undeserved. For people to be utilized, Grace goes ahead of them to prepare a way for everything that they will do on behalf of The Kingdom.

Wesley's sermon, "Free Grace," addresses just how undeserved Wesley thought Grace was, and is, and how it costs us nothing:

The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is FREE IN ALL, and FREE FOR ALL. First. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part. It does not in anywise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is. It does not depend on his endeavors. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions; for all these flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and with him freely giveth us all things. (Wesley, "Free Grace")

Wesley's characterizations of Grace are often referred to as "Prevenient Grace – A Priori Grace." By the power and Grace of God, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ goes before to

“Prepare The Way.” He does so even before people have acted or followed through with their trusting faith and action.

Wesley also believed the very ability to say “yes” to Jesus as Lord and Savior is only by the power of this same Holy Spirit-filled Grace. He also insists that God’s Grace is a “sanctifying” Grace that makes people holy and holier and that humans can be made in the perfection of God.

Wesley believed that no matter what people are doing and where they are in their relationship with God, they are allowed, enabled, encouraged, and expected to strive for perfection in increasing and greater holiness (Schlimm 124). This text allows us to exhibit this striving both in mindful attitude and action. It is often referred to as his belief that believers are going on to perfection in their growing relationship with Jesus Christ (Wesley, “Means of Grace”). Wesley insists that people must give all credit to God, for any and all that is good that emanates from Jesus Christ, preparing the way by the Power and Presence of His Holy Spirit (Royster 79).

Paul reinforces the same characteristic of God’s gift of Grace when He wrote to the believers in Rome, stating:

But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins

previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21-26)

John Wesley's sermon, "The Righteousness of Faith" speaks of what restores that which was lost due to our sinfulness:

and to man (humanity) in this state it prescribes the condition whereon he may regain the pearl he has lost, may recover the favor and image of God, may retrieve the life of God in his soul, and may be restored to the knowledge and the love of God, which is the beginning of life eternal. (Wesley, "The Righteousness of Faith")

### **Faith as a Doctrine**

Faith as a Doctrine is vital to how believers' understanding of this new relationship with Jesus is initiated, takes place, and endures. God provides the opportunity for salvation. Faith fuels each person's trusting and believing in God, who has, can, and will save them through Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts illustrates this faith as it recounts an encounter Paul and Silas had:

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken and immediately, all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailor woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself since he supposed the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailor called for the lights and rushed in; he fell trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said,



“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16.25-31)

The jailor was saved by the faith he accepted through The Grace of Jesus Christ.

### **The Inspiration of Scripture**

The final doctrine essential for this project is the inspiration of Scripture. For centuries the Bible has been the primary source of knowing who God is. John 1.1-5 states

In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him; without him, not one thing would come into being. Life came into being in him, and life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

John Wesley concisely describes God in the trinitarian terms that are found in 1 John 5.7 “There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one” (Wesley, “On the Trinity”). Wesley also quotes the above passage as his definition because it is found in the scriptures, “I would insist only on the direct words, unexplained, just as they lie in the text.”

Scripture is the inspired word of God as given to humanity. The scripture informs the reader that The Word has been since the beginning, that it is Jesus Christ who was and always has been The Word. It further underscores that it is Jesus Christ, the son of God. He proclaimed in John 10.29-30 that “What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one” (NSRV). Jesus, as detailed by John, asserts the unity of The Trinity.

In the second letter of Paul to Timothy, the inspiration by God in the scriptures is verified: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work”. (2 Tim. 3.16-17) This scripture relays that scripture is God’s inspired word. “It is inspired” means it is from the breath of God because it originates from God by the power of The Holy Spirit.

What is the nature of this inspiration of the scriptures by God, and why is it so imperative to understand how it guides the work God calls believers to do? Without the Bible and its inspiration, Christians have no guidance as to how to live out the relationship God offers.

God’s inspiration from the scriptures also details how people will be saved. It is the Holy Spirit who carries the strength and power of the Bible’s writings. While each author is different than other biblical authors, God uses their respective styles and ancient voices as tools to inform and guide believers today. This is detailed in 2 Peter 1.19-21: “So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First, you must understand this, that no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (NSRV). It is akin to raising a flag up the pole each day, trusting that it will fly as the wind blows. Likewise, believers trust that God’s Holy Spirit will inspire them as they are guided by Scripture.

Christians’ trust in God’s Word is rooted in the assurance it is divinely inspired. Matthew 4.4 states, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word

that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew goes further to encourage believers to be obedient to their relationship with God, trusting that God does not steer people illegitimately. Matthew 4.7 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, Matthew goes further, saying, in Matthew 4.10, “Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

The believers’ desire to serve God is bolstered, guided, and qualified by God’s Word inspiration. Christians can trust Scripture, and they can trust God to guide them. In the book *Circumambulating Exodus*, Marion Grau offers some additional thoughts. Grau writes:

Whether these figures are read as collaborators, as victims, or as tricky survivors, doing what they have to do to ensure at least their destiny is perhaps unhelpful to decide finally. The stories of migration, life in a foreign nation, exile, and dangers of extermination and enslavement are woven throughout the biblical narratives. They are a realistic chronicle—whether they are always historically accurate is here not the most central concern of the experiences and interplay of nomadic, landless, and sedentary societies. Rather than being reduced to deplorable stories of genocide or justification of one’s imperial goals, these stories might be relevant to oppressive ideologies but skeptical of our ability to overcome such tendencies finally. What if, unlike their editors, translators, and readers, the biblical narratives tell us stories that do not shun complexity and show us the issues and problems we are facing in ways that might help us address them with a greater

sense of their reality? The untamable diversity of these texts might well inspire a humbler approach to interpretation. (26)

John Wesley affirms this humble approach, suggesting believers can trust scripture. In his sermon “The Difference Between Walking by Sight, And Walking by Faith” he says:

All these, and these alone, can say, “We walk by faith, and not by sight.” But before we can possibly “walk by faith,” we must live by faith, and not by sight. And to all Christians our Lord saith, “Because I live, ye live also:” Ye live a life which the world, whether learned or unlearned, “know not of.” “You that,” like the world, “were dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened,” and made alive; given you new senses, -- spiritual senses, -- “senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil.” (Wesley, “The Difference”)

God’s Holy Spirit enables and allows believers to be open to assist and help anyone who truly is in need. It also gives Christians the confidence to try to convince naysayers who oppose helping immigrants who they believe are inauthentic in their expression of needs, and to forge ahead even when the believers’ calling and work calls them to persist in the face of outside pressure.

God offers people both persistence and endurance in their relationship through Jesus Christ. The Holy Word is enduring and without end, as Matthew illustrates in Matthew 5.17-18: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Jesus, The Word, inspires believers to endure and never give up in their

study of the word, their living in the word, and having it guide all they do. Paul's writing to the Romans echoes the same idea: "What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8.31).

The Holy Scriptures' inspiration from God is not only enduring but is all perfect. Most importantly, the Scriptures have authentic reliability given only by God. John, the Gospel writer, addresses it in this manner:

Jesus answered, 'Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods? If those to whom the Word of God came were called gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled—can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, I am God's Son? If I am doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. (John 10.34-38)

Jesus implies in His teaching that His actions are perfectly inspired by God the Father. Whether believers are an individual or a local church, by following the scriptures, they know that the work they are called to do is a witness in their actions to those around them. It is even when believers are unaware of how they are being observed.

### **Lesson of a Parked Car**

Let me offer a personal story:

In 1987, when I was a Senior student at Duke Divinity School, I accepted the opportunity to be Head Resident for two dormitories on Duke's East Campus. I was also appointed as the Pastor on The Norwood Circuit in The Western North Carolina Annual

Conference of the United Methodist Church. I saw both responsibilities as opportunities to serve God.

I was 26 and still driving the aged 1966 Chrysler Newport that I drove from Minnesota to attend Duke in the Fall of 1984. It was old enough that the car's transmission was struggling mightily. "Reverse" in the transmission did not work until the vehicle had warmed up sufficiently. I learned to avoid parking spots that required me to back up using the reverse gear. So, I began to back into parking spots instead of pulling into them at the end of the day. One day, I went out to my car to use it for the first time that day only to find the following handwritten note, folded and stuck in my windshield wiper "Dear Driver: We have been watching you for quite some time parking your car ala teeny-bopper style "backing in." You now have become the center of a wager: #1 When or will you get it right? #2 How many times will it get done properly this semester? You will be pleased to know that you have lightened our hearts and made us feel less insecure about our own faults." In my case, I had no idea who authored the note and have no idea today." We never know when we are being observed and how our actions and witness impact others. But I know that my actions were observed and impacted others on behalf of and because of the power of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. The same is true for each of us and can also be for most institutions.

The doctrine of the inspiration of the holy scriptures holds three attributes for consideration about how believers are to carry out their knowledge of God and living out of God's inspiration:

First, Christians may believe that scripture is without any blemish in the original writings of both the Old and New Testaments. Christians know this as John 17.16-17,

“They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” Wesley in Sermon 67 entitled “On Divine Providence” addresses how believers may further view how God inspires the scriptures by God’s Divine providence. He says:

And it is no wonder: For only God himself can give a clear, consistent, perfect account (that is, as perfect as our weak understanding can receive) And this he hath done in his written word: All the oracles of God, all the Scriptures, both Old Testament and the New, describe so many scenes of divine providence. It is the beautiful remark of a fine writer’s attribution: “Those who object to the Old Testament in particular do not observe the nature and design of these writings. They do not see that Scripture is the history of God.” Those who bear this upon their minds will easily perceive that the inspired writers never lose sight of it but preserve one unbroken, connected chain from the beginning to the end. All over that wonderful book, as “life and immortality” (immortal life) is gradually “brought to light,” so is Immanuel, God with us, and his kingdom ruling over all. (Wesley, “On Divine Providence”)

Second, believers are encouraged to view the Scriptures as historically verifiable and accurate. It may seem like an obvious historical truth, for example, that humans were created as male and female. Not to be overly simplistic, but the Bible details the reality of the human species having only two genders. Matthew 19:4-6 states, “Have you not read that the one who, in the beginning, ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined together, let no one separate’” (NSRV). It is not meant to be any more than a verification of the accuracy of

the scriptures. Believers are taught that they can rely upon them to provide historical context, relevance, and reliability for application in carrying out the gospel in their lives today.

John Wesley entertains God's presence in the scriptures and, in the unfolding of human history, teaches believers that God is during it all--from beginning to end and in everything in between. His sermon, entitled "The Wisdom of God's Counsels" reminds his audience that God did not just initiate the creation and leave it alone to unfold with no undetermined end. Wesley also asserts that God is not just driving worldly circumstances to meet God's ends at the end of humanity. Rather, Wesley explains that God is involved in it all:

1. Some apprehend God's wisdom and knowledge to mean one and the same thing. Others believe that the wisdom of God more directly refers to his appointing the ends of all things; and his knowledge of the means which he hath prepared and made conducive to those ends. The former seems to be the most natural explication; as the wisdom of God, in its most extensive meaning, must include the one and the other, the means and the ends. (Wesley, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels")

Third, God's holy inspiration and presence in the scriptures and the universe demonstrates God's ultimate supremacy. Matthew shares how Jesus illustrated God's omnipotence and omniscience: being all-powerful and all-present. In Matthew 15.4-9, Jesus responds to those who were trying to entrap him in questioning why he would tolerate the breaking of Jewish and cultural traditions. Jesus replies:



For God said, “Honor your father and mother,” and, “Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.” But you say that whoever tells father or mother, “Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,” then that person need not honor the father. So, for the sake of your tradition, you void the word of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: “The people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.”

John Wesley reminds believers that they are to revere God above all, that they are not to ever let anything supersede God, and that nothing is above God’s word. Wesley writes, “Teaching the commandments of men as equal with, nay, superior to, those of God. What can be a more heinous sin?” (Wesley ”Notes on the Gospel of Matthew.

### **Living Out the Theology of Service and Sacrifice as Evangelism**

Today, on any given Sunday, one attending The Ellendale UMC would routinely see 100% of the worshippers as Caucasian descendants of earlier arrived European immigrants. The great majority of them are over the age of 50. This local church faces what Lovett H. Weems Jr. calls “The Death Tsunami” (8). He details the reality that in the United Methodist Church, there will be “50 percent more deaths in 2050 than in 2010” (Weems 8). It is simple to see this same dynamic at work in the local Ellendale UMC just by looking around and surmising life expectancies that this local congregation is facing a tsunami of its own within the next two decades. Weems’s words jolt one’s psyche and spirit with this reality: at some point along this journey, such a church must make a basic decision. One option is to continue to live one year at a time and do whatever it takes to get by even, if necessary, decisions harm long-term viability, and

even knowing the church may close in the not-too-distant future” His words haunt me as the pastor of this local congregation. Most population growth in the next decades in Minnesota will be amongst non-Europeans. It behooves Ellendale Church to examine what they will do next to carry out its mission for both spiritual and ministry viability. The Ellendale UMC is blessed to have immigrants who move to Southern Minnesota.

The Early Church, like the Ellendale UMC, wrestled with how it would change to meet the ever-growing needs of those who were coming to the Church as new disciples. Weems says, “‘What is our mission?’ is the first question for any congregation. A congregation is fortunate to have a good mission (statement) stating clearly what it exists to do. But more is necessary” (61). More is required for the Ellendale UMC to do as well. It begins with acknowledging its own mission statement and assessing whether it is living up to it: “The mission of the Ellendale United Methodist Church is to create the desire to make Jesus Christ Lord of our lives through preaching, teaching, praying, and obeying the Word of God.”

Weems delves further into the crux of this project and the dilemma of The UMC in the USA. “Today, the United Methodist Church in the United States is not only dramatically smaller than it used to be, but it is older and less diverse than the population. Thus, the premise emerges that we must learn to reach more people, younger people, and a more diverse people” (Weems 76). Rodney M. Woo, in his book, *The Color of Church*, describes what a local church’s vision might look like from a macro view. Woo says, “It is essential for a church to have a clear biblical vision if they dream this God-sized dream of all the nations coming together for the glory of God” (33). Woo does not take a cautionary approach in his writings. Rather, he writes encouragingly:

Wherever you are spiritually in this delicate and explosive process; God may be calling you to a new beginning. Your beginning may simply involve becoming aware of what is going on racially across our country and more specifically, in your local context. You may need to learn how to leave your racial comfort zone and begin new relationships with people who belong to different races. In addition, your congregation may need a new beginning in the manner and target of their ministry. Enlarging your racial, cultural, and ethnic boundaries may need to take on an entirely new dimension. (Woo 3)

The manner and target of ministry changes may seem too enormous for small congregations like The Ellendale UMC. But it is not impossible. Woo encourages any congregation contemplating this. Woo writes, “Although the multiracial vision is not entirely visible to the American church at this time, it does not mean that it is not in the process of developing into a movement of sizeable proportions” (23).

Woo suggests that there are five distinct ways to describe how people advocate for and view the racial makeup of local churches, and their role in this process:

1. “On the far right are the advocates of prejudice who want to maintain the purity of the separate divisions between races and cultures within the religious or church context to keep these distinctions intact” (Woo 145). These are the types of people who complain about the influx of other races, like the influx of “Mexican and Somali” migrants in Willmar, Minnesota. This is detailed in an article, “We Hear It Is Raining in Willmar,” where some imply that it was raining new people who did not look like the traditional homogenous society it once did before the Hispanic and Somalian immigrants began to arrive (Green).

2. "The Homogenous advocates are entrenched in their distinct racial traditions... This group sees nothing wrong with churches of different races and even encourages their separate existence, but they refuse to cross racial lines and interface with different groups" They will not act beyond the comfort of their own racial group.
3. "On the one hand, Christians need to develop attitudes that come from the core of their faith and not from popular prejudices. These attitudes then need to develop into actions of service. The second challenge is the need for churches to take a prophetic stance against the unjust ways in which society treats immigrants" (Escobar 6).
4. "Seekers includes curious people who are fascinated by the multiracial congregation includes people who come to our church looking for something different than their homogeneous congregations. They feel something is missing in their Christian and church experiences. They question why there are racial lines of demarcation at all, especially considering what the Bible says about reaching all nations. These seekers discover and experience the crossing of racial lines at work, school, community, and are perplexed why the church refuses to cross these blatant barriers" (Woo 148-49). These kinds of church members may also be those who would be frustrated by the negative targeting of immigrants by prejudices and anyone who would be sympathizers for immigrant rights (Jones). They may also be in favor of the arrangement in St. Anthony Park Lutheran, St. Anthony Park, MN where a mostly white Lutheran church shares their church building with a congregation of Chinese Speaking Immigrants.

5. “Fully Integrated Believers... In the contemporary setting, the fully integrated believers are the people in our church family who caught and embraced the multiracial vision” (Woo 152). These “Fully Integrated Believers” are highlighted in the article about the Trinity Lutheran Congregation which was started in Minneapolis by Norwegian and Danish Immigrants in 1868, “It’s about grace: being a neighbor in a changed neighborhood,” I’m not sure, and I have been at this a long time. But I have come to know a few things. Being a Christian presence in Cedar-Riverside means often feeling inadequate, not particularly useful, and being ready to feel inadequate and useless for a long time. Being a Christian presence means letting go of any expectations and dreams of fixing everything. It means letting the community lead and listening for ways we might, just might, be able to help. It means quietly realizing that being present and listening may be the real help that we can give this community. But mostly, it simply means that we are here, for the long haul, with no agenda other than to be here. It means trusting that somehow God is working through all of US in a way that is bigger than anything we will ever be able to comprehend. Accompaniment is the word for it these days.... In so many ways those of US who are white Christian leaders have for so long been from the dominant cultural group that it seems natural and right to assume we know and understand the heart or cause of an issue. We blindly and easily think that we know how to fix it. And then we assume that we have the right to do just that. Letting go is not easy, especially when so much power and control can be lost. Grace can be hard to see at times like that. Today we are clearly in the minority, and, in many ways, we are the

guests. We do not look, sound, or worship like most of our neighbors. We are Christians, and our newer neighbors are primarily Muslim, with some burnt-out hippies from the 1970s sprinkled in.

6. “Missionaries...The final group is the missionaries for the cause of multiracial congregations. The primary biblical examples are Jesus and Paul. Both men shattered ancient racial barriers to incorporate all people groups into one body and one family. Even though they encountered stiff opposition from their own race, they both intentionally and persistently reached out to all people groups. Many individuals did not need to be in each congregation, but each church needs a core group who are willing to lead, cast the vision, and set the pace” (Woo 153). I believe that by knowing Jesus Christ, each believer has varying degrees of “The Missionary” within them. It may not have yet been awakened. They may not know how it will be used or manifested in their lives. But it is there. Believers, and their churches, have yet to allow God to draw it out of them as God did with the First Century Church in The Book of Acts.

