

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

RELATIONALLY CONSULTING LEAD PASTORS OF ESTABLISHED
SUBURBAN CONGREGATIONS: CLARIFYING DIRECTION
AS A CATALYST TO RELAUNCH THE CHURCH

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
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BY

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ABSTRACT

The North American church is plateaued and dying. The last decade has seen many attempts to revitalize established churches, with nebulous results at best. Many pastors feel discouraged and hopeless, even to the point of questioning their call. Further exacerbating the issue, the popular writers on church leadership are founding pastors, not pastors who have led established churches through the revitalization process. Many mainline denominations have responded to this crisis by strengthening their emphasis on church planting. However, the Church will experience limited Kingdom impact without a rigorous effort to revitalize established churches.

My project created a model that included a Relaunch Cohort and personal consultations with seven pastors of established churches in suburban communities with three precise goals: (1) Clarify the direction of their churches, (2) lead their churches in a well-defined and time-bound strategic initiatives, and (3) learn proficiencies to lead their churches through revitalization.

All seven pastors reported an increase in their own personal clarity and confidence and described tangible ministry results. Collectively, the pastors reported significant quantitative and qualitative results. The greatest improvement in scale score occurred for clarity, which increased on average by $M = 7.4$ points from the pretest. The pastors conveyed an increase of hope for the future of their congregations and a sense that God used this project as a catalyst or tipping point to revitalize their congregations.

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I am indebted to countless people for the outcome of this project. My heart overfills with gratitude for all who have provided invaluable time and insight to it.

Dr. Lois Olena, Dr. Ava Oleson, and Dr. Cheryl Taylor of the AGTS Doctor of Ministry team have been instrumental to this process. I still remember Ava looking at me during the approval process and encouraging me to pursue this project. These three have given me a remarkable amount of input, time, and support. I also appreciate the enthusiasm that AGTS president Dr. Byron Klaus has shown. Speaking with me at General Presbytery in August of 2013, he stimulated me to think, write, and provide the North American pastor hope and encouragement.

My elders at New Life Church continually demonstrated their support for my project, affording me the time and platform to execute it. Don Hoffman especially added much to the project's completion. Involved with New Life for forty-one years, he has served as elder for each of the four pastors. His contributions to this project—reading and offering insight—immeasurably improved the project's quality.

I offer my heartfelt appreciation to the seven pastors who participated in this project: Andrew Murch, Darrell Johnson, Dave Brakke, Jeff Duchemin, Mike Acker, Scott Harris, and Stan Russell. Their audacious leadership and courageous decision to lead their churches through the revitalization process have been God-honoring and breathtaking.

I am blessed by my two advisers, Dr. Mel Ming, Project Adviser, and Dr. Waldemar Kowalski, Biblical Adviser. Dr. Ming was a significant influencer in creating this program and cheering me on to its completion. Dr. Kowalski stretched me to think through the theological and biblical foundation; his contributions added a layer of irreplaceable substance.

Dr. Stephanie Nance, my editor, has proven invaluable. Five years ago, I called Dr. Nance and asked her to walk with me from start to finish of my doctoral degree. She has done this with grace and fortitude. I would have been unable to make this without her. Her craft of editing is nonpareil.

My mentor and friend, Dr. Alan Johnson, was there the day I bowed my knee to Jesus and was filled with the Spirit at a Bible camp in 1980. He disciplined me the first five years of my Christian life, modeling hunger for God. Five years ago he encouraged me to think through the principles that have influenced the growth and Kingdom impact of New Life Church. God used his words as a catalyst for this project.

My pastor and spiritual father, Dr. Rick Ross, taught me how to lead a church in revitalization. Even before I graduated from Northwest University, he believed in and invested in me, teaching me the ropes of leadership. I watched Pastor Ross lead an historical church into transformational change; his example provided me a baseline for this project.

For my wife of twenty-five years, Jana Jones, I am constantly—and eternally—grateful. Many times I felt overwhelmed, wondering if I could make this project a reality. Jana never doubted for a moment, encouraging me every step of the way. Her undying

love, support, and commitment to my personal growth and well-being is unequalled ... I will love her forever.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To begin I have a deep heart and passion for pastors who lead established churches. The North American church is struggling to respond to a changing society and to find its relevancy in reaching unchurched people. Regardless of denomination or affiliation, collectively, churches remain ineffectual in reaching people for Christ and making disciples. Reeling from years of stagnation and too many failed attempts to revitalize their churches, pastors throughout North America continue to attempt to best understand how to lead their congregations, resulting in great discouragement. Ironically, resources on how to grow churches bombard pastors, but they remain lost in the midst of empty promises for church growth and quick fix answers.

This project purposes to provide hope for pastors and to create a model that helps them clarify the direction of their established churches, leading to a catalyst, or tipping point, to relaunch their congregations. I am convinced that within every pastor God has birthed a dream; however, after years of failure and unsuccessful attempts to move their churches ahead, pastors today stand confused and frustrated.

The Context

To understand the context of this project, one needs awareness of my salvation story—how Jesus transformed my life. Over a period of thirty-three years, I moved from growing up in a broken home to becoming the lead pastor of the church that first impacted my life.

My salvation story begins at the age of thirteen, when I first experienced Renton Assembly of God (known today as New Life Church). A teenager with a recently divorced mother, Renton Assembly provided a bus to pick me up and take me to church. Then, in the summer of 1980, the church gave me a scholarship to attend Cedar Spring Bible Camp. During this week of camp God transformed my life, filled me with the Spirit, and called me into full-time ministry. I returned to Renton Assembly of God as a new Christian with a voracious appetite to learn more about God and His Word. During my high school years, I memorized over half the New Testament through Bible Quiz. I also became actively involved in the youth ministry, and many of the pastors and men in the church disciplined me. God transformed me from a broken teenager into an emerging leader, passionate about the mission of God and eagerly anticipating His direction for my life.

After graduating from high school I attended Northwest University. Throughout college, I served as an intern at Renton Assembly, leading the church's youth ministry during my senior year. Then, in the spring of 1989, a momentous event for Renton Assembly of God and me occurred: Pastor Rick Ross was elected as senior pastor. Shortly thereafter, Pastor Ross offered me the full-time youth pastor position. I graduated that spring and married my wife, Jana, a week later.

I spent the next ten years giving my life to students as a youth pastor, learning the heart and soul of Renton Assembly of God. During this time, I watched Pastor Ross honor the past of this historic church. Founded in 1926, it had consistently grown over the years; yet like many churches, it found itself in a decline, unsure of its direction. With a strong vision and clear direction, Pastor Ross initiated the process of reinventing the

church for the future. My observation of his leading the church through this period of transition serves as the foundation for this project.

I became the District Youth Director of the Northwest Ministry Network in 1999, where I served for five years. In 2003, God began changing my focus from youth ministry to leading a local church. I found myself dreaming of a church that unchurched people would want to attend, ultimately surrendering their hearts to Jesus. This church would preach the Bible in such a way that individuals outside of the faith, or drifting from God, could understand the Word and begin to apply it to their lives. Then, on vacation while attending San Diego's Saddleback Church, I abruptly realized I did not think about their youth ministry at all, only the church and how it was impacting people. I knew something was changing inside of me.

Simultaneously, Pastor Ross recognized his time at New Life Church was coming to a close. In the spring of 2003, I returned to New Life Church, with a mutual understanding of my transitioning into the lead pastor position over the next two to four years. However, the transition happened much more quickly than either of us had anticipated. Pastor Ross resigned that fall, and in December the congregation selected me as their new lead pastor.

Although having grown to an average 1600 in attendance each week, New Life was experiencing a three-year plateau. Changes had to take place for the church to grow and have a greater Kingdom impact on the community. As the new lead pastor, I began to formulate questions to determine our next steps: How does New Life ignite a vision for the future while honoring the legacy of almost eighty years? How does New Life become a more welcoming place for unchurched people to attend? How does New Life attract

young families and people in the community outside of faith? These questions kept me on my knees, in the Word, and in constant dialogue with my staff and Elders. I began to sense God's direction for redesigning how our church should express His message to His people, the community, and the world.

Over the past ten years, the church has added a second campus and grown in attendance from 1,600 to 3,700 people each weekend. New Life currently has 1,800 adults in life groups and averages more than 1,000 children every weekend. After the first five years, the momentum within the church was so strong we had to build a larger auditorium. On Easter 2010, our Sunday services moved into a brand new 36,000 square foot building, featuring two auditoriums and an expansive lobby. Since this move, New Life has seen an average of fifty new families every weekend, baptized 462 people, and grown over 70 percent in weekend attendance!

In October 2010, after moving into our new building, I began my doctoral work at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. Working on my doctorate provided me with an environment to take an honest look at the growth of New Life and ask myself, "Why has New Life experienced this growth and momentum?" This was the genesis of my project. Simply put, I asked, "How can an established church relaunch itself in such a way that the transformation is biblically grounded and will stick into the very fiber of the church?" My experience and research has led me to conclude that significant change begins with the pastor having a solid biblical, theological, and intentional clarity for the church's direction. This clear direction serves as the impetus that causes the catalyst, or tipping point, of the church.

The Problem

In the last decade, authors have written hundreds of books concerning the health of the North American church. Today, the church is deluged with conferences, new books, blogs, leadership cohorts, and systems management ideas on how to do church and be effective; yet churches continue to struggle to impact their communities. This ineffectiveness stems partly from the fact that the majority of the leading voices come from founding pastors, not pastors who have led established churches in revitalization. Leaders such as Rick Warren, Andy Stanley, Craig Groeschel, Steven Furtick, and Perry Noble seek to provide strong, inspirational instruction for all pastors throughout North America—yet they have never led an established church into significant change. Because of this lack of commonality, their models prove problematic for lead pastors who have to build upon the traditions of the past and the foundation of an established church.

These leading voices provide insight and advice that work well for founding pastors. Unfortunately, that same advice may prove damaging to an established pastor who needs to transform a long-standing church into an effective tool for Christ. A vast difference exists between leading a church one has planted and leading an established church built on someone else's foundation. The proficiencies, insights, and leadership decisions are inherently different and, therefore, must receive careful consideration.

To further complicate this problem, church planting has become the focus in the Assemblies of God (AG) and other mainline denominations. Although church planting is mission critical to the AG's future, one of the unintended consequences is that many associate pastors and Bible college students receive the subtle message that if they desire effectiveness, they must plant a church. Today's student, youth pastor, or associate pastor is less likely to dream about leading an established church and more likely to have their

goals focused on planting a new church. As a result, established churches sit empty with the leadership pipeline to lead these churches quickly disappearing.

The Purpose

The purpose of this project is to establish a model of cohorts and personal consultation for lead pastors of established churches, so they may clarify their vision and church's direction. Helping them achieve these goals will ultimately serve as the catalyst, or tipping point, that will invigorate their ministries and relaunch their churches.

Definition of Terms

- **Established Churches**—In this project, this term refers to a church with at least ten years of history and one where the founding pastor does not serve as the current pastor.
- **Relaunch Pastor**—Pastors who lead churches that have plateaued or declined for at least three years and seek to change that position.
- **Deceptively Healthy**—Although the church may appear to have limited problems, the pastor is burdened with the feeling that something within is unhealthy, or something about its direction or future is deficient. These churches are not on life support or in critical care, but are deceptively healthy.
- **Personal Consultation**—Advice and input given based upon a relationship between a pastor and someone he or she trusts. Professional consulting depends upon data and the bottom line; relational consulting is built on trust, respect, and chemistry with the lead pastor.

- Relaunch Cohort—This is a small group of pastors meeting together for a distinct reason—to clarify the direction of their churches and simultaneously lead them in a well-defined and time bound strategic initiative.
- Fresh Eyes—Trusted people who provide pastors with fresh perspective for their congregations, philosophies, structures, decisions, and direction of the church.
- Full Kingdom Impact—The core reason for a church to revitalize is to have achieve full kingdom impact, not personal gain or status.
- Strategic Initiative—This refers to a well-defined and time-bound focus on the part of the pastor to lead their church in a cultural shift, not simply a programmatic change.

Description of the Proposed Project

Scope of the Project

I will select seven lead pastors of established churches in suburban communities to participate in a Relaunch Cohort that will include five personal consultations. This project will help the pastor do three precise things: (1) clarify the direction of their churches, (2) lead their churches in a well-defined and time-bound strategic initiative, and (3) learn proficiencies to lead their congregations in revitalization.

I will start the process of selecting pastors October 2013 and execute three Relaunch Cohorts and five personal consultations from January to June 2014. The Relaunch Cohorts will take place at New Life Church. These sessions will start at 9 a.m. and finish at 3 p.m. During these Relaunch Cohorts, the seven churches will network, collaborate with each other, share the development and progress of their strategic

initiatives, and hear practical teaching on vision, momentum, celebrating short-term wins, personal courage, and mission critical decisions.

I will strategically schedule the personal consultations before and after each Relaunch Cohort by using GoToMeeting for the pastors' convenience. The consultations will discuss what they absorbed during the Relaunch Cohort, ascertain how they realistically applied the information, and examine the progress they are making with their congregations in the strategic initiatives.

I will use the resources discovered in chapters 2 and 3 as the foundation for my personal consultations and Relaunch Cohorts. The insights from my research, and my experience leading New Life for the past ten years, will provide a baseline for our discussions and strategies.

This project will evaluate both quantitative and qualitative effectiveness. As the means for quantitative evaluation, I will create a pretest and posttest, comparing the results with the help of Jeff Fulks. For the qualitative assessment, I will create a Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation that asks questions regarding the project's strengths and weaknesses and the tangible results in the pastors' churches and their lives. This evaluation will provide a place for the pastors to offer honest feedback

The project will help pastors clarify the direction of their churches, which will serve as their catalyst, or tipping point, for significant change. This will include focusing on a six-month strategic initiative while simultaneously learning the proficiencies necessary to lead their churches in revitalization.

This project will not evaluate and assess all the systems and ministries of the church or deal with established churches on life support or in critical care. This project

will focus on “deceptively healthy” congregations. These congregations appear not to have any major problems; however, they are experiencing a plateau or are in decline. Most importantly, these lead pastors feel a deep burden that something is amiss and without change, their church’s future is unpromising. This project will not include churches in rural or urban communities; it will only focus on churches located in suburban communities.

Phases of the Project

This project will include five phases: research, planning, implementation, evaluation, and writing.

Research

The research phase of this project includes establishing the biblical-theological foundations for leading a church in revitalization and realizing full Kingdom impact on the congregation. The second stage of research, the general literature review, will study the process and proficiencies a pastor needs to lead his or her church in revitalization.

Biblical/Theological Literature Review

Pastors must root and ground revitalization efforts in Scripture. One of the core reasons revitalizations fail is that pastors do not have a clear understanding of the character and nature of God and how this impacts the church’s culture and mission. I will research how understanding God’s Trinitarian nature provides the church with a foundation for an outward-focus church. This study will look at three themes throughout Scripture: (1) The Kingdom of God: God’s Expansive Nature, (2) The Incarnation of

Christ: God's Redemptive Nature, and (3) The Sending of the Spirit: God's Empowering Nature.

Furthermore I will establish a biblical foundation for a pastor receiving fresh perspective, not only through the Spirit, but also from trusted relationships that become God's mouthpiece to them. This section will establish the argument for "fresh eyes" by studying four models within narrative passages—two from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament: (1) Moses and Jethro: A Pentateuch Model for Fresh Eyes, (2) Esther and Mordecai: A Historical Model for Fresh Eyes, (3) Peter the Apostle: A First-century Church Model for Fresh Eyes, and (4) Paul the Apostle: An Outsider Model for Fresh Eyes.

General Literature Review

The general literature review will address the process and proficiencies pastors need if they will effectively lead their congregations in revitalization. The first theme is assessment, where a pastor faces congregational realities. During this phase, a pastor must ask him or herself, "What are the current realities of the congregation?" The second theme is clarity, where a pastor defines the clear and compelling direction of the church. During this phase, a pastor asks him or herself, "What is the clear and compelling direction of the church?" The third theme is momentum, where a pastor creates a culture of catalytic change. During this phase, a pastor needs to ask him or herself, "How do I as the pastor identify and cultivate momentum in my congregation?"

Planning

The planning phase comprises three particular steps: (1) selection of seven pastors, (2) provide the pastors with a pretest survey, and (3) help the pastors develop their strategic initiative.

Select Seven Pastors

First, I will select seven pastors who have previously expressed to me their interest to lead their churches in strategic change. Through the process of initial discussions about their churches and their futures, they have demonstrated the leadership capacity necessary to lead their churches through revitalization. The whole selection process will also include trusting God to assemble the proper group of pastors, as He prepares their hearts, minds, and spirits for this kind of catalytic change.

Pretest

Second, I will provide each of the seven pastors a pretest to ensure the pastors are ready to lead their congregations. I will work with Dr. Jeffery Fulks and Dr. Mel Ming in developing this pretest, which will also determine how the lead pastors feels about their churches, discover their perceived hurdles, identify their willingness to effect substantial change, and their commitment to long-term leadership at the church.

Develop Strategic Initiative

Third, I will help the lead pastors develop a well-defined and time-bound strategic initiative. This phase begins with the question, “What is God birthing in the heart of the lead pastor?” During this planning phase, I will meet with each pastor and ask him or her to wrestle with what God is birthing inside of him or her. This step aims to have the lead

pastor determine an actual date he or she will launch the strategic initiative. The precise date provides impetus for the change and supplies motivation and accountability during the whole consulting process.

Implementation

The implementation phase includes the execution of two learning environments: personal consultations and the Relaunch Cohorts.

Personal Consultations

The personal consultations will include five consultations to help the pastors clarify the direction of their churches, dissect the material discussed in the cohorts, discuss proficiencies to lead their churches, and deal with issues that may arise that are unique to their ministry contexts.

Relaunch Cohorts

The Relaunch Cohort will exist as a collaborative environment where the pastors network with each other, share the development and progress of their strategic initiatives, and learn the skills to lead their churches in catalytic change while leading and cultivating momentum within their churches.

Evaluation

The evaluation phase will involve both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative will include pretest and posttest and compare the results with the help of Dr. Jeff Fulks. This will assist me in determining the impact of the personal consultations and Relaunch Cohorts. The analysis will take place between June and July of 2014.

The qualitative analysis will include a Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation that will ask critical questions about the project's strengths and weakness, as well as how the project specifically provided tangible ministry results for them. Using both the posttest and evaluation tools will give me with both quantitative and qualitative data that will provide insight to strengthen this project.

Writing

The fifth phase of this project concludes with writing. In chapter 2, I will review the research discovered in the biblical/theological review and complete the writing by October 2014. Chapter 3 will review my general literature review, which I will bring to completion by January 2014. My chapter 4 will feature the actual description and results of the field project, scheduled for July 2014. Chapter 5, written by August 2014, will include a written project summary, providing project evaluation, implication, and recommendations for the church and for future study. I will conclude the writing phase with chapter 1 by September 2014.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Churches experiencing a decline or plateau may attempt to look for the latest and newest idea or program to create momentum for their congregations. This results in quick fixes that do not provide lasting transformational change. Pastors of established churches need to build a biblical and theological foundation for effective churches that reach their full Kingdom potential. Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren explain the outcome if the missional movement does not ground itself in biblical theology: “We are convinced theology is critical to the formation of missional churches. If we don’t think through our theology, then missional just becomes better tactics and strategies for attracting more people.”¹ Forming a strong biblical foundation is indispensable in the work of relaunching a congregation. Darrel L. Guder articulates that mission serves not merely as a strategic expression or growth tactic but as “an essential theological characteristic of God.”² The church should mirror God’s character, as seen throughout Scripture, not the whim of the pastor motivated primarily by strategy for growth.

This chapter will explore the indispensable theological foundation for the relaunch pastor who desires to lead his or her established church in momentous

¹ Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 91.

² Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 37.

transformational change. Two themes will come under consideration: (1) A Theology of the Outward-focused Church: Rooted in the Nature of God and (2) A Theology of Fresh Eyes: The Need for New Perspective. In order for congregations to experience long-term transformational change, pastors need to deepen their biblical and theological understanding of God's nature and character and seek the perspective of people who can provide fresh eyes.

A Theology of the Outward-focused Church: Rooted in the Nature of God

The theological expression of an outward-focused church finds its roots in the Trinitarian relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Michael Reeves expresses the significance of Trinitarian theology: "The Trinity is the governing center of all Christian belief, the truth that shapes and beautifies all others. The Trinity is the cockpit of all Christian thinking."³ Understanding all the aspects of this triune relationship serves as the foundation for an established church that seeks to create an outward-focused congregation and to experience full Kingdom potential in its community and world.

Lesslie Newbigin explains that in order to understand God's mission, a person has to understand the dynamic relationship of God reflected in the Trinitarian relationship. Each person of the Godhead reflects a multifaceted expression of the Church's outward character.⁴ Every characteristic of the triune God speaks to a congregation's conviction of

³ Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 16.

⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 897-902, Kindle.

having an outward focus to its community and world. David W. Congdon clarifies that the foundation of mission theology is “steadfastly rooted in the Christian gospel of the triune God, and in the proclamation of humanity's reconciliation with God in Jesus of Nazareth.”⁵

An outward-focused church reflects the heart, nature, and beauty of the triune God. The relaunch pastor lives with a deep conviction that the triune God actively works in people's hearts outside the church walls and the church simply mirrors God's character. This section examines three characteristics of the triune God: (1) The Kingdom of God: God's Expansive Nature, (2) The Incarnation of Christ: God's Redemptive Nature, and (3) The Sending of the Spirit: God's Empowering Nature.

The Kingdom of God: God's Expansive Nature

God desires for His Kingdom to expand, grow, and have apostolic influence in the world. He cares more about Kingdom potential than about any one particular local church. God's primary way to expand the Kingdom, however, happens through His people as the Spirit empowers them to take His redemptive message to the world—this is the Church. Reflecting God's character and nature means the local church fully engages in Kingdom potential in its community and world. Established congregations naturally drift toward an ingrown state. Metaphorically, the church has a tendency to become a swamp more than a river. A swamp has restricted boundaries, does not contribute to a broader body of water, and eventually begins to decay. A river always moves and

⁵ David W. Congdon, “A Primer on Missional Theology: Overview and Outline,” *The Fire and the Rose*, accessed November 5, 2013, <http://fireandrose.blogspot.com/2008/09/primer-on-missional-theology-overview.html>.

changes, contributes to a greater body of water, and overflows with life. The local church adds to a greater body of water, the expansion of God’s Kingdom to every tribe and nation.

Established churches were often originally started with the purpose of reaching new people groups and reproducing itself, thereby increasing the Kingdom’s influence within the context of a specific community. Over time, however, an established church can easily lose the mystery of expanding the kingdom of God to every person, tribe, and nation. Such a church may become ingrown and content—swamp-like. This church will rationalize itself with spiritual vernacular such as, “We may not be growing, but we are spiritually deep.” To believe a congregation can possess spiritual depth with limited influence on the Kingdom’s expansion signifies a deceptively healthy church. Relaunch pastors need a deep theological conviction that God desires for His people to have Kingdom influence in the communities in which they live and in the world.

The Notion of Blessing

The theme of blessing and life threads itself throughout the Genesis narratives,⁶ providing a theological framework and an understanding of God’s character. God pronounces blessing three times in the creation account: (1) On day five God blesses the creatures of the sea and the birds of the air, (2) on day six God blesses humanity, and (3) on day seven God blesses the Sabbath (Gen. 1:22, 27; 2:3). His blessing in the creation account primarily associates with reproduction, expansion, and multiplication. God creates seed-bearing plants, fruit producing trees, and creatures of the sea that fill the

⁶ John Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *Genesis-Leviticus*, vol. 1 of *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 67.

water and birds that increase on the earth.⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright defines the core purpose of God’s blessing: “Blessing is the way God enables His creation to be fertile and fruitful, to grow and to flourish. It is in the most comprehensive sense God’s purpose for His creation.”⁸ God’s blessing holds divine purpose and design and is not meant for personal gain and prosperity.

God’s first instruction to humanity shows the intrinsic link between His blessing and His expansion. “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it’” (Gen. 1:28).⁹ God creates humanity to scatter and to fill the earth. Wright defines God’s blessing as “the concept of fruitfulness, multiplication, spreading, filling and abundance. It is a richly life-affirming word.”¹⁰ Fundamentally, God blesses His creation so they can reproduce, give life, and multiply—the expansion of humanity, starting in the Garden of Eden and ultimately throughout the world.

The purpose of the initial blessing enfolds three mandates: be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth, and take care of the land (Gen. 1:28). Joseph Castleberry refers to these as the three mandates of humans: the reproduction mandate (“be fruitful and multiply”), the migration mandate (“fill the earth”), and a cultural mandate (“subdue the

⁷ See Genesis 1:11, 22.

⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 1023-1024, Kindle.

⁹ All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, come from the New International Version.

¹⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 989-992, Kindle.

earth”).¹¹ God originally designed humanity to reproduce, migrate, and build new cultures. C. Norman Kraus stresses the weight of humanity’s critical obligation to God: “And these mandates were to be kept as a profound spiritual responsibility to God, the Creator.”¹² Humans reflect God’s original intent and the image of God given to them at creation¹³ when they multiply and give life to others (reproduction mandate), migrate and explore new lands and territories (migration mandate), and build cultures, including new systems and governments (cultural mandate).

God never intended His blessing for temporary pleasure but for expanding His purpose and the Kingdom. North American pastors may view God’s blessing through their own worldviews and experiences; however, this often conflicts with the truths found in the Old and New Testaments. The biblical understanding of God’s blessing does not reflect the accumulation of temporary treasure on earth but rather the storing up of eternal treasure in heaven.¹⁴

Some North American churches associate the results of God’s blessing with larger buildings, more attendees at weekend services, and flourishing operating budgets. Others associate God’s blessing with deeper Bible study and their own definition of “anointed worship,” regarding numerical results as irrelevant. Although none of these measurable

¹¹ Joseph L. Castleberry, “Procreation, Migration, and Dominion in Genesis 1:28 and Its Missiological Importance” (paper presented at the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Eugene, OR, March 2009).

¹² C. Norman Kraus, *The Community of the Spirit* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 40.

¹³ God seared His image into the hearts of humankind. Genesis 1:27 records, “So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.” Genesis 2:7 gives meaning to the image of God by describing the creation of humankind: “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” God literally breathes the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam.

¹⁴ See Matthew 6:19.

results are inconsequential, seeing the salvation of men and women proves to be the most valuable aspect of storing up eternal treasure—the expansion of the kingdom of God.¹⁵

Pastors and congregations can mislead themselves into believing they are spiritually healthy when they only measure the temporal results, becoming deceptively healthy.

The Fall of Humankind

The desire for expansion and multiplication does not exist as a part of humanity's sinful nature. The consequences of sin distorted God's initial intent to reproduce, migrate, and build new cultures. Castleberry explains the effect of sin on humanity and on the fulfillment of God's original purpose:

The fall, however, threw the mission of God and humanity out of sync. After the curse of Genesis 3, sin compromised each area of the human mission. The pains of childbirth accompanied reproduction. Thorns and thistles and painful toil complicated dominion over the earth. Migration took place in the context of banishment from the garden of God's presence. Human work, out of sync with God, no longer necessarily reflects God's Kingship through God's human regents. In contrast, the "prince of this world" rises up against the rule of God.¹⁶

God creates Adam and Eve, placing them in the garden to work the land and take care of it; however, the Fall dilutes God's original purpose. After expulsion from the garden, the human race continues in a sinful and selfish downward spiral, disgracing God's original design for humanity. Cain epitomizes selfishness and pride when he murders his brother.

In time, the human race becomes so wicked that God grieves and concludes that every inclination of the human heart is evil all the time (Gen. 6:5). God then destroys the

¹⁵ Waldemar Kowalski, interview by author, Seattle, December 8, 2013.

¹⁶ Joseph Castleberry, *The Kingdom Net: Learning to Network Like Jesus* (Springfield, MO: My Healthy Church, 2013), 1614-1619, Kindle.

earth with a flood. However, even in the midst of God’s pain and regret, He reveals His expansive nature and character. After the flood, God reinstates His original design through His covenant with Noah “As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it” (9:7). God also saves Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. “These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth” (v. 19).

God saves Noah’s family, desiring humanity to live in relationship with Him and bring glory to His Kingdom design by continuing the three mandates: to reproduce, migrate, and build new cultures. Reflecting on how God called humanity back to His original design after the flood, Wright explains, “In the aftermath of the flood God renews His promise to creation, and human beings are again sent forth under God’s blessing to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 9:1).”¹⁷ However, sin, pride, and selfishness continue to fuel the hearts of humanity.

