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Stimulating Growth in Missional Understanding and Participation

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**STIMULATING GROWTH IN MISSIONAL
UNDERSTANDING AND PARTICIPATION**

**A Major Applied Project
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry**

**By
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April 2018**

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ABSTRACT

Benson, David M. "Stimulating Growth in Missional Understanding and Participation." Doctor of Ministry. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2018. 195 pp.

The purpose of this project was to initially assess the understanding of and attitude toward the mission of the Church among the active membership of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri. Then, through the implementation of a six week, biblically based course of study about the *missio Dei* and the mission of the Church, a sampling of the membership were given in-depth instruction to increase their missional awareness. This same group was then reassessed to see if there had been any growth in missional understanding and willingness to participate in the mission.

The objective of this project was to determine the level of understanding of and participation in the mission of the church for a representative sample of the members of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri and an effort to determine if that understanding and participation can be increased through an in-depth, biblically based course of instruction. Although there are other related questions that could have been researched in this process, the scope of this project was limited to those objectives.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

(Jesus said to them) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8 NIV).¹

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

Why be concerned about pastors’ and laity’s understanding of and engagement in the *missio Dei* (Latin for “the mission of God”) and the mission of the Church? Because these things come from the heart of the Triune God and are the primary focus of God’s activity in the world.

As the above passages (Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:8) reveal and declare, it is the Lord’s will and desire that the saving news of the Gospel go out into all the world and that as many as would believe would become His disciples and workers in His Kingdom.

The *missio Dei*, however, is evident in Scripture long before the incarnation of Christ. In Gen. 12:1–4, at the call of Abraham, and from the beginning, God has had a plan and a mission to save humanity.

The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

It is clear that Yahweh was sending Abraham to be an agent of His divine mission. The mission not only involved making Abraham “great” and building from him a chosen nation set

¹ All quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

apart for God's purposes, but it also had in its scope the salvation of all of humankind. "*All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*" Of course, Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise, but the theme of salvation also for the Gentiles appears throughout the Old Testament and particularly in the Psalms and the prophet Isaiah. This is a mission that was largely overlooked by Israel.

Though the Church generally points to the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28 as the mandate for joining God in His mission, long before Jesus spoke those words to His disciples, the inspired prophet Isaiah wrote, "(God) says: 'It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the end of the earth'" (Isa. 49:6). The *missio Dei* has been in the mind of God from before creation and continues until the final judgment. It is a travesty if God's people overlook it or fail to hear and understand His call to join Him in His work.

The Problem Identified

Some members of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, MO, have expressed that they are lacking in their understanding about the *missio Dei* and the mission of the Church. This lack of insight and knowledge may significantly affect their willingness to have a missional focus for their lives and service to God. This was probably not the case at the beginning of this congregation.

Faith Lutheran Church was born as a "mission" church from the joint efforts of Trinity and Redeemer Lutheran Churches in Springfield. For several years, the feasibility of forming a new "mission" church in north Springfield had been discussed by members of Trinity and Redeemer. Long-Range Planning committees were formed by both congregations.

In July, 1973, these committees were authorized to proceed with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) —Missouri District Board of Missions, in establishing another church in Springfield. Both committees worked together in trying to locate a suitable site for the new mission. In early 1974, a 4.71 acre tract of land in North Springfield was located on Valley Water Mill Road just west of Highway 65, and was favored by both committees. In June 1974, a special meeting of both congregations was held to discuss an option to buy this tract. The District Mission Board was contacted and Board officials visited Springfield, inspected the site, and decided to exercise the option to purchase.

The Long-Range Planning Committees called a meeting Aug. 29, 1974 for anyone interested in forming a new congregation. This meeting was attended by approximately 28 individuals representing a total of 55 people who would commit to worship with the new mission. The committee held a meeting on Sept. 22, 1974 and selected the name "Faith Lutheran Church" for the new mission. Officers were elected to head the new church, a constitution was to be drafted, and a temporary place of worship was to be located.

On Sept. 29, 1974, Rev. John Meyer, Director of Missions for the LCMS Missouri District, met with the group and encouraged them to begin holding services as soon as possible. On October 6, 1974, a meeting was held with the Circuit Counselor, Rev. Robert Wyssmann, St. Paul's, Marshfield, and Rev. Elmer L. Schnelle, a Missouri Synod pastor now residing in Springfield. Rev. Schnelle consented to serve the Mission on a temporary basis as a "worker priest."

A location was secured where services could be held, and on Sunday, October 20, 1974, in Bakers' Union Hall, 336 East Commercial, the first service of Faith Lutheran Congregation was conducted. Rev. C. W. Heilman, pastor of Trinity, and Rev. Gerard Thies, pastor of Redeemer,

served as Liturgists. Rev. Robert Wyssmann, St. Paul's, Marshfield, was the speaker for this occasion. Services were held regularly with Sunday School and Adult Bible Class in the Hall.

On June 23, 1975, Rev. Elmer L. Schnelle was called by the Division of Missions, Lutheran Church, Missouri District to serve as Missionary-at-Large in the Springfield area, and on Sunday, September 7, 1975, was installed as Missionary-at-Large of Faith, Springfield, and the worshipping group of Bolivar, Missouri.

On October 7, 1975, the new church was incorporated, and officially named, Faith Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod of Springfield, Missouri. On August 29, 1976, groundbreaking ceremonies for an Educational unit with chapel were held. Construction began immediately, and work progressed well on the building. Dedication of the new building was held February 6, 1977. At this time the new Faith congregation numbered 152 souls.

During the early months of 1977, Rev. Ed. A. Krause, a retired Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor living in Springfield, consented to help with worship services and Christian Education. This was due to the illness of Pastor Schnelle. Both pastors continued to serve both Faith, Springfield, and Zion, Bolivar.

In August, 1977, word was received that Pastor Schnelle would be permanently retired due to ill health. Pastor Ed. A. Krause consented to serve Faith as interim pastor. He served Bolivar as needed, assisted by area pastors. Beginning in October, 1977, Pastor Krause served the congregation until The Rev. Mark C. Stenbeck was installed as the first permanent pastor for Faith on January 7, 1979.

A ground-breaking service was held on June 27, 1982 to start the building of a new addition for Sunday School rooms and to remodel the present building, thus enlarging the sanctuary. Pastor Stenbeck preached his farewell sermon on August 8, 1982 as he had accepted a

call to Paradise, California. Rev. Gerald L. Thies served as interim pastor, and Rev. Marvin Lillie and Rev. Joseph Bragg served in other capacities during this vacancy.

The new addition was just about completed when the Rev. Leslie J. Mitkos, Jr. accepted the call to be Faith's new shepherd. Pastor Mitkos was installed on March 6, 1983. Dedication services for the newly remodeled and extended building were held on May 15, 1983. Faith was truly blessed at this time with 409 baptized members.

Pastor Mitkos preached his farewell sermon on June 28, 1992 as he had accepted a call to Zion Lutheran in Staunton, III. The Rev. Wilfred Ziekert served as the interim pastor during the short vacancy. The Rev Andrew J. Spallek was installed as pastor on December 6, 1992.

In September 1994, Faith began a new outreach ministry in the form of a preschool with 12 children enrolled. The preschool children used the Sunday school rooms during the weekdays. In August 1995 Faith called Deaconess Angie Reitmeier whose main duties would be to serve Faith and its members in the area of preschool director and Sunday School Superintendent.

In June 1997, ground breaking was held for yet another addition to Faith, a 10,000 square feet building which would house 3 new classrooms, a large preschool room, library, gymnasium, and large kitchen. The facility was dedicated on August 2, 1998. Reverend Andrew J. Spallek accepted a call to Salem Lutheran Church, Florissant, Missouri in early November 2001. Reverend Erhard W. W. Wolf began serving Faith as interim pastor on November 21, 2001 and remained in that service until July 11, 2004.

At a special Voters' Assembly held on September 29, 2002, Faith made one of its toughest decisions ever: to close the Preschool and Daycare Center that was started in September 1994. The center officially ceased operation on November 1, 2002. The Rev. Jason Shaw was installed as pastor at Faith in July of 2004. Pastor Shaw brought a rekindling of a mission focus

to the congregation.

In April 22, 2007, Faith Voters' approved application for a loan from Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) for \$193,000 to repair/upgrade Faith facilities, both internal and exterior. Pastor Shaw was instrumental in introducing a contemporary worship service, held in this renovated space, for the purpose of outreach to the community. Following Pastor Shaw's leaving to take a new call, in April of 2013, I was called to serve as Interim Pastor until such time as a new permanent pastor was installed. I served Faith from June 1, 2013 until June 30, 2014.

In summer of 2014, The Rev. Michael Edwards was called as the pastor of the congregation and began serving in July. My wife and I remain members of Faith, but I am now serving as a missionary at large planting a new congregation, Open Arms, in Ozark, with the support of Faith and the LCMS- Missouri District. Over the years I have personally observed that a large portion of the members of the Lutheran congregations I have served seem to be lacking in their understanding of the purpose and mission of the church and in their zeal to personally participate in it. This is no less true for the members of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, MO.

The problems that this situation presents are:

- 1) A detrimental effect on the congregation's ability to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus and carry out evangelistic work, and
- 2) A tendency to inwardly focus the congregation's energy and resources on "maintenance ministry" instead of making reaching out to the community with the Gospel its first priority.

Unless a higher percentage of the members of Faith Lutheran Church come to a clearer

understanding of the Church's mission and are willing to personally participate in it, they will be relatively ineffective in reaching others for the Kingdom and making disciples for Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to assess the understanding of and attitude toward mission among the active members of Faith Lutheran Church; design and implement a course of study about the *missio Dei* and the Mission of the Church to be taught to these members; and to reassess these same members to see if there has been any growth in missional understanding and willingness to participate in the mission.

This project is designed to determine the level of understanding of and participation in the mission of the church for a representative sample of the members of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri and an effort to determine if that understanding and participation can be increased through a course of instruction. Although there are other related questions that could be researched in this process, the scope of this project will be limited to those objectives.

The following statements/beliefs are assumed for the purpose of this research project:

- 1) Lack of understanding of the *missio Dei* and the mission of the Church, and the failure of congregational members to personally participate in that mission is a detriment to the purpose and effectiveness of the congregation.
- 2) Congregational members should have a good understanding of the mission of the church and should personally participate in it.
- 3) The randomly selected sample group of congregational members will be representative of the entire congregation.

The Anticipated Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes for this project include:

- 1) The successful completion of an accurate initial assessment of the level of understanding of and attitude toward the mission of the Church of a representative sample of active members of the congregation.
- 2) The design and implementation of a brief, but intense, training course to teach about the *missio Dei*, the mission of the Church, and missional focus and involvement.
- 3) The reassessment of the same members and the discovery that there has been growth and improvement in missional understanding and in willingness to participate in the mission among those who have received the missional training.
- 4) The gaining of feedback and suggestions regarding revisions and additions to the course of study for future use.
- 5) The refinement of the course of study so that it can then be used in an ongoing manner, and in some way shared with other pastors and congregations, to inform and equip other church members regarding the mission of the Church.

The Process by which the Project is Conducted

The process of this project will (1) involve assessing a random sample of members regarding their understanding and engagement in the mission of the church, (2) the designing and implementing of a course of study to increase the knowledge of and encourage personal involvement of these same members in the mission of the church, and (3) the evaluation of the course by participants to see if it has accomplished its goal.

This project will begin with the recruiting of no fewer than twenty-five members at Faith

Lutheran Church who will be assessed regarding their understanding of and attitude toward the mission of the Church. These same members will be invited to participate in a brief, but intense, course of study lasting six weeks, designed to increase their knowledge of the mission of the Church and encourage them to participate in it.

The process will involve the administration of a questionnaire at the beginning, prior to the first class, and the administration of the same questionnaire to the participants at the end of the course. Additionally, after it is completed, focus group interviews will be conducted to discuss with the participants of the course the impact the course had on them. Finally, the collected data will be processed and analyzed.

The Parameters of the Project

This major applied project (hereafter "MAP") is designed to discover the possibilities and approaches to promoting and increasing missional understanding and participation at Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, MO and other congregations and ministries in the future. Some of the presuppositions that are understood which I did not investigate are:

1. Each participant's prior knowledge of the *missio Dei* and his or her participation in it. This will vary because of the church background and experiences of the participants.

2. The learning styles of the participants. The effective learning styles of adults vary greatly. The approaches I use in the instructive course may be more effective for some participants than for others.

There are also theological assumptions being made that are in force and are not up for debate in this MAP. These theological assumptions are:

1. All references to God in this project are to the One, True, and Triune God who has revealed Himself in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the revealed, reliable, infallible, authoritative and written Word of God and is the sole source and norm of all Christian doctrine.

3. The Lutheran Confessions, as contained in the Book of Concord (1580), are a true and correct exposition of Scripture because (*quia*) they are in agreement with Scripture in their teachings.

4. God alone builds His Kingdom. The *Missio Dei* remains solely His. God has chosen to work through the means of grace (His Word and Sacraments) and through His people, the Church, to carry out His work, but the mission is carried out only under His authority and guidance.

5. There is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ and faith in Him. All true believers are part of the one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church, whose faith is ultimately known only by God.

The Content of Upcoming Chapters

In Chapter Two, the Biblical and theological foundation of this MAP will be discussed. The concept of the *missio Dei* will be clarified and how the Mission of God unfolded in Scripture and continues to unfold today through Christ's Church.

In Chapter Three, the theological perspective will be explored. Some of the historical and contemporary manifestations of the *missio Dei* and the mission of the Church will be recounted and pertinent literature will be reviewed.

In Chapter Four, the design of this project will be explained in detail and the methods used in gathering the information for this study. Specifically, the awareness building and education process used in a congregation in regard to God's Mission and the mission of His Church will be

addressed.

In Chapter Five, the surveys and focus group discussion will be explored by the presentation of the findings. An extensive and careful analysis of those findings will present valuable information about if and how a congregation or group of believers can be challenged and taught to think more missionally and thus motivated to participate more fully in the mission of the Church.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, summarizes how the Doctor of Ministry Program has enabled me to grow and become a better missional leader in Christ's kingdom and the congregations and ministries I serve or may serve in the future. This chapter presents recommendations for action that can be extrapolated from the collected data. Conclusions will be drawn and recommendations suggested for other congregations and ministries.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The two main and inter-related doctrines that underlie this project are the Mission of God (*missio Dei*) and the mission of the Church. This section will explore the biblical, theological, and confessional basis for these teachings. It will also address their implications for missional Christian leadership, mission in a cultural context, and the ramifications of these teachings in the life and ministry of the Church.

The *Missio Dei* and the Mission of the Church

To begin, what is the definition of *missio Dei*? In his book “The Mission of God,” Georg F. Vicedom defined the concept of *missio Dei*, when he wrote, “The mission is the work that belongs to God. This is the first implication of *missio Dei*. God is Lord, the One who gives the orders, the Owner, the One who takes care of things.”¹ He also said, “The church must first in obedience fulfill His (God’s) missionary intention. Only then can she speak of her mission, since her mission is then included in the *missio Dei*.”² Vicedom further wrote that God has chosen to fulfill His mission exclusively through the church. Salvation for people around the world is the objective. He said, “All revelation of God in His *missio Dei* takes place always for the sake of the salvation of mankind.”³

Greg Finke in his book, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, defines the mission of God in this

¹ Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1965), 5.

² Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 6.

³ Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 9.

way: “The mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings.”⁴ In other words, God’s main objective, as He works in this world, is to bring it back under His reign and back into a relationship with Him. This is especially true for human beings who were all created in His image.

In *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, Christopher J.H. Wright says, “When we grasp that the whole Bible constitutes the coherent revelation of the mission of God, when we see this as the key that unlocks the driving purposefulness of the whole grand narrative (to cite our subtitle), then we find our whole worldview impacted by this vision.”⁵

Mission is the heart of God. The only concept of mission into which God fits is the one in which He is the beginning, the middle, and the end! It always remains God’s mission; believers are invited to join Him as co-workers and instruments of that mission.

“Mission” can be understood, in a military sense, as a process to an objective directed by and under orders of a higher authority. Mission can also be understood, in a corporate or business sense, as a statement or document which identifies the organization’s identity and why it exists and provides internal standards by which to evaluate the actions of the members of the organization. And, mission can be understood in a diplomatic sense as an ambassador of a government representing the views, values, and concerns of the homeland and promoting an ongoing peaceful relationship with another country.

The *missio Dei* encompasses elements of all these perspectives on mission. As His Church believers are called to carry out a process of disciple-making (i.e. The Great Commission) under God’s own orders and direction. The *missio Dei* is also the identity of believers and the standard

⁴ Greg Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary* (Elgin, IL and Tyler, TX: Tenth Power, 2014), 91.

⁵ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 533.

by which we as God's people evaluate our actions. And, the *missio Dei* can be seen as a "diplomatic" mission where Christ is working through His ambassadors to bring to fruition the reconciling of the world to Himself. Mission leads Christians to talk about God.

The mission of the Church, then, is to be sent, under orders from God, to go out and serve as instruments of the *missio Dei*. According to thinking along the lines of Thomas Aquinas, the mission is found in the doctrine of God. The Father sends His Son into the world and, in turn, the Son sends the Church.

The *missio Dei* is a mission that God Himself is carrying out. The mission starts with the Trinity; it is an extension of God Himself. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the *missio Dei* in action. Therefore, the mission, as it is carried out by the church, is also incarnational in nature. The *missio Dei* is the very identity of the Church. The faithful go, in the flesh, to the whole world, to carry out a mission that is for all tribes and nations. The mission, therefore, is universal and transcultural. Nurturing and disciple-making are part of the mission. Disciples are to be engaged in a dynamic cycle of making more disciples who, in turn, make disciples.

Martin Kähler said that "mission is the mother of theology." In other words, God reveals Himself through His mission. Theology, then, is a human response to the revelation of God. Wonderful insights can be gained by approaching Scripture with a hermeneutic that is focused on the *missio Dei*.

Christopher J.H. Wright stated that, "the writings that now comprise our Bible are themselves the product of and the witness to the ultimate mission of God."⁶ Christians are urged to approach the reading of Scripture with "mission eyes." The *missio Dei* is found everywhere in Scripture, beginning with the creation account.

⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 48.

The Biblical Foundation of the *Missio Dei*

The first and second chapters of Genesis reveal that God creates the world and human beings with an intentional plan and purpose in mind. He creates humankind in His own image, to be like Himself, to be the caretakers of God's creation, and to be fruitful and multiply. It is clear from the creation story, in Hebrew Scriptures, that God is Lord of the whole human race, not just the Jews. It is also evident from the Biblical creation story that Yahweh alone is worthy of worship. Nothing in the created order should ever be an object of adoration.

The third chapter of Genesis contains the account of the fall into sin. The human heart is corrupted and the intimate relationship with God is broken. Yet, God still desires to be in relationship with fallen human beings. He, therefore, makes it His mission to redeem and rescue humankind.

In Exodus, that mission and calling continues in the person of Moses. Although it would appear that the "rescue mission" of delivering the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt was for them alone, in reality it was all part of God's larger plan to work through them to complete His "rescue mission" for the whole human race. There is an interesting hint at this purpose found in Exod. 12:38, where we learn that "many other people (non-Jews) went up with them" out of Egypt.

Further on in Exod. 19:6, it says that God intended for Israel to be a "kingdom of priests," intercessors for the nations; a role they failed to fully realize. Similarly, the New Testament church is called to be a "royal priesthood" that she "may declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness" (1 Peter 2:9). No nation or people group is to be excluded from the mission because *all* are included in the *missio Dei*.

In 1 Kings 8: 41–43, it is revealed that the temple, which Solomon dedicates, is to be a "house of prayer for all people." There the Lord will hear the voice even of the foreigner. They

will come to worship the Lord even as Israel does. Psalm 67 declares that the Lord's salvation is for "all nations" (v. 2). The peoples and nations (Gentiles) are called to praise the Lord as well as Israel (vv. 3–5). The worship is not complete until the whole earth joins in.

The prophet Isaiah provided glimpses of God's mission to the nations through Israel. In Isa. 49:6, the Lord said, "I will give you (Israel) as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." And, Isaiah 56 told of a day when foreigners will have a place within the house of the Lord. The prophet wrote, "The sovereign Lord declares- he who gathers the exiles of Israel: 'I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered'" (v. 8).

Zechariah 8:20 and following tells of the day coming when all the nations will be drawn to Israel by God. Zech. 8:23 declares "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" Is it reading too much into this verse to view that "one Jew" as the Messiah, the Lord Jesus?

Turning to the New Testament, the *missio Dei* focus continues and expands. Of course, Matthew 28:16–20, "The Great Commission," is the most well-known New Testament passage that points to the Mission of God and the mission of the Church. The Gospel writer, Luke, reported that the old man, Simeon, upon meeting the child Jesus in the temple recognized that God's mission is to save all nations. Simeon proclaimed, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32).

The Apostle and Gospel writer, John, penned the most famous verse of the New Testament which also speaks of the Mission of God: John 3:16–17. "For God so loved the world that he

gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” Jesus, the Messiah came to save everyone: Jew and Gentile alike.

In Acts 4:12, the Apostle Peter said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”. Later in Acts, Luke wrote about Peter’s visit to the home of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. After this significant encounter with a Gentile believer, Peter says, “... God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28b). Peter concludes, “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34–35).

To the very end of the New Testament the Mission of God remains front and center. The Apostle John’s vision of the final judgment and the commencement of the Heavenly Kingdom of God clearly demonstrate the universality of Christ’s salvation. John wrote: “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9–10).

David J. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* makes specific reference to mission as it is portrayed in Matthew’s Gospel, the Luke-Acts narrative, and the Pauline letters (the seven “undisputed ones”). Bosch observes that in Jesus’ ministry “God’s reign is not understood as exclusively future but as both future and already present.”⁷ Furthermore, Jesus’ ministry

⁷David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 32.

“launches an all-out attack on evil in all its manifestations,”⁸ regardless of whether it emanates from the Gentiles or Israel.

The Early Church expanded upon the inclusivity of Jesus’ mission. As Bosch says, “The first Christian community was not opposed to the conversion of Gentiles.”⁹ He does, however, note that the *hebraioi* believers were less motivated to reach out to the Gentiles than the *hellenistai* believers.¹⁰

Bosch considers the missionary vision of Matthew’s Gospel. He observes that Matthew “conditions” his readers toward a mission to the Gentiles. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 clearly includes all nations in the mission of the church to make disciples. In fact, Bosch describes Matthew’s paradigm as one of “missionary discipleship.”

In examining the mission view of Luke through his Gospel and his Acts of the Apostles, Bosch observes, “As Luke retells the story of Jesus and of the early church there are certain themes to which he returns again and again: the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the centrality of repentance and forgiveness, of prayer, of love and acceptance of enemies, of justice and fairness in inter-human relationships.”¹¹ Luke’s “Great Commission” is found in the words of Jesus from Luke 24 where our Lord states that “repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations.”

Bosch explores the mission of the Apostle Paul. He identifies Paul as the first missionary in the New Testament sense, in contrast to the traditional view of Paul as the first theologian of the early Church. Both are true, but the missionary role is predominant, according to Bosch. The

⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 32.

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 42.

¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 44.

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 86.

seven “undisputed” epistles of Paul form the basis for Bosch’s analysis. He begins by asserting that Paul, rather than being “converted” was “called” by Christ.¹²

Bosch describes Paul’s “missionary strategy” by saying that Paul thought and worked regionally, choosing cities that were centers from which the Gospel could easily go out to the entire area. Paul’s vision for mission was the whole known world. Wherever he went Paul also utilized “associates” who were often placed in charge of a particular church once he moved on. Bosch astutely notes that Paul’s motivation for mission was three fold: consisting of a sense of concern for the lost, a sense of responsibility to proclaim the Gospel to everyone, and a sense of privilege or gratitude for the mercy and grace he had received from Christ.¹³

Bosch describes Paul’s key views as: seeing the Church as a new community, a single “body” that breaks down all former barriers; understanding that the mission is still first to the Jews and also to the Gentiles; seeing the mission in light of the imminent and ultimate triumph of God; holding the expectation that the Gospel will have a transformational effect on earthly society; realizing that the mission is carried out in weakness and accompanied by suffering for the sake of Christ; and finally that the aim of the mission is to lead all nations to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world.¹⁴

The *Missio Dei* and Leadership in the Church

What are the roles of pastors and other church leaders in helping the Church to live out the *missio Dei*? Providing leadership for the *missio Dei* begins with prayer. Jesus emphasized prayer in His earthly life and ministry (see Matt. 26:29, Mark 1:35, Luke 22:41 and John 17:1). The

¹² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 125.

¹³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 131.

¹⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 172.

Apostle Paul also stressed the role of prayer for all people (see 1Tim. 2:1–7). Prayer is the first component of mission, especially for leaders.

St. Paul serves as a good model for missional Christian leadership. He filled several roles, especially the roles of apostle, preacher, and teacher. Missional leadership today can be carried out through these same roles. As aspects of the pastoral office, preaching and teaching can serve as channels through which a congregation and its members come to a clearer understanding of the *missio Dei* and their involvement with it. The weekly sermon is a missional leadership tool which can affect and influence the hearers. It can serve as an avenue to cast vision (which is really God's vision).

In missional leadership God is always the ultimate leader, working through His human representatives. God is the leader and mission is the heart of God. Human leadership is subject to the direction and prompting of God. Leadership is a skill; a gift from God. The gift of governance or leadership is listed among the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Romans 12. Leaders are raised up from the community of faith. Their gifts are recognized by the church and they are called to lead. A leader is a witness on behalf of the whole body of believers.

Christian leadership is different from leadership in the world. Leadership in the Church is, first and foremost, servant leadership. A Christian leader also acts as a mediator, just as Christ is a mediator, serving as a go-between that enables people to come to God. A Christian leader is an intercessor and a bridge-builder, dealing mercifully with people.

A Christian leader needs to have a clear perspective of the future. Therefore, Christian leadership has an eschatological focus. Christian leaders set the hearts of their flocks on the return of Christ and encourage them to trust in the Lord to keep them safe until His heavenly reign begins. Everist and Nesson wrote in their book, *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for*

a Church in Mission, “Transforming leadership is not about the heroic leadership of the individual but the growing capacity for leadership within the entire faith community. Transforming leadership is shared leadership, as the gifts of other people are nurtured and celebrated.”¹⁵ Leadership in the Church is not a “Lone Ranger” style of leadership; it is a leadership delegated by God and shared with others in the Body of Christ.

From the Scriptures it is learned that Christian leaders are both born and made. Leadership is first of all a gift from God. A person may not want to recognize he is a leader but, if God calls him, he will be compelled to lead despite his resistance. So, leaders in the Church are called and gifted, but they are also equipped, trained, and shaped by God in a process that makes them into the leaders they are meant to be.

There are several Biblical examples of missional leadership. The first is Moses. Moses had the Spirit of God; the divine calling and revelation; and the years of molding both in the courts of Pharaoh and in the desert of Midian. He was both born and made into a leader. Through his calling and shaping by God, Moses became an intercessor for the nation of Israel and served as their deliverer from bondage, leading them to the Promised Land.

David is another biblical example of missional leadership. David’s personality and character is multi-faceted. He served in many different roles over his lifetime. He was a shepherd, a giant killer, a boy hero, a musician, a poet, a politician, a friend, a lover, a father, a warrior, a king, and a prophet. Through all these experiences God was shaping and molding David into the leader he was chosen to be. He was a great man, but a man nonetheless; truly both saint and sinner.

Another example of a missional leader is the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was both a

¹⁵ Norma Cook Everist and Craig L. Nesson, *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2008) 164.

reluctant prophet and a prophet reluctantly received by God's people. He spoke words of God's judgment but also offered words of hope to the remnant who would return from captivity. He also viewed his mission as one extending beyond the people of Israel to include the Gentile nations as well. Jeremiah shows that being a leader called of God does not bring the praise or recognition of people. On the contrary, it often is resisted and misunderstood. True leadership can mean suffering and struggle and calls for perseverance.

Turning to the New Testament, of the first example of a missional leader to be considered is Simon Peter. Peter was a rough Galilean fisherman called by Jesus to become a fisher of men. The transition, however, was not an easy one for Peter. Even though Jesus nicknamed him Cephas, "The Rock," Peter was often on shaky ground. On occasion Jesus had to correct him. Peter often let the opinions of others sway him. He even denied knowing Jesus to save his own skin. The actions of Peter are a reminder that all leaders fail at times. Even when Peter became a central leader in the early Church, he still made mistakes and had conflicts with Paul and other Church leaders.

The leadership of the Apostle Paul should also be considered. Although he didn't know it at the time of his conversion, Paul later acknowledged (in his letter to the Galatians) that he had been set apart from birth to be an apostle of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. His apostolic authority came directly from God and was later cautiously affirmed by the Church. God was already shaping and preparing Paul for his mission through his upbringing in Roman territory (Tarsus) outside of Israel, his fluency in Greek, his training as a tentmaker, and his learning in Jerusalem under Rabbi Gamaliel. Through his missionary journeys and his epistles he showed skill in being able to provide leadership to the Church at large. He was also equipped to deal with problems that arose such as rival "missionaries," charlatans, factions in the churches, Judaizers, and

disillusioned believers.

Apostolic leadership in action can be seen through sections of the Acts of the Apostles. The first scenario is in Acts 6 where the Hellenistic Jewish widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of provisions. This was clearly a problem created by cultural differences. The favoritism may have been an unintentional oversight but it created tension and conflict nonetheless. The Twelve gather the whole body of disciples to address this issue. The apostles were clear on their role as leaders: they were called to a ministry of preaching the Word and of prayer. This issue could be a distraction from their designated work so they saw the need to delegate the solution to others.

Here is the beginning of “social ministry” or the work of “human care” in the Church. As the Church grew, different kinds of leaders for different kinds of service would be needed. It was the apostles’ role to teach, inspire, and motivate. Others, with different gifts, were needed to oversee the care of the needy among them. The basic requirements and qualities for this new role are the same as for any position of leadership in the Church: they were to be persons with a good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

Even though it is not mentioned in the narrative of Acts 6, there were, undoubtedly, other qualities and spiritual gifts needed for success in this new duty. In addition, these “deacons” needed to be caring, hospitable, discerning, impartial, and good at administration. They also needed the affirmation and blessing of the whole community of faith in order to serve effectively in this role. True leadership in the Church is affirmed by the body of believers.

Another example of missional leadership in action from the book of Acts is found in chapter 15. A gathering took place in Jerusalem over the issue of the role of circumcision and the Law of Moses in regard to salvation. The key players were some men from Judea who were

teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation; Paul and Barnabas who were sent by the church at Antioch; some Pharisees from Jerusalem; Peter, and James. As they gathered together they became a problem solving “task force.” Paul and Barnabas worked hard to keep the focus on mission by relating their success among the Gentiles.

Peter, repenting of his past shortcomings in this area, argued that no additional burden should be laid upon the believing Gentiles. There was much debate after which James proposed a solution. There would be no yielding to Pharisaical legalism or the insistence on circumcision. There would, however, be an appeal to the Gentiles, for the sake of unity, to give no offense to the Jewish believers and to refrain from practices that would be particularly offensive to those of Jewish background.

Here is a good example of shared leadership and how the leaders could, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, arrive at a consensus. Considering the wide gap that existed at the beginning of this debate, the outcome is amazing. The contemporary Church seems to have greater difficulty arriving at consensus on much lesser issues in the Church today.

***The Missio Dei* and Culture**

Another important subject is culture as it relates to the *missio Dei*. Culture can be understood as a collection of assumptions, values, and loyalties of a particular group of people. Out of these components grow observable behaviors, actions, and artifacts that define a culture. Several observations about culture can be made. First, culture is part of our identity: who we see ourselves to be. In regard to the propagation of the Gospel, culture is often “neutral.” However, there are aspects of culture that can either be supportive or antagonistic towards the Gospel. Secondly, culture is a human condition. It is not innate or genetic. Culture is formed by a cumulative product of the choices of a community over a long period of time, which forms a

construct.

Third, culture is shared and communal. Even something as simple as gestures do not have an inherent meaning; meaning must be “assigned” and shared. Fourth, culture is learned. Like language, it must be acquired gradually over time. A person can “learn” another culture, but this, too, takes time and effort. It helps to have a “cultural informant” to serve as a guide. Fifth, culture is comprehensive and integrative. It connects all “reality” and makes sense out of the totality of the human experience. Sixth, culture provides categories that shape our understanding of the world. And finally, all living cultures are dynamic. They are in a constant process of change. Every culture has implicit “rules” of change, but they can and do change too.