The biblical template for believers contemplations about allowing God to draw it out of them lies in Acts 6. The first several chapters of Acts set the scene of a growing community despite some conflict and pressures from within and externally. Acts 6.1-7 highlights how the Early Church deemed that it needed to examine its practices. They decided how to best change to meet the emerging needs of those around them. They knew that if they did what they had always done, they were not going to be able to meet the needs of those who were coming and expressing new needs.

The most significant aspect of this foundational approach is that the Early Church was “assessing” how it was doing ministry as it sought to fulfill The Gospel. It sets the example of the need to re-assess how, and how effectively, the mission of Jesus Christ was, and is, being carried on. This is made clear as “The number of Disciples” it says were increasing both in numbers and depth of The Holy Spirit. They were beginning to illustrate their growing understanding of The Passion Story and its pivotal role in the history of humanity (Acts 6.1).

At the same time, the Church was evolving in the first century; they also faced their differences. Those differences forced them to reckon with how to minister to and with one another. Namely, how would they live out their Service and Sacrifice as Evangelism? This is the crucial aspect of the theological foundations with which The Ellendale UMC, or any congregation, must also reckon. How can they sacrifice themselves in service to those people, population-wise, who are not yet serving, but who are coming to Minnesota? How will they, or we, allow this to be our witness and Evangelism?

This allowance begins with looking around to see what and where the needs exist. In so doing, modern believers are not unlike the “Hellenistic Jews”, that is Jews who adopted the Greek language and culture, who were expressing needs that had arisen amongst themselves as they complained that “widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6.2). It was a good problem to have--to be required to reassess how to best fulfill the Gospel in meeting the needs of those around them and us. The protection comes in the way that they were able to work through their differences. McKim describes the Hellenistic as Jews who spoke the Greek language (1051).

The Hellenistic Jews expressed a basic need for food. In this respect, they offered themselves with a genuine desire for subsistence and daily living. So, the apostles created a division of labor amongst the church. They recruited seven others full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to serve the widows (Strong 104857). Thus the offices of deacon and elder were created. Those that were chosen were (Davis and Hays 290). They were the kind of people that God had raised, despite their imperfections, for the rest of us to emulate. They wanted to meet the bare subsistence of those around them.

The subsistent and daily needs of an immigrant in Minnesota can be broken down into various categories. I offer the main categories that this project discovered:

1. Hunger—includes nutritional and food needs, learning how and where to access State-sponsored food programs, whether by vouchers—WIC—food stamps, and how and where to access food shelves.
2. Shelter—includes access to temporary housing, affordable rental housing, multifamily or multi-generational living, knowledge of and access to purchasing permanent housing, and learning how to potentially become a landlord.
3. Education—includes literacy, learning English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Language, basic education in writing and arithmetic, pre-kindergarten, completing high school, preparing for college, and transitioning to college and graduate school.
4. Health Care—includes assessing the immigrants' current health status, basic health care, community gardens (Hartwig and Mason), access to and knowledge of the healthcare system, abortion, understanding where there may be free or reduced access to health care, understanding how the State of



Minnesota grants and provides healthcare for immigrants, access to preventative care, Elder care—including long term care, access to mental health and home care (Gernand et al.,11) psychological support, healing services for those affected by sexual abuse, rape, incest, sex trafficking, or sexual violence, understanding sexual issues such as identity—Gay and Lesbian/LGBTQ—and understanding or navigating a new country in light of one’s native cultural norms around all of these.

5. Economics—basic financial support until an immigrant finds work, aiding in all aspect of finding work, vocational training, surviving poverty, getting out of poverty, obtaining proper documentation to be able to work, navigating job loss, unemployment, entrepreneurial opportunities, transportation—including understanding access to owning vehicles and public transportation.
6. Social and Cultural—includes navigating the new setting, whether city, town, small town or rural setting, racial bias, racial bigotry, racial and cultural prejudice, class-related oppression, needs of adoptive families, and those who are adopted, access to and understanding the legal system, and language-cultural barriers.
7. Religious—includes finding a place to worship in the immigrants’ native religious group or finding a new setting—possibly Christian, while being supportive of the immigrants’ choice of any religion.

It a fundamental place and station for any fellow human. It is also for those immigrants who have come to Minnesota.

### **Look Around “The Neighborhood” For Those in Need**

Luke's writings in The Acts of The Apostles encourage believers to look where they live for those who need help. The biblical mandate in Acts 6.1-7 takes place against the backdrop of Acts 2.41: "So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added" (NRSV). It was a church community that had experienced growth in numbers. Also, the needs of those within and around its church body changed. The Ellendale UMC can learn how to initiate this process from its first-century siblings. As in the first-century community, modern believers are reminded by Luke: "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.7-8).

The Early Church was still growing and receiving new members. So is the Ellendale UMC. The Ellendale UMC, like the early community, takes the call seriously to go out and preach the Gospel. Within the early church, a discussion developed between two groups: The Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews, who had come to be a part of the Church. This all took place after Matthias was selected as the fill-in disciple to replace Judas (Acts 1.16-26). The Holy Spirit was outpoured on this community on the day of Pentecost:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were

filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2.1-4)

As The Early Church community became aware of the food needs of those within and around them, they experienced a new dimension in their relationship with God. This signifies the evolution of a dimension of the relationship between God and humanity: believers are called to be aware of those around them, no matter how similar or different they may think they are or are not. This awareness, fueled by our faith, is perhaps the best practice for emulating early Christians. Here, Luke depicts the beginning of the practice of allowing a theology of sacrifice in service to others to become another form of Evangelism. For the first Century Christians, it was the differentiated Jewish groups and their widows who needed feeding. Likewise, today Christians have the opportunity to serve immigrants who do not look like them in the parity of the Gospel (Grau 15).

### **The Laying on of Hands**

The parity of the Gospel also encourages 21<sup>st</sup> century disciples to consider where and how ministry to immigrants can take place. Audrey Singer sets forth four observations of how believers may be used as the arms and hands of Jesus Christ:

Among these are: —(1) the patterns of residence of the foreign-born in these new gateways, and the growing number of immigrants and refugees who are living in the suburbs —(2) the mixed attitudes and perceptions of receiving communities to immigrant and refugee newcomers —(3) the official response to new immigrant flows and attempts to “manage” immigration locally —(4) the role of social, political, and ethnic networks in migrant decision making as shown in patterns of settlement, identity retention, and processes of adjustment. (17)

These observations and awareness are patterned in Acts 2.14–36. Peter stands amongst the other eleven disciples to explain the outpouring the Holy Spirit and then offers the first Gospel sermon. He restates the original admonition to care for those around believers. He also instructs the believers that, in caring for others, as they are filled with the Holy Spirit, their actions carry out “the laying on of hands.” Though Christians may not be literally laying on hands, their awareness and actions will speak louder than any words can. Their actions also preach again and again Peter’s first sermon, but a lack of action also does the contrary.

Jerusalem and the surrounding area were the geographical, social, and spiritual womb for the church’s template to care for those in need. Wherever immigrants settle in the State of Minnesota, they establish the same boundaries of the church’s usefulness and application of this foundational text. Peter’s second sermon also occurred there in Jerusalem (Acts 3.1-26).

The established boundaries and social parameters force the disciples to weigh the efficiency and cost of meeting the needs of others, as opposed to also being loyal to the spiritual habits that will sustain them for lifelong ministry. On the one hand, they endeavor to feed others properly. On the other, they try to do what they feel is their duty spiritually. They are forced to consider the spiritual and physical boundaries of what they can or cannot do service-wise, and spiritually.

The Ellendale UMC faces similar considerations. If the church does not reach out and attract new members, the congregation will slowly wither away. If they decide to reach out to immigrants, which the church has not done before, they have better odds of adding to the congregation. Reaching out to immigrants is the marriage between meeting

two needs: immigrants who benefit from the loving care of this congregation and invigorating a dwindling flock. The work is fueled by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, which gives its legitimacy to both the giver and receiver (Hondagneu-Sotelo 20). The disciples are challenged regarding how they oversee the ministry and care of different groups as detailed by the cultural differences between the Hellenists and the Hebraic Jews. This is crucial for future consideration of cultural differences between The Ellendale UMC's constituents and the myriad of non-European immigrants who live in Minnesota. The Acts 6 dilemma highlights that real boundaries existed culturally and socially. These differences could have been an obstacle, stopping the Early Church's growth. Instead, they were addressed head-on.

Addressing tensions and real obstacles head-on is another best practice when working with immigrants. Some challenges are attitudes amongst white Christians who do not want to work with immigrants. "Congregations' responses to their changing communities take place in a broader social context, one often characterized by concern and suspicion. Some rural communities are concerned about what the demographic shifts mean for their towns, and some respond with animosity" (Rehwaldt 687). Others believe that "...newcomers bring crime, economic competition and (undue) tax burdens to communities" that they deem are not worth the cost (Hirschman and Massey 11, 12). Still others who provide sanctuary to immigrants are very upfront about the reality of such "risks" (Feuerherd National Catholic Reporter).

Risks, tensions, and obstacles caused the first century Christians to discuss an early Church ecclesiastical boundary and process for working out duty delegation; they

decide who would perform specific duties. This must be done even in the face of tense boundaries against refugee immigrants. Kudee writes:

A refugee is an individual who is forced to flee their country of origin to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Although refugees are despised by many, especially in the host country, they are still human. To ensure refugees are assisted, Christians need to think about what the Bible says. Since the Bible talks of love and accepting other people despite their differences, refugees are regarded as neighbors to Christians in host countries. Therefore, Christians are encouraged to assist refugees. (151)

Christians never know when they may be the one that God uses to help an immigrant move towards their personal goals. Believers may help them move from a station in life, including poverty: “Four reasons one leaves poverty: It’s too painful to stay, a vision or goal, a key relationship, or a special talent or skill” (Ehlig, Payne 5). Believers may become the key relationship for non-European immigrants out of love for God and them. It is a vital spiritual boundary that the church should ask God to help her to shatter and reckon.

Another biblical boundary established here is that one would not be appointed to serve without prayer, and once decided and accepted, then they are commissioned by the laying on of hands by fellow Christians. The laying on of hands forms an established boundary. It also sets one of the first examples of “Problem Solving” in the name of the Kingdom. Indeed, it sets the precedent that ministry and caring for God’s children involve a constant state of problem-solving.

The Ellendale UMC can be a part of this problem-solving, even though it is located in the upper Midwest. It has a greater opportunity by virtue of who is coming to Minnesota, Shandy and Fennelly observe, “While total numbers of foreign-born residents pale next to those in the coastal and border states, Minnesota has a larger percentage of immigrants who are refugees than the rest of the country” (27). Liberian Immigrants are among these and have an increasing presence in Minnesota:

One can infer from the distribution of births and from information provided by LSS and the Liberian Community Membership Directory, that St. Paul and Minneapolis were early cores of Liberian settlement. The sister cities remain important centers of established immigrant Liberians and their families. (Frazier, Darden, Henry 276)

Twenty centuries later, it is effortless to identify boundaries that existed during the first century. A significant boundary was the exclusion of women in the service of the ministry. This is not a critique, just a reality. Only men were called and appointed. We now recognize women are equal partners in ministry. My great-grandmother, Anna Mae Draper Stewart, was a lifetime member of her local Methodist Church and a charter member of the Methodist Women’s fellowship in the NE Iowa town of Lamont. My father’s first cousin, Vivian Stewart Salisbury, was also an Ordained Minister in The Four-Square Gospel Church. This was amidst what was a male-focused society in terms of leadership. Thankfully this is a boundary, at least in most places in the USA and Minnesota which have diminished drastically.

Food insufficiency (also known as “hunger”) was a boundary among the widows in the first century. They were overlooked or neglected in the account of Acts. The plight

of immigrants living in a geographic radius around The Ellendale UMC is also frequently overlooked. Acts begins with Jesus's last time on earth after He had appeared following His resurrection. Jesus's servitude and sacrifice is the template by which the Disciples are to live and by which they "evangelize" those around them.

Luke's account in Acts illustrates Jesus's living example, addressing Theophilus and thus the wider community of believers. This is an attempt to boost the faith of the early believers by reminding them of Jesus's purpose through a lengthy recap of the purpose of the faith, a faith that reveals itself in action to serve. This is another crucial practice in believers' work with immigrants. Their faith relationship fuels their sacrifice in service to others as evangelism. When Christians care and provide for the needs of others, their faith is boosted. The "neglected" around them are those that they do not yet know. They are immigrants believers have not yet sought after. They are neglected because the church has not yet found them. The Church does not know their wide-ranging variety of needs simply because believers have not engaged them. Kedri Metzger implores the church not to give up:

Churches are called to minister to all persons to whom they have access. This includes persons who are in this country illegally. Outreach access includes gospel proclamation, inviting others into the life of the church, and charity when needed. When it comes to illegal immigration, the church should teach compliance with the existing law, even to those who are pastors and ministry leaders with significant responsibility. Such counsel may include helping illegal immigrants seek legal status. The church also needs to reach immigrants from non-Christian backgrounds, which is more challenging but more important. (1)



Acts reveals who will help believers find the immigrants. It repeatedly promises the power and presence of The Holy Spirit and witnesses to the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven. It is The Holy Spirit which will help the church. The Holy Spirit evidences the witness of the disciples in Judea and Samaria.

The same Holy Spirit fills the Jerusalem ministry accounts in Acts. Also, within this book comes the preaching of Philip, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul-), Peter's miracles, and Cornelius's conversion. It includes details of the ministries of Barnabas, Saul, and Peter. It details the aggression of Herod's persecution of Christians, James' beheading, and Peter's arrest. Then comes the eventual release of Peter from prison.

Peter's release from prison. It prompts the reader to find higher ground purposes in all they do. Believers must do so even when it seems that they minister and carry on God's care to others in lowly places or who they first thought were beneath us. It means Christians seek to meet the subsistent needs of others around them, like those of immigrants. It should not matter whether believers are imprisoned, persecuted, or called like Paul; Christians are to continuously seek to serve others.

Helskog describes the beginning of the assimilation process:

Integration processes take place in the space made available between the three factors described in this thesis: Immigrants' strategies, government strategies and structural factors. If one of the three factors in this model changes, integration processes will change ...I can sum up the integration processes of each society in two different examples of this model, describing the specific circumstances in which integration takes place in Norway and in Minnesota. By introducing the integration model, I aim to illustrate that from a scientific perspective; you cannot

focus on only one of the three factors, all three need to be taken into consideration when investigating immigration processes. (Schulze 44)

I suggest that local churches like The Ellendale UMC may be counted among the “structural” factors in this model. At the very least, the Church is an additional factor in identifying and providing where support can be found. Examples include providing support as after school programs in a twin cities Phillips Neighborhood (Valdes and Valdes 69) or combatting overt racism in its own town or that of the neighboring city of Blooming Prairie, Minnesota (Valdes and Valdes 64).

Many of the themes that appear throughout Acts 6.1-7 include such as individual and corporate empowerment, encouragement of the faith, mild discord within the Christian ranks, facing individual shortcomings in the mission, strategizing for overcoming their shortfalls, creation and appointing of the office of elder, the rise of the priesthood of all believers, establishment of the Church, hearing the needs of those that have been overlooked and who are seeking aid, facing of persecution, eventual trials, and martyrdom of the disciples. Thankfully, few North American Christians face untoward persecution, legal trials, or martyrdom. This does not mean they have not met, or will not face, pressures for wanting to aid or assist immigrants. In addition to time and effort, this is where believers can experience a different form of sacrifice on behalf of those immigrants they may reach. Outreach to immigrants can come at a cost.

Christendom’s outreach, as outlined in the book of Acts, can be placed into three sections: the witness in Jerusalem, the witness in Judea and Samaria, and then finally, the call to witness wherever a disciple lives and serves. It is not for the faint of heart nor the timid. It does, by the power of The Holy Spirit, require bravery. The text provides keen

insight into the early disciples' bravery, persistence, and compassion. This signaled, too, how God intended for God's people to distinguish themselves as they lived out a new type of relationship between themselves and a living God.

### **The Meaning of Life**

How does Acts 6.1-7 fit into "The Telos of Life"? The meaning of life begins with the notion that all humans are created to be in a loving relationship with God and to worship God through all they do. People were designed to love God and kiss the face of God. Then, people are called to employ His love to love and serve others as people love themselves.

Acts 6.1-7 invites the disciples into a deeper relationship with God through The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The disciples' reframed use of time also reframed their usefulness to God as applied to service to others. It also offers a good look at the power of tradition within life, the lives of the disciples, and the life of the Church. up to that point, The Temple was a place where religious and social traditions were conveyed. It was where God's children were taught about God's great love for His creation. Even when it seemed as if God's people did not deserve such love, God desired to make holy again that which was no longer holy.

Doctor of Ministry classes introduced this ethical discontinuity: people are both holy and unholy. Even as people enter a new relationship with Jesus Christ, they must remember that there are no better or worse than anyone around them. Those around believers need Jesus Christ as severely as they do. This also guides the church to see others as Children of God, no matter their religiosity. A welcoming heart is an essential aspect of caring for the subsistence of those around the church and their spiritual

relationship with God. The disciples' example in Acts teaches believers that they influence others with the love of God and the truth of The Word, especially when the church cares for their most basic needs first. First, believers feed, clothe, and shelter them, helping them learn the new language, and then, believers earn the privilege of addressing their relationship, or lack thereof, with God through Jesus (Cochrane et al. 22). Nothing gains another's attention more effectively than when one places genuine care for a stranger as foremost in a new relationship. The more we learn about and relate to them and their poverty, the better (Ehlig and Payne). Having someone trust believers enough to listen to or see the visibility of God's new life within them is vital.

Acts 6.1-7 allows a glimpse into how believers may still love God despite ethical discontinuity, just as the Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews did in the early church. God's Presence will enable the church to move beyond discontinuity to find commonality in servitude. Finding commonality in servitude allows believers to see benefits where others may not. Immigrants added "793 million in state and local taxes, 6% of businesses are immigrant owned, and the richness of their global connections" (Martin-Rogers, et al. 2, 3).

The "richness" also reminds believers that just as the disciples learned that they were not meant to be extinguished individually, believers today must retain their respective individuality even as they were called to corporate servitude. The same is true of the richness that small towns and rural immigration propels. "Rural America (can be seen) as an Engine of Urbanization" (Lichter and Brown 7). The suburbs represent a rapidly growing associated bridge between big cities and nearby rural communities and the countryside" (Lichter and Brown 9). It is further clarified:

Rural America as New Immigrant Destination... New rural immigration is clearly linked to the changing global economy, especially the agri-food system.