The Tower of Babel

The first ten chapters of Genesis exhibit how the sinful nature of humanity wars against and distorts God’s divine purpose to reproduce, migrate, and build new cultures. The story of the tower of Babel distinctly reveals humankind’s deceptive and sinful nature and the natural swamp-like temptation for an established church. The people of Babel decide to settle and find a comfortable plain in Shinar (Gen 11:2), directly opposing God’s original plan for humanity. Allen S. Maller provides understanding as to why humanity drifts toward an ingrown society:

¹⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 2566-2567, Kindle.

In the aftermath of a catastrophically destructive flood, many generations of humans were fearful and anxiety-ridden. They felt very weak and vulnerable; and they only wanted to huddle together in one place. Humanity did not want curiosity to lead people to explore other locations and thus promote change and development. This went against God's blessing to fill up the earth in Genesis 9:7.¹⁸

The people reason, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). The people at the tower of Babel do not want to scatter over the face of the earth. Bernard Anderson speaks to the impetus of the builders: “The intention of the builders was to gather the people into a centralized location, thereby resisting God's purpose that they should multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.”¹⁹ They want to centralize humankind; God wants to decentralize the population. Miroslav Volf offers further insight regarding the people’s intention:

To counter the threat of disintegration and to triumph over insignificance, they build a city and a tower ‘with its top in the heavens’ (v. 4). A single place, a single tongue, and a single tower will provide the pillars for a centralized political, economic, and religious system with universal pretensions. Humanity will be securely unified and manifestly great.²⁰

The intentions of the people were grounded in safety, arrogance and contradictive to the God’s original design to “Be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:28).

Volf speaks about the people’s fear and desire for false glory. “A misplaced fear of disintegration nourished by the desire for false glory led to the rejection of salutary

¹⁸ Allen S. Maller, “The City of Babel and its Tower,” accessed January 10, 2014, http://jbq.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/403/jbq_403_towerofbabel.pdf.

¹⁹ Bernard W. Anderson, “Unity and Diversity in God's Creation: A Study of the Babel Story,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 5 (1978): 74.

²⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 226.

‘scattering’ and to the oppressive universal ‘gathering.’”²¹ Humanity fears scattering and will do everything they can to prevent it. Walter Brueggemann depicts how this fear of migration paralyzed humanity. “Humankind fears scattering and takes action to prevent it.”²² This ingrown mentality coupled with fear and desire for false glory acts as a form of deception, and today it still poisons established congregations of every size, affiliation, and denomination.

God sees the people’s pride and their attempt to gather all the people on the earth in one place; therefore, He confuses their language. Castleberry adds some clarity to God’s purpose for confusing the language: “When the people at Babel refused to scatter and tried to draw all humanity back together, God turbo-charged the diversity process by confusing their languages.”²³ No longer able to communicate, the people abandon building their city and its tower and begin to disburse. “So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city” (Gen. 11:8). God confuses their language because they are shirking from His original design and scattered the people all over the world.

Whatever the motivation of God’s heart, He uses this opportunity to return the people back to His original design for humanity. Brueggemann reflects that in some contexts “scatter” refers to exile and is a negative term;²⁴ however, in this context scattering “is blessed, sanctioned, and willed by Yahweh. It can be argued that ... the

²¹ Volf, 227.

²² Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 98.

²³ Castleberry, *The Kingdom Net*, 1063-1064, Kindle.

²⁴ See Ezekiel 11:17; 20:34, 41; 28:25

intent of creation finally comes to fulfillment (Gen 1:28).”²⁵ God disperses the people so they will fulfill His edict to reproduce, migrate, and build new cultures.

Established churches often succumb to the temptation to create a safe place to settle, losing sight of reproducing themselves, reaching new people groups, and creating a culture where the church can have full Kingdom potential in its community and world. The tower of Babel temptation also occurs at practical levels, including monies spent on missions’ endeavors, community outreach, and investing in new church plants. All too easily, pastors begin to think in terms of one place, one location, and one tower. Congregations lackadaisically stop “storing up eternal treasure” by neglecting to invest in influencing the community and the world for the Kingdom’s sake. Such churches yield to the tower of Babel temptation by hoarding their resources for their name and legacy.

Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant serves as a clear picture that God’s original intent for humanity includes not only reproduction and care for creation but also ultimately expansion of God’s Kingdom to all the nations, tribes, and people. The human race continued to spiral downward in selfishness, pride, and despair. As a result, God creates a new covenant with humankind, choosing an elderly and childless couple, making them “the launch pad of His whole mission of cosmic redemption.”²⁶ God forms a covenant with Abram:

Go from your country, your people and your father’s household 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

²⁵ Brueggemann, 98.

²⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 962-963, Kindle.

whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you (Gen. 12:1-3).

God calls Abram to have a son (reproduce) and to go from his country (migrate); after he does this, God will make Abram into a great nation (cultural). From that moment forward, humanity's three mandates possess a spiritual and Kingdom dynamic. Rather than just a concern for the earth and the human race, the concern centers on the formation of God's people walking under the blessing of a covenant relationship. God blesses Abram not for an accumulation of things but for Abram's advancement of His Kingdom. God promises Abram a blessing for all people. Reggie McNeal communicates the purpose of Abram's blessing: "God chooses to bless Abraham with an end in mind. His ultimate endeavor is to bless the world through Abraham. God chose to embody His blessing in a people who were to show the world who He is and what He wants them to enjoy."²⁷

In a real sense, Abraham served as God's first missionary to the world. He was the father of Israel, the nation that would ultimately bless all other the nations. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. reflects on the divine purpose of blessing Abraham: "The whole purpose of God was to bless one people so that they might be the channel through which all the nations of the earth might receive a blessing. Israel was to be God's missionary to the world—and thereby so were all who believed in this same gospel."²⁸ Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden describe the intrinsic connection of Abraham's blessing and humanity: "God's promise to all the nations, and the promise to Abraham, was likewise a promise

²⁷ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 27.

²⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 368-369, Kindle.

for blessing to all peoples.”²⁹ God’s blessing of Abraham serves as a conduit for His Kingdom expansion to every tribe, nation, and people group.

The promises of the Abrahamic covenant set the agenda not only for the rest of the book of Genesis but also for all subsequent Scripture to describe the entire story of God, including its continuance to a New Testament fulfillment in Jesus Christ.³⁰ The Early Church witnesses God’s Kingdom expansive nature beginning with the Day of Pentecost. Luke records the Church first growing to 3,000 (Acts 2:41), then 5,000 (4:4), and finally in Acts 6 he stops recording the numbers, explaining, “the number of disciples increased rapidly” (6:7). The Apostle John describes a beautiful picture of the expansion of God’s Kingdom, including all tribes, nations, and people groups in heaven one day. In essence, he describes the expansive nature of God in its fullness:

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 and before 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).

That day will bring the culmination of the first commission, the Abrahamic covenant, and the Great Commission.

The remarkable and unmistakable similarities between the first instructions given in Eden, the Abrahamic covenant, and the Great Commission given by Jesus reveal the expansive nature of God’s Kingdom in a faultless manner. God first instructs humanity to “be fruitful and increase in numbers” (Gen. 1:28). He wants His people to reproduce and

²⁹ Samuel Vinay and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 173.

³⁰ Desmond T. Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 2003), 16.

increase in numbers. Abram’s covenant promise declares, “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (12:2). The Kingdom exists for all people on the earth—every nation, tribe, and people group. The Great Commission instructs disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). The Kingdom’s message as expressed in the Great Commission exists not only for the Jews, but also for all nations and people groups.

The Incarnation of Christ: God’s Redemptive Nature

The church exists as God’s incarnate expression of redemption in its community and world. Lois Barrett comprehends the divine purpose as to why the Church is described as the body of Christ: “It is no accident that the church is called the ‘body of Christ.’ It continues as an incarnate expression of the life of God.”³¹ The relaunch pastor holds a deep theological conviction that his or her church must be redemptive at its core because it reflects God’s character and nature. By contrast, the deceptively healthy church rationalizes its judgmental attitudes toward people outside of the faith with spiritual terminology believing that “we need to separate ourselves from those sinners.” They see the church as an institution for unadulterated saints, not a place for broken people in need of God’s redemptive kingdom. David Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw describe God’s redemptive nature in this manner: “This triune God is never distant and aloof, drawing near only in the past but today removed and unmoved. God is always drawing near, entering in, walking beside the world in all its distress and uncertainty, in all its

³¹ Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 350-351, Kindle.

poverty and depravity.”³² God’s redemptive nature appears throughout Scripture, beginning with Him walking through the garden looking for Adam and Eve to His presence in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Rooted in Old Testament

The Old Testament contains a rich vocabulary of redemption. God’s redemptive character first appears in the Garden of Eden. After the Fall of humanity, God walks through the garden in the cool of the day. Desiring a close relationship with His creation, God demonstrates His love and redemption toward sinful humanity. Adam and Eve hear His redemptive voice asking, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9). The Creator of the universe chooses not to relate to the world from a distance but to take on human form and go for a walk among His creatures, personally engaging them in regards to the recent events.³³

At the heart of the redemptive image resides the idea of paying a price to regain something that would otherwise be forfeited. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch define the two-fold meaning of redemption:

Redemptive action may take two forms, (a) a redemption by power, whereby people are released from slavery through an act of violence, or (b) redemption by purchase where a kinsman-redeemer pays the price to free a person sold into servitude.³⁴

³² David E. Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw, *Prodigal Christianity: 10 Signposts into the Missional Frontier*, Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2013), 1208-1210, Kindle.

³³ Terence E. Fretheim, “Genesis,” in vol. 1 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 362.

³⁴ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 172.

The formation of God's people shows how God frees them from slavery and pays the ultimate price for their redemption. God's redemptive nature resides at the core of how the Church ministers in the world.

Exodus uses redemptive language as Moses works to free the Israelites from the grip of Pharaoh.³⁵ Wright identifies the exodus as the prime Old Testament model of redemption: "The exodus provides the prime Old Testament model of God acting as Redeemer. Redemption is an act that simultaneously demonstrates God's faithfulness, justice and love."³⁶ Among the rich, poetic imagery used to describe the exodus and its historic and cosmic significance resides this redemption metaphor. William VanGemeeren traces God's redemptive nature from the patriarch Abraham to God's covenant relationship with Israel:

Through the delivery out of Egypt, through the provisions of water, manna, and quails, and through the theophany at Mount Sinai, Yahweh had revealed Himself as their Redeemer-King. He is the God who made a covenant with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; confirmed His covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai; and swore fidelity to His word.³⁷

God initiates Israel's restoration by calling Moses to deliver His people from the bondage of Pharaoh. God tells Moses to say to the Israelites, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment" (Exod. 6:6). After the deliverance of the people from bondage and the crossing of the Red

³⁵ This is the first explicit use of the redemption language.

³⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 459-462, Kindle. Although this serves as the prime Old Testament model, other Old Testament examples exist.

³⁷ William A. VanGemeeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 52.

Sea, Moses expresses his faith for the present and his hope for the future because of God's act of redemption: "In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling" (15:13). God's act of redemption not only delivers them from bondage, it leads them into the Promised Land.

The Incarnation of Christ

God's redemptive nature finds its underpinning in the Old Testament; however, it finds full expression in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Barrett accentuates the incarnation of Christ as God's divine apex, explaining, "God's mission unfolded in the history of God's people across the centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God's work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected."³⁸ The Apostle John describes Jesus' coming to earth: "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Incarnation literally means "in the flesh," and "refers to the historic act whereby the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity—without ceasing to be God—took upon Himself human nature, becoming fully human."³⁹ God is fully present in the person of Jesus Christ. Alan Hirsch explains the deity of Christ: "In Jesus the eternal God is fully present to us. Jesus was no mere representative or prophet sent from God; He was God in the

³⁸ Barrett, 181-184.

³⁹ Sudhakar Mondithoka, "Mission Theology of Incarnation," in *Dictionary of Mission Theology*, ed. John Corrie (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 177.

flesh (John 1:1-15; Col. 2:9).”⁴⁰ The coming of God constituted an actual dwelling among humanity, not just a momentary theophany (John 1:14).

Roxburgh and Boren describe the incarnation of Christ as God moving into the neighborhood: “He comes to us on our level, and He does this in a very specific, local way. He ‘moved into the neighborhood.’”⁴¹ God came through the person of Jesus Christ so He could provide the ultimate act of redemption. Hirsch echoes this same persuasion about God’s incarnation: “When God came into our world in and through Jesus, the Eternal moved into the neighborhood and took up residence among us (John 1:14).”⁴² The Son of God did not stay in the safety of heaven removed from human sin, suffering, and tragedy. Paul describes the incarnation as Christ who “made Himself nothing” (Phil. 2:7). The word *kenosis* in this text means “self-emptying.” Gordon Fee explains how this looked for Jesus: “Christ did not empty Himself of anything; He simply ‘emptied Himself,’ poured Himself out.”⁴³

God poured himself into humanity by taking on human nature and living a human life, enduring sorrows, feeling hurts, and bearing humanity’s sin and death. Paul describes the incarnation of Christ in beautiful language: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in

⁴⁰ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 132.

⁴¹ Roxburgh and Boren, 94.

⁴² Hirsch, 132.

⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 6079-6084, Kindle.

human likeness” (Phil. 2:6-7). He did not stay aloof from the people others would expect Him to avoid. He made friends with the dropouts and outcasts of society and touched the untouchables.⁴⁴ The incarnation of Christ has profound implications for the Church in regards to how it deals with the community and those outside the faith.

The Sacrifice of Christ

God demonstrates His redemptive nature in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ: “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). Fee believes the cross reflects the true redemptive character of God. “What is thus being urged upon the Philippians is not a new view of Jesus, but a reinforcement, on the basis of Paul’s view of the crucifixion, that in the cross God’s true character, His outlandish, lavish expression of love, was fully manifested.”⁴⁵ Jesus’ death reflects the depth of God’s redemptive nature. Fee portrays Jesus’ redemptive character as a “self-sacrifice—a cruel, humiliating death on a cross—for the sake of those He loves.”⁴⁶ God provides the ultimate act of redemption when Christ Jesus dies on the cross, crying out to the Father, “It is finished” (John 19:30). At this moment the curtain in the temple tears in two,⁴⁷ and Christ pays the redemptive price for all humankind. Christ sees Himself as giving His life as a ransom.⁴⁸ Guder

⁴⁴ Mondithoka, 178.

⁴⁵ Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 6060-6062, Kindle.

⁴⁶ Gordon Fee, *Philippians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 97.

⁴⁷ See Luke 23:45.

⁴⁸ Mondithoka, 79.

underscores the heart of the Christian message: “The Christian message states that the very heart of the good news that is God's mission is the death of Jesus on the cross.”⁴⁹

Christian tradition views Christ's cross as the climax of the full and final revelation of God's love and justice. Ultimately, this makes every Christian community a community of the cross.⁵⁰ Christ's sacrifice fulfills what God had promised to His Old Testament people: a covering for their sins, forgiveness, and cleansing.⁵¹ Newbigin calls the death of Jesus, “The hinge upon which all happenings turn.”⁵² The hope of redemption for past, present, and future sin hinges on the death of the Savior Jesus Christ.

The Redemptive Church

An established church will continue in its downward spiral until it decides to participate in the life of Christ and His redemptive mission to the world. Ross Hastings believes an ingrown and defeated church must return to the life of Christ. “Participation in the life of the triune God as revealed in Christ is the greatest key to releasing the church from its besieged and defeated position.”⁵³ Jesus provides a model for incarnational ministry that every congregation needs in order to breathe life into the church. Frost and Hirsch view God's redemptive nature as a model for the Church. “God is the redeemer, and in that mode he provides a model for how we can act in the world. To redeem is to buy back that which is lost, clean it up, and put it back to its original

⁴⁹ Guder, 41.

⁵⁰ Mondithoka, 78.

⁵¹ VanGemeren, 405.

⁵² Newbigin, 700-701, Kindle.

⁵³ Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 839-840, Kindle.

intended use.”⁵⁴ James D. Hernando sees the Church as responsible for God’s redemptive mission: “As God’s agent it [the Church] is instrumental in carrying out His redemptive mission on earth, not in the sense of adding to the work of Christ on the cross, but facilitating its appropriation by a world in need.”⁵⁵ God’s agent—the Church—continues to reflect God’s redemptive voice throughout the earth.

Christians often think of Christ’s suffering as His sole act of redemption. God’s redemptive character, however, displays not only in the cross but also in Jesus’ life and ministry. David J. Bosch describes Jesus’ life as a call, inviting people into redemption: “The call is an act of grace, a restoration of fellowship, the beginning of a new life—even for tax-collectors.”⁵⁶ Roxburgh and Boren observe how Jesus spent time where people lived: “When we read the New Testament, we see that almost all of the stories occurred in the neighborhood. Jesus came where people lived in their daily, ordinary stuff. He did not wait for the ideal religious time or setting and then ask people to come to Him. He went to them.”⁵⁷

Jesus was a friend of sinners. He ate with people and discussed the kingdom of God in the context of relationship. Hirsch observes that if the Church plans to be the body of Christ, it must follow Jesus’ footsteps and model incarnational ministry: “Jesus mixed with people from every level of society. He ate with Pharisees as well as tax collectors

⁵⁴ Frost and Hirsch, 171-172.

⁵⁵ James D. Hernando, “What Was the Church Created to Be?” accessed October 1, 2013, http://www.agts.edu/faculty/faculty_publications/Hernando/What%20is%20the%20Church-artic.pdf.

⁵⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 928-929, Kindle.

⁵⁷ Roxburgh and Boren, 94-95.

and prostitutes. If we are to follow in His footsteps, His people will need to be directly and actively involved in the lives of the people we are seeking to reach.”⁵⁸ McNeal describes the hope the Church offers the world: “We are to be the aroma of Jesus in the cemetery of decaying flesh. We are to be different in the hope we offer, in the grace we exhibit, and in the obvious sacrifice of love we display in dealing with others.”⁵⁹ This hope resides so central to the Church’s mission that Jesus promised the third person of the Trinity to empower the Jerusalem church to take His redemptive Kingdom to the world.

The Sending of the Spirit: God’s Empowering Nature

God originally intended for humankind to scatter; ultimately, this would find fulfillment through His sending of the Spirit who would empower the Church to take the Kingdom’s redemptive message to the known world. R. P. C. Hanson explains the relationship the Spirit of God has with the Church: “The Spirit of God is the dynamic, life-giving power of the Church, the unseen Lord, Master, Guide, and Inspirer of the Christian community.”⁶⁰ In Acts 1:8, Jesus links the Spirit’s mission with His disciples’ empowerment for ministry. “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.” The Greek word *dunamis* translates as “power,” meaning “potential

⁵⁸ Hirsch, 134.

⁵⁹ McNeal, 24.

⁶⁰ R. P. C. Hanson, “The Divinity of the Holy Spirit,” *Church Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1969): 302.

for functioning in some way, power, might, strength, force, capability.”⁶¹ God’s empowering nature gives the Church power, might, strength, and force.

Wright explains the specific role the Spirit has in reflecting God’s empowering nature: “It is very clear that the Spirit of God is synonymous with power.”⁶² Stanley M. Horton traces the Spirit’s power to the covenant with Abram: “The *dunamis* relates to the promise God gave to Abraham that He would bless all the families of the earth”⁶³ Jesus said God’s *dunamis* will send His Church to expand God’s redemptive Kingdom to all the people and tribes of every nation.

Israel’s Leaders Empowered

Throughout Israel’s history, God used Spirit-empowered leaders to guide the nation. Newbigin describes the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament: “In the Old Testament the Spirit is the living active power of God, giving life to all and empowering men to perform special service or to receive special revelation.”⁶⁴ God called and empowered Israel’s leaders at every juncture and moment of the nation. Wilf Hildebrandt provides a historical perspective of the third person of the Trinity: “In every stage of their history, Yahweh gives Israel leaders who are enabled for their various roles by the

⁶¹ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁶² Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 41.

⁶³ Stanley M. Horton, *The Book of Acts: The Wind of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: The Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 22.

⁶⁴ Newbigin, 313, Kindle.

ruach.”⁶⁵ Walter Eichrodt describes *ruach* as the Spirit who “now permeates individuals, transforms them, and gives them power to shape their lives in accordance with God’s commands.”⁶⁶ Many examples reveal how God’s Spirit empowered Israel’s prophets, priest, and leaders:

- Pharaoh recognized the Spirit of God on Joseph (Gen. 41:38).
- Bezalel, son of Uri, was filled with the Spirit of God (Exod. 31:2-4).
- The seventy elders were filled with the Spirit of God that rested upon Moses (Num. 11:16-18, 25).
- Balaam blessed the Israelites by the Spirit of God that came upon him (Num. 24:1-3).
- Joshua, son of Nun, was selected as the successor of Moses because God recognized the Spirit of God on him (Num. 27:18).
- Gideon experienced the power of the Spirit to defeat the Midianites (Judg. 6:34).
- Samson performed miraculous feats of physical strength because the Spirit of the Lord was on him (Judg. 14:6, 19).
- Samuel anointed Saul with oil, and the Spirit of God came upon him, enabling Saul to serve as Israel’s first king (1 Sam. 10:6).
- The Spirit of the Lord empowered David when Samuel anointed him to become the second king over Israel (1 Sam. 16:13).
- Elijah granted Elisha a final request, giving Elisha a “double portion” of his *ruach* (2 Kings 2:9, 15).⁶⁷
- The prophet Isaiah recognized, “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me because the LORD has anointed me” (Isa. 61:1). This statement acknowledged his own prophetic ministry in the 8th century BC and foretold a key element of the future ministry of the Messiah.
- God told the prophet Zerubbabel that all of his words and actions must come under the power of the Spirit: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (Zech. 4:6).

A four-hundred-year gap occurs between the end of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament period. During this time, the expansive nature of God’s redemptive Kingdom appeared to have come to a halt; however, even though no

⁶⁵ Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 104.

⁶⁶ Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, translated by Cosslette Quin (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 499-500.

⁶⁷ Hildebrandt, 140.

canonical material exists, the Spirit of God was actively at work in the backdrop of humanity. According to Galatians 4:4, when the “set time had fully come” God sent His son Jesus to the earth. The Spirit’s work then manifested in the ministries of John the Baptist and the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Empowered

Jesus’ life and ministry reveal God’s active presence through the third person of the Trinity. From the announcement of His birth, Jesus had an intrinsic connection with the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:35 an angel announces to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” The Holy Spirit would continue to overshadow Christ’s teachings, miracles, and life. Scripture reveals the Spirit’s power on Christ’s life at His baptism, His temptation in the desert, and His inauguration into ministry.

When Jesus begins His ministry, He is baptized in the Jordan River. David E. Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw describe the Spirit’s work at Jesus’ baptism:

Indeed, just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the deep from which creation emerged out of chaos and darkness, so now the Spirit hovers over the one emerging from the waters of the Jordan, the one who will confront chaos and darkness. The Father, Son, and Spirit—God the three in one, God the Trinity—are acting in Jesus’s baptism to begin new work, tearing open a new possibility for a wandering and estranged world.⁶⁸

During Jesus’ baptism, “the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove” (Luke 3:22). Robert Menzies describes an intrinsic link between Pentecost and Jesus’ baptism:

⁶⁸ Fitch and Holsclaw, 1171-1175, Kindle.

The parallels between Jesus' experience at the Jordan and that of the disciples at Pentecost are striking and clearly intentional. Both occur at the beginning of the respective missions of Jesus and the early church, both center on the coming of the Spirit, both are described as a prophetic anointing in the context of a sermon that cites Old Testament prophecy.⁶⁹

Next, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness in order for Satan to tempt Him for forty days.⁷⁰ The Spirit of God, however, gives Jesus *dunamis* to overcome the temptations of the enemy. Luke records that after forty days, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside" (Luke 4:14). Jesus enters His teaching and healing ministry in the Spirit's power, accomplishing God's mission solely because He depends on God's empowering nature through the Spirit.

At the inauguration of Jesus' ministry, the Spirit's *dunamis* is seen as Jesus opens the scroll and reads from the prophet Isaiah, prophesying about His earthly ministry. As He reads, Jesus is keenly aware of God's empowerment as revealed in the Old Testament. Newbigin depicts how Jesus interprets the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 as foreshadowing His ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good tidings to the afflicted, He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound: to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).⁷¹ Jesus ministered in the power of God's Spirit, healing, preaching, and casting out demons—not in His own strength or power.

⁶⁹ Robert Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story is Our Story* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), 381-388, Kindle.

⁷⁰ See Luke 4:1 and Matthew 4:1.

⁷¹ Newbigin, 312-319, Kindle.

The Empowered Church

The Church experiences God’s empowering nature through the third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. Ray S. Anderson explains the importance of the Spirit’s empowerment: “The Holy Spirit is not an accessory but rather the engine that propels and the fuel that empowers.”⁷² Relaunch pastors must utterly depend on the third person of the Trinity, not as an accessory but for empowerment to lead their congregations and influence their communities for Christ.

Jesus spends three years preparing His disciples to lead a movement that would expand God’s Kingdom and spread God’s redemptive plan throughout the world. However, during the days prior to His crucifixion, the disciples feel frightened, perplexed, and overwhelmed.⁷³ Jesus knows the disciples cannot fulfill God’s redemptive plan for the world in their own finite strength and power; therefore, He promises to dwell with them, providing *dunamis* through the Holy Spirit. “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). The Holy Spirit’s power, as promised by Jesus and sent by the Father, takes the group of ordinary disciples and empowers them to look beyond their human frailty to preach the Kingdom’s message to the world.

Pneumatology serves as a central focus of Pentecostal theology. Without much focus upon pneumatological nuances and agreements, the first-century Christians understood that the Spirit empowered God’s people.⁷⁴ Fee argues, “in contrast to the common understanding of contemporary believers, first century believers understood—

⁷² Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 69.

⁷³ Judas betrayed Christ, Peter denied Christ, and Thomas doubted Christ’s resurrection.

and assumed—the Spirit to be manifested in power. So much is this so that the terms ‘Spirit’ and ‘power’ at times are used interchangeably.” The theological discussions of pastors and congregants alike prove fruitless when they do not acknowledge the reality of the Spirit’s power in the lives of God’s people.⁷⁵

Bosch outlines how ordinary disciples received power to transform a world: “It is the Spirit who emboldens previously timid disciples. Through the Spirit, God is in control of the mission.”⁷⁶ The Spirit gives the Church *dunamis* so it can fulfill its mission.

Menzies speaks of Pentecost in a missional context: “The Spirit of Pentecost is, in reality, the Spirit for others—the Spirit that compels and empowers the church to bring the ‘good news’ of Jesus to a lost and dying world.”⁷⁷ Newbigin describes the Spirit’s role in the mission of the Church: “Mission is not just something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who is Himself the witness, who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey.”⁷⁸

While relaunch pastors realize the Spirit empowers and directs them, they also need to understand that God’s Spirit will utilize their human relationships to speak and direct them during critical junctions in their ministries, providing them with fresh eyes.

⁷⁵ Gordon Fee, *God Empowering Presence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 35.

⁷⁶ Bosch, 3017-3022, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Menzies, 888-889, Kindle.

⁷⁸ Newbigin, 776-778, Kindle.

A Theology of Fresh Eyes: The Need for New Perspective

Established church pastors often have a subtle theology that proclaims, “All I need is God,” or “If I pray more, the church will have full Kingdom potential.” At first glance such statements sound theologically resilient and spiritual; however, these assertions reveal a flaw in pastoral theology and will lead down a road of isolation and discouragement. A deceptively healthy church often prides itself in learning only from Scripture or listening to the Spirit, ignoring the wisdom of providential relationships that can offer insights to help the pastor lead the established church. While pastors need to hear from God directly, they fool themselves if they do not understand that God speaks through people in order to advance His redemptive Kingdom. Pastors need trusted people who provide them with fresh eyes for their congregations, philosophies, structures, decisions, and direction of the church.⁷⁹

Scripture never gives pastors a direct principle or a command to seek perspective from other people. Although Scripture contains commands that teach the Church it needs to pray, encourage, love, and serve one another, a believer never finds an explicit directive to have someone provide mentoring, consulting, or coaching.⁸⁰ The study of narrative rather than propositional theology, however, unearths how God speaks through someone as a means to provide fresh perspective and wisdom.

⁷⁹ There is substantial material and information on the market today pertaining to counseling, mentoring, coaching, and consulting. Moreover, there exists great discussion concerning words of wisdom, knowledge, and prophecies. Both of these conversations are beneficial and even advantageous for leading the church.