So, what does culture have to do with the *missio Dei* and Christian ministry? Cultural awareness is helpful because everyone is immersed in some particular culture of their own. Everyone who hears the Gospel hears it in the context of their culture. Not everyone to whom the Gospel is proclaimed hears it in the same context. Christians are called to communicate the Gospel so that it is understood by the hearers as Gospel. Understanding a culture can help us to avoid distorting the Gospel.

In considering the mission of the Church it is also necessary to address the “Theology of Culture.” Dr. Robert Kolb defines culture as “the organic and dynamic whole of human activities and the relationships which define the meaning and significance of life for a specific group of people linked by these elements in a common identity and purpose and in common endeavors.” Culture gives meaning and significance to life. It serves as the identity for a specific group of people. There is a shared common purpose. If one part of the cultural structure is changed it will have a “ripple effect” throughout that society.

There are those who live just outside the “laws” of their culture who are known as rebels or

anomalies. In some cultures (such as the military) violations of the cultural “rules” can meet with greater discipline. Other cultures are more loosely connected and allow for greater variation. In many cultures there are counter-cultural movements that involve an identifiable group of people. “Order” is an important element of culture because you cannot have harmony or *Shalom* without things being in their “proper” place.

People living in a culture need to know its boundaries and parameters, the rules and “do’s and don’ts” of the culture. Cultures involve systems and institutions, as well as individuals. There can also be “higher” and “lower” sub-cultures within any given culture.

What are some of the elements of culture? Certainly religion, language, social structure, economic relationships, and political institutions are traditionally the most significant cultural elements. In many cultures, sports and leisure, music and the arts, science and technology, healthcare, and the media are immersing as equally important elements of culture. Other elements that shape culture are the military, educational systems, festivals, dealing with death, humor, transportation, food, clothing, hygiene, criminal justice, location and climate, management of time, methods of conflict resolution, dwellings and architecture, and one’s view of others as part of one’s own identity.

A culture is expressed in the telling of its history and narratives; its spoken and written records; and in its legends and myths. It is also revealed in its rules; codes of conduct (written and unwritten); its models and standards for individual and group behavior; and through its icons, signs and symbols.

Christians are called to the role of “priest,” *pontifex*, or “bridge-builder. Their task is to bridge the gap between the Scriptures and the culture in which God has placed them. The dilemma is that there are two sides to the “bridge”: cultural context and the unchanging Word of

God. To begin with, the bridge needs to be anchored in the Scriptures. How the bridge is crossed, however, is constantly changing.

For Lutherans, the theology of culture is a theology of two kingdoms. Martin Luther had three different sets of “two kingdoms.” The first was the medieval Augustinian model (“City of God” and “City of the World”). The second set was the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. The third set of “two kingdoms” for Luther was the two spheres of life: our relationship with God and our relationship with other people.

Our relationship with God is grounded in the Gospel. It is the Gospel that motivates Christians to do the right things, to be the human beings God designed them to be. In the “vertical” realm there is a passive righteousness. This kind of righteousness is identified as *coram Deo*, “before God.” It is bestowed upon believers as a gift of God without any contribution or cooperation on their part. Those engaged in the mission of the Church do well to remember that salvation comes only as a result of God’s activity through His Word and Spirit. The messenger doesn’t contribute to this kind of righteousness.

At the same time, as Christians are carrying out their God-assigned tasks such as serving their neighbors in the name of Christ, they are also exercising an active “horizontal” righteousness called *coram mundo*, “before the world.” So, as this relates to the mission of the Church, believers are passively righteous before God but actively righteous in living out their faith in the world. These two kinds of righteousness are always found together as Christians carry out their calling and mission in the world to be “salt and light.”

In medieval social theory, life was divided into three estates: family and economic life; political community; and The Church. In each of these realms everyone had an identity, role, responsibility, office, or official position. Christians view these roles as “callings” or vocations.

That is how Luther saw life and culture. This is the setting in which Christianity and its mission meets the individuals that that God has called Christians to serve.

The importance of vocation was revisited at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries in German thinking. Luther's theology of vocation is again relevant to the cultural discussion today. The larger umbrella over this is Luther's doctrine of creation, where the daily things of life are seen as God's good gifts for the working of His kingdom. Today, Lutheran Christians, continue to view their relationship with God and their relationship with others in the context of their culture.

Disciples of Jesus Christ seek to share the Gospel with sinners in their cultural context. Moral values are at work in all cultural expressions. There is always something to connect with. Ministers of the Word of God need to recognize that they are always moving into new cultures, but the Church, can never be completely "at home" in any earthly culture. Believers are always strangers and sojourners who can be both supportive and critical of the culture around them. All cultural expressions are penultimate, but can be very important, for example, family life.

The preservation of freedom is important. It is part and parcel of working within the culture and laboring within a community context. It is an abuse of God's Word to read too much into Scripture as a way to justify one's actions. Conversion to Christ, however, does involve a cultural move. To be a Christian means to be counter-cultural in some ways at least.

The book *Christ and Culture in Dialogue; Constructive Themes and Practical Applications*, edited by Angus J.L. Menuge, came out of a lecture series at Concordia University-Wisconsin beginning in 1996, orchestrated by Dr. Menuge.¹⁶ This volume is an attempt to re-engage the work of H. Richard Niebuhr in his classic volume *Christ and Culture* and to re-think

¹⁶ Angus J.L. Menuge, et al, ed. *Christ and Culture in Dialogue* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1999).

and re-apply the issues he raised for this generation, with special focus on “the Lutheran difference” in approaching Christ and culture today.

In his essay contribution, Dr. Robert Kolb revisits the paradoxical view and faults Niebuhr for not adequately utilizing Luther’s “two realms” view of Christian life to show how this approach can be precisely what is needed for our time. Kolb then reviews the seven elements of Niebuhr’s definition, showing how they are helpful in understanding this view. He concludes with thoughts on how Christians live and carry out their mission in two dimensions, allowing Christ to predominate and guide them in their use of culture.¹⁷

Dr. Victor Raj, in the essay he contributed to the book, explored Eastern metaphors for the Gospel. Although it has been branded a “Western” religion, true Christianity is actually trans-cultural and universal and can take root in any culture. In fact, Raj proposed that the Gospel is particularly congenial to eastern thinking, when properly presented.¹⁸

The Gospel is transformational in that it always has an impact on cultures. It is also true that the Gospel is initially alien to every culture. Proclaiming the Gospel is always transcultural. The initial results may be deep puzzlement before understanding comes.

Paradigms for the Mission of the Church

Mission then is the divine impulse to bring the Gospel to those who don’t know it. The mission is always carried out through a particular model or construct which David Bosch calls a paradigm. In his afore mentioned book, *Transforming Mission*, Bosch identified six mission paradigms used over the history of the Christian Church.¹⁹

¹⁷ Menuge, *Christ and Culture*, 104–25.

¹⁸ Menuge, *Christ and Culture*, 167–82.

¹⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 181–510.

The first paradigm under which the Church in mission operated was the Primitive approach. This was the approach of the Early Church, to send out apostles and their associates to go from city to city and region to region founding congregations.²⁰

The second paradigm which Bosch identifies is the Hellenistic/Patristic period. During this era, Christianity changed from being Jewish into a thoroughly Greco-Roman religion. The influencing factors in this shift were Greek philosophy (particularly Plato) and Gnosticism. Not that the Church as a whole was swayed to adopt Hellenistic thought over and against biblical teaching, but the Church's methodology, approach to theology, and her paradigm of mission were greatly affected.²¹

Under this paradigm Christianity came to be viewed not as a "mystery religion," but as a reasonable, rational faith. Christianity was defined by doctrine and systematizing theology and gave rise to the creeds and other "confessions" of faith. As Bosch wrote, there was an "ever-growing tendency to define the faith and systematize doctrine."²² "The mobile ministry of apostles, prophets, and evangelists was beginning to give way to the settled ministry of bishops, (elders) and deacons."²³

As a result, missionary zeal subsided. The "mission" of the Church became "church-centered" and was seen as residing in the liturgy. Bosch said, "The witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact, the worshipping community is in and of itself an act of witness."²⁴ In regard to the mission activity of the Eastern/Patristic Church, there developed a lack of concern for those outside the Church. Bosch stated, "The emphasis was on conservation

²⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 181–89.

²¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 190–213.

²² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 194.

²³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 201.

²⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 208.

and restoration rather than on embarking on a journey into the unknown.”²⁵ Under the Hellenistic/Patristic paradigm, the Church is the aim of mission. The goal is to draw people into the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. The Church is the only place to encounter God and is, therefore, not an instrument but a goal of the *missio Dei*.

Bosch next considers the third paradigm of the medieval Roman Catholic Church: the Western Paradigm. This paradigm was shaped by the new influence of Roman culture and the Latin language. Different emphases developed in the West. As Bosch writes, “the theology of the Eastern Church was incarnational...the theology of the Western church was staurological...it emphasized the substitutionary death of Christ for the sake of sinners.”²⁶ The Western Church began to focus on salvation of the individual through the ministry of the church.

There also developed a blending of church and state, with a view toward the state carrying out the purposes of the church. This led to indirect and direct “missionary wars” where the conquering of other nations and colonization were seen as a legitimate form of “mission” to convert pagan lands to Christianity. Bosch does add that the rise of monasticism in the West produced, inadvertently, another parallel and positive avenue of mission.²⁷

Fourth, Bosch takes up the paradigm of the Protestant Reformation era. Of course, the person who became the catalyst for this paradigm was Martin Luther. According to Bosch, Luther’s move to using the writings of Augustine to guide him in the interpretation of Scripture precipitated a shift away from the Aristotelian, Aquinasian, and Scholastic methods of interpretation and theology. Bosch identifies five characteristics of the Protestant theology of mission: the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, the view that all humans are fallen

²⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 212.

²⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 214.

²⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 214–38.

creatures (and that this also affects human reason), a stress on the subjective nature of salvation, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and the centrality of the Scriptures. Bosch writes that Luther was “a creative and original missionary thinker.”²⁸ However, Lutheran theologians immediately following Luther were less clear on the missionary nature of theology. They still operated with a “parish” mentality, and didn’t see other areas as mission fields.²⁹

Fifth, Bosch considers the impact that the Enlightenment had on the Church and her paradigm of mission at that time. He notes the following: the use of reason became important in Christian theology, a strict separation of subject and object began to be applied also to theology, purpose was replaced by direct causality, the philosophy of progress gave hope to the spread of Christian “knowledge” and the growth of the Church, facts became more important than values, all problems were viewed as solvable with sufficient knowledge applied, and everyone began to be viewed as emancipated, autonomous individuals even in matters of faith.³⁰

The Enlightenment Paradigm begins a distinction between State and Church, public and private, fact, and value, and secular and sacred. True missionary efforts might have ended had it not been for the Great Awakening, the birth of Methodism, and the Second Awakening.

Bosch notes that since William Carry in 1792 the text for the modern era’s mission paradigm is Matthew 28:18-20; the Great Commission. Bosch writes,

In our own time, however, the Christian missionary enterprise is, slowly but irrevocably, moving away from the shadow of the Enlightenment... Few sincere Christians would be prepared to jettison the missionary idea and ideal as such. They believe that the Christian faith is intrinsically “missionary.” But, they may be prepared for a revision of missionary theology and practice, for a missiological paradigm shift.³¹

²⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 244.

²⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 248.

³⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 262–345.

³¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 344.

Sixth, and last, Bosch wrote of an emerging paradigm that he calls “postmodern.” He emphasizes that this new paradigm is in the process of emerging and will take decades to develop. So, we are now working in at least two paradigms, the remnant of the dying Enlightenment/Modern paradigm and the beginning of the postmodern paradigm.³²

The postmodern paradigm seeks to go beyond rationality to include experience. It seeks to go beyond the subject-object scheme to view humans more holistically, not as mere objects to be manipulated and exploited. It seeks to rise above cause and effect determinism to reintroduce contingency and unpredictability. Bosch says this means the re-immergence of “repentance and conversion, of vision, of responsibility ... giving a new relevance to the Christian mission.”³³ The new paradigm also challenges “progress thinking.” World conditions are not automatically going to get better.

Bosch argues for a more “fiduciary” framework in which to deal with facts and values. He states that, “Fundamental to the Enlightenment paradigm was the radical distinction between facts and values.”³⁴ Bosch goes on to observe, “We now know, then, that there are no “brute facts” but only interpreted facts and that interpretation is conditioned by the scientist’s plausibility structure, which is largely socially and culturally produced.”³⁵

The optimism of the modern era, in Bosch’s estimation is being chastened in the postmodern paradigm. Bosch said,

This is the moment where the Christian mission may once again, humbly yet resolutely, present the vision of the reign of God- not as a pie in the sky, but as an eschatological reality which casts its rays, however opaque, into the dismal present,

³² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 349–510.

³³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 356.

³⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 358.

³⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 359.

illuminate it, and confer meaning on it. It is a road beyond Enlightenment optimism and anti-Enlightenment pessimism.”³⁶

Bosch considers mission in a time of testing. He states that, “Neither extreme reactionary nor excessively revolutionary approaches, so it seems to me, will help the Christian church and mission to arrive at greater clarity or to serve God’s cause in a better way... mission must be understood and undertaken in an imaginatively new manner today.”³⁷

Bosch identifies shifts in missionary thinking. It is no longer about the expanding the Church, *per se*, but about the salvific work of God, the *missio Dei*. “The Christian world mission is Christ’s, not ours.”³⁸ The Church is becoming more missionary in nature, so that it will become impossible to talk about the Church without talking about mission.

The Church is now beginning to be viewed as a “pilgrim people,” called out of the world and sent back into the world. The Church is a sign and an instrument of God, and is only the Church when it exists for others. In the new paradigm, the local church is re-emerging as the center of missionary activity. There is a tension between the view that the Church is the sole bearer of the message of salvation and the view that the Church serves at most as an illustration or example to the world. These two views, according to Bosch, do not have to be mutually exclusive. In his estimation the Church must be in the world but, at the same time different from the world. Or, as Jesus said of His followers in John 17:16, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.”

In the postmodern paradigm, Bosch says that we need to come to a new understanding of salvation “which operates within a comprehensive Christological framework, which makes the *totus Christus*- his incarnation, earthly life, death, resurrection, and Parousia- indispensable for

³⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 361, 362.

³⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 366, 367.

church and theology.”³⁹ This may point to a return to the Creed as being central to our identity and proclamation.

This postmodern paradigm is an emerging and developing one. It will take years or decades for it to take shape. Therefore, it remains to be seen if this paradigm will be scripturally based and compatible with confessional Lutheranism. Bosch seems too eager to jettison objective theology and systematic thinking in favor of a theology that is more fluid or subjective.

Another danger here is the anti-rational thinking that is a characteristic of post-modernism. Bosch seems to imply that in the postmodern paradigm there will be no room for doctrinal statements or fixed theological concepts. He welcomes the addition of *experiential* religion as a component to mission and seems to embrace theology that is more nonconceptual in nature. All of this could not be readily adopted by biblical and confessional Lutheran missionaries.

Bosch argues that mission is not synonymous with evangelism, but rather evangelism is a sub-set of mission. The two are, “nevertheless, indissolubly linked together and inextricably interwoven in theology and praxis.”⁴⁰ Bosch believes that the Church is now moving from a theology of mission to a missionary theology. However, he qualifies this thought by stating, “To say that the church is essentially missionary does not mean that the mission is church-centered. It is *missio Dei*. It is Trinitarian. It is mediating the love of God the Father who is the Parent of all people, whoever and wherever they may be.”⁴¹

Bosch speaks of mission in “many modes.” He says that, “Our mission has to be multidimensional in order to be credible and faithful to its origins and characters. So as to give

³⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

³⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 399.

⁴⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 411.

⁴¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 493, 494.

some idea of the nature and quality of such multidimensional mission, we might appeal to images, metaphors, events, and pictures rather than to logic or analysis.”⁴² He enumerates six “salvific” events that once again, in my estimation, parallel the Creed: the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost, and the Parousia.

In reflecting on these events, Bosch writes, “The six Christological salvific events may never be viewed in isolation from one another. In our mission, we proclaim the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, ascended Christ, present among us in the Spirit and taking us into future as ‘captives in his triumphal procession.’”⁴³ Bosch concludes by saying, “It is not the church which ‘undertakes’ mission; it is the *missio Dei* which constitutes the church.”⁴⁴

Ecclesiology and the *Missio Dei*

A final consideration is the relationship of Ecclesiology and Mission. What is a Lutheran understanding of the Church? The Church comes from the Word of God. The Church is created by God’s Word in oral, written, and sacramental forms. The Church is formed as the people of God listen to His Word and, as Luther puts it, are “called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” The *Augsburg Confession*, Article VII, in essence, says that the true Church is found wherever a congregation gathers around Word and Sacrament.⁴⁵ The life of the Church is totally dependent upon Word and Sacrament; the Means of Grace.

Traditionally, Lutherans have recognized eight marks of the Church: (1) the proclamation of the Word; (2) baptism; (3) absolution; (4) the Lord’s Supper; (5) the Office of the Public

⁴² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 512.

⁴³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 518.

⁴⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 519.

⁴⁵ Paul Timothy McCain, et al, ed. *Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2005), 60.

Ministry; (6) worship, prayer, and instruction; (7) the bearing of the Cross (persecution); and (8) works of love.

The Lutheran Confessions do not specifically or overtly address the doctrines of the *missio Dei* or the mission of the Church. Nonetheless, the general focus of the confessional writings upon the Gospel and its universal proclamation are foundational for and supportive of the mission of the Church.

The Augsburg Confession- Article V (Ministry) begins: “So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacrament was instituted.”⁴⁶ The propagation of the faith and the expansion of the Kingdom of God are at the heart of the reformers’ calling and objective.

In *The Power and Primacy of the Pope* we read that “Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power (i.e., the command to teach the Gospel)... For Christ says, ‘Go...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:19-20). Also, ‘As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you’ (John 20:21).”⁴⁷ The confessors clearly saw that the Biblical mandate and sole purpose of the Church is to advance the mission of God.

From the Augsburg Confession, and all the confessional writings in the *Book of Concord*, it can be seen that the confession revolves around the *Evangelium*, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The confession is eschatological (time limited), ecumenical (for the whole Church), evangelical (focused upon the good news of Christ), and edifying (meant to build up the people of God).

This view of the Church should certainly move the Church to be a mission focused Church. A mission focus helps a congregation to be a healthy congregation. Missional congregations are healthy, and healthy congregations are missional. However, the centrality of mission is not self-

⁴⁶ McCain, *Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions*, 59.

evident. Biblically based teaching is important for bringing awareness and action in a congregation, even a healthy one.

In his book, *Natural Church Development*, Christian A. Schwartz identifies eight quality characteristics that he found are consistently present in healthy and growing churches. 1) Empowering Leadership- leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. 2) Gift Based Ministry- leadership helps members identify their gifts and integrate into appropriate ministries. 3) Passion Spirituality- church members live committed lives and practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm. 4) Effective Structures- structures are developed which promote an ongoing multiplication of ministry. 5) Inspiring Worship Services- whenever the Holy Spirit is truly at work, He will have a concrete effect upon the way a worship service is conducted including the atmosphere of a gathering. 6) Holistic Small Groups- small groups that go beyond just discussing Bible passages to applying its message to daily life. 7) Need-oriented Evangelism- outreach that is focused on the questions and needs of non-Christians. And, 8) Loving Relationships- members truly care for each other and enjoy being together even outside the church setting.⁴⁸

Schwartz also explains six growth forces or principles that are at work in the Natural Church Development process of which we should be aware. They are: 1) Interdependence- working on any one of the aforementioned eight quality characteristics will produce growth in all the others as well. 2) Multiplication- hardly anything demonstrates the health of a congregation as much as the willingness- and ability- to give birth to new congregations. 3) Energy Transformation- health-destroying energies are re-channeled and transformed into health

⁴⁷ McCain, *Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions*, 324.

⁴⁸ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 24–39.

producing ones. 4) Sustainability- initial energy investment is put to multiple use, i.e. participation in leadership provides training for new leaders. 5) Symbiosis- the church encourages the interplay of widely diverse gifts and personality types, all benefiting one another. And, 6) Fruitfulness- is the church showing signs of improving health and evidence of quantitative growth?⁴⁹

In the last section of his book, Schwartz explains what he calls the “growth spiral,” a repeating cycle of gathering information, applying that information, and experiencing transformation. He says there are six phases to this cycle: 1) Perceive, 2) Test, 3) Understand, 4) Plan, 5) Do, and 6) Experience. This is an ongoing process that, if repeated over and over again, will produce increasing fruitfulness.⁵⁰

The first thing that needs to happen in living out the *missio Dei* in a congregational setting is the building of a culture that recognizes that God is in mission with and through the Church. The members of the congregation must come to more fully realize that God is at work in their community, seeking the lost, and that they are called to join Him in His work. Each member should see himself or herself as a witness for Jesus Christ and a participant in the Mission of God through the congregation.

This cultural transformation or change of viewpoint will need to be accomplished through many avenues, especially through preaching and teaching. The public worship service is another potential avenue for developing a culture of mission. Kent Hunter in his book *The Jesus Enterprise* writes, “The challenge for Jesus enterprise churches lies in cultivating worship that breaks through the ‘stained-glass barrier.’ Worship that does not engage does not reflect a Christian community that is for others, but perpetuates a traditionalism that is for ‘members

⁴⁹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 65–81.

only.”⁵¹ Worship services are still a primary entry point for guests and thus a main outreach avenue.

Perhaps, in regard to worship services, congregations need to follow a strategy of “at home” and “away” as outlined by Patrick Keifert in his book *Welcoming the Stranger*. Keifert writes that worship planners might,

Develop at-home and away strategies, using two separate services to respond to these differing demands for public worship. They both could be played every Sunday, for example, but they would be played with different teams...Both strategies are needed if the church is to bridge the private and the public where the gospel can have free course. ...Both understand that the Word of God is always embodied. Both should be characterized by hospitality to the stranger.”⁵²

It is important to remember that there is a doxological nature to the mission of God and the mission of the Church. Human beings were created by God to give Him glory and praise. Thus, God’s mission, and the mission of the Church, is not only to save His wayward creatures from condemnation but to restore each person’s reverence for God and the desire to worship Him. As Peter wrote in his first epistle, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

So, praising God is part of being missional. Doxology is included in the mission of the Church. The goal is not only to lead people into a restored relationship with God but into the Assembly of God’s people and into a life of praise to their Creator and Redeemer.

⁵⁰ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 110–123.

⁵¹ Kent R. Hunter, *The Jesus Enterprise: Engaging Culture to Reach the Unchurched* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 135–36.

⁵² Patrick Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger, a Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 97–99.

Summary and Conclusion

The *missio Dei* is the heart of God. It always remains God's mission; Christians are invited to join Him as co-workers and instruments of that mission. The *missio Dei* is also the Church's identity and the standard by which God's people evaluate their actions. The mission of the Church, then, is to be sent, under orders from God, to go out and serve as instruments of the *missio Dei*.

The *missio Dei* is found everywhere in Scripture, beginning with the creation account. In the third chapter of Genesis we learn of the fall into sin. The human heart is corrupted and the intimate relationship with God is broken. Yet, God still desires to be in relationship with fallen human beings. He, therefore, makes it His mission to redeem and rescue as many as possible. In Genesis 12, God unilaterally promises to Abraham that all nations, the whole world, will be blessed through him and his offspring. A mission to all people, through the Jewish people, is the *missio Dei*.

God intended for Israel to be a "kingdom of priests," intercessors for the nations. The New Testament church is called to a similar role, to be a "royal priesthood" that we "may declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness" (1 Peter 2:9). No nation or people group is to be excluded from our mission because *all* are included in the *missio Dei*.

The *missio Dei* shines through even more brightly in the New Testament. Matt. 28:16-20, "The Great Commission," clearly reaffirms the mission of God and the mission of the Church. Throughout the New Testament, all the inspired writers affirm the *missio Dei* and the Church's role in it. To the very end of the New Testament and the book of Revelation, the *missio Dei* remains central.

In order for the Church to fulfill her role in advancing the mission of God, she needs missional leaders. There are several Biblical examples of missional leadership. Moses, David,

Jeremiah, Peter, and Paul are just a few of the missional leaders found in the Bible. Leaders in the Church are called and gifted, but they are also equipped, trained, and shaped by God in a process that makes them into the leaders they are meant to be. In missional leadership God is always the ultimate leader, working through His human representatives. God is the leader and mission is the heart of God. Our human leadership is always at the direction and prompting of God.

Human culture has a significant impact on the advancement of the *missio Dei* and the mission of the Church. We need cultural awareness as we carry out our mission. Everyone is immersed in some particular culture of their own. Everyone who hears the Gospel hears it in the context of their culture. Not everyone to whom the Gospel is proclaimed hears it in the same context. Believers are called to communicate the Gospel so that it is understood by the hearers as Gospel. Understanding a culture can help Christians avoid distorting the Gospel.

The mission of the Church is a divine impulse to bring the Gospel to those who do not know it. The mission is always carried out through a particular model, construct, or a paradigm. The primary paradigm for mission has changed over the history of the Christian Church. It began in a simple way, what has been called the “Primitive” paradigm, in the Early Church but has since been reshaped and adapted several times as the situation of the Church and the mission field have changed.

A new paradigm is now in the process of emerging and developing. The Church is now working in at least two paradigms, the remnant of the “Enlightenment/Modern” paradigm and the beginning of the “Postmodern” paradigm. In the new paradigm, the local church is re-emerging as the center of missionary activity.

A clear understanding of the nature of Christ’s Church is necessary for the effective

fulfillment of her mission under the *missio Dei*. The *Augsburg Confession*, Article VII, says that the true Church is found where ever a congregation gathers around Word and Sacrament. The life of the Church is totally dependent upon Word and Sacrament; the Means of Grace. From the Lutheran Confessional writings it can be seen that the confession revolves around the *Evangel*, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The confession is eschatological, ecumenical, evangelical, and edifying.

In order for the *missio Dei* to be lived out in a congregational setting, it is necessary to do some Biblical educating and build a “culture” that recognizes that God is in mission with and through us. The members of the congregation must come to more fully realize that Jesus is at work in their community, seeking the lost, and that they are called to join Him in His work. Each member should see himself or herself as a witness for Jesus Christ and a participant in the mission of God through the congregation. This cultural transformation or change of view point will need to be accomplished through many avenues, especially through preaching, teaching, and the public worship service.

This project is designed with the above theological principles and framework in mind. As stated in chapter one, this project is intended to determine the level of understanding of and participation in the mission of the church for a representative sample of the members of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri. It is an effort to determine if that understanding and participation can be increased through a course of instruction.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

The terms “mission” and “missionary” are today so inextricably connected with the Christian Church and the spread of the Gospel that it is hard to believe that the terms are neither biblical nor ancient in origin. And yet, these terms first emerged during the 1500’s. David J. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission*, writes,

For fifteen centuries the church used other terms to refer to what we subsequently came to call “mission”: phrases such as “propagation of the faith”, “preaching of the gospel”, “apostolic proclamation”, “promulgation of the gospel”, “augmenting the faith”, “expanding the church”, “planting the church”, “propagation of the reign of Christ”, “illuminating the nations”. The new word “mission” is historically linked indissolubly with the colonial era and with the idea of a magisterial commissioning. The term presupposes an established church in Europe which dispatched delegates to convert overseas peoples and was as such an attendant phenomenon of European expansion. The church was understood as a legal institution which had the right to entrust its “mission” to secular powers and to a corps of specialists” priests or religious. “Mission” meant the activities by which the Western ecclesiastical system was extended into the rest of the world. The “missionary” was irrevocably tied to an institution in Europe for which he or she derived the mandate and power to confer salvation on those who accept certain tenets of the faith.¹

Nonetheless, the terms “mission” and “missionary,” as they are used in the current age, have, after five more centuries, largely shed their imperialistic trappings. We readily speak of the “mission of God” or the “mission of the church” without implying or conveying colonial aspirations. So, throughout this chapter, the terms “mission” and “missionary” will be used as they are popularly understood today.

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 228.

An appendix to this chapter (Appendix One) relates the progress of the missionary activity of the Church, grouped into four eras: the New Testament/Early Church period (A.D. 1 to 99), the Roman era (100 to 500), the Middle Ages (500–1500), the Reformation and Colonial era (1500–1700), and the Enlightenment period (1700–1900). Those four eras together comprise the historical perspective on the mission of the Church. A fifth era, the Modern to Post-modern era (1900 to the present), will be considered in this chapter.

Significant Influences on LCMS Outreach in the Twentieth Century

In 1957, Georg F. Vicedom, a German Lutheran theologian at the Neuendettelsau Seminary in Bavaria, first published his book *Missio Dei*. This work was subsequently translated into English by Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf and published by Concordia Publishing House in 1965, as *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*. This seminal work reframes and reintroduces the concept of *missio Dei* into the theological language and discussion of missions in the mid-twentieth century. As Vicedom states in the preface of his book,

Only when we have grasped the fact that the whole purpose of the Bible is the rescue of mankind and therefore mission work, only then do theological thought and every type of church work receive their proper direction. This monograph is intended to help toward that end.²

Vicedom divides his volume into five sections: 1) “The *Missio Dei*,” 2) “The Lordship of God,” 3) “The Sending,” 4) “The Missionary Goal,” and 5) “The Church of Salvation.” He thoroughly examines the biblical foundation for missions and clearly explains the concepts of the mission of God, the kingdom of God, and the mission of the Church and the relationship between

² Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1965), xi.

them. This important work significantly affected the perspective on missionary activity in the late twentieth century, at least in Lutheran circles.

Another book that affected the thinking of Lutherans regarding the mission of the Church was *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* by Oscar E. Feucht, published by Concordia Publishing House in 1974. Feucht's primary subject is "the priesthood of all believers" but his perspective on the role of laity in the Church has significant ramifications for broad participation in the mission of the Church.

Feucht sets out to correct the mistaken notion that reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the responsibility of the ordained clergy alone. That non-biblical way of thinking had crept into the Church by the first half of the twentieth century and was hindering the Church's evangelistic mission. As Feucht writes,

No pastor can fulfill the ministry God gave to each believer. Unfortunately centuries of erroneous thinking in the church has made the tasks of 500 parishioners the task of a single pastor. It was not so in the early church. They who believed went everywhere preaching the Word. There is no concept that can reverse this error in the churches more effectively than the priesthood of all believers. The question is: How can they recover what they never really possessed? The priesthood teaching is a dead document unless it is inscribed in each believer's heart. This can be done only as it is taught specifically to each new and old member of the parish. The spiritual life and mission of every parish is at stake here. It is when the whole parish with all its members is committed to the task of evangelism that something exists which no force in the modern world can stop.³

Feucht observes that lay members of the Church will not automatically engage in the mission of the Church. A biblically-based education process is necessary in order for the whole people of God in a congregation to effectively join in the mission. As Feucht writes,

Christian laymen in the full generic sense of the term are already in dispersion throughout most of the world. However, they are only partially equipped. So many have not been enlisted for their mission (to fulfill it where they are), or adequately

³ Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1974), 47.

trained. Only the full membership of all Christian churches can fulfill the Lord's great commission.⁴

Feucht emphatically states that only the revival of the teaching of the priesthood of all believers and the equipping of the saints will result in the fulfillment of the mission God has given to His Church. He concludes his book saying,

"Mission and ministry" as it grows out of a fresh look at the New Testament means all of God's people exercising their spiritual priesthood every day wherever they are- in all the contact and service areas of life, in their daily occupation, in formal and informal associations with people.... This is not a new doctrine, but a repristination of the early church and a recovery of the Reformation principle of being a witness to Christ in every arena of life.⁵

In 1970, a resource came on the scene that had a profound effect upon evangelism in the established denominations including the LCMS. This program or course of instruction for lay people was called *Evangelism Explosion* and was developed by The Rev. Dr. D. James Kennedy, who was pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Evangelism Explosion is an instructional course or program that was designed to train laypeople for the task of personal evangelism. In his introductory chapter, Kennedy writes,

Realizing that laymen are the most strategic and also the most unused key to the evangelization of the world, we have endeavored to build a program which will motivate, recruit, and train men and women and boys and girls to do the job of evangelism- and keep them doing it! This, of course, is not an easy task, as most pastors can testify. And yet it would seem that the basic principles of New Testament evangelism require that this mobilization of laity take place.⁶

Kennedy based his program on the principle that every Christian is called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. He saw that "the Church is a body under orders by Christ to share the gospel

⁴ Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 143.