Immigrant farm workers have picked America's fruits and vegetables for decades.

Today, low-skilled, and often undocumented immigrant workers, are recruited to work in rural meat and food-processing plants, construction, and service jobs.

(Kandel & Parrado 2005; Lichter and Brown 12)

They are recruited in "rural midwestern communities" because industries "relocate and expand their meat processing and manufacturing plants" (Fennelly 172).

This richness counterbalances the negative ways of looking at immigrants:

1. Immigrants are a burden.
2. Immigrants make government services worse.
3. Immigrants take (wanted) jobs away.
4. Immigrants do not pay their fair share of taxes.
5. Immigrants do not learn English quickly enough
6. Immigrants are less likely to adapt.
7. Newcomers threaten traditional American values.
8. Need to protect America from foreign influence. (McDaniel et al. 215-16)

The respect for individuality amongst First Century Christians cut between those serving and those to be served. The same may be said of those who seek to serve Minnesota's immigrants. Neither server nor served loses their respective individuality yet become one, mutually interdependent in the love of Jesus Christ at its purest intent. The interdependence allows those in service to immigrants which may help them as they are challenged with "difficulties" such as being "religiously divided," dealing with American

views on “gender and the role of women,” and the difference in the needs of “older settled and newer immigrants” (Granquist 7, 8).

From where does godly intent emanate? The disciples learned that they were meant for eternal personal spiritual existence and that the disciples’ telos of life is to get to know others, serve them, and lead them to enter a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This was to be the blessing that was to come from the telos. It was to be lived out in their example of love of one to another.

The creation of the office of elder exemplifies God’s mandate to love other people. The book of Matthew encourages the disciples to live out The Great Commandment: “He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Two commandments hang all the law and the prophets’” (Matt. 22.37-40). Thus, again there is the equation of sacrifice and service as evangelism toward others, including 21<sup>st</sup> Century Minnesota Immigrants.

Living out the first two commandments was not accomplished by the disciples alone. The text implies that it is possibly only with the power of God within and behind the telos: an ultimate end of life eternal. The ethos, the distinctive character, of love, is exemplified in this text should be applied to life as a whole. It applies to every aspect of life and saturates every aspect of life given to humans from God. Love comes from the power and presence of The Holy Spirit.

Acts is a narrative story about Covenant Theology: God’s sacrifice of His Son in service to make humanity wholly restored. This was God’s “evangelism” to humans,

God's people: to love them back into a relationship with God. This text is a microcosm of the promise of the only living God to God's people and God enabling God's people to respond to live out the mutual promise in love.

The text of Acts 6.1-7 reveals that love's telos begins with an inward disposition that The Holy Spirit redirects from within. This turns to an outward yearning for a deep oneness that culminates in a profoundly intimate union between God and the disciples. It stipulates that the disciples were obligated to seek the thriving of others around them through both telos and ethos. The Ellendale UMC and its members have the same opportunity.

The previous point contradicts the dim view of the beginning of the text, as seen by Calvin. He takes a much darker view regarding the growth and increasing numbers of the Church (Calvin 230). I would push back out of respect. Granted with greater growth in numbers, all manner of God's people with every shortcoming under Heaven show up. Calvin dwells on the newcomers' hypocrisy and wickedness, causing disagreement amongst the ranks of the new believers. Of course, one cannot deny that there is inherent selfishness among humanity. Hopefully, all are granted escape from this selfishness to follow God's command.

Holy optimism holds fast to a healthy view of humanity's shortcomings. The church hopes to see a significant rise in the number of immigrants who come in need. God appoints some immigrants to care for others. A story about a young Hmong immigrant, Les, and a wedding conundrum details this appointment. Lea had a nephew whose future formed a clash around arranged marriage and individual freedom of choice. The nephew spoke English quite well, especially slang, had a secret American girlfriend,

and worked hard to fit into his new life. Everyone at school was very nice to him, but he wondered why none of the students ever asked him about his different past life. She suspects that they were not interested. I suspect they pretended not to notice his difference, and they intended their ignorance as an act of kindness.

I could not help but wonder if this was the kind of disappearance Rolvaag meant in his *Boat of Longing*. “Minnesota is historically a place of complicated and conflicting truths” (Atkins 51). In this case, the immigrant wanted his classmates to inquire about his past. They thought they were being polite by not asking about it. Linda Cameron describes the immigrant odyssey of coming to Minnesota:

After navigating the maze of American immigration law and breaking through the barriers of language and discrimination, immigrants who become Minnesotans face one more significant challenge: preserving their own culture and traditions while embracing those of their new country. Throughout history, immigrant parents have bemoaned that their children had become ‘too assimilated,’ that they were losing the family’s native language in favor of English and preferred American cuisine and customs. (106)

Some immigrant groups refer to areas as “too assimilated” around sexuality. Minnesota is nationally known to support gay populations who successfully assimilated. They brazenly go against the norms of their native cultures. For example:

Tou Bee, a 25-year-old gay Hmong man, left his hometown of Clovis, California, in 2016 to pursue studies in a prestigious graduate program at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Although Clovis is close to Fresno, where there is a sizable Hmong population. Tou Bee chose to come to Minneapolis not only



because of the large Hmong community in the Twin Cities but because that community was more visibly queer and Hmong. (Pha 2)

Or consider another case: Try as he might to fit in, Ganwar (a pseudonym), a member of the “Neur” Sudanese immigrants, will always bear the outward and visible signs of where he came from. Before he came to the USA, he, like most other Neur men was “Initiated into manhood through the cutting of six deep scars—gaar—which are still prominent on his forehead...” (Hotlzman 1). He will always bear the mark of his culture.

Becoming “too” assimilated is a common experience amongst USA’s immigrant population. I grew interested in when and how my ancestors arrived in the United States when I was a parent. I will never forget going to the Rochester, Minnesota, Library and finding a book entitled *Germans to America*—I think. Within the confines of that book, I found an index in the back with the names of my Great Great Grandparents: Foelke (Kronenberg) and Remmer Cirksena. I was utterly thrilled to travel to America with my great-great-grandparents. The ship’s manifest confirmed their names as checking in. I found their names again listed as passengers who arrived from Bremen, Germany in Castle Garden, New York, aboard the ship The Hermann, on Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1873. I cannot imagine what it was like to come across the North Atlantic Ocean in the stiffening cold days of that October.

What is even more confounding is additional research was fruitless until 1880, when the immigrant’s purchased property. They bought two small, 20 feet wide double lots to build a house in Forreston, Illinois. I assume that they did all they could in that in-between time to survive and begin to assimilate into their new home country. Nothing more is known for seven mysterious years. It is certain that they worked hard to

assimilate. Thankfully, their son, my Great Grandfather, and my Grandfather spoke a Nieder Deutsch—Low German dialect, which I got to hear on several occasions.

The assimilation process involves the ways immigrants do their best to fit in. It also includes a congregation like The Ellendale UMC, garnering itself to aid in the process. In my brief visit with professor Tanden Brekke regarding immigrant assimilation, he reminded me that he taught his students at Bethel and St. Thomas University to focus on the cultures of immigrants rather than their own when attempting assimilation. John Wesley states that no matter what believers are doing and where they are in their relationship with God, they are allowed, enabled, encouraged, and expected to allow God to bring out their better selves (Schlimm 124). One cannot imagine a better approach to assimilating to the immigrants' needs and cultures.

Ruby Payne argues that these encounters may include the suggestion of “mentoring.” Individuals may share themselves as mentors/advisors to immigrants. The mentors provide a bridge in such a way that both the mentee and mentor benefit. She offers these best practices for mentoring:

Create a positive environment, develop good character, establish independence, establish clear, safe boundaries, share mistakes, plan objectives, inspect what is mutually agreed upon, practice tough love, seek small successes, provide direction as a resource, understand the risk that a mentee's failures could reflect upon the mentor also, establish mutual protection of privacy, be a good listener in communication style, practice an extended commitment if so agreed upon by both parties, help with life transitions, and finally practice fun/laughter—humor enhances relationships. (Payne, et al. 98–101)

Immigration, of course, is not a laughing matter. The harshness of immigration magnifies when immigrants bring abject poverty to Minnesota. Researchers have determined that 12% of the children under the age of 18 in Minnesota live in poverty (Payne 123). One can only imagine how this affects immigrant children in Minnesota under age 18. Regardless, it certainly gives the church a greater impetus to help immigrant children and their families rise out of poverty. But how? Acts 6.1-7 deals with hungry widows who need feeding and are probably living in some semblance of poverty for that day and time. One of the powerful ways The Ellendale United Methodist Churches aids in helping others who may be in poverty is through the local food shelf. Weekly, they invite anyone who desires to do so to come to get foodstuffs. Foodstuffs is a tool that can be used to reach other cultures that the church does not already serve (Jackson IV). It is uncertain whether immigrants consistently come to the food shelf. One may imagine that a food shelf serves as one of the “spaces” in our state and community where we encounter an increasing number of immigrants (Leitner 830).

Spaces, like a food shelf, where believers may encounter immigrants in a rural small town like Ellendale, Minnesota, are increasing. They are increasing because of the expansion of the number of immigrants willing to do the types of work that non-immigrant Americans will no longer do. Hirschmann and Massey write, “The presence and expansion of poorly paid jobs that are difficult, dirty, and sometimes dangerous in small towns and rural areas is a common thread in many “new destination” areas” (8). Ellendale has one factory. Many of the surrounding small towns and cities also do; Austin, Owatonna and Albert Lea, Minnesota are population hubs where immigrants work in food production and meat packing plants (Fennelly and Leitner 2). These are

likely untapped places and spaces of opportunity to reach out to any immigrants who may be in need (Hondaganeu-Sotelo 7).

Churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and parishes are untapped places of opportunity for serving immigrants and providing a place of “social connectedness” (Adrian 161). For this study, I focus on the local church. Stephanie J Nawyn implores people to share her vision regarding work with immigrants and refugee resettlement, “...refugee resettlement involves a network of overlapping social service, advocacy, religious and cultural institutions” (5).

Boice introduces new concepts about the process. As mentioned earlier in Acts 6.1-7, this was more of an “administration” issue (Boice 112). There was work, more work than ever. The Word proclaims the orders of the day. It was the work of meeting the needs of those who needed sustenance and continuing diligent practice. Because one responsibility was pulling at the other, the disciples had to determine an expedient manner to get both done.

Boice characterizes the assimilation process as an administrative issue, void of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (Boice 113). Instead, Christians see this process as abundantly filled with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Pastor Bruce Moberg speaks of the immigrant work of his church in St. Paul, Minnesota:

In our own history, the European immigrant churches—with their high commitment to Christ and low skills in English—were God’s instruments for ministry to each of those ethnic communities. The same is true today. The unity Jesus prayed about is granted by God’s love and mercy, which knows nothing of

cultural or language barriers. The same Holy Spirit enlivens both. (Berg-Moberg 291)

These balance some interpretive questions because one cannot assume that God is not within the process for technical rules. For example, the Church does not recount that they did or did not pray at the time of the decision process (Bauer and Traina 144).

Acts 6.1–7 gives greater insight into how efforts fit within the entire text of The Book of Acts. Hafemann provides a deeper understanding. Hafemann addresses the positivity of the mission of The Church (172). This text and the segment illustrate that this is where the church receives its commission. The Lord directed Israel to bear the light of God unto the ends of the earth: “The light of Israel will become a fire; and his Holy One a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day” (Isa.10.17).

The notion of this Acts 6.1-7 text fitting into the entire Book of Acts underscored by Moltmann’s discussion of the Holy Spirit. Initially, some may be uncomfortable with Moltmann’s distance between the Church and the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, Moltmann declares the Church does not have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit. Yet, in the same breath, the Holy Spirit is entirely in control of the Church. This control was and is exhibited throughout the entire Canon and draws from the whole history of humanity’s relationship with the Lord. A reading of both Hafemann and Moltmann expounds this viewpoint better. Moltmann tied the ideas of rebirth and new creation together (93). If the scriptures encourage taking the light of God away to other places, does this mean believers are to ignore our local ministry opportunities? No, the metaphor does not discount local ministry. Instead, it is inclusive of ministry opportunities near and far. It

causes Christians to be more cognizant of opportunities near them they have yet to address. For whatever reason, believers have not acted thus far. Taking the love of God to the ends of the earth begins right at home, where people live. It underscores this is an unmistakable case where the book of Acts coheres with the entire Canon of the Bible.

So, what does examining the qualifier of proximity ministry being done near or to the ends of the earth have to do with servitude? It means that Christians cannot and must not limit the scope of where ministry begins or is done. It also causes the church to reckon with the reality of who they are to do ministry with and for. Naturally, believers know that if they travel away to another part of their state, region in the USA, or another country, they can safely assume that they will be doing ministry with and for people elsewhere. Contrarily, the scripture in Acts reminds readers that ministry's "ends of the earth" may be right under their noses, so to speak.

So, what types of ministries may the church offer? Here is a substantial list:

1. Helping with Psychological services and Depression (Yang 2).
2. Pointing Green Card holders to other immigrants who work in STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) (Roman-Clark and Tea).
3. Immigrant farming Incubator at The U of Minnesota (Kerr 60).
4. Immigrant Four Year College Transitions costs of housing and transportation (Swartz and Busse 19).
5. Helping young immigrants dealing with dating across racial lines (Hein 5).

In the case of The Ellendale UMC, the congregation is the beneficiary of the reality of receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, mostly here in the United States of America. This church is part of a Global Communion with perhaps the most

significant geographic footprint of any Church or Denomination in the world. This church are also inheritors of the Christian Relationship because of the work of the brothers Wesley: John, and Charles Wesley, who came from another country.

God used the two brothers in England to move them to begin to reach out to others in England with the love and grace of Jesus Christ. They felt compelled to go to where people were--factories, plants, shops, stables, farms, bars, taverns, hospitals, and small crossroads throughout the countryside. The Brothers thought the Church of England was faltering. Like the early disciples, the church was not meeting the needs of the “widows” and those all over England who were starving in both body and spirit. Thus, they began to go to where people struggled in body and spiritual needs. It was not a self-righteous intent, but that of genuine concern and care for their bodily and soul needs as “a movement, spontaneous and diverse, full of energy and aspiration” (Norwood 31).

Eventually, the Methodist Movement expanded across England and then to North America. John Wesley exhibited the same care on the new continent as in England. Folks in need are like those modeled in Acts. Seeing the need of others, he ordained Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury to be the first ordained ministers and Bishops on the new Continent. He desired to have them go to where the souls were on the new continent.

During the late 1700s, 1800s, and into the 1900s Methodism spread across the new nation of The United States of America. Itinerant Methodist preachers traveled on horseback from place to place, town to town, crossroad to crossroad, farm to farm, encampment to encampment, and proclaimed the Gospel to anyone who had not yet been introduced to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The early American Methodist Christians experienced the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit as many new worshippers

came to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was all by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Meeting the physical and spiritual needs of God's children both in England and in North America illustrates the holy tension in the text of The Acts of The Apostles.

This notion provides a keener insight into what was happening in the Early Church. The Methodist Movement was evolving, as examined within the confines of the Acts text. Witherington further supports that it is wholly and solely done by the work of the Holy Spirit, as The Word of God, as described in Act 6.1-7). Witherington implies that the increase in numbers was due to the Word of God itself, an alive entity, growing in and of itself. It is not that he discounts the diligence of the early church, just like John and Charles Wesley never ignored the diligence that the early Methodist circuit riders needed to be about. Instead, he gives the full measure of the power behind the growth of the early Church to the fact that the Word was an alive, living and growing entity. It was and is always responsible for the results of the early disciples, the early circuit riders, and will be for the work of the Ellendale UMC (Thompson 3851).

The Twelve gathered to discuss the ministry (Acts 6.2b). Their gathering for worship was not unlike a worshipping congregation in Minnesota. They discussed their belief that, as Christ's disciples, they were not attending to all the ministry aspects that were being presented to them at the time. They were torn between both attending to feeding those around them and to their accustomed attention to "the word of God" (Acts 6.2b). They did not want to neglect their discipline to studying and understanding the Word, nor did they want to neglect their duty to feed those around them. The cognizance, or lack thereof, for both the disciples in Acts and for The Ellendale UMC lend themselves to believers' further scrutiny for what it teaches them



and what steps in ministry may lay ahead. This account continues to grow to an expanding set of issues that come into focus when trying to formulate immigrant ministry.

The dichotomy between attending to the Word and Sacramental service and to the basic needs of those who were being neglected indicates that, like modern believers, the disciples faced a multiplicity of challenges in meeting the needs of those in their midst. This provides the Ellendale UMC with the foundation from which its members can highlight what an immigrant faces when he or she comes to Minnesota. The scripture, Acts 6.1-7 mandates that meeting all the needs of Word and Sacrament are inclusive of one another, especially immigrants.

When the scripture addresses those present as “friends” or “brothers and sisters,” it begs the reader to examine who their friends and or brother and sisters are. With whom are believers serving, and to whom is it that they are called to serve (Acts 6.3)? The scripture demands that believers seek the wisdom from as many people as they can when caring for God’s children in need. It also compels Christians to see others in a different light: no longer shall they ignore, not see, not include, overlook, or not engage those with whom believers have not yet engaged no matter the demographic. Many immigrants do feel “extreme isolation,” even Korean adoptees (Park Nelson 116). Also, believers shall not give any one race of immigrants any preferential treatment over the other. Christians are to avoid any public perception of a sense of group favoritism and do not feed into any animosity that may exist between any cultures here in Minnesota, as when Asians and Latino’s are characterized as “non-white cultures” (Frazier Tettey-Fio 4).

Scripture indicates that “The Twelve” called together the whole community (Acts 6.2). The Twelve were charged with selecting “from among yourselves seven good men of good standing” to be devoted to attending to the tables: literally to feed those in need. The text does not indicate that “The Twelve” or “The Seven” were any more significant than the others. It highlights that the two groups were charged with different aspects of the ministry, both of which are vital for this project and the fulfillment of the Gospel.

“The Seven” were set aside for what in modern terms has become “ordained ministry.” It does not indicate that believers should see it as a directive for only those who are ordained and called to meet the basic subsistence needs of immigrants. It is instead an affirmation of the need of “The Priesthood of All Believers” as a pluralistic practice. This too is needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It takes an “All hands on deck” approach bringing together as many believers with as many gifts as possible. “The issue of religious pluralism and integration of immigrants is controversial due to its complex dimensions and dynamic natures” (Daba 44). It reminds believers that each of us is a part of the immigrant ministry. Every person can positively contribute to meeting others’ needs.