⁸⁰ There exist thirty-eight “one another” verses in the Bible that serve as directives for Christian living. See Appendix A, “‘One Another’ Verses in New Testament.”

According to Fee and Douglas Stuart, the Bible contains more narrative literature than it does any other literary type; over 40 percent of the Old Testament is narrative.⁸¹ Alexander Lucie-Smith defines narrative theology as “one that starts not with abstract first principles, but with a particular story; it is inductive rather than deductive.”⁸² Narrative literature provides pastors with a great deal of insight on how God shapes, speaks, and forms His leaders. Fee and Stewart emphasize that narrative teaches about God and how He guides people. “Every narrative in Scripture has an overall plot and characters that one can easily observe. However the most critical person in the narratives is God Himself orchestrating humanity and teaching us about Himself and how He leads and guides individuals in God’s Story.”⁸³ God’s Story uses people’s historical accounts to help readers see the complete picture of His love for the world and how He guides and speaks to people in order to advance His Kingdom.

This section will establish the argument for fresh eyes by studying four models within narrative passages—two from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament: (1) Moses and Jethro: A Pentateuch Model for Fresh Eyes, (2) Esther and Mordecai: A Historical Model for Fresh Eyes, (3) Peter the Apostle: A First-century Church Model for Fresh Eyes, (4) Paul the Apostle: An Outsider Model for Fresh Eyes.

⁸¹ Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 34.

⁸² Alexander Lucie-Smith, “Narrative Theology and Moral Theology,” accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9780754656807>.

⁸³ Fee and Stuart, 79.

Moses and Jethro: A Pentateuch Model for Fresh Eyes

Wisdom serves as one of the greatest needs for a pastor of an established church in decline or that has reached a plateau. Pastors do not lack accessibility to conferences, books, and resources; however, there exists a shortage of wisdom on how to sift through the mountain of information and discern the right direction for their congregations. Pastors need to find people from whom they can receive insights and a fresh perspective. The Moses and Jethro narrative offers a beautiful picture of how God provides wise counsel to leaders directly through providential relationships.

Exodus 18: Moses and Jethro

Biblical scholars recognize Moses as one of the greatest Old Testament prophets. God used Moses to deliver the Israelites out of bondage, and Luke records him as one of the two prophets at the transfiguration of Christ (Luke 9). Moses had experienced God's blessing in his ministry, delivering His people out of Egyptian bondage and defeating the Amalekites with the help of Joshua, Aaron, and Hur (Exod. 17). While Moses' life and ministry both seemingly reside at their peaks, his ministry stumbles. This time the problem centers on his personal ministry schedule. Moses faces burnout in both his ministry and his life because of his burdensome schedule. Furthermore, his wife Zipporah feels the pain of his all-consuming ministry. Most commentaries state that Zipporah returns to Midian with her sons, Gershom and Eliezer, to visit her father, Jethro, after a family dispute.⁸⁴ Although not stated explicitly, the narrative indicates Moses' ministry priorities and schedule cause problems for his family and personal well-being.

⁸⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," in *Genesis-Leviticus*, vol. 1 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 468.

When Jethro arrives,⁸⁵ Moses greets his father-in-law by bowing down and kissing him, signifying an act of respect for someone with a higher social standing and a greeting of friendship.⁸⁶ Moses needs someone whom he trusts, someone to provide wisdom and offer fresh eyes to his complicated situation. The narrative indicates no one else has a platform to speak to Moses about his ministry schedule and priorities other than Jethro. His wife either does not feel the freedom to offer advice or does not have the experience. Aaron and Hur understand their role to lift up Moses' arms but do not get involved with the day-to-day organizational issues.

Although Moses knows how to hear from God, God chooses Jethro as a mouthpiece of wisdom and insight to confront Moses about his ministry schedule and to personally challenge him to restructure his priorities, offering advice on reorganizing Israel's leadership. Jethro lists Moses' priorities as being prayer, teaching, personal integrity, and establishing a leadership structure to do the daily ministry responsibilities.⁸⁷ Jethro promises Moses if he follows this advice he will live above the strain and he will serve the people better.⁸⁸

Moses' response to Jethro's instruction reflects his humility and character. "Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said" (Exod. 18:34). Moses could make various excuses: "My father-in-law is old, and he has never delivered anyone

⁸⁵ Scripture first introduces Jethro in Exodus 2:15-16 when Moses flees from Pharaoh to live in Midian. During this time Moses marries one of Jethro's seven daughters.

⁸⁶ John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 105.

⁸⁷ See Exodus 18:19-22

⁸⁸ See Exodus 18:21

out of bondage;” “God didn’t choose Jethro, He chose me;” “I will wait for God to speak to me from a burning bush.” Wisely, however, Moses does not make excuses.⁸⁹ He accepts the fresh perspective and wise counsel of his father-in-law.

The Formation of the Nation of Israel

Exodus 18 illustrates how God uses Jethro to change the outcome and influence the trajectory of His Kingdom. Jethro’s fresh perspective places Moses at a turning point in his ministry. McNeal explains the significant role Jethro has in Moses’ life:

Jethro plays a huge role in the Exodus saga, the biggest event in Old Testament history. On top of giving Moses a wife and a job when the prince is a fugitive, Jethro intervenes with good administrative advice when Moses’ leadership challenges threatened to overwhelm him.⁹⁰

The advice and wisdom bring stability to Moses, facilitating a streamlined judicial reorganization and positively affecting the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land.⁹¹ By following Jethro’s advice, Moses transforms the way he makes decisions. He chooses capable men and makes them leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Thereafter, “The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves” (Exod. 18:26). By restructuring the nation’s leadership, Moses saves both his family and the nation of Israel.

Often pastors in established churches have years of experience to draw upon, leading them to isolate themselves and to miss hearing the wisdom of others. They have had some Red Sea moments and victories along the way. They can point to times when

⁸⁹ One reason Moses accepts this wise counsel is because of Jethro’s approach. See Appendix B, “Jethro’s Approach to Consulting.”

⁹⁰ McNeal, 28.

⁹¹ Alexander and Baker, 469.

they heard from God. Like Moses, pastors may also miss obvious pitfalls with their own schedules and ministerial limitations due to their longevity. Pastors may have a good motive for “ministering to all the people”⁹² but do not realize they have stifled their own health and the future of their churches. They need trusted people similar to Jethro who can provide wisdom and insight for their ministries in order for their congregations to have full Kingdom potential. Relaunch pastors should remain open to listening to people who God will send their way to provide wisdom and insights.

Esther and Mordecai: A Historical Model for Fresh Eyes

Pastors can easily lose perspective after they have pastored a church for any length of time, forgetting they play a role in God’s grand story and His Kingdom. Esther was also a leader who lost perspective. She, like pastors, needed someone to provide her fresh eyes and remind her that her position was not by random accident. This section examines how Esther needed Mordecai to remind her that her position came with a purpose; God was using all the details of her life to orchestrate His story and His Kingdom expansion.

The book of Esther contains one of the most significant moments in Israel’s history. The entire Jewish race hung in the balance; if Esther fails, the origin and the bloodline of Jesus could be jeopardized. Instead of using a miraculous method to speak directly to Esther, God uses Mordecai as a discerning voice in her life. With the stakes so high, it seems natural to think God would speak directly to her or send an angel.

⁹² Moses’ response to Jethro reflects that Moses feels as if he needs to minister to and meet everyone’s needs: “Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and instructions” (Exod. 18:15-16).

However, the book of Esther does not mention God or the supernatural. Robert Stearns points out the silence of providential intervention in the book of Esther: “It is often noted that the Book of Esther does not contain even one mention of God. God—His presence, miracles, angelic messengers, and supernatural wonders are strangely absent from this most epic of tales.”⁹³ God relies on Mordecai to be His mouthpiece for this critical moment in the nation of Israel.

The historical events of Esther’s life occurred sometime between 486-465 BC, the years when the Persian King Xerxes reigned.⁹⁴ The narrative opens with King Xerxes removing Queen Vashti from her position because of her unwillingness to entertain him and his guests at a banquet. The king’s attendants then propose, “Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king” (Esther 2:2). An orphan named Esther gets brought before the king. Mordecai, a relative, had raised Esther.⁹⁵ Stearns lists three setbacks that exist in Esther’s life: she is an orphan, a woman in a man’s world, and a Jew—all negatives in the Persian world of 500 BC.⁹⁶ However, Esther “had a lovely figure and was beautiful” (v. 7). At first glance it appears as though Esther’s outward beauty gets

⁹³ Robert Stearns, *The Cry of Mordecai: Awakening an Esther Generation in a Haman Age* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2009), 79.

⁹⁴ Karen H. Jobes, *Esther*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 948, Kindle.

⁹⁵ Esther and Mordecai were cousins. Because of the apparent age difference between them, there was an uncle-like relationship or even a fatherly one.⁹⁵

⁹⁶ Stearns, 40.

her brought to the king. In the background, however, God orchestrates all the details in order for this orphan to save the nation of Israel from extinction.⁹⁷

Haman⁹⁸ convinces King Xerxes that it serves in his best interest to issue a decree to destroy the entire Jewish race.⁹⁹ Mordecai reacts with great emotion, understanding the conflict with him and Haman brought the entire Jewish nation into jeopardy.¹⁰⁰ Esther hears about Mordecai's lamentation and reaches out to him. His anguish distresses her, and she sends him clothing to replace his sackcloth.¹⁰¹ Esther orders Hathach, one of her attendants, to find out what is bothering Mordecai, who tells Hathach everything—how Haman convinced the king to obliterate all the Jews. After hearing Hathach's report, she sends another message to Mordecai saying she cannot do anything about the threat to the Jewish people.

Mordecai recognizes the urgency of the situation and comprehends that Esther's providential position can save the Jewish people. Mordecai sends a message to Esther that discerns the situation, interprets the events of her life, and sounds an alarm for courageous and deliberate action on her part:

Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the

⁹⁷ Many young women are brought to the kingdom with the possibility of becoming the next queen. After twelve months of prescribed beauty treatments, Esther is brought before King Xerxes who finds Esther more attractive than any of the other women (Esther 1:7).

⁹⁸ Xerxes had promoted Haman to a high position. Haman is an Agagite, a people that had a relationship of enmity with the Jews. This causes a great conflict between him and Mordecai.

⁹⁹ Haman does this because of personal tension between him and Mordecai. This tension mirrors the tension with the Agagites and Jews. Haman's internal rage toward Mordecai grows and has seventy-five feet high gallows built and plans to seek permission from the king to hang Mordecai.

¹⁰⁰ Jobes, 2381-2382.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2393-2395.

Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this (Esther 4:13-14).

Mordecai reminds his queen that all the previous circumstances that brought her to the Persian throne happened just for this moment—when she could intercede for her people.¹⁰² Mordecai's fresh eyes offer perspective that helps Esther to interpret accurately the events of her life, giving her the courage to act deliberately.¹⁰³ Stearns depicts the Mordecai's discerning role that serves as a wake up call for Esther:

There was someone in Esther's life who was not ignoring the urgency of the moment. Someone who was fully alert to the coming destruction, and resolutely committed to doing all in his power to stop it. He was an interpreting voice, clearly discerning the situation, and he became a trumpet to rouse Esther to action.¹⁰⁴

Mordecai speaks to Esther's heart and provides her with courage that ultimately saves the people of Israel from genocide. The narrative indicates that no other person possesses the credibility or platform to speak to Esther and gives no indication that she seeks to hear God's voice for direction, wisdom, and discernment.

If Mordecai had not stepped forward to offer Esther his perspective, she would have missed her pivotal role in saving the nation of Israel.¹⁰⁵ She had accepted the reality

¹⁰² Jobes, 2439-2440.

¹⁰³ Queen Esther makes a bold request of the king. "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated" (Esther 7:3). "Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews" (Esther 8:3). The king finally agrees with Esther and orders the writing of another decree to stop the annihilation of the Jewish people.

¹⁰⁴ Stearns, 79.

¹⁰⁵ Mordecai makes it clear that if Esther remains silent, God will find another solution. "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish" (Esther 4:14).

of Persian law, that only a few had unlimited access to the king; accordingly, she thought she could do nothing.¹⁰⁶ Esther needed to understand that all the events might have looked like random happenstance, but in reality they occurred through God’s providential control. Stearns says Mordecai’s “penetrating, persistent, unrelenting voice called her to be more than she thought she could be, dared her to recognize the reality of her situation, and to act with holy boldness.”¹⁰⁷ Mordecai’s perspective touches something deep within Esther.

Pastors of established churches desperately need someone like Mordecai to offer discernment for and a fresh perspective of their ministry situations. Like Esther, God places pastors in their particular communities and congregations for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). Pastors must maintain a deep conviction that God has placed them in their congregations for this time in order to lead their congregations into a redemptive Kingdom perspective and to accomplish His mission in the world.

Simon Peter the Apostle: A First-century Church Model for Fresh Eyes

The first-century Church seized the opportunity to reach Jerusalem but did not have full Kingdom potential in “Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). They rapidly settled into traditional Jewish customs and then required these traditions for Gentile conversions. Ray S. Anderson describes how the Jerusalem church transferred Judaism into Christianity:

¹⁰⁶ James D. Quiggle, *Esther: A Private Commentary on the Bible* (CreateSpace, 2012), 2352-2353, Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ Stearns, 80.

The church community in Jerusalem, despite the ‘moment’ of Pentecost, quickly incorporated this event into a movement with a high degree of continuity with the tradition of the Twelve. It carried a great deal of the DNA, to use a contemporary expression, of the historical past into the present.¹⁰⁸

God used Peter to provide fresh perspective and clear leadership for the first-century Church during a critical transitional moment. Markus Bockmuehl points out the significance of Peter in Scripture. “It is surely significant that Peter is, after Jesus, the most frequently mentioned individual both in the Gospels and in the NT as a whole.”¹⁰⁹ Peter’s apostolic nature helped the Church see its redemptive mission and provided fresh eyes for critical Church government issues (Acts 6), reaching Gentiles (Acts 11), and restructuring theological understanding (Acts 15). With regard to Peter, Hengel observes,

It was he who suggested in Acts that an election be held to maintain the basic number of the Twelve. It is he who takes the initiative to speak at Pentecost, who speaks the judgment against Ananias and Sapphira, who serves as speaker for the new messianic community in its confrontation with the Jerusalem hierarchy, who joins John in visiting the newly won Christians brought to faith in Samaria by Philip, who restrains Simon Magus, and who brings many to faith through the miracles that he performs in Jerusalem, Lydda, the Sharon Plain, and Joppa.¹¹⁰

Peter’s leadership and influence allowed the Church to transition beyond the Jewish customs to full Kingdom potential in their world. Bockmuehl emphasizes that the Church was able to develop and grow beyond the lifetime of its founder because Jesus entrusted the Church to the apostolic witness of His disciples, placing special focus on Simon Peter as the first and chief among these witnesses.¹¹¹ Peter provided the Church

¹⁰⁸ Ray S. Anderson, 20-21.

¹⁰⁹ Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 300, Kindle.

¹¹⁰ Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 879-883, Kindle.

¹¹¹ Bockmuehl, 309-312.

with a fresh perspective on God's redemptive plan to reach all humanity with the gospel; however, he personally needed God to provide him with a fresh perspective prior to addressing the Jerusalem church.

Simon Peter and Cornelius's House (Acts 10-11)

In Acts 10, the Holy Spirit provides Peter with fresh eyes concerning the Jewish customs and how the Church needs to eat with sinners, challenging the traditions he had known growing up in Judaism. A voice comes from heaven, saying to Peter, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15). This happens to Peter three times. God shows Peter that the dietary laws in the Law of Moses are no longer binding. The vision clarifies for Peter that the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant and the message of the Kingdom exist not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. Peter expresses, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" (vv. 35-36).¹¹²

When Peter returns to Jerusalem the circumcised believers criticize him: "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them" (Acts 11:2-3). Peter then provides fresh eyes for the Church during one of its most transitional moments, explaining the vision and what it means for the Church. He explains that he witnessed the Holy Spirit come on the Gentile believers just as He did on them in the upper room. Then he provides the Jewish church leaders with a fresh perspective by asking, "So if God gave them the same gift He gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way" (v. 17). The leaders listen to Peter as he relates the

¹¹² Peter knew God had accepted the Gentiles because he observed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles as it was given to the Church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 10:45-46).

vision at Cornelius's house. Luke records, "When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life'" (v. 18). At this moment the Jerusalem leaders understand a new perspective on the Church's Kingdom impact: redemption belongs to all nations, not just the Jewish nation.

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

The Jerusalem Council is perhaps the most critical transitional and catalytic moment for the first-century Church. At the Jerusalem Council Peter provides fresh eyes on one of the Church's most important theological issues: Soteriology. The debate's central issue focuses on whether converted Gentiles experience redemption if they remain uncircumcised and do not keep the law.¹¹³ The Jerusalem church has a solid theological framework for believing in Gentile circumcision. God implemented circumcision when He confirmed His covenant with the patriarch Abraham (Gen. 17). The Judaizers' protest is rooted in a long-standing Jewish tradition that the rite of circumcision resides central to the covenant people's public identity (Gen. 17).¹¹⁴

Newbigin explains the tension regarding the uncircumcised Gentiles' acceptance into the Jerusalem church: "To talk of uncircumcised pagans being heirs of Abraham and members of the household of God was, it could well be argued, to make nonsense of the plain teaching of Scripture, of tradition, and even of Jesus Himself."¹¹⁵ The Jews believed

¹¹³ Hubertus Waltherus Van de Sandt, "An Explanation of Acts 15:6-21 in the Light of Deuteronomy 4:29-35 (LXX)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992): 85.

¹¹⁴ Robert W. Wall, "Acts," in vol. X, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 205.

¹¹⁵ Newbigin, 830-834.

Gentiles could not escape moral impurity without the protection afforded to them by submission to the whole yoke of the Torah, including circumcision for males.¹¹⁶

Newbigin offers some historical context as to why the Jerusalem church felt like the uncircumcised Gentiles should not be accepted. “The uncircumcised male was excommunicated from God's people (Gen. 17:14). Martyrs had given their lives to uphold this law. Jesus Himself had been circumcised, and by no single word had He suggested that circumcision was to be set aside.”¹¹⁷ The notion of gentiles not following the Jewish law seemed heretical and compromising.

Acts 15 provides a glimpse of the Early Church’s tension regarding the new Gentile converts. The Church leaders debate and engage in lengthy conversations about the Torah, circumcision, and the requirements of salvation. They feel challenged to reexamine some of their theological pillars from a new Kingdom redemptive lens. After discussion and debate, Peter stands up and becomes God’s mouthpiece to the Church,¹¹⁸ reminding them about his vision at Cornelius’s house. He speaks clearly and boldly about how God does not discriminate between Jews and Gentiles. Acts 15 records perhaps the most important words that Peter ever spoke to the Church: “Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are

¹¹⁶ Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Council Decision,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism*, ed. David Rudolph (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 4706-4707, Kindle.

¹¹⁷ Newbigin, 830-834.

¹¹⁸ Both Peter and James stand up in the Jerusalem Council and conclude that the Gentile believers do not need to be circumcised into order to follow Christ (Acts 15:10-20). This paper primarily reflects on Peter.

saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:10-11).¹¹⁹ Simon Peter’s influence and courageous leadership during this transitional moment was essential in order for the Church to have full Kingdom potential.

Transitions in an established church can be difficult and controversial. These transitional moments may center on theological nuances and practical issues such as music styles, dress at church, coffee in the sanctuary, and theological perspectives that need re-examination in light of Scripture and Kingdom perspective.¹²⁰ Pastors need Peter-like influencers in their lives who will remind them that God’s Kingdom exists for all people. Strong voices like Peter’s will have the courage to influence the tough decisions in light of God’s expansive, redemptive, and empowering nature.

Paul the Apostle: An Outsider Model for Fresh Eyes

The first half of Acts reflects the influence and fresh eyes of Simon Peter. In the second half of Acts Luke introduces another apostolistic voice that brings fresh perspective and courage to the first-century Church. God raises up an outsider, an unlikely person to provide the Church with fresh eyes on every aspect of its nature—the Apostle Paul.¹²¹ Even with Peter’s fresh eyes, the first-century Church had not sent out any missionaries or planted any churches, and they continued to wrestle with the gospel

¹¹⁹ James, the brother of Jesus, affirms these words in Acts 15:19 saying, “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

¹²⁰ This is not to suggest that missional churches should compromise solid theological doctrine in order to win people. The church, however, should consider issues of legalism, politics, and styles that hinder the church’s missional voice.

¹²¹ Paul’s original name was Saul of Tarsus. God changes his name to Paul in Acts 13:9. A person can only speculate why his name was changed. One common belief is that his new name, Paul, relates to his mission of reaching the Gentile world.

going to the Gentiles. The Early Church needed to think in terms of Kingdom expansion, sending, church planting, reproduction, and migration throughout the whole world.

God in His divine providence chooses an unlikely outsider to provide contrasting and correcting perspectives to the Church. Roxburgh and Boren defend the essential role outsiders play in the Christian Church:

Every denomination and local church tends toward insider thinking. Therefore, while we have to engage in forming local theologies, we will do that best as we learn to stay awake for and open to hearing from those outsiders who can provide contrasting and correcting perspectives.¹²²

Paul starts as the Church's enemy, not an original disciple. Jesus selects Paul to become the gospel's most zealous messenger. Similarly to Peter, God initiates a fresh-eyes experience with Paul. Jesus appears to Paul on the road to Damascus and lets him know, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).

Referring to Paul Jesus says to Ananias, "This man is My chosen instrument to proclaim My name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). As Ananias prays over Saul, "something like scales fell from Saul's eyes," both literally and figuratively speaking (v. 18). Jesus transforms Paul, giving him a fresh and divine revelation concerning his Jewish upbringing, the Torah, and his Kingdom mission.

The First Missionary and Church Planter (Acts 13)

The Antioch church, responding to the Apostle Paul's leadership and outside perspective, begins the great Kingdom effort to reach the Gentiles.¹²³ After Paul and

¹²² Roxburgh and Boren, 93.

¹²³ Stephen Strauss places an unique importance on the city of Anioch: "Antioch seems to take the role of Luke's 'second Jerusalem,' the new 'mother church' for the Pauline Gentile mission, and the place where Gentiles following Jesus became the standard for the future growth of the church. One of the crucial identifying markers of the Antioch church is stated in Acts 11:26, 'The disciples were first called Christians

Barnabas's service to the Antioch church and its new believers, they go out as the church's first missionaries and church planters. In Acts 13 the Holy Spirit instructs the church at Antioch, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Paul takes the gospel to the Gentile world, planting upward of twenty new churches. Albert Harrills communicates Paul's Kingdom impact:

In fewer than ten years (ca. 50 to 57), Paul and his tiny circle of associates created an impressive urban network of tiny apocalyptic groups dedicated to the imminent final coming of Messiah Jesus. Each was a small household-based congregation (perhaps little more than three dozen adherents) of Gentiles (former pagans) whose males remained uncircumcised.¹²⁴

Paul makes three long missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire, planting churches, preaching the gospel, and giving strength, direction, and guidance to early Christians. Traditionally, Paul receives credit as the author of thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament.¹²⁵ Although proud of his Jewish heritage, Paul understands that redemption belongs to the Gentiles as well as the Jews and travels tirelessly throughout the ancient world, taking the message of salvation to the Gentiles. God uses an outsider to influence the Church and to initiate the fulfillment of the gospel going to the "utter most parts of the world" (Acts 1:8). Paul's Kingdom voice is essential for the first-century Church and the spread of the gospel to the Gentile world.

in Antioch." Strauss, Stephen J. "The Significance of Acts 11:26 for the Church at Antioch and Today," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (July-September 2011): 283-300.

¹²⁴ J. Albert Harrill, *Paul the Apostle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1038-1041, Kindle.

¹²⁵ Traditionally, Paul receives credit for writing the following books: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Paul Confronts Peter (Galatians 2:11-16)

Every church needs an outsider’s perspective that will provide fresh eyes. Even Peter—after his vision at Cornelius’ house, his influence on the first-century Church, and his strong leadership at the Jerusalem Council—needs someone to provide fresh eyes for him. Galatians 2 records a confrontation between the New Testament’s two leading apostolic voices: Peter and Paul. Hengel believes this event takes place a “few years after the Apostolic Council, between the ‘second’ and ‘third’ missionary journeys,” roughly in the year AD 52/53.¹²⁶

Peter goes to Antioch and begins enjoying fellowship and sharing of a meal with the Gentile Christians even though this was forbidden by Jewish dietary customs. Fear grips Peter because of how this situation looks, and he begins to recoil from the earlier decision made at the Jerusalem Council. Harrill sheds light on the nature of the dispute: “Shortly thereafter, at Antioch, Peter and Paul became embroiled in a major dispute over a communal meal.”¹²⁷ For Paul, this debate does not concern food but the truth of the gospel. Hengel depicts the strong tension in this confrontation:

The deep divide that was signified by the dramatic, public, drawn-out dispute between Peter and Paul is something we cannot portray deeply enough. Paul accused Peter and those who followed him, in front of the entire community, of cowardly hypocrisy and of a betrayal of the “truth of the gospel.”¹²⁸

Paul stands so firmly grounded in the gospel that he opposes even Peter, contradicting him publicly. He views Peter’s action, and that of the other Jews, as clear hypocrisy that will compromise the gospel (Gal. 2:13).

¹²⁶ Hengel, 579-581.

¹²⁷ Harrill, 954-955.

¹²⁸ Hengel, 639.

Paul provides a Kingdom voice and brings a fresh perspective to Peter, confronting him because his actions are not “in line with the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14). Paul accosts Peter, questioning, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs” (v. 14). Paul reminds Peter that one is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, not by the works of the law: “So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified” (v. 16). Paul’s Kingdom voice echoes the words that Peter recited at the Jerusalem Council: “No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:11).

God uses Paul’s voice to remind Peter of the redemptive Kingdom impact: to keep the Church on mission. In the modern world fear can motivate pastors of established churches, making them afraid of the potential consequences or the possible outcomes of transformation, including what certain people might say. The fear of losing long-term church members and/or people who give faithfully, coupled with the fear of compromising the gospel, paralyzes many pastors and their congregations. Established pastors need an apostolic voice to have honest conversations with them about the Kingdom heart and life of their congregations. Without someone’s fresh eyes, established churches will focus only on the insiders within their congregations and neglect the lost and dying outside the walls.

God is raising up apostolic voices throughout North America. These voices challenge the status quo and push established churches beyond their comfortable four walls. Pastors can either ignore the apostolic voices or allow God’s Spirit to challenge

the traditions and programs of their churches. Relaunch pastors must humble themselves and not feel threatened by such new innovative leaders; rather, they need to embrace the opportunity to implement such new methods in order to bring their established churches into a vital Kingdom understanding. A pastor needs fresh eyes to see Kingdom expansion, redemptive ministry, and Spirit-empowered boldness.

Conclusion

Without a solid and well-thought-out theological framework, relaunch pastors will hit roadblocks and have no lasting transformational change. A pastor needs a deep conviction about God's character and nature and how each person of the Trinity actively shapes and forms the church's life. Furthermore, pastors must remove any theological nuances that imply they only need to read Scripture and to listen to the Spirit, ignoring the fresh eyes of providential relationships.

Pastors need to lead their congregations in transformational change that is rooted in Scripture, created with a heart of humility, and vetted with the wisdom and perspective of people who can provide fresh eyes. These tasks are not simple, easy, or achieved overnight; pastors must face the brutal institutional and personal realities of their congregations, define the clear and compelling direction of the church, and execute a plan to lead the church in transformational change.

CHAPTER 3: GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Established congregations across North America have plateaued or are heading for fatality if a renewed vision does not infuse pastors' hearts. George Barna voices his trepidation for the North American church: "The local church is one mechanism that can be instrumental in bringing us closer to Him and helping us to be more like Him. But, as the research data clearly show, churches are not doing the job. If the local church is the hope of the world, then the world has no hope."¹ Research indicates that even with the growth of mega churches and the missional movement the church in North America currently struggles to survive.

A report completed by the Healthy Church Network, drawn from the Assemblies of God Annual Church Ministries Report (ACMR) from 1980-2011, reveals that roughly 2/3 of all Assemblies of God churches in the U.S. are either plateaued or in decline.² Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson provide further insights into the condition of the North American church: "Today, fewer than 20 percent of Americans attend church regularly, and only 22 percent have a positive view of church."³ However, the lack of conversion lies at the heart of Ferguson's concern: "Half of all churches in America did not add one

¹ George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012), 500, Kindle.