⁵ Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, 149.

⁶ D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion: Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Healthy Growth* rev. ed. (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 1977), 1.

with the whole world.”⁷ He was convinced that the work of preaching the word was not limited to the Apostles. In fact, Kennedy was convinced that evangelizing was largely the work of early believers other than the Apostles. He says,

Well, we all know that a standard exegetical axiom is, “A text without a context is a pretext,” and this has been a pretext long enough for letting ecclesiastical George do it! The significant context of that verse is found in Acts 8:1 where we read that “they were all scattered abroad except the apostles.” And (Acts 8:4) “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” The word translated “preaching the word” is the Greek word *euangelizo* which means “evangelizing.” That is, everybody *except the apostles* went everywhere evangelizing! Now we know that the apostles did their share. But the point that the inspired writer is emphasizing here is that everyone besides the apostles also went and evangelized.⁸

A key component of *Evangelism Explosion* was the conducting of a door to door survey called the “Assurance Questionnaire.” In this questionnaire several questions are asked regarding the respondent’s religious thinking and affiliation. Then the survey turns to two questions regarding their assurance of eternal life. They are:

1. Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know that you have eternal life- that is, do you know for certain that if you died today you would go to heaven? And, 2. If you were to die today and stand before God and he said to you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” what would you say? ⁹

With the respondent’s permission, these questions were followed by a personal testimony of faith and a gospel presentation by the presenter. A follow up visit was offered and an invitation was extended to attend worship at the presenter’s congregation. Gospel literature and a follow up phone call or letter were also offered.

Evangelism leaders in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod of the early 1970s became aware of *Evangelism Explosion*. It was widely used in congregations across several denominations including the LCMS. However, some within the LCMS raised concerns about the

⁷ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 2.

⁸ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, 3.

doctrinal content of the training course.

W. Leroy Biesenthal's *Dialogue Evangelism* was a Lutheran adaptation of D. James Kennedy's course. It was divested of *Evangelism Explosion's* "decision" theology but in most other respects it was the same approach.

This method can be described as "confrontational" because the evangelism caller is trained to do just that, confront others about their spiritual beliefs. At the core of the presentation remain the two "diagnostic questions" quoted above. These questions are often asked of perfect strangers with whom the caller has no prior relationship. Very few lay persons or pastors, for that matter, are excited about this kind of approach or believe they are gifted to evangelize in this way. W. Leroy Biesenthal, in his introduction to "Dialogue Evangelism" wrote,

The technique to be shared in this method is not for all. It may work for some, and not for others. But we do suggest that we stop waiting around for some perfect method that can be prescribed for all. There is no one way! Whatever method we use should be used wisely and well-recognizing that the method is not an end in itself, but only a means to the end of sharing the Good News.¹⁰

Many Lutheran lay people and seminarians were trained in this method in the late 1970s and early 1980's. It may have been productive at that time, but this approach would likely not be very effective in today's society. People of this day and age are less likely to be home when callers arrive and, if they are, less likely to let them in. People of today are willing to talk about their religious beliefs but only with someone they know and trust.

The American society of the early twenty-first century is quite different from the culture of the 1970s. In the 1970s, a large percentage of the population identified themselves as "Christian" even if they did not attend a church. A "Christian" worldview was predominant in the culture.

⁹ Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, appendix A.

¹⁰ W. Leroy Biesenthal, *Dialog Evangelism* (St. Louis, MO: The Board for Evangelism of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1979), 3.

But the world is different today.

The Missional Movement of the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-first Centuries

The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion, the “nones,” is growing, according to a recent extensive survey by the Pew Research Center.¹¹ Many more religious groups and world religions are represented in large numbers in the U.S.A. at this present time than in the 1970s or before. As Christians are engaged in the mission of the Church and share the Gospel in 2018 they are presented with some very different challenges not present fifty years ago. The followers of Jesus Christ are now living in a pluralist society.

Gone in the U.S.A. is a predominantly “Christian” culture, a majority worldview based on Christian beliefs and morality. The culture is now heterogeneous and many competing worldviews are represented in modern society. Yet, the Gospel remains the same and continues to take root in the lives of people of various cultural groups. In his 1989 book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Lesslie Newbigin, addresses the issue of carrying out the mission of the Church in a world of diverse cultures and growing pluralistic thinking. He writes,

The gospel endorses an immensely wide diversity among human cultures, but it does not endorse a total relativism. There is good and bad in every culture and there are developments continually going on in every culture which may be either creative or destructive, either in line with the purpose of God as revealed in Christ for all human beings, or else out of that line. The criteria for making judgements between the one and the other cannot arise from one culture. That is the familiar error of cultural imperialism. There can only be criteria if God has in fact shown us what His will is. He has done so in Christ. If that is denied in the name of religious pluralism, then there is no valid criterion by which the positive and negative developments in human culture can be assessed. On the other hand, the content of the revelation in Christ, defined crucially by the twin events of cross and resurrection, provides a basis on

¹¹ Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” (May 12, 2015), <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape>, accessed 10-30-2017.

which the great diversity of cultures can be welcomed and cherished and the claim of any one culture to dominance can be resisted.¹²

For centuries international missionaries have been called to proclaim the Gospel in diverse cultures and in the context of other religions. This diversity is now at American Church's doorstep. The Church has been commissioned to make disciples and needs to meet people where they are at. Believers no longer have the luxury of ministering in a culture that generally supports her cause. Christians must find new ways to faithfully and respectfully present the eternal truth of Christ in this pluralistic environment. As Newbigin states in regard to the Gospel and other religions,

As a human race we are on a journey and we need to know the road. It is not true that all roads lead to the top of the same mountain. There are roads which lead over the precipice. In Christ we have been shown the road. We cannot treat knowledge as a private matter for ourselves. It concerns the whole human family. We do not presume to limit the might and the mercy of God for the ultimate salvation of all people, but the same costly act of revelation and reconciliation which gives us that assurance also requires us to share with our fellow pilgrims the vision that God has given us the route we must follow and the goal to which we must press forward.¹³

In 1991 Charles Van Engen published his book *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church*. This volume calls for a return to a biblical viewpoint and approach to the mission of the Church that is centered out of each local congregation. Van Engen points to the book of Ephesians as foundational in revealing the missional purpose of the Church. He wrote,

We have studied the missionary nature of the Church through the images afforded us by Paul in Ephesians, and have allowed those images to become a confession of God's glorious purpose. By so doing we have been confronted with a powerful vision of the local congregation in mission. By the very act of confessing our faith in

¹² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 197.

¹³ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 183.

“one holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,” we intentionally and unavoidably commit ourselves to participate in God’s mission in the world.¹⁴

While there certainly remains a need for denominational bodies to train and send missionaries into various fields around the world, Van Engen contends that the primary mission belongs to the local church in its setting. This requires a fundamental change of thinking about the nature of missions; a paradigm shift. He states,

(There is) an urgent call to create a new perspective of the congregation as God’s missionary people in a local context. If we are to build missionary congregations in the world we must first carefully consider the relationship between Church and mission. The Church of Jesus Christ may find its fullest expression in relation to the world from within the Kingdom of God only if it lives out its nature as a missionary people. As Emil Brunner said, “The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.”¹⁵

The mission of the Church cannot be accomplished by “professional” missionaries or the clergy alone. Once again the concept of the “priesthood of all believers” comes into view. The mission of the Church has not been given to a select few within her ranks, but to all believers.

Van Engen points out that,

In the New Testament it is the *whole people of God* together who are called to be the Church. All members are joined to grow up into maturity, to the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph.4:15). Such fullness is not possible if only 10 percent or fewer exercise their place and calling. Fullness will be found when the 90 percent join in ministry.¹⁶

A groundbreaking book that has had a major impact on current missiology is *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* published in 1998 and edited by Darrell Guder. This work is based on a three-year research project that studied the relationship between the church and secular culture in North America. The result of this

¹⁴ Charles Edward Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 57.

¹⁵ Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 27.

¹⁶ Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 151.

comprehensive project is a work that identifies the beginning of the post-Christian culture. It calls upon the church to recognize that North America has become a mission field in its own right. As the subtitle of the book implies, the goal of the authors is to cast a vision for the sending of the church into the North America mission field.

Catching the vision that is cast by the authors requires a basic understanding of some realities pertaining to church and society, as well as a theology of mission. The first observation that *The Missional Church* makes clear is that North American Christianity is facing a crisis. Their evidence suggests that Christian churches have become increasingly marginalized, no longer occupying central or influential roles in society. In most of the densely populated urban areas of North America, Christian churches currently represent a minority movement. Adding to the difficulty, the church has been slow to recognize the changes that have taken place, often contributing to its own crisis by employing solutions that may have worked in the past but do not mesh with the current culture.

The general thesis set forth in *The Missional Church* asserts that methodological problem solving will not adequately answer the crisis of the North American church. Because the “real issues in the current crisis of the Christian church are spiritual and theological,”¹⁷ the solution must come from the depths of the church’s spiritual and theological identity. To that end, the authors expose the shortcomings of Christendom that arose as the Western church developed and expanded from Europe to North America. One of those shortcomings was a misguided understanding of mission. Instead of recognizing mission as God’s work (*missio Dei*), it came to be regarded as an activity of the church, often categorized with equal standing among the other programs and functions that the church offers.

¹⁷ Darrell L. Guder, et al, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3.

The core of the vision that *The Missional Church* casts for the future of the Christian church in North America is dependent upon a theological recovery of the church's understanding of *missio Dei*. The authors state their case clearly: "We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purpose to restore and heal creation."¹⁸ Building a solid scriptural case for this statement, the authors attempt to show that the church is not the goal of mission, but a tool of God's mission. The mission is God's and He sends His people out as instruments of His mission. The authors reiterate the importance of understanding this for our North American culture: "...God's mission is calling and sending us, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church in our own societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves."¹⁹ Of North America, they state that its: "...character as a mission field is so obvious as to need no demonstration."²⁰

The Missional Church is by no means an oversimplification of the problems or solutions to the crisis facing the North American church. The historical background and theological study is very thorough, making this book both challenging and stimulating to read at the same time. The title uses the term "missional," a term that is becoming widely used, but not necessarily widely understood or accepted. Some in the church have confused "missional" with the methodological trappings that this book links with contributing to the crisis facing the church.

In presenting their thesis, the authors of *Missional Church* help us better understand what is truly meant by the word "missional." They write: "The term missional emphasizes the essential nature and vocation of the church as God's called and sent people."²¹ In this book Guder and

¹⁸ Guder, *Missional Church*, 4.

¹⁹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

²⁰ Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

²¹ Guder, *Missional Church*, 11.

associates show that a missional ecclesiology is Biblical, historical, contextual, eschatological, and can be put into practice. On their concluding page they write,

A missional ecclesiology must clearly identify and resist all attempts to equip the church merely for its maintenance and security. It must reject every proposal to restore the trappings and privileges of Christendom. It must boldly question every temptation to indulge in compromises with worldly power and jeopardize the institutional practices of servanthood after the model of Jesus.²²

Following the release of *Missional Church*, many other books, by many other authors, were written on the topic of being missional. A few of these works successfully expanded upon *Missional Church* and added new insights into what it means to live missionally. One of the most helpful books is *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* by Reggie McNeal, who previously authored *The Present Future*. McNeal, in his introduction to *Missional Renaissance*, states, “I think we are in a kind of missional renaissance, where the confluence of thinking by key thinkers is reshaping the landscape of our imagination of what we think the church can and should be.”²³ The core message of this book is that some radical shifts in thinking and doing need to take place in the Church at large today before it can be truly missional.

McNeal writes,

Going missional will require that you make three shifts, both in your thinking and in your behavior: From internal to external in terms of ministry focus; From program development to people development in terms of core activity; From church-based to kingdom-based in terms of leadership agenda. These shifts are the signature characteristics of what missional means.²⁴

In chapter one, McNeal tells us what he wishes to communicate in and through *Missional Renaissance*.

²² Guder, *Missional Church*, 268.

²³ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), xv.

²⁴ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, xvi.

There are two things, then, I want to accomplish in these pages. First, I want to explore these three distinctive shifts that characterize the missional renaissance in terms of theology and practice, thinking and behavior.... Second, I also want to suggest what a new missional church scorecard might consist of. We need a new scorecard to support the rise of the missional church in North America.... This means that the old church scorecard of how many, how often, how much- all bottom-line measures that are calculated in terms of church activity- is counterproductive to participating in the missional renaissance. The old scorecard keeps us church-absorbed. As long as we use it, we will continue to be inwardly focused, program-driven, and church-based in our thinking and leadership.²⁵

McNeal first addresses the needed shift from internal to external in the thinking and action of the church. He notes that, although this change is necessary, it is nothing short of cataclysmic.

The shift from an internal to an external focus signals more than an emphasis or an activity; it is a tectonic shift. It involves changing the very understanding of what the church is, not just what it does, though that changes dramatically as well. Moving to an external focus pushes the church from doing missions as some second-mile project into being on mission as a way of life.²⁶

Next Reggie McNeal focuses on the necessary cultural change that moves the Church away from a program-driven focus to a people development focus. He says,

In the program-driven church, we track participation. Who comes to church? How often? Do they participate in small groups or fellowship functions? Do they participate in funding drives and regular offerings? These participation items tell us how “involved” they are in the “life” of the church- meaning its programs.²⁷

In contrast, McNeal goes on to explain how the people development culture differs from the modern era program development culture.

In a people development culture, the key issue is maturation. Are people growing in every aspect of their life? Are they becoming more like Jesus? Are they blessing the world as the people of God? There is no necessary correlation between time logged sitting in pews and attaining godliness.²⁸

In the missional movement’s worldview the Church is not a network of program offerings

²⁵ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 16.

²⁶ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 42.

²⁷ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 100.

²⁸ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 100.

but a community in the truest sense of that word. A focus on “being” rather than “doing” is in order. The relational nature of the Church, which was largely lost in the modern era, needs to be reclaimed. McNeal goes on to write,

People do not exist apart from relationships. They come to be who they are in relation to others. Only a church that ceased to be about people and became about an institution apart from people needs to be reminded of this. The missional church *is* people; it’s not a place where people congregate.²⁹

Third, McNeal explores the difference between church-based and kingdom-based leadership. He says,

Church-based leadership is well entrenched, courtesy of the Constantinian world order, resulting in a clergy-dominated church culture. This kind of leadership can be described as institutional, maintenance-oriented, positional, pastoral, church-focused, and highly controlling. Kingdom-oriented leadership is more akin to the kind of leadership we see at work in the early days of the Christian movement, in its apostolic era. A different set of descriptors captures the character of this leadership: organic, disruptive, personal, prophetic, kingdom-focused, empowering.³⁰

McNeal recognizes that making these three shifts in a traditional church can be very difficult. He, therefore, offers some suggestions about how traditional churches can begin to make this transition. He writes,

Churches can function as intake and deployment centers for missional followers of Jesus. Many current followers of Jesus are attending traditional churches. They, along with those coming into faith across the threshold of traditional church expression, need to understand the call to live missional lives. Their answer to it needs to be celebrated even if it plays out outside the church ministry. The traditional church can serve as an umbrella organization for missional communities (MCs)... The motive for moving this direction cannot be to build up *this* church but to build up *the* church.
31

The leadership style and focus of the clergy is a key component in moving the church into a missional mindset and life. McNeal asks the hypothetical question: “What is the role of clergy

²⁹ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 110.

³⁰ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 131.

³¹ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 148, 149.

in the missional movement?”³² His answer is that the clergy will be valued for “teaching,” “life-coaching,” “missional strategizing,” and the “training of missional community leaders.”³³ In other words, pastors will need to serve primarily as “equippers of the saints.” They will need to lead by example and exemplify the missional ideals of an external ministry focus, people development activity, and a kingdom-based leadership agenda.

McNeal’s *Missional Renaissance* is an extremely valuable and practical contribution to the unfolding missional movement in North America today. Reggie McNeal has been given a prophetic gift and a role to spur on the contemporary church to be all that it can be as the missional people of God.

A Recent Influence on LCMS Missional Efforts

In the last few years a LCMS pastor, mission consultant, and author has produced some very practical resources to assist Christians and congregations in engaging in the mission of the Church. Rev. Greg Finke is the co-founder (with his wife, Susan) of Dwelling 1:14 ministries. Greg has recently written two books, *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary* (2014) and *Joining Jesus- Show Me How: How to Disciple Everyday Missionaries* (2017). Both books merit a close examination and review, starting with *Joining Jesus on His Mission*.

“We’re not on mission *for* Jesus but *with* Jesus,”³⁴ says Finke, as quoted in the forward section of *Joining Jesus on His Mission*. Finke continues in his introduction,

³² McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 150.

³³ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 150, 151.

³⁴ Greg Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary* (Elgin, IL and Tyler, TX: Tenth Power, 2014), 13.

This is a book that shows you *how*. It's a field manual that shows you how to take up the mindset and simple practices needed to join Jesus on his redemptive mission in the places you already live, work or go to school.³⁵

Greg Finke goes on to explain the outline of *Joining Jesus on His Mission*,

The first part of this book will focus on the mindset we need to be an everyday missionary. The second part will focus on the practices. In the end you will have what you need to get started on the mission adventure Jesus has prepared for you (Ephesians 2:10).³⁶

Finke begins his book by observing that there has been a profound cultural shift in the U.S. in the last two or three decades. Unfortunately, the Church, overall, has not adapted to this cultural change. The Church is acting as if it still existed in the “churched culture” of the 60s and 70s. As a result, the Church is ill-equipped to carry out the mission as it needs to be in this decade and society. Finke says, “We are no longer a church who is servicing a community filled with a variety of Christians. We are now a church who finds itself needing to be on mission in a mission field.”³⁷

The old evangelism “programs’ and outreach methods, effective in the past, no longer work. But, Finke says, Christians shouldn’t worry because Jesus knows exactly what to do and He is inviting believers to join Him in His work. He writes,

And while some of our churchy presumptions and programs may be in trouble, his Church is not. Jesus is very clever. He is using these shifting times to wake us up and get us ready to rejoin him on his redemptive mission to our neighborhoods, workplaces and schools. Not everyone will pay attention and even fewer will respond. But Jesus is moving out on his mission to redeem and restore all to his Father’s kingdom. And he invites us to join him....Joining Jesus on his redemptive mission is what I mean by the term “missional living.” “Missional living” is simply living each day as if it were a mission trip.³⁸

The approach that Finke teaches in his books is one of being available to Jesus to join Him

³⁵ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 16.

³⁶ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 16.

³⁷ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 21.

in His work in everyday settings: work, school, sports, and especially in one's neighborhood.

The strategy is to be friends with the people around us, build relationships, and look for the right opportunities to share Jesus with them. As Finke wrote,

This is our new missional mindset: We know Jesus is already out there in our "neighborhoods" doing the heavy lifting of ripening people for their next step towards his Father's redemption. So every morning, as we head out for a new day of mission-adventure with Jesus, we can ask ourselves these simple questions: What's Jesus up to? Who are these people around me? And what are they almost ready for? Jesus did not give you a mission to do *for* him. He invites you to come on his mission *with* him. This is our new missional mindset.³⁹

Finke calls this strategy, modeled by Jesus, an inefficient but effective strategy. Developing relationships and friendships takes time. As the old adage states, "No one cares what you know until you show them how much you care." Finke says,

As counterintuitive as it sounds, it is the inefficient investment in friendship (being a "friend of sinners) that leads to effective missional results in people's lives.... In order to join Jesus on his redemptive mission all we have to do is: enjoy people; and seek, recognize and respond to what Jesus is already doing in the lives of the people we are enjoying.⁴⁰

Greg Finke deals with three very important concepts in *Joining Jesus on His Mission*: the kingdom of God, the mission of God, and the mission of the Church. He explains these terms in a way that is clear and understandable for the average Christian. Regarding the kingdom of God he writes, "The kingdom of God is what Jesus came to announce, display and open up to all who would receive it."⁴¹ He goes on to explain,

A working definition for us could be: "The kingdom of God is the redemptive presence and activity of God in human lives." To say it simply, the kingdom of God is God himself. Wherever God is present and active, his kingdom is present and active.... He put into play a plan to redeem and restore the created universe and

³⁸ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 22.

³⁹ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 35, 36.

⁴⁰ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 60.

⁴¹ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 73.

people particularly, to himself-or, as the New Testament would say it, to his kingdom.⁴²

Next Finke explores the nature of the mission of God or the *missio Dei*. He describes this as the thing that Jesus is “up to.” Believers are invited to join Him in His mission, but it always remains His mission. He says,

The mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the kingdom of God, beginning with human beings. We cannot redeem and restore people to the Father’s kingdom. That’s the job of Jesus. Our job is to see who is ripe for his redemption.... So, what is Jesus inviting us to open our eyes and see? What is Jesus showing us? What does Jesus want us to notice? People. People who are ready.⁴³

Finke views the mission of the Church simply as “joining Jesus in His mission.” Although God’s people are called to preach the Gospel and make disciples, the mission of the Church is never independent from the mission of God. The two are inseparable. The mission of the Church is participation in the mission of God. But, in order to join Jesus in His mission, Christians need to have a way and a plan to do that. Finke suggests what he calls the “5 practices” for mission.

We advocate the 5 practices because they help mission-minded people like you be in position to join Jesus every day in simple, practical ways. What are these five mission practices? 1. Seeking the kingdom. 2. Hearing from Jesus. 3. Talking with people. 4. Doing Good. 5. Ministering through prayer.⁴⁴

Over the next several chapters of this book, Finke unpacks what each of these practices entails. “Seeking the kingdom” means watching for where God is already at work. “Hearing from Jesus” is being in God’s Word on a daily basis so that Christ can “speak” from the Scriptures. “Talking with people” means just that: having everyday conversations with people about various things, but always ready to address spiritual concerns when they arise. “Doing good” is serving and meeting the needs of people as Jesus’ representatives, always keeping in

⁴² Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 75.

⁴³ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 91.

⁴⁴ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 97, 98.

mind their greatest need for Christ. “Ministering through prayer” means praying for and with people faithfully and seeking God to remain focused on the mission.

In the final chapter of *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, Finke introduces the “5 Questions.”

As he writes,

The 5 Questions are simply questions which correspond to the 5 Practices. When we gather in our missional communities, the 5 Questions give each person the opportunity to tell their stories of what happened as they put the 5 Practices into play along life’s way. The 5 Practices with their corresponding Questions are the following:

1. Seeking the kingdom: How did you see God at work this week?
2. Hearing from Jesus: What has Jesus been teaching you in His Word?
3. Taking with People: What kind of conversations are you having with pre-Christians? (By “pre-Christians” we mean to err on the side of hope.)
4. Doing Good: What good can we do around here?
5. Ministering through Prayer: How can we help you in prayer?⁴⁵

Greg Finke concludes his book, *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday*

Missionary by saying,

While the 5 Practices put us into position to join Jesus on his mission every day, the missional community and the 5 Questions help us stay intentional and inspired for the missional life. Mission doesn’t happen in our missional community, but mission doesn’t last without our missional community. So, who will you invite? Where will you gather? When will you start?⁴⁶

The book *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary* was intended, by Greg Finke, to be a practical resource for Christians to live out the mission of the Church day by day. However, that volume stopped short of providing a clear path toward the development of a plan for making Jesus followers into growing disciples of Christ. In his second book, *Joining Jesus Show Me How: How to Disciple Everyday Missionaries*, Finke expands on the foundation

⁴⁵ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 156.

of his first book and provides a biblical perspective and a clear and simple plan for disciple making. In his introduction he says,

Joining Jesus—Show Me How has two parts. The first part takes you back to the gospels so that you can watch Jesus and clarify in your mind how he disciplines his followers. The second part helps you leverage your newfound clarity in order to craft a simple discipling plan you can use to disciple your kids, willing neighbors or friends or fellow church members.⁴⁷

Although *Joining Jesus—Show Me How* is solidly based on biblical knowledge, principles and theology, the intended end result of this book is true discipleship that compels action. The goal of learning about Jesus' approach to disciple making is not just academic or for scholarship's sake; it's being a disciple and joining Jesus in making more disciples. As Greg writes,

If scholarship is the goal of discipleship, then we end up with scholars who make more scholars who know right answers. If joining Jesus is the goal of discipleship, then we end up with disciples who make disciples who participate in the redemption and restoration of all things. Scholarship is fine. But, redemption and restoration of all things is the goal.⁴⁸

Finke concludes chapter 2 with a definition of discipling:

What is discipling? According to what we see Jesus doing in the gospels, discipling is the process of showing the people of God how to participate in the mission of God as a daily lifestyle. This may not be the answer we thought we'd get, but it is the answer Jesus has been giving from the beginning.⁴⁹

According to Finke, a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who participates in the mission of God. But, what is the mission of God? In short, Finke says that the mission of God is "to redeem and restore all things through Jesus."⁵⁰ He goes on to elaborate on this thought,

⁴⁶ Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 165.

⁴⁷ Greg Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How: How to Disciple Everyday Missionaries* (Elgin, IL and Tyler, TX: Tenth Power, 2017), 15.

⁴⁸ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 41.

⁴⁹ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 41.

⁵⁰ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 44.

God wants his world back. God wants all things reconciled to himself. This is the mission of God. This is the point. Everything else is a means to that mission. *Everything*. The cross and the empty tomb of Jesus are means to that mission. The Word and sacraments are means to that mission. Discipling is a means to that mission. Our churches and worship services and programming are means to that mission. And so are we. The mission of God is what we are made for and saved for.⁵¹

Finke goes on to emphasize the need to have a discipling plan. Little or no discipling will actually take place without a plan. And, not just any plan will do: It must be based upon a clear understanding of biblical discipleship. If discipleship is about knowledge the plan would probably be academic classes. If discipleship is about gaining church members the plan would probably be an assimilation process. But Finke says the plan that should be adopted is Jesus' own plan, a plan for relationship. He wrote,

We need a clear and simple plan for discipling our family or friends. Instead of making up our own plan, we can imitate Jesus' plan. It looks like a relationship: intentional time together, unhurried conversation about real life and Jesus—and the kingdom comes.⁵²

In addition to imitating Jesus' plan of discipling, Christians should also be sure they are operating with Jesus' definition of a disciple. A disciple is a follower of Jesus but not all followers of Jesus are disciples. A disciple follows Jesus as a student follows a teacher. The goal is for the student to be like the teacher. A disciple of Jesus seeks to be like Jesus and is trained by Jesus' own word and example. Finke states,

If we're going to join Jesus making disciples, we need to know what one is. According to Jesus in the gospels, a disciple follows Jesus: in order to become *like* Jesus (through baptism *into* Jesus and training *by* Jesus); so that he/she can participate *with* Jesus on his mission as a daily lifestyles; and show others how to do the same.⁵³

A disciple of Jesus is called to observe, learn from, and do what Jesus does. Finke says,

⁵¹ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 45.

⁵² Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 80.

⁵³ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 98.

“The Bible gives us three main places where we can watch Jesus and imitate him: 1. In the gospels; 2. In daily life; 3. And in the lives of other experienced Jesus-followers.”⁵⁴ A way to practically accomplish this is following what Finke calls the “5 Lifestyle Practices of Jesus.” He says they are: “1. Jesus remembers his true identity and mission.... 2. He seeks the kingdom.... 3. He humbles himself.... 4. He freely gives... 5. And he shows others how to do the same.”⁵⁵

Greg Finke writes that Jesus’ disciples are to follow these lifestyle practices of Jesus.

Jesus wants us to watch him, imitate him and practice what he shows us over and over again for the good of others. This is how he trains us. And what does he train us to do? Remember our true identity and mission; seek the kingdom; submit to the Father; freely offer a little of what we already have in abundance; and show other how to do the same.⁵⁶

Finke asks the question: What is Jesus’ discipling process? His answer is “proclamation, imitation/participation, and replication.” He says,

“Proclamation, Imitation/Participation, Replication” is simply our way of organizing and summarizing the way Jesus moves a follower from spoken-truth to experiential knowledge and then on to training others to do the same. Jesus disciplines his followers using all three parts. So, if we want to see Jesus’ discipling results, we need to follow Jesus’ discipling process.⁵⁷

Jesus’ discipling “classroom” where He does His training is, according to Finke, the situations of everyday life, among family, friends and coworkers. Jesus’ style of discipling is “on the job” training. Finke wrote,

In the gospels Jesus does most of his discipling in the midst of his daily mission adventure. He then takes his disciples to quieter places where they can have time for reflection and conversation. The “classroom” of daily life helps his followers gain experiences and understanding. The “classroom” of time together helps them reflect and sort out what they have experienced and learned with him. And we can do the same.⁵⁸

Part 2 of *Joining Jesus—Show Me How* involves understanding and devising a discipling

⁵⁴ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 100.

⁵⁵ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 102–3.

⁵⁶ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 110.

⁵⁷ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 114, 115.

⁵⁸ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 131.

plan. In this section of the book Finke unfolds how to get started with a plan, shares five discipling practices to use, and provides a template for making a personal plan for discipling. In regard to getting started, Greg Finke offers these six pointers:

1. *Start with the end in mind* (where do you want to end up?).
2. *Prioritize your schedule around discipling* (reserve at least 2 hours per week for it).
3. *Identify the person(s) you will be discipling* (who is willing and ready?).
4. *Think long-term relationship not short-term program* (a mentoring and friendship approach, not a class).
5. *Give the gift of clear expectations* (make sure the person(s) you're discipling know what they're getting into).
6. *Ask about baptism* (baptism is the first step in becoming a disciple and precedes all others).⁵⁹

In meeting with persons who are being disciplined and are discipling others, Finke says that there are “5 Discipling Practices” that help to optimize time together and purposefully frame and direct the conversation toward the desired outcomes. They are:

1. *True Identity and mission in Christ* (through Holy Baptism and faith we have our true identity and mission restored).
2. *In here is for out there* (the purpose for meeting together is to be reminded of and equip for the mission in our daily lives).
3. *Ask good questions* (questions that stimulate reflection, discovery of new insights, and action).
4. *All of this is still this* (keep it simple: the purpose for all the study, training, theology and reflection is joining Jesus in His mission).
5. *Insight to action* (insight without action is merely the accumulation of information, but insight put to action reveals that training has taken place).⁶⁰

Finke continues by writing that disciples who make disciples must have a plan for discipling others. A discipling plan answers the questions of “who,” “why,” and “how” in discipling. Greg Finke has suggested a template of questions to address these three aspects. For “who” he asks, “Who will I disciple to join Jesus on His mission?” “How will I invite the person(s) into a discipling relationship?” and “When and where will we have our meetings?” For “why” he asks, “Why are we meeting and what is our discipling goal?” And, for “how” he asks, “How will I help the person(s) I am discipling engage Jesus’ discipling process of Proclamation

⁵⁹ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 146–50.

⁶⁰ Finke, *Joining Jesus— Show Me How*, 154–66.

(engaging with God’s Word), Imitation/Participation (reduplicating Jesus’ methods of discipleship) and Replication (while being disciplined, beginning to disciple others)?”⁶¹

In his “A Final Word” section of *Joining Jesus- Show Me How*, Greg Finke compares the discipling process to the actions in Jesus’ first recorded miracle at the Wedding at Cana (John chapter 2). The bottom line of being a disciple of Jesus and making disciples for Jesus is following Jesus’ direction. The methods of Jesus and the invitation of Jesus to join Him in His mission are clearly recorded in the Gospels. Disciples need to follow the leader as He guides them by His Word and Holy Spirit. Finke concludes,

And so it is as we disciple our children, neighbors or fellow church members. We follow Jesus’ discipling plan. We do what he tells us to do and fill each jar to the brim in anticipation. But in the end, all we can do is step back and enjoy the way Jesus turns all that discipling water into discipling wine. His miracle of transformation may happen quickly or slowly; it may happen smoothly or by fits and starts; it may be inspiring or frustrating. But let’s follow the advice of Mary, who said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”⁶²

The carrying out of the mission of the Church continues to change and develop. Many approaches to reaching the lost with the Gospel have been taken over the centuries and millennia of the Church’s existence. What the future holds and what paradigms for mission will emerge are impossible to predict. David Bosch offers these insights:

In our mission, we proclaimed the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, ascended Christ, present among us in the Spirit and taking us into his future as “captives in his triumphal procession (2 Corinthians 5:14, NEB). ...Mission is *missio Dei*, which seeks to subsume into itself the *missiones ecclesiae*, the missionary programs of the church. It is not the church which “undertakes” mission; it is the *missio Dei* which constitutes the church. The mission of the church needs constantly to be renewed and re-conceived. ... Looked at from this perspective mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that

⁶¹ Finke, *Joining Jesus- Show Me How*, 168–69.