The Faribault, Minnesota (within 30 miles of Ellendale, MN) School District held a difficult public meeting. Milogrom reports:

One evening of a Diversity Leadership Workshop, Leaders invited community members to an open forum on diversity. Approximately 20 members of an Owatonna-based group attended the forum to loudly proclaim anti-immigrant views. As a result, members of the workshop decided to form a “public response team” to write letters to local newspaper editors, speak openly with community

members, observe the activities of local hate groups, and take other actions to promote multi-cultural integration. (6)

This scripture reminds believers that all have something to contribute. None is unusable in ministry, especially as it pertains to meeting others' needs.

“The proposal pleased the whole group” (Acts 6.5). Believers today have the privilege of engaging in this examination. No centralized resource found in Minnesota details the best practices for attracting non-European immigrants to local churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and Nonprofits. The Early Church did not have the template given to them, save for the example of Jesus Christ. His sacrificial life set the standard.

Believers today have both the scriptural template and the opportunity to build consensus with which to forge ahead. Just as those gathered to consider these things chose Stephen to be the first among the “Seven,” Christians can discern what will be regarded as “best practices.” The Twelve experienced Stephen as being “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6.5). The church’s prayer is to be found the same as Stephen, whether they minister to any immigrant regardless of their “current” faith relationship. Hopefully, the love of God through Jesus Christ will shine through believers sacrifice and servitude.

### **Research Design**

This study employs a pre-intervention mixed method qualitative and quantitative approach. What is unique to this study is that I wanted to look beyond the local Ellendale United Methodist Church’s opportunity to meet others where they are (utilizing a paper questionnaire) in inviting non-European immigrants to their church home. Yet, I wanted

to determine what have been the best practices for secular leaders around the state in meeting others where they are when inviting non-Europeans to their respective institutions. To do so I utilized an online multi part questionnaire.

To get the greatest participation at the local church level I simplified both the tool and process. The researcher created a questionnaire with only two qualifications for respondents. A respondent must be 18 years or older and must have attended worship in person in one of the last two calendar years: 2021 and 2022. The questionnaire's first part asks several questions offering the respondent multiple choice, "yes" or "no", and scale (offering numerical groupings) options. An announcement inviting people to participate in the study were printed in the weekly worship bulletin, sent out in the church e-mail chain, and orally given during the "announcements" portion of the weekly worship services. The congregants were asked to personally contact the researcher following weekly worship services in order that they may be given the printed questionnaire. The second and third portions of the questionnaire included utilizing scale questions gauging the respondents "actively open-minded thinking" and "intellectual humility." These provide a sharper insight as to the participant's willingness to see issues on a broader scale and their willingness to change their mind. All questions were reviewed by four experts. Three of the four are professors at the undergraduate collegiate level or above. The fourth is a former collegiate graduate school level research and writing editor. The survey was developed in mutual consultation with Profess Karla Devlin Lassonde, a research expert at Minnesota State University.

The second questionnaire was also reviewed by the same four individuals. It too was the result of additional consultation with Dr. Lassonde who aided in its construction

and implementation. This was done with a program utilized at Minnesota State University called Qualtrics. It is used for the creation of such research tools. The survey consisted of three questions. The first two were open ended. The final was closed ended in part in that it offered the respondent the opportunity to choose all that applied from a list of 32 options. It also offered, in the final part of the question, the opportunity to type in additional items the respondent may want to offer as responses to the final question. Questionnaires allow for such flexibility (Sensing 113-14).

### **Summary of Literature**

In using the Early Church's model for sacrifice and servitude to others found in Acts 6.1-7, the doctrines of Belief in Human Depravity, God's Grace, The Necessity of Faith and the Inspiration of the Scriptures, this chapter seeks to provide the biblical foundation for fulfilling the Great Commission. In so doing it lays forth the model for loving others as believers would love themselves. It enables the reader to live it out in meeting others where they are rather than expecting them to learn the church's ways first. Finally, this chapter details the methodology of questionnaires which were utilized in the research portion of the project.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The Ellendale United Methodist Church is located along United States Interstate 35. It is nearly halfway between Owatonna, Minnesota, and Albert Lea, Minnesota, on the Southern Minnesota Prairie. The State of Minnesota Demographer indicates that the population growth for Southern Minnesota in the next twenty to fifty years will not come from the traditional European Descendants who have inhabited this land since before the founding of the State in 1858. Instead, the population growth is projected to come from non-European immigrants from all over the world. I contend that it will be vital for The Ellendale UMC to determine whether it wants to strategize to reach out to the non-Europeans who have and are coming to Minnesota, namely Southern Minnesota. To initiate this process, I questioned the local congregation's desire to do such outreach through their sacrifice and service as evangelism to non-European Immigrants. Additionally, I engaged the appointed clergy of the Minnesota Annual Conference and various other clergy leaders (Evangelical Luther Church of American, Roman Catholic Clergy/Catholic Charities). Also engaged were food processing plant managers, human resource directors, employment recruiters, free healthcare clinic leaders, non-profit leaders, and professors in and around Minnesota from different denominations and religions to determine their approaches to the exact outreach.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the research was to discern the best practices for churches and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their

respective communities. Minnesota United Methodist Clergy and leaders from other Christian and non-Christian religious organizations in Minnesota were invited to participate in an online questionnaire. This questionnaire sought to garner best practices for sacrifice and servitude toward reaching out to non-European immigrants. Interview and survey questions were also developed to aid the local Ellendale UMC in determining its attitudes, desire, understanding, and perceived necessity to do such outreach to non-Europeans. The data was analyzed by the researcher who looked for the local church's willingness to engage in this process and the positive practices from around the state.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Question #1**

In the opinion of pastors, laypeople, school officials, professors, company HR directors, and directors of organizations, Nonprofits, and free clinics, what are the best ways to attract, support, and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?

The aim of the project is to place best practices at the disposal of those who would desire to meet others where they are in their support of non-European immigrants. This was accomplished by sending non-lay people a mixed method questionnaire (Appendix A). This was sent to them via e-mail. The survey was also posted to their respective synod, annual conference, district, or diocese websites. In the e-mail or post there was a live link for them to click on. Once they did so, they were provided an informed consent form. If they agreed to the consent form, they gained access to the body of the questionnaire. The first question within the research instrument asks each subject to

respond with what has worked in meeting non-European immigrants where they are. It was purposely open ended in order not to limit the subjects' responses.

Additionally, within the research questionnaire the third question asked, "If all limitations were eliminated, given what you know now about your institution, what of the following options might you employ in your work to meet non-European people where they are?" Here is the list from which they could choose by clicking beside each option:

- Provide childcare/day care support.
- Support Single Parents.
- Provide Elder Care support.
- Support Orphans.
- Initiate a Food Shelf.
- Support with transitional housing.
- Support with permanent affordable housing.
- Provide LGBTQ support.
- Provide Addiction/Recovery and Treatment support.
- Provide after school student support.
- Provide early childhood education support.
- Provide Financial Education Support
- Provide ESL/Literacy and High School Education Support.
- Provide Preventive Health Care Support.
- Mental Health Care Support
- Employment Search Support
- Green Card/Immigration process support
- Become a sanctuary institution.
- Help support amidst any experienced racism, bigotry and prejudice.
- Help amidst unemployment or job loss-transition.
- Help understand self-business ownership/entrepreneurs.
- Provide Community Garden for seasonal use.
- Provide Support for getting driver license/drivers training.
- Provide Support to those facing Sexual, Physical, Psychological abuse.
- Provide Legal Referrals for Most needs.
- Provide Post Immigration Support for those who were sex trafficked.
- Provide Support to Illegal Immigrants.
- Provide Citizenship Process Support.
- Provide Support to Adoptive Families of Non-European Children.
- Provide Spiritual and Moral Support to those sending remittances to family back in their country of origin.
- Provide Support to those experiencing INS targeting.
- Provide Dietary Knowledge Meal Support.



At the end of this list they then were offered the opportunity to write in other options that were not included.

### **Research Question #2**

In the opinion of pastors, laypeople, school officials, professors, company HR directors, and organizations serving immigrants, Nonprofits, and free clinics, what barriers inhibit the ability to attract, support, and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?

This question was answered by sending the non-lay people the same mixed method questionnaire detailed in response to research question number one (Appendix A). This was sent to them via individual e-mail, posted to their respective synod, annual conference, district, or diocese websites. In the e-mail or post there was a live link for them to click on. Once they do, they were provided an informed consent form. Once consent was given, they gained access to the body of the questionnaire. The second question in the research instrument asked each subject to respond with what has not worked in meeting non-Europeans where they are. It was purposely open ended in order not to limit the subjects' responses.

### **Research Question #3**

What are the best practices for church and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?

This question was answered by reaching out to the lay people at the Ellendale United Methodist Church. They were solely included in the second research tool (Appendix B). They were asked to respond to an alternative mixed method questionnaire. This tool has three parts. The first contained 14 questions. Questions 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10 and

14 were multiple choice. Questions 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, and 13 solicited closed ended “yes” or “no” responses.

The second part of this questionnaire solicited responses to statements related to “Actively Open-Minded Thinking.” The respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on a 1-7 scale with “1” being in strong agreement, a “4” being neutral, and a “7” being strong disagreement. These questions gauged both individual and corporate open-mindedness to change.

The third part of this questionnaire solicited responses to statements related to “Intellectual Humility Scale.” They were asked, “Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you, and roughly your same age.” The respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on a 1-7 scale with “1” being in strong agreement, a “4” being neutral, and a “7” being strong disagreement. This was solicited to gauge the individual and corporate ability and desire to see things differently than they have before.

I established several steps to guard the protection of each subject participating in the studies. I gained permission from The Minnesota Annual Conference, ELCA Minnesota Synods, The Minnesota Roman Catholic Diocese, Educational Leaders, Plant Managers/Human Resource Directors, Directors of Nonprofits and Directors of Free Clinics permission to conduct research with an online questionnaire. Every participant was informed of the nature of the research project, and how the data and findings would be utilized and disseminated. I also offered the opportunity for each to receive a 1–2-page summary of the findings for their potential use within their respective contexts. Each

participant, after reading the informed consent, could choose to go forward or opt out of the study. The informed consent was located at the beginning of each questionnaire (See Appendix A and B).

The researcher also established several steps to guard the protection of each subject participating in the Ellendale United Methodist Church lay people questionnaire. Each participant was informed of the nature of the research project and how the data and findings would be utilized and disseminated. Each participant, after reading the informed consent, could choose to go forward or opt out of the study. The precise informed consent can be found at the beginning of the questionnaire. To further protect each subject, the completed questionnaires were stored in a dual lock and key safe. Once they had been utilized and were no longer needed, they were destroyed by shredding, then the shredding was burned.

### **Ministry Context(s)**

The Ellendale UMC is composed of fiercely independent people thinking religiously, politically, and economically. Most are farmers, children, and grandchildren of farmers. Geographically, the focus of this study is Southern, South-Central Minnesota, inclusive of The Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul Area. The worldview is hard work and independence. Congregation members are so independent that they did not desire, seek, or accept government funds during the most recent Covid 19 Pandemic.

The researcher utilized other subjects who come from several varying contexts. The United Methodist, ELCA and Roman Catholic pastors/priests each serve respective parishes in and around Minnesota. Some are serving one church, while others may be serving in a multi-church parish setting. They are charged with the pastoral care of their

respective congregants within their respective settings. Plant Managers and Directors of Human Resources are employed in and around Southern Minnesota. They work at plants which range from slaughter and meat packing plants to that of food manufacturing plants. The college professors are employed at various higher education institutions within the state of Minnesota. The Directors of Nonprofits and free medical clinics provide social services to the public throughout Minnesota. The Education Leaders are both Superintendents and School Principals at Districts and High Schools in Minnesota.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

This project aimed to discover the best practices of immigrant ministry as sacrifice and servitude evangelism. The research sought access to the clergy of the United Methodist Churches in Minnesota and the clergy of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America in Minnesota. Reaching out to leadership in the respective “other” dominant Minnesota denominations is vital. I also reached out to a local “free” healthcare clinic in Owatonna MN. The hope was to network to find and gain access to other free clinics around Minnesota. The research for the project required to learn the clinic’s best practices in meeting the needs of non-European immigrants. I also reached out to The State of Minnesota’s “Minnesota State Association of (“Education”) Administrators”—MASA. The hope is to reach out and determine their best practices for supporting non-European immigrants. I reached out to the local Superintendent of Schools with the same hope and to potentially have his help in gaining access to other resources. A local university professor helped identify other college and university professors who are teaching and researching the subject. An influential leader of a non-profit in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area is helping to

reach out to other non-profit leaders and garner their best practices supporting non-European immigrants from them. My thought in all of these was simply that there is direct contact with immigrants throughout the State of Minnesota in each of these categories.

### **Description of Participants**

**“The Ellendale United Methodist Church”** - Participants range in age from 18 to 100+. They are both male and female. They committed to participate in this local congregation by profession of faith, their presence in worship, financial giving, and/or volunteering in the ministry. I surveyed the membership of the local Ellendale United Methodist Church to determine their resolve, desire, and plans to follow through on their outreach as sacrifice and servitude as a context for evangelism. The only other criterion is that they are members and/or worship at this local congregation.

**Educational Administrators and Local School Principals** – Additional participants are Minnesota educational leaders such as Superintendents of Schools and local school principals. They completed education for K-12 and, as school superintendents, received licensure through The Minnesota Department of Education.

**Non-Profit Leaders/Free Health Clinic Leaders** - Leaders in free clinic/non-profit organizations provide for immigrants’ needs in the State of Minnesota. The Nonprofits/free clinics range from supplying and meeting the health care, food insufficiency, housing, and education of immigrants.

**Plant Managers/HR Directors/Employment Recruitment Directors** - Leaders in manufacturing plants rely upon employing non-European immigrants to fulfill the compliment of raw labor needed to produce their respective products.

**College and University Professors** - College and university professors in Minnesota who are teaching about and/or have experience in instruction around the gamut of all that goes into meeting the needs of Minnesota's non-European immigrants. They have been appointed by their respective collegiate administrations and completed commensurate educational credentials required for such consideration and appointment.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To maintain the respondents' protection and confidentiality, I consulted with Dr. Karla Devlin Lassonde of Minnesota State University as to how to do so. Regarding the EUMC lay person questionnaire (Appendix B), it was agreed that I would solely print and personally hand them to each participant. Each participant was required to maintain at least a six-foot diameter of space for privacy when completing the survey. Once complete or the process abandoned, they were personally handed back to the researcher and carried in a locking brief to where they were stored in a dual lock and key safe. Once they were utilized and no longer needed, they were both shredded, and the shredding burned.

Likewise, in consultation with Dr. Lassonde, a process was developed for the "Meet People Where They Are" questionnaire (Appendix A). In concert with Dr. Lassonde and utilizing the secure website on Minnesota State University's Qualtrics, a secure link was created leading the subjects to the questionnaire. There the respondent was provided with an informed consent page which served as the gate keeper to the research tool. It was there they could consent and move on or decline and abandon the process.

### **Instrumentation**

#### **The Best Practices Questionnaire**

This is a mixed-method research instrument. It was shared with superintendents of schools in Minnesota. It was also shared with a sample of college professors in Minnesota who are teaching and leading about immigrants and immigration. It was also shared with the leaders of nonprofits that work and support Minnesota immigrants. I worked to gain access to this group through the local Superintendent of Schools at New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale and Geneva Consolidated School District. The questionnaire was designed to garner information both on what issues the groups face and how they address them officially in their respective settings. It asked about their tenures and how long they have implemented their practices. It also ascertained when the issues began to arise and the specific immigrant populations with which they work.

**The Clergy Survey of The Minnesota Annual Conference UMC, The Minnesota ELCA Synods, and Minnesota Catholic Dioceses**

The researcher reached out to the two District Superintendents of Southern Minnesota, Fred Vanderwerf, and Cynthia Williams, of The United Methodist Church, Fred instructed that he send a copy to Cynthia to be included in Minnesota UMC “Connections” electronic newsletter. Fred also offered to distribute it to the other 3 DSs in Minnesota for inclusion on their respective District Facebook pages. It is a mixed-method research instrument.

The researcher also reached out to the respective ecclesiastical bodies in Minnesota of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America: Synods and The Catholic Church of Minnesota Dioceses. The subjects were asked in their respective settings and ascertained when they began to meet non-Europeans where they are. The purpose is to learn about the respective immigrant populations they are working with and the

individual issues they have faced. It also seeks to determine if they have immigrant populations in their geographic area and what prevents them from outreach if they are not doing any outreach.

In order to shape both research instruments I consulted with several others including members of my Doctor of Ministry cohort, an MLA expert college professor, a former graduate school research editor and author, a retired professor of advanced educational degree administration, and Dr. Karla Lassonde, Psychology Department Chair and Research Scientist at Minnesota State University.

The researcher initially had included 20+ questions in the Ellendale UMC Worshiper and Parishioner Questionnaire. With feedback from Dr. Milton Lowe and Dr. Lassonde I condensed it to 14. Dr. Lassonde who suggested an additional “deeper dive” wrinkle in this instrument. It was suggested to add two additional sections providing the respondents the opportunity to reveal their openness to seeing issues differently than they may have before and their likely openness to change.

The researcher initially had only two questions in the “Meet People Where They Are” questionnaire. All the experts agreed; two of them suggested to add an additional opportunity for the subjects to answer a third question. The third question gave respondents the opportunity to offer additional suggestions as to what they may do in addition to what they had already done to meet others where they are.

The surveys and questionnaires I used sought input from two groups. The first group, as previously mentioned, was made up of participants from the local Ellendale United Methodist Church. My research assumptions were that a pattern and history will



emerge as to what has prevented, and may prevent, the constituents of The Ellendale UMC from reaching out to non-European immigrants both to invite to worship and to assist them in their respective plights in having come to a new country. This research instrument was a 14-question mixed-method questionnaire. Two of the 14 questions were quantitative, and eleven were qualitative, and one was both qualitative-quantitative as I was hoped to learn about their attitudes and actions, their reasons, and any of their fears or inhibitions. The reading has informed the design of the research instrument of Patton to avoid a lack of clarity. The questions have been juxtaposed against Creswell's suggestions for viability and reliability.

There were two additional parts of this survey: the Actively Open-Minded Test with 7 questions, and the Intellectual Humility Scale with 22 questions. They provided qualitative information which was summarized into general themes and conclusions about where local parishioners may be at in terms of welcoming non-European members into the church. These results illustrated the "development and validation of a scale of intellectual humility" of the respondents (Alfano 1).