² Research provided by the Healthy Church Network. Drawn from Assemblies of God ACMR data 1980-2011. Approved for communication by the General Council Executive Leaders Team. See Appendix B, "15 Church Health Observations."

³ Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How to Accomplish the Jesus Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 148-152, Kindle.

person through conversion last year.”⁴ This problem is of massive enormity. The Assemblies of God and evangelical churches must address this erosion of the local church.

Alan Hirsch expresses his cynicism about the future of the established church: “Although we hear about successful attempts to revitalize existing churches, the overall track record is actually very poor.”⁵ While Hirsch may accurately observe that many established churches have not had success with revitalization, he erroneously accesses the Kingdom potential of established churches. This impedes the Spirit’s work in renewing the passion that still lies deeply within the heart of many pastors. Unfortunately, such assertiveness reflects in many missional writers and denominational leaders who have given up on the established church. Denominational leaders and pastors need to reject the notion that established churches will become entrenched and trust the Spirit’s work to renew vision, growth, and Kingdom influence.

An intentional focus on church planting within the Assemblies of God is currently underway. Although church planting plays a vital role in Kingdom growth, the Assemblies of God must create a distinctive model to awaken and invigorate established churches. God wants to plant new churches and simultaneously revitalize established churches. This chapter provides explanation of the relaunch metaphor and examines three themes the relaunch pastor must explore to effectively lead their congregation in revitalization. : (1) Assessment: Facing Congregational Realities, (2) Clarity: Defining

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 52.

Clear and Compelling Direction, and (3) Momentum: Creating a culture of catalytic change.⁶

Relaunch Metaphor

The process of relaunching a congregation requires clear direction from the pastor and well-defined and time-bound strategic initiatives. Every church and organization will reach a point in its life cycle when it will need a relaunch. Mark Rutland states that nearly every human institution needs “reimagined, reinvented, and relaunched— in short, turned around.”⁷ Samuel R. Chand frames the relaunch concept as re-dreaming: “Without the constant infusion of entrepreneurial spirit, flourishing can lead to floundering! Churches must ‘re-dream’ the dream or discover a new compelling vision for their existence.”⁸ Relaunching implies an increased amount of focused energy and intentionality, focusing the church long enough to experience a mission, vision, and cultural shift.⁹ As a verb, “relaunch” means to launch again, start, or get going.¹⁰ The relaunch metaphor invites pastors to return to their sacred call to lead congregations and infuse life into the DNA of their congregations.

⁶ This chapter uses the terms “catalytic change,” “chain reaction” and “tipping point” as similar concepts, meaning that the impetus of the pastor’s vision will ultimately relaunch the entire congregation.

⁷ Mark Rutland, *ReLaunch: How to Stage an Organizational Comeback* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013), 21, Kindle.

⁸ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 2365-2369, Kindle.

⁹ Planes use the most fuel and produce the most harmful emissions during takeoff. On short flights as much as 25 percent of the total fuel consumed is used at this time. World Watch Institute, accessed July 10, 2014, <http://www.worldwatch.org/planes-utilize-most-fuel-during-takeoff>.

¹⁰ Dictionary.com, s.v. “relaunch,” accessed September 1, 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/relaunch>.

The relaunch metaphor originates around a distinctive question taken from Andrew S. Grove, Andy Stanley, and corporation reengineering literature: “If we all got kicked off the staff and the board, and an outside group (a group of leaders who were fearlessly committed to the mission of this church) took our place, what changes would they introduce?” Stanley follows up this question by asking, “Why shouldn’t you and I walk out the door, come back, and do it ourselves?”¹¹ Relaunching requires pastors metaphorically to walk out the door, come back, and start over. Michael Hammer and James Champy provide a parallel definition concerning business reengineering:

When someone asks us for a quick definition of business reengineering, we say that it means starting over. It doesn’t mean tinkering with what already exists or making incremental changes that leave basic structures intact. It isn’t about making patchwork fixes—jury-rigging existing systems so that they work better. It means asking this question: “If I were re-creating this company today, given what I know and given current technology, what would it look like?” Reengineering a company means tossing aside old systems and starting over. It involves going back to the beginning and inventing a better way of doing work.¹²

Many pastors must rediscover their original call and passion and infuse into the church new vision and God’s redemptive heart.

Pastors often experience natural momentum at different seasons of their tenures at the church. Momentum frequently occurs during their first year of leadership, a move into a new facility, the hiring of a new staff, or a time of unexpected tragedy, such as a moral failure or a church crisis. Relaunch pastors must learn to harness this deliberate momentum aside from honeymoon periods, new facilities, staff hires, or tragedies.

¹¹ Andy Stanley borrowed and contextualized this question from Andy Grove. His version is, “If we got kicked out and the board brought in a new CEO, what do you think he would he do?” See Andrew S. Grove, *Only the Paranoid Survive* (New York: Crown Business, 1999), 89.

¹² Michael Hammer and James Champy, *Reengineering the Corporation: Manifesto for Business Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 34, Kindle.

Thom S. Rainer reports on the five natural life cycles of a pastor's tenure. His research indicates the pastor experiences momentum during the honeymoon period and in the sixth through tenth years, which he refers to as "fruit and harvest."¹³ Rainer's research suggests that during the eleventh year of a pastor's tenure he or she has to be "reinvigorated as a leader" or he or she will plummet into complacency: "During this relatively rare tenure beyond ten years, the pastor will go down one of two paths. One path is to be reinvigorated as a leader and ready to tackle new challenges and cast new visions. Or the pastor will be resistant to change, and then become complacent."¹⁴ One may naively believe longevity will build a healthy and dynamic kingdom-minded church, but research indicates otherwise. Pastors who do not relaunch themselves will only build an entrenched congregation over a period of time.

Assessment: Facing Congregational Realities

Nothing will change until the pastor resolves to answer genuinely this question: "What are the current realities of the congregation?" Larry Osborne conveys the paramount step for a church to get back on mission requires the critical examination of one question: "Where Are We?" "If no one realizes that we've drifted, everyone thinks we're on target."¹⁵ In writing to social sectors, Jim Collins communicates that no matter how grim, a leader has to "confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever

¹³ See Appendix C, "The Five Life Stages of Pastoral Tenure."

¹⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 489-491, Kindle.

¹⁵ Larry Osborne, *Mission Creep: The Five Subtle Shifts that Sabotage Evangelism & Discipleship* (n.p., 2014), chapter 3 and chapter 9.

they might be.”¹⁶ Relaunch pastors must possess the discipline to diagnose before they prescribe.¹⁷

Joseph Grenny et al provide strong language for influential leaders: “Diagnose before you prescribe. Anything else is malpractice. Most leaders fail to take this essential step and simply throw together an influence strategy they believe should work under any circumstances.”¹⁸ Relaunching necessities confronting the brutal realities and embracing the process of straightforward assessment regardless of how excruciating it may be. Rainer, reflecting on his autopsy of declining churches, concludes that the congregation could have circumvented this slow death if they had faced reality: “In most of the cases, indeed all of them I studied, the issue was slow erosion. There would be no autopsy to perform if they had faced reality and, in God’s power, reversed course.”¹⁹ If a pastor does not create a culture of candid assessment and diagnosis, the established church will drift toward accepting the status quo as the congregation’s normative culture.

Asking Questions

Proper assessment and diagnosing begins with asking the right questions. Chand depicts how change agents ask penetrating questions: “Change agents need to be positive, but they need to be multidimensional: they must also possess the ability to ask penetrating questions to help the group discern God’s will, to find the best alignment of

¹⁶ Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 459-461, Kindle.

¹⁷ Joseph Grenny et al, *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change*, Second ed. (New York. McGraw-Hill Education, 2013), 295-296, Kindle.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 159, Kindle.

roles and goals, and to develop the best plan for any challenge.”²⁰ Probing questions help pastors acquire a better understanding of their present situations and provide a beginning point to lead transformational change. One great question can transform a congregation. Ken Coleman describes what he refers to as a powerful maxim: “Good questions inform, but great questions transform.”²¹ Ferguson and Ferguson contend that pastors who have big dreams ask questions nobody else asks:

The bigger your dream, the more you challenge and stretch your mind with tough questions. The size of your dream will often determine the types of questions you ask. Small dreams that are within your grasp and easily managed require one set of questions. Big dreams lead you to ask an entirely different set of questions, questions you would probably never ask otherwise.²²

Questions the pastor asks him or herself, the staff, and the board will delineate the direction of the church more than any other ministry practice.²³ Diagnosis requires Kingdom-minded questions—questions that stir the soul of the pastor and trigger urgency to see catalytic change.

Precise questions will expose pitfalls and serve as a protection of the congregation’s vision. Habitually, pastors focus on questions that promote status quo more than Kingdom influence. Status quo pastors ask, “How do we compare to the church down the street?” and “How do we keep insiders happy and content?” Kingdom-minded pastors ask, “How do we reach full Kingdom potential in our community and our world?” Stanley provides insight into the significance of questions: “Asking the right

²⁰ Chand, 1603-1605, Kindle.

²¹ Ken Coleman, *One Question* (New York: Howard Books, 2013), 159, Kindle.

²² Ferguson and Ferguson, *Exponential*, 647-649, Kindle.

²³ Jesus was a masterful question asker. He knew how to penetrate the hearts of humankind with the right question.

questions (and asking them over and over) will ensure that the vision of your church remains paramount while your programming remains subservient.”²⁴ Relaunch pastors cultivate a whole new set of Kingdom questions, confronting brutal realities of their churches, rejecting church comparisons, and providing their churches the means to have a redemptive impact in both their communities and the world.²⁵

Deceptively Healthy

Pastors often do not perform candid diagnosis of their congregations because they have become deceptively healthy. It is easy for an established congregation to lure themselves into a fabricated reality that “everything is ok;” however, deep within the heart of the pastor lies an awareness that his or her church has settled for the status quo. A subtle propensity exists to accept the norm as long as the bills get paid and the members are not cantankerous.

Numerous studies within the social sciences show that people prefer the status quo to change.²⁶ Howard Schultz expresses the opinion that any organization embracing the status quo dies a slow death: “We cannot be content with the status quo. Any business today that embraces the status quo as an operating principle is going to be on a death march.”²⁷ Many pastors circumvent the brutal reality and even spiritualize the results they

²⁴ Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 302.

²⁵ See Appendix D, “Assessment Questions from Leading Pastors.”

²⁶ Rich Horwath, *Elevate: The Three Disciplines of Advanced Strategic Thinking* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 344-352, Kindle.

²⁷ Alexandra Wolfe, *The Wall Street Journal*, “Howard Schultz: What Next, Starbucks?” September 27, 2013, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304213904579093583249134984>.

experience. Darrin Patrick and Mark DeVine scrutinize established churches that grow spiritually defensive: “When churches settle into extended periods of decline, they sometimes adopt a defensive rhetoric that touts spiritual growth or spiritual health over numerical growth. Such false dichotomy often masks a tragic loss of vision, a lapse into spiritual sloth, and even defeat.”²⁸ Established churches that disregard the diagnosis process and simply accept the status quo camouflage maintenance for depth and status quo for spiritual health.

Rainer specifies five symptoms that will help a pastor diagnose the health of his or her congregation. Rainer’s research indicates that of the 350,000 churches in America, 150,000 churches are deceptively healthy or have symptoms of sickness.²⁹ These five symptoms comprise not only Rainer’s research but also other writers that embody the general literature on church health.

First, a pervasive attitude that the best days are in the past serves as a symptom of a deceptively healthy church.³⁰ Congregants frequently express the desire to preserve the legacy of the church. Deceptively healthy congregations emotionally devote themselves to and depend upon the past. Zach Williams sees this “emotional attachment” as an impediment to redemptive ministry: “Emotional attachment and history are big hurdles that need to be overcome to transition from the church to the unchurched.”³¹ Although

²⁸ Darrin Patrick and Mark DeVine, *Replant: How a Dying Church Can Grow Again* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2014), 183-186, Kindle.

²⁹ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 159, 692-696, Kindle.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 159, Kindle.

³¹ Zach Williams, *Transitioning the Church: Leading the Established Church to Reach the Unchurched* (Nashville: Rainer, 2014), 25, Kindle.

nothing is inherently evil with reminiscences of the past, congregants and pastors must build on the past but not rival in it. They must not allow the success of yesterday to camouflage the compliancy of today. Rich Horwath contends a successful past can negate the idea of a change:

For groups that have experienced success in the past, the idea of making changes to the strategy flies in the face of common sense, so their question is, “Why change what made us successful?” What they may not realize is that changes in market trends, customer value drivers, and the competitive landscape may be making the current strategy obsolete.³²

A fruitful past can serve as an impendent to the future. However, a vigilant study of the past can also serve as a meaningful launching pad for vision and transformational change.

Relaunch pastors do not belittle or minimize the history of the church; they analyze it to find clues to create the future. Patrick and Devine view the history of an established church as allies, not adversaries of change. They hold the belief that when replanting a church, a pastor needs “to recognize that history and tradition can be allies in forging a path toward revitalization. Many times these churches have a valuable gospel DNA; a theological tradition, lost, that needs to be recovered; and a history of God’s faithfulness that needs to be retold.”³³ Relaunch pastors honor the history of their churches by considering the sacrifice and dedication of the past and retelling their stories in context of Kingdom growth and sacrifice.

Established churches often were pioneered with a well-defined mission and vision and have stories embedded into their narrations that reflect past sacrifices and Kingdom passion. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner convey the idea that this may seem

³² Horwath, 344-352, Kindle.

³³ Patrick and DeVine, 55-57, Kindle.

counter intuitive, but understanding the past can help leaders with the future:

“Understanding the past can help you identify themes, patterns, and beliefs that both underscore why you care about certain matters now and explain why making them better into the future is such a high priority.”³⁴ It is indispensable during the diagnosis process for a pastor to know the church’s history and story he or she leads. Often a pastor cannot effectively cast the vision for the future if he or she remains unaware of the past.

Second, a decline in numbers acts as a symptom of a deceptively healthy church. Pastors frequently feel as if numerical growth is posturing and holds no significance in diagnosing the church’s health. Rainer warns pastors who ignore the statistics in their churches: “Many leaders stop looking at numbers when they began to decline. And when numbers are ignored, they tend to get even worse.”³⁵ When a pastor begins to disregard the numbers, it signifies he or she is unwilling to face current reality. Patrick and Devine state that true spiritual health always longs for numerical growth: “Numerical growth can never substitute for spiritual health and may even cloak spiritual rot. But true spiritual health always longs to see the body of Christ grow. It longs to see the joy of the gospel shared and to offer more praise to its Lord.”³⁶ Any attentive study of the book of Acts shows how the Spirit’s work in the life of the church resulted in Kingdom expansion, both numerically and spiritually.³⁷

³⁴ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 106.

³⁵ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 701-704, Kindle.

³⁶ Patrick and DeVine, 183-186, Kindle.

³⁷ Acts 2:41, 2:47, 5:14, 6:1, 6:7, 11:24, 12:24, 13:49, 16:5, 19:20.

The diagnosis process comprises of taking an honest look at numbers and asking, “What are the numbers telling us?” Although numbers may reveal information from a symptomatic perspective, they do not always tell the whole story. Pastors need to consider four specific issues in diagnosing statistics: (1) Times exist when a pastor has to make difficult Kingdom decisions that result in losing long-term church members, particularly during a transitional phase. (2) Healthy churches experience natural stages of both growth and decline. Relaunch pastors embrace these as part of the undercurrents of church life. (3) A Kingdom church plants new works, sends missionaries, and trains Kingdom- minded leaders who many times answer God’s call and leave the church. (4) The community may not be growing, which may have an impact on the church’s growth rate. Pastors must consider genuine factors that may impact numbers and simultaneously not allow decline in numbers to camouflage realities of deformity in a congregation.³⁸

Third, a deceptively healthy church’s ministries and programs shift toward members. Rainer’s research indicates the one symptom that stands out as the strongest is that the church has become entrenched and ingrown: “But more than any one item, these dying churches focused on their own needs instead of others. They looked inwardly instead of outwardly. Their highest priorities were the way they’ve always done it, and that which made them the most comfortable.”³⁹ Rainer contends that an inward focus leads to death: “When a church ceases to have a heart and ministry for its community, it

³⁸ Churches with symptoms of sickness are likely to have declined or plateaued in worship attendance over the past five years.

³⁹ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 203-204, Kindle.

is on the path toward death.”⁴⁰ Williams warns how effortlessly the church can entrench itself within the four walls:

The mission that is supposed to be taking place outside the church has become entrenched within the four walls. The process of becoming an established church happens slowly, and it is often an unintentional process. It just happens. At some point, many established churches stop doing what they were designed to do. They stop drawing people. They stop reaching outward. These churches can fall into the cycle of maintaining the existing state of affairs within the church. Maintaining rather than transitioning becomes the goal.⁴¹

The predisposition toward becoming ingrown is a virus every established church must intentionally fight or the epidemic will poison a congregation’s bloodstream.

The shift toward an insider emphasis is the most difficult symptom to identify and diagnose and requires a painstaking honesty. Often pastors, all too easily, dismiss this symptom as one that does not represent their congregations. An outside coach or consultant can help them come to grips with the malformation of their churches. Reggie McNeal writes about how deep-seated this external culture is for the church:

We must move from an internal to an external focus. The church does not exist for itself. When it thinks it does, we've created a church-centric world. Our perception of reality is skewed. By external focus of ministry, I mean we radically reorient to understand that we exist primarily to do ministry beyond ourselves.⁴²

The church does not exist to indulge Christians but to make radical disciples who become Jesus’ hands and feet to their community and world.

Fourth, a deceptively healthy church lacks discipleship. Ironically, numerical growth by itself can serve as the greatest camouflage of deceptive health. Osborne

⁴⁰ Ibid., 246-247, Kindle.

⁴¹ Williams, 7-8, Kindle.

⁴² Fickett, Harold, “Interview with Reggie McNeal, Author of *Missional Renaissance*,” *The High Calling*, February 15, 2010, January 10, 2014, <http://www.thehighcalling.org/leadership/interview-reggie-mcneal-author-imissional-renaissancei#.U81pM6gwIc0>.

maintains that discipleship is nearly impossible if the focus centers on growing the church numerically: “The moment our primary focus shifts from developing biblical community and iron-sharpening-iron relationships to growing the church larger, genuine discipleship becomes nearly impossible.”⁴³ Ferguson offers a growing church a strong warning: “A growing church attendance does not promise that people are growing spiritually. An attendance graph that is up and to the right does not guarantee that people are faithful in following Jesus and displaying the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.”⁴⁴ The church requires a whole new scorecard if they want to infuse spiritual health into the DNA of the congregation. Tim Keller explores the concept that a church must measure its results using business techniques, but he also cautions pastors:

Out of necessity, the large church must use organizational techniques from the business world, but the danger is that ministry may become too results-oriented and focused on quantifiable outcomes (attendance, membership, giving) rather than the goals of holiness and character growth. Again, this tendency should not be accepted as inevitable; rather, new strategies for focusing on love and virtue must always be generated.⁴⁵

The greatest deception pastors plummet into is measuring church health by bodies, budgets, and buildings and not spiritual transformation. Jesus clearly articulated the mission of the church: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).⁴⁶ Rainer calls the Great Commission the centerpiece of the church: “Thriving churches have the Great Commission as the centerpiece of their vision, while dying churches have forgotten

⁴³ Osborne, chapter 7.

⁴⁴ Dave Ferguson, *Keeping Score* (n.p., 2014), 347-349, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Timothy Keller, “Leadership and Church Size Dynamics. How Strategy Changes with Growth,” *The Movement Newsletter*, 2006.

⁴⁶ All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

the clear command of Christ.”⁴⁷ Ferguson asserts discipleship is the pursuit that matters most when diagnosing a church: “The challenge Jesus left with His followers is the same challenge He leaves with us, ‘make disciples.’ This is what matters most—the making of disciples!”⁴⁸ The church’s mission does not aim to make consumers, fill seats, or develop sophisticated ministries.

Fifth, a deceptively healthy church contains lots of clutter.⁴⁹ The established church can easily fill up with “meaningless clutter” and the mission, vision, and culture gets lost in the midst. Eric Geiger and Thom S. Rainer describe the effect of clutter within a church: “Many of our churches have become cluttered. So cluttered that people have a difficult time encountering the simple and powerful message of Christ. So cluttered that many people are busy doing church instead of being the church.”⁵⁰ The disparaging consequence results in people getting busy in church life but never becoming the hands and feet of Jesus to the world. Rainer describes the principal reason churches have meaningless clutter: “The primary reason those programs and ministries are continued is simply because ‘that’s the way we’ve always done it.’”⁵¹ Churches notoriously start ministries without ever stopping them. Every ministry must diagnose in the context of mission and vision, not programs, ministries, and traditions.

⁴⁷ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 339-340, Kindle.

⁴⁸ Ferguson, *Keeping Score*, 475-477, Kindle.

⁴⁹ Rainer, 708, Kindle.

⁵⁰ Eric Geiger and Thom S. Rainer, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 19, Kindle.

⁵¹ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 710, Kindle.

Fresh Eyes

Diagnosing an established church often requires seeking outsiders who will help identify the entrenched nature of the congregation and develop an intentional plan to infuse renewed vision into the church. On the whole, the ministerial culture has not created an environment of coaching and consulting. All too often, ministers question each other's motives while resisting fresh perspective from outsiders. Osborne believes pastors need new advisors to break through ministry walls: "Once we've hit the wall and can't break through with the usual strategies (effort, efficiency, and improved quality), the first thing most of us need to find is a set of new advisors."⁵² New advisors may be a leadership coach, professional or relational consultant, another pastor, or even someone in the business world who can provide a different set of eyes.

Stanley warns that a leader will never reach his or her full potential without personal coaching:

You will never maximize your potential in any area without coaching. It is impossible. You may be good. You may even be better than everyone else. But without outside input you will never be as good as you could be. We all do better when somebody is watching and evaluating.⁵³

Frequently pastors hit natural leadership lids that will become impediments to the health of their churches if they do not seek fresh perspective from other people.

The discipline to hear and accept a fresh perspective begins with the humility and character of a pastor willing to listen. Relaunch pastors recognize that in order for them to do things they have never done, they must listen to people to whom they have never

⁵² Larry Osborne, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret: Why Serial Innovators Succeed Where Others Fail* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 1663-1664, Kindle.

⁵³ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 104.

listened. Peter Drucker suggests that listening serves as the first competency of a leader: “The first such basic competence, I would put the willingness, ability, and self-discipline to listen. Listening is not a skill; it’s a discipline. Anybody can do it. All you have to do is keep your mouth shut.”⁵⁴ The discipline to listen is not inherently natural to most pastors.

Listening means a pastor has to acknowledge his or her own insecurity and arrogance. Osborne describes how these two traits will hinder a pastor receiving fresh perspective from outsiders: “Sometimes it’s because of arrogance. They think they and their tribe have all the answers. Sometimes it’s because of insecurity; they fear leaving their comfort zones.”⁵⁵ Many pastors, full of pride, convince themselves they do not need outside perspective, or enslaved to insecurity they refuse to listen and seek wise council. Arrogance and insecurity block pastors from listening to and learning from people who can help them discern and diagnose their congregations.

While an arduous process, a candid diagnosis only reflects the beginning of a relaunch pastor’s effort. Assessment and diagnosis constructs a starting point where the pastor can take action. An assessment serves to transform not inform. Donald L. Anderson explains that diagnosis serves to generate action: “practitioners agree that the purpose of diagnosis is to ‘help an organization understand its behavior and its present situation—what’s going on, how it’s going on— so that something can be done about it.’ Diagnosis is not only an informational activity; it is aimed at generating action.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 20, Kindle.

⁵⁵ Osborne, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret*, 1692-1694, Kindle.

⁵⁶ Donald L. Anderson, *Organization Development: The Process of Leading Organizational Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 152.

Assessment aims for profound transformation and activity that begins with clarity of mission, vision, and culture.

Clarity: Defining Clear and Compelling Direction

A relaunch pastor should first ask, “What is the current reality of the congregation?” Second, he or she should ask, “What is the clear and compelling direction of the church?” Clarity of mission, vision, and culture will serve as a catalyst or tipping, eventually relaunching the whole church and infusing every stratum of the church with Kingdom DNA.

A relaunch pastor must navigate the waters of uncertainty, a natural part of leadership. Social media and innumerable conferences bombard pastors with information and possibilities to the point of paralysis. Furthermore, unsuccessful attempts to revitalize the church cause uncertainty. Anderson shares how unsuccessful interventions create uncertainty and even a cynical stance within organizations: “Many organizational members today have become cynical about organizational change, in part due to the number of unsuccessful interventions they may have experienced.”⁵⁷ Grenny et al explain that repeated failures can cause people not to take a pastor’s latest innovation seriously: “Soon your latest change ideas are tagged ‘program-of-the-month’ or ‘another one of Mom’s crazy ideas!’”⁵⁸ These unsuccessful attempts shake the pastor’s credibility with the congregation. The congregation tires, the staff wears out, and the board turns

⁵⁷ Ibid., 193.

⁵⁸ Grenny et al, 295, Kindle.

skeptical. All this leaves the pastor feeling uncertain about the church's future and direction.

Unsuccessful attempts to revitalize the congregation or introduce change not only cause cynicism in people about change, but they disparage the pastor's own personal confidence. Grenny et al contend that repeated failings can lead to a loss of self-confidence.⁵⁹ Courage and confidence are indispensable to a pastor's leadership and tenure. Pastors often overcome this cynical brashness toward change and regain their own personal confidence by renewing their own visions and having crystal clear clarity of mission, vision, and culture. Kouzes and Posner offer leaders hope, expressing that the essence of leadership is navigating uncertainty: "The study of leadership is the study of how men and women guide others through adversity, uncertainty, hardship, disruption, transformation, transition, recovery, new beginnings, and other significant challenges."⁶⁰ Leaders lead during times of uncertainty.

Stanley depicts the consequences of an unclear leader: "As leaders we can afford to be uncertain, but we cannot afford to be unclear. People will follow you in spite of a few bad decisions. People will not follow you if you are unclear in your instruction, and you cannot hold them accountable to respond to muddled directives."⁶¹ Clarity of mission, vision, and culture will eventually create catalytic change in the congregation while rebuilding the pastor's confidence and his or her credibility with them.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Kouzes and Posner, 160.

⁶¹ Stanley, *Next Generation Leader*, 88.

Mission Clarity

Every established church must stay alert for mission drift. Without ruthless intentionality, this virus will spread like an epidemic throughout the entire church. Osborne considers mission drift unavoidable for churches as they age: “As organizations grow and mature, there’s almost always some measure of mission creep. It’s inevitable.”⁶² Peter Greer and Chris Horst explain that a “mission true” organization, in its simplest form, will “know why they exist and protect their core at all costs. They remain faithful to what they believe God has entrusted them to do.”⁶³ Osborne expresses how easily a church can get off mission, heading in the wrong direction:

It doesn’t take much to get off course. Even a mere one-degree variance makes a huge difference. That’s why it’s so important that we maintain a ruthless focus and devotion to our primary mission (and a willingness to do whatever it takes to realign with it), or it won’t be long until we’re headed off in the wrong direction without even knowing it.⁶⁴

Established churches do not drift off mission overnight; it happens gradually. Greer and Horst write about how organizations slowly deviate from their original purpose:

Without careful attention, faith-based organizations will inevitably drift from their founding mission. It’s that simple. It will happen. Slowly, silently, and with little fanfare, organizations routinely drift from their original purpose, and most will never return to their original intent. It has happened repeatedly throughout history and it was happening to us.⁶⁵

⁶² Osborne, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret*, 682.

⁶³ Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2014), 27, Kindle.

⁶⁴ Osborne, *Mission Creep*, chapter 1.

⁶⁵ Greer and Horst, 15.

The mission drift requires bold and audacious leaders who remind the church it exists to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19) and mirror the redemptive life of Christ who came to “seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Some pastors look for the easy and painless answers that automatically kick-start their churches. They chase the latest technique or program that will grow their churches. Pastors tend to look for “what” will grow the church instead of “why” the church exists. Simon Sinek explains how companies fall into this same trap:

Very few people or companies can clearly articulate WHY they do WHAT they do. When I say WHY, I don't mean to make money—that's a result. By WHY I mean what is your purpose, cause or belief? WHY does your company exist? WHY do you get out of bed every morning? And WHY should anyone care?⁶⁶

Simon Sinek argues that successful companies build their enterprises on the “why” not the “what” of their organizations. Relaunch pastors infuse into every stratum of the church the mission or the why of the church. Understanding the mission or the why infuses conviction in a congregation more than any great idea or technique. Until a pastor ignites a passion for the mission of the church, all strategies will merely become the latest fad of church growth and meaningless clutter.