⁶² Finke, *Joining Jesus- Show Me How*, 189, 190.

verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.⁶³

Summary

This chapter examined selected writings, material, and thinking about the mission of God, the mission of the Church, and evangelism approaches that have developed since the mid-twentieth century. (*A historical overview of missions prior to the modern period was also undertaken and is included in Appendix Ten.*)

In this chapter, which covered the Modern to Post-modern era (1900 to the present), the first book reviewed is Georg F. Vicedom's seminal work *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*. This volume served to reframe and reintroduce the concept of the *missio Dei* into the theological language and discussion of missions in the mid-twentieth century. This book was foundational for the theme of this project. The mission of God is the mission of the church and all God's people, the whole church have a role in it. Understanding the mission is the beginning of becoming personally involved with it.

The next work reviewed was *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* by Oscar E. Feucht. In this book Feucht corrects the mistaken notion that reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the responsibility of the ordained clergy alone. The laity are equal partners in proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples. This book affirmed a premise of this project that all members of the church are to be involved with the Church's mission.

Evangelism Explosion, developed by The Rev. Dr. D. James Kennedy, was also examined. Kennedy based his program on the principle that every Christian is called to be a witness for

⁶³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 518, 519.

Jesus Christ. He saw that the Church is a body under orders by Christ to share the gospel with the whole world. A key component of *Evangelism Explosion* was the conducting of a door to door survey called the "Assurance Questionnaire."

Evangelism leaders in the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod of the early 1970s became aware of *Evangelism Explosion*. W. Leroy Biesenthal's *Dialogue Evangelism* was a Lutheran adaptation of D. James Kennedy's course. It was divested of *Evangelism Explosion's* "decision" theology but in most other respects it was the same approach. Both *Evangelism Explosion* and *Dialogue Evangelism* support the premise of this project that lay persons can also be instructed to more effectively engage in the mission of the Church.

God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church by Charles Van Engen was the next book examined in this chapter. Van Engen contends that the primary mission belongs to the local church in its setting. The mission of the Church cannot be accomplished by "professional" missionaries or the clergy alone. Once again the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" comes into view. The mission of the Church has not been given to a select few within her ranks, but to all believers. This work was very relevant to the premises and objectives of this project, pointing to the understanding of the Church's mission belonging to every Christian in every congregation.

Next reviewed was the book that had a major impact on current missiology: *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, edited by Darrell Guder. The core vision that *Missional Church* casts for the future of the Christian church in North America is dependent upon a theological recovery of the church's understanding of *missio Dei*. The mission is God's and He sends His people out as instruments of His mission. The viewpoint and objectives of this project have sprung from the perspective of *Missional Church*.

Another book, reviewed in this chapter, which built upon the perspective of *Missional Church is Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* by Reggie McNeal. The core message of this book is that some radical shifts in thinking and doing need to take place in the Church at large today before it can be truly missional: “From internal to external in terms of ministry focus; From program development to people development in terms of core activity; From church-based to kingdom-based in terms of leadership agenda.”⁶⁴ All three of these shifts are needed in order for the objectives of this project to see fruition.

Lastly reviewed were two recent books written by LCMS pastor Greg Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary* (2014) and *Joining Jesus- Show Me How: How to Disciple Everyday Missionaries* (2017). In his first book Finke says, “We’re not on mission for Jesus but with Jesus.”⁶⁵ The old evangelism “programs’ and outreach methods, effective in the past, no longer work. But, Finke says, we shouldn’t worry because Jesus knows exactly what to do and He is inviting us to join Him in His work. The approach that Finke is teaching in his books is one of being available to Jesus to join Him in His work in everyday settings: work, school, sports, and especially in one’s neighborhood. The strategy is to be friends with the people around, build relationships, and look for the right opportunities to share Jesus with them.

In his second book, *Joining Jesus- Show Me How*, Finke focuses on the importance of discipleship in order to truly join Jesus in His mission. He expands on the foundation of his first book and provides a biblical perspective and a clear and simple plan for disciple making. Although *Joining Jesus—Show Me How* is solidly based on biblical knowledge, principles and theology, the intended end result of this book is true discipleship that compels action. The goal of

⁶⁴ McNeal, xvi.

learning about Jesus' approach to disciple making is not just academic or for scholarship's sake; it's being a disciple and joining Jesus in making more disciples.

Georg F. Vicedom's book *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* and Greg Finke's book *Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary*, were both incorporated into the teaching component of this project. These two books together provided both a solid biblical foundation and practical application for the course of study that was developed. All of the volumes that were reviewed in this chapter greatly contributed to the formation and implementation of the project.

⁶³ Greg Finke, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, 13.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

Throughout my pastoral ministry I have wondered why Lutheran congregations seem to be more inwardly focused than congregations of other evangelical church bodies that I have observed. Why was it that I saw non-Lutheran churches engaging their communities in a variety of ambitious outreach efforts, while the Lutheran congregations, of which I was a part, struggled to get enough volunteers to just maintain an evangelism committee?

Was this lack of mission outreach a matter of theology, culture, or training or a combination of these and other factors? The Lutheran Church– Missouri Synod (LCMS) has historically been actively engaged in “foreign” or “international” missions. This church body, from its earliest days, has been a pioneer in sending missionaries to unreached nations. The LCMS has also had periods of rapid expansion nationally with the planting of “mission” congregations. However, both of these efforts have always been led by and dependent upon specially trained missionaries or clergy.

There is nothing in the theology of the LCMS that should hinder all church members from being whole-heartedly involved in making disciples of all people, near and far. However, the mindset seems to have been that evangelism and missions are the responsibility of pastors and other professional church workers, not the laity. I surmise that this is partly due to the prevailing culture of the Lutheran Church but even more so a lack of instruction regarding the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church. An occasional mission Sunday or mission sermon is not enough to

change this mindset.

It is my premise that, with some direct and focused mission education, the thinking and attitude of Lutheran laity and clergy can be effected in a positive and measurable way. I believe that through Biblically based training, Lutheran church members can come to a deeper understanding of the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church and be motivated to personally participate in it.

To that end, this project was designed to 1) assess if my subjective observations were supportable, 2) provide some intensive instruction regarding the *Missio Dei*, the Mission of the Church and personal participation in it, and 3) determine if the course of instruction had any measurable effect on the participants.

The Design of the Study

The first step of this project was the writing of a questionnaire to assess the level of understanding of the Mission of the Church and the willingness of the individuals completing the instrument to personally participate in that mission. The format of this survey was a set of seven questions requiring short answers composed by the participants. Special focus was given to determining the participants' current understanding of the mission of the church and their desire to personally participate in that mission. (*Appendix Two provides a copy of the questionnaire.*) Next, the questionnaire was given to a representative sample of the congregation's active members. My goal was to have at least 25 members participate. In actuality, I had 26 who completed this first questionnaire and 24 who agreed to participate in the course.

The following step was to design and write a brief, but intense, course of study about the *missio Dei*, the mission of the Church, and missional involvement.

The responses to the questionnaire gave an indication of where the participants may be

lacking in regard to missional knowledge and personal engagement in the mission. Therefore, the content of the course of study was shaped to give not only the “big picture” of the Mission of the Church but also to address any detected gaps in understanding discovered through the initial questionnaire.

This course of study is based upon Scripture passages of both the Old and New Testaments and upon mission focused theological writings, especially *The Mission of God* by George Vicedom and *Joining Jesus on His Mission* by Greg Finke. The course covers the topics of the Kingdom of God, the Mission of God, the mission of the Church, and engaging in the mission. (*Appendix Three contains a copy of all six sessions of the course, both participants and leader's versions.*)

As initially taught, this course was six sessions in length. The sessions were an hour each in duration, held on a weekly basis. The course consisted of Bible study on pertinent Scripture passages as well as the reading and discussing of excerpts from various books and articles.

Next, I asked those who had completed the questionnaire to take the course of study, committing to attending all six sessions. I had 24 participants commit to complete the class.

At the conclusion of the course, I re-administered the original questionnaire to the 24 members who initially completed it and who also participated in the class. (*Appendix Four provides a copy of that questionnaire.*) Only 21 participants completed the second questionnaire. The purpose was to discover if there had been any growth and improvement in the understanding of the mission of the Church and in the willingness of the participants to personally engage in the mission since the time of the initial questionnaire.

I also wrote and administered, at the beginning and again at the conclusion of the course, a brief questionnaire of twelve statements to which I asked the participants to respond on a six

point Likert scale. This survey was intended as an additional tool to assess the pre-class and post-class understanding of the Church's Mission. (*Appendix Five provides a copy of that questionnaire.*)

Finally, I developed a set of interview questions to be used in a focus group setting. After the administration of the second questionnaire, in order to avoid having participants say what they think I wanted them to say, I asked Cynthia MacGregor, Ph.D., a professor of education at Missouri State University and a member of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri, to personally interview the course participants in a focus group of six. Through this means I was seeking to gain further insight into this sub-set's mission understanding and involvement and receive feedback on ways to improve the course. (*Appendix Six provides a copy of the questions asked during the focus group meeting.*)

Research Tools and Methodology

The main instrument for this project was a questionnaire of seven questions to which the participants responded. This same questionnaire was given to all the participants twice: initially at the beginning of the process and again following the instructional course. I also administered the six point Likert scale questionnaire twice. I anticipated that there would be positive change in the understanding of the mission of the church and willingness to participate in the mission in the group taking the course.

In addition to the questionnaire, I had Dr. Cynthia MacGregor interview six participants of the instructional course in a focus group. This interview provided open-ended questions that allowed the participants to expand upon their responses to the survey, indicate changes in their understanding of the mission of the church, their attitudes regarding willing participation in the mission and how they planned to do so. They also were asked to provide feedback regarding the

instructional course and how it can be improved. (*Appendix Seven is the transcription of that meeting.*)

The questionnaire and interviews served as qualitative research as an expression of the participants' subjective understanding. However, in the case of the Likert scale questionnaires, similar responses could be tallied and averaged in a quantitative manner. The interviews, of course, were a purely qualitative approach but provide deeper insight into the participants' changing understanding of the mission of the church and their personal role in it.

In addition, in order to gain valid and useful information from those who participate in the research, I assured them that their responses would remain confidential. In the publication of the data I kept the responses confidential; I did not identify them by name, and I did not include any details from their responses which might be traced back to specific individuals and thus imperil their confidentiality. I had the participants sign informed consent forms, before participating, in which I explained the purpose and methodology of the field research and gave assurance of confidentiality. I also assured the participants that they could withdraw at any time from the research and invited them to discuss with me any concerns they may have had.

All participant responses, audio recordings, and data have been stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a secure computer during the research and writing period of this Major Applied Project. After the MAP is completed all participant responses, audio recordings, and data will be deleted or destroyed.

Implementation of the Project

The critical steps in this project were the field research of surveys and interviews, the bibliographic research, the writing and teaching of the instructional course, and the process of organizing, evaluating, and writing.

The time line for the research and writing of this project was:

Initially registered for the MAP in the winter quarter of 2014 (December)

Research (initial survey) conducted in December 2014.

Instructional course written by December of 2014.

Instructional course taught during Epiphany season (January and February) of 2015

Research (second survey) conducted in March of 2015.

Interviews of course participants conducted in March of 2015.

The analysis of the research and the completion of the writing of the MAP by February of 2018.

The semi-final draft of the MAP to be presented by April 15th of 2018.

The final draft of the MAP to be presented by April 30th of 2018.

Summary

This chapter provides a description of the design of the project, how it addressed the problem of lack of engagement in the Mission of the Church, and how it accomplished the purpose of increasing understanding and involvement in that mission. The questionnaires and focus group questions were developed to effectively assess the level of the participants' understanding and personal engagement in the Church's Mission before and after the instructional course. The intensive course of study was designed to increase the participants' knowledge and understanding of the *Missio Dei* and the Mission of the Church and to motivate them to become more personally involved in it.

Also provided is an overview of the implementation of the project and the various steps in the process. Chapter Five, "The Project Evaluated," will delineate the findings of this study and give careful analysis of the data to demonstrate how well the project's hypothesis was supported.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION

Introduction

Three research instruments were utilized in the process of this project: 1) a twelve statement, six point Likert scale survey that was administered to the participants twice, at the beginning and end of the instructional course; 2) a seven question, short answer questionnaire that was also administered to the participants twice, prior to and following the instructional course; and 3) a focus group of six participants and a moderator, considering nine follow-up questions, held after the completion of the course of instruction.

In this chapter, the data collected through these three instruments will be examined and analyzed in light of the project's objective. This analysis is intended to determine whether or not the initial premise of the thesis is tenable. That is, that members of Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri can come to a deeper understanding of the mission of the Church and desire to personally engage more fully in that mission, as the result of participating in an intensive instructional course.

The anticipated outcomes for this project included: 1) The successful completion of an accurate initial assessment of the level of understanding of and attitude toward the mission of the Church of a representative sample of active members of the congregation. 2) The design and implementation of a brief, but intense, training course to teach about the *missio Dei*, the mission of the Church, and missional focus and involvement. 3) The reassessment of the same members and the discovery that there has been growth and improvement in missional understanding and in

willingness to participate in the mission among those who have received the missional training. And, 4) the gaining of feedback and suggestions regarding revisions and additions to the course of study for future use.

The Twelve Statement, Six Point Survey

This section of the chapter considers the results of the comparison of the initial survey given at session #1 of the instructional course and follow-up survey given after session #6. (Appendix Five provides a blank copy of this survey.) Here is the response scale used:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Below are the averaged comparisons of the two surveys, statement by statement, and some brief analysis.

1) I have a clear understanding of the mission of God.

Session #1- average 4.33

Session #6- average 5.46

There is measurable movement in the level of response to this statement. Initially, the average response was in the “slightly agree” range, but on the follow-up survey the average shifted over a point, almost to the “strongly agree” level. This would seem to indicate that some substantial learning did take place regarding an understanding of the mission of God.

2) The mission which God has entrusted to His people is first presented in the Bible through the “Great Commission” of Jesus recorded in Matthew 28:19 & 20.

Session #1- average 4.00

Session #6- average 3.42

Although there is noticeable movement in the anticipated direction on this statement, it is not a substantial change, (re: “slightly agree” to “slightly disagree”). Perhaps the intent of this statement was unclear to many of the participants. The key word in this statement is “first,” but those responding may have misinterpreted this word as “foremost.” The intent of the statement

was to gauge the participants understanding that the mission of God has been in the mind of God since the beginning and is found throughout the Old Testament. It is clearly restated by Jesus, but the Great Commission is not the first presentation of the mission of God in the Bible.

3) The mission of the Church should be carried out by ordained clergy only.

Session #1- average 1.50

Session #6- average 1.13

Again, the movement on this statement is minimal. However, the results of the initial survey were different than expected. It was anticipated that many of the participants would view the mission of the Church as being the responsibility of the clergy alone. Evidently, prior to this course of instruction, most participants had already been informed of and accepted the fact that the mission of the Church has been given to the laity as well. So, even if the movement was slight, (from “disagree” to “strongly disagree”) the anticipated outcome occurred.

4) The mission of God is to redeem and restore all people to Himself.

Session #1- average 5.25 (“agree”)

Session #6- average 5.83 (“strongly agree”)

Even before the beginning of the instructional class, most participants already seemed to have a good understanding of the scope and nature of the mission of God. The movement on this statement is less than a full point because the group as a whole had a good, basic understanding of concept even before that instruction began.

5) The mission of God and the mission of the Church is essentially the same thing.

Session #1- average 4.33

Session #6- average 4.54

The initial response to this statement is surprising. It was not anticipated that most of the participants would see the close correlation between the mission of God and the mission of the Church prior to the course of instruction. Again, the participants’ prior understanding of the relationship of these two missions was greater than expected. Thus, the movement as a result of

the instruction is slight, but still in the desired direction.

6) The kingdom of God has come into the world to work out the mission of God through the Church.

Session #1- average 3.96

Session #6- average 4.50

Again, the initial response to this statement is better than expected; already well into the “agree” range. However, the movement shown in the follow-up survey seems to indicate that the course of instruction reinforced and strengthened this understanding.

7) The mission of God is accomplished solely through the service of Holy Communion.

Session #1- average 4.33

Session #6- average 5.46

The response to this statement is the most baffling of all of the twelve statements. The initial response is not particularly surprising, on average indicating a slight agreement with the statement. It was anticipated that some of the participants would initially see the service of Holy Communion as the only means through which God’s mission is carried out and accomplished. However, following the class instruction, it was expected that the participants would see a much broader picture of how God accomplishes His mission. It was anticipated that there would be movement toward the “disagree” direction in the follow-up survey. Instead, the movement was over a point stronger in the “agree” direction. Either the instructional class failed to effectively address this understanding or most of the participants misinterpreted the intent of the statement. The key word here is “solely,” but may have been overlooked by the majority of participants.

8) I have personally been engaged in the mission of the Church in my daily living.

Session #1- average 4.38

Session #6- average 4.63

The initial response to this statement was better than hoped for. It was expected that most of the participants would not have viewed themselves as being engaged in the mission of the Church in their everyday lives. On the contrary, the average respondent was on the “agree” side

of the scale even before the class began. It is also surprising that the movement in the average response to this statement on the follow-up survey was not greater than it was toward the “strongly agree” choice.

9) A missionary is someone called by God to share the Gospel in a foreign land.

Session #1- average 2.42

Session #6- average 1.71

The initial response to this statement, and the concept of “missionary,” was close to what was expected. The movement observed on the follow-up survey was also consistent with what was expected. However, the movement toward “strongly disagree,” while substantial, was not as great as expected. The result here does indicate an overall change in thinking regarding who is a “missionary.”

10) Being a missionary requires receiving a special and specific spiritual gift from God.

Session #1- average 2.88

Session #6- average 1.79

The result on this statement closely parallels the result of the previous statement. On average, the participants seemed to have been influenced by the instructional class in their thinking regarding the nature of being a “missionary.” The change from the initial to the follow-up survey is over a full point toward the “strongly disagree” side of the scale. This indicates that the participants had come to understand that being a “missionary” is the role of every believer, not just some specially selected and gifted individuals in the church.

11) I am personally willing to be used by God to accomplish His mission.

Session #1- average 5.17

Session #6- average 5.58

The initial response to this statement was very positive and aligns with a response of “agree”. Still, on the follow-up survey, there was an indication of a minimal increase in the willingness of the participants to be used by God in His mission.

12) Every Christian is called by Jesus to be a missionary.

Session #1- average 4.96

Session #6- average 5.83

Surprisingly, the pre-course survey response to this statement was also more positive than expected. Evidently most of the participants in the instructional course came in with the understanding that they personally are called to be “missionaries.” Yet, at the conclusion of the course the response was nearly a point higher than the before class survey. This would seem to indicate that the idea of personally being involved in the mission of the Church had been reinforced and strengthened by the course.

In summary, the compared responses to these twelve statements, on both the before and after surveys, allow some preliminary conclusions. 1) There is a strong indication that, on average, the participants understanding of the mission of God was increased by attending the instructional course and doing the assigned readings. 2) Most participants, even prior to the course did not view the mission of the Church to be the responsibility of the clergy alone. This viewpoint seems to have been slightly intensified by the course. 3) Many participants began the course with an accurate definition of the “mission of God” and saw a correlation between the “mission of God” and the “mission of the Church.” The course appears to have reinforced this thinking, but not substantially. 4) The concept of the “kingdom of God” was understood by most participants but participation in the course reinforced and strengthened this understanding. 5) Most participants indicated in the initial survey that they had already been engaged in the “mission of the Church” in their daily living. The concluding survey results indicated only slightly greater agreement on this point after the class. 6) Many participants already understood that the term “missionary” did not exclusively apply to those serving in a foreign land. The follow-up survey did, however, show increased agreement with this understanding at the end of

the course. And, 7) the participants, on average, after the conclusion of the course were in much stronger agreement that every Christian is called by Jesus to be a missionary.

The Seven Question, Short Answer Questionnaire

This section of the chapter considers the results of the comparison of the initial questionnaire, administered before session #1 of the instructional course, and the follow-up questionnaire given after session #6. (*Appendices Two and Four provide blank copies of these surveys.*)

Comparison and analysis will be provided, question by question, for each participant's answer on both the initial and follow-up questionnaires.

1) How do you define the word "mission"?

Participant # 1

Initial Questionnaire (here after abbreviated as "I") - *An outwardly directed purpose or action. Within the Church, to advance the Kingdom of God or to help others.*

Follow-up Questionnaire (here after abbreviated as "F") - *A mission is a "job" or a process by/through which one reaches a goal. It is intentional.*

Participant # 2

I- *A mission is a task that a person or group has been given.*

F- *A mission is a task that one wishes to accomplish.*

Participant # 3

I- *A task given to a person or persons that is meant to be accomplished over a period of time.*

F- *The sending of persons to perform a pre-specified activity.*

Participant # 4

I- *A mission is a purpose for energy to be directed toward, a guideline after which one strives or sets before themselves to feel drawn toward and for which to aim.*

- F- *That purpose or task God would have me to do to join Him in His activity here on earth to restore us to His redemptive plan for all humans.*

Participant # 5

- I- *A job or task*
- F- *Jesus plan for us in showing others about His love and eternal life with God in heaven.*

Participant # 6

- I- *Spreading the "good news" to unbelievers and believers.*
- F- *Bring the "Good news" to everyone Jesus calls all to believe in God through his sacrifice. Plant the seed by word and actions.*

Participant # 9

- I- *A type of errand or being sent for a purpose. Getting out of a comfort zone.*
- F- *A duty to carry out that has special importance to someone.*

Participant # 10

- I- *The word mission means the act [?] of sending. Has a lot of different meanings. I think of it as a ministry commissioned by a religious congregation to propagate its faith or humanitarian work; an organized effort to spread the Christian faith, a specific task a person or group is charged with.*
- F- *In our English language mission has so many different meanings, as a Christian I think of it as a calling from God, through his son Jesus sent us the Great Commission. Therefore we are all responsible to God, to spread the Gospel.*

Participant # 11

- I- *Serving others, outside our own church, showing them the love of God and showing them the path to faith in Jesus.*
- F- *Spreading the gospel by serving and knowing our friends, neighbors and relatives.*

Participant #12

- I- *Sent for a special purpose.*

F- *Being sent to do something special.*

Participant # 15

I- *A mission is a goal or aim: a purpose to fulfill.*

F- *A goal or an objective, a purpose that one aims to accomplish or carry out. Usually of importance to the person(s) who are tasked to meet that stated purpose.*

Participant # 16

I- *Sending someone out with a specific assignment.*

F- *Seeking God's will and participate where God is working.*

Participant # 17

I- *The mission of a person or organization is its goal. It's what it considers its "job" or reason for being in existence; its purpose.*

F- *"Mission" is that purpose which is most important, and upon which one is exclusively (or almost exclusively) focused and intent on accomplishing.*

Participant # 20

I- *A God given goal; objective, duty and/or assignment.*

F- *An objective, duty, assignment or goal given by God.*

Participant # 21

I- *1. Job(s) to do (He wants all to be saved or none to be lost) 2. Place to do it.*

F- *Job or purpose; overarching goal.*

Participant # 22

I- *A job or a task that a person or an organization has set up for themselves to accomplish.*

F- *An objective that a person believes is their responsibility to complete. It usually is something that is very important to them.*

Participant # 23

- I- *A job or a prospect that you are asked to do or carry out; trying to accomplish a goal*
- F- *It is an objective (task) that a person believes it is his responsibility to carry out. It is something that is very special and important and a person must devote special effort to it.*

Participant # 25

- I- *To spread the word of God.*
- F- *Set out to do something*

Participant # 26

- I- *I would define it as a purpose or reason for doing something.*
- F- *I would define "mission" as an important job or calling.*

Participant # 30

- I- *A mission is a goal you set after careful thought. A plan to accomplish something you whole heartedly want to achieve. I think of it as a journey down a path you have determined.*
- F- *A determined plan to accomplish a task.*

Participant # 31

- I- *The purpose of a group of people.*
- F- *Whatever it takes to show and spread the Love of God!*

The intent of this question was to discover the participants' understanding of the concept of "mission" before and after the instructional course and to see if any change in thinking had occurred as a result of taking the course. In the initial questionnaire, "mission" was commonly defined with words like "purpose," "action," "task," "job," "errand," "goal," "being sent," "duty," "assignment," and "objective." Most participants considered and defined the term "mission" in a general sense. However, six participants made some reference or connection to

God or the Christian faith in their definitions even before the course began.

Not much change is observable on this item in the follow-up questionnaire. "Mission" is still defined in a similar fashion with the words "purpose," "task," "job," "goal," "being sent," "duty," "assignment," and "objective." Some new terms are added to the definition such as "pre-specified activity," "plan," "calling," and "serving." On the follow-up questionnaire, eight participants made some reference or connection to God, the "Good News," or the Christian faith in their definitions, an increase of two. Four of these participants had also made reference to God or faith in their initial questionnaire but the other four had not. This may be due to having been immersed in *missio Dei* thinking for the six weeks of the course.

Using this definition, please answer the following questions:

2) **What mission is God most involved in?**

Participant # 1

I- *Bringing those "lost" to Himself; equipping us to bring the lost to God.*

F- *God is involved in the mission of bringing everyone to Himself.*

Participant # 2

I- *God's mission is to be the righteous sovereign God of His creation and that His creation would follow His will for it/them.*

F- *God is most involved in restoring and healing His creation, humanity.*

Participant # 3

I- *He is most involved in the one He gave Jesus- to preach the gospel, or good news, which will save people from their sins.*

F- *Redeeming and restoring all things to the Kingdom of God through Jesus and with our help in joining His mission.*

Participant # 4

I- *God is involved in establishing Himself among us as believers, as well as seeking*

a relationship with anyone who recognizes Him as Lord and Savior of the world.

- F- *To restore us to His original plan so that through the redemptive work of Christ and the interceding of the Holy Spirit to work sanctification we are guaranteed to be with God eternally.*

Participant # 5

- I- *To bring people to glorify "Him" through "His" "Son" "Jesus".*
- F- *To have all to love Him more than anything else.*

Participant # 6

- I- *Provides the Spirit (Holy) to bring and open hearts to the message of his Son.*
- F- *Saving all lost souls.*

Participant # 9

- I- *Spreading of his word to others who have not heard or don't know a lot about God. We are not "comfortable" in doing this.*
- F – *Saving his creation even the lost and erring, bring them to eternal salvation thru Jesus.*

Participant # 10

- I- *Saving souls, spreading the Christian faith.*
- F- *Saving Souls*

Participant # 11

- I- *Bringing all to faith in his Son.*
- F- *Increasing those that know His Son; partnering with His believers on earth.*

Participant # 12

- I- *Saving souls through His Son.*
- F- *Restoring human lives, bring people back to the Father and God's Kingdom.*

Participant # 15

- I- *The mission of bringing people to Him; for reconciliation and to be His people*

and live in an intimate relationship to Him.

- F- *God is most involved in restoring and redeeming His creation to himself, starting with humans.*

Participant # 16

- I- *Spreading His word.*
- F- *Salvation; giving eternal life.*

Participant # 17

- I- *I believe that God's mission, or master plan, is to make salvation available to all of mankind. I believe that everything He directs/wills to happen is part of His Master plan, and that He uses those things that we do outside His plan to in on some way accomplish His purpose.*
- F- *Returning all creatures to his kingdom – beginning with humans.*

Participant # 20

- I- *Saving humanity*
- F- *Save human kind through God's Son, Jesus*

Participant # 21

- I-
 1. *Saving*
 2. *Building the collection of believers*
 3. *Whole world*
- F- *To redeem and restore all things to His kingdom especially and primarily human beings through His son, Jesus.*

Participant # 22

- I- *Making Himself available for all mankind to come to in time of need or thankfulness. He desires that everyone come to know and believe in Him and be saved.*
- F- *To bring eternal salvation to all of his creation beginning with the human race, through love in Jesus Christ.*

Participant # 23

- I- *Bringing people to Him and equipping them to live in a way that shows the world (those we come in contact with daily) His love and salvation.*
- F- *The mission God is most involved is to bring eternal salvation to His whole creation beginning with humans, by bringing it back to His kingdom by love in Christ.*

Participant # 25

- I- *To spread the Gospel and that eternal life is through Jesus.*
- F- *To bring people to his word. To know him and Jesus.*

Participant # 26

- I- *Providing us with a reason to live a purpose filled life.*
- F- *The mission God is most involved in is restoring His kingdom to all who are saved through His son, Jesus Christ.*

Participant # 30

- I- *Bringing people to believe, love and trust in him, and to one day join him in heaven.*
- F- *Bringing his children to believe and follow him and to one day join Him in heaven.*

Participant # 31

- I- *To save mankind from eternal death!*
- F- *To save the lost.*

In answer to the question “What mission is God most involved in?” in the initial questionnaire the participants had a wide variety of responses. However, the predominant thought among the answers (11 out of 21) centered on God seeking to save lost humanity, with some respondents specifically mentioning Jesus. Other thoughts expressed by the remaining 10 respondents, which went in a different direction, included “being the righteous, sovereign God of His creation,” “establishing Himself among us believers,” “bringing people to glorify Him,”

“providing the Holy Spirit,” “making Himself available to all mankind,” “spreading His Word,” and “providing us with a reason to live a purpose filled life.”

In answer to the question “What mission is God most involved in?” in the follow-up questionnaire the participants had a more uniform set of responses. Of the 21 respondents, 12 answered this question with a variation of the following: “The mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings, through His Son, Jesus Christ.” This was the definition of the mission of God that was agreed upon during the instructional course. Of the remaining participants’ responses, 6 centered on God seeking to save the lost (salvation) and 3 were unique: “to have all to love Him more than anything else,” “increasing those that know His Son,” and “to bring people to His Word, to know him and Jesus.”

It is evident that more than half of the participants’ responses were influenced by what was taught in the class regarding the mission of God. Even the 6 respondents who focused on “saving the lost” were not far off the mark. Only 3 participants had answers that didn’t match up with one of the above two categories, and even these answers were not essentially incorrect. While it is true that many of the participants had a good basic understanding of the mission of God prior to taking the instructional course, what was taught in the class did have an impact on how most of the participants articulated this concept following the class.

3) What mission are Christians to be most involved in?

Participant # 1

- I- *To be focused inward (our own spiritual growth) and outward (to bring others to Christ; to help others where needed); upward= Praising God!*
- F- *Christians are to be involved with God in His mission. We are His “hands” here on Earth; bringing others to Christ.*

Participant # 2

- I- *To follow the will of God to the best they can, also to use the life of His Son Jesus Christ as a role model, to put our trust in Him, to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and the true Son of God, but when we fail, to repent and change our ways.*
- F- *Christians should be most involved in assisting the Church and God to restore and heal humanity.*

Participant # 3

- I- *The same one God is involved in- preaching, teaching and upholding the Truth. It is not to become politically or socially "correct."*
- F- *Through everyday opportunities that we notice Him giving us.*

Participant # 4

- I- *We are to be involved in spreading the good news of our salvation in Christ Jesus.*
- F- *To bring people to know Christ as their personal Savior. I need to discover where God is working and join him.*

Participant # 5

- I- *Witness to others.*
- F- *Showing our love to our neighbors as Jesus loved us so much to die for our sins.*

Participant # 6

- I- *Spreading the Gospel.*
- F- *Bringing unbelievers to the saving Grace God has given to every living being.*

Participant # 9

- I- *Going to other countries, cities and our own backyard inviting people and telling or sharing the "good news" of salvation. (once again getting out of that comfort zone.)*
- F- *God thru our actions in our everyday life. Partnering with Jesus*

Participant # 10

- I- *The great Commission – Matt 28:19 Go ye therefore and teach all Nations,*

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to [?] all things, whatsoever I have commanded you and lo I am with you even to the ends of the earth.