All participants were asked the same demographic and qualitative questions. The criteria for their participation were that they had to be at least 18 years old and a worshipping or active participant in some aspect of the church's life. Each participant had attended worship at least once or more in the last year.

The other "Meet People Where They Are" instrument focused on a small group of no more than 20 participants from a combination of the following respective categories:

1. Local Southern Minnesota Educational School Principals
2. Local Southern Minnesota Educational School Superintendents

3. Leaders from Local Southern Minnesota Free Medical Clinics
4. Leaders from Southern Minnesota Nonprofits who assist immigrants
5. Pastors from either the United Methodist Church or ELCA who are currently working with immigrants in Southern Minnesota.

The survey for these groups was limited to less than 20 participants in a cross-section of each category combined. It was designed to be simple, asking the following:

1. What programming do you have in place for working with immigrants?
2. What programming have you no longer used that was not working?
3. If all limitations were eliminated, given what you know now about your institution, what of the following options might you employ in your work to meet non-European people where they are?

For the third question, the subjects were offered to choose between 32 additional options, and to add additional options which were not listed.

### **Data Collection**

The research design the researcher chose for the data collection was pre-intervention. As noted earlier, both Patton and Creswell were consulted. The questionnaires were handed out in October and November of 2022 to each participant in the local EUMC. Likewise, the other questionnaires were emailed to the local school superintendents-school principals, pastors and priests, plant managers-human resource directors of production plants, leaders of the Nonprofits, and the local free health care clinic leadership in early December of 2022.

As the researcher engaged each person handing them their respective questionnaires, they were provided with the review board-approved informed consent

form. All church members, pastors-priests, non-profit leaders, school superintendents, school principals, and leaders of the free health clinics were provided with a sheet with key term definitions. Each participant received the same questionnaires as those within their respective research grouping.

### **Data Analysis**

The goal here through data analysis has been to reap greater understanding and deeper meaning for meeting non-European immigrants where they are as they have arrived in Minnesota (Sensing 57). With the aid of the experts who consulted on this project, the researcher has learned that the process and components can take on many different evolutions (Patton 12). It was an enlightening journey, and the researcher utilized a many of the suggestions of Sensing. He used Qualtrics for the “meeting people where they are” questionnaire which was shared with the participants from leadership in nonprofits, schools, free clinics, plant managers, human resource directors, college professors and clergy. It automatically tabulated results for filtering and pin-pointing responses for greater depth of analysis. It allowed for analysis to uncover trends in key words which were provided by those responding to the questions. In consultation with Dr. Lassonde, the researcher drew out trends, divergences and congruences within professional disciplines, and could denote data with convergences. The questions provided qualitative information that were summarized into general themes and conclusions about what the secular institutions may be at in terms of recruiting, hiring, and employing non-European immigrants.

The data for the Ellendale UMC Worshiper and Parishioner questionnaire was a more complex process. It had three parts, and each was analyzed separately.

Several of the Ellendale UMC Worshiper and Parishioner questions provided direction information about member opinions and behaviors related to inviting non-European community members into the local church. These questions provided qualitative information that was summarized into general themes and conclusions about where current local parishioners may be in terms of welcoming non-European members into the church. These themes will be used to spearhead plans and initiatives that allow the congregation to meet these community members where they are in the hopes of growing our church.

Each answer was examined over several times. I had to limit the scale of what could be analyzed, bearing in mind to what purpose it was to be used. Thus, a process was developed, with the consultation of Dr. Lassonde, by which the researcher could tabulate the responses to each of the initial 14 questions, and the remaining two sections. These two scales were used to find patterns of traits related to the type of thinking that is more open to meeting new people where they are. Survey items were also computed into descriptive statistics. These quantitative measures provided information about how the parishioner sample compares with norms in the areas of open-mindedness and intellectual humility. When appropriate, means were compared on survey items to reveal patterns in data. Higher scores for traits related to open thinking and humility to accept other person's viewpoints could be related to one's willingness to consider behaviors, ideas, and beliefs that may be different than their own.

The researcher recorded the number of marks each response received on a master copy of the questionnaire. As prominent results emerged from the data, he again

consulted with both Dr. Milton Lowe and Dr. Karla Devlin Lassonde, who confirmed their significance as crucial determinations which the data supported.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The Ellendale United Methodist Church lies within the Southern Prairie District of The United Methodist Church's Minnesota Annual Conference. It is surrounded by Minnesota's prairie in the southern part of the state. This region of the state, not unlike the rest of the state, is experiencing a transition population wise. That is, since its founding as a state, Minnesota's population growth traditionally came from European immigrants and their descendants. Such is no longer the case. Most population growth is projected, in the near term, to come from those who are non-Europeans.

The purpose of this study was to explore the best practices to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in Minnesota. The project sought to ascertain the level, frequency, and longevity of parishioners' involvement in the local congregation. It sought to gauge their attitudes of change towards non-European immigrants in their midst, outreach to them, and their willingness to reach out to them within the context of traditional Christian servitude and sacrifice. It also polled how Christian and secular leaders throughout the state meet the needs of non-Europeans "where they are" as they settle in Minnesota.

The desired results were that the experience and practices of these leaders may inform this study. It was also hoped that this study would detail how the local congregation and any institution in Minnesota may better choose to meet non-European immigrants "where they are." This was shaped by the discussion and manner of

evangelism as servitude and sacrifice as outlined in Chapter 2. The evidence of the study and research has been compiled and presented here.

## **Participants**

### **Parishioners of The Ellendale United Methodist Church**

This project had two different groups of participants. The first was local worshipping parishioners from The Ellendale United Methodist Church. The researcher determined that asking those worshipping locally to participate would aid in answering Research Questions 1 and 2. Local worshipers could reflect most readily the current attitudes, values, traditions, and practices of the local congregation. Twenty nine people participated in the questionnaire. In adhering to the informed consent letter, participation was completely voluntary. They were informed that they could abandon the process at any time. They were also informed that if they had questions regarding the questionnaire they could ask the researcher about it at any time during the process.

The summary of the raw data of the first four questions in the Congregational questionnaire reveals the length of time, frequency, depth of volunteerism, and whether or how often the respondent invites guests to the church. The participants were required to be at least 18 years or older. They also had to have worshipped in the congregation at least once in each of the last two calendar years. In response to the first question, “How long have you worshipped here?” I received the following results:

1. (1–5 years) – 2 respondents: A subtotal of 6.8 percent of questionnaire participants have worshipped in the congregation for 5 years or less.
2. (6–10 years) – 3 respondents: A subtotal of 17.2 percent of participants have worshipped in the congregation for 10 years or less.

3. (10–15 years) – 6 respondents: A subtotal of 41.3 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for 15 years or less.
4. (16–20 years) – 3 respondents: A subtotal of 48.2 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for 20 years or less. Approximately,
5. (21–30 years) – 3 respondents: A subtotal of 17.2 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for more than 20, but less than 30 years.
6. (31–40 years) – 3 respondents: A subtotal of 17.2 percent of the participants have worshiped in the congregation for more than 30, but less than 40 years.
7. (41–50 years) – 3 respondents: A subtotal of 17.2 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for more than 40, but less than 40 years.
8. (51–60 years) – 1 respondent: A subtotal of 3.4 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for more than 50 years but less than 60 years.
9. (61–70 years) – 2 respondents: A subtotal of 6.9 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for more 60 years, but less than 70 years.
10. (71–80 years) – 2 respondents: A subtotal of 6.9 percent of participants have worshiped in the congregation for more than 70 years, but less than 80 years.

Overall, half of participants had a worshiping tenure of less than 20 years. Approximately one of every three participants of the participants (31%) have worshipped in the congregation for more than 20, but less than 50 years. A subtotal of 17.2 percent of the participants have worshiped for more than 50 years, but less than 80 years.

In response, to question #2 “How often do you worship here?” I discovered that of the 29 participants, 86% of them attend worship at least once every three months. Approximately 62% attend weekly or more than once a month. Almost two out of every



three respondents are invested in worship attendance weekly, or approximately more than once a month.

**Table 4.1 Worshiping Congregants Worship Frequency**

Weekly	8 responded	27.5 %
One to 3 times a month	10 responded	34.4 %
Once every 3 months	7 responded	24.1 %
1 to 2 times over 6 months	2 responded	7 %
1 or 2 times a year/Christmas or Easter attendee	2 responded	7 %

In response to question #3, “Do you volunteer in the congregation beyond worship?” the data indicates that over two-thirds of worshippers consider themselves as a volunteer within the ministry of the local church beyond worship attendance.

**Table 4.2 Worshiping Congregation In Church Volunteerism**

Yes	20 responded	69 %
No	9 responded	31 %

The fourth question inquired, “Do you bring guests to worship here? If so, how often?”

**Table 4.3 Worshiping Congregation Invitational Beyond Worship**

Yes	18 responded	62 %
No	11 responded	38 %

Approximately 2 out of 3 respondents indicated that they bring guests each year.

I also inquired as to how often people invite others.

**Table 4.4 Worshiping Congregation Invitation of Others Frequency**

1-2 times a year	10 responded	34 %
3-5 times a year	1 responded	3 %
Rarely	5 responded	17 %
Never	1 responded	3 %
No Answer	12 responded	43 %

It's logical that at least 11 participants did not provide an answer to how often they bring someone to worship in a year since they had already answered that they do not. A positive factor gleaned here was that over one-third of participants acknowledged that they ask and bring a guest at least once or twice a year.

**Clergy, Professors, Education Administrators, Directors of Nonprofits/Free Health Care Clinics, and Manufacturing Plant Managers/Human Resource Managers/Hiring-Recruiting Managers**

These were the participants for the second questionnaire to determine best practices and hindrances in meeting non-European immigrants where they are. Clergy came from three different denominations. They included: The Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Two Evangelical Lutheran Church Synods in Minnesota (The Northeast Synod and South West Synod), and Roman Catholic Charities Clergy. The number of ordained elders currently in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is approximately 314. The total for The SW

Minnesota Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church of America is in excess of 100: The total for the NE Minnesota Synod of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of American is in excess of 100. The professors who participated teach on the subject of immigration to Minnesota. They teach at collegiate level in public and private institutions in Minnesota.

The educational administrative leaders who were contacted and asked to participate were from multiple school districts in Southern Minnesota. They were from Albert Lea MN, Owatonna MN, Blooming Prairie MN, Faribault MN, and NRHEG (New Richland MN, Hartland MN, Ellendale MN and Geneva MN). They were either school superintendents or high school principals.

The directors of nonprofits and free health care clinics were from multiple locations in the Minneapolis-St Paul MN, and Southern Minnesota areas. Each one verified their involvement and intention to work with and better the lives of non-European immigrants already here or arriving in Minnesota.

The next group which the researcher reached out to was leadership of private manufacturing plants throughout South Central Minnesota. They included: Mrs. Gerry's (Food Manufacturing), Quality Pork Corporation (Meat Processing), Cargill (Food Processing), Hormel Institute (Meat and Food Manufacturing and Processing), Select Foods (Food Processing), Truth Hardware (Manufacturing), and Wenger Corporation (Manufacturing). It became apparent through the reading and research that manufacturing and processing plants have traditionally been places where non-European immigrants have gravitated to for employment. The reason for this is that many non-immigrants avoid and shy away from the intensity of the grueling work and conditions found in many

of these plants. Plus, there is a great demand for those who are willing to do such work. Non-European immigrants provide a solution to the employment vacancy needs.

The researcher found that in addition to the Plant Managers, they were aided in their work by two other types of leadership within their Plants: Human Resource Directors and Employment Recruiting Directors. It was in interfacing with both Plant Managers and HR Directors that the researcher learned the addition of Employment Recruitment Directors had borne fruit. In each case where there was an Employment Recruitment Director that position had gone to an individual who had (1) come as a non-European immigrant and (2) who had worked within the plant themselves. There is no better way for someone to understand the needs of both the employing plant, and the non-European immigrants who may want to work there. I learned a “best practice” by the plants before there were any research participants or questionnaire results.

I had been coached to hope for no less than 10 invitees to respond positively to my requests for participation in this questionnaire. Getting 20 participants would have been beyond excellent. As of February 1, 2023, a total of 55 participants had started and 51 completed the questionnaire: four did not complete it, meaning they selected “No” and did not move forward with the questions. Again, each of them was told that the invitation and process was completely voluntary. They were also informed that they did not have to complete the entire process if they, at all, became uncomfortable. They were informed that they could abandon the process at any time.

### **Research Question 1: Description of Evidence**

In the opinion of pastors, church laypeople (worshiping attendees), school officials, professors, company plant managers, human resource and employment

recruiting directors, and directors of organizations, nonprofits, and free clinics, what are the best ways to attract and minister to non-European in their respective communities?

The researcher included several research questions in the congregational paper research tool and the online research tool to garner results to answer the above. Initially, the results from the “congregational questionnaire” will be shared here. A question in the congregational questionnaire asked, “Do you know the mission statement of this congregation?” Incidentally, the questionnaire did not include the mission statement. But the mission statement is printed weekly in the worship bulletin: “The Mission of The Ellendale United Methodist Church is to create the desire to make Jesus Christ Lord of our lives, through preaching, teaching, praying and obeying the Word of God.” Here are the results:

**Table 4.5 Do you know the mission statement of this congregation?**

Yes	23	79.3 %
No	6	20.7 %

I wanted to ascertain the congregation’s view of its future, given that most worshippers are primarily over fifty years old. The next question asked was, “How do you view the congregation’s future, given how many are fifty years or older?” Here are the results:

**Table 4.6 How do you view the future?**

Unsure	7	24 %
Positively	8	28 %
Concerned	11	38 %

No Answer	3	10 %
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More than one out of four respondents responded positively. Approximately 10% did not respond at all. Approximately one out of three were concerned, and approximately one out of three were unsure. Overall, two out of three respondents were either “unsure” or “concerned.”

The researcher desired to ascertain the congregation’s knowledge of where future population growth will come from. This reality has been the catalyst for the research from the very beginning. It was asked, “Do you know that most population growth here in Southern Minnesota will not come from the “traditional” European descendants?”

Here are the results:

**Table 4.7 Knowledge/Awareness of future Southern Minnesota Population Growth**

Yes	21	72 %
No	8	28 %

Approximately three out of four respondents expressed awareness that population growth will not come from traditional European descendants. Likewise, about one out of four were not aware of this.

### **Service and Sacrifice as Evangelism (Meeting People Where They Are)**

One of the great tenants of Christianity detailed in this project is exploring meeting others, including non-Europeans, “where they are” as a form of evangelism expressed through sacrifice and servitude. So I asked in the congregational questionnaire,

“Do you see sacrifice and service as a part of your meeting immigrants where they are?”

Here are the results:

**Table 4.8 Do you see sacrifice and service as a part of meeting others where they are?**

Yes	12	41 %
No	0	0 %
Unsure	17	59 %

Just by the numbers, one may gather that the respondents did not want to tell the pastor

“No” to this question. Four out of ten agreed, and almost six out of ten were unsure.

Sacrifice and service certainly can result in some form of action. The researcher desired to measure the congregational respondents’ willingness to consider some form of action. A new question formed “Would you be willing to reach out to immigrants on behalf of this congregation?” Here are those results:

**Table 4.9 Willingness to reach out to immigrants on behalf of this Congregation?**

Yes	9	31 %
No	3	10 %
Unsure	17	59 %

One of every three responded positively. One out of ten expressed no desire to do so.

Almost 6 out of 10 were unsure; the good news in this is that they did not rule it out yet.

The researcher desired to explore further the congregation’s sense for the need for action, or the urgency of such a need. The hope was to gauge their understanding of how action or inaction regarding such issues will impact the future. The question took this

form, “What do you think may happen to these congregations’ numbers if such efforts are not considered or acted upon?” They were asked to respond by choosing one of these options: decline, increase, or I don’t care. The responses offered this corresponding data:

**Table 4.10 What Do You Think May Happen?**

Decline	26	90 %
Increase	2	7 %
I Don’t Care	0	0 %
No Answer	1 Written In	3 %

The overwhelming majority believe that without action, the congregation will decline.

These are not delicate musings or information from the participants. However, the good news is that they can become informed and learn that other positive forces are involved beyond how their congregation may or may not be affected. Those forces come in the form of non-European immigrants who continue to arrive in South Central Minnesota. That is factual reality. Congregational Questionnaire Question 11 asked about their knowledge and/or awareness that people are arriving and continue to arrive from around the world. It asked, “Are you aware that Minnesota has immigrants moving here from all over the world?” They were asked to respond, Yes or No.

**Table 4.11 Are You Aware?**

Yes	28	97 %
No	1	3 %



By all but one, the congregation expressed an awareness that immigrants from all over the world are moving to Southern Minnesota.

To discover the local congregation's openness to another form of "meeting others where they are," there was Question 12. It sought to gauge the congregation's readiness to welcome a group of non-European immigrants and worshipers from another country to share their building for worship service purposes: "Would you be ready for our church to allow a group of worshipers from another country to share this building to hold their worship service?" The choices were: yes, no, and one was written in. Here are the results:

**Table 4.12 Willingness to Share the Building With Non-European Immigrant Church**

Yes	18	62 %
No	10	34 %
Written In as Neutral	1	4 %

Many of the congregants expressed a willingness to share their building with a non-European immigrant group or congregation to worship. This is a very interesting response, given the fact that the congregation was approached about sharing their building within the last year. The group that approached the congregation about using the building was a part of another denomination that does not own its own building. It worships primarily on Saturdays and is a Christian Congregation. While it never came to a congregational vote, it was voted down by the Ellendale United Methodist Church's Administrative Board.

Question 13 followed the previous question about sharing the church with another worshipping group from another country. This question sought to determine further if the

congregation would be willing to have non-European immigrants and their “non-English” language worship service. The researcher wanted to determine the impact of a foreign language being part of the equation. The researcher asked, “Would you be willing for our church to host a worship service in another language?” The requested responses were yes, or no.

**Table 4.13 Would You Be Willing To Have Non-English Speaking**

Yes	19	65 %
No	10	35 %

By a nearly 2 to 1 ratio, the respondents were in favor of this notion. This specific response is very telling given that it details respondents’ responses regarding language, namely a foreign language, being utilized within the walls of one’s respective local congregation’s building.

To determine what prevented the congregation from inviting non-European immigrants up to the present, I probed further. In nine years, the Pastor of this local congregation has not personally witnessed any of his flock inviting non-European immigrants. They do a very excellent work of welcoming others to the congregation. The invited guests simply have not been non-European. The requested responses were: Don’t Know Any, Don’t Know How, I Want to But Need to Learn, Am Fearful but Willing To Learn, Don’t Care To Do So.