Mission clarifies the negotiable and the non-negotiable for the congregation. Drucker proposes that people will adapt to change easier if they know what will never change: “Indeed, the great paradox of change is that the organizations that best adapt to a changing world first and foremost know what should not change; they have a fixed anchor of guiding principles around which they can more easily change everything

⁶⁶ Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), 39, Kindle.

else.”⁶⁷ Long before a relaunch pastor declares to the church the new changes, he or she needs to devote time to clarify the unchangeable things, such as the Scripture’s authority, sound theology and doctrine, honoring every generation, and the Kingdom’s mission.

Stanley uses explicit language to describe the unchangeable nature of the mission: “Marry your mission. Date your model. Fall in love with your vision. Stay mildly infatuated with your approach.”⁶⁸ Congregations need to marry and have a covenant relationship with the mission, not the ministries or the model of their churches. They need to clarify the sacred and the unsacred. Church revitalization does not merely grow a congregation or build an enormous church for one’s own well-being; it is about fulfilling the mission of God to the world.

Vision Clarity

Mission defines why the church exists; vision explains where the church intends to go. Vision offers a preferred picture of the future. Kotter defines the concept of vision: “Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.”⁶⁹ The congregation accepted the status quo because the pastor has an unclear vision or no vision at all. Groeschel describes how a visionless congregation will settle: “Without a vision, people become comfortable with

⁶⁷ Peter F. Drucker, *The Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool: Participant Workbook* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 14-16.

⁶⁸ Stanley, *Deep & Wide*, 284.

⁶⁹ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 71, Kindle.

the status quo. Later they grow to love the status quo. Eventually, they'll give their best to protect what is, never dreaming about what could or should be.”⁷⁰

Relaunch pastors view themselves as architects of the vision, not as fire fighters of present problems. They will consistently ask this question: “What is the preferred future for the church?” Kouzes and Posner describe a visionary leader as an architect: “Much as an architect draws a blueprint or an engineer builds a model, you need to have a clear vision of what the results should look like before starting any project.”⁷¹ Relaunch pastors carefully design and craft “exciting and ennobling possibilities”⁷² of what the future will look like. This section will examine three principles visionary leaders understand in crafting and designing vision.

First, relaunch pastors need to hear from God, not the latest growth book or what the pastor down the street does. Often pastors make a grave mistake when they imitate another ministry or church. Osborne says the vision has to be personal: “A compelling vision comes from within. When leaders develop their vision by looking out the window to see what everyone else is doing, they don’t end up with a vision. They end up with a poor imitation of someone else’s vision.”⁷³ Patrick and DeVine communicate the depth of receiving a divine vision: “By vision I mean a picture of what it might look like for a particular band of believers to live and serve as the people of God here and now. Not a

⁷⁰ Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 42, Kindle.

⁷¹ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 18.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Osborne, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret*, 2013-2015, Kindle.

vision conjured out of the musings of the pastor's head but one received from God."⁷⁴

Hybels communicates the personal urgency of understanding the divine vision:

If God has given you a kingdom vision, if you see it clearly and feel it deeply, you had better take responsibility for it. You had better give your life to it. That's why God made you a leader. That's your unique calling. That's what you and I will be held accountable for someday.⁷⁵

Relaunch pastors must respond honestly to the following questions: What is God saying to you about the future of your church? Do you believe your vision? Are you excited for the vision deep in your heart?

Second, clear vision will create action. Often, established churches have a culture of indifference; nobody cares enough to get involved and take action. Years of visionless leaders produce a culture of apathy. Hybels explains the relationship of vision and action in the church: "Vision is the fuel that leaders run on. It's the energy that creates action. It's the fire that ignites the passion of followers. It's the clear call that sustains focused effort year after year, decade after decade, as people offer consistent and sacrificial service to God."⁷⁶ Ferguson shares the infectious nature of big dreams: "Big dreams are also contagious. They are infectious. They not only change you, but they can also slowly begin to change your friends and those around you! Big dreams generate excitement, and they attract those who want to follow your example and step out in faith."⁷⁷ Relaunch pastors have to infuse into the church's bloodstream a clear, compelling, and infectious

⁷⁴ Patrick and DeVine, *Replant*, 345-351, Kindle.

⁷⁵ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 37, Kindle.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁷ Ferguson and Ferguson, 669-670, Kindle.

vision that will inspire people to action. Established churches have succumbed to an ingrown focus due to the lack of a clear and compelling vision of the future.

Finally, vision serves as the only way to create a catalytic transformation in a congregation. The impetus of relaunching the church begins with a pastor having a clear, unequivocal picture of the future, then communicating this to the congregation in such a way that people wholeheartedly follow it. Stanley communicates the kind of vision that will facilitate change in a congregation: “The catalyst for introducing and facilitating change in the local church is a God-honoring, mouthwatering, unambiguously clear vision.”⁷⁸ Vision is the catalytic tipping point to relaunch a congregation trapped in years of mundane ministry and status quo. Vision has a chain reaction in a congregation. Once people see the future, it creates an urgency to move forward. Groeschel says an intrinsic link exists between clear vision and momentum. “Ministries that have it always have a clear vision. The people know the vision, understand the vision, believe in the vision, and live the vision. The vision guides them, motivates them, and energizes them.”⁷⁹ When a pastor paints a clear and compelling word picture of the preferred future, the people in the church will make enormous sacrifices and take far-reaching action to accomplish this vision.

Culture Clarity

Studies of any successful company or church reveal a well-crafted culture infused into the life of the organization. Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn reflect on the distinct cultures of successful firms:

⁷⁸ Stanley, *Deep & Wide*, 270.

⁷⁹ Groeschel, 39, Kindle.

Name the most successful firms you know today, from large behemoths like Coca-Cola, Disney, General Electric, Intel, McDonald's, Microsoft, Rubbermaid, Sony, and Toyota, to small entrepreneurial start-ups. Virtually every leading firm you can name, small or large, has developed a distinctive culture that its employees can clearly identify.⁸⁰

Cameron and Quinn explain how “Most organizational scholars and observers now recognize that organizational culture has a powerful influence on the performance and long-term effectiveness of organizations.”⁸¹ Transformational change is not simply an organizational or program change but a cultural change that impacts the organization from the inside out. Culture is a notion hard to define but easy to identify. A review of the general literature on culture in organizations reveals some commonly shared and accepted definitions:

- Cameron and Quinn refer to culture as the “taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, and definitions that characterize organizations and their members.”⁸²
- Anderson defines the shorthand definition of culture: “the shared attitudes, values, beliefs, and customs of members of a social unit or organization.”⁸³
- Edgar H. Schein sees culture as a “set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations.”⁸⁴
- Shawn Parr delineates culture as a balanced blend of “human psychology, attitudes, actions, and beliefs that combined create either pleasure or pain, serious momentum or miserable stagnation.”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 299, Kindle.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 309, Kindle.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 501-503, Kindle.

⁸³ Anderson, 29.

⁸⁴ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 29, Kindle.

⁸⁵ Shawn Parr, “Culture Eats Strategy For Lunch Shawn Parr,” *Fast Company*, accessed May 19, 2014, <http://www.fastcompany.com/1810674/culture-eats-strategy-lunch>.

- Kotter says culture refers to “norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people.”⁸⁶

A study of church culture sheds light on why people struggle with revitalization and Kingdom changes. Schein explains that culture helps things become understandable: “When we learn to see the world through cultural lenses, all kinds of things begin to make sense that initially were mysterious, frustrating, or seemingly stupid.”⁸⁷

Understanding culture gives pastors the necessary patience to deal with congregants who have a difficult time in transitions. Schein explains why leaders need to understand the subtleties of culture:

If we understand the dynamics of culture, we will be less likely to be puzzled, irritated, and anxious when we encounter the unfamiliar and seemingly irrational behavior of people in organizations, and we will have a deeper understanding not only of why various groups of people or organizations can be so different but also why it is so hard to change them.⁸⁸

Relaunch pastors have to learn to deal with critics in congregations from a cultural lens, not as a personal attack. They need to know congregants have learned their church culture over the many years and even decades and will take time to absorb a new one.

When a culture shift occurs at a church, people will feel it deeply and personally. In his fictional story, McDonald shares a narrative of a new pastor who brought changes to his congregation. At first, the congregation wanted and welcomed these changes; however, the problem was that the congregation expected program changes, not a cultural transformation. McDonald explains how the expectations of the people were “merely a

⁸⁶ Kotter, 156, Kindle.

⁸⁷ Schein, 13, Kindle.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 9.

fresh voice in the pulpit and a program or two imported from more successful churches people.”⁸⁹ The pastor underestimated the cultural shift:

What he and his fellow church members had not anticipated was a total shift in the church’s culture, a reinvention (a favorite word of mine) of ways to love God and serve people. What they did not see coming was a reshuffling of the church’s priorities, so that lost and broken people rather than found and supposedly fixed people became the primary target audience.⁹⁰

After the cultural shift, however, the people in the congregation felt their church had been stolen out from under them and hijacked. The people were comfortable with new programs added, however, not with a holistic cultural shift. Chand believes leaders need to focus on cultural changes and not merely strategy: “Top leaders need to spend at least as much time analyzing their culture as they do crafting their new vision, strategy, and marketing plans.”⁹¹ People will feel like someone has stolen their church and even their personal calling and ministry to the body of Christ. Understanding culture helps a pastor provide pastoral leadership not impetuous leadership.

Many church revitalizations have proven unproductive because pastors have not infused a new culture of change into their churches. The transformational change never permeated into the congregation’s culture and DNA. The relaunch pastor observes a few encouraging changes and concludes everyone is on board. Hirsch, in explaining why most revitalizations do not work, acknowledges the cultural factor: “The reason for this is actually quite simple, though it is often overlooked: unless the paradigm at the heart of

⁸⁹ Gordon MacDonald, *Who Stole My Church?: What to Do When the Church You Love Tries to Enter the 21st Century* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 84, Kindle.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Chand, 348-349, Kindle.

the culture is changed, there can be no lasting change.”⁹² Kotter explains that change will never stick until it permeates the bloodstream of the organization:

In the final analysis, change sticks only when it becomes “the way we do things around here,” when it seeps into the very bloodstream of the work unit or corporate body. Until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are always subject to degradation as soon as the pressures associated with a change effort are removed.⁹³

The pastor must infuse transformation into the DNA and every stratum of the established church. Chand calls culture the dominant factor: “Culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization.”⁹⁴ Greer speaks of the intentionality of leaders in crafting and architecting a culture:

Thoughtful leaders intentionally craft the culture of their organizations and know it is too important to delegate. They create, reinforce, and celebrate the traditions and practices undergirding the culture. Ignoring the little things will mean drastic consequences in the long run, because a culture without purpose and intentionality will leave no defense against drift.⁹⁵

A relaunch pastor can vary the church lobby to make it more inviting or even add a contemporary service; however, if they do not “intentionally craft the culture,” they will not have long-term revitalization. Shawn Parr depicts the relationship of long-term success and culture: “Long-term success is dependent on a culture that is nurtured and alive. Culture is the environment in which your strategy and your brand thrives or dies a

⁹² Hirsch, 53.

⁹³ Kotter, 14, Kindle.

⁹⁴ Chand, 197, Kindle.

⁹⁵ Greer and Horst, 156, Kindle.

slow death.”⁹⁶ Any work on renewing the vision of a congregation must include the subject of culture clarity.

Designing and creating a culture begins with the words a pastor chooses and how he or she speaks them to his or her congregation, staff, and board. Words have the power to shape not only lives but also an organization’s culture. Schein shows the intrinsic link between how leaders use language to create and reinforce new culture: “Culture supplies us our language, and language provides meaning in our day-to-day life.”⁹⁷ In order for a pastor to change the church’s culture, he or she has to change the congregation’s language.

This change includes language spoken in services, board meetings, staff meetings, in private, announcements, preaching styles, policy handbooks—every environment that exists within the church. Greer points out that organizations ruthless about their mission recognize “that it is not just what they do, and not just how they do it, but how they talk about it that matters.”⁹⁸ Chands speaks to the power of words: “The words we use, and the way we use them, define organizational culture.”⁹⁹ Kouzes and Posner describe the grasp exemplary leaders have on this concept: “Exemplary leaders understand this and are attentive to language. They know the power of words.”¹⁰⁰ A relaunch pastor has to get

⁹⁶ Parr.

⁹⁷ Schein, 3. Kindle.

⁹⁸ Greer and Horst, 166, Kindle.

⁹⁹ Chand, 1131-1132, Kindle.

¹⁰⁰ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 79.

clarity on the culture and language it speaks.¹⁰¹ The church's language will ultimately be the church.

Clarifying the church's mission, vision, and culture will have a chain reaction and ultimately serve as the tipping point that relaunches the church. However, often pastors stop at this point and never courageously lead their churches in catalytic change. They create all types of elaborate statements but never identify and cultivate the momentum God sends to His church. As a result, all over North America churches have well-crafted mission statements but essentially no measureable results. Clarity without transformational momentum will leave pastors and congregations frustrated and on a downward spiral into discouragement and Kingdom setback.

Momentum: Creating a Culture of Catalytic Change

God is actively alive and present in His Church. Jesus said to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation, "he who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying."¹⁰² God speaks to His Church and sends waves of His Spirit for her to leverage for Kingdom influence. He wants to provide momentum for His people in a way that will build His Kingdom, redeem humanity, and bring to reality the vision anchored within the pastor's heart. Groeschel describes momentum, "it," as only coming from God:

That's why we have to embrace the fact that God makes it happen. It is from him. It is by him. It is for his glory. We can't create it. We can't reproduce it. We can't manufacture it. It is not a model. It is not a system. It is not the result of a program. You can't purchase or manufacture it. It can't be copied. Not everyone

¹⁰¹ New Life Church in Renton, Washington, trains new staff and employees on culture and language. See Appendix F, "Language of New Life Church."

¹⁰² Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

will get it. It can't be learned in a classroom. Yet even though it can't be taught, it can be caught.¹⁰³

Momentum can only happen with God's providence; however, pastors' scarcity of courage and fortitude encumber momentum. The surfer holds no responsibility for creating the waves; the surfer's responsibility is to identify and ride the wave. Only God creates the waves of the Spirit. However, an undeniable proficiency exists in identifying and riding the wave. A relaunch pastor first has to answer, "What are the current realities of the congregation?" Second, he or she answers, "What is the clear and compelling direction of the church?" Third, the relaunch pastor answers, "How do I as the pastor identify and cultivate momentum in my congregation?" This section will consider three areas of the lead pastor's proficiency to lead and cultivate momentum: (1) Courage: going from Ideals to Action, (2) Celebrating Short-term Wins, and (3) Momentum: The Tipping Point.

Courage: Going From Ideals to Actions

Leadership demands clarity and courage. One without the other constrains momentum and results in a plateaued or declining church. Clarity without courage creates a disheartened congregation. Courage without clarity creates a divided congregation. Lomenick explains how crystal clear vision by itself will not lead to transformational change: "Without courage, your calling is crippled. Even if you have a crystal-clear vision from God about the path you should pursue—and most of us don't—it will not alter your direction one whit until you have enough courage to act on it. Courage moves

¹⁰³ Groeschel, 27, Kindle.

us from ideals to action, from potential to actuality.”¹⁰⁴ Courage on the part of the pastor is essential for cultivating momentum.

Courage to act, making unflinching decisions, and taking risk proves essential for leading an established congregation. Kouzes and Posner state that courage fuels leaders during the darkest hour: “Leaders take us to places we have never been before, and you can’t go to those places without courage. Courage gives you the confidence to believe you can make it. Courage gives you the strength to sustain yourself in the darkest hours.”¹⁰⁵ Stanley credits the tipping point of extraordinary change in a congregation to a single act of courage.¹⁰⁶ Despite all the good intentions of pastors they will never relaunch their congregations without undertakings of courage.

Relaunch pastors face their fears and ask God for courage and confidence to lead into the future.¹⁰⁷ Patrick and DeVine communicate the resolve that a relaunch pastor needs: “At some point, leaders in a declining or plateauing church have to look at themselves in the mirror and say, ‘Enough is enough.’ Leaders need clarity about what

¹⁰⁴ Brad Lomenick, *The Catalyst Leader: 8 Essentials for Becoming a Change Maker* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 100, Kindle.

¹⁰⁵ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Finding the Courage to Lead* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 213-215, Kindle.

¹⁰⁶ Audrey Barrick, “Thousands Take Courage to be Catalysts for Christ,” *Christian Post*, March 4, 2011, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/thousands-take-courage-to-be-catalysts-for-christ-49283/>.

¹⁰⁷ Lomenick encourages leaders to have courage by reminding us of Christian history: “Christian history illustrates this legacy of taking heart amid life’s difficulties. Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the Wittenberg church door and catalyzed the Protestant Reformation. William Wilberforce dreamed of a society free of slavery, and he began a movement to realize it. Hudson Taylor braved the seas and became the first missionary in China. In 1930, George Washington Carver turned down every job opportunity and instead chose to courageously enhance the lives of poor Southern farmers. Dietrich Bonhoeffer stood against the Nazi regime and ultimately gave his life opposing the evil dictatorship. In 1955 Rosa Parks literally took a courageous seat of liberation, changing the course of human history. In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream and the impact from his courageous march toward freedom is still felt today.” Lomenick, 104, Kindle.

the Scripture says the church ought to be, and courage to stand against those who refuse to let the Scripture inform their view of the church.”¹⁰⁸ Kouzes and Posner echo this same resilience that leaders must declare: “‘Enough is enough. I’m not going to take it anymore.’ And you have to be resolute about it. No fence sitting. No hemming and hawing. No equivocating. This is the moment; this is the time when you have to act.”¹⁰⁹ Established churches need a pastor who will take a courageous leadership stance; they need an individual willing to lead confidently and wisely his or her congregation in revitalization.

Often fear paralyzes pastors, imprisoning and entrenching them in irrelevant programs and church traditions inept or no longer effective. Ferguson speaks of two fears pastors face in taking risks:

I find that there are two common fears that keep us and our churches from taking risks for the sake of mission. The first is our fear of failure. We say to ourselves, “I’m afraid it just won’t work . . . and I can’t accept the possibility of failure.” The second fear that keeps us from taking risks is closely related— it’s the fear of loss. We work for years to build a large church or successful career, and our “success” can become the very thing that gets in the way of our taking more significant risks. We tell ourselves, “I’ve accomplished too much to lose it all.”¹¹⁰

The fear of failure and loss implode pastors, causing them to accommodate the status quo and their comfort zones, rendering them and their churches ineffective.

The church will never have a redemptive ministry and Kingdom influence without first stepping outside of its comfort zones, which, according to Williams, pastors must willingly do: “If you desire for the church to be the vessel that is used by God to reach

¹⁰⁸ Patrick and DeVine, *Replant*, 413-415, Kindle.

¹⁰⁹ Kouzes and Posner, *Finding the Courage to Lead*, 269-271, Kindle,

¹¹⁰ Ferguson and Ferguson, 812-818, Kindle.

the lost, bring hope to the hurting, comfort the brokenhearted, then it will require you stepping out of your comfort zone.”¹¹¹ Morgan believes the pastor must get uncomfortable in order for a church to get out of the funk: “The reality is that if we’re going to reach people outside the church and outside the faith, we’re going to have to be uncomfortable.”¹¹² Relaunch pastors possess resilience and understand that Kingdom impact is more imperative than self-comfort.

Patrick and DeVine express the raw faith Kingdom work requires: “In every kingdom endeavor, there is a time and a place for raw faith. A time to risk comfort, security, and all you have known for the reward of seeing God do something unexplainable.”¹¹³ Relaunch pastors need resiliency and courage, knowing God creates the waves of the Spirit in their congregations. The courage and boldness of the Spirit that empowered the Early Church is indispensable in leading the local church today in Kingdom impact and redemptive ministry.

Short-term Wins: The Remodeling Phase

Revitalization is not an overnight process. Kotter communicates that it takes time for a change effort to sink into the culture: “Until changes sink down deeply into the culture, which for an entire company can take three to ten years, new approaches are fragile and subject to regression.”¹¹⁴ A time will come when the old does not work any

¹¹¹ Williams, 21, Kindle.

¹¹² Tony Morgan, *Stuck in a Funk?: How to Get Your Church Moving Forward* (n.p.: Morgan Live, 2013) 23, Kindle.

¹¹³ Patrick and DeVine, 732-733, Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Kotter, 13, Kindle.

longer and the new has yet to embed fully in the culture. Anderson refers to this time as the neutral zone: “The neutral zone is a time when ‘neither the old nor the new ways work properly.’ It can be frustrating and confusing to recognize that a change is taking place, without the comfort of established routines and practices.”¹¹⁵ Revitalization resembles remodeling a house. A time exists when the old has been demolished and the new has yet to be built. Restoration always costs more than a person thinks and takes longer than he or she planned. One of the toughest undertakings is helping a congregation stay on mission during the remodel phase. Anderson describes the frustration of this remodeling phase:

It can be frustrating and confusing to recognize that a change is taking place, without the comfort of established routines and practices. People can feel bombarded and overwhelmed by new information and may not know how to evaluate or interpret all of it. It can feel uncomfortable and risky to try new things without the knowledge of what may happen next. It may feel as if the transition is taking forever without a clear sense of when the confusion will end.¹¹⁶

In order to move a congregation forward, pastors must keep the morale high and vision vibrant during times when people feel uncomfortable and things reside in the remodeling phase or neutral zone.

The pastor needs to recognize, celebrate, and leverage short-term wins within the congregation in order to sustain high morale and keep the people focused on the vision. Short-term wins serve as a tangible example of what will become a new normative culture of the congregation in the imminent future. Kouzes and Posner describe a small win as “a concrete, complete, implemented outcome of moderate importance.”¹¹⁷ An

¹¹⁵ Linda Holbeche, *Understanding Change* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 74.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, 197.

¹¹⁷ Kouzes and Posner, *Finding the Courage to Lead*, 190.

irrefutable link exists between momentum and celebrating short-term wins. Revitalization necessitates celebrating wins grounded in the church's mission, vision, and culture before the vision's fulfillment. Every time a pastor celebrates a small win he or she, to use Jim Collins's language, pushes the flywheel in the right direction:

In building greatness, there is no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Rather, the process resembles relentlessly pushing a giant, heavy flywheel in one direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond.¹¹⁸

Celebrating short-term wins emboldens the congregation, clarifies the vision of the church, and fuels the pastor's credibility and confidence.

Short-term wins help people move forward incrementally in the new direction and give people confidence that the vision anchored in the pastor's heart is not merely talk. Congregates resist changes when they cannot see outcomes in a reasonable amount of time. Kotter speaks of the importance of showing people how their efforts pay off: "To ensure success, short-term wins must be both visible and unambiguous. The wins must also be clearly related to the change effort. Such wins provide evidence that the sacrifices that people are making are paying off."¹¹⁹ The congregants must sense momentum and see outcomes immediately, albeit incrementally, in any transitional effort. Hunt shares insights as to why so many changes lose traction and the need for short-term wins: "Without short-term wins the change process will never gain traction. Fairly early on we

¹¹⁸ Collins, 468-470, Kindle.

¹¹⁹ "The 8-Step Process for Leading Change," Kotter International, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://www.kotterinternational.com/our-principles/changesteps/step-3>.

need to find some early successes, no matter how small, and put a spotlight on them.”¹²⁰

Short-term wins keep a vision alive in the hearts of the congregants before its completion.

Furthermore, celebrating short-term wins helps a congregant break old mindsets and current behavioral patterns. Kouzes and Posner understand an inherent connection exists between breaking old mindsets and helping people move forward both immediately and incrementally:

How do you get people to want to move in a new direction, break old mindsets, or change existing behavior patterns in order to tackle big problems and attempt extraordinary performance? You climb that mountain one hop at a time. You make progress incrementally. You break the long journey down into milestones. You move people forward step-by-step, creating a sense of forward momentum by generating what University of Michigan professor Weick calls “small wins.”¹²¹

The congregant’s mindset and behavior patterns are integrated into their individual church culture lens. Even after a pastor paints a preferred picture of the future, a person often sees this through his or her own experiences and traditions. His or her particular type of music, preaching style, and programs represent what they have experienced as their church culture; it does not signify an unsupportive or divisive person. Celebrating short-term wins gradually creates a new church culture lens for people.

Momentum: The Tipping Point

Momentum takes a vision from the pastor’s heart to the congregation’s bloodstream. Groeschel writes about the impact of momentum on the congregation’s life:

When a ministry has it [momentum], the staff knows they're part of something much bigger than themselves, part of a divine mission. They show up early for

¹²⁰ Josh Hunt, *Change Your Church or Die* (n.p.: Pulpit Press), 14, Kindle.

¹²¹ Kouzes and Posner, *Finding the Courage to Lead*, 190.

everything. They often stay late. They rarely fight. When they do disagree, they grow through their differences, usually quickly. When a church doesn't have it, the staff is simply doing a job, drawing a paycheck. They're territorial. Jealous. Griping. Even bitter.¹²²

Momentum serves as a pastor's ally or adversary. When a pastor has momentum, it seems like everything goes in the right direction. Without momentum, everything seems worse and the morale truncates.

Momentum is the tipping point where a church experiences a cultural shift within the congregation. Malcolm Gladwell introduces the tipping point to organizations: "The Tipping Point is the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point."¹²³ He describes three characteristics of the tipping point: (1) contagious, (2) little causes can have big effects, and (3) change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment.¹²⁴ Gladwell articulates that changes made at the tipping point will have enormous consequences, and at this dramatic moment everything can change all at once.¹²⁵ Rick Warren, in discussing how to lead a church in decline or at a plateau, says churches need to learn to "create a catalytic event, followed by continuous systems."¹²⁶ He believes churches need to create moments that become tipping points for a congregation.

Clarifying the church's direction serves as a catalyst, or tipping point, to relaunch the church and infuse a new DNA of Kingdom impact into every stratum of the

¹²² Groeschel, 29, Kindle.

¹²³ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2006) 12, Kindle.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, Kindle.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3574, Kindle.

¹²⁶ Rick Warren, "Leading Your Church through Plateaus" (Lecture, AG Large Church Network, San Diego, February 13, 2014).

congregation. Relaunch pastors unwaveringly “lead and cultivate” the waves of momentum in their congregations. This section examines three substratum principles for leading and cultivating momentum in the life of a congregation: (1) Focus on Mission-critical Changes, (2) Create Well-defined and Time-bound Strategic Initiatives, and (3) Stop Tinkering with Change—Lead It.

Focus on Mission-critical Changes

Deliberate focus on mission-critical changes, not auxiliary changes, cultivates momentum. Often pastors wrongly think they must completely reimagine and change every program and ministry at one instantaneous moment in order to create momentum. Few pastors have the credibility to change everything at the same time, nor would it be advantageous.¹²⁷ Mission-critical changes are determined by any change that encumbers the church’s momentum as it relates to its overall all mission, vision, and culture. Relaunch pastors must think decisively about this, not wasting credibility on auxiliary changes but focusing on mission critical changes that move the congregation forward.

Grenny et al communicate how to create a cascade of change: “Master influencers know that it takes only a few behaviors to create big changes in the results they care about. To do so, they look vigilantly for one or two actions that create a cascade of change.”¹²⁸ Relaunch pastors need to focus on making acute changes in a few areas, not in every area of their congregations. Grenny et al convey the success of the leader depends on their capacity to create systematically rapid, profound, and sustainable

¹²⁷ There is a time when a church needs to shut the doors and reinvest their resources into a church plant or multi-site strategy; however, this is not the purpose of this project.

¹²⁸ Grenny et al, 62, Kindle.

changes in a handful of key behaviors.¹²⁹ Eventually, these rapid, profound, and sustainable changes will have a chain reaction and contribute to the tipping point of the congregation, ultimately relaunching the church and infusing new DNA into the life of the church.

Infusing new Kingdom DNA into a congregation requires unapologetic single-mindedness on a handful of mission critical goals. McChesney, Covey, and Huling refer to these goals as “wildly important goals” (WIGS). They define the WIGS as the first discipline of leaders: “The first discipline is to focus your finest effort on the one or two goals that will make all the difference, instead of giving mediocre effort to dozens of goals.”¹³⁰ Leaders separate between wildly important and auxiliary goals. McChesney, Covey, and Huling claim this separation is essential to success: “To succeed, you must be willing to make the hard choices that separate what is wildly important from all the many other merely important goals on your radar.”¹³¹ This proves a difficult discipline for pastors since they tend to think if they ignore all outdated ministries now they are not providing strong leadership. The opposite holds true. Pastors start with mission critical ministries first and wait for the right timing with all other ministries.