- F- *The extension of Gods Kingdom, which is right here on earth right now! Our recent Bible gave me a different view of what I thought the Kingdom of God is, all around us each day. We say "thy Kingdom come" like it is in the future.*

Participant # 11

- I- *Bringing others to a closer relationship to Jesus.*
- F- *Beginning with their own family, friends and neighbors, and acquaintances. Showing the love of Jesus and sharing the Good News of His forgiving and loving nature.*

Participant # 12

- I- *Spreading the news of Christ.*
- F- *To join Jesus on his mission.*

Participant # 15

- I- *To fulfill God's mission to bring Christ to the lost – preach and share the Word of Salvation.*
- F- *They are to proclaim the message of Salvation; to be the means God uses to reach fellow humans in order to restore and redeem them.*

Participant # 16

- I- *Bringing everyone to Christ. Telling others about God through his Word and their testimony.*
- F- *Pray and see where God is so you can serve as God leads you to help bring others to the cross.*

Participant # 17

- I- *We are to be involved in sharing God's Word to others, and in this way to help spread His kingdom and help make salvation available to all people.*
- F- *We are to be most involved in God's mission.*

Participant # 20

I- *Saving humanity and connecting worship, God's Word and our witness in proclaiming God's plan for salvation to the world.*

F- *To (follow) join Jesus in the mission to save humanity.*

Participant # 21

I- *God's mission (love)*

F- *Through the provision of the Holy Spirit, participate in God's mission in His redemption of people in the world (universe) – creation. Join Jesus in the mission.*

Participant # 22

I- *Spreading the good news of God's plan of salvation and bringing the lost to Christ.*

F- *Spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to all nations (The great commission).*

Participant # 23

I- *Bringing the lost into His kingdom; impossible on our own; living a life that is Christ-centered*

F- *The Great Commission Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are to be His witness to the world.*

Participant # 25

I- *Share the Gospel with others.*

F- *Sharing the Gospel, to tell people about God and Jesus.*

Participant # 26

I- *Spreading the Gospel and educating themselves.*

F- *Christians are most involved in joining God in His mission; sharing His presence in our lives with others.*

Participant # 30

I- *Christians are to live a Christ centered life bringing as many people to God as they can. To be an example of one of God's children.*

F- *Being neighbors to those around us. To be ready to listen and be on the lookout for opportunities that God has placed us in.*

Participant # 31

I- *To spread the word of God.*

F- *Your neighbor and beyond.*

In the initial, pre-course questionnaire, in response to “What mission are Christians to be involved in?” there were a wide variety of responses. However, of the 21 respondents, 11 answered with a version of “spreading or sharing the Gospel (or Good News).” The other 10 responses included: “be focused inward...outward...and upward,” “follow the will of God the best they can,” “preach, teach, and uphold the truth,” “the Great Commission- Matthew 28:19,” “bringing others to a closer relationship to Jesus,” “bringing everyone to Christ,” “bringing the lost into His kingdom,” “saving humanity,” “God’s mission (love),” and “to live a Christ-centered life.” Of these 10 responses, 3 have as their emphasis “bringing people to Christ.” All but 2 of the 21 responses have some element of sharing the Gospel with people. However, little is said in any of these responses, except 2, about our mission being involved in God’s mission.

In the follow-up, post-course questionnaire, 10 participants offered responses similar to “joining God (or Jesus) in His mission.” This was a core teaching of the instructional course and God’s mission was only mentioned by two participants prior to the course. This seems to be a strong indicator that the concept of our mission being to join God in His mission was clearly communicated and received by most of the class members. Other post-course responses to this question included 2 answers that focused on “fulfilling the Great Commission,” 2 answers that focused on “showing the love of Jesus and sharing the Good News,” as well as the following more unique responses: “through everyday opportunities,” “bringing unbelievers to God’s saving

grace,” “serve as God leads you to help bring others to the cross,” “sharing the Gospel,” “being neighbors to those around us... be on the lookout for opportunities that God has placed us in,” and your neighbor and beyond.”

4) How do pastors participate in this mission?

Participant # 1

- I- *They are to train the rest of us in what to do to grow the Church.*
- F- *Pastors are to be the equippers. They prepare the people on how to join God in His mission. They also participate with God in His mission, but they are not the only ones who should be a witness to others.*

Participant # 2

- I- *Pastors are unique in the fact that they have been given the office of the keys which includes all the duties to secure the wellbeing of God's church on earth, which also includes the great commission.*
- F- *Pastors participate in teaching the Word, worshiping the Triune God, and evangelizing God's message of forgiveness, mercy, and grace to the lost and the saved.*

Participant # 3

- I- *They are the ones who, in general, are better equipped to be apologists and to teach us to be as well. They should be preaching law and gospel, praying for those are saved and those who are not, and setting an atmosphere for spiritual growth. They should be providing Bible studies that are just that- the study of God's Word. Although they are sinful by nature as are all human beings, they should endeavor to reflect the Christian character. If these things are done, there would be no need to explain political issues to the congregation as they would know what is right and wrong. And, most of all, they need to lead the mission, helping to steer the congregation away from activity that is not leading to the mission.*
- F- *Pastor's need to be constantly setting an example of joining God's mission. With his background, this can be done through sermons, services that keep the rest of us focused and ready to stay in the mission, and providing us with ways to say what we need to with gentleness and respect.*

Participant # 4

- I- *They serve as facilitators. They have been theologically trained to lead us (the lay people) in God's Word and in our mission here on earth. They encourage us.*
- F- *They train us to be missionaries; leading us, encouraging us, praying with and for us. They facilitate us.*

Participant # 5

- I- *Leading and teaching God's word.*
- F- *Teaching us with the word, prayer and sacraments.*

Participant # 6

- I- *Actively involved in equipping the lay people on how to go out and Spread the Gospel.*
- F- *Guide the members to God's mission here on earth. Preach the bible in all its truths.*

Participant # 9

- I- *By sharing and teaching or leading bible studies. Being involved with the community.*
- F- *Preach and teach and engage. They with God's help, thru Jesus, proclaim both law and Gospel to all people.*

Participant # 10

- I- *Pastors should be enablers and prepare their members for Evangelism, by teaching and seminars on Outreach to help prepare them to assist the minister.*
- F- *Help establish a mission Program (Evangelism) with training, prayer, Outreach to the community. Seeing new members are assimilated into the congregation with their spiritual gifts. Be an enabler.*

Participant # 11

- I- *Training and teaching followers to evangelize using their God-given gifts.*
- F- *Leading in the mission in their own personal lives and training others to do likewise.*

Participant # 12

- I- *Leading and training and teaching the mission*
- F- *Teaching the Word of God, so people can put what we know about Jesus into practice.*

Participant # 15

- I- *To aid and provide the means to carry it out as well as lead. Teach and educate; prepare those to go out and share God's message of salvation.*
- F- *They lead and give direction to the people so they can join in the mission.*

Participant # 16

- I- *I think every Christian participate in the way God leads them. Pastors and lay people alike.*
- F- *Leading his congregation and joining God where he is working.*

Participant # 17

- I- *Pastors are those who teach us, guide us, lead us in God's mission. They are Christ's mouthpieces, and it's through pastors that Jesus forgives us and comes to us in the sacrament of the altar.*
- F- *Pastors are the instruments God uses to show us law and Gospel; to administer sacraments; forgive sins on earth; set an example; and teach lay people to be missionaries.*

Participant # 20

- I- *As a facilitator, interpreter, teacher and administration of God's Word.*
- F- *As a teacher and interpreter of God's Word... to facilitate and administer (serve) the "church" and its mission.*

Participant # 21

- I- *Reading and sharing scripture (Grace and Good News) (love): Leading, Equipping, Protecting, Teaching, Baptizing, Communing, Praying, Responding to His call, Acting in His way, Interacting with Believers and non-believers.*
- F- *Preaching/teaching law and gospel (The Word), Serving/pastoring the flock (Communion, Baptism, etc.)*

Participant # 22

- I- *They feed and nourish their congregations to keep them strong in the faith. They also are to encourage and help equip laypeople to take part in evangelism.*
- F- *By preaching the good news about Jesus Christ to their congregations, reinforcing their faith, so that they will in turn tell others outside their congregation about Jesus.*

Participant # 23

- I- *The pastor participates by leading, teaching, communication and supporting others in their daily walk with Christ as they work to bring others into Christ's kingdom.*
- F- *As "called" servants their job in the church is the same as the mission or Great Commission- bring people to Christ, but my pastor and others participates by showing me (already a believer) where I can be a missionary each day in my daily living and support me with prayers, Bible study, etc. Tough job because he wears so many hats and subject to human ideas and restrictions.*

Participant # 25

- I- *Guiding us (as a congregation) through sermon*
- F- *By helping us better understand the Gospel. Maybe see it from another perspective (other than your own).*

Participant # 26

- I- *They guide people as they try to live through Jesus.*
- F- *Not only are pastors also joining God in his mission, but they also help to educate and support others in that mission as well.*

Participant # 30

- I- *Pastors are to teach, preach, baptize and lead us closer to God.*
- F- *Pastors are to teach God's word to us and administer the sacraments.*

Participant # 31

- I- *They are the shepherd of the congregation.*
- F- *To advise and train.*

In the initial questionnaire, of the 21 participants, 10 wrote a response that essentially said that pastors participate in the mission “by teaching, equipping, and training” lay persons. An additional 6 respondents had answers that essentially said that pastors are to participate by “leading the mission.” There were also 5 initial responses that didn’t clearly fit into either of the two above categories: “the office of the keys...which includes the Great Commission,” “every Christian participates in the way God leads them; pastors and lay people alike,” “guiding us (as a congregation) through sermons,” “they guide people as they try to live through Jesus,” and “they are the shepherd of the congregation.”

In the follow-up questionnaire, of the 21 participants, 11 wrote a response that essentially said that pastors participate in the mission “by teaching, equipping, and training” lay persons. An additional 3 respondents had answers that essentially said that pastors are to participate by “leading the mission.” In the post-course questionnaire an additional category emerged with 4 respondents saying that pastors essentially participate in the mission by conducting Word and Sacrament ministry. Finally, there were three responses that didn’t really fit any of the above categories: “setting an example of joining God’s mission,” “establishing a mission program...be an enabler” and “helping us better understand the Gospel.”

In comparing the participants’ responses to this item on the before and after questionnaires, it is evident that there was no significant change in thinking regarding the role of a pastor in the mission of the Church. Since this issue was not a key point in the instructional course, it is not surprising that the initial and follow-up responses were much the same. However, the responses were in keeping with the understanding that pastors are “equippers of the saints” in regard to carrying out the mission of the Church. Since a pastor taught the instructional course, that role was reinforced by the process of this project.

5) How do lay people participate in this mission?

Participant # 1

- I- *They see where God is working and join Him. It may be in the local church, in the community or at a very personal level with others.*
- F- *Lay people join God in His mission by befriending others, helping where needed, studying the Word to prepare themselves to be knowledgeable when speaking with others about God.*

Participant # 2

- I- *We can do the most in this by showing non-Christians how true Christians live their lives.*
- F- *Lay people can participate through using their talents to bring God's restoring gift of Christ to people in need and to live a life as the "5th Gospel."*

Participant # 3

- I- *By hearing the Word, studying the Word, and responding to opportunities presented to them either within the church or in their everyday lives that further the mission, not dilute it. This could include time, money and/or prayer. Their behavior should also reflect Christianity.*
- F- *By prayer, activity with non-believers as well as believers, who can slip when something bad happens, and daily acts of kindness (and if necessary, use words).*

Participant # 4

- I- *Lay people ask the Holy Spirit to fill their hearts and minds to be God-centered in finding His purpose for us.*
- F- *Through the building of relationships, we communicate our love for Jesus and His love for us by caring for others physically, emotionally, and especially spiritually.*

Participant # 5

- I- *Studying God's word, prayer and talking to others about "Jesus", plus worship.*
- F- *The word, prayer, worship, and showing love to our neighbors.*

Participant # 6

- I- *Train and find their place in Mission.*

- F- *Planting a seed by actions and Word. Be there for neighbors and listen for opportunity to spread God's Word.*

Participant # 9

- I- *Being involved with places like victory mission. Inviting friends or co-workers to a time of coffee and visiting – sharing the bible with them in an informal setting.*
- F- *By keeping our eyes, "ears open" and using the opportunities to plant seeds of faith and letting the Holy Spirit do the rest.*

Participant # 10

- I- *Preparing themselves through scripture and the Holy Spirit. Commitment. You may not be comfortable in making calls, but there are other areas you can help. We don't all have the same Spiritual gifts.*
- F- *By being committed to the churches programs, helping the Pastor to extend Gods Kingdom. Having a spirit of unity for the mission. Being in the Word.*

Participant # 11

- I- *To embrace their spiritual gifts through Bible study and worship and to reach out to the hurting and lost; showing them the love of Jesus.*
- F- *To strengthen their own faith through worship, Bible Study and association with other Christians. To be in prayer.*

Participant # 12

- I- *Enjoy living in Christ and telling the story.*
- F- *Being in the Word of God on Sundays and also daily Bible study. Talking to Jesus so we may recognize and put into practice what Jesus is telling us.*

Participant # 15

- I- *To be witnesses on their daily lives; share with those they meet as well as family and friends. Also to be vigilant on prayers and stewardship.*
- F- *To participate in their daily lives – with those in their family, friends they come in contact with each day. Not only with words, but in how they live their lives.*

Participant # 16

I- *I think every Christian participates in the way God leads them. Pastors and lay people alike. [#4 and #5 were answered together.]*

F- *Prayer for the pastor and members and move together to serve God.*

Participant # 17

I- *Lay people share God's love with others; they teach by example; raise children as Christians; help with the work of the church – tasks/administration/contributions of time, talent, treasure. We are to do those things God would have us to do.*

F- *Lay people are to model Christ by how they live their lives (set an example). They are to learn to look for the opportunities: to help others, to share the love of Jesus, and to share the Gospel of Jesus.*

Participant # 20

I- *Through: 1. worship, prayer and praise 2. Studying and inwardly digesting God's word individually and with others (Put on the armor of God) 3. Proclaiming His saving grace.*

F- *Through prayer, praise, worship... studying God's word... and following Jesus's example being patient and listening to His lead (directions).*

Participant # 21

I- *Same as answer to #4 [Reading and sharing scripture (Grace and Good News) (love): Leading, Equipping, Protecting, Teaching, Baptizing, Communing, Praying, Responding to His call, Acting in His way, Interacting with Believers and non-believers.*

F- *Seek kingdom (Read word/pray/watch/listen) Hear/listen to what the Word says Talk with others (Pray to God and associate with community – believers and non-believers) Do good. Join Jesus*

Participant # 22

I- *They should be taking every opportunity that they can to witness for Christ in their everyday lives and be Christian role models.*

F- *By leading a godly life and living as an example to others in their daily walk with God. Showing love and compassion towards their fellow man and witnessing to those they come into contact with on a daily basis when the opportunity arises.*

Participant # 23

- I- *Through prayer, being in God's word, and participating and supporting God-centered programs and activities.*
- F- *We participate on a daily basis. He doesn't give us a mission to do for Him, but rather asks us to join Him, come with Him, and live each day with Him as our guide. Look each day for "mission" opportunities. We just make ourselves available as He has already done the work. Keep our eyes open for opportunities.*

Participant # 25

- I- *? [Apparently did not understand what "lay" meant.]*
- F- *To tell how God is working in our lives.*

Participant # 26

- I- *? [Didn't know definition of "lay."]*
- F- *I believe that lay people have the role of becoming familiar in scripture and using it, along with their everyday experiences through Christ, to witness to others.*

Participant # 30

- I- *Lay people are to use their gifts to help and lead others to God, by word and example.*
- F- *Plant seeds to those around us every day, not necessarily expecting to see results immediately. Pray for others you see searching or in need and be available as a friend.*

Participant # 31

- I- *Attending church, give financial support*
- F- *Whatever it takes to show and spread the love of God!*

In the initial questionnaire, of the 21 participants, 7 respondents wrote something similar to "lay people participate in the mission by coming to worship, studying God's Word, and praying." One participant responded by saying, "attending church and giving financial support." Three respondents said lay people participate in the mission of the Church "by sharing the Gospel or witnessing." Two participants wrote that lay people participate "as God, the Holy

Spirit leads and two others said that they participated “by being a good example.” The remaining responses did not fit into any of the above categories. These responses were, lay people participate by- “seeing where God is working and joining Him,” “training and finding their place in the mission,” and “being involved in social ministry.” Two participants answered with a question mark, apparently not understanding what was meant by the term “lay people.”

In the follow-up questionnaire, of the 21 participants, 6 respondents wrote something similar to “lay people participate in this mission by seeing where Jesus is working and joining Him in His mission.” Six other respondents answered by saying something like “sharing the Gospel or witnessing.” Four participants wrote that lay people participate in the mission of the Church by “caring for their neighbor’s needs.” Three respondents persisted in answering the same way as their initial questionnaire by saying that “lay people participate in the mission by coming to worship, studying God’s Word, and praying.” One participant wrote, “Plant seeds to those around every day...be available as a friend.” Another respondent said “whatever it takes to show and spread the love of God.” These last two examples would probably fit, in spirit, with the “sharing the Gospel or witnessing” category.

In the initial questionnaire, 1/3 of the participants, 7, responded by saying that “lay people participate in the mission by coming to worship, studying God’s Word, and praying.” In the follow-up questionnaire, only 3 participants responded in that way. This is a good indication that there was a shift in thinking with several of the participants due to the class experience. Additionally, in the initial questionnaire only one respondent said that lay people participate by “seeing where God is working and joining Him,” but in the follow –up questionnaire 6 respondents wrote something similar to that. This is another good indication that the class produced a new understanding of the mission of the Church for lay people. Furthermore, 6 other

respondents answered by saying something like “sharing the Gospel or witnessing,” versus only 3 having such a response in the initial questionnaire. Another 4 respondents indicated that they saw lay people participating in the mission of the Church by “caring for their neighbor’s needs.” At first glance, this sounds like “social ministry” but a closer examination of these responses seems to suggest that many with this type of response also had in mind sharing Jesus with their neighbors. One respondent said that “we communicate our love for Jesus and His love for us by caring for others.” Another participant said that lay people participate in the mission through “daily acts of kindness (and if necessary, use words).” So, this type of response is not devoid of sharing the Gospel.

Even the 2 participants with unique responses indicated growth and a change in thinking from their initial responses to this statement. The one participant, in the pre-course questionnaire, wrote “lay people are to use their gifts to help and lead others to God, by word and example,” but in the post-course questionnaire said, “Plant seeds to those around us every day, not necessarily expecting to see results immediately. Pray for others you see searching or in need and be available as a friend.” The other participant initially responded “attending church, give financial support,” but after the course wrote, “whatever it takes to show and spread the love of God!”

When comparing the initial and follow-up questionnaire responses, this particular item proved to be revealing. On average, a change in thinking clearly occurred by the end of the course instruction. The participants even used new terms and phrases, from the class, in the post-course questionnaire largely not seen in the initial questionnaire.

6) How have you, personally, participated in this mission already?

Participant # 1

- I- *I married a pastor... I have been involved in activities of the church for many years, most recently with Open Arms.*
- F- *I have personally participated in this mission by being a witness in my workplace, trying to live as God would want me to, developing a prayer life, participating in Bible study, teaching Sunday School, leading a women's Bible study and trying to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.*

Participant # 2

- I- *Yes, I have involved myself in the administration of the church, the planning of outreach to the unchurched, and in everyday maintenance of the church. I have offered my time and talents to the church. But most of all I have tried to live as Christ did and I am a penitent sinner.*
- F- *Yes, I have participated by a fervent attempt to live my life as Christ did, to continue my education in the Word, to participate in worship services and the Sacraments, and to participate by showing others that God does care and wants to be a part of their everyday lives.*

Participant # 3

- I- *With prayer, financial support of organizations that are true to God's Word and of his Church. By staying politically involved as an individual in issues that go against God's will. In everyday life, reacting to situations or people either with word or with actions. By affecting the young by teaching the Bible stories in VBS and reinforcing the work of our son and daughter in law with their children. By watching and studying E-DBS each day with [my husband] and going through the LCMS reading of the Bible series in order to become able to field unbelievers' questions or comments.*
- F- *Yes, on a daily basis at work and in our neighborhood.*

Participant # 4

- I- *I feel God has been a big part of my life as I trained to be a teacher. In every aspect of my life I feel God's presence in leading others to Him.*
- F- *Since I have the gift of gab (HA!) I relate my story, or stories of what my life in Christ has meant throughout my life because without Him I would never have survived (divorce, death of a daughter).*

Participant # 5

- I- *Talked to others inviting them to worship, Bible study and special events at church.*

F- *Bible study, prayer and worship.*

Participant # 6

I- *Help with building church.*

F- *Prayer. Inviting someone to church. Study the Bible to be able to know when God speaks to me.*

Participant # 9

I- *By teaching Sunday school and VBS. Springfield Lutheran School through the lunch program. Helping with the Blind Ministry at Redeemer. Trunk or treat, trying to get a Lutheran High School in Springfield area.*

F- *I've taken food to a neighbor and we talked about church and how important it is. I've talked with co-workers about world issues and we've talked about the end times and salvation. I've also put in a call to Victory Mission to see about serving a meal for the homeless.*

Participant # 10

I- *I try to on a daily basis. I helped to start Faith as a mission, Pastor Schnelle was a great Evangelism teacher. We went to Seminars under [?]. a program similar to Kennedy. It gave me confidence to witness. We made personal visits, church membership grew to 300. Before visit, he would pray, "Dear Lord send us on our way and give us the words to say."*

F- *Yes, Evangelism is my Passion, at Faith I have been chairman, at a time that was our focus. The focus of the church has to be the same as ministers and Pastor. Billy Graham said "The Lutheran Church is a sleeping giant." If we were only mission minded. He is right we haven't been in the past.*

Participant # 11

I- *Yes, but in a limited response.*

F- *I have in a limited way in the past.*

Participant # 12

I- *Telling of my Christian faith and helping the story of Jesus continue.*

F- *Talking with and praying for a client who is going through a difficult time.*

Participant # 15

- I- *I have tried to be an example at work to fellow employees thru how I live, speak and act. And share my faith as opportunity arises as I am able. I support LWML missions.*
- F- *There have been times at work, I was able to talk to guests and express/share my faith.*

Participant # 16

- I- *Yes, but there have been opportunities I have missed.*
- F- *Daily prayer and reading his word so I can see where God is working.*

Participant # 17

- I- *I have held church offices – served as usher/deacon/helped with events. Have raised children as Christians; have invited others to church.*
- F- *Yes – anyone who is really a Christian has participated in the mission- at least to some degree.*

Participant # 20

- I- *Okay with worship and studying, but not so well with proclaiming God's saving grace.*
- F- *Yes... through prayer and praise. In daily life as an example to others and with conversations with co- workers, etc.*

Participant # 21

- I- *Some*
- F- *Reading Word, Praying, Watch, Listen, sometimes act*

Participant # 22

- I- *I try, whenever possible, to witness at work to people, but I have to admit that I let many opportunities go by without saying anything. I also try to live as a Christian example to others but once again fail miserably.*
- F- *By trying to set an example of Christian love to those I have come into contact with – family, friends, co-workers and strangers over the years. During my 30 years of teaching and coaching in public education, I always tried my best to*

conduct myself as a Christian example to my students, players and co-workers. Because I am a sinner, I have not always carried this out as I should have.

Participant # 23

- I- *I feel like I rededicate myself to it every day, but being a sinful human being at the end of the day feel like I've fallen short.*
- F- *I volunteer in the surgery waiting area of Mercy every Thurs. It is a setting where people are stressed and emotional also often with uncertain outcomes. It is the perfect setting to visit with people about what part Christ plays in their lives. It is easy to plant seeds. I also work a seasonal job with Springfield R-12 school in an office with a couple of women of strong faith – strength in numbers makes it easier to share faith and speak of what Christ has done for me.*

Participant # 25

- I- *By encouraging my children to attend church and Sunday school.*
- F- *To be honest I haven't. I'm not comfortable walking up to a person and start talking. I'm working on it within my home and with my wife and kids.*

Participant # 26

- I- *By raising children who have Christ in their hearts.*
- F- *I believe I have! I have gradually begun to familiarize myself with God's word and am currently doing my best to guide my small children on their walk with Christ. I am struggling to open up as a witness to others.*

Participant # 30

- I- *I've served on Boards and Council, taught Sunday school, given Children's message and sung in Choir. But I think the most important is talking to people one on one.*
- F- *I seem to feel more peace in my life. I am more patient. I have started listening to others.*

Participant # 31

- I- *In years past, but not lately.*
- F- *At present I can only pray and give financial gifts.*

In response to this statement, on the initial questionnaire, 8 participants said something

similar to “I have personally participated in the mission (of the Church) by being involved in church activities.” This activity could include worship, Bible study, committee work, or administrative service. The second most common response was something like “I have personally participated in the mission (of the Church) by being a witness in my daily life.” Three participants had that type of response. Three other respondents answered that they had somehow participated but had “missed opportunities.” Two participants said they participated in the mission by “teaching at church (Sunday School, VBS, Bible class, etc.).” Two more respondents wrote that their participation was “spiritually nurturing their own children.” Of the three remaining participants, one said “participating in the congregation’s evangelism program,” another wrote “praying and providing financial support,” and still another said “inviting others to church.”

The responses to this item on the follow-up questionnaire demonstrated a change in thinking. Eleven participants responded with something like “I have personally participated in the mission (of the Church) by being a witness in my daily life.” This is an increase of eight participants responding in this way and is half of the total group. The second most common response to this item, on the post-course questionnaire, was “I have personally participated in the mission (of the Church) by being involved in church activities” with three participants writing something similar to this, two of which had the same response on the initial questionnaire. Two respondents said “spiritually nurturing their own children.” The same respondents answered this way on the initial questionnaire, however, on the follow-up questionnaire one did make mention of witnessing to others as well. Two more participants said they “looking for opportunities.” Of the three remaining respondents, one wrote “inviting others to church,” another said “participating in the congregation’s evangelism program” (the same as their initial response), and

the last participant responded with something similar to “praying and providing financial support.”

Over all, the differences in the responses on this item from the initial questionnaire to the follow-up questionnaire clearly show a change in thinking for many in the class. The big shift was the movement from seeing the “activities” of the congregation as the mission of the church to “witnessing” being the mission. This seems to correlate with the content of the instructional course and would indicate that the class had an effect on most participants’ perception of how they have and do participate in the mission of the Church.

7) How do you wish to change your participation in this mission?

Participant # 1

I- *See where god directs next!*

F- *Maybe by being more intentional in what I do.*

Participant # 2

I- *I have started trying to do things such as purchasing parts of water wells for areas of the world that don't have good water. I have given to missions such as "Doctors Without Borders." I'm unsure that working within a church fulfills that mission as decisions are made by too few in the church and seem to be last minute decisions.*

F- *I want to learn to give God control over my life. I want to learn as much as I can about His Word, the Bible. I want God to help me be more giving.*

Participant # 3

I- *I wish to do more studying of the Bible in groups at the church, drawing in those who do not participate. I have not felt the call to change at this point other than the above. My involvement with students and instructors at [a local college] is my mission field right now. It certainly is not something I do to be popular.*

F- *I want to make sure that I am just joining God, not trying to do God's work. I need patience in my daily activities that may or may not harvest anything.*

Participant # 4

- I- *I want to continue to grow in my faith and trust in Him; to commit to anything that He is preparing for me as I look back or reflect upon my past spiritual markers.*
- F- *I want to become more active and persistent in reaching out to others in every area of my life. I know a lot of people through teaching and need to be more intentional in any way I can. I need to pray for God's help! With God all things are possible.*

Participant # 5

- I- *Stronger in speaking of Jesus love.*
- F- *Pray that Jesus will direct me in the way He wants.*

Participant # 6

- I- *Find how I can help behind scenes. Not good at one to one contact.*
- F- *Be more aware of how God is speaking to me when I am needed.*

Participant # 9

- I- *I want to help serve meals at Victory Mission and get more people from church involved. I would like to serve on a board in the High School. Have get-togethers with my friends and family and neighbors with a small devotion or a bible study as part of the get together. Public speaking perhaps.*
- F- *Be more active with my neighbors and friends. Step out of my comfort zone and be more engaged.*

Participant # 10

- I- *I would like to be more aggressive in the Mission of the Church, Health reasons keep me from doing this but I can assist in many ways.*
- F- *I'm not physically able to knock on doors, but I can help with telephone calls, mailings, etc. I like the neighborhood concept and have practiced it. I have had Evangelism training in several areas and seminars, especially mentoring and training and placement of volunteers.*

Participant # 11

- I- *To become more intentional and confident in reaching out to others, especially those closest to me.*
- F- *To become more intentional in sharing the Good News especially with family that is not currently churched. This study brought into focus that we are partners with Jesus and He will bless our going to any mission field.*

Participant # 12

- I- *Becoming more educated in my faith and more proactive in its teaching.*
- F- *Listening more to my surroundings to recognize what Jesus wants me to do with what He is telling me.*

Participant # 15

- I- *To be able to be more articulate in sharing my faith.*
- F- *To look for and be aware of more opportunities to talk or share with others, to get to know them in order to build a relationship that would lead to further opportunities.*

Participant # 16

- I- *To be more courageous and trust that God will provide the words when trying to talk to others about him.*
- F- *Increase my praying so I can recognize God's works so I can join according to his will.*

Participant # 17

- I- *I would like to be a better evangelist and a better example to others. After retirement, I hope to have more time to devote to Faith and its mission.*
- F- *Worry less, Trust more, Better recognize "opportunities," Be bolder in sharing Jesus verbally.*

Participant # 20

- I- *Frankly, I'm at a loss and don't have a clear vision... I'm praying daily for understanding, wisdom and direction.*
- F- *Need to be patient and see what's next. I feel things may change soon and blow me onto the next fork in the road. Be patient... wait and pray.*

Participant # 21

- I- *Not sure how, yet; Depends on what scripture, relationship with God, and events reveal and lead me to*
- F- *Be more bold in action, but only after much prayer and study of the Word
Be willing to act when God presents me a situation.*

Participant # 22

- I- *I constantly ask God to forgive me of my shortcomings and give me the strength to carry out the mission of the church.*
- F- *I need to spend more time being in God's word in order to strengthen my faith so that I can witness to those I come into contact with on a daily basis when the opportunity presents itself.*

Participant # 23

- I- *I want to be available for God to equip and use me, but feel like I want to focus and be more active in 1 or 2 areas. Sometimes I feel spread too thin by taking on too much.*
- F- *Based on Question #6 I feel like I need to look for opportunities with those in my neighborhood. I'm working on changing my mindset that it is my job and look constantly for those opportunities God presents to me each day.*

Participant # 25

- I- *By being more involved in the church. And have a better understanding of God's Word.*
- F- *To be better about helping people understand the Gospel.*

Participant # 26

- I- *I want to learn more about God's word and spend more time at church.*
- F- *I want to become more comfortable speaking with others about my faith, but, I have noticed more occasions lately where I feel confident sharing the presence of God in my life with others!!!*

Participant # 30

- I- *I'm not as active as I use to be. I used to have more joy in serving. I'd like to get that back.*

F- *I guess I'm not really sure what I should be doing. I feel like I should do more in our community. Maybe volunteer work. I have and will continue to pray about what I should be doing.*

Participant # 31

I- *Good question! Just do what I am doing now.*

F- *No*

In response to “How do you wish to change your participation in this mission?” on the initial questionnaire, 8 participants wrote something similar to “be a more intentional witness.” Three more respondents said “participate more in church activities.” Three other participants wrote something like “I have no idea.” Two more participants responded with “work more behind the scenes.” Two respondents said something similar to “grow more spiritually.” Of the remaining three respondents, one wrote “pray and provide financial support,” another said “look for God’s direction,” and the last one said they would not change anything but maintain the “status quo.”

On the follow-up questionnaire, 11 participants responded with “be a more intentional witness,” an increase of three. Seven others said they would “join God (Jesus) in His mission.” Two participants wrote that they would “work more behind the scenes.” One respondent had the same answer as they did on the initial questionnaire: they would not change anything but maintain the “status quo.”

Although a significant percentage of the participants responded to this item on the initial questionnaire with “be a more intentional witness,” this number increased by three respondents on the follow-up questionnaire. Furthermore, seven respondents changed their responses on the follow-up questionnaire to “join God (Jesus) in His mission,” a response that wasn’t used at all on the initial questionnaire. The responses “work more behind the scenes” and “status quo”

remained the same as the initial questionnaire. The language used in the follow-up responses on this item paralleled the language and concepts taught in the instructional course. Clearly there was a change in thinking and perception in the respondents about their future participation in the mission of the Church.

Over all, most of the responses to the items on the follow-up questionnaire showed a change in the thinking and perception of the mission of the Church for most of the participants. The comparison of the responses on the pre and post questionnaires strongly indicates that learning took place regarding the mission of the Church in the course. Furthermore, most of the participants were pointed in the right direction regarding their future participation in the mission.

Analysis of the transcript of the “Mission of God” Focus Group, March 22nd, 2015

This focus group, conducted by Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, consisted of six participants- three women and three men who also participated in the course component of this research. Here, by way of answering nine questions, they give feedback on what they learned in the class and offer suggestions for improving the course.