**Table 4.14 What Has Stopped You from Inviting**

Don’t Know Any	23	80 %
Don’t Know How	1	3 %

I Want to But Need To Learn	1	3 %
Am Fearful but Willing To Learn	2	7 %
Don't Care to Do So	2	7 %

The resulting responses illustrate that most respondents indicated that they currently do not know any non-European immigrants. Two flat-out indicated that they don't care to do so, that is invite non-European immigrants to church. Four of the participants indicated at least some semblance of willingness to reach out. Of these four, one indicated that they do not know how, one indicated that they would like to but need to learn, and finally, one indicated that while they were fearful, they, too, would like to learn.

**The Online Clergy, Professors, Education Administrators, Directors of Nonprofits/Free Health Care Clinics, and Manufacturing Plant Managers/Human Resource Managers/Hiring-Recruiting Managers Questionnaire**

Here after are the results of the online research tool. This questionnaire comprised soliciting both marked choice selections and written responses. In response to the question "What has worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to your institution?", 21 research participants provided written responses. Seventeen participants responded to the question "What has worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to your institution?" One of those answers was "N/A-not applicable." In response to the third question "If all barriers and/or limitations were eliminated, given what you know about your institution, what of the following options might you employ in your work to meet non-European people where they are?" participants responded as illustrated below.

**Table 4.15 Online If All Barriers and Limitations Were Eliminated**

Option	The Number of Respondents Who Chose as a Best Practice
Support amidst any experienced racism, bigotry and prejudice	16
Provide Support for single parents	15
Provide ESL/literacy high school education support	13
Support for permanent affordable housing	13
Provide addiction/recovery treatment and support	12
Provide mental health care support	12
Provide seasonal community garden	12
Provide spiritual and moral support to those sending remittances to family back in country of origin	12
Provide elder care support	11
Support with transitional housing	11
Provide after school student support	11
Provide Support to those facing sexual, physical, psychological abuse	11
Initiate a food shelf	10
Provide citizenship process support	10
Provide childcare/daycare support	9
Provide early childhood education support	9
Provide preventive health care support	9
Help Support amidst unemployment or job-loss transition	9
Provide dietary knowledge and meal support	9
Support orphans	8
Provide green card/immigration process support	8

Provide legal referral for most needs	8
Provide LGBTQ support	7
Provide financial education support	7
Provide self-business ownership/entrepreneur support	7
Provide Post Immigration Support for those who were sex trafficked	7
Provide employment search support	6
Provide support to illegal immigrants	6
Provide support to those experiencing INS targeting	6
Become a sanctuary institution	5
Provide drivers education and training	5
Provide support to adoptive families of non-European children	5

The above is an exhaustive list of opportunities to meet others where they are in reaching out to non-Europeans. Sadly, topping the list was support of those facing racism and bigotry. Non-European immigrants often look different by skin pigmentation and are not insulated from humanity's inhumanity towards one another. Supporting single parent immigrant families was a close second. Rounding out the top three was aiding those challenged by learning English as a Second Language. Other common methods of meeting these immigrants where they are include housing, mental health/overcoming addiction support, elder care for those whose aging parents have come with them, community garden space where a vegetable garden can be planted, student after school academic support, establishing a food shelf to aid in offsetting food insufficiencies,

coping with mental-physical violent-sexual abuse in all settings, and finally navigating the citizenship progress.

Below are the written responses to the first question of the online questionnaire as to what has worked in meeting non-Europeans where they are. The respondents were invited to offer additional items which had worked in their respective institutions, which were not included in the exhaustive list in the questionnaire. The main take aways for these additional written responses are characterized around language, authenticity towards others, being patient and spending enough time with others, and sincerely wanting to know the personhood of the non-European immigrant.

Just as in any budding relationship if there is not common language it presents grave difficulties for communication. If one is inauthentic, no amount of help may overcome such a perception. Lack of patience and being hasty without sensitivity to others can be troubling. Others know if someone offering help is sincere, or merely acting according to their own agenda-without respect to the personage and culture of the receiving non-European immigrant.

**Table 4.16 What Has Worked in Meeting Non-European Immigrants Where They Are Written Responses:**

1	Enough informal time to get to know each other and build trust.
2	We have individuals and teams that actively look for visitors and welcome and sit with them.
3	In 1976, welcoming Vietnamese refugees Trinity Lutheran, North Branch, MN partnered with four other congregations in the area to resettle a family of five. Key to the success of the ministry was daily communication, listening to and advocating for their needs.
4	Access to material and services in multiple languages, including translation and interpretation services when necessary. Celebrating the culture they bring with

	them. Utilizing trusted messengers (those who are trusted and well connected in the immigrant community) to communicate what services and resources are available.
5	I do not have a specific example to share.
6	Hiring people that can translate and are of the same ethnic background for translation.
7	Conducting outreach in places where non-European people together, i.e., churches, culturally specific community centers. It is also important to form relationships with non-European community insiders, someone to advocate for my organization.
8	It is initially a shock when they see that I am also non-European, but you can sometimes see them almost physically relax, but, sometimes, you get the feeling that they are waiting to see if you're still one of them or have you "crossed over".
9	Knowing what barriers we could experience. Although there have been some in-person meetings, due to Covid, much of the communication has been handled via email, phone and zoom. In all cases, we do our best to have translators or interpreters assist when necessary. It is also necessary to be educated in 'their' culture, prior to the visit/meeting, to better understand and not offend them.
10	Having communications, meetings, and open dialogue.
11	We always educate ourselves about the culture and belief systems of any non-European families before meeting. We want to be mindful of others' preferences or their way of things.
12	First contact is very important, how you make a person feel. Make sure you understand how people want to be greeted. It has always been my practice on asking how I should address you. Also, I have been intentional in understanding different cultures beliefs and values.
13	Open dialogue, welcoming attitude, familiarizing self and staff with customs prior to their arrival.
14	Meeting non-European people where they are starts with an authentic listening ear. I find this works in nearly all instances, especially in cultures that are rarely introduced to our organization. Hearing the entire perspective of the non-European visitor helps to create a foundation of understanding the needs and outcome expected from our organization.
15	They are aware I'm not European.

16	Welcome. Sincerity of that welcome. Inclusion into things. relate that their experience may not be (is not) the same as others in my congregation and acknowledge that information.
17	Creating a culture that includes all employees no matter their background or immigration status, being involved in all aspects of their lives by helping in things such as schooling, childcare to buying vehicles and getting a driver's license etc. Helping create a faith-based center in the community and supporting cultural events.
18	Food shelf
19	Having options to help with language barriers, having a understanding of culture differences.
20	A friendly welcome and help them in any way or mean to make them feel comfortable.
21	Language support and additional adults in the building to help with communication and connections with families.

Below are some additional responses from the online questionnaire, Question 4

“If there are areas of support you might offer not mentioned above, please describe here.”

**Table 4.17 Question 4 from online Research Tool**

1	I checked three boxes because I would only provide support based on felt and expressed needs as I would any member of the congregation.
2	Ask, listen and support as you are able (your above list does not allow me to uncheck)
3	Because our focus is on home ownership, we would benefit the most by focusing on communication with different languages. i.e. Interpreters and marketing in culturally specific media.
4	Provide emotional support to help with the transition into a strange social environment.
5	We are in a situation where we don't have the funds to support much for programs; however, we would/could provide advocacy in a variety of the areas mentioned above.



6	I would provide parent education support for parents (female/Male) who may struggle with child management or structure in the home.
7	One thing I noticed on this form you used “illegal” immigrants, please make sure language is inviting, who is legal, are they criminal because of their status. Please use undocumented.
8	I wish we could provide a possible need; however looking at our space and our mission, it is limited what we could do.
9	Provide a course in US Constitutional Law; Have a multi-lingual translator on hand; offer volunteer opportunity within my congregation.
10	Transportation
11	A safe place just to be!
12	Provide use of building and sanctuary to immigrants for worship in their native languages.
13	Support and involve them in activities and interests to get them involved so to be a part of the community.

These continue to focus upon aiding non-European immigrants overcoming any language barriers. Signs at work-religious centers-community support centers, worship bulletins, bibles, hymnals/song books, and translating are a part of overcoming language insufficiencies. Non-European immigrants, like all other of God’s children can identify a “phony” when they encounter one. Sincere outreach inclusive of a true desire to know a non-European’s culture enhances the trust and bond between the care provider and its recipients. Immersing oneself in the culture/community of the non-European is essential. It reveals a true desire to know from what and where the immigrants come. Aiding the non-European in making personal contacts in the new area in which they live adds greater

breadth to their social circle. It is here where they can become further anchored to their new home area.

### **Research Question 2: Description of Evidence**

“In the opinion of pastors, laypeople, school officials, professors, company HR directors, and directors of organizations who serve immigrants, Nonprofits, and free clinics, what barriers inhibit the ability to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?”

**Table 4.18 What Barriers Inhibit the Ability to Attract Non-European Immigrants**

1	Not giving enough time to building relationships
2	Giving gifts with strings attached, especially between institutions. Let them decide what it needed and when.
3	I do not have an example to share.
4	Not having enough people that can translate or modify documentation in the languages required.
5	Reaching out to non-Europeans like I would any other group/culture of people that have established roots in the community. I.e.: advertising, social media, flyers in local stores.
6	If they consider their reason for being at my institution is strictly because it is a part of a requirement often very little will work. You spend all the time attempting to convince them your interaction is not just a job.
7	Being ignorant of any barriers and/or cultural ways.
8	Blaming, going back to issues that are not part of a plan. Egocentric and individuals who do not comply equally with all participants.
9	Inviting people in with the assumption that we know them. There are groups of people who share the same ethnicity but have different beliefs and values. There are many groups of Africans/Hispanic here in the US who have different traditions and values.
10	First contact – if you don’t greet someone with warmth, people know how you feel. Not being genuine.

11	Being too forward, a slower approach has proven to be a more welcoming approach.
12	To propose our regulations without first explaining them, does not work when meeting non-European people. The laws, policies and rules that are in place must be thoroughly explained in a way that is beneficial to (a) non-European person who is interested in using or needing our services.
13	The Institution is Uninviting. Church failed most.
14	Color-blindness. Similar experiences.
15	Overall, it has been a very positive experience.
16	N/A
17	We have not been able to identify any of the supports that have not at least supplied a little amount of support for students and families.

The researcher desired to explore the “Actively Open-Mindedness” of the respondents utilizing the second half of “The Congregational Questionnaire.” This was an acknowledgment that one’s degree of open-mindedness may be a barrier. Likewise, one’s level of “Intellectual Humility” can also be a barrier to meeting non-European immigrants where they are in their outreach to them. Below are the statements which participants rated their agreement concentrating on a seven point scale to gauge their being “Actively Open-Minded”:

1. Allowing oneself to be convinced by an opposing argument is a sign of good character.
2. conflicts with one’s established beliefs. People should take into consideration evidence that goes against their beliefs.
3. People should reverse their beliefs in response to new information or evidence.
4. Changing your mind is a sign of weakness.
5. Intuition is the best guide in making decisions.
6. It is important to persevere in your beliefs even when evidence is brought to bear against them.

7. One should disregard evidence that conflict with one's established beliefs.

The research subjects were offered the opportunity to respond to each of the above and below statements. If one strongly agreed they would select "7." If they strongly disagreed they would select "1". By selecting "4" they indicated a neutral indication about the respective statement. The responses to the groupings were then added together for each respondent for each grouping. The corporate responses for each grouping were then tallied for a global total average amongst the participants. The computation of the cumulative "Open Minded" results in the first grouping provides an average score of slightly above 37 (37.23809).

As per Dr. Karla Devlin Lassonde, all but one respondent scored above a neutral position regarding being open-minded. She added, "Open-mindedness of 37 indicates that most rated each item favorably toward open-minded traits" (Devlin Lassonde, AOM "Actively Open Minded" Comments).

In addition to gauging over all open-mindedness the questionnaire sought to gauge measure the corporate Intellectual Humility--the willingness to believe that others have beliefs that may positively influence one's own.

**Intellectual Humility Scale:** (The following are answer averages to the questions asked)

27. I think that paying attention to people who disagree with me is a waste of time.

34. I feel no shame learning from someone who knows more than me.

35. If I do not know much about some topic, I don't mind being taught about it, even if I know about other topics.

45. Even when I have high status, I don't mind learning from others who have

lower status.

50. Only wimps admit that they've made mistakes [modified to say, "Only wimps admit that they're confused."

51. I don't take people seriously if they're very different from me.

As in the previous set of questions, Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point scale their level of agreement with the items, with 1 marking strongly disagree and 7 marking as strongly agree.)

The average score of these questions came back as 37.03. An average of 37 or above indicates that the respondents are highly open-minded. (Devlin Lassonde, comments) Their corporate open-mindedness allows that they as a subject group are open minded to other beliefs. They experience others both as worthy of God's love, and also of one's love and respect.

### **Intellectual Modesty**

In addition to gauging over all open-mindedness the questionnaire sought to gauge measure the corporate Intellectual Modesty -- the willingness to believe that others have intellect that may positively compliment and contribute to one's own.

To gauge the intellectual modesty of the participants, participants were asked to rate on a 7-point scale their level of agreement with the following statements:

8. Being smarter than other people is not especially important to me.

10. I would like to be seen explaining ideas that no one else understands.

11. I get a lot of pleasure from knowing more than other people.

15. I want people to know that I am an unusually intelligent person.

32. I like to be the smartest person in the room.

The respondents were more intellectually modest than not, with an average score of 13.90 (Devlin Lassonde, comments). They do not corporately express the need to feel, or to be perceived as to being intellectually superior to anyone else.

### **Corrigibility**

The following questions were asked to determine whether participants are open to being corrected. The participants were asked their agreement with these statements on a seven-point scale:

- 37. I find it annoying to be told that I've made an intellectual mistake.
- 38. If someone points out an intellectual mistake that I've made, I tend to get angry.
- 39. I appreciate being corrected when I make a mistake.
- 40. When someone corrects a mistake that I've made, I do not feel embarrassed.
- 43. When I realize that someone knows more than me, I feel frustrated and humiliated

The average result of 15.66 reflects that the sample was quite open to being corrected when wrong (Devlin Lassonde, comments). The subject group does not need to always be right. They are open to other ideas other than their own. They are willing to be approached with notions with which they may not initially agree. They also see that new ideas make their own beliefs broader and richer.

### **Engagement**

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements about engagement on a seven-point scale. The statements were:

- 18. I rarely discuss things that I wish I understood better with other people.
- 24. I enjoy reading about the ideas of different cultures.
- 25. I would be very bored with a book about ideas I disagreed with.
- 26. I've never really enjoyed figuring out why people disagree with me.
- 29. I find it boring to discuss things I don't already understand.
- 31. A disagreement is like a war.

Per Dr. Karla Devlin Lassonde, an average of 27.10 reflects that the sample is more neutral regarding engagement. She indicates this is influenced by some variability affecting the average due to high and very low numbers. Some of the subjects scored very high and some very low in the area of engagement of others--as to reaching out to others in order to influence them positively towards one's way and manner of beliefs. The results reflect they are neither against engagement, and yet they are not a group of subjects who will be outwardly engaging. Hence, the comments that they are "more neutral" in this regard.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The results suggest that insincerity on the part of those desiring to aid and support non-European immigrants absolutely does not work. Those who receive care always desire for those offering it to be sincere. Nothings interrupts the building of trust and rapport with new immigrants worse than this. Similarly offering such aid void of empathy is hollow, and also does not work according to the results. Lack of empathy invalidates any semblance of goodwill that may be offered as well.

In correlation with earlier findings of the importance of language, the results suggest further that a lack of language support is very detrimental when seeking to support non-European immigrants. One cannot over emphasize its impact. Its presence instills a foundation upon which to build relationships. Its absence makes it that much harder to establish a relationship in a setting and environment that can be fraught with overwhelming challenges under the best of circumstances.

The results also suggest that there must never be any kind of “strings attached” in when seeking to work with non-European immigrants. This could not be more emblematic of what it means to be a Christian: that we love one another as unconditionally as humanly possible. It is also a great practice for any institution. This is also hallmark for anyone who comes to the USA, including Minnesota. Non-Europeans deserve to know that they can come here and seek what has often been called “The American Dream.” They can believe that they too can strive to achieve whatever they desire with no strings attached.

The results also suggest additional major findings. If any institution is going to make outreach to non-European immigrants one of its priorities, it must do so in non-traditional manners. This means what has worked in the past must be augmented by newer approaches. Which underscores the vitality of the final finding: that ignorance of, or being closed-minded, of barriers also spells difficulty. The two are mutually inclusive of one another in terms bolstering the necessity for their inclusion in any and all outreach to non-Europeans.

### **Research Question 3: Description of Evidence**



What are the best practices for churches and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities?

Perhaps the best practice discovered to meet non-Europeans where they are finds its roots in being open-minded. It may sound trite or trivial, or even too simplistic. Yet, its vitality is the foundation upon which additional strategies and approaches exist and function. Kendra Cherry provides a sound definition of what is meant “Open-Mindedness:” “In everyday use, the term ‘open-minded’ is often used as a synonym for being non-prejudiced or tolerant. From a psychological perspective, the term describes how willing people are to consider other perspectives or try new experiences.” (“How to Become More Open-Minded”).

Cherry further writes that “Open-mindedness can also involve asking questions and actively searching for information that challenges your beliefs. It also encompasses the idea that others should be free to express their beliefs and arguments, even if you do not necessarily agree with those views” (“How to Become Open-Minded”). Cherry further suggests these are the characteristics of “Open-Mindedness”:

- Be curious to hear what others think.
- Be able to have their ideas challenged.
- Not feel angry when they are wrong.
- Have empathy for other people.
- Consider what other people are thinking.
- Be humble about their own knowledge and expertise.
- Want to hear what other people have to say.
- Believe others have a right to share their beliefs and thoughts. (Cherry, “How to Become More Open-Minded”)

This embodies the Christlikeness believers seek to exhibit as they live out their service and sacrifice in meeting others “where they are.”

### **Summary of Major Findings**

After analyzing the data results from both congregational and clergy-secular leadership questionnaires, the following significant findings deserved further exposition.

First, the clergy and secular leaders around the State of Minnesota and the local congregation place high regard on trying to help non-Europeans with any language barriers they may face. Their responses imply that they desire to intentionally tear down language barriers.

Second, the clergy and secular leaders and the local congregation believe that in the face of decline it is imperative to be friendly and authentic in reaching out to non-European immigrants.

Third, the clergy and secular leaders and local congregation see the importance of helping non-Europeans to develop relationships beyond their own culture as a means of avoiding decline in their respective institutions.