Leadership requires making the complex choice between mission critical changes and those that do not merit a leader’s energy or credibility. McChesney, Covey, and Huling advise organizations when determining the WIGs not to ask, “What’s most

¹²⁹ Ibid., 6, Kindle.

¹³⁰ Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling. *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 23, Kindle.

¹³¹ Ibid., 27, Kindle.

important?” Instead begin by asking, “If every other area of our operation remained at its current level of performance, what is the one area where change would have the greatest impact?”¹³² During a revitalization, the initial changes should concentrate on the ones that have an unswerving, immediate impact on a church’s mission, vision, and culture. Mission critical changes will create a cascade of change or tipping point; auxiliary changes run the risk of propelling a church into confusion over things that will not contribute to the overall revitalization.

Undeniably, the Sunday gathering serves as the most prominent and mission-critical place.¹³³ Sunday impacts the church’s soul and culture. Sunday happens every seven days and impacts the church’s mission, vision, and culture more than any other environment. At first glance a person may conclude that a focus on Sunday serves as a futile attempt to make superficial or cosmetic changes without addressing the real problematic issues. This would hold true if the pastor only aspired to a “cool” Sunday; however, it aims to create momentum and credibility with the congregation. Sunday impacts the church’s soul. The environment on Sundays will ultimately infuse the entire church with culture and vision. Sundays provide a great platform to engage new people with the vision of the church as well as an opportunity to “re-educate” long time members on the church’s mission. Pastors tend to underestimate the power of the Sunday gathering for embedding the mission, creating culture, and casting vision to the congregation.

¹³² Ibid., 32, Kindle.

¹³³ See Appendix G, “From the Street to the Seat.” This is a full assessment tool for pastors to measure the effectiveness of their Sunday services.

Create Well-defined and Time-bound Strategic Initiatives

Well-defined and time-bound strategic initiatives cultivate momentum, which, along with the pastor's vision, fuels the relaunch process. Strategic initiatives serve as the impetus to a tipping point, or cascade of change, in the congregation. In a real sense, a pastor has to announce the church's pregnancy and declare a date the church will give birth to the vision anchored within his or her heart. Drucker argues an organization needs an "innovative strategy—a way to bring the new to the marketplace."¹³⁴ Strategic initiatives provide a practical approach for the pastor to lead their congregation from vision to reality. Hybels articulates that people need more than vision: "At a certain point people need more than vision. They need a plan, a step-by-step explanation of how to move from vision to reality."¹³⁵

Strategic initiatives go beyond the why (mission) and even the preferred future (vision) and give the detailed plan of the what, when, and where. Schein communicates the need for time-bound initiatives: "Goals have to be formulated for what to do next year, next month, and tomorrow. Goals concretize the mission and facilitate the decisions on means."¹³⁶ Osborn contends a pastor must present the what, when, and how: "I'm fond of reminding people that God's will has three components: a what, a when, and a how. Each is equally important. Two out of three won't cut it. Miss out on any of the three and you'll end up in deep weeds."¹³⁷ Strategic initiatives provide an intentional approach to

¹³⁴ Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization*, 14, Kindle.

¹³⁵ Hybels, 55, Kindle.

¹³⁶ Schein, 79, Kindle.

¹³⁷ Osborn, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret*, 730-732, Kindle.

leading change through creating a step-by-step action plan to establish clear and wildly important goals for the congregation within a specific time-bound commitment.

Strategic changes aim at cultural changes, not just simple program changes. A difference exists between program changes and cultural changes within a congregation. McChesney, Covey, and Huling explain two distinct varieties that help differentiate between types of changes: “stroke of the pen” changes and “behavior changes.” Leaders execute stroke of the pen strategies by ordering or authorizing them to be done: “These are initiatives that, if you have the money and the authority, you can make happen simply by deciding to implement them”¹³⁸ Such initiatives may offer a significant capital investment, change in compensations processes, require hiring new staff, or necessitate designing an environment. Behavior changes are cultural changes. They affect the “whys” of doing things. A strategic initiative aims to create a new culture or new normal behavior in the congregation—a new understanding of the imperative that the “why” represents.

Ultimately, strategic initiatives will cause a tipping point that infuses a new Kingdom culture into every stratum of the congregation. Grenny et al say clear goals will have a trigger—a chain of events that will transform everything: “The effect of providing this clear, compelling, and time-bound target was immediate. It started a whole chain of events that virtually redefined the organization.”¹³⁹ Strategic initiatives cause a tipping point in the congregation beyond any one undertaking of the pastor. Something happens in the bloodstream of the staff, board, and congregants when they rally together behind a

¹³⁸ McChesney, Covey, and Huling, 240, Kindle.

¹³⁹ Grenny et al, 19.

compelling vision. Research done by Grenny et al reveals that a “clear, compelling, and challenging initiative or goal causes the blood to pump more rapidly, the brain to fire, and the muscles to engage.”¹⁴⁰ This tipping point is the “dramatic moment” where mission critical changes can occur and new culture DNA can infuse in one moment for a church.

Stop Tinkering with Change—Lead It.

Leading change, not tinkering with it, cultivates momentum. Frequently pastors notoriously tinker with things but never lead the congregation into change for the fear of losing people or credibility. It is easy to plunge into the trap of tinkering and making minor changes. Grenny et al shares two fatal outcomes from tinkering with change:

Whatever the rationale for tinkering, the cost of putting forth a tepid effort can be extraordinary. In addition to the fact that addressing profound problems with trivial solutions doesn't create the changes you desire, you do create a reputation for not being able to create change.¹⁴¹

Tinkering will never address the deep seeded cultural changes necessary within an established church. Additionally, tinkering brings into question the pastor's credibility to lead transformational change. Osborne reiterates this same challenge to pastors and innovators: “Serial innovators don't fall into the tinkering trap. They don't try to fix everything that's broken or improve things that aren't running perfectly. Instead, they focus on fixing the things that will make the biggest difference.”¹⁴² Pastors need to stop tinkering with issues that do not provide momentum.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 295.

¹⁴² Osborne, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret*, 507-509, Kindle.

Tinkering wars against a culture of change; therefore, tinkering will merely create an entrenched congregation. Making unflinching and decisive decisions in a few mission critical issues cultivates momentum. Once a pastor determines the mission critical changes, he or she has to decide, “no more tinkering.”

Conclusion

A clear and compelling direction from the pastor and well-defined and time-bound strategic initiatives serve as a catalyst or tipping point for relaunching a congregation. The North American church desperately needs revitalization. Pastors must diagnose the brutal realities and stop hiding behind rhetoric that defensively suggests the church is “under attack” and if they simply pray harder, God will send a revival. They need to look deep inside their hearts, diagnose their current realities, clarify the church’s direction, and trust the Spirit to send waves of momentum to the congregation. Pastors then must lead people courageously into catalytic and cultural changes. Clarifying a church’s direction will create a far-reaching tipping-point moment and infuse Kingdom DNA and a redemptive heartbeat into every stratum of the congregation.

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF FIELD PROJECT

Preparation of the Project

Obtaining significant results demands intentional preparation. The research of chapters 2 and 3 laid this project's foundation, providing me both personal aptitude to discuss the theological foundation behind relaunching a church and practical insights and framework to infuse into each pastor's vision and courage. The substance of this project—reflected in chapters 2 and 3—is rooted in personal experience and academic research. Preparation for this project took place in three ways: (1) Selection of Pastors (2) Clarification of Strategic Initiatives, and (3) Preparation of Project Logistics.

Selection of Pastors

My first task was to select the appropriate lead pastors for this project; bringing the right participants on board would prove critical to the project's success. Frequently, pastors express a desire to lead their congregations into transformational change; however, they may not have fully counted the personal and congregational cost. In October and November 2013, I had meetings with prospective pastors who expressed an interest in revitalizing their churches. These meetings entailed several aspects of my selection process, which involved such personal questions as: "What is God speaking to you?" "What is the next chapter of your church?" Such probing questions ensured the

pastor's willingness to provide strong and audacious leadership for his¹ church. Each pastor would need to decide whether he was ready to infuse into his congregation a clear and compelling vision. The issues discussed during these initial meetings involved three areas:

- The commitment of the pastor: Is he committed to give his church enough time to see this transformation embedded into the culture?
- The emotional health of the pastor: Does the pastor have the emotional bandwidth to lead in this kind of revitalization?
- Spiritual discernment: Has the pastor heard from God, or is he merely craving temporary results of numerical growth?

In some cases, I referred pastors to other coaching networks or resources that would serve them better. This project was not for the novice, simply trying to figure out rudimentary elements of his or her church.

The pastoral selection process involved a pretest to assess five different areas: credibility, culture, clarity, competency, and courage. Working with Dr. Jeffery Fulks, Director of Adult & Graduate Studies at Evangel University; and Dr. Mel Ming, my D.Min. project adviser, I developed a Lead Pastor Assessment pretest.² I sent out the pretest via Survey Monkey to each of the seven pastors on January 23, 2014, for them to receive before the first Relaunch Cohort on January 27, 2014. The purpose of the pretest was to discover if the pastor had: (1) credibility to lead their churches, (2) wisdom to understand their current cultures, (3) willingness to provide clarity of vision, (4) competency to lead their churches, and (5) courage to make the needed decisions to lead their congregations in transformational change.

¹ All of the pastors chosen for this project were pastors in Assemblies of God established churches in suburban communities. Currently there are no female pastors who meet these criteria in the Northwest Region.

² See Appendix H, "Lead Pastor Assessment."

The pastors selected needed to be strong leaders, ready spiritually, emotionally, and mentally to lead their congregations in catalytic change. They would each have to commit courageously to make a personal covenant with all the other six pastors:

- I will lead my congregation in a clear and compelling vision.
- I will lead my congregation in a well defined and time bound strategic initiative.
- I will participate and engage in all three relaunch meetings.
- I will prioritize and engage in the five relational consultations.
- I will complete all assignments provided during this project

On January 27, 2014, God brought together seven lead pastors to lead their churches in catalytic change during this project.³

This Relaunch Cohort consisted of

- Pastors with an average tenure of ten years. Three pastors had seventeen or more years at their churches; four pastors had four years or less at their churches.
- Pastors were all male.
- Four churches from Western Washington, two churches from Eastern Washington, and one church from Oregon.
- Seven congregations, all belonging to the Assemblies of God.
- Three churches in towns/cities of more than 91,000 people, four churches in towns/cities under 66,000.
- Attendances averaging 737. The smallest church was 300 and the largest was 950. Four averaged above 850; three under 740.
- Total average attendance among the seven churches: 5,158.
- Seven churches that represented 405 years of history. The average age of the church was 58 years old.
- Average age of the pastors was 44. Three of them were under 36 and four over 45.
- Pastors with different gift mixes, personalities, and hurdles they had to overcome.

Throughout the process of selecting lead pastors, I sought to discern the Spirit. Although this process involved setting meetings and designing pretests, God orchestrated and assembled this group, putting the dynamics of these seven together to dream great things for His Kingdom. The perspectives, life experiences, and congregational realities

³ See Appendix I, “Relaunch Cohort Churches and Pastors.”

all differed; yet, throughout the process, these pastors encouraged, inspired, and learned from one other.

Clarification of Strategic Initiatives

Second, the project clarified the well-defined and time-bound strategic initiative the seven pastors would develop for their congregations. The goal was not to give pastors a vision; rather, it was for them to discover the God-birthered vision within them. Clutter often overshadows the vision, or past attempts to revitalize the congregation have submerged it. During this preparation stage, my responsibility was to get the pastors to discover what they knew deep within, not repeat what other pastors or churches have said or done.

I gave the pastors an assignment to get away and reflect on what God was speaking to them, encouraging them to ask, “What is bugging me?” Frequently, whenever something pesters a pastor, it indicates that God is speaking. Also, I had each pastor reflect on Andy Stanley’s questions:

- If we all got kicked off the staff and the board, and an outside group (a group of leaders who were fearlessly committed to the mission of this church) took our place, what changes would they introduce?
- Why shouldn’t you and I walk out the door, come back, and do it ourselves?⁴

As a prerequisite to his involvement in this project, each pastor’s assignment included creating a well-defined and time-bound strategic initiative. The pastors needed to provide a specific list of changes they felt necessary to occur at their churches, along with a precise date when they would unveil their initiatives. Also, I required them to

⁴ Andy Stanley borrowed and contextualized this question from Andy Grove. His version is, “If we got kicked out and the board brought in a new CEO, what do you think he would he do?” See Andrew S. Grove, *Only the Paranoid Survive* (New York: Crown Business, 1999), 89.

provide a timeline of events that would lead them through the strategic initiative process. They had to turn in the complete initiative plan to me by January 15, 2014.

Preparation of Project Logistics

Finally, I organized the project logistics into two categories: five relational consultations and three Relaunch Cohorts.

I strategically scheduled the five relational consultation dates before and after each Relaunch Cohort by using GoToMeeting for the pastors' convenience. My assistant, Rachel O'Brien, arranged all the appointments to occur between January and June 2014. Each session lasted approximately forty-five to sixty minutes. Altogether, I did thirty-five relational consultations for this project.

The logistics of this Relaunch Cohort included such things as communicating the dates and times to the pastors, catering breakfast and lunch, arranging media needs, clarifying the room setup and obtaining permission to share project results in my writings.⁵ During the cohorts sessions, I used videos shown previously at New Life Church to demonstrate creative ways to cast vision to congregations. It was necessary to locate these videos and ensure they were ready to show at these cohorts' sessions. Furthermore, I sought to instill confidence in each of my participants by inviting Kevin Geer, pastor of Canvass Church in Kalispell, Montana, to the second cohort session to share the story of how he successfully relaunched his church after serving as the lead pastor for only two years. The guest speaker aspect of my cohort required oversight of all the details for his travel, expenses, and logistics.

⁵ See Appendix J for "Informed Consent Form."

Execution of the Project

After the research phase and preparatory assessments, the time came for the execution of this project. The execution phase included three elements: (1) Relational Consultations, (2) Relaunch Cohorts, and (3) Networking and Sharing Resources.

Execution of Relational Consultations

Five relational consultations transpired for each of these lead pastors, between January and June of 2014. The purpose of the personal consultation was to discuss what they absorbed during the Relaunch Cohort, ascertain how they were realistically applying the information, and discuss the progress with their congregation in the strategic initiatives and focus on any impediments they were confronting. During the respective consultations, I used the three themes outlined in chapter 3 as my essential framework for the consulting relationship.

First, each participating pastor and I diagnosed the current realities of his congregation. During these relational consultations, I asked probing questions to help the pastors understand the culture and climate of their congregations. One of the goals of the project was to make sure the pastors “diagnosed before they prescribed.” It was essential for pastors to understand context, history, and the current realities of their congregation before they could infuse a new culture. The history of each church would provide the pastor essential clues for casting a vision for the future.

Second, the pastor and I defined a clear and compelling vision for their churches. During these relational consultations a discussion around the vision of their churches was paramount: Is the vision clear? Is the vision compelling? What about the vision grabs the mind—the soul—of the pastor? While in the preparation stage, I asked questions about

the clear and compelling vision of the congregation; however, during the execution phase I continued to ask these questions repeatedly, assuring the pastor had clarity on the vision.

Finally, the pastor and I identified and cultivated momentum in the church. The relational consultations focused on the pastor's proficiency to identify and cultivate momentum. Discussions centered on the pastor's core competencies: personal courage, celebrating short-term wins, making critical mission decisions, and not tinkering with change. Pastors need practical insights and wisdom on the nuts and bolts of these competencies in leadership. Although reading a book or listening to a lecture is advantageous, relational consulting and intentional networking with pastors in these competencies emboldens a pastor. These types of learning opportunities create practical leadership environments that result in transformational changes for their congregations.

Execution of Relaunch Cohorts

I organized and implemented three Relaunch Cohorts for these seven churches. The Relaunch Cohorts included their key staff they felt were influential in the transformational process. The dates for the Relaunch Cohorts were January 27, March 27, and May 22, 2014. The first two Relaunch Cohorts went from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; the final one from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. During these Relaunch Cohorts the seven churches were able to network, collaborate with each other, share the development and progress of their strategic initiatives, and hear practical teaching on vision, momentum, celebrating short-term wins, personal courage, and mission critical decisions.

Cohort One, set on January 27, 2014, focused on three areas: (1) Clarity: The need for a clear and compelling vision, (2) Full Kingdom Impact: The importance is

Kingdom growth, not merely numerical growth, and (3) Ingrown Church: Naturally, congregations tend to become internally entrenched; therefore, pastors need to infuse into their congregations a new and outward focus.

During this cohort, the seven pastors resolved to never concede to the status quo and to trust God for renewed passion and deeper conviction in their hearts. It concluded with each pastor sharing his clear and compelling vision with one other, displaying his vision on a huge poster board for everyone to celebrate. Seeing all the seven visions on the poster board created a sense of deep community and healthy accountability among the seven, encouraging each pastor to lead his church.

Cohort Two, held on March 27, 2014, consisted of each pastor updating the development and progress of his strategic initiative. During the updates, I provided insights and encouragement to the pastors, particularly involving setbacks or other unexpected problems. Furthermore, the pastors learned from each other and shared personal encouragement. During cohort two, the discussion and teaching focused on the subject of momentum and the proficiency of courage and aptitude pastors need to identify and cultivate momentum in their congregations. As a direct result, discussed the skills and disciplines needed to identify and cultivate momentum: Celebration of wins, courage of the pastor, mission critical decisions, leading and not tinkering with change.

Cohort Three, held on May 22, 2014, was the pastors' final time together. The pastors shared the victories they experienced as a result of leading their congregations in the well-defined and time-bound strategic initiatives. The sense of hope and courage felt within this cohort was unprecedented in my twenty-five years of ministry. This cohort focused on three practical teachings: (1) creating a culture of change and innovation

within the congregation, (2) learning when and where to make mission critical decisions, and (3) Kingdom Diagnosis: asking Kingdom questions and creating a culture of diagnosis and assessment. The questions came from well-respected leaders, and then I walked them through seven questions I constantly ask myself to keep New Life's vision fresh and the programs and ministries of the church effective.⁶

Execution of Intentional Networking and Sharing Resources

I created environments for intentional networking and sharing of resources with each other. I did four things to create this networking environment. First, I created a Dropbox account in order for all seven pastors to place their resources for their particular strategic initiative in a central digital location. They uploaded material and content throughout the six-month period, making the sharing of ideas and resources convenient and easy. Second, I allowed plenty of time before, during, and after the Relaunch Cohort for discussion. The Relaunch Cohort was a collaborative environment, filled with questions, dialog, and shared ideas among the pastors. Third, sharing meals together created an optimal networking and relational environment. I encouraged the pastors to arrive early to have coffee and a light breakfast together. Lunch was also offered on site, providing the pastors another interval to connect and share. Finally, strategic staff members from New Life Church attended. They were available to network, answer questions, and share ideas with the pastors. This fostered a culture where the executive pastors, worship pastors, children pastors, and youth pastors could talk with New Life's pastors, brainstorming and getting questions answered.

⁶ See Appendix K, "Troy Jones's Assessment Questions."

Results of the Project

This project resulted in both quantitative and qualitative data. This section first presents the quantitative results, followed by the qualitative findings.

Quantitative Results

I created the Lead Pastor Assessment for the purposes of this project, which Dr. Fulks reviewed. From this review, I modified the instrument and then provided it to the pastors. Dr. Fulks also analyzed the data from the pretest and posttest.

I designed the Lead Pastor Assessment to measure five leadership qualities to determine the readiness of the pastor for the Relaunch Cohort: credibility, culture, clarity, competency, and courage. Each of these scales consisted of six to eight items, using seven-point Likert scales. At the end of the Relaunch Cohort and personal consultations, the lead pastors completed the same inventory as a posttest. On each administration, a scale score was completed for each person by adding point values for each of the items associated with it. A composite score was also created by adding the values for all thirty-six items. I provide the mean scores for the pretest and posttest periods for each scale, including the composite score, as seen in Table 1, for the seven pastors participating in the project. This table includes standard deviations and the standard error of the mean as measures of variability.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Pretest and Posttest Scores

| <i>Scale</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Std. Deviation</i> | <i>Std. Error Mean</i> |
|------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Pre credibility | 44.6 | 7 | 7.80720 | 2.95084 |
| Post credibility | 46.7 | 7 | 4.02965 | 1.52307 |
| Pre culture | 45.1 | 7 | 2.54484 | .96186 |
| Post culture | 45.7 | 7 | 1.25357 | .47380 |
| Pre clarity | 42.3 | 7 | 8.75051 | 3.30738 |
| Post clarity | 49.7 | 7 | 4.75094 | 1.79569 |
| Pre competency | 48.9 | 7 | 4.52506 | 1.71031 |
| Post competency | 50.4 | 7 | 4.19750 | 1.58651 |
| Pre courage | 39.4 | 7 | 1.61835 | .61168 |
| Post courage | 39.7 | 7 | 2.05866 | .77810 |

In comparing the pretest and posttest scores, there was improvement noted for each of the scale scores. The greatest scale score improvement was for clarity, which increased on average by $M = 7.4$ points from the pretest. This difference is statistically significant with $t(6) = 3.109$, $p = .021$. This was also clearly reflected in the qualitative results. These seven pastors had a greater clarity of vision as a result of this project.

Because this study used newly created instruments and novel coaching practices, I consider this a pilot project. Therefore, it would be appropriate to make $\alpha = .10$ for making decisions regarding statistical significance. Using this standard, the improvement for the composite score is also significant with a mean change of $M = 12.0$ points. Practically, this would indicate the pastors grew overall in the five areas assessed. This difference would then be significant with $t(6) = 2.301$, $p = .061$. Table 2 reports the results for each of the paired samples t-tests.

Table 2: Mean Change Scores and Paired t-tests

| <i>Scales</i> | <i>Mean Change</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Credibility | -2.1 | -1.307 | 6 | .239 |
| Culture | -.6 | -.880 | 6 | .413 |
| Clarity | -7.4 | -3.109 | 6 | .021 |
| Competency | -1.6 | -1.474 | 6 | .191 |
| Courage | -.3 | -.471 | 6 | .654 |
| Composite Score | -12.0 | -2.301 | 6 | .061 |

The findings from this sample of participants suggest selected impact of this project on the outcome of the pastors. Although several scales showed no significant improvement, this could relate to the high level capacity of pastors I selected for this

project. Pastors ready to lead in this kind of strategic change already possess a great deal of credibility and competency. In addition, some issues targeted for growth are not amenable for quick change. For example, courage is a core personality issue. Six months of consultation will most likely not provide the pastor of a large church significant opportunity to develop more courage than they already possess.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative results of this project are significant, stemming from a Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation. I gave it to the pastors of the participating churches at the final cohort on May 22, 2014, to be returned by June 1, 2014.⁷ This survey inquired about the tangible results they experienced (if any) in their congregations, their personal lives, and their approach to leading their congregations. After reviewing the seven responses, four themes surfaced: (1) Tangible Ministry Results, (2) Clarity of Vision, and (3) Confidence of the Pastor.

Tangible Ministry Results

The tangible ministry results were noteworthy among the pastors. The Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation asked, “What kind of tangible results has your church experienced as a result of the Relaunch Cohort & Coaching Calls (Include the top 3-5)?”

The seven churches provided precise tangible ministry results:

- Seven new services will be added to these churches in 2014.
- Two churches will shift to a multi-site strategy in 2014.
- LifePoint Church reports financial growth of 22 percent as a result of this project.
- Horizon Community Church reports a growth from 750 to 900 in its Sunday service.⁸

⁷ See Appendix L, “Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation.”

⁸ Stan Russell, pastor of Horizon Community Church in Tualatin, Oregon.

- Citipoint Church expects to grow 100 people by the end of the year.⁹
- Faith Assembly attributes an “increased attendance” because of this project.¹⁰
- LifePoint Church reports a growth in its leadership culture; specifically, their quarterly leadership meeting attendance went from 60 to 115 leaders in just three months.
- Stone Church credits this project with a significant remodel for their kids’ ministry. Duchemin reports, “Simply put ... we would not be stepping out in faith for our Kids Remodel Campaign had we not received the challenge and direction from the Relaunch Cohort.”

The Kingdom impact articulated in these ministry results reveals how pastors benefit from an outside perspective and networking to infuse new vision into the bloodstream of their congregations. All of these pastors contributed the relational consultations, practical teaching, and intentional networking with each other to see their churches move forward; collectively, they feel optimistic and have confidence that the best days for their churches lie before them.

Clarity of Vision

Five out of the seven pastors reported clarity of vision as a result of this project.

This information was significant in the pretest and posttest and was echoed in the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation at the end. The pastors were asked the question, “What kind of tangible results has your church experienced as a result of the Relaunch Cohort & Coaching Calls (Include the top 3-5)?” The pastors specifically reflected on how this project gave them clarity of vision:

- Jeffery Duchemin expresses the mission clarity he received: “The Relaunch Cohort gave me a clarity of mission and church focus: ‘Here is what we will focus on’ and ‘Here is what we will not worry about.’”¹¹

⁹ Michael Acker, pastor of Citipoint Church in Mount Vernon, Washington.

¹⁰ Darrel Johnson, pastor of Faith Church in Pasco, Washington.

¹¹ Jeff Duchemin, pastor of Stone Church in Yakima, Washington.

- Michael Acker reports his clarity: “I have been at this church for two and a half years. The Cohort and the coaching have been life-giving and helpful to have a clear plan.”
- Darrell Johnson stated this project provided him clarity in three areas: “Leadership, Expectations and Next Steps in his church.”
- Andrew Murch told how he has grown during this project:¹² “My ability to discover, clarify, and cast the vision of the church has grown exponentially.”
- Scott Harris communicated the result of this project in his life:¹³ “The Relaunch Cohort and coaching calls gave me clarity, confidence, resolve.”

Clarifying the pastor’s direction will ultimately serve as the catalyst, or tipping point, to relaunch a church. The responses in the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation suggest each pastor has a clear and compelling vision of the future and is seeing tangible ministry results.

Confidence of the Leader

One of the areas of qualitative improvement that was not an intentional objective of this project but that pastors clearly indicated was the development of confidence in the pastor’s life. I intended for this project to help the pastors get clarity on the direction of the church, which resulted in an infusion of personal confidence. The Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation asked the pastor, “What tangible results have you personally experienced during the Relaunch Cohort & Coaching Calls (If any)?” The pastors expressed the confidence they felt after this project:

- Stan Russell: “I regained confidence as a leader and we recaptured momentum.”
- Jeff Dutchman: “As a new Lead Pastor, the Coaching Calls gave confidence that we were moving in the right direction. Sometimes you just need a mentor to say ‘Do this,’ and ‘Don’t do this.’”
- Scott Harris: “a greater degree of confidence in leading my team.”

¹² Andrew Murch, pastor of Lifepoint in Vancouver, Washington.

¹³ Scott Harris, pastor of Brooklake Church in Federal Way, Washington.

- Darrell Johnson: “Helped me identify and implement initiatives Gives confidence in facing challenges while leading.”

The qualitative data indicated that confidence was developed in the pastors with a long tenure and pastors in their first years of ministry. David Brakke has pastored his church for twenty-five years. He began this project with a deficiency of confidence and momentum in his church. He shares the profound impact of this project on his leadership and faith:

I have been personally encouraged to lead with passion and confidence and to increase my expectations for my staff. The principles learned during the Relaunch Cohort and Coaching Calls will most definitely impact my leadership as I have increased in confidence and feel that my faith has been built up to truly work and believe for God's best for the church.¹⁴

Andrew Murch has pastored his church for three years and entered into this project feeling burned out and exasperated. He summarizes how this project has increased his confidence in four areas:

- (1) I developed the confidence to not only take a major step of faith personally, but to call the entire leadership and church body to take it with me.
- (2) Through the success of the initiative I know God built major leadership credibility and capital for me personally in the church consciousness.
- (3) I spent a number of weeks in prayer and fasting, igniting a sense of vision in my personal spiritual disciplines that challenged and revived me.
- (4) I have noticed a significant progression in my sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit and my faith in God to accomplish great things in my ministry.

The confidence of the pastors is specifically seen in the way they view the future.

Rainer states that a deceptively healthy church sees the best days of the church in the past.¹⁵ As a result of this project, these seven pastors have confidence in the future of their churches. The Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation asked, “How will the

¹⁴ David Brakke, pastor of The Church at Maltby in Maltby, Washington.