1) *What were some things that you learned or were reminded of during this course?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

Female Participant 1 (henceforth FP 1) - *We're not supposed to do everything ourselves. We're not in this by ourselves.*

Female Participant 2 (henceforth FP 2) - *When it comes to mission we're in it together; we don't have to do it alone. We're a collective group with the same goals in mind. We have a lot of support.*

Female Participant 3 (henceforth FP 3) - *We're really only helping Jesus. It's His mission and we're helping Him.*

Male Participant 1 (henceforth MP 1) - *Is not just the pastor's job. But the problem many people*

have is they think he's the only evangelist on the premises.

Male Participant 2 (henceforth MP 2) - *I think what was interesting to me is that I tended to think of God as not having a mission. He's got a job. He's got a mission and we're it.*

From their comments, the focus group participants show that, through the process of the instructional course, their thinking changed regarding the mission of God, the kingdom of God, and the mission of the Church. First of all, they discovered that God has a mission. They may not have been thinking in those terms prior to the course. Furthermore, they discovered that the mission of the Church is a corporate effort. While every individual Christian has a role and part in the mission, it is something we do together. Additionally, one participant voiced the understanding that the mission of the Church is “not just the pastor’s job” but every believer is a participant in the mission. Another participant said, “We’re really only helping Jesus. It’s His mission and we’re helping Him.”

2) *What was the single most important thing that you learned from participating in “The Mission of God” course?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

MP 2- *I think it truly was that we don't have to sit there waiting for ourselves to grow up and get that really big thing to do. There are things to do around us and those are the things that might not seem very important to us but that's what the Lord guides us to do. We're joining Jesus in His mission and loving people in His name....*

MP 1- *Well, it's a long race and we may not see the end of the race ourselves.... We know that we have to go make disciples but that may take a while and we may not see it right away.*

Male Participant 3 (henceforth MP 3) - *We may start out small and say something about Jesus to somebody and not think about it. But, they may down the road come back to us and tell us that what we said really had an impact on them.*

In zeroing in on the single most important thing that they learned from participating in the course, the focus group members cited a couple of different things. First, one participant responded that our mission is found in our everyday living. He said, “There are things to do all

around us... we're joining Jesus in His mission and loving people in His name." The concept of "joining Jesus in His mission" was a central theme of the course and evidently that got through to the participants. Another important thing that the participants picked up on from the course was that we may not see immediate results from our involvement in the mission of the Church. As one participant said, "We may not see it right away" and as another stated, "We may start out small...."

3) *Did your understanding of the mission of God change because of this course? If so, how?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

MP 1- *I think it nailed it down a little bit, I think I had a good idea of what it was about before the course but what changed for me is the realization that God is already at work, not just in some far off place, but right around me in my own family and neighborhood. I need to be where God is and recognize it and move.*

FP 3- *Like Pastor Benson said in class, you don't have to go overseas like to Africa to find the mission field. It's right here around us. There's something we can be doing daily.*

FP 2- *It's about where God wants you, it's not where God sent these people. So maybe that is right outside my door.*

There is evidence of some change in thinking among the participants about the mission of God as the result of the course. One participant said, "What changed for me is the realization that God is already at work, not in just some far off place, but around me..." Another participant stated that "(The mission of God) is right here around us." Still another respondent said that the mission of God is "right outside my door." Following the course, the participants' view of God's mission seems to be more local and personal.

4) *Did your understanding of the kingdom of God change because of this course? If so, how?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

FP 1- *I didn't really get the difference between the kingdom of God and God's mission.*

MP 1- *I think it's a tough concept because the kingdom of God is really everything. You talk about the kingdom of God; it's all things and the universe and you want to build on that. You start with mankind, but all the creatures of God are part of the kingdom. Everything else here is part of the kingdom. But if we want to concentrate on just when our salvation is concerned (the mission of God), it's mankind. At least that's how I remember it from our class discussion.*

There may not have been enough discussion or responses to this question to allow for any general conclusions. One participant stated that she didn't really understand any difference between the kingdom of God and the mission of God. Another participant seems to have a good grasp of the distinction but there is no indication that the other participants shared this understanding. Perhaps an improvement to the course of instruction would be to add some information that would help the students to better demarcate these two concepts.

5) *Did your understanding of the mission of the Church change because of this course? If so, how?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

FP 1- *I think it helped me to see that every believer has a little portion of the mission. It's not just the job of the important people but everybody has something they can contribute.*

MP 3- *I learned that the mission is an everyday thing; that we're doing it where ever we are. It's not some program where we have to go knocking on doors and reading a script to people or something like that. Your daily routine may be your role.*

MP 2- *I think the mission looks quite different at different parishes or congregations... . But I now know that it most important that we're carrying out the mission in our local setting and capitalizing on the unique opportunities God gives this congregation.*

MP 1- *... The mission of the church is, one, to minister to those in need first and then, two, try to reach them spiritually. We may not see the fruits of our labors but we shouldn't be discouraged if we don't see the results on the backside of our actions.*

It seems that some learning regarding the mission of the Church did occur through the teaching component of this project. One participant stated, "I learned that the mission (of the Church) is an everyday thing; that we're doing it where ever we are. It's not some program where we have to go knocking on doors and reading a script to people or something like that."

Another participant said, “I think it helped me to see that every believer has a little portion of the mission. It’s not just the job of the important people but everybody has something they can contribute.” The responses indicate that a new and clearer understanding was gained regarding both the personal and corporate nature of the mission of the Church.

6) *Did this course change your desire to participate more fully in the mission of the Church? If so, how?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

FP 2- *It's helped me to realize that I'm already a participant and that I just need to be aware of the opportunities as they arise. I also know that God's not going to send me somewhere where I'm going fail. I participate but I'm not the one responsible for the outcome. I do what I can and leave it up to God.*

MP 3- *I now see that I can participate in my own situation and not have to be afraid that God's going to ask me to do something on a larger scale that I can't handle.*

FP 1- *Being in high school and talking with my friends I can't just jump in and talk about God or Jesus because they might close up and stop listening to me. I have to be patient and let them (friends) bring up the subject before I can share my faith directly with them.*

FP 3- *Being a teacher in a secular setting I too have to be careful with whom and how I share my faith. Sometimes, if they bring it up or ask I can share what I believe.*

MP 1- *I think this course, and Pastor's sermons, and our previous pastor's messages and vision have moved this congregation to become more engaged in the mission of the church....*

MP 2- *Before we can participate in the mission of the church, I think I've come to realize in my own life, that, good or bad, everybody does participate but not always in the best possible way. And maybe we need to think about how our participation can be improved and more effective.*

Regarding engaging in more participation in the mission of the Church as a result of the course, one respondent said, “It’s helped me to realize that I’m already a participant and that I just need to be aware of the opportunities as they arise.” Another participant responded, “I think this course ... (has) moved this congregation to become more engaged in the mission of the church....” And another stated, “I now see that I can participate in my own situation and not have to be afraid that God’s going to ask me to do something on a larger scale that I can’t

handle.” These are strong indicators that these particular respondents intend to further their own participation in the Church’s mission and that the course assisted in moving them in that direction.

- 7) *In what ways could this course be improved to make it more effective in teaching about the mission of God, the kingdom of God, and the mission of the Church? Please be specific.*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

MP 2- *The reading assignments for class were sometimes challenging to understand. I had to read some of them over five or six times before I got them. ... I think most of us don't have the scholastic background to participate in discussions that are that deep theologically.*

MP 1- *I think it might not be a bad idea to make some of the more challenging readings extra credit or optional. I mean something side by side that adds to what we're going to be talking about.*

MP 2- *Well, I felt like I HAD to read that material and understand it for next week's discussion in class.*

MP 1- *That's really the only criticism I have of the class. I think the "Joining Jesus" book could be explored further in a follow up class or maybe the evangelism team could go through it together. I think that would be great.*

MP 3- *Evangelism is a scary term. So, finding another term than evangelism might help.*

FP 2- *I agree that especially the readings from the book "The Mission of God" (Vicedom) were difficult and I'm not sure that I always saw how they tied in to what we were talking about in class.*

Regarding changes or improvements to the course, one respondent said, “The reading assignments for class were sometimes challenging to understand. I had to read some of them over five or six times before I got them. ... I think most of us don't have the scholastic background to participate in discussions that are that deep theologically.” Another participant agreed saying, “especially the readings from the book “The Mission of God” (Vicedom) were difficult and I'm not sure that I always saw how they tied in to what we were talking about in class.” Additional comments were, “I think the “Joining Jesus” book could be explored

further....” and “- I think it might not be a bad idea to make some of the more challenging readings extra credit or optional.”

It is clear that Greg Finke’s book, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*, resonated with the participants in this focus group. It is also clear that excerpts from Vicedom’s “The Mission of God” were taxing for the class members and not particularly helpful in explaining the concepts being conveyed in the course. Future versions of this class should probably substitute something from a different source and make the Vicedom readings optional or supplementary.

8) *In what ways could this course be improved to motivate the learners to personally engage in the mission of the Church? Please be specific.*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

FP 1- *I think that it could have been a little more versatile.*

Dr. MacGregor (henceforth Dr. M) - *Versatile?*

FP 1- *Yes, I don't think there was anyone in the class younger than me and I felt like I was having a hard time keeping my head above the water. I mean expecting me to keep up with all the readings and everything I think it was geared to older people. And so, I was just trying to keep up and couldn't make the connection to using it much in my own life. So, I think the class could have been more mindful of everybody in the group and that not all of us have the same life's experiences or maturity. And, not all of us find it easy to be in conversations of a spiritual nature.*

MP 1- *She makes a good point that with the spiritual journey that we're all on, and at different places along the way, and somebody young who's not as experienced or maybe someone who hasn't been in church that long, it doesn't matter, evangelism is still for all of us. But the more spiritually awake we are we're going to approach an evangelism situation differently than someone that's not. So, that's a good point that might not have been nailed down as good as it could have been.*

FP 1- *I'm thinking that someone like this 30 or 35 year old mom who brings her kids to church and Sunday School and on the second time someone meets her and invites her to this class and she's terrified. She doesn't know what going on so I think just be mindful of that.*

Dr. M- ... *This mission class was not intended for that entry level person, but even in that I feel there is room for situations and questions. What would it be like to have this class for high schoolers and their mission field or parents as they interact with other parents?*

FP 3- *I thought this class was by invitation first. So you were probably invited to come.*

FP 1- *Yes, I was.*

FP 3- *So he (Pastor Benson) knew that you already had enough of a background to handle this. If someone had just dropped in it would have been uncomfortable for them because he was trying to have a focused group. So, I think a follow up of this would be to do it with the young people, and maybe you could help to get them there, and do it in a way that speaks to their situation in life.*

FP 1- *This class did get me thinking about some of my non-Christian friends and particularly one girl I know. So, a lot of the times, when points were being made in class, I would think about what I could do to make her understand why I believe what I do and get her to seriously consider it. I think the class could have encouraged more reflecting on specific people we know and how to share the message with them and not just in general. It could have been more personalized.*

The responses to this particular question seemed to go off topic and did not provide much by way of suggestions for improving the motivation of the learners to personally engage in the mission of the Church. The bulk of the discussion here centered on the experience of the youngest member of the focus group and class. Her comments indicate that she thought the course was tailored for adults who had more spiritual maturity and life's experience than she did. The other group members agreed. Dr. M. added the comment, "This mission class was not intended for that entry level person, but even in that I feel there is room for situations and questions." It was suggested that a mission of the Church class geared specifically for teenagers should be considered.

The teenage participant did offer a pertinent and helpful comment. She concluded, "This class did get me thinking about some of my non-Christian friends and particularly one girl I know. So, a lot of the times, when points were being made in class, I would think about what I could do to make her understand why I believe what I do and get her to seriously consider it." From this comment comes a suggestion that, in future versions of this course, the teaching be adapted to give participants opportunity to apply the concepts in a more personal and specific

way. They should be encouraged to have particular individuals in mind as they apply what they are learning.

9) *What else would you like to share about your experience in this course?*

Selected excerpted quotes from the transcript-

FP 2- *For me, the class triggered a thought that at one time, at least in my mind, we had set out to have our new second service be strictly an outreach to unchurched people: gaining people who wouldn't be comfortable coming to our regular church service.*

MP 1- *The course did get me thinking not only collectively about the mission of the church but about my personal mission. I do have some family members who are not church goers and I find myself talking about that service a little bit more to them about that. And I'm not sure that before this course that would have hit that mark but I'm finding myself to be bolder about sharing the faith.*

FP 2- *I think I've learned from this course to be more aware in everyday life of whomever I come in contact with and keeping the things from this course in mind. That's the mission; that we are really out there in the mission field. And if your temper is short or someone cuts you off in traffic it isn't really the end of the world. And, it your reactions to those things that those people not only see but it your reaction to them. It's part of your life as a missionary.*

FP 3- *I would like to see the content of this course delivered more from the pulpit because I don't know how else it would get to the rest of the congregation that didn't come to this class, so that they would understand it as well. Because everybody needs to be part of the mission.*

MP 2- *This particular course could only reach a small percentage of the church. I think it was intended to train the leadership in understanding the mission and then it's our responsibility to cast the vision to the rest of the congregation and lead by example.*

MP 1- *I think this congregation has been moving in a more mission minded direction. The creation of second service is preamble to that along with this course and what we're doing now. That all tells me that we are beginning to focus in that direction, and that's extremely helpful to me personally, but also to the congregation.*

This last question is rather open ended and discussion got off track. An issue somewhat related to the focus of the course (the starting of a new worship service for outreach purposes) took the conversation on a tangent. Dr. M. did redirect however. Some pertinent comments were made. One respondent said, "The course did get me thinking not only collectively about the mission of the church but about my personal mission." Another stated, "I think I've learned from

this course to be more aware in everyday life of whomever I come in contact with and keeping the things from this course in mind. That's the mission; that we are really out there in the mission field." Still another respondent said, "I would like to see the content of this course delivered more from the pulpit because I don't know how else it would get to the rest of the congregation that didn't come to this class, so that they would understand it as well. Because everybody needs to be part of the mission. Another participant responded to the above comment by stating, "This particular course could only reach a small percentage of the church. I think it was intended to train the leadership in understanding the mission and then it's our responsibility to cast the vision to the rest of the congregation and lead by example."

Conclusion

The results of all three research tools utilized in this project lend support to the thesis that understanding and participation in the mission of the Church can be increased through a course of instruction. Particularly, understanding was clearly increased among the participants of the instructional course. Willingness to participate, or continue to participate, in the mission of the Church was also indicated but only time will tell if this translates into actual mission involvement for the participants.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter of my Major Applied Project will summarize my experience in the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and offer some conclusions regarding the significance and application of this research project. The chapter will be divided into four sections: contributions for personal ministerial growth, contributions for Faith Lutheran Church, contributions for the Church at large, and concluding thoughts.

Contributions for Personal Ministerial Growth

My participation in the Doctor of Ministry program has been challenging and longer than originally planned, yet rewarding. The classes and seminars in which I participated stretched me personally and professionally. I particularly benefited from the courses that involved the propagation of the faith and the equipping of God's people for the work of the ministry. The classes most helpful to my concentration were: "The Pastor as Evangelist," "Shepherding the Growing Parish," "Leadership and the *Missio Dei*," and "Cross-cultural Leadership." All the other classes (core courses and electives) were also enriching and enlightening.

The process of developing, implementing, analyzing, and writing my Major Applied Project was both the greatest challenge and the most beneficial component of the Doctor of Ministry degree program. It motivated me to go deeper into the theology and concepts of the *missio Dei*, the mission of the Church, evangelism, and witnessing than I ever would have without this project. It also helped me to develop some very practical approaches to equipping church members to live as more effective disciples of Jesus Christ and be more engaged in the

mission of the Church.

All of this has been especially helpful, and I believe will continue to be helpful, to me in my new role as a missionary-at-large in developing a new congregation: Open Arms Lutheran Fellowship in Ozark, Missouri. During the process of earning this degree I have served in three different ministry settings. Throughout the stage of my course work I served as Pastor at Campus Lutheran Church, a “town/gown” university congregation in Columbia, Missouri. During the research and implementation stages of this MAP I served as Interim Pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri. Since the unfolding of this project took place during the time of my ministry at Faith, the clearest benefits can be seen within that context.

Contributions for Faith Lutheran Church

Like the other Lutheran congregations I have served, Faith Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri, has struggled with understanding and effectively participating in the mission of the Church. Over the years, various evangelism and outreach approaches and “programs” have been utilized but very few members (including the lay leaders) of the congregation actually participated. Involvement in the Church’s mission has been limited to the pastor and the members of the “evangelism committee” or its equivalent. Evangelism, witnessing, and being personally engaged in the mission of the Church has not historically been part of the mindset of the average member at Faith congregation.

It is my sincere hope that this project has been a turning point in helping a larger percentage of the members at Faith understand what the Church’s mission is and how they can be more effectively involved in it. To begin with, more than 20 people were involved as students in the six week mission of the Church class connected with this project. As far as I can tell that is the largest number of people at Faith to ever engage this topic at the same time. Additionally,

many of the 20+ participants in my course of study for this project are lay leaders in the congregation. As a result, they are in a position of influence for the rest of the congregation in engaging in the Church's mission as individuals and as a body.

A new vision about the mission is already being cast at Faith Lutheran Church. The lay leaders who were involved in the project's class have begun to be more engaged in the mission of the Church in their own daily living and are desirous to encourage the rest of the congregation in their participation. A new urban outreach to the city (New Creation Ministries) has been initiated and the voters' assembly has adopted a "mission of the month" focus which keeps the mission of the Church before the congregation by highlighting support for various (mostly local) outreach ministries.

A suggestion I am making to the leadership at Faith is that they conduct another follow-up class that keeps the momentum going and builds upon the foundation of the initial class. This new course should be focused on being disciples of Jesus Christ who make more disciples. Greg Finke's second book *Joining Jesus: Show Me How* would be a good resource for such a class.

Contributions for the Church at large

While the focus of this project was on increasing the missional awareness of the members at Faith Lutheran Church, I believe the concern is shared by each and every LCMS congregation in our church body and probably congregations of other denominations as well. The discoveries and insights of this project are, I believe, applicable to any church seeking to better engage in the mission of the Church as a congregation and as individual believers.

I have already had opportunities to bring the content of the course of instruction used in this project to church members and congregations other than Faith- Springfield. First of all, I have utilized this material in the training of my core group at my forming congregation, Open

Arms- Ozark, and will continue to do so. I have also conducted Bible classes on this topic at neighboring LCMS churches. Finally, I have taught a breakout session on witnessing at a Missouri District “Encourage and Equip” conference.

In the future I hope to have other opportunities to teach on this subject in Bible classes and breakout sessions at various conferences. I would also like to develop the course of instruction used in this project into a publishable Bible study for congregational use. Perhaps, with further study and research, I may write a book on the subject of stimulating growth in missional understanding and participation (with a much more catchy title of course). In any event, I pray that what I have learned through this project I will be able to pass on to others and that it will be a blessing to the church at large.

Concluding thoughts

The undertaking of this project has been both a challenge and a blessing to me as a pastor. It has especially been helpful in preparing me for my new work as a missionary-at-large developing a new congregation. I believe the Doctor of Ministry program has made me a better pastor by challenging and stretching me to look deeper into theological and pastoral issues and teaching me to apply my acquired knowledge and insights in the context of my ministry.

I am hopeful that I will be able to continue to build on the foundation of this project for the further enhancement of my ministry as a missionary pastor. I also pray that I will be able to continue to share with other pastors and the church at large insights I have received through the discipline and process of the Doctor of Ministry program and future research and reading on the subject.

+Soli Deo Gloria+

APPENDIX ONE

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE TO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

New Testament/Early Church Period

It might be taken for granted that the mission of the Church was initiated by Jesus' commissioning of His Apostles just prior to His Ascension. But, in fact, that command alone does not account for the impetus in the Early Church to share the Gospel with Jew and Gentile alike. The propagation of the Gospel was additionally motivated by the Early Church's sense of gratitude to God for the salvation received in Christ. As Michael Green states in his book *Evangelism in the Early Church*,

It is important to stress this prime motive of loving gratitude to God because it is not infrequently assumed that the direct command of Christ to evangelize was the main driving force behind the Christian mission. A great deal is made in some missionary writings of "The Great Commission" in Matthew 28:18-20. No doubt this was important. Obedience to the Lord was the great new commandment Jesus had left to those who loved Him: 'If you love Me, keep My commandments.' ... Whereas, however, the precise terms of the Great Commission do not appear to have played a great part in sending the early Christians out in evangelism, the example of Christ and the sense of responsibility to Him were very important. Mission, they saw, was grounded in the very nature of a God who gave: it must be no less evident in those who claimed to have a relationship with such a God.¹

In the first few years following Christ's resurrection and Ascension, the Early Church's missionary efforts were focused largely on the Jews. Shortly after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the mass conversion of diasporate Jews visiting in Jerusalem, these new converts returned to their home countries where they shared the Gospel with their Jewish family

¹ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 239-40.

members and friends. And so the church began to take root in the far-flung corners of the civilized world including northern Africa. Meanwhile, the church in Jerusalem experienced significant growth until a time of persecution arose which drove most believers, except the Apostles, out of the city (Acts 8:1). This had the effect of bringing the Gospel to the towns and villages of Judea and Samaria and spreading the influence of the church. Even though the initial focus of the mission of the Church was on Jewish people, the stage was being set to also reach out the Gentiles with the Gospel. As Christopher J.H. Wright notes in his book *The Mission of God*,

Jesus' earthly ministry was launched by a movement that aimed at the restoration of *Israel*. But he himself launched a movement that aimed at the ingathering of the *nations* to the new messianic people of God. The initial impetus for his ministry was to call Israel back to their God. The subsequent impact of his ministry was a new community that called the nations to faith in the God of Israel. This double dimension of the mission of Jesus needs to be kept in mind as we read the New Testament.²

The earliest Gentile converts to the faith were those who had previously converted to Judaism: the proselytes and the "God-fearers." In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the Apostle Peter initially saw his mission as one of reaching fellow Jews. Through a vision that led him to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius, Peter came to understand that Jesus had come to be the Savior of all people (Acts 10). Of course, Saul of Tarsus, better known as the Apostle Paul, is the most notable missionary to the Gentiles in the early church. His journeys and his letters to the churches obviously did much to establish the church outside of Jerusalem. We must not overlook, however, the unnamed multitude of believers who carried the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. As Stephen Neill points out in his book *A History of Christian Missions*,

² Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 506.

The church could count on the anonymous and unchronicled witness of all the faithful. Our first mention of this comes in Acts 8:4, where we are told that those who were scattered as a result of the persecution that followed on the death of Stephen went about preaching the word; some of them, more venturesome than the leadership of the Church, seem to have made Christian history at Antioch by preaching directly to Gentiles, without the intervention of any preliminary preparation through the law.³

Roman Era

Christianity made its entrance into the world of the Roman Empire. In many respects this was a *kyros* moment: it was the right time, the opportune time, for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be spread abroad. This was the time of the Pax Roman, the Roman Peace. Never in the history of the world had such a vast area come under the influence of such a unifying empire. It wasn't a perfect peace: there were revolts and uprisings in various corners, but in comparison to what had gone before, the world was a relatively peaceful place. The Romans were also great road builders. Everywhere they conquered they built roads to connect the empire and promote commerce and interchange. These factors also served well the propagation of the Christian faith. Stephen Neill writes, "Travel was safer and more rapid than at any later time till the nineteenth century. Nothing about early Christians is more striking than the extent to which they managed to get about the world."⁴

For the duration of the first century and even into the second, the various Jewish communities spread across the Roman Empire served, as they did for St. Paul, a staging point for missionary activity. Although reception of the Gospel was limited among the Jews themselves, greater success was found with the proselytes and the "God Fearers;" Gentiles who had embraced monotheism and Yahweh as the one true God.

The second century was a time of religious upheaval. The old religion of the Roman gods

³ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 22.

⁴ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2A.

was receding and new “mystery religions” and various forms of Gnosticism were on the rise. It was in this climate of religious searching and divergent philosophies that Christianity had to compete.

In the Roman period, the Church was initially urban in its configuration. Churches were founded mainly in cities and church oversight and activity came out of the cities. With the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, Antioch became the next eastern “capital” of Christianity. In the west, Rome became the center of the Christian Church. Until about AD 300 the church had no official missionary method or program. The Gospel was propagated in new territories by traveling “preachers” to some degree, but mainly by ordinary Christians on the move, either relocating or traveling as merchants.

A classic example of an ordinary Christian having a profound impact on an unreached nation is St. Patrick. Patrick was born around AD 389 in the coastal town of Bonavern, Taberniae, Britain. His father, Calpurnius, was a civil magistrate and a deacon, and his grandfather was said to be a minister in the Celtic Christian Church, whose origins date from second-century Roman occupation. At age 16, Patrick was kidnapped by raiders and sold as a slave in Ireland. For six years he herded pigs on a Flemish farm. Patrick's life became marked by intense prayer. He was eventually led to escape to the seacoast, where he found a ship to freedom. As they left Ireland, a storm blew them to Gaul (France), where he lived in a monastery on the island of St. Honorat for several months.

Years later, Patrick had a dream which called him to go back to Ireland as a missionary. He left his family and prepared for his ministry in Auvergne, Gaul. In the year AD 432 Patrick crossed the sea to Ireland with twelve other monks and went to meet with the Chieftain Loigaire. He was impressed by Patrick's boldness and not only granted him religious toleration, but was himself

baptized and donated the land for Patrick's first wooden church. Tradition says Patrick used various illustrations to preach the Gospel, the most famous of which was the three-leaf clover, or shamrock, which he used to explain the Trinity. He is credited with founded over 300 churches and baptizing over 120,000 converts. Patrick died on March 17, AD 461 It is said that Patrick found Ireland heathen and left it Christian, resulting in Irish missionaries re-evangelizing Europe in later centuries.

Beginning in about AD 500, the monasteries picked up on the function of propagating the faith. As Bosch writes,

The significance for the early Christian mission up to the third century of charismatic healer-missionaries, miracle workers, and itinerant preachers should not be underestimated. From the fourth century onward, however, the monk would gradually replace the itinerant preacher as missionary in as yet unevangelized areas. ⁵

In the first five centuries, a great deal of progress was made by the church in spreading the Gospel to all the borders of the Roman Empire. As Stephen Neill writes,

In the year 500 the church could look back on five centuries of miraculous success. As yet it knew almost nothing of the ancient and stable civilizations of India and China, but it had constituted itself the greatest civilizing force in the Western world. It had drawn into itself the best of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. It had shown its ability to survive the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. It had manifested a versatility that could adapt itself to the needs of peoples on very different levels of civilization. ...In spite of the troublesome disputes as to the relative status and authority of patriarchs – Antioch against Alexandria, and at times Rome against all the rest – Christians in every part of the world felt themselves to be one with all other Christians. ⁶

Middle Ages

As the church entered the Middle Ages, which can be broadly defined as AD 500 –1500, conflicts arose that greatly slowed down the advance of Christianity beyond the crumbling

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 32.

⁶ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 52.

Roman Empire and even brought some serious losses, putting the church into a survival mode. As Neill notes, “The Church found on its hands in the years following A.D. 500— the struggle with the barbarians, and the unending battle with Islam.” The greatest losses came to the Eastern Church. Muslim conquest nearly destroyed the Christian Church of the East, reducing them to a weak minority. It is a miracle of God that they survived at all.

Christianity’s influence became mainly limited to Europe and even there all was not well. The Western Church’s struggle was with the “barbarians.” Fortunately, some of the invaders, such as Alaric, the Goth, had already become Christians, or were open to Christianity, so even where the Roman Empire fell, the Church remained and even advanced. To once again quote Neill,

For 500 years the major task of the Western Church was that of wrestling with the barbarians and with barbarism in the effort to make their conversion something more than nominal; in the process, it found itself transformed from an imperial into feudal Church. By AD 1000 the greater part of this task had been at least outwardly accomplished, though, as we shall see, it was still very far from being completed. ⁷

During these difficult times missionary efforts did not cease entirely. In fact, there were some notable successes. Kenneth Scott Latourette in his classic work “A History of Christianity, Volume 1; Beginnings to 1500,” writes,

In that century (sixth) Christianity spread up the Nile into what is now called the Sudan. It also was carried eastward and early in the seventh century was planted in China. In the West in the latter part of the sixth century Pope Gregory the Great greatly added to the power of the Church of Rome, and through missionaries, some of them from Rome and some from Ireland, a beginning was made towards the conversion of the Germanic people who had settled in Britain and of other pagans on that island. In the seventh century the reconversion of Britain was practically completed. ⁸

It was during the early Middle Ages that the practice of coercing conquered peoples to

⁷ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 55.

⁸ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Volume I, Beginnings to 1500* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1953, 1975), 272–73.

convert to Christianity came into widespread practice. This was due, in part, to the writings of St. Augustine and a questionable interpretation of his concept of the two “cities” or societies: the *civitas terrena* or earthy society and the *civitas Dei* or city of God. The Catholic Church became equated with the city of God and the Roman Empire was seen as an instrument for salvation. This thinking resulted in both indirect and direct “missionary wars.” Conquered nations were forced into the Christian faith, sometimes by threat of death. David Bosch has this to say about it,

It was Gregory the Great who moved Christian doctrine in this dubious direction, where the defense of Christendom and, often, its extension were held to be the foremost duties of the ruler. ... The immediate aim of the war was the subjection of the pagans, which was regarded as the basis for subsequent missionary activity under the protection of the state; peaceful proclamation of the gospel could now take place. ... The dividing line between “indirect” and “direct” missionary war was, however, very thin. It was only a matter of time before the second would evolve from the first. ... Since Christian rulers were expected to defend Christendom, could they not also actively further it by means of military campaigns? This is the way Charlemagne saw the situation in his time, so he set out forcibly to subdue the Saxons to the Catholic Church.... Even so, these aggressive and frequently brutal “direct missionary wars” remained the exception.⁹

It is questionable if coerced conversions can really be considered conversions at all. It was the follow up work of monks in particular that led to the true embracing of the Christian faith by conquered people. Neill states,

Far more difficult than the task of first bringing these peoples into the church was that of making Christian faith effective in their lives, of bringing proud, undisciplined, and illiterate natures under the yoke of the Gospel. That it was accomplished at all was due in the main to three continuing factors, which we shall encounter in almost every one of the countries that will come under our scrutiny- royal favor, martyrdom, and monasticism.¹⁰

The evangelization of Britain demonstrates the importance of these factors. Although there had been Christian churches in Britain as early as the third century, they had nearly been eliminated in the fifth century by the invasion of the Angles and Saxons. In AD 596 Pope

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 224.

¹⁰ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 57.

Gregory the Great sent to England a group of monks, under the leadership of a priest named Augustine (later known as Augustine of Canterbury). It was their task to convert the kings and rulers of the Angles and Saxons. They met with their first success when they settled in Canterbury and found favor with King Ethelbert of Kent. Ethelbert had married a Christian princess from Gaul by the name of Bertha and granted the monks permission to stay and teach. Neill remarks, "Their virtuous life and their preaching made such a deep impression that the King (Ethelbert) was before long converted, and by the end of the year Augustine was able to baptize 10,000 Saxons."¹¹ David J. Bosch writes this about the monastic movement as an agent for mission efforts:

After the Constantinian era had commenced and the supreme test of martyrdom was no longer demanded, the ascetics had come in the eyes of the Christian world to hold the position the martyrs had previously occupied. The eighth century Irish *Cambrai Homily* refers to the three types of martyrdom- white, green, and red- which symbolizes three stages of Christian perfection: white martyrdom refers to asceticism, green to contrition and repentance, whilst to red martyrdom signaled total mortification for Christ's sake; the monks in particular were regarded as the expression of uncompromising Christian life and as the ones who 'kept the walls' of the Christian city and repelled the attacks of its spiritual enemies. If monks had only been ascetic and eccentric in their behavior, however, they would not have won the devotion and admiration of the people in the way they did. Thus secondly, their exemplary life style made a profound impact, particularly on the peasants. Their conduct was epitomized in the words of Celtic monk Columban, 'He who says he believes in Christ ought to walk as Christ walked, poor and humble and always preaching the truth.' ... Through their disciplined and tireless labor they turned the tide of barbarism in Western Europe and brought back into cultivation the lands which had been deserted and depopulated in the age of the invasions. ... Third, their monasteries were centers not only of hard manual labor but also of culture and education. ... In an age of insecurity, disorder, and barbarism, the monastery embodied the ideal of spiritual order and disciplined moral activity which into time permeated the entire church, indeed, the entire society. ... There was a fourth way, less easily put into words, and which monastic movement made a lasting impression on the medieval world, particularly the peasants. I am referring to the monks' patience, tenacity, and perseverance. ... Ninety-nine out of a hundred monasteries could be burnt down and the monks killed or driven out and yet the whole tradition could be reconstituted from the one survivor, and the desolate sites could be

¹¹ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 59.

repeopled by fresh supplies of monks who would take up again the broken tradition, following the same rule, singing the same liturgy, reading the same books and thinking the same thoughts as their predecessors. ... Although the monastic communities were not intentionally missionary (in other words, created for the purpose of mission), they were permeated by a missionary dimension.¹²

One notable missionary monk was St. Columba, born in Ireland in about AD 521, who became known as the Apostle to Scotland. In AD 563, Columba and his fellow monks founded a new monastery on the island of Iona (Hy). The objective was to share the Gospel with the heathen Picts living there. St. Columba successfully founded several more monasteries on Iona, but it wasn't until after his death in AD 597 that mission work extended into the great part of Scotland.