Fourth, the clergy-secular leaders and local congregation believe that it is imperative to seek a place and way to understand the non-Europeans' culture, versus insisting that they assimilate to the status quo of whatever culture they encounter in their respective institutions.

Fifth, the clergy/secular leaders and the local congregation opposed solely using traditional means of outreach (advertising, social media, and flyers in local stores). They believe it does not work. Instead, they favor other ethical means, including service and sacrifice evangelism, in their outreach.

Finally, both groups of respondents agree that any approach to meeting non-Europeans where they are begins and ends with a healthy and holy open-mindedness.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The research aimed to discern the best practices for churches and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities. After analyzing the results and data gathered through the congregational questionnaire and the online (professors, educational administration, processing plant-HR-employment--recruiting managers, free health care clinic directors, non-Profit directors, and Minnesota clergy: Minnesota United Methodist, Roman Catholic charities and two Minnesota Lutheran Synods). This chapter reports the significant findings and highlights the ramifications and implications of those findings. This chapter also identifies the possible limitations of those findings, unanticipated observations that surprised the researcher during the process, and recommendations for potential further exploration and study. Finally, the researcher will provide a postscript narrative on his experience throughout this most improbable research project and academic adventure.

#### **Major Findings**

##### **Eliminating Language Barriers Is Essential to Meeting Non-European Immigrants Where They Are**

As the pastor of The Ellendale UMC since July 2014, I have not witnessed the attendance of non-European immigrants who have been invited by the congregation. That is not a critique or comment. It is a fact. If any non-Europeans were invited, it might have been on a given Sunday upon which I was absent. There was no discussion about a concerted effort for there to be any, either. If non-European immigrants had shown up to

worship, they would have been warmly welcomed. There just have not been any before this study or during, unless they were guest speakers the Pastor invited.

Since the start of this research in 2017, the Ellendale UMC has hosted guest speakers from The Philippines, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe, India, and Nigeria. The Pastor invited them. All of them, while multi-lingual, have addressed the congregation in English. The congregation has benefitted from being addressed in English as most of them are English-speaking only.

This research has discovered that language has been, is, and will continue to be one of the major factors in attracting and ministering to non-European immigrants. Thus, eliminating language barriers is essential to meeting non-Europeans where they are. The Lord God reminds us that we may think this way. It was earlier in Acts 2.8-11 whereby the power of God's Holy Spirit was exhibited in the ability to communicate to those present "where they were" in a language they each could understand. In Acts 2, the people hearing the disciples asked:

And how is it that we hear, each of us in their own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians-we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.

(Acts 2.8-11)

Throughout this research, the language issue continued to appear as one of the major barriers to reaching out to and attracting non-European immigrants. Before either of the two research questionnaires were developed or implemented, the issue was one of the

primary issues raised in the literature review. It was also among the choices of those things for respondents to select as items they would prefer to implement in their respective institutions: “Provide ESL/Literacy and High School Education Support.” It received the third most significant responses (thirteen of them) in the clergy/secular leaders’ questionnaire (see Table 4.15).

Literacy and language continued to emerge as a significant finding in written responses to question three: “If there are areas of support you might offer not mentioned above, please describe here.” One respondent noted: “Because our focus is on home ownership, we would benefit the most by focusing on communication with different languages. i.e., interpreters and marketing in culturally specific media” (See Table 4.17). Likewise, within the same solicited responses came, “Provide a course in US Constitutional Law; Have a multi-lingual translator on hand; offer volunteer opportunity within my congregation” (See Table 4.17).

The dominance of this finding documented in the written responses to the first question of the online questionnaire of what has worked in meeting non-Europeans where they are, including. Written response number four stated: “Access to material and services in multiple languages, including translation and interpretation services when necessary—celebrating the culture they bring with them. Utilizing trusted messengers (those who are resources are available” (see Table 4.16). Response number six read: “Hiring people that can translate and are of the same ethnic background for translation” (See Table 4.16). Response number nineteen read: “Having options to help with language barriers, having an understanding of cultural differences” (See Table 4.16). Finally, number twenty-one read: “Language supports and additional adults in the building to help

with communication and connections with families.” Four of the twenty-one written responses mentioned providing some semblance of language support as the support they would add to what they are already doing. That is nineteen percent of those written responses.

Meeting non-European immigrants where they are utilizing their native language conveys an unmistakable measure of instant respect for the needs of those receiving. It was this similar respect that the Methodists, United Brethren and Evangelical Association showed to the German speaking immigrants in the 1830’s by developing German language magazines, for example (Norwood 313). These undergird a certain depth, caring, and desire for the well-being of non-European immigrants. It further substantiates a genuine desire to be open-minded to any other needs which may arise.

### **May Decline In Spite of Friendliness and Authenticity**

South Central Minnesota, where the Ellendale United Methodist Church stands, is in population decline. Given that The Ellendale United Methodist Church is comprised of 100% of descendants of European Immigrants, they face this reality along with the fact that most of its worshiping congregation is well above the age of fifty. This study found that over 60% of the respondents have worshipped at the congregation for over 16 to 80 years. Over 50% of the congregational respondents have worshipped here for over 20-80 years. Over 40% of the congregational respondents have worshipped for 30-80 years. There is both age and longevity amongst the congregational respondents.

The congregational respondents affirmed by over a 2 to 1 ratio (72% of respondents) that they believe that most population growth in Southern Minnesota will not come from the “traditional” European descendants in the near to long term future. In

response to the question, “How do you view the congregation’s future given how many are 50 years or older?” only 28% responded positively. Of the remaining, 62% were either concerned or unsure, with 24% being unsure and 38% being concerned (see Table 4.6). This indicates a keen awareness on the part of the respondents that the congregation is facing a potential decline in numbers.

The data bears this out. When asked, “What do you think may happen to this congregation’s numbers if such efforts (to attract non-Europeans, among others) are not considered or acted upon?” only two (7%) of the respondents believed the congregation would increase. An overwhelming response of twenty-six participants (90%) indicated they believe that if nothing is considered or acted upon, the number of worshippers will decline (see Table 4.10).

Thus, the local congregation realizes they may decline. They face the need to factor this into how they shall conduct their reaching out to non-European immigrants. Facing this reality, not unlike those depicted in Acts 6.3, the congregation finds it is imperative to be friendly and authentic. Insincerity does not work. Offering help without empathy to a non-European does not fulfill or propagate one being full of The Holy Spirit or its wisdom. Non-Europeans, like any others, can spot a phony, insincere, self-serving person. Unfortunately, this leads them to speculate about motivation and “strings being attached” to one’s kindness towards them. It turns non-Europeans off completely, killing whatever work had been shared between one another up to that point. The same was true in the emerging African American population in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Where the African Americans encountered true friendliness and authenticity in the Methodist Movement, there was mutual trust. They also then gained empowerment (Norwood 372).

## **The Ellendale UMC is Poised to Avoid Decline By Outreach to Cultures Beyond One's Own**

The Ellendale UMC has been reaching out to God's people in Southern Minnesota since 1902. It is a vibrant community of Christians with the healthiest pre-k through high school youth Sunday School Program in the area. We are currently blessed with three candidates for appointed/ordained ministry for a smaller congregation. Each has been approved by the local congregation and is already in dialogue with both the Superintending Pastor, District Superintendent Fred Vanderwerf, and the cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Each is at varying stages of education, licensing, appointment to a local church, or ordination.

There are many other strong suits to the EUMC congregation. It boasts a missional outreach group called N.O.W. (Nurture, Outreach, and Witness), comprised of seven adult volunteers. Judy Lewer, The EUMC Sunday School Superintendent, reports 40+ youths participate in youth Sunday School in a given year. Our youth group leader, Diana Foster, reports seven youths are consistently active in the United Methodist Youth Fellowship/youth group. That is a good number for a small town.

There are two other groups at work within the congregation and united by the mission of Jesus Christ. They are historically a vital part of most United Methodist Churches worldwide: The United Methodist Women and The United Methodist Men. Allie Larson reports more than twenty-five active women in the EUMC's UMW/United Methodist Women. That is an excellent number.

Another couple of prevalent ministries add mightily to why The EUMC is poised to avoid decline. The first is a local food shelf that provides foodstuffs for upwards of forty-five families. Its geographical footprint reaches across county lines in all four



directions. This has become an even greater impactful ministry since the inception of the pandemic and considering today's economic and financial challenges of inflation.

The final ministry element illustrates that EUMC's readiness to avoid decline is attributed to EUMC's Youth Confirmation Class Program. It was resurrected in 2015, the year after the Bishop appointed me to EUMC by the late Emily and Larry Otto; they both recruited and networked to invite young people to participate. To be included in the ministry was nothing short of magnanimous. They intentionally included a great number of youths who were not attending the church but were directly related through a friendship or family relationship to someone already involved in the congregation.

In that first 2015 Class, Patty Hocking carried on the same outreach ministry through Confirmation. She has led no less than three sections or classes since . She has twelve young people who are slated to be Confirmed as new Christians and new members of this local congregation this Spring of 2023. Again, the most tremendous significance, in addition to the teaching, has been the invitation and inclusion of youth not directly from our local church family!

These missional actions live out the tenants of EUMC's mission statement: "...to create the desire to make Jesus Christ Lord of our lives, through preaching, teaching, praying, and obeying the word of God." The respondents to the congregational questionnaire affirmed their knowledge of the mission statement at a rate of 79.3% (see Table 4.5). It resonates with the words of Charles Wesley's hymn regarding the work of believers of Jesus Christ (stanza 1) "Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go, my daily labor to pursue, Thee, only thee resolved to know, In all I think, or speak, or do (Stanza 2). The

task thy wisdom has assigned, oh, let me cheerfully fulfill, In all my works thy presence find, And prove thy acceptable will” (qtd. In Whaling 213).

Moschella encourages immersion in the work to which believers are called, including this research, and what it further reveals of the EUMC. Moschella writes, “Immerse yourself in it all. This takes an ongoing investment of time but will pay off in several ways. First, you will review all the collected data and not rely solely on your recent impressions or distant memories” (168).

The respondents to the congregational questionnaire’s question #7 (“Do you know that most population growth here in Southern Minnesota will not come from the ‘traditional’ European descendants?”) reveals that a majority of seventy-two percent acknowledge and understand this fact (see Table 4.7). They know that the pool they have traditionally drawn in new worshippers and members has changed. This knowledge, and acknowledging it, is power for them. It sets them up for a realistic view of what they may or may not do going forward regarding their respective missional strategies. It also provides them with the opportunity to fulfill the calling of Matthew 28.19-20:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of The Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The blessing the Ellendale UMC congregation has in this day is that through migration and immigration the whole world is at its front doors.

### **Finding A Place and Way for All to Serve Others In Understanding Others’ Cultures**

The Ellendale UMC finds itself with various gifted missionaries (Christians) in its midst. When it is determined to do something, no matter what it is, they have found a way to get it done. They have forged ahead and completed a multi-million dollar building against the lack of endorsement of The Minnesota Annual Conference. The common theme amongst anyone who helped in that effort was that everyone had a job to do and pitched in where they could. This is not unlike the first disciples in Acts 6.2, “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables’” (NSRV). The Early Methodist Movement, from which The Ellendale UMC comes, was not unlike the early disciples in that they had to divide out different tasks for different servants. Norwood observes about the Early Methodist Movement:

In 1784, twelve (thirteen) elders were ordained. In effect, these became ‘presiding elders,’ the old term for district superintendent. From the first, they were assigned a group of circuits over whose un-ordained preachers they assumed guidance. It was their special responsibility to take the sacraments to the people. This was, then, the first definition of the office of district superintendent or presiding elder: to provide the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper to the People Called Methodists. Theirs was a priestly and pastoral office. (141)

The research bore out that there are those in the midst of the congregation with varying skill sets and interests in general outreach. When asked, “Would you be ready for our church to allow a group of worshipers from another country to share this building to hold their worship services?” the corresponding data indicates most respondents would

favor eighteen (62%) of such an approach (see Table 4.12). This approach may require the least amount of effort regarding actual “outreach.”

Further research data details that respondents were willing to entertain an additional form of meeting others where they are, building upon welcoming another group to utilize the building for worship. To be clear, the respondents were not unanimous that they would be willing to share the building. It would take good care, communication, leadership, and open-mindedness to bring the remainder of the respondents and congregation on such a venture. To be concise, eleven (38%) respondents did not favor sharing the building. The data also indicates that many (62%) respondents would favor sharing the building (see Table 4.12).

Additionally, when asked, “Would you be willing for our church to host a worship service in another language?” the response was favorable. There were nineteen (65%) who were in favor of such, as opposed to ten (35%) who were not in favor (see Table 4.13). Still, this is a very favorable result which, again, illustrates an openness to other approaches to meeting others where they are.

In the secular work I have done since 1993, I have learned much about recruiting, hiring, selecting, training, and encouraging others to do the common work we have shared. One of the people I reported to for quite some time was a gentleman named Bob Holbrook. Bob had been a hiring manager for many decades when I met him in the early 2000s. He tried his best to teach me all he could about working with others and supporting them.

Bob taught me how to differentiate four kinds of people when assessing and selecting who can do what you desire to help them learn to do. He often reminded me,

“Those four types of people you choose from to accomplish your mission can be separated and identified as those ‘who can’ do what you want to hire them to do and those ‘who cannot.’ Amongst those ‘who can,’ you must decipher ‘who will’ and/or ‘who will not.’”

**Table 5.1 Differentiation of Four Types Of People With Whom We Serve**

Those Who Can	Those Who Will
Those Who Cannot	Those Who Will Not

The researcher asked the respondents, “What has stopped you from inviting (non-European) immigrants from other countries to worship here?” The overwhelming response was that of twenty-three (80%) indicating that they “Don’t know any.” The remaining (20 %) responses were spread over “Don’t know how” (3%), “I want to but need to learn” (3%), “Don’t care to do so” (7%), “Am fearful but willing to learn” (7%). It is not easy to do anything for non-Europeans if they do not know any. Expecting a whole congregation to get on board with any issue is also difficult. Often ministering to one fellow disciple at a time can be effective. Both corporate and individual approaches may be employed. In a letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 1751, John Wesley detailed the dynamic of impacting both individuals and a whole congregation:

Therefore, it is only in private converse with a thoroughly convinced sinner that we should preach nothing but the gospel.

If, indeed, we could suppose a whole congregation to be thus convinced, we should need to preach only the gospel. And the same we might do if our whole congregation were supposed to be justified. But when these grow in grace and in

the knowledge of Christ, a wise builder would preach the law to them again, only taking particular care to place every part of it in a gospel light as not only a command but a privilege also, as a branch of the glorious liberty of the sons (children) of God. (qtd in Outler 233)

### **Use of Service and Sacrifice As Non-traditional Evangelism**

Use of service and sacrifice by The Elleandlae UMC places them upon the precipice of where to go. The scriptural foundation, as highlighted in Chapter 2 is found in Acts 6.1-7. They have the opportunity, like the early Christians, to decide how they will meet the needs of those living amongst and around them. The complexion of the population around them is changing, and they know it. The starkest question here is, “Are they ready and willing to face this emerging new reality? The data says, “Yes.” When asked, “Do you see sacrifice and servitude as a part of your meeting immigrants where they are?” the response was very uniquely “Minnesotan,” if you will.

Inhabitants of Minnesota, which includes the folks of the Ellendale UMC, have often nationally been characterized by a welcoming spirit of generosity and kindness often referred to as “Minnesota Nice.” It is the art, culturally, of being welcoming without offending, of never wanting to cast any negative shadows over what they intend to carry out in daily living, including attracting and ministering to others within the Church, the state, and the community. When responding to whether they see service and sacrifice as mutually inclusive of their missional outreach, not one of the respondents gave a “no.” Instead, in a “Minnesota Nice” fashion, the responses were either “Yes” or “Unsure,” not “no.” The impression of this researcher is kindly that the respondents did not want to answer “no.” The good news is that no one responded “no.” But by a tally of

58.6 percent, the respondents indicated they were “unsure.” Those that responded “Yes” tallied 41.4% (see Table 4.8).

While this might not initially seem like a positive indicator, it can be. As discussed earlier, every institution needs members comfortable doing different tasks, as was true in Acts 6.1-7, including and most especially a local congregation like EUMC. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many types of servant missionaries when it comes to reaching out across racial lines or to non-European immigrants. Some want to maintain their institution’s racial purity and do not reach out (Woo 145). Still, others seek to maintain their congregation’s homogeneity, and they do not reach out. The data provides insight as to where the EUMC stands.

Only three (10%) respondents rejected the notion when asked, “Would you be willing to reach out to immigrants on behalf of this congregation?” Seventeen (59%) earnestly responded as being unsure. Amongst these are those still wrestling with clinging to old social mores of racial purity and homogeneity, while old prejudices no longer hold others. These are the ones whose attitudes formed the core of their faith and are open to cross-racial outreach (Escobar 6). There were 8 (31%) who responded positively to carrying this out (see Table 4.9). Of these, there can be “Seekers,” those “curious people who are fascinated by a multi-cultural congregation,” and still others who believe that the local congregation can reflect the evolving community demographic changes of being a “fully integrated” congregation (Woo 152).

### **It Is All for Nothing Without Open-Mindedness**

Anyone who encounters another person from a different culture naturally will experience many unfamiliar things. The same is true for non-European immigrants as it is

for those who may desire to reach out to them. Any effort to reach out to non-European immigrants, enriched by open-mindedness, portends a much greater missional success. This is true for churches, mosques, synagogues, and any other institution in the State of Minnesota.

The researcher is struck by the words of the first stanzas of the beautiful hymn written in 1895 by Clara Scott,

Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me. Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free. Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see. Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine! Open my ears that I may hear voices of truth thou send clear, and while the wave notes fall on my ear. Ev'rything false will disappear. (Hymnary.org)

These stanzas illustrate, with lyrics and melody, the how “open-mindedness” is steeped in biblical foundations. These provide the theological framework for how this finding of the importance of open-mindedness is related to the project.

In the Old Testament, Proverbs 3.13 states, “Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding.” And Psalm 51.10 reads, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” The New Testament also adds and enhances what God wishes for believers in caring for one another. First, Christians must be open-minded within their relationship with God. Then God may utilize them to love others as they would love themselves. Matthew 22.1 echoes this need for a person’s whole mind to be a part of their relationship with God: “And he (Jesus) said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”



This biblical mindedness establishes how God rebuilds souls, lives, and minds. It is in such a way that people may be used to reaching out to non-European immigrants. Romans 12.2 states, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (NSRV). Perhaps open-mindedness is encapsulated best in Matthew 7.12: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

The research data confirms how open-mindedness is essential to attracting, caring for, and ministering to non-European immigrants to any institution in Minnesota. Colossians 3.2 says, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” The research suggests that before believers can impact non-European immigrants, they must first be able to trust them. They must be able to believe that the church has their best interest in mind and not its own interests. They must believe that Christians reach out with the best of intentions, with no strings attached. They must also know that believers want to know their culture and cultural beliefs, customs, and traditions rather than requiring them to conform to the believers’. The clergy/secular leaders bear this out in their responses to the various questions included in the online questionnaire.