¹⁵ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 159, Kindle.

principles learned during the Relaunch Cohort & Coaching Calls impact your leadership in the next 12-18 months?” Michael Acker, at his church for three years, reports how this project gave him a roadmap to the future: “We have a road map for the next 18 months. That is how long our plan from the cohort will take. So we will be directly living out the content for the next 18 months.” Michael understands how to develop a roadmap of change. He has seen results incrementally and knows how to apply this into the future.

Stan Russell, who has pastored his church for twenty years, sees the momentum he has recaptured as a platform for future changes:

With the recaptured momentum and the positive results from the initiative ... we have learned to use the muscles and the body has been strengthened as a result. We are now using the muscle called Catalytic Change. In Feb of 2015 we are planning the launch of multi-site campuses. We will launch 3 brand new sites for Horizon on that day.¹⁶

Stan communicates the heart of this project and indicates God is actively working in his church. He has learned how to identify and cultivate momentum in this congregation.

Andrew Murch has pastored his church for less than three years and expressed his vision and anticipation for the future of LifePoint Church:¹⁷

We won't slow down. LifePoint has already taken major strides following our visionary initiative to progress into the vision for the next 12-18 months. The branding for our initiative: 'To Be The Church' is literally written on the wall of our lobby and has become a rallying cry in our local church body. We are moving forward, attempting to tackle even greater financial and visionary plans this year and beyond. This first initiative developed a faith and confidence in our body which has been sorely lacking in the last 20 years in this church. It is a first step. What is ahead is a series of strategic initiatives and catalytic moments that will detonate a gospel-centered movement known as LifePoint Church all throughout Clark County.

¹⁶ Stan Russell, pastor of Horizon Community Church in Tualatin, Oregon.

¹⁷ Andrew Murch, pastor of Lifepoint, Vancouver, Washington.

At no time did any of my assessments, questions, diagnosis, or teachings speak to the personal confidence of a pastor. I developed the project around the clarity of the pastor. As pastors sharpen clarity of vision and begin to see short-term wins, confidence in God and their own leadership abilities naturally intensifies.

As I studied the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation, clear indication exists that this project provided the pastors with confidence and tools for the future, not merely a quick fix for today. During the whole project, I offered an intentional focus on learning the principles of momentum and catalytic change and how to infuse them into the culture of the church. This project would have been unwarranted if pastors viewed this as some easy growth option for their church rather than principles of transformation. The litmus test of this project's success is whether these pastors have clarity, confidence, and courage in the future.

The Project's Contribution to Ministry

I selected this project because of my heart for established churches in North America and the Assemblies of God. Although church planting remains essential and needs strengthening, an intentional focus on relaunching and revitalizing of established churches needs to take prominence. This project contributes to ministry and the Assemblies of God in three ways: (1) it brings attention to the need for revitalization of the established church, (2) it infuses clarity and confidence in pastors, (3) it offers a practitioner-based leadership model to relaunch and revitalize established churches.

Revitalization of the Established Church

The Assemblies of God lacks established churches that are on a growth trajectory. The testimonies of the seven churches in this project can serve as a foundation to

communicate to a wider audience the need for church revitalization. Numerous church leaders, such as those in the Alaska and Oregon districts, have expressed a renewed interest in revitalization. Furthermore, this has brought attention to the need to focus on church revitalization in the Northwest Ministry Network. Mel Ming has recently asked me to become the point person for LEAD seminars in the Northwest Ministry Network because of the research in this project. During the fall of 2014, I traveled the entire Network and presented the findings of this project in four key seminars.

Infusion of Clarity and Confidence in Pastors

Another contribution of this project to ministry is the infusion of clarity and confidence into the heart of pastors, antecedents to the success of the relaunch and revitalization process. The greatest contribution a pastor can make to his or her church is a clear and compelling vision for the future. Although the North American church is experiencing unprecedented change and innovation, it can create a lack of courage and clarity within many pastors in regards to how they can respond to the changes and opportunities. When pastors have the courage to lead their congregations with a clear and audacious vision, it becomes a tipping point for catalytic change. Although conferences, books, and higher education benefit pastors, they also need relational and personal consultation to inculcate the ideas into their hearts and implement them in ministry. This project has created a model that allows for personal consultation, practical teaching, and networking with other pastors in tangible and meaningful ways.

Developed a Practitioner-based Model to Revitalize Churches

The third contribution of this project to ministry is the development of an effective practitioner and principle-based model rooted in theology. Many models of church revitalization either try to get pastors to imitate the popular church down the street or to root in philosophies ineffective for their communities. The Assemblies of God needs a practitioner-based model founded on current principles that take into consideration the pastor's congregation, community, and history.

Leaders have utilized numerous unsuccessful church revitalization models in the Assemblies of God. Often these revitalization models fail due to a lack of personal attention given to the pastor. Relational consultation does not exist in generic teachings and collective leadership models; it requires time, discussion, and accountability. Pastors need wisdom predicated upon their current realities and congregations, not some model that worked in one setting but is irrelevant to their particular ministry realities.

CHAPTER 5: PROJECT SUMMARY

Chapter 5 provides an assessment of this project. This chapter reviews the effectiveness of the project, evaluates improvement issues, discusses implications, and offers recommendations for further study. During the project, I deliberately asked the relaunch pastors for input. After each Relaunch Cohort, I sat down with trusted advisers and enlisted input. Finally, following each cohort and consultation, I dedicated time to compile my personal insights and capture suggested improvements while there were fresh in my mind. I also provided the seven pastors with a Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation at the end of the project, asking them to share openly and unreservedly how to improve and strengthen the project's effectiveness. Personal reflection and the results of the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation shaped this evaluation.

Evaluation of the Project

This project aided seven pastors in clarifying the direction of their congregations while they led their churches in well-defined and time-bound strategic initiatives. The premise of this project was that a catalyst, or a tipping point, for transformational change can occur when pastors clarify the direction of their churches. At the project's conclusion, each of the seven pastors involved experienced an unprecedented clarity of vision, tangible ministry results, and an increase in personal confidence.

Keys to Project Effectiveness

Five keys made the project effective: (1) relational component (2) practical nature, (3) theological background, (4) commitment to each pastor's personal vision, and (5) networking and sharing resources.

First, the distinctive relational nature of the five individual consultations and the three Relaunch Cohorts strengthened this project. I fostered the relational component by taking time to comprehend each pastor's unique ministry context and environment. The project did not focus on church theory or broad-spectrum data; rather, it concentrated on each pastor and his specific vision for his congregation. During the project, each of the seven pastors provided examples of specific incidents and circumstances with which that pastor had to deal. This provided the cohort with the opportunity to discuss and process each situation as an illustration of actual "down to earth" church life.

I intentionally created a relational environment where deep community, trust, and openness to change could not only coexist but thrive. These relational environments entailed sharing meals together, praying with one another, and even venting frustrations, which created community, helping everyone lead their church in a shared strategic initiative. A relational environment allowed the pastors to be transparent, honest, and authentic about their fears and doubts and played a significant role in the project's success and fruitfulness.

Second, the immense practical nature of the project served as a strength. This practicality added a dynamic that created a healthy tension and enhanced networking among the pastors. Often conferences and leadership cohorts give an appearance of practicality; in reality, however, they are only pastors discussing their stories and context. This project utilized practical discussions among all participants as they exchanged ideas

about courage, vision casting, celebrating short-term wins, identifying and cultivating momentum, communicating with influencers, and how to overcome hurdles each pastor faced.

Third, this project benefited from a strong theological framework, as detailed in chapter 2. These theological constructs focus on deeper issues, not the mundane “budgets, building and bodies.” This project was not merely about growing bigger churches. Intentionality was given to Kingdom impact and redemptive ministry—a total dependence on the power of the Spirit of God in leadership.

Fourth, each pastor’s personal vision invigorated this project. The project’s foundation was that God has already placed a vision within each pastor’s heart. This project aimed to help a pastor discover the vision within, not imitate someone else’s. Therefore, a key to the effectiveness of this project was starting with several questions to each pastor: “What is God saying to you?” “What do you feel the Spirit of God is saying in your church and your context?” “What is the next chapter for your church?” It was important that they answered these questions for themselves—not what they may have read about, viewed in another church, or heard in the latest conference. Often coaches and consultants start with the answers. Starting with the questions made this project effective.

One of the greatest activities the pastors participated in occurred at the first Relaunch Cohort. All seven pastors wrote their vision in front of their peers on a large poster board. An act of courage, it established a personal commitment for each pastor. When the last pastor was finished, all the pastors prayed for one other. This exercise

collectively emboldened the pastors and impacted the remaining consultations and cohorts.

Finally, this project created intentional networking environments. The pastors were able to network and share resources with each other. During the six months of the project, the pastors actively used a Dropbox folder as a means to encourage and share ideas with one another. The networking proved practical and useful, and it strengthened the effectiveness of this project. Furthermore, at each cohort I invited key members of my New Life staff to share ideas and answer questions.

Keys to Project Improvements

Seven keys exist to improving this project for the future: (1) creation of a competency pretest, (2) development of a covenant contract, (3) inclusion of spouses, (4) involvement of fewer churches, and (5) restructure of relational consultations, (6) requirement of personal reading, and (7) rethinking practical logistics.

First, creating a competency pretest would have reinforced the project's overall experience. The pretest I created focused on the readiness of the pastor in areas of credibility, culture, clarity, competency, and courage. Although it served its purpose to discover the readiness of the pastor for this project, it fell short of shedding light on the proficiencies of a relaunch pastor. A pretest based upon the explicit competencies of the pastor would reinforce the overall efficacy. This pretest would focus on the following competencies: clarifying vision, celebrating short-term wins, making mission critical decisions, leading momentum, and casting vision.

Second, a personal covenant contract would have served the project well. In future Relaunch Cohorts, I will require a personal covenant for the pastors to sign after

discussions with their spouses, boards, and other influencers in their churches and lives. This covenant contract will serve three purposes: (1) to help the pastor count the cost of leading their churches in transformational change, (2) to formalize the communication with the pastors and their spouses, and (3) to broaden the support of board members and other influences in the relaunch process.

Third, including spouses would have served as an asset. One of the observations I received on the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation, as well as hearing from the pastors, was the benefit of having their spouses involved in this project. Andrew Murch, project participant, suggested I reorganize the first cohort around the spouse: “Initial cohort with Lead Pastors and their wives only. Troy and his wife could lead this, helping the Lead pastor and his wife through practical and applicable lessons unique to their roles. This would be priceless for the Lead pastor and wife in a setting like this.” In the future, I will add this component to the first Relaunch Cohort.

Fourth, having fewer churches involved might have created an even deeper community and improved networking. Due to the relational and personal nature of this project, inviting fewer churches allows more freedom and creates more community among the pastors. At first glance, seven churches did not sound like a lot; however, the effectiveness of this project requires a great amount of time, commitment, and emotional bandwidth on my part. It is a time-consuming process to walk alongside the pastor, learning his or her particular ministry setting and situation. Seven participating churches required thirty-five personal consultations. The emotional bandwidth and requisite energy to do thirty-five consultations in five months is unsustainable.

Furthermore, four to five churches would allow people to share more honestly and completely, creating an atmosphere better targeted to specific ministry hurdles and situations. Andrew Murch reflects on the size of the cohort: “I think the cohort could be improved by keeping it smaller. Three to four churches are probably more than enough. . . . At times the Relaunch Cohort could drag, because too many people were in the room and this can dilute the content-base.” A smaller cohort would allow more time for each pastor to participate in the conversation.

Fifth, the project would benefit from restructuring relational consultations to include assigned topics of discussion. One of the helpful insights I received from the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation concerned the personal consultations. Two of the seven pastors observed that an assigned topic would have been advantageous before the consultations. David Brakke offered insights regarding the personal consultations: “The Coaching Calls were appreciated; however, it might have been even more beneficial to have a specific agenda or topic in advance, so that we could have been prepared for the possible questions or discussions about the topic.” Andrew Murch added additional thoughts:

For the coaching calls, if there were assigned topics that the lead pastor being coached could think through and prepare to answer for Troy’s calls—that may be helpful. Troy does a good job displaying flexibility in the coaching calls, but if both the coach and student were equipped with the topics to discuss, that may provide more beneficial back and forth conversation. Either the student or the coach could determine the schedule of topics beforehand and formalize it.¹

Assigning a concise topic beforehand would maximize the consultations, further helping the pastor process both the information and the transformation they anticipate.

¹ Andrew Murch in Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation.

Sixth, a requirement of personal reading would benefit the participants. I assumed pastors have, or would, read the book I requested. Disappointingly, only a few did; most did not. In the future, therefore, I will require that before each cohort they read one book, totaling three books. This would, on a personal level, help them better process necessary information. It would also enhance dialog during the personal consultations and Relaunch Cohorts.

Finally, rethinking practical logistics would reinforce the outcome of this project. There are five practical logics I would execute differently: (1) Shift the Relaunch Cohort from a Monday to a Thursday. Many pastors take Monday off. All seven relaunch pastors mutually agreed that Thursday is a much more productive day; (2) Organize the cohorts into two sections. In the morning, I would focus on practical teaching; in the afternoon, I would focus on networking together and sharing progress of their strategic initiatives; (3) Change the time of the Relaunch Cohorts from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. After the first cohort I implemented this change for the remaining two cohorts. Starting at 10:00 a.m. allows pastors to arrive early and share breakfast together. Ending at 2:30 p.m. keeps the afternoon from dragging and provides time for pastors to network afterward and not feel hurried; (4) Hold all three Relaunch Cohorts in one room. Due to conflict schedules with New Life Church, I had to move the cohort to three different rooms; (5) Structure the Relaunch Cohorts September through February rather than January through May. Starting in September is a more productive month, as it allows the pastors to lead their congregations in a strategic initiative that commences February or March of the following year. In most churches, February through Easter serves as the strongest months for

church momentum. Allowing the pastors to harness that springtime potential for strategic initiatives would best maximize their time, effort, and energy.

Implications of the Project

Numerous essential implications exist as a result of this project. Local church pastors, denominational leaders, and authors of church health and growth should seriously consider these implications.

First, this project addressed and brought to light the condition of the established church in North America and identified the fatal “status quo comfort” of many established congregations. Settling for the status quo traps many pastors and congregations. It is imperative that pastors and denominational leaders face the brutal realities of the condition of the North American church. Often, entire denominations become deceptively healthy and camouflage the dysfunction of the churches they represent with rhetoric and stats that do not disclose the truth.

Second, this project demonstrated that hope exists for the 300,000 established churches across North America. The focus of church planting is indispensable; however, to minimize the revitalization of established churches negates one of the greatest ways to grow the kingdom of God. Established congregations throughout North America have years of rich history that need discovered and leveraged for bringing a redemptive work to their communities and world.

Third, this project substantiated the ability of personal consultations and networking to help pastors clarify the direction of their churches. Revitalization requires more than information and inspiration on the part of the pastor. Information and inspiration alone lead to frustration; pastors need personal consultations and

consulting/coaching. Pastors require practical networking and environments so they may wrestle with the hurdles and issues of their local congregation.

Finally, too many pastors lack clarity and confidence. Not all pastors have clarity of vision and confidence to lead. Many pastors are paralyzed, feeling uncertain, unconfident, and unclear about the future—the church’s and personal future. Often insecurity, failure of past revitalizations, and fear fosters this lack of confidence. Pastors need a clear and compelling vision for the future or the church will sink into status quo. A clear direction will serve as the tipping point for Kingdom transformation in their congregations.

Recommendations for Denominational Leaders

National and local denominational leadership play a critical role in influencing established churches. I have three recommendations for all denominational leaders; however, I focus specifically on the Assemblies of God (AG) and the district in which I pastor—the Northwest Ministry Network.

First, denominational leaders should not underestimate the influence of their leadership in creating a movement to revitalize established churches. AG leaders can too easily conclude they have no governing power to help the local church; therefore, their influence is regulated to personal care of the pastor but not apostolic leadership. Although local AG churches are self-governed, a resurgence of apostolic influence needs to take place in the life of AG pastors and established churches. Denominational leaders need to understand God has placed them in their areas of leadership to lead pastors, not to coddle them. Their role can challenge the status quo, stirring the hearts of pastors to again believe God for their congregations. The highest-level leaders of the AG should cast

vision and create a holy tension within churches that have plateaued or are dying. This needs to take place at both a district and national level.

Second, the AG needs to strengthen current and create new models for church revitalization. These models must be practical, involve practitioners who currently serve as pastors, encompass personal relationships with pastors, and focus on the pastor's vision, not mirroring some larger nebulous church strategy. The AG must develop new innovative ways to infuse Kingdom DNA into the bloodstream of established churches.

Third, the AG needs to continue to cultivate a culture that urges pastors not only to hear from God but also actively to seek the fresh eyes of other people. At times a culture exists within the AG that advises, "pray harder and your church will grow," or "go to the mountain and come down with God's word for the people." Although a concerted effort to encourage pastors to hear from God should exist, pastors need to hear from people who can help them identify and breakthrough the status quo mentality of their congregations. AG leaders need to create language, biblical examples and coaching/consulting models that become the normative part of the AG culture. Denominational leaders need to encourage pastors to embrace coaching and consulting that will help them identify the lids they have developed for their Kingdom growth and learn how to create a redemptive awakening within their churches. By clarifying the church's vision, a pastor can again lead his or her congregation to reach their Kingdom potential.

Recommendations for Future Study

During the process of this project, five issues surfaced that I was unable to research due to the project's limited scope. Therefore, I recommend the following five

areas for future study: (1) natural life cycle of congregations, (2) gift mix of relaunch pastors, (3) spiritual warfare, (4) personal crisis, and (5) empowerment of the right team.

First, the natural life cycle of a church needs attention. “Is there a natural life cycle in a congregation that a pastor should be aware of and accept as normative?” The answer to this question has significant implications for my project. If the answer to this question were “yes,” additional questions would follow: “What are the indicators that a church has reached her natural life cycle?” “When should a church consider closing down and reinvesting their resources into other kingdom endeavors?” “What kind of healthy models exist today to see this happen?” This study would include models to honor churches that have reached this point, how to transition in a God-honoring manner, and methods to reinvest into church plants or multi-site strategies with another church. As the AG celebrates 100 years, the fellowship needs to focus upon and review this question with great deliberation. Perhaps many AG churches need to accept this natural life cycle.

Second, future study needs to occur around the gift mix required to lead an established church in revitalization. Not all pastors have the right gift mix to lead their churches in catalytic change. This study should include (1) the gifts and strengths a relaunch pastor requires, (2) determination if every pastor can develop these gifts, and (3) the point a pastor unable to lead the church in revitalization should step down.

Third, further study needs to take place on the impact of spiritual warfare in relaunching a church and on church leadership. Unfortunately, those who write on spiritual warfare tend to dismiss the dynamics of church leadership; those who write on church leadership disdain the impact of spiritual warfare. Future study needs to be commissioned on how church leadership and spiritual warfare interface with each other.

Fourth, a study of the impact of personal crisis on leadership needs to take place.

During this project, four out of the seven pastors had a personal crisis in their lives:

- Darrell Johnson had a motorcycle accident and was hospitalized for days.
- Mike Acker and his wife over the years have desired to have a baby and have tried infertilization. During this project, they made another unsuccessful attempt at getting pregnant through infertilization treatment. This has been an emotional and financially draining process for them.
- David Brake's mother passed away, after spending weeks in hospice.
- Stan Russell had surgery to remove Basil Cell Carcinoma from his lip. This caused a number of intensive surgeries including Mohs surgery, flap surgery and then a number of follow up surgeries. Furthermore, during this time Russell's daughter went through even a much larger trial. She has Grave's disease and developed a complication called thyroid eye disease. This is when the eyes push forward and develop a bulging look. She had a surgery called an ocular decompression.

Personal crises can significantly affect any pastor, especially one leading transformational change. This study should include (1) how to help pastors in personal crisis, (2) how does personal crisis influence the revitalization process, and (3) how to manage emotions during personal crisis.

Fifth, pastors cannot relaunch their congregations without the right team. Future study should research how to build and empower teams, including best ministry practices in working with the staff, how to create a creating a culture of innovation and change, and how to keep the staff healthy during times of transitional change in a congregation.

Conclusion

After seeing pastors regain confidence and experience tangible results in their churches, I am more optimistic than ever about the local church. The Spirit is speaking to His Church and sending new waves of momentum. Although church planting is an essential part of the Spirit's work in North American, God is also pouring out His Spirit in established churches that once had a Kingdom mindset but have lost it. God wants to

provide confidence and clarity for pastors who feel discouraged and are reeling from years of stagnation in order to transform their churches.

This project provides a model to help pastors clarify the direction of their churches that will eventually become the catalyst, or tipping point, to relaunch their congregations. Church revitalization begins with pastors and denominational leaders facing the brutal realities of their churches, clarifying the direction God has spoken, and then identifying and leading the momentum God sends.

APPENDIX A: JETHRO'S APPROACH TO CONSULTING

Exodus 18 provides us a biblical model of how to coach someone who needs a set of fresh eyes.

Principle One: Listen before you speak: Jethro listened to Moses

Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them. Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians" (Exod. 18:8-9).

Principle Two: Affirm before you advise: Jethro affirmed Moses

He (Jethro) said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God (Exod. 18:10-12).

Principle Three: Lead with questions; not answers: Jethro asked Moses questions

The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening? (Exod. 18:13-14).

Principle Four: Be clear about the issue not vague: Jethro was clear with Moses

Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone" (Exod. 18:17).

Principle Five: Offer practical advice; not philosophical answers: Jethro offers

Moses advice

Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied (Exod. 18:19-23).

APPENDIX B: 15 CHURCH HEALTH OBSERVATIONS

Michael H. Clarensau

15 CHURCH HEALTH OBSERVATIONS Drawn from Assemblies of God ACMR Data 1980-2011

The following church health observations are drawn from research conducted by the Healthy Church Network and have been approved for communication by the General Council Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

GROWTH

1. Roughly 2/3 of all Assemblies of God churches in U.S. are either plateaued or in decline.

This calculation uses a standard definition for growth, plateau, and decline, where a growing church is one that has increased average worship attendance by at least 10% over a five-year period (2006-11) and a declining church's attendance has decreased by at least 10% over that same five-year period. The actual percentage of plateaued and declining churches, 65.5%, has been slowly increasing in recent years.

2. 62.5% of Assemblies of God worshippers attend the larger 16% of our churches.

In this study, the term "larger" church refers to churches that report 200 or more in worship attendance. These "larger" churches comprise 16% of all Assemblies of God churches in the U.S.

3. 34% of Assemblies of God churches are growing, compared with 39%!! 9 years ago.

This measure is derived when comparing the 2006-11 worship attendance growth calculation with the 1996-2001 worship attendance growth calculation for all Assemblies of God churches in the U.S.

4. Only 28% of churches 200-399 are growing, the lowest percentage of our size groupings.

Our calculations use seven size groupings (0-49, 50-99, 100-199, 200-399, 400-699, 700-999, 1000+). Among these, 200-399 has the lowest percentage of growing churches (2006-11), followed by the 100-199 size grouping at 29%.

5. More smaller churches are growing than larger churches.

In this study, "smaller" church refers to churches that report less than 200 in worship attendance. 35.1% of these smaller churches are growing (2006-11), compared to 31.1% of larger (200+) churches. Smaller churches have had a higher percentage of growing churches for every year of this study (dating back to 1980).

6. As a church grows beyond 200, its reported conversions tend to grow even faster.

Churches 100-199 average one reported conversion for every 6.21 worship attendees, meaning it takes more than six worshippers to produce a reported conversion in a year. That number consistently decreases as the size grouping gets larger indicating increasing effectiveness in evangelism as a church grows.

2011

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Churches 100-199 | one reported conversion for every 6.21 worship attendees. |
| Churches 200-399 | one reported conversion for every 4.62 worship attendees. |
| Churches 400-699 | one reported conversion for every 4.27 worship attendees. |
| Churches 700-999 | one reported conversion for every 3.25 worship attendees. |
| Churches 1000+ | one reported conversion for every 2.46 worship attendees. |

MINISTRY IMPACT

7. Reported annual conversions have increased by 100% since 1986, while annual water baptisms have increased by 30% and annual Spirit baptisms have increased by less than 1% over that same period.

The 470,679 conversions reported in 2011 is nearly double the 235,480 reported in 1986. Water baptisms increased from 97,143 (1986) to 126,774 (2011), while Spirit baptisms only grew from 83,289 (1986) to 83,774 (2011).

8. Today it takes 4 Assemblies of God worshippers to produce one reported conversion in a year. Twenty-five years ago, it took 6 Assemblies of God worshippers to produce a reported conversion. Among all Assemblies of God churches in the U.S., one conversion was reported for every 3.95 worship attendees (2011). In 1986, one conversion was reported for every 6.16 worship attendees.

9. The 470,679 conversions reported in 2011 were the most since 2004. 42% of those were reported by our largest 2% of churches.

The 559,501 conversions reported in 1997 is the most reported in any year of the study period (1980-2011).

10. In our smaller churches, 1 in 4 reported converts are expected to one day receive Spirit-baptism, compared with 1 in 7 in our larger churches and 1 in 9 in our largest churches.

Among smaller Assemblies of God churches (under 200) in the U.S., one Spirit Baptism was reported for every 3.62 conversions (2011). Larger churches (200+) reported one Spirit baptism for every 6.79 conversions and our largest churches (1000+) reported one Spirit baptism for every 9.12 conversions.

11. As a church grows beyond 200, its water baptism and Spirit baptism growth fails to keep pace with the rate of conversions indicating decreasing in baptizing new converts and guiding them toward Spirit baptism.

Churches 100-199 average one reported water baptism for every 2.16 conversions and one reported Spirit baptism for every 3.59 conversions. Those ratios consistently expand as the size grouping gets larger indicating decreasing effectiveness in guiding new converts and worship attendees to water and Spirit baptism as the church grows.

| | 2011 |
|------------------|--|
| Churches 100-199 | one reported water baptism for every 2.16 reported conversions. |
| Churches 200-399 | one reported water baptism for every 3.13 reported conversions. |
| Churches 400-699 | one reported water baptism for every 3.30 reported conversions. |
| Churches 700-999 | one reported water baptism for every 4.20 reported conversions. |
| Churches 1000+ | one reported water baptism for every 7.02 reported conversions. |
| Churches 100-199 | one reported Spirit baptism for every 3.59 reported conversions. |
| Churches 200-399 | one reported Spirit baptism for every 4.65 reported conversions. |
| Churches 400-699 | one reported Spirit baptism for every 5.27 reported conversions. |
| Churches 700-999 | one reported Spirit baptism for every 6.42 reported conversions. |
| Churches 1000+ | one reported Spirit baptism for every 9.12 reported conversions. |

COMPARING GEOGRAPHIC AND HISPANIC DISTRICTS

12. Roughly 2/3 of churches in both Hispanic and Geographic districts are under 100 in worship attendance. While this measure is often quoted to underscore widespread need for revitalization, it is a percentage that has changed very little in decades. Since 1980, churches under 100 have comprised between 61.6% and 64.9% of churches in Geographic districts and 62.2% and 69.8% of churches in Hispanic districts. In 2011, both groups reported that 64.6% of their churches are under 100 in worship attendance.

13. While Geographic churches report a higher rate of conversions, Hispanic churches report a higher rate of water and Spirit baptisms. Churches in geographic districts report one conversion for every 3.73 worship attendees, compared to one reported conversion for every 5.61 attendees among Hispanic district churches. However, Hispanic districts report one water baptism for every 2.46 conversions and one Spirit baptism for every 3.59 conversions. Among Geographic churches, one water baptism occurs for every 3.96 conversions while one Spirit baptism is reported for every 6.09 conversions reported.

14. More than half of our smallest Hispanic churches are growing. 50.5% of the smallest (0-49) Hispanic churches are growing (2006-11). Among the smallest (0-49) Geographic churches, 42.1% are growing (2006-11).

15. In Geographic districts, our smallest and largest churches lead the way in growth at 42%. Among the seven size groupings, the smallest (0-49) and largest (1000+) churches, 42.1% of the churches are growing, the highest percentage among the size groups.

Research provided by the Healthy Church Network.

APPENDIX C: THE FIVE LIFE STAGES OF PASTORAL TENURE

- Year 1: Honeymoon. Both pastor and church have a blank slate and they enter the relationship hoping and believing the best about each other. Perhaps the pastor was weary of a previous pastorate, and perhaps the church was happy to replace their former pastor. For a season, neither can do wrong in the other's eyes. That season does not usually last long.
- Years 2 and 3: Conflicts and Challenges. No pastor is perfect. No church is perfect. Each party discovers the imperfections after a few months. Like a newlywed couple, they began to have their differences after a while. The spiritual health of both the pastor and the church will likely determine the severity of the conflicts and challenges.
- Years 4 and 5: Crossroads, Part 1. This period is one of the most critical in the relationship. If the conflict was severe, the pastor will likely leave or be forced out. Indeed, these years, four and five, are the most common years when a pastor leaves a church. On the other hand, if the pastor and the church manage their relationship well, they can often look forward to some of the best years ahead.
- Years 6 to 10: Fruit and Harvest. My research is not complete, but it's more than anecdotal. A church is likely to experience some of its best years, by almost any metrics, during this period of a pastor's tenure. Indeed, in my interviews with both pastors and members, I have heard this theme repeated. Both parties have worked through the tough times. They now trust each other and love each other more deeply.
- Years 11 and beyond: Crossroads, Part 2. During the first crossroads era, the pastor decides to stay or leave. Or the congregations may make the decision. During this relatively rare tenure beyond ten years, the pastor will go down one of two paths. One path is to be reinvigorated as a leader and ready to tackle new challenges and cast new visions. Or the pastor will be resistant to change, and then become complacent. I have seen both extremes, but I am still struggling to understand why pastors go down one path versus the other.¹

¹ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 488-492, Kindle.

APPENDIX D: ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

FROM LEADING PASTORS

From Larry Osborne: “Zero-Basing” Questions¹

At North Coast Church, one of the most powerful tools we’ve used to help us keep our eyes on the target and regularly make the adjustments needed has been a process called “zero-basing.” A zero-based meeting or retreat gathers a small group of key leaders and simply asks:

1. What would we do differently if we were starting all over?
2. If there were no backlash to worry about, what would we drop?
3. What would we start?
4. What would we change?
5. How does the reality of our ministry match with our stated vision and goals?
6. What would we do differently if our only boundary was a radical commitment to the Great Commission?

Larry Osborne: Innovation Questions²

To identify the programs, processes, and policies that are most ripe for innovation and change, step back and ask yourself, “What frustrates me most?”

1. What is it that drives me crazy?
2. What are we doing that makes absolutely no sense?
3. What processes and programs seem to take lots of work, but bear no fruit?
4. What traditions are we putting up with simply because it has always been done this way?

¹ Larry Osborne, *Mission Creep: The Five Subtle Shifts That Sabotage Evangelism & Discipleship* (N.p., 2014), 49.

² Larry Osborne, *Innovation's Dirty Little Secret: Why Serial Innovators Succeed Where Others Fail* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 591-592, Kindle.

5. What is the one problem that if we could solve it, most of our other problems would go away?
6. What's broken that seems to be unfixable?
7. What problems are we living with because everyone says, "That's just the way it is"?

From Craig Groeschel: Questions to Stir Vision³

1. Why does your organization exist? (If you can't answer this clearly, I'll bet you an overpriced latte that there are a few things your organization should stop doing immediately.)
2. What can your organization be the best in the world at? (Borrowing from Jim Collins in *Good to Great*.)
3. If you could do only one thing, what would it be?
4. If you left your organization tomorrow, what would you hope would continue forever?
5. What breaks your heart, keeps you awake at night, wrecks you?

From Bill Hybels: Questions to Clarify Vision⁴

1. Have you yielded yourself fully enough to God?
2. Have you asked God to unveil his vision for your life, or are you asking him to bless a plan that you've already come up with? We must come to God with empty hands and an open heart and ask, "What is your vision for my life?"
3. Have you fasted?
4. Have you prayed?
5. Have you been quiet and waited on God in solitude?
6. Have you cleaned up sinful patterns in your life?
7. Have you weeded out the distractions and ambient noise that would keep you from hearing what God is trying to say to you?

³ Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 45, Kindle.

⁴ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 38, Kindle.

8. Have you read avidly?
9. Have you traveled widely?
10. Have you visited a variety of ministries around the world?
11. Have you exposed yourself to the kaleidoscope of visions that God has given to others so that you can be inspired by the variety of options?
12. If not, get out there! See what God is doing!

Questions from Andy Stanley⁵

1. Do we have a transferable mission or vision statement?
 - Do our members and attendees know why we exist?
 - By what standard do we measure our success as a church ... really?
 - Which of these three drive the majority of our decisions: reaching people, keeping people, or paying the bills?
2. What have we fallen in love with that's not as effective as it used to be?
 - What do we love doing that's not really working?
 - What's off limits for discussion?
 - Do we have any "old couches" that need to be thrown out?
3. Where are we manufacturing energy?
 - What are we promoting that we secretly wish we didn't have to attend?
 - What would we love to quit doing but continue to do because we fear the consequences of change?
 - What are we doing programmatically that we would never dream of inviting a friend to attend?
4. If we all got kicked off the staff and the board, and an outside group (a group of leaders who were fearlessly committed to the mission of this church) took our place, what changes would they introduce?
 - What's the first thing they would do?
 - Who would they replace?
 - What would they refuse to fund?
5. What do we measure?
 - Is there a natural relationship between what we measure and our mission?

⁵ Andy Stanley, *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 304, Kindle.

- Are there things we should be measuring that would give us a more accurate read of how well we are accomplishing our mission?
 - What are we afraid to measure?
6. What do we celebrate?
- Is there a natural relationship between what we celebrate and our mission?
 - Are there things we should be celebrating that would help reinforce our mission?
 - Do we celebrate anything that reinforces a behavior that shouldn't be reinforced?
7. If our church suddenly ceased to exist, would our community miss us? If so, why? What value do we bring to our community? How do people outside our church view our church?

APPENDIX E: CHAND'S QUESTIONS TO
CRACK CHURCH CULTURE

To see a few snapshots of a church's culture, we might ask these questions:¹

1. Who are the heroes?
2. What makes them heroes?
3. Who determines who the heroes are?
4. When someone inquires, "Tell me about your church or nonprofit," what stories are told?
5. How much does the average staff member feel he or she has input into the direction and strategy of the church or nonprofit?
6. Who has the ear of the top leaders? How did these people win a hearing with the leaders?
7. What are the meaningful rituals? What message do they convey to those in the organization and those outside it?
8. Who is rewarded and for what accomplishments?
9. What is the level of loyalty up and down the organizational chart? What factors build loyalty?
10. What is the level of creativity and enthusiasm throughout the organization?
11. When an objective observer spends an hour watching people interact in the offices, what mood does he or she pick up?
12. How are decisions made, deferred, or delayed?

¹ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 251-252, Kindle.

13. Who are the nonpositional power brokers, the people who have authority based on the respect they've earned but who don't have authoritative titles?
14. Where are control problems and power struggles most evident?
15. How is "turf" defined and protected?

APPENDIX F: LANGUAGE OF NEW LIFE CHURCH

LANGUAGE OF NEW LIFE

Language creates culture. When we all use the same language we will be unified and consistent. This area is organized in two sections: 1) Phrases – these statements are used to reinforce values, 2) Glossary of Terms – these terms define what New Life is, does, or tools and systems used by our team.

Phrases

Alignment & Autonomy – Every ministry and campus at New Life is aligned and autonomous. They have alignment in a common mission, purpose, language and model. They have autonomy to apply the New Life model to reach their unique community or tribe.

Apprentice Always – We expect every leader at New Life to train someone else to do what he or she does. We want to consistently produce additional leaders to feed our leadership pipeline. Apprenticing people is critical for launching future campuses and expanding Life Groups.

Authentic Community – Core Value: We create environments where people experience accountability, belonging, care and spiritual growth.

Be Authentic – We value authenticity in everything we do. Whether we are on stage or behind the scenes, around people or alone we are the same.

Biblical Authority – Core Value: Scripture transforms our character and conduct and is the final authority for our lives.

Circles not Rows (groups) – We believe people grow spiritually in the context of relationships. We want everyone at New Life to get out of the rows of a gathering and into the circle of a Life Group.

Clarity AND Compassion – When addressing sin we will provide clarity and express compassion. Clarity without compassion is wrong. Compassion without clarity is equally wrong.

Coaching Moments – We are teachable and open to feedback at all times. We actively coach those we lead. On game-day the mission is more important than feelings.

Continuous Improvements – Left alone everything will gradually get worse. Our goal is for everything to be just a little better each week. We don't expect perfection, just progress. Ask, "Are we where we need to be?" and "What is the next step?"

Do for one what you wish you could do for all – New Life is successful in part by utilizing great systems. However, we are also willing to break systems to help one person when needed. People are more important than systems.

Don't Listen to Words...Listen to values – When talking with people we look for common ground by listening for their expressed values instead of getting lost in their specific words.

Empty Seats at Optimal Times – Sunday morning is they most likely time for guests to come to New Life. We consistently try to open seats in our Sunday morning gatherings by adding gatherings and campuses.

Evangelism – The Great Commission directs us to make disciples of all nations. Although we gear our weekly gatherings to engage people far from God, we believe each of us individually

Friend of Sinners – Jesus was accused of being a friend of sinners. We want to be guilty of that same accusation.

Full Kingdom Potential – Our desire is for each campus to do everything God desires for it to do.

We are Guided by the Staff, Guarded by the Elders, and Gifted by the Membership – This statement describes the role of staff/elders/membership in the governance & leadership of New Life.

If I Need You I Can't Lead You – Each of us are replaceable. If we ever get to the point when we feel like we can't lose someone our ability to provide objective and needed coaching may suffer.

Kids Trump – Kid's environments are the number one priority outside of the adult auditoriums & main lobby. Everything else may be adjusted or impacted to provide the best environments for our kids. This generally applies to all kids and youth, however, during a weekend gathering it specifically applies to birth – 8th grade (Boardwalk, KidTown & LIFT).

Heart & Soul – This phrase describes loyalty and alignment with Pastor Troy and the vision of New Life. It is based on 1 Samuel 14:7 where the armor-bearer said to Jonathan, “Do all that you have in mind. Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.”

Heartfelt Worship – Core Value: We engage in genuine worship and respond to sacred moments with God.

Honor People – At New Life we honor everyone always. This doesn’t mean we avoid conflict or cater to people. It means we strive to communicate better, extend people grace, and are patient with people.

Honor the Past – Some great people paid a great price with their time and finances to bring New Life to where we are. Whenever possible we draw values from our past and acknowledge those who lead before us. This is especially true when leading change.

Humanity – We are all sinners. At New Life we are ok with the humanity of people. We extend this grace to those we work with and to those who attend.

Intentional – We strive to be purposeful in everything we do. From environments to systems to service flow, we are intentional in what we do and why we do it.

Intentional Discipleship – Core Value: We pursue mentoring relationships that foster spiritual growth and lifelong learning.

Invest & Invite – We all have people in our sphere of influence who are unchurched or de-churched who need Christ. We strive to invest in those relationships and when the time is right we invite them to join us at New Life and to Jesus.

Language Creates Culture – Everything we say characterizes New Life. We intentionally use words to create our desired culture, authentically and with clarity.

Lead with Yes – When determining if something can or should be done we try to say yes. There will always be time to clarify potential challenges or unintended consequences before a decision is made, however, we don’t lead with why it can’t be done. This is especially true when we are brainstorming.

Leadership Pipeline – This refers to the pool of leaders we are recruiting and apprenticing. We strive to be three deep at each position so there is someone to step up when we launch new gatherings, new campuses, or a current spot opens up.

Less is More – Left alone everything will get cluttered and complicated. We strive to keep church simple by eliminating unneeded activities and content. This applies to our services, preaching, ministries, calendar, really to everything!

Life Group Elements: Pray, Study, Serve – Every life group at New Life will pray together, study together and serve together. We see these three elements as necessary to foster spiritual growth in the context of community.

The Main Thing is to keep the Main Thing the Main Thing – This refers to our desire to remain focused on our primary purpose. We are a church not a community center. We preach Jesus not the latest religious fad.

We Major on the Majors and Minor on the Minors – This refers to our core doctrine and beliefs. We believe Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a cross, rose from the dead, sits at the right side of God the father, and will return for His church one day. We have beliefs about everything else but will not divide the church over it.

Ministry Model: Gather | Grow | Go – We Gather weekly for worship and teaching; we Grow in smaller settings through life groups; and we Go by serving locally and globally.
Mission Statement: Leading people in to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. This is why we exist. This is why we do what we do.

No Perfect People Allowed – This is another way of saying we are all sinners. We are authentic about our humanity and do not expect people to be “perfect” when they attend New Life.

Numbers have names; Statistics have Stories – We use stats to quantify growth, change, and effectiveness, however, every number represents a real person with a real story. Whenever possible we lead with stories not stats.

Offline Conversations – During meetings we stay focused on the current discussion pertinent for those in that meeting. If something needs to be discussed in more detail or with additional people we have an offline conversation.

One Church...Many Gatherings – New Life is one church that is made up of many gatherings (services) that meet at different times and locations. We currently have 11 gatherings every weekend.

We are Organized so we can be Organic – We organize everything, as far ahead of time as possible, so we can be organic at the last moment. We never let the last moment keep us from implementing a great idea.

We Preach for Monday not just Saturday/Sunday – We want the Word of God to transform not just inform a person. Therefore we expect the message to impact someone’s thoughts and actions during the week not just during a weekend gathering.

Principle versus Preference – This is a phrase we use to frame our doctrine and beliefs. We are not guided by personal preference but rather biblical principles.

Progress not Perfection – We do not expect perfection, however, we do expect consistent progress. Everything will improve or regress, it will never remain where it is. We look for the next step. We ask if it is where it needs to be.

Relational Evangelism – Core Value: The gospel is most effectively conveyed within the context of personal relationships.

Relentless Compassion – Core Value: We demonstrate Christ’s redemptive love in substantial ways to the helpless and hurting in our community and broken world.

Scarcity generates Creativity – Having more isn’t always best. Having less simply forces us to be more creative. We never blame the lack of money or lack of people as to why something cannot be done.

Simple Church – We believe church should be simple. We want everyone to do three things: attend a weekend gathering, join a small group and serve. Our calendar is simple to allow for these things to happen and create space for people to be the church in their neighborhoods and communities.

Street to the Seat – We use this phrase to describe our First Impressions environments. Guests will form an opinion about New Life way before they hear the worship or teaching pastor. We want to welcome and serve everyone from the moment they drive on our parking lot and all the way until they find their seat.

Stories not Stats – We lead with stories of life change instead of stats. We are not afraid of numbers, however, stories engage a person significantly more than a number ever will.

Systematic Giving – Giving is as important to spiritual growth as a personal quiet time. We encourage people to make their giving automatic or systematic. This practice helps people keep their financial priorities in alignment with God’s will for their life.

Tangible Ministry – Core Value: Our spiritual gifts have maximum impact when exercised in practical and strategic ways.

Teachable – We position ourselves to learn from anyone at anytime. We are continually willing to receive coaching or give coaching.

Three Deep – We want to have three people ready to serve in every position. Through consistent recruitment and apprenticeship we can fill our leadership pipeline to prepare for launching new gatherings or new campuses.

Walls are just Suggestions – Although this tangibly applies to physical walls in our campuses, it also metaphorically applies to anything that may artificially prevent us from solving something. We will move any wall if it is best for the mission.

We are called to reach people where they live, work & play – New Life (“The Church”) is not just a building or a place we gather. We are the church when we are Jesus to everyone we interact with in the community.

We are a Hospital for Sinners not a Museum for Saints – The church is a messy place and we expect the humanity of people to be evident. We are not perfect

When the Bible is Clear we are clear; when the Bible is unclear we simply discuss – The Bible is our authoritative guide. When the Bible leaves room for debate we are ok with debate. We will not divide the church over nonessential doctrine. We have strong beliefs in nonessential doctrine, however, we will not divide the church over it.

Wise Stewardship – Core Value: We are stewards of the time, treasure and talents God has given us.

Glossary of Terms

ACS – This web-based database is the primary database for New Life and is used for people management, assimilation, contributions, financial statements, and church directory. ACS stands for Automated Church Systems.

ACTS 13 – This is our umbrella for all missions’ related work locally and around the world. The name comes from the book of Acts when the first missionaries were sent out. We support over 60 missionaries and organizations. Supporting these “Boots on the Ground” missionaries reach the world’s least reached people groups is the highest priority of ACTS 13.

ACTS 13 Strategy: GPS (Give/Pray/Send) – We engage people in missions endeavors at New Life by encouraging everyone to give financially, pray for missionaries and consider becoming a career missionary or going on a short-term missions trip.

Annual Business Meeting (ABM) – Every November we have our Annual Business Meeting. At this meeting we review the financial report from the previous fiscal year, vote on prospective or returning Elders and hear vision from Pastor Troy. All staff members are expected to attend.

Assimilation – This refers to the process of fully integrating a guest into New Life. We follow-up with 1st & 2nd time guests with emails and letters to welcome them and help them get connected.

AXIS – This is the name of our ministry for students 9th grade to college-aged. Their main gathering takes place on the Renton Campus each Sunday night. They also meet in small groups, called Epic Groups, during the week.

Boardwalk – This is the name of our early childhood ministry from birth to pre-kindergarten. Boardwalk is available to every weekend gathering at every campus.

BOAT Idea (Break Out Another Thousand) – This is a humorous phrase that refers to ideas that cost over \$1,000 to implement.

Bulletin Shell – This refers to the exterior portion of the weekly program or bulletin. We ask people to recycle these each week so they can be reused in future weeks by placing them in a blue bin at the back of each auditorium.

Bumper Video – This video introduces the current teaching series. It is shown immediately prior to the teaching pastor during every weekend gathering.

Campus Pastor – Every physical and virtual campus has one person who is responsible for reaching their community for Christ and for everything that takes place at that campus. This includes weekly gatherings, life groups, campus specific staff, spending plan etc.

Capital Budget – This refers to a budget managed by Central Support for large expenditures that do not fit in a department or campus spending plan. They typically are for items that cost over \$1,000 and that are used for multiple years such as computers, furniture, equipment and significant remodel projects.

Catalytic Event – Most catalytic events leverage the launch of a new gathering or campus to accomplish several changes at the same moment. These catalytic moments take place every one to two years.

Central Support – This refers to the team that serves every area of New Life. It includes Facilities, Finance Office, Communications, IT and Service Programming.

Champion – A champion protects the New Life model for their specific area. Each champion and campus pastor work together with campus specific staff to ensure quality control. We currently have champions for kids, youth, worship and media.

The City – The City is our online community for life groups, personalized communication, kid's check-in and recurring giving. It is how people join and interact in their life group, service groups and campus groups.

CityGive – CityGive is the name of the online giving tool through The City. A donor can set-up either one time or recurring gifts with any desired timeframe. They can also view an online contribution statement including all giving from all giving methods.

Confidence Monitor – This monitor located on the first row (Renton Campus) or at the back of the room (Softer Sundays & Maple Valley Campus) provides lyrics for the worship team, the next screen on the Plasma for Teaching Pastors as well as a countdown clock for every service element.

Connection Card – This is a card found in each week's bulletin. We want every person who attends New Life to complete this weekly. Regulars provide positive peer pressure for 1st & 2nd time guests to complete the connection card, allowing us to follow-up through our assimilation process. It also provides next steps for teaching application, prayer requests and a way to request information about various things.

Deep Dive – This is a meeting that helps develop a teaching series. It typically takes place 3-6 months before a teaching series begins. It covers content, branding, and other service elements to reinforce the main thoughts.

Elders – The Council of Elders or Board of Directors are elected from among the membership of New Life. They meet monthly to guard the doctrine and finances of New Life as well as provide encouragement and wisdom to Pastor Troy.

End of Year Offering – This is an offering we receive every December that funds ACTS 13 and future campuses.

Epic Groups – This is the name of our small groups for junior high (LIFT) and senior high (AXIS) students. These groups meet during the week.

Fallapolloza – An annual event for kids 6th grade and under that typically occurs the last Friday in October. This Halloween alternative event begins with an interactive show with music and drama. Several activities follow including inflatables, hayrides, food, etc.

Financial Peace University (FPU) – FPU is our growth group that teaches people how to manage their finances from a biblical perspective. This video curriculum is taught by Dave Ramsey and is incredibly effective to help people get out of debt, learn to budget and increase their generosity.

First Impressions – Every guest will form an opinion about New Life before they hear anything from the stage. First Impressions is the umbrella for the following teams: parking team, host team (greeters & ushers), guest services, and coffee.

First Steps – This is our class for new believers and those kicking the tires of Christianity. It is a 5-week class that goes over topics like God, The Bible, Salvation, etc.

Fiscal Year – Our financial year runs from September 1st to August 31st. All spending plans are designed around this timeframe.

Gatherings – This typically refers a weekend service at one of our campuses. We currently have 11 gatherings across 3 campuses.

Ghosts – This refers to real or imagined people whose expressed or assumed opinions should not factor into a discussion. We are willing to listen and learn from anyone and everyone, however, we do not lead toward the desires of a select few at the cost of the mission.

God Moments – During each weekend gathering we create space for moments where God can connect in a powerful and genuine way. We call these God Moments.

Hit & Run – This is a method of planting a seed for a future conversation without having the conversation. Pastor Troy frequently utilizes this method. It also is the best way to get his attention on an item.

Host Pastor – During every gathering a host pastor welcomes guests, walks everyone through the weekly bulletin and may highlight one event/item. This typically happens in-between worship and the message. There is an intentional script that is used.

Invite Cards – Word of Mouth is our best method of marketing. We produce cards that communicating major events (i.e. Easter) for people to use to invite their friends, neighbors, family, etc. Sometimes these are also called Promo Cards or Touch Cards, however, Invite Cards is the preferred name.

Jingle Jam – This is an annual event for kids 6th grade and under that occurs in December. This Christmas event begins with an interactive music and drama show and then features other activities including games, inflatables, food, etc.

KidTown – This is the overall umbrella name for our kid’s ministry from birth to 6th grade. It includes these sub-groups (Boardwalk: birth to pre-kindergarten; The Park: Kindergarten; KidTown: 1st grade to 4th grade; Route 56: 5th & 6th grade).

Leadership College – This eight-month program is for students who want to learn hands-on ministry while receiving a college education through Northwest University. After two years a student can receive an AA in Ministry Leadership, live in dorms by the Renton Campus and gaining practical ministry experience.

Leak Leadership – This refers to the process of allowing information about an upcoming idea, change or event before it is officially announced. This can be done with staff, volunteers or with the entire church.

Legacy Journey (LJ) – LJ is a follow-up growth group to Financial Peace University. This video growth group is also taught by Dave Ramsey and helps people go deeper into the principles of FPU. It helps develop a biblical framework for leaving legacy through generosity.

Life Groups – This is the name of our small groups for adults. Groups meet from 3 months to 3 years. They meet in groups of 3, 12 or 70. They meet at one of our campuses, in homes, coffee shops, etc.

LIFT – This is the name of our Junior High ministry to 7th & 8th grade students. They have gatherings during weekend services and meet in small groups called Epic Groups during the week.

Lobby – This refers to the space directly outside of any adult auditorium or Kid’s environment (i.e. Main Lobby, KidTown Lobby, etc.). We do not use the words foyer or atrium to describe this space.

Main Auditorium (Mains) – This is the largest or only auditorium for adults on each campus.

Maple Valley Campus – This campus launched in January 2011 is located between Maple Valley and Covington at 27405 216th Ave SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038. This video venue is designed to be the full New Life experience including worship, host teams, Boardwalk, KidTown & LIFT.

Mark-It-Up Notes – These are the teaching notes for the weekly message. They include the biblical text, space for notes and the weekly Bible reading plan.

Membership – After attending New Life 101 any adult is able to apply for official membership with New Life Church. Membership helps people declare they are on mission with New Life. Members vote on a few items at each Annual Business Meeting.

Midnight Moments – At our annual staff retreat the newest member of the team leads in a devotional time at midnight on the first night.

New Life News – This is our weekly communication for announcing upcoming events and topics. New Life News is sent out to the entire church in a weekly email and printed as an insert to the weekly bulletin.

New Life Nick – This is one filter we use to evaluate everything we do at New Life. New Life Nick is a 32-year-old guy that is married with a couple kids. He is a little frustrated with his marriage and is unchurched or de-churched. Publically we refer to New Life Nick as a “young family”.

New Life 101 (NL 101) – This is our environment for people to learn what New Life is all about and how to be on mission with New Life. NL 101 takes place 4-6 times a year on each campus. This is also the class for someone to become a member of New Life.

Next Gen – This refers to the student ministry at New Life for all students from 7th grade through college. This includes LIFT & AXIS.

Northwest Ministry Network (NWMN) – We partner with this organization for pastoral accountability, foreign missions, and kids/youth camps.

Nursing Mother’s Room – We provide a private room for mothers who are nursing during our weekend gatherings. They have fully stocked changing tables, gliders and a TV to keep connected with the service.

Online Campus – Launched in April 2014, our online campus allows people to attend New Life remotely. Whether they are traveling, sick, or prefer a second screen experience, this virtual campus is designed to be a full New Life experience including worship, teaching and kids. It is located at live.nlchurch.com.

Parent Alert System (# below screen) – When our kid’s team needs to connect with a parent a family number is displayed to alert them. This display is located below the side screens at the Renton Campus and above the center screen in all video venues.

Pastor – While we don’t always refer to each other as “Pastor” it is preferred language especially in any public environment (spoken or written) or in front of kids and youth.

Pastoral Moment – This refers to a moment during worship where the worship leader shares a through to encourage, inspire or inform. Sometimes this is done through a personal story and sometimes with a Scripture reading.

Planning Center Online – This online system organizes volunteer scheduling for all weekend gatherings and creates a service flow sheet that communicates all elements of that service.

Plasma – This the nickname for the TV used by teaching pastors (It’s not actually a Plasma TV, we just call it that).

Primetimers – This is a complementary monthly luncheon for senior adults. It typically takes place on the first Wednesday of every month (except July & August) on the Renton Campus.

Program (Bulletin) – We use these terms interchangeably. It refers to the packet every adult receives as they enter an auditorium. It includes a bulletin shell, connection card, a self-addressed stamped offering envelope, New Life News and Mark-It Up Notes. Periodically an additional communication piece is also included.

Relaunch Initiative – This is the process of changing something that currently exists to reframe, reimagine or reposition it for health or growth reasons. On the initiative scale this is done through a Catalytic Event or Strategic Initiative.

Renton Campus – We moved to this campus in 1995. It is located along Maple Valley Highway at 15711 152nd AVE SE, Renton, WA 98058. Until 2011, this was the only campus of New Life.

Renton Christian Schools (RCS) – RCS is the private Christian school and childcare center sponsored by New Life Church. RCS provides care for children birth through pre-kindergarten through Sonshine Learning Center (SLC) and classroom environments designed for pre-kindergarten to 8th grade students. RCS meets at the Renton Campus.

RCS School Board – This board functions as a sub-committee of the Elders to provide wisdom and direction to the administration of Renton Christian School to continually improve the school.

ServiceU – This online system manages our church calendar, room requests and set-ups, and vehicle requests for all campuses.

Service Flow – This refers to the progression of a weekend gathering. It also refers to a document printed from Planning Center that details the elements and flow of a service (i.e. Service Flow Sheet).

Signature Sound – We have two signature sounds that guide our worship culture at New Life, one for Softer Sundays and one for all other gatherings. This guides our song list for worship and the desired level of excellence for musicians and vocalists.

Simply Worship – This is a gathering with extended worship and prayer. This takes place on Wednesday nights 3 times a year.

Sonshine Learning Center (SLC) – This childcare center is sponsored by New Life Church and is under the umbrella of Renton Christian School (RCS). SLC provides care for children birth through pre-kindergarten on the Renton Campus.

Softer Sundays – This video venue features a unique music style for worship. Songs include timeless hymns and familiar choruses for those who were raised in the church. Softer Sundays currently meets twice every Sunday at the Renton Campus.

Service Programing – This refers to the process of designing and managing all of the elements of a weekend gathering. This is organized and facilitated through the weekly SP Meeting.

SP Meeting – This is our weekly Service Programming meeting where the weekend gatherings are planned and organized.

Spending Plan – Each pastor and department lead is responsible for a slice of the overall campus budget. They annually develop a plan on who to fund their ministry priorities. This is a proactive approach to budgeting.

Stake in the Sand – This phrase is used to describe the moment someone decides to commit to faithfully attend and be involved with the mission of New Life. Typically this moment includes the step of membership.

Staff Chapel – All church employees gather weekly to celebrate what God is doing at New Life and hear vision and encouragement from Pastor Troy. This typically takes place on Tuesday mornings at the Renton Campus.

Strategic Initiative – During a strategic initiative the entire staff focuses on the same thing to significantly improve or accomplish a