Other Irish monks set out to reach other sections of Europe for Christ. Stephen Neill writes, "One of the most notable of these 'wanderers for Christ' was the younger Columba (AD 550–615), often called Columban to distinguish him from his more famous namesake. Columban was already forty years old when he set out on his travels. His first scene of labour was eastern France where he founded the monastery of Luxeuil."¹³ One of Columban's companions, St. Gall, traveled in a different direction and became an apostle to the people living in what is now northeastern Switzerland.

With the British Isles largely reached, the missionary focus turned toward continental Europe. Latourette writes, "Within less than a century after the arrival of Augustine (of Canterbury), missionaries from the recently converted English were going to the Continent. There for several generations they led in the conversion of much of what are now Holland and Germany."¹⁴ Two missionaries in particular stand out in the European outreach efforts of the

¹² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 231–233.

¹³ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 62.

¹⁴ Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Volume I*, 347.

seventh and eighth centuries: Willibrord and Wynfrith of Crediton, later known as Boniface.

Willibrord's field of labor was Holland, among the Frisian people, with his headquarters in the city of Utrecht. He began his work there in AD 690. with the assistance of eleven companions. The monastery was the center of Willibrord's mission. During his lifetime he was able to establish monasteries at both Utrecht and Epternach. These monasteries served as a home base for his company of monks who went forth from them on their missionary journeys and returned to them for rest and renewal.

Willibrord was consecrated as an archbishop to the Frisians by Pope Sergius in AD 695. Willibrord also received the support of the Frankish ruler, Pepin of Heristal, however, this association put him on the outs with local Frisian leaders and probably slowed down his progress. As Latourette puts it,

Quite understandably the Frisians connected Willibrord with Frankish imperialism and associated baptism with submission to Frankish rule. Baptisms decreased or increased with the ebb and flow of Frankish power. Yet until he was eighty-one, Willibrord continued his difficult task. He was aided by other missionaries from England, and while success was slow, by the time of his death he saw Christianity well established in the southern part of what is now the Netherlands.¹⁵

Perhaps of even greater impact on the European continent was the work of Wynfrith of Crediton, or Boniface, who is known as the Apostle of Germany. Wynfrith had been a monk living in the monasteries of Exeter and Nursling near Winchester, England. In AD 720, at the age of 40, Boniface was sent to Frisia (Holland) to work with and under Willibrord. In AD 722. Boniface was called to Rome and was consecrated by Pope Gregory II to serve as a bishop for the German frontier. Stephen Neill writes of Boniface,

The shortly after his return from Rome (724), Boniface won fame for himself and repute for the Christian cause by his courageous act in felling the sacred oak of Thor at Geismar in Hesse, the chief object of the superstitious reverence of the non-

¹⁵ Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Volume I*, 348.

Christians and of the half-Christianized peoples of that area. ... The Germans were convinced that anyone who infringed the sacredness of the sanctuary would be destroyed by the gods; Boniface affirmed that he would be unscathed. The oak was felled; nothing happened. The watchers were at once convinced that Boniface was right, and that the God he proclaimed was really stronger than the gods of their fathers. With the wood of that tree Boniface built a chapel in honour St. Peter.¹⁶

Boniface, during his lifetime, was able to organize and unify the Frankish Church as well as the Church in Bavaria. He founded a monastery at Fulda in central Germany that survives to the present day. Boniface also brought the Frankish Church into allegiance with Rome and was the one to crown Pepin of Heristal as king of the Franks in AD 751. In his later years, Boniface gave up his administrative duties and returned to direct missionary activity. In AD 753, he and group of companions traveled to the far side of the Zuider Zee where some Frisians had not been reached with the Gospel. Although they met with some success, unfortunately they also stirred up violent reaction. On June 5th of AD 754, Boniface and fifty of his comrades were attacked by some hostile pagans and killed.

The next phase in mission outreach comes under the reign of Emperor Charlemagne and the age of the Holy Roman Empire. Through his military campaigns the church had the opportunity to expand into previously unreached lands. Of foremost concern to Charlemagne was the menace of the Saxons. He and his army essentially waged the “missionary wars,” as I mentioned earlier in this paper. Neill says about this,

Once a German tribe had been conquered, its conversion was included in the terms of peace, as the price to be paid for enjoying the protection of the emperor and the good government that his arms ensured. But this meant an association of the new religion with the conquering power that could only be dangerous. Any spark of patriotism, any movement of resistance to the dominant race, could only take the form of equally violent opposition to the Christian faith. So every uprising of the people was accompanied by a resurgence of paganism, and the long tale of martyrdom and

¹⁶ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 64, 65.

massacres sheds a lurid light on the process by which the Saxons were finally converted.¹⁷

Many priests and monks were martyred during the time of Charlemagne. Still, the church persisted and kept sending replacements to continue the mission work. By the time of his death in AD 814, the conversion of the Saxons, at least nominally, was complete.

Meanwhile, to the north, in Scandinavia, a pagan civilization was thriving. These barbarians were worried about the conquest and conversion of their Saxon neighbors and took active steps to prevent this from happening in their territories. But attempts were made by the Church to break through this barrier. An exiled king of the Danes by the name of Harald Klak had fled to Mainz. In 826 A.D. he was converted and was baptized along with 400 of his followers. Harald decided to attempt to regain his kingdom and took along with him missionaries under the leadership of Anskar of Picardy. But Harald failed to regain his throne, no footing was made for the establishment of the church in Denmark, and Anskar returned home. Later on, however, some merchants in Birka, Sweden requested that a missionary be sent to them. Anskar was again dispatched and was well received by King Björn who gave Anskar and his companions permission to preach and build the first Christian church building in Scandinavia. Unfortunately only a few Swedes were baptized and, after eighteen months, Anskar once again returned to Frankish soil. It would be the second half of the tenth century before the church would be extensively planted in Scandinavia.

Although the Muslims effectively put a stop to the spread of Christianity in the East and South, the Byzantine Church did find opportunities to the North. In fact, in the ninth century the Patriarch of Constantinople sent "inspectors" to oversee missionary efforts in the eastern European regions. Two people groups that were most effectively reached by the Greek Church

¹⁷ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 68.

were the Slavs and the Moravians. Latourette writes,

The most famous of the early missionaries to the Slav was from the Eastern wing of the Catholic Church were the two brothers, Constantine (also known as Cyril from the name which he assumed late in life) and Methodius. Shortly before the year 852, the Moravians were won to a nominal profession of the Christian faith. Precisely how that was accomplished we do not know, but within a few years Italian, German, and Greek missionaries were said to have been laboring among them. Sometime in the years 861, 862, or 863 the prince of the Moravians, Rastislav, himself a Christian, asked the Byzantine emperor for missionaries to instruct his people.¹⁸

The Eastern Church is also responsible for the first converts among the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Russians. The first Russian ruler to become a Christian was Princess Olga, who traveled to Constantinople in AD 957 to be baptized by the Patriarch. Her new found faith was not readily adopted by her court, however. Fortunately her son and successor, Sviatoslav, remained with the Church and his son, Vladimir, established Russia as a Christian nation.

Returning to mission efforts in Scandinavia, it should be noted that for centuries Scandinavians had lived in relative isolation from the rest of Europe. Therefore, the conversion of the Scandinavian peoples was a long and slow process, with many setbacks. Because of its proximity to Germany, Denmark was the first Scandinavian area to be reached. Harald Bluetooth is considered to be the first Christian King of the Danes, around AD 948. However, Christianity was not well established there until the reign of King Knut (Canute) in the early 1000's. Knut conquered England and had his bishops consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Commenting on Knut, Neill says,

As he grew older he grew more pious, and devoted himself with intense earnestness to making of his realms a Christian kingdom. The laws of the Christian world were the basis for the laws which he introduced, and the tradition which he established was one of an almost Byzantine unity of church and state.¹⁹

Norway also became a Christian nation because of royal power. Olaf Trygvessøn, who

¹⁸ Latourette, 307.

¹⁹ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 88.

was baptized around AD 990, was elected king in 995. and immediately set out to make Christianity the religion of the Norwegians. His task was a difficult one and when all other forms of persuasion failed, he was not afraid to use coercion. Tryggvesson's successor, Olaf Haraldsson, later known as St. Olaf, had an easier time of Christianizing Norway and didn't have to resort to violence as Tryggvesson had. The Norwegian outposts, Iceland and Greenland, also turned to the faith. It is interesting to note that Christianity was adopted by the Icelanders on the recommendation of one respected wise man among them. Neill writes, "It might seem that this acceptance of Christianity was a rather calculating and lifeless thing. (But) it was more than that: it was a real weighing of two different ways of life and genuine acceptance of the higher...."²⁰

Sweden was slower than Denmark or Norway to enter the Christian fold. Once again, royal authority played a major role. In the early 1000's, King Olof Skötkonung was baptized and established a bishopric in Skara, Sweden under the jurisdiction of the see of Hamburg-Bremen. But he met with extreme resistance and pagan religion dominated Sweden for another century. It was only under the reign of King Sverker (AD 1130–1155) that Christianity began to be firmly established and dominant.

Finland was also late in turning to Christianity. It was under King Erik IX of Sweden that baptism and adherence to Christianity was demanded of the Finns, when he conquered and occupied Finland in AD 1155. Bishop Henry of Uppsala was established as the ecclesiastical leader there, but he was soon martyred. It was only in 1291, under an indigenous bishop by the name of Abo Magnus, that the establishment of Christianity was relatively complete in Finland.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century much of Europe was Christian. But to the south and east of the Baltic Sea were the Wends, Prussians, and Lithuanians who persistently resisted

²⁰ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 91.

the infiltration of the Christian faith. It was only under the campaigns of the Teutonic Knights, around 1200, that these regions were annexed to the Christian world under threat of sword. Priests of the Dominican Order were sent to accompany the knights and attend to the religious side of the work. Because of the strong resistance of the pagans, the conquest took fifty years to be completed, both politically and religiously.

By the end of the fifteenth century Europe was predominantly “Christianized” but the spread of the faith elsewhere had been thwarted or not even seriously attempted. Most Church historians have a rather negative view regarding the effectiveness of the Crusaders in propagating the Christian faith. Neill believes that the Crusades “permanently injured the relations between the Western and the Eastern branches of Christendom, leaving a trail of bitterness across the relations between Christians and Muslims, and involved a lowering of the whole moral temperature of Christendom.”²¹

At the dawn of the sixteenth century, Europeans were launched into world exploration. A spreading of the Christian faith was one of the motivations for making contact with new peoples, though certainly trade was the primary interest. Portuguese explorers were the first to establish a mission in Africa, in the Congo, but it didn't last. These explorations, initially by Spain and Portugal and later by England, Holland, France, and others, led to the colonization and subjugation of the peoples “discovered.” In AD 1493, Pope Alexander VI decreed that one of the objectives of the explorers should be “to bring to Christian faith the peoples who inhabit these islands and mainland...and to send to said islands and to the mainland wise, upright, God-fearing, and virtuous men who will be capable of instructing the indigenous peoples in good morals and in the Catholic faith.” Often Dominicans or Franciscans, and later Jesuits, were sent

²¹ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 97, 98.

along with the sailors to carry out this work. It was at that time that we have our first reference to the propagation of the faith being a “mission” and the propagators being identified as “missionaries.”

The Jesuits Order (Society of Jesus) was founded by Ignatius Loyola in AD 1534 and had as one of its main objectives to convert pagans to the Catholic faith. One of the first companions of Loyola was Francis Xavier, who became one of the greatest Catholic missionaries of all time. In 1542, he went to India where he oversaw the conversion and baptism of thousands of Indians of the lower castes. Xavier eventually moved on to Japan where he found the situation to require a different approach than he had been taking. Neil writes,

These early contacts with the Japanese produced a change in Xavier’s understanding of the nature of Christian missionary work which was to be of the greatest significance for the whole future of the enterprise. The earlier years he had been inclined to accept uncritically the doctrine of the *tabula rasa*- the view that in non-Christian life and systems there is nothing on which the missionary can build, and that everything must simply be leveled to the ground before anything Christian can be built up. This was the general view of the Spanish missionaries in Latin America and the West Indies; in his dealings with the simple and illiterate fishers in South India, Xavier had been seen no reason to modify it. But now that he was confronted by a civilization with so many elements of nobility in it, he saw that, while the Gospel must transform and refine recreate, it need not necessarily reject as worthless everything that has come before.²²

In the late 1500’s, Jesuits also experienced some success in China and the Philippines. The Chinese were more resistant than the Philipinos, but the patience, creativity, and flexibility of the Jesuits helped them make inroads.

On the other side of the world, the Spanish and Portuguese in particular were busy colonizing Central and South America. Neill says, “The approach of these two powers to the New World of the West was always marked by three considerations- conquest, settlement, and evangelization.” I would add that evangelization was third, not only on the list, but also in

²² Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 133.

priority. Nonetheless, the task was undertaken. With every expedition came priests and friars. The conquest of Central and South America took place quickly, beginning with Columbus in AD 1492 and completed by 1515.

Reformation and Colonial Era

The advent of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century brought with it the eventual competition of missionary activity around the world. This did not happen quickly, however. The Protestant movement took time to gain a hold on Europe and, for a long while, the focus was on the more local transformation of the Church rather than on expanding it in other places around the globe.

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, continued and even intensified its colonial based efforts until the late 1700's. In AD 1622, Pope Gregory XV created the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, consisting of thirteen cardinals, two prelates, and a secretary to oversee the advancement of the Catholic faith worldwide. The Jesuit Order became less and less involved and ordinary clergy were enlisted into the ranks of the missionaries. France also began to immerse as a political force and took the forefront as the primary Catholic missionary nation.

Stephen Neill makes the following comments on the Roman Catholic missionary efforts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

Almost every possible form of missionary work had been tried –accommodation and the fierce refusal of accommodation; individual conversion in China and group conversion in South India; the ordination of priests in Goa and their refusal of ordination in other areas; the appeal of the Jesuits to the rulers and the appeal of the Franciscans to the poor and outcast. Every method had had its at least partial successes....²³

²³ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 176.

During the 1600's notable work was done by Catholic missionaries in India, China, Canada, and to a lesser and more limited degree in Africa. But, by the second half of the eighteenth century, Roman Catholic missions had begun to wane. Protestant nations such as England, Holland, and Denmark began to enter what had been exclusively Roman Catholic territory. The two camps into which Western Christendom had been divided extended their competition overseas.

Lutherans and Anglicans in Europe were not particularly focused on the spread of the Gospel to foreign lands. Protestant missionary efforts didn't begin in earnest until the late 1600's and then only at the rise of and in response to pietism. In the early 1700's, King Fredrick IV of Denmark commissioned the pietist leader August Hermann Frankcke of Halle in Germany to send missionaries to work in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar in south-east India. Frankcke supplied two young men, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plüttschau, who became the first non-Roman Catholic missionaries in India. Their focus was on the education of especially the Indian children with the goal of them being able to read the Bible in their own language. This mission was successful and interestingly enough was later taken over by the High Church Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Christian Friedrich Swartz (AD 1726–98) was the most notable missionary of that society. Other mission societies of other countries and churches were formed and the mission society approach of Protestant missions was in full swing.

The man considered to be the “father of modern missions” is William Carey (AD 1761–1834). Carey was a Baptist and was commissioned in 1793, by the Baptist Missionary Society, to go and labor in India. A summary of Neill observes that Carey saw mission work as a five-pronged advance:

- (1) the widespread preaching of the Gospel by every possible method;
- (2) the support of the preaching by the distribution of the Bible in the languages of the country;
- (3)

the establishment at the earliest possible moment of a church; (4) a profound study of the background and thought of the non-Christian peoples; (5) the training at the earliest possible moment of an indigenous ministry.²⁴

Carey established a model for mission work that would be followed by countless missionaries in Asia, Africa, and around the world for decades to come.

Enlightenment Period

With the arrival of the enlightenment, Christian theology and missiology were also affected. First of all, reason became of supreme importance, even over faith. Secondly, religion became a private and personal matter. Thirdly, theology began to be viewed as a science. And, fourthly, society became viewed strictly as secular, with no role for a universal God.

How did this enlightenment thinking affect mission work? Well, for one thing, it was the death knell for the colonial approach. As David Bosch writes,

In the Enlightenment paradigm ...the alliance between church and state increasingly came under pressure: in the long run it could not but find such a union unacceptable. ...It was only a matter of time before religion and politics would go their separate ways. ... Henceforth, theocratic dreams would belong to the past; colonial and ecclesial expansions were to be two separate things.²⁵

Furthermore, Bosch says, "The Enlightenment's orientation ... was decidedly forward and optimistic. Under its influence, the churches tended to view God as benevolent Creator, humans as intrinsically capable of moral improvement, and the kingdom of God as the crown of the steady progression of Christianity."²⁶ Not all missionaries fell under this influence, but those of the mainline denominations largely did. Remnants of this paradigm persist to this day.

By the mid 1800's, the Protestant missionary thrust had shifted from Europe to the United States. There were some mission societies formed along the English model, but for the most part,

²⁴ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 224-225.

²⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 275.

mission work was done denominationally.

How did Lutherans in America view the need for mission work? There was certainly some concern for the gathering together of dispersed and straying Lutheran immigrants, especially in western regions of the country. A church body called the Synod of the West was formed in 1835 “to meet the challenges of the western field; missions drove the Synod of the West.”²⁷ There were also some serious attempts at reaching the Native Americans (Indians) with the Gospel.

The Lutheran Church– Missouri Synod (LCMS) did not formally engage in any foreign mission efforts until nearly half a century after its founding. In 1895 the first LCMS missionaries, Theodor Naether and Franz Mohn, were sent to India. Work in Brazil began in 1900. This does not mean that the synod, at its beginning, had no interest in mission efforts.

William Danner writes in *Moving Frontiers*,

At its very first convention the new born Missouri Synod established a Committee on Missions, which was to concern itself with the total mission outreach. Missions to the heathen bulk large in the regulations. However, missions to the immigrant Lutheran became the major concern of this committee. The goal of reaching out to the heathen in foreign lands, even in the midst of the pressing demands for home missions, remained. Ferdinand Sievers urged a comprehensive program. The theoretical and theological support for such a program, however, was greater than the support of available men and money.²⁸

The LCMS at the turn of the twentieth century was just beginning to engage in foreign mission work. The expansion of the sending of missionaries grew slowly. By 1961, however, LCMS mission work had been established in 24 different countries. At this point in time, in the minds of LCMS members, “mission” was synonymous with the work of “missionaries” in foreign lands. A “theology of missions” and the concept that there is a “mission of the Church”

²⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 334.

²⁷ Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. in *Missionary to America: The History of Lutheran Outreach to Americans* Marvin A. Huggins ed. (St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1994), 72.

²⁸ William J. Danner in *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church– Missouri Synod* Meyer, Carl S., ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 296.

in which all believers, not just specially trained workers, are to be engaged was just beginning to emerge.

APPENDIX TWO

THE INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The Initial Questionnaire for- **“The Mission of God: What is it and how are we to be involved in it?”** **By Pastor David M. Benson**

Confidentiality Disclaimer: *(Please read carefully and sign.)*

“I am completing this questionnaire with the understanding that my identity and my responses to this questionnaire will be kept in strict confidence. Only Pastor Dave Benson and his administrative assistants will know my identity and view my responses and they pledge not to reveal this information to anyone else in any form or under any circumstances.”

Signed

Date

Instructions: *Please carefully read the following questions and, without consulting with any other persons or books, provide your own short, concise answers for each. After you have completed this questionnaire, please return it to Pastor Dave Benson via the Faith Lutheran Church office, 1517 East Valley Water Mill Road, Springfield, MO 65803, no later than January 4th, 2015. Thank you!*

1) How do you define the word “mission”?

Using this definition, please answer the following questions:

2) What mission is God most involved in?

3) What mission are Christians to be most involved in?

4) How do pastors participate in this mission?

5) How do lay people participate in this mission?

6) How have you, personally, participated in this mission already?

7) How do you wish to change your participation in this mission?

APPENDIX THREE

THE COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

“The Mission of God: What is it? What does it have to do with me?”

Course Outline

January 18 th -	Session 1: “Defining the Mission of God”
January 25 th -	Session 2: “Understanding the Kingdom of God”
February 1 st -	Session 3: “Discovering the Mission of the Church”
February 8 th -	Session 4: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 1”
February 15 th -	Session 5: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 2”
February 22 nd -	Session 6: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 3”

Session 1: “Defining the Mission of God”

- 1) Before looking up and discussing the Bible passages below, please complete the Class Survey.
- 2) The Encarta Dictionary defines the word “mission” as “an objective or task that somebody believes it is his or her duty to carry out or to which he or she attaches special importance and devotes special care.” What is God’s “mission”? What is of special importance to God and to what does He devote special care? Look up the following passages and try to define what the mission of God is.

Deuteronomy 10:14

2 Kings 19:15

Psalms 19:1

Psalms 22:27-28

Psalms 47:1-7

Psalms 67:1-4

Psalms 145:9, 13, & 17

Isaiah 49:6

Isaiah 54:5

Jeremiah 10:10-12

Jeremiah 12:14-17

Ezekiel 38:23

Luke 19:10

Luke 24:45-47
John 3:16 & 17
Romans 1:16
1 Timothy 2:4

- 3) Based on these Bible passages, and what else you know from the Bible, write your definition of the “Mission of God” here. Share your definition with those at your table.
- 4) Now write a refined definition that incorporates the thoughts of others at your table.
- 5) Finally, after the sharing of the various table definitions, write a further refined definition by the entire class and instructor.

Session 1: “Defining the Mission of God” (Leader’s guide)

- 1) Before looking up and discussing the Bible passages below, please complete the Class Survey.
- 2) The Encarta Dictionary defines the word “mission” as “an objective or task that somebody believes it is his or her duty to carry out or to which he or she attaches special importance and devotes special care.” What is God’s “mission”? What is of special importance to God and to what does He devote special care? Look up the following passages and try to define what the mission of God is.

Deuteronomy 10:14

¹⁴ To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.

2 Kings 19:15

¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: “LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Psalms 19:1

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Psalms 22:27-28

²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.

Psalms 47:1-7

¹ Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. ² For the Lord Most High is

awesome, the great King over all the earth. ³ He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. ⁴ He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. ⁵ God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets. ⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. ⁷ For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.

Psalm 67:1-4

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us— ² so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth.

Psalm 145:9, 13, & 17

⁹ The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. ¹⁷ The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.

Isaiah 49:6

⁶ The LORD says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Isaiah 54:5

⁵ For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

Jeremiah 10:10-12

¹⁰ But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. ¹¹ “Tell them this: ‘These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.’”
¹² But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

Jeremiah 12:14-17

¹⁴ This is what the Lord says: “As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will uproot the people of Judah from among them. ¹⁵ But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to their own inheritance and their own country. ¹⁶ And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, ‘As surely as the Lord lives’—even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal—then they will be established among my people. ¹⁷ But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it,” declares the Lord.

Ezekiel 38:23

²³ And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.’

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Luke 24:45-47

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

John 3:16 & 17

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

1 Timothy 2:4

⁴ (God) wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

- 3) Based on these Bible passages, and what else you know from the Bible, write your definition of the “Mission of God” here. Share your definition with those at your table.

It is God, the Father's objective to bring to salvation as many people as possible, by bringing them back into His Kingdom, through faith in His Son.

- 4) Now write a refined definition that incorporates the thoughts of others at your table.

The Mission of God is to bring eternal salvation to as many people as possible, by bringing them back into His Kingdom, through faith in Jesus Christ.

- 5) Finally, after the sharing of the various table definitions, write a further refined definition by the entire class and instructor.

Greg Finke's definition: *“The mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings.”*

Session 2: “The Kingdom of God”

Review: According to the process in the first session of this class, what is the “Mission of God?”

As a class, refine this definition.

1) According to the Encarta online dictionary, a “kingdom” is 1) “a state or people ruled over by a king or queen,” or 2) “a realm or area of activity in which a particular thing is thought to dominate.” What is God’s “kingdom”? Over whom does God rule and what is His realm or area of activity?

2) Look up the following Bible verses that in some way describe the “Kingdom of God.”

Exodus 19:5-6
1 Chronicles 29:10-11
Psalm 45:6
Psalm 93:1-2
Psalm 99:1-2
Psalm 103:19
Isaiah 2:2
Daniel 4:3
Daniel 7:13-14
Matthew 4:23
Matthew 6:33
Matthew 7:21
Matthew 13:31-32
Matthew 18:1-4
Matthew 21:43
Mark 1:15
Mark 4:26-27
Luke 12:32
Luke 17:20-21
John 3:5
Acts 28:30-31
Philippians 2:9-11
2 Timothy 4:1-2
Revelation 11:15

3) Based on these Bible passages, and what else you know from the Bible, write your definition of the “Kingdom of God.” Share your definition with those at your table.

4) Now write a refined definition that incorporates the thoughts of others in your small group.

5) Finally, after the sharing of various group definitions, write a further refined definition created by the entire class and instructor.

Session 2: "The Kingdom of God" (Leader's guide)

Review: According to the process in the first session of this class, what is the "Mission of God?"

The Mission of God is to bring eternal salvation to His whole creation, beginning with human beings, by bringing them back into His Kingdom, through His love in Jesus Christ.

Finke- The Mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings.

As a class, refine this definition.

The Mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings, through His Son Jesus Christ.

- 1) According to the Encarta online dictionary, a "kingdom" is 1) "a state or people ruled over by a king or queen," or 2) "a realm or area of activity in which a particular thing is thought to dominate." What is God's "kingdom"? Over whom does God rule and what is His realm or area of activity?

Finke- The Kingdom of God is the redemptive presence and activity of God in human lives.

God ultimately rules over the whole universe and everything in it, but not all of His creation currently is in submission to His reign. Human beings are in rebellion but God is at work through the Gospel and His people, the Church, to restore humanity to Himself.

- 2) Look up the following Bible verses that in some way describe the "Kingdom of God."

Exodus 19:5-6

⁵ 'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

1 Chronicles 29:10-11

¹⁰ David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹ Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

Psalm 45:6

⁶ Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

Psalm 93:1-2

¹ The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure. ² Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.

Psalm 99:1-2

¹ The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. ² Great is the Lord in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations.

Psalm 103:19

¹⁹ The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

Isaiah 2:2

² In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

Daniel 4:3;

³ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Matthew 4:23

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Matthew 6:33

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 7:21

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

Matthew 18:1-4

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³ And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 21:43

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.”

Mark 1:15;

¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Mark 4:26-27

²⁶ He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.”

Luke 12:32;

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

Luke 17:20-21

²⁰ Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, ²¹ nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

John 3:5

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”

Acts 28:30-31

³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

Philippians 2:9-11

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2 Timothy 4:1-2

¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view

of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Revelation 11:15

³ The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

- 3) Based on these Bible passages, and what else you know from the Bible, write your definition of the “Kingdom of God.” Share your definition with those at your table.

According to Greg Ogden and Daniel Meyer in “Leadership Essentials”-
The Kingdom of God comprises much more than the Church.
The Kingdom of God is focused on the radical renewal of life.
The Kingdom of God determines the success of human endeavors.
The Kingdom of God grows organically, not mechanically.

- 4) Now write a refined definition that incorporates the thoughts of others in your small group.

Finke- *The Kingdom of God is the redemptive presence and activity of God in human lives.*

- 5) Finally, after the sharing of various group definitions, write a further refined definition created by the entire class and instructor.

Session 3: “The Mission of the Church”

Review: According to the process in the first session of this class, what is “The Mission of God?”

Review: According to the process in the second session of this class, what is the “The Kingdom of God?”

- 1) True or false: The mission of the church is intended by God to be carried out only by clergy and/or professionally trained missionaries.
- 2) True or false: The mission of the church belongs to the whole Church (all Christians) and every believer should, in some way, be engaged with it.
- 3) The Encarta Dictionary defines the word “mission” as “an objective or task that somebody believes it is his or her duty to carry out or to which he or she attaches special importance and devotes special care.” What is our “mission” as God’s people? What should be of special importance to us and to what should we devote special care?

- 4) Look up the following Bible verses that in some way describe the “Mission of the Church.”

Psalm 96:1-3

Isaiah 49:6

Matthew 10:16

Matthew 16:13-20

Matthew 28:19-20

Luke 2:29-32

Luke 9:1-2

John 17:18

John 20:21

Acts 1:8

Romans 10:12-15

Ephesians 4:11-13

1 Peter 2:9-10

1 Peter 3:15

- 5) Based on these Bible passages, and whatever else you know from the Bible, write your definition of the “The Mission of the Church.” Share your definition with those at your table.

Session 3: “The Mission of the Church” (Leader’s guide)

Review: According to the process in the first session of this class, what is “The Mission of God?”

The Mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings, through His Son Jesus Christ.

Review: According to the process in the second session of this class, what is the “The Kingdom of God?”

The Kingdom of God is, in the broad sense, God’s eternal reign over the entire universe and, in the narrow sense, God’s redemptive presence and activity in human lives through Jesus Christ.

- 1) True or false: The mission of the church is intended by God to be carried out only by clergy and/or professionally trained missionaries.
- 2) True or false: The mission of the church belongs to the whole Church (all Christians) and every believer should, in some way, be engaged with it.
- 3) The Encarta Dictionary defines the word “mission” as “an objective or task that somebody believes it is his or her duty to carry out or to which he or she attaches special importance and devotes special care.” What is our “mission” as God’s people? What

should be of special importance to us and to what should we devote special care?

- 4) Look up the following Bible verses that in some way describe the “Mission of the Church.”

Psalm 96:1-3

¹ Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ² Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

Isaiah 49:6

⁶ The Lord says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Matthew 10:16

¹⁶ “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Matthew 16:13-20

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Luke 2:29-32

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

Luke 9:1-2

¹ When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

John 17:18

¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 20:21

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Acts 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Romans 10:12-15

¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Ephesians 4:11-13

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

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 3:15

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

- 5) Based on these Bible passages, and whatever else you know from the Bible, write your definition of the "The Mission of the Church." Share your definition with those at your table.

The Mission of the Church is to serve as an instrument of God to continue His mission and carry on the life of Jesus Christ in this world.

Finke- The Mission of the Church is joining Jesus in His mission.

- 6) Now write a refined definition that incorporates the thoughts of others in your small group.

The Mission of the Church is to serve as an instrument of God to continue His mission and carry on the life of Jesus Christ in this world.

Finke- The Mission of the Church is joining Jesus in His mission.

- 7) Finally, after the sharing of various group definitions, write a further refined definition created by the entire class and instructor.

The Mission of the Church is to serve as an instrument of God to continue His mission and carry on the life of Jesus Christ in this world.

Finke- The Mission of the Church is joining Jesus in His mission.

Session 4: "Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 1"

Review: According to the process in the first session of this class, what is "The Mission of God?"

Review: According to the process in the second session of this class, what is the "The Kingdom of God?"

Review: According to the process in the third session of this class, what is the "The Mission of the Church?"

Joining Jesus on His Mission- How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Rev. Greg Finke

Chapter 1) In the first chapter of his book Pastor Finke asks the question, "What's Jesus Up To?" He says that Jesus is "messing with" His church, especially in the USA, in a new way. What do you think he means by that? What do you think Jesus is inviting you to notice believe, or wrestle with right now?

Chapter 2) In this chapter, Pastor Finke says that Jesus is already on a mission (the Mission of God) and He invites you to join Him. He doesn't give you a mission to do *for* Him. He's on a mission and invites you to come *with* Him. How do you react to this statement?