In response to “What has worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to your institution?” some responses support the need for open-mindedness: 1. “Enough informal time to get to know each other and build trust;” 2. “We have individuals and teams that actively look for visitors and welcome an(d) sit with them;” 4. “...Celebrating the culture they bring with them;” 5. “Conducting outreach in places where non-European people gather i.e., churches, culturally specific centers;” 8.

“It is initially a shock when they see that I am also non-European, but you can sometimes see them almost physically relax, but sometimes you get the feeling that they are waiting to see if you are still one of them or have you ‘crossed over;” 9. “....It is also necessary to be educated in ‘their’ culture, prior to the visit/meeting, to better understand and not offend them;” 11. “We always educate ourselves about the culture and belief systems of any non-European families before meeting. We want to be mindful of others’ preference or way of things;” 12. “First contact is very important in how you make a person feel. Make sure you understand how people want to be greeted. It has always been my practice to ask how I should address you. Also, I have been intentional in understanding different cultures’ beliefs and values;” 13. “Open dialogue, welcoming attitude, familiarizing self, and staff with customs prior to their arrival;” 14. “Meeting non-European people where they are starts with an authentic listening ear. I find this works in nearly all instances, especially in cultures that are rarely introduced to our organization. Hearing the entire perspective of the non-European visitor to create a foundation of understanding the needs and outcome expected from our organization;” 19. “...having an understanding of cultural differences.” 20. “A friendly welcome and help them in any way or means to make them feel comfortable”(see Table 4.16).

The research further points to open-mindedness as the key factor for initiating any relationship with non-European immigrants. In response to question number two: “What has not worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to your institution?” on the clergy/secular leader questionnaire comes the following about such open-mindedness: number nine “Inviting people in with the assumption that we know them. There are groups of people who share the same ethnicity but have different

values.” Number ten “First contact – if you don’t greet someone with warmth, people know how you feel. Not being genuine” (see Table 4.18).

In response to Question 4 of the clergy/secular leader online questionnaire, “If there are any areas of support you might offer not mentioned above (an exhaustive list of suggested best practices), please describe here”, responses included: number two: “Ask, listen, and support as you are able.” Number thirteen: “Support and involve them in activities and interests to get them involved so to be a part of the community” (see Table 4.17). These cover a wide variety of ways to exhibit open-mindedness toward non-European immigrants. These are the manners in which we would want to be greeted if we were to arrive in a strange new country. This open-mindedness provides a richness of relationships with non-European immigrants that flows both ways, as one would hope for any relationship.

This study suggests that this is the way of Jesus Christ, reflected in the sacrifice and servitude of The Acts of the Apostles and utilized in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Ministry Implications of The Findings**

The research aimed to discern the best practices for churches and organizations in Minnesota to attract and minister to non-European immigrants in their respective communities. Based on the study’s findings, I have identified three major implications for The Ellendale United Methodist Church and any religious or secular leader in Minnesota going forward.

#### **The Ellendale UMC Equipping Itself To Fulfill its Mission Inclusive of Non-European Immigrants**

As the United States is an unprecedented migration of humanity across both the Northern and Southern borders, this study suggests that the local Ellendale UMC is aware

that they may face a numerical decline overall in the years to come. This, as was highlighted earlier, is due to aging and a declining number of births amongst the traditional European descendants who dominate the general population in Minnesota, specifically in The Ellendale UMC worshipping congregation. The Ellendale UMC will do well to equip itself for the task of attracting non-European immigrants to come to experience their worshipping community. It is a part of their opportunity to live out their mission to others in the name of Jesus Christ. Serendipitously, it is an opportunity at “their doorstep” as non-European immigrants are beginning to move into Ellendale, Geneva, and the small towns around them.

### **Language, Language, Language**

The Ellendale United Methodist Church, all Minnesota religious institutions, whether church, mosque, or synagogue, and secular institutions--including state, county, and local governments--will do well to familiarize themselves with many languages spoken and understood within their respective geographical bounds. This acquaintance may include promoting, acknowledging, and using the various languages in crucial places that welcome non-European immigrants. Good measures may be taken to implement this inclusion process while still maintaining English as the primary language. However, whenever and wherever it can be functional, utilization of the languages of any immigrants may be spoken, broadcast, published, and posted with the effect of welcoming and validating those new to the State of Minnesota.

### **A Service and Sacrifice State of Mind, Heart, and Soul**

Finally, this study confirms that service and sacrifice as practiced by The Ellendale United Methodist Church has and will continue to serve them in their mission.

It gives them the “open-mindedness” to reach out to others. It also allows them to treat others as well as they already have, as they would want others to treat them. This open-mindedness may compel them to reach out to know the non-Europeans they have yet to meet.

By whatever means, The Ellendale UMC will do well to keep in mind the practices of being in an “open-minded” state. When one checks the United Methodist Church’s general website, one is greeted with the caption, “A welcome and a call: Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors” ([www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)). Being open-minded takes this welcome and call steps further. Keeping such open-mindedness, in addition to attending to the scriptures and prayer, may include:

1. Practice Thinking Outside Your Box
2. Realize Your Fallibility
3. Think About the Middle Ground (*Psychology Compass*, “Contradict Yourself To Become More Open-Minded”)

### **Limitations of the Study**

It was not until I began to peruse the written responses to the congregational questionnaire that I began to see some potential shortcomings of the research tools. In some cases, in addition to offering the “yes” or “no” response, I offered the respondent a third option of “unsure.” One question led no respondents to answer “no,” leaving the responses all split between “yes” and “unsure.” There were no “nos.” As expressed in the writing, I was concerned that perhaps no one wanted to respond “no” out of social politeness to avoid offending the researcher.

Secondly, my use of language as a researcher in one case caused me some regret. In question number four of the clergy/secular leader online questionnaire, I received

precious feedback in response number seven. Question four asked, “If there are any areas of support that you might offer not mentioned above, please describe them here.” The number seven response reads, “One thing I noticed on this form is you used ‘illegal’ immigrants. Please make sure the language is inviting; who is legal? Are they criminals because of their status? Please use undocumented.” Utilizing “undocumented” instead of “illegal” immigrants is a further step in the researcher’s less offensive language usage.

Thirdly, it may have been productive to utilize one-on-one interviews of respondents from the local Ellendale UMC and a healthy number of the additional clergy and secular leaders from across the various institutions I was granted permission with which to work in the research process. Undoubtedly, subtle positive nuances may have been gleaned from that experience.

Fourthly, it would be fascinating to expand the scope of professors, clergy, and clerical of more popular religions, school administrators from throughout the state, non-profit leaders and directors of free medical clinics, and leaders from more production and manufacturing plants. I was in conversation with a chaplain from a nearby state. They let me know that they have a colleague who is a chaplain at a major food processing plant. That colleague shared that the large plant has signage in no less than eight languages to accommodate non-European immigrants.

Finally, perhaps it may be considered an omission of sorts. I did not until now consider that I did not include a whole segment that would have brought a broadened perspective to this study, research, and results. I am unsure how best to approach the omission, except that including a research sample of non-European immigrants may have enhanced the whole experience. It remains a mystery for now as to what the non-

European immigrants would have added. Suffice it to say, it also reveals my own bias, or shortcomings, in that I did not even think before now of including them.

### **Unexpected Observations**

Four unexpected observations vexed my previously held beliefs about this study. For the longest time, I had been thinking in a very transactional process of caring for others, including non-European immigrants. I could compile a list of what others had done in reaching out to them. I did not anticipate the absolute crucial positives of using the native language when reaching out. This again shows my English-centric language usage, even though I am proficient enough in German to aid others in that language.

The second unanticipated observation was how essential it was to stop thinking of working with non-Europeans as if it were going to be a process of assimilating them to fit into our culture(s). I learned just the opposite is true. While we do not need to abandon our own culture, it is vital and rich to learn their cultures first.

The third unanticipated observation was to stop using the phrases, “illegals”- “illegal aliens” or “illegal immigrants.” Instead, as was shared earlier by a research respondent, it is far more polite and respectful to use, “undocumented immigrants” when referring to those who have not yet encountered or initiated the immigration process of The United States of America.

The final unanticipated observation was the absolute necessity of “open-mindedness” as a fundamental part of the mission of any institution wanting to reach out to non-European immigrants in Minnesota. Whether religious or secular, any approach not built upon open-mindedness will deprive itself of the entire breadth of what will come, as it is when it is included from the start of such a process.

### **Recommendations**

At the study's inception, I believed the congregational questionnaire might be less revealing for research purposes than the clergy/secular leaders' questionnaire. I was wrong. Both questionnaires offered a bevy of insightful results. I would recommend developing an "open-mindedness" workshop for use in religious or secular institutions. These could be beneficial for any further research and for honing work in attracting, caring for, and ministering to non-European immigrants.

### **Postscript**

I recall sitting in class at Asbury with Dr. Verna Lowe in the Summer of 2017. She encouraged us to choose a topic to ignite and sustain our passion. Dr. Milton Lowe, at first blush, encouraged me to narrow the scope of my study such that I could try to become as knowledgeable on the subject as humanly possible. Looking back on it, I could never have imagined how crucial and complicated immigration and undocumented immigrants would become in the past two years. God only knows how this dissertation will figure in both the near and far future for what could be both pitfalls and blessings to this country and the State of Minnesota.



## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX A

Meet People Where They Are Questionnaire \*:

1. What has worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to our institution?
2. What has not worked in meeting non-European people where they are when they are invited to our institution?
3. If all limitations were eliminated, given what you know now about your institution, what of the following options might you employ in your work to meet non-European people where they are?

- Provide childcare/day care support
- Support Single Parents
- Provide Elder Care support
- Support Orphans
- Initiate a Food Shelf
- Support with transitional housing
- Support with permanent affordable housing
- Provide LGBTQ support
- Provide Addiction/Recovery and Treatment support
- Provide after school student support
- Provide early childhood education support
- Provide Financial Education Support
- Provide ESL/Literacy and High School Education Support
- Provide Preventive Health Care Support
- Mental Health Care Support
- Employment Search Support
- Green Card/Immigration process support
- Become a sanctuary institution
- Help support amidst any experienced racism, bigotry and prejudice
- Help amidst unemployment or job loss-transition
- Help understand self-business ownership/entrepreneurs
- Provide Community Garden for seasonal use
- Provide Support for getting driver license/drivers training
- Provide Support to those facing Sexual, Physical, Psychological abuse
- Provide Legal Referrals for Most needs
- Provide Post Immigration Support for those who were sex trafficked
- Provide Support to Illegal Immigrants

- Provide Citizenship Process Support
- Provide Support to Adoptive Families of Non-European Children
- Provide Spiritual and Moral Support to those sending remittances to family back in country of origin
- Provide Support to those experiencing INS targeting
- Provide Dietary Knowledge Meal Support
  
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Invitation Paragraph:

Thank you for considering answering these questions. Much of Minnesota's population growth is forecasted to come from non-Europeans. Your input may play an important part of what and how future Minnesota institutions shape and carry out their missional responses to these demographic change opportunities. In appreciation for your participation I will provide a 1 page summary of what others are doing for your use in leading your institution.

\*Am using the phrase "...meeting where they are" vs "assimilating" in order that our mindset and actions be governed by the desire to learn from non-Europeans rather than dictating what or how they must learn from us.

## APPENDIX B

### Ellendale UMC Worshiper and Parishioner Questionnaire

1. How long have you worshipped here? (1-5 years) (6-10 years) (10-15 years) (16-20 years) (21-30 years) (31-40 years) (41-50 Years) (51-60 years) (61-70 years) (71-80 years) (81-90 years)
2. How often do you attend worship here? (weekly) ( 1-3 times monthly) (once every three months) (once or twice every six months) (once or twice a year) (Christmas and Easter)
3. Do you volunteer in the congregation beyond worship? (Circle one that applies)  
Yes No
4. Do you bring guests to worship here? (circle one that applies) Yes No If so, how often? (circle one that applies) rarely (1-2 times a year) (3-5 times a year) (6-10 times a year) (11 or more times a year) never
5. Do you know the mission statement of this congregation? (Circle one that applies)  
Yes No
6. How do you view the future of the congregation given how many are 50 years or older? (Circle one that applies) Unsure Positively Concerned
7. Do you know that most population growth here in Southern Minnesota will not come from the “traditional” European descendants? (Circle one that applies) Yes No
8. Do you see sacrifice and servitude as a part of your meeting immigrants where they are? (Circle one that applies) Yes No Unsure
9. Would you be willing to reach out to immigrants on behalf of this congregation? (Circle one that applies) Yes No Unsure
10. What do you think may happen to this congregations’ numbers if such efforts are not considered or acted upon? (Circle one that applies) Decline Increase I don’t care
11. Are you aware that Minnesota has immigrants moving here from all over the world? (Circle one that applies) Yes No

12. Would you be ready for our church to allow a group of worshipers from another country to share this building to hold their worship service? (Circle one that applies) Yes No
13. Would you be willing for our church to host a worship service in another language? (Circle one that applies) Yes No
14. What has stopped you from inviting immigrants from other countries to worship here? (Circle one that applies) Don't know any Don't know how I want to but need to learn Am fearful but willing to learn Don't care to do so

Please rate your agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 1-7 scale, where 1 = Completely Disagree, 4 = Neutral, and 7 = Completely Agree.

---

Allowing oneself to be convinced by an opposing argument is a sign of good character.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)
-

People should take into consideration evidence that goes against their beliefs.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)
- 

People should revise their beliefs in response to new information or evidence.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)
-

Changing your mind is a sign of weakness.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)
- 

Intuition is the best guide in making decisions.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)
-

It is important to persevere in your beliefs even when evidence is brought to bear against them.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)
- 

One should disregard evidence that conflicts with one's established beliefs.

- ☐ 1 - Completely Disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Completely Agree (7)

Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you, and roughly your same age.

Please rate your disagreement or agreement with each statement on a 1-7 scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neutral, and 7 = Strongly agree.

---

I think that paying attention to people who disagree with me is a waste of time.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

I feel no shame learning from someone who knows more than me.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
-



If I do not know much about some topic, I don't mind being taught about it, even if I know about other topics.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

Even when I have high status, I don't mind learning from others who have lower status.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
-

Only wimps admit that they've made mistakes.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

I don't take people seriously if they're very different from me.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

Being smarter than other people is not especially important to me.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
-

I would like to be seen explaining ideas that no one else understands.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

I get a lot of pleasure from knowing more than other people.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

I want people to know that I am an unusually intelligent person.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)

---

I like to be the smartest person in the room.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)

---

I find it annoying to be told that I've made an intellectual mistake.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
-

If someone points out an intellectual mistake that I've made, I tend to get angry.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

I appreciate being corrected when I make a mistake.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

When someone corrects a mistake that I've made, I do not feel embarrassed.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)

---

When I realize that someone knows more than me, I feel frustrated and humiliated.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)

I rarely discuss things that I wish I understood better with other people.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

I enjoy reading about the ideas of different cultures.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)

---

I would be very bored by a book about ideas I disagreed with.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)

---

I never really enjoyed figuring out why people disagree with me.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
-

I find it boring to discuss things I don't already understand.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
  - ☐ 2 (2)
  - ☐ 3 (3)
  - ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
  - ☐ 5 (5)
  - ☐ 6 (6)
  - ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)
- 

A disagreement is like a war.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 - Neutral (4)
- ☐ 5 (5)
- ☐ 6 (6)
- ☐ 7 - Strongly agree (7)



## APPENDIX C

(THIS IS FOR THE PASTORS/PRIESTS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH MINNESOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, THE ELCA SYNODS, ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCES , EDUCATIONAL LEADERS AND PROFESSORS, DIRECTORS OF Nonprofits, PLANT MANAGERS/HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTORS, FREE HEALTH CARE CLINICS IN MINNESOTA)

You are invited to participate in a research study by Randy Cirksena Jr., a Doctor of Ministry Student at Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you interface with others from whom you may benefit, possibly including non-European Immigrants. This questionnaire seeks to garner anything you have done to meet others where they are, that have worked and not worked. It also seeks suggestions of additional things you may want to do to meet others where they are, if you were given the opportunity to do them now: these can be checked off from a list offered or written in additional spaces at the end of the form.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate voluntarily in an online questionnaire. It should only take between 5-10 minutes. Your participation is not remunerated, but your involvement will be greatly appreciated.

The results of this study will be shared with my cohort at Asbury Theological Seminary, The Southern Prairie District, The Minnesota Annual Conference, and United Methodist Church Denominational and church-wide events. No names will be used, and all returned questionnaires and details from the focus group will be coded with numbers or initials so that your responses stay confidential.

If something about the study makes you feel uncomfortable while you are in it, please contact me. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may discontinue your participation by letting me know through email, phone, or in person. Feel free to ask me questions about the study throughout the process. There is no obligation to participate and no one will be upset with you if you choose not to. Thank you for your consideration.

*PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ASKED IF THEY AGREE WITH THE ABOVE TERMS AND ONLY BY CLICKING YES BE ABLE TO CONTINUE IN THE SURVEY.*

**APPENDIX D****INFORMED CONSENT LETTER****(THIS IS FOR THE ELLENDALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WORSHIPERS)**

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Randy Cirksena Jr., a Doctor of Ministry Student at Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you have attended worship within the 2021 and 2022 calendar years. This questionnaire assesses the understanding and attitudes toward meeting non-European immigrants where they are in their living here in Minnesota.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to voluntarily participate in at least one hard copy/paper questionnaire and possibly an online questionnaire or online. Your participation is not remunerated, but your involvement will be greatly appreciated.

The results of this study will be shared with my cohort at Asbury Theological Seminary, The Southern Prairie District, The Minnesota Annual Conference, and United Methodist Church Denominational and church-wide events. No names will be used and all returned surveys, questionnaires, and details from the focus group will be coded with numbers or initials so that your responses stay confidential.

If something about the study makes you feel uncomfortable while you are in it, please contact me. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may discontinue your participation by letting me know through email, phone, or in person. Feel free to ask me questions about the study throughout the process. There is no obligation to participate, and no one will be upset with you if you choose not to. Thank you for your consideration.

*PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER WILL BE ASKED TO CONSENT IN WRITING AS TO THEIR DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE BY SIGNING BELOW*

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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