Chapter 3) Here, Pastor Finke relates the true story of how, in 1998, the Choluteca River in Honduras changed course, due to Hurricane Mitch, and left a state-of-the-art bridge stranded and useless by the side of the river channel. He compares this to the current spiritual climate in the US. The "river" has moved from a church-friendly

society to a church-indifferent (even hostile) society. How does this change the way we share Jesus and the Gospel with our neighbors?

- Chapter 4) In this chapter, we are challenged to stop “stalling” in joining Jesus in His mission. We will learn more about being a missionary by doing something then by reading something missional. It’s not what we know, but what we do with what we know that makes a difference in people’s lives. What are some of the reasons you might be “stalling” in joining Jesus in His mission?
- Chapter 5) Here, we learn that Jesus has made our participation in His redemptive mission simple. He is doing all the work, we only need to make ourselves available to Him and seek, recognize, and respond to what Jesus is already doing in the lives of people around us. We make it hard when we try to do the work of Jesus rather than what He gave us to do. What are some ways in which we complicate our role and make it hard?
- Chapter 6) In this chapter, Pastor Finke states that, while He was physically in this world, Jesus’ method of accomplishing His redemptive mission was relational. He “hung out” with sinners and enjoyed being with them in His Father’s grace. It was inefficiently effective. Jesus would have us imitate this approach. We can also enjoy people, build relationships, and seek, recognize, and respond to what Jesus is already doing in the lives of people around us. What do you think could keep you from imitating Jesus’ strategy?
- Chapter 7) According to this chapter, we start to seek, recognize, and respond to what Jesus is already doing in the lives of people around us by paying attention to what He is already showing us. In essence, Jesus says, “Open your eyes and look and I will show you where I’m working.” What intrigues you about seeking what Jesus is already showing you?
- Chapter 8) This chapter is about the Kingdom of God. Pastor Finke says that the Kingdom of God is God Himself and came into the world He created through Jesus Christ. When Jesus arrived here, He unleashed the promise season of world redemption. It is happening now. Wherever God is redemptively present and active, His Kingdom is at work. We can seek it, recognize it, and join with it. Do you agree with this explanation of the Kingdom of God? Is there anything you would add to it?
- Chapter 9) Pastor Finke continues His consideration of the Kingdom of God in this chapter. If we see a need in a human being we can recognize that the Kingdom of God is nearby and active. That is what Jesus invites us to look for, recognize and respond to. The Kingdom of God comes to people from Jesus through us. How could this change the value you place on showing love, joy, truth, or patience to the people around you?
- Chapter 10) The Mission of God is the topic of this chapter. Pastor Finke tells us that God is

already doing everything necessary to make our participation in His mission simple. All we have to do is allow Jesus to reorient our minds to His Good News and keep asking Him two questions: “What are You up to?” and “How would You have me join You?” What scares you about being an “everyday missionary?”

Assignment: Read “Joining Jesus on His Mission” through chapter 15 by the next class.

Session 4: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 1” (Leader’s guide)

Review: According to the process in the first session of this class, what is “The Mission of God?”

The Mission of God is to redeem and restore all things to the Kingdom of God, beginning with human beings, through His Son Jesus Christ.

Review: According to the process in the second session of this class, what is the “The Kingdom of God?”

The Kingdom of God is, in the broad sense, God’s eternal reign over the entire universe and, in the narrow sense, God’s redemptive presence and activity in human lives through Jesus Christ.

Review: According to the process in the third session of this class, what is the “The Mission of the Church?”

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Mission of the Church is to participate with God in His redemptive activity in human lives through Jesus Christ.

Joining Jesus on His Mission- How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Rev. Greg Finke

Chapter 1) In the first chapter of his book Pastor Finke asks the question, “What’s Jesus Up To?” He says that Jesus is “messing with” His church, especially in the USA, in a new way. What do you think he means by that? What do you think Jesus is inviting you to notice believe, or wrestle with right now?

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- Chapter 10) The Mission of God is the topic of this chapter. Pastor Finke tells us that God is already doing everything necessary to make our participation in His mission simple. All we have to do is allow Jesus to reorient our minds to His Good News and keep

asking Him two questions: “What are You up to?” and “How would You have me join You?” What scares you about being an “everyday missionary?”

Assignment: Read “Joining Jesus on His Mission” through chapter 15 by the next class.

Session 5: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 2”

Joining Jesus on His Mission- How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Rev. Greg Finke

- Chapter 11)** In this chapter we are challenged to get into position to be everyday missionaries and are introduced to the five mission practices: 1. Seeking the Kingdom, 2. Hearing from Jesus, 3. Talking with people, 4. Doing good, and 5. Ministering through prayer. Pastor Finke asks, “Are you ready to move beyond an occasional “mission program” and become an everyday missionary?”
- Chapter 12)** Seeking the Kingdom: The practice of seeking the Kingdom of God is simply forming the habit of watching for what God is showing us every day in the middle of our daily living. We are to be looking for opportunities where God is showing us that His grace can be applied. It often looks like human need. How have you seen God at work in your life this past week or month?
- Chapter 13)** Hearing from Jesus: The practice of hearing from Jesus in the Bible, and especially the Gospels, is all about being able to better recognize and respond to what Jesus is telling us and showing us on our daily mission trip in life. Listen to what Jesus actually said. Watch what He actually said. Ask yourself, “How is Jesus asking me to respond?” What has Jesus been teaching you in His Word lately?
- Chapter 14)** Talking with people: God can do more with two people talking with each other than He can with two people successfully ignoring each other. Talking with people actually means we do more listening than speaking. This practice is for introverts and extroverts, honoring the relational pace with which God has wired us. Invite the other person to tell their story. Listen for what they are ready to receive. Take it one conversation at a time. So, what kind of conversations are you having with people around you?
- Chapter 15)** Doing good: The missional practice of doing good is the result of God preparing us and we responding. We are to be Jesus “with skin on” to those around us. When we find out what someone needs, we step in and help. Jesus will work through us to make His love and goodness tangible to people we encounter. Jesus can work even through the small things we do. Think “seed,” “pinch of yeast,” or “cool cup of water.” What good can you do for those around you? How can you make the Kingdom and grace of God a little more real to people nearby?

Assignment: Read “Joining Jesus on His Mission” from chapter 16 to the end of the book by the next class.

Session 5: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 2” (Leader’s guide)

Joining Jesus on His Mission- How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Rev. Greg Finke

Chapter 11) In this chapter we are challenged to get into position to be everyday missionaries and are introduced to the five mission practices: 1. Seeking the Kingdom, 2. Hearing from Jesus, 3. Talking with people, 4. Doing good, and 5. Ministering through prayer. Pastor Finke asks, “Are you ready to move beyond an occasional “mission program” and become an everyday missionary?”

Mission programs or mission trips are good and can be valuable experiences, but what we really need is to have a mindset that we are continuously on a mission trip where ever we are. Becoming an everyday missionary means changing our thinking about what it means to be missional.

Chapter 12) Seeking the Kingdom: The practice of seeking the Kingdom of God is simply forming the habit of watching for what God is showing us every day in the middle of our daily living. We are to be looking for opportunities where God is showing us that His grace can be applied. It often looks like human need. How have you seen God at work in your life this past week or month?

If we're not deliberately looking to see God at work in us and around us we may fail to perceive it. God at work can be very subtle and seemingly insignificant, so we need to pay attention or we will miss out on opportunities to join Him in His work.

Chapter 13) Hearing from Jesus: The practice of hearing from Jesus in the Bible, and especially the Gospels, is all about being able to better recognize and respond to what Jesus is telling us and showing us on our daily mission trip in life. Listen to what Jesus actually said. Watch what He actually said. Ask yourself, “How is Jesus asking me to respond?” What has Jesus been teaching you in His Word lately?

Jesus' approach is very relational. He meets people where they are at and connect with them in their needs. If we observe Jesus very carefully in the Gospels we will learn how to reach people “Jesus style.”

Chapter 14) Talking with people: God can do more with two people talking with each other than He can with two people successfully ignoring each other. Talking with people actually means we do more listening than speaking. This practice is for introverts and extroverts, honoring the relational pace with which God has wired us. Invite the other person to tell their story. Listen for what they are ready to

receive. Take it one conversation at a time. So, what kind of conversations are you having with people around you?

Early conversations with people usually need to be times of getting acquainted and building a relationship. As the trust level grows you can share more about how God is at work in your life and how He wants to work in the other person's life as well. The pace of moving into deeper conversations depends on your personality, gifts, and style as well as the receptivity of the other person.

Chapter 15) Doing good: The missional practice of doing good is the result of God preparing us and we responding. We are to be Jesus “with skin on” to those around us. When we find out what someone needs, we step in and help. Jesus will work through us to make His love and goodness tangible to people we encounter. Jesus can work even through the small things we do. Think “seed,” “pinch of yeast,” or “cool cup of water.” What good can you do for those around you? How can you make the Kingdom and grace of God a little more real to people nearby?

There are always opportunities to help others around us in their needs if we keep our eyes and ears open. We must not allow ourselves to see helping others as an inconvenience or chore or we will lack sincerity. Our prayer needs to be that we see others as Jesus sees them and allow Him to love them through us by giving us His compassion.

Assignment: Read “Joining Jesus on His Mission” from chapter 16 to the end of the book by the next class.

Session 6: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 3”

Joining Jesus on His Mission- How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Rev. Greg Finke

Review the first four of the “Five Practices.”

1. Seeking the Kingdom.
2. Hearing from Jesus.
3. Talking with people.
4. Doing good.

Chapter 16) Ministering Through Prayer: The fifth of the “Five Practices” is Ministering Through Prayer. When trust has had time to build, people will start sharing what’s really going on in their lives. When a person shares something real and hard, we can respond to them with a simple offer of grace: “Would you like me to pray with you about that?” When it comes to ministering through prayer, what matters most is not getting your words right but inviting your King in. What is holding you back from offering to pray with others?

Chapter 17) The Missional Party: Being an everyday missionary begins with getting to know and starting to enjoy our neighbors. Over time, “neighboring” allows us to answer key missional questions about the people God has put around us: 1. Who are these people? 2. What is Jesus already up to in their lives? and 3. How can I join Him? The best way to get to know and start to enjoy your neighbors is to create opportunities for neighbors to come together, get acquainted with one another, and become friends. What are some simple things you can do with your neighbors initially to connect with them and begin to join Jesus in what He is already doing in their lives?

Chapter 18) What Will Your Story Be? We get to better know the people with whom God has put us by creating “neighboring environments.” The “formula” for making neighboring environments is: unhurried time + proximity + activity (food) + conversations over time = friendship. Jesus can do more with neighbors who are friends than He can with neighbors who are strangers. Several examples of both intentional and spontaneous neighboring activities are listed on pages 149 through 151 of “Joining Jesus.” Which ones stood out as a good fit for you?

Chapter 19) With a Little Help from My Friends: While the “Five Practices” put us into position to join Jesus on his mission every day, the corresponding “Five Questions” help us stay intentional and inspired for missional life. The “Five Questions” are: 1. How did I see God at work this week? 2. What has Jesus been teaching me in His Word? 3. What kind of conversations am I having with “pre-Christians?” 4. What good can I do around me? and 5. How can I help someone in prayer? It is best if don’t try to be “lone rangers” as everyday missionaries. We need a “missional community” with whom to gather for mutual encouragement, support, insights, and accountability. What group of people will serve as your missional community?

First Things First) Joining Jesus’ mission is not so much about changing the whole church as it is about changing our own mindset and practices and inviting a few friends to come with us. Joining Jesus’ mission is not about changing what we do when we go to church on Sunday; it’s about changing what we do when we go out into our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools on Monday. Why focus on changing your own mindset and practices before trying to change anyone else’s? What do you still need from God in order to become an everyday missionary?

Benediction: Page 167 of “Joining Jesus on His Mission”

Session 6: “Joining Jesus on His Mission- Part 3” (Leader’s guide)

Joining Jesus on His Mission- How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Rev. Greg Finke

Review the first four of the “Five Practices.”

1. Seeking the Kingdom.
2. Hearing from Jesus.
3. Talking with people.
4. Doing good.

Chapter 16) Ministering Through Prayer: The fifth of the “Five Practices” is Ministering Through Prayer. When trust has had time to build, people will start sharing what’s really going on in their lives. When a person shares something real and hard, we can respond to them with a simple offer of grace: “Would you like me to pray with you about that?” When it comes to ministering through prayer, what matters most is not getting your words right but inviting your King in. What is holding you back from offering to pray with others?

Fear of rejection is certainly one thing that may hold us back from offering to pray for and with others. But remember, we’re not talking about strangers here but people with whom we have a relationship of growing trust. The fact is, seldom do persons of any faith background or no faith background refuse to be prayed for. They may not recognize the power in prayer but they will see it as a sign that you sincerely care about them. You will be terrified to do this only once.

Chapter 17) The Missional Party: Being an everyday missionary begins with getting to know and starting to enjoy our neighbors. Over time, “neighboring” allows us to answer key missional questions about the people God has put around us: 1. Who are these people? 2. What is Jesus already up to in their lives? and 3. How can I join Him? The best way to get to know and start to enjoy your neighbors is to create opportunities for neighbors to come together, get acquainted with one another, and become friends. What are some simple things you can do with your neighbors initially to connect with them and begin to join Jesus in what He is already doing in their lives?

To begin with we need to hang out in our front yards more often and watch for opportunities to have brief, but unhurried conversations with them. Before we invite our neighbors to some activity at our home we should at least know their names and have had some short conversations with them.

Chapter 18) What Will Your Story Be? We get to better know the people with whom God has put us by creating “neighboring environments.” The “formula” for making neighboring environments is: unhurried time + proximity + activity (food) + conversations over time = friendship. Jesus can do more with neighbors who are friends than He can with neighbors who are strangers. Several examples of both intentional and spontaneous neighboring activities are listed on pages 149 through 151 of “Joining Jesus.” Which ones stood out as a good fit for you?

A cookout or ice cream party might work for us. A neighborhood VBS might work too, at our house or in the neighborhood park.

Chapter 19) With a Little Help from My Friends: While the “Five Practices” put us into position to join Jesus on his mission every day, the corresponding “Five Questions” help us stay intentional and inspired for missional life. The “Five Questions” are: 1. How did I see God at work this week? 2. What has Jesus been teaching me in His Word? 3. What kind of conversations am I having with “pre-Christians?” 4. What good can I do around me? and 5. How can I help someone in prayer? It is best if don’t try to be “lone rangers” as everyday missionaries. We need a “missional community” with whom to gather for mutual encouragement, support, insights, and accountability. What group of people will serve as your missional community?

For us, our launch team is our missional community. For Faith members, maybe the Sunday morning Bible class, the Thursday morning Bible class, or a small group in your home.

First Things First) Joining Jesus’ mission is not so much about changing the whole church as it is about changing our own mindset and practices and inviting a few friends to come with us. Joining Jesus’ mission is not about changing what we do when we go to church on Sunday; it’s about changing what we do when we go out into our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools on Monday. Why focus on changing your own mindset and practices before trying to change anyone else’s? What do you still need from God in order to become an everyday missionary?

We can’t encourage others to do something we ourselves are not doing. We must first change our mindset and develop new practices before we can teach and encourage others. Courage and trust in Jesus are the things I need in order to live as an everyday missionary.

Benediction: Page 167 of “Joining Jesus on His Mission”

APPENDIX FOUR

THE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

The Follow-up Questionnaire for-

“The Mission of God: What is it and how are we to be involved in it?”
By Pastor David M. Benson

Confidentiality Disclaimer: *(Please read carefully and sign.)*

“I am completing this questionnaire with the understanding that my identity and my responses to this questionnaire will be kept in strict confidence. Only Pastor Dave Benson and his administrative assistants will know my identity and view my responses and they pledge not to reveal this information to anyone else in any form or under any circumstances.”

Signed

Date

Instructions: *Please carefully read the following questions and, without consulting with any other persons or books, provide your own short, concise answers for each. After you have completed this questionnaire, please return it to Pastor Dave Benson via the Faith Lutheran Church office, 1517 East Valley Water Mill Road, Springfield, MO 65803, no later than March 29th, 2015. Thank you!*

1) How do you define the word “mission”?

Using this definition, please answer the following questions:

2) What mission is God most involved in?

3) What mission are Christians to be most involved in?

4) How do pastors participate in this mission?

5) How do lay people participate in this mission?

6) How have you, personally, participated in this mission already?

7) How do you wish to change your participation in this mission?

APPENDIX FIVE

CLASS SURVEY FOR SESSIONS #1 AND #6

Class Survey for Sessions #1 and #6 of "The Mission of God"

Please read the following statements and circle the number that comes closest to your response.

1) I have a clear understanding of the Mission of God.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

2) The Mission which God has entrusted to His people is first presented in the Bible through the "Great Commission" of Jesus recorded in Matthew 28:19 & 20.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

3) The Mission of the Church should be carried out by ordained clergy only.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

4) The Mission of God is to redeem and restore all people to Himself.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

5) The Mission of God and the Mission of the Church is essentially the same thing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

6) The Kingdom of God has come into the world to work out the Mission of God through the Church.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

7) The Mission of God is accomplished solely through the Service of Holy Communion.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

8) I have personally been engaged in the Mission of the Church in my daily living.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

9) A missionary is someone called by God to share the Gospel in a foreign land.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

10) Being a missionary requires receiving a special and specific spiritual gift from God.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

11) I am personally willing to be used by God to accomplish His Mission.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

12) Every Christian is called by Jesus to be a missionary.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX SIX

QUESTIONS FOR “THE MISSION OF GOD” FOCUS GROUP

- 1) **What were some things that you learned or were reminded of during this course?**
- 2) **What was the single most important thing that you learned from participating in “The Mission of God” course?**
- 3) **Did your understanding of the mission of God change because of this course? If so, how?**
- 4) **Did your understanding of the kingdom of God change because of this course? If so, how?**
- 5) **Did your understanding of the mission of the Church change because of this course? If so, how?**
- 6) **Did this course change your desire to participate more fully in the mission of the Church? If so, how?**
- 7) **In what ways could this course be improved to make it more effective in teaching about the mission of God, the kingdom of God, and the mission of the Church? Please be specific.**
- 8) **In what ways could this course be improved to motivate the learners to personally engage in the mission of the Church? Please be specific.**
- 9) **What else would you like to share about your experience in this course?**

10) Thank you for your time and assistance. Your responses and time are very valuable.

APPENDIX SEVEN

TRANSCRIPTION- "MISSION OF GOD" FOCUS GROUP

Faith Lutheran Church, Springfield, MO March 22nd, 2015

This focus group, conducted by Dr. Cynthia McGregor, consisted of six participants- three women and three men who also participated in the course component of this research. Here they give feedback on what they learned in the class and offer suggestions for improving the course.

(Unfortunately, intermittent motor noise from the cassette tape recorder that was used rendered brief portions of the conversation unintelligible. Those spots are noted in the transcription.)

Dr. M- Thank you for coming today. As you all know Pastor Benson is doing his research as part of his degree that he is finishing at the seminary. I'm going to ask you some questions. This is not the kind of thing where everyone answers every question. If you feel like you have something to contribute, please jump in or if someone else gives an answer similar to what you would have said you don't need to elaborate on it again. In other words, you don't need to speak to every question.

Dr. M- So, first of all what were some things you learned or were reminded of during the course?

Female Participant 1- We're not supposed to do everything ourselves. We're not in this by ourselves.

Dr. M- Anybody else have anything they learned or were reminded of?

Female Participant 2- When it comes to mission we're in it together, we don't have to do it alone. We're a collective group with the same goals in mind. We have a lot of support.

Female Participant 3- We're really only helping Jesus. It's His mission and we're helping Him.

Male Participant 1- Is not just the pastor's job. But the problem many people have is they think he's the only evangelist on the premises.

Male Participant 2- I think what was interesting to me is that I tended to think of God as not having a mission. He's got a job. He's got a mission and we're it.

Dr. M- So, what was the single most important thing that you learned from participating in the mission of God course?

Male Participant 2- I think it truly was that we don't have to sit there waiting for ourselves to grow up and get that really big thing to do. There are things to do around us and those are the things that might not seem very important to us but that's what the Lord guides us to do. We're joining Jesus in His mission and loving people in His name. We might not shatter windows or make church bells ring but that's what we're supposed to be doing and we need to be satisfied with that.

Dr. M- Anybody else with the most important thing that you learned?

MP 1- Well, it's a long race and we may not see the end of the race ourselves. We see what we consider to be the struggles, we may not see the end result of those struggles. We want some instant gratification being the Americans that we are, that we want to see that return on investment. It's all awaiting God's time and we have to be okay with that. We can kind of beat ourselves up too much about some of that. We know that we have to go make disciples but that may take a while and we may not see it right away.

Male Participant 3- We may start out small and say something about Jesus to somebody and not think about it. But, they may down the road come back to us and tell us that what we said really had an impact on them.

(Due to recorder noise, a few minutes of the recording, at this point, was unintelligible and could not be transcribed.)

Dr. M- Did your understanding of the mission of God change because of this course? If so how?

MP 1- I think it nailed it down a little bit, I think I had a good idea of what it was about before the course but what changed for me is the realization that God is already at work, not just in some far off place, but right around me in my own family and neighborhood. I need to be where God is and recognize it and move.

FP 3- Like Pastor Benson said in class, you don't have to go overseas like to Africa to find the mission field. It's right here around us. There's something we can be doing daily.

FP 2- It's about where God wants you, it's not where God sent these people. So maybe that is right outside my door.

Dr. M- So, did your understanding of the kingdom of God change because of this course? If so, how?

FP 1- I didn't really get the difference between the kingdom of God and God's mission.

MP 1- I think it's a tough concept because the kingdom of God is really everything. You talk about the kingdom of God; it's all things and the universe and you want to build on that. You start with mankind, but all the creatures of God are part of the kingdom. Everything else here is part of the kingdom. But if we want to concentrate on just our salvation concerned, it's mankind. At least that how I remember it from our class discussion.

Dr. M- You know the third main phrase from the class is the mission of the Church. Did your understanding of the mission of the Church change as a result of this course and if so how?

FP 1- I think it helped me to see that every believer has a little portion of the mission. It's not just the job of the important people but everybody has something they can contribute.

MP 3- I learned that the mission is an everyday thing. That we're doing it where ever we are, That it not some program where we have to go knocking on doors and reading a script to people or something like that. Your daily routine may be your role.

Dr. M- Good, anyone else on the mission of the church?

MP 2- I think the mission looks quite different at different parishes or congregations. I remember hearing about a congregation that was active in starting churches in Russia and I thought how since we weren't doing that then we weren't really participating in the mission. But I now know that it most important that we're carrying out the mission in our local setting and capitalizing on the unique opportunities God gives this congregation.

MP 1- I think our congregation offering space to Christ the King Presbyterian Church when they were first getting started was part of our unique mission here at Faith. I mean I don't think the mission is to make Lutherans out of everybody. We share the Gospel with someone but they may not join our church. They may become a good Baptist instead but we're still fulfilling the mission even if it doesn't result in growing our particular congregation. The mission of the church is, one, to minister to those in need first and then, two, try to reach them spiritually. We may not see the fruits of our labors but we should be discouraged if we don't the results on the backside of our actions.

Dr. M- Very good. Next, we've already talked some about this but say a little more about if this course has changed your desire to participate more fully in the mission of the Church and, if so, how?

FP 2- It's helped me to realize that I'm already a participant and that I just need to be aware of the opportunities as they arise. I also know that God's not going to send me somewhere where I'm going fail. I participate but I not the one responsible for the outcome. I do what I can and leave it up to God.

(Due to recorder noise, a few minutes of the recording, at this point, was unintelligible and could not be transcribed.)

MP 3- I now see that I can participate in my own situation and not have to be afraid that God's going to ask me to do something on a larger scale that I can't handle.

FP 1- Being in high school and talking with my friends I can't just jump in and talk about God or Jesus because they might close up and stop listening to me. I have to be patient and let them bring up the subject before I can share my faith directly with them.

FP 3- Being a teacher in a secular setting I too have to be careful with whom and how I share my faith. Sometimes, if they bring it up or ask I can share what I believe.

MP 1- I think this course, and Pastor's sermons, and our previous pastor's messages and vision have moved this congregation to become more engaged in mission of the church. I think the voters assembly next week will find out where the current leadership is at with moving the congregation forward in being more engaged in specific mission efforts. We need to be more mission oriented, more mission focused, and look outside our walls. Understanding that not everybody may agree with our approach but still if we look at ways to build the kingdom, there can be no wrong answer to that. And, I think this kind of solidifies the kind of journey we've been on as a congregation for the last several months, I really do.

MP 2- Before we can participate in the mission of the church, I think I've come to realize in my own life, that, good or bad, everybody does participate but not always in the best possible way. And maybe we need to think about how our participation can be improved and more effective.

Dr. M- Ok, thanks for those thoughts. Now let's turn our focus to ask in what ways could this course we've just completed be improved to make it more effective in teaching about the mission of God, the kingdom of God, and the mission of the church? Please be specific. If you could make it better, what would you change?

MP 2- The reading assignments for class were sometimes challenging to understand. I had to read some of them over five or six times before I got them.

Dr. M- But you did understand them after that?

MP 2- Yes, but I think most of us don't have the scholastic background to participate in discussions that are that deep theologically.

Dr. M- Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. What do the rest of you think about the readings?

MP 1- I think it might not be a bad idea to make some of the more challenging readings extra credit or optional.

Dr. M- (laughs)

MP 1- I mean something side by side that adds to what we're going to be talking about.

MP 2- Well, I felt like I HAD to read that material and understand it for next week's discussion in class.

MP 1- That's really the only criticism I have of the class. I think the "Joining Jesus" book could be explored further in a follow up class or maybe the evangelism team could go through it together. I think that would be great.

MP 2- I think the term “evangelism” scares people because they think it requires special abilities or training that they don’t have.

Dr. M- True, I mean whoever volunteers to be on the evangelism committee. Really nobody right now.

FP 2- Maybe if you renamed it the mission committee you’d get more participants.

MP 3- Evangelism is a scary term. So, finding another term than evangelism might help.

MP 1- Maybe mission and outreach.

Dr. M- Mission and outreach, yes. Well, do you have any other things you would change about the course?

FP 2- I agree that especially the readings from the book “The Mission of God” (Vicedom) were difficult and I’m not sure that I always saw how they tied in to what we were talking about in class.

Dr. M- So, if you read it you’re waiting to see how it ties in?

FP 2- Which is fine.

Dr. M- That sounds like some of my students, “So why did you have us read this exactly? We didn’t talk about it.” It will be good for you.

FP 2- But we don’t always like what is good for us.

(Due to recorder noise, a few minutes of the recording, at this point, was unintelligible and could not be transcribed.)

Dr. M- So, in what ways could this course be improved to motivate the learners to personally engage in the mission of the church? Please be specific.

FP 1- I think that it could have been a little more versatile.

Dr. M- Versatile?

FP 1- Yes, I don’t think there was anyone in the class younger than me and I felt like I was having a hard time keeping my head above the water. I mean expecting me to keep up with all the readings and everything I think it was geared to older people. And so, I was just trying to keep up and couldn’t make the connection to using it much in my own life. So, I think the class could have been more mindful of everybody in the group and that not all of us have the same life’s experiences or maturity. And, not all of us find it easy to be in conversations of a spiritual nature.

MP 1- She makes a good point that with the spiritual journey that we're all on, and at different places along the way, and somebody young who's not as experienced or maybe someone who hasn't been in church that long, it doesn't matter, evangelism is still for all of us. But the more spiritually awake we are we're going to approach an evangelism situation differently than someone that's not. So, that's a good point that might not have been nailed down as good as it could have been.

FP 1- I'm thinking that someone like this 30 or 35 year old mom who brings her kids to church and Sunday School and on the second time someone meets her and invites her to this class and she's terrified. She doesn't know what going on so I think just be mindful of that.

Dr. M- Good point. Just today in Bible class I was introducing the concept of zero entry Bible study. That we need some topical kinds of conversations on Sunday morning at the education hour where even people with no experience with Bible study can still understand the concepts and not feel completely lost or intimidated. This mission class was not intended for that entry level person, but even in that I feel there is room for situations and questions. What would it be like to have this class for high schoolers and their mission field or parents as they interact with other parents?

FP 3- I thought this class was by invitation first. So you were probably invited to come.

FP 1- Yes, I was.

FP 3- So he (Pastor Benson) knew that you already had enough of a background to handle this. If someone had just dropped in it would have been uncomfortable for them because he was trying to have a focused group. So, I think a follow up of this would be to do it with the young people, and maybe you could help to get them there, and do it in a way that speaks to their situation in life.

P 1- I guess the problem for me is that I didn't really feel part of the group, I mean, everybody was more mature than me and so I kind of felt out of place and like I didn't have anything to contribute. Maybe if there had been a few more teenagers there it would have been different. It's not that I didn't learn anything but I didn't feel I was on the same level as the rest of the group.

Dr. M- Thanks for opening up about that. Now, what else would you like to share about your experience with this course? So, here's your opportunity to share anything about the class that you haven't shared yet.

(Due to recorder noise, a few minutes of the recording, at this point, was unintelligible and could not be transcribed.)

FP 1- This class did get me thinking about some of my non-Christian friends and particularly one girl I know. So, a lot of the times, when points were being made in class, I would think about what I could do to make her understand why I believe what I do and get her to seriously consider it. I think the class could have encouraged more reflecting on specific people we know and how

to share the message with them and not just in general. It could have been more personalized. I mean so many people just don't know, they just don't know, and that's why they don't come to church, that why they don't learn more, because they haven't even opened the Book. And, you have to start at the very, very bottom because they don't know what we know. I think Young Life has been a really, really, good thing in my life and it really given me a lot of hope for people, younger people, who don't want to be involved in church and such.

FP 2- What is Young Life?

FP 1- It's a Christian fellowship group for High School students I've been involved with.

Dr. M- Anybody else who would like to share about you experience with this course?

FP 2- For me, the class triggered a thought that at one time, at least in my mind, we had set out to have our new second service be strictly an outreach to unchurched people: gaining people who wouldn't be comfortable coming to our regular church service. That was the mind set or the thought of our second service and I don't know if we've really kept the course with that. It's kind of just turned into another service and I don't think that was the mind set or the goal or the mission initially.

MP 1- That's right, there is a worship committee to try and figure out the direction of that.

FP 2- Because it becomes to me more and more and more like the traditional service. And, that's not where we were going with that, in my mind initially. You know that vision it was really had by someone else (*former pastor*) but I think others too.

FP 1- That type of church service in other churches is really focused around the younger families and teenagers and we just don't have that average church. And, even I've noticed that a lot of the younger families still go to the traditional service. And so, I think that what happened is a few of our families that hadn't been to church came back but we really haven't gotten very many new people to come.

Dr. M- Well, although these comments are related I'd like to get back to thinking about the course itself. I mean the discussion about the new service is relevant because the course got you thinking about mission outreach collectively so that's valid but don't want to get too far off track just taking about the second service.

MP 1- The course did get me thinking not only collectively about mission of the church but about my personal mission. I do have some family members who are not church goers and I find myself talking about that service a little bit more to them about that. And I'm not sure that before this course that would have hit that mark but I'm finding myself to be more bold about sharing the faith.

FP 2- I think I've learned from this course to be more aware in everyday life of whomever I come in contact with and keeping the things from this course in mind. That's the mission; that we are really out there in the mission field. And if your temper is short or someone cuts you off

in traffic it isn't really the end of the world. And, it your reactions to those things that those people not only see but it your reaction to them. It's part of your life as a missionary.

FP 3- I would like to see the content of this course delivered more from the pulpit because I don't know how else it would get to the rest of the congregation that didn't come to this class, so that they would understand it as well. Because everybody needs to be part of the mission.

MP 2- This particular course could only reach a small percentage of the church. I think it was intended to train the leadership in understanding the mission and then it's our responsibility to cast the vision to the rest of the congregation and lead by example.

(Due to recorder noise, a few minutes of the recording, at this point, was unintelligible and could not be transcribed.)

MP 1- I think this congregation has been moving in a more mission minded direction. The creation of second service is preamble to that along with this course and what we're doing now. That all tells me that we are beginning to focus in that direction, and that's extremely helpful to me personally, but also to the congregation.

Dr. M- You would think the Holy Spirit might be at work here.

MP 1- *(Laughs)* I would think so, and it probably goes back a couple of years. We may disagree about how this building was upgraded but that really started a change of attitude, in my opinion.

Dr. M- Well, thank you very much for your time and help with this. Your responses and time are very valuable. And now, Pastor Dave gets to transcribe all of this. *(Laughs)*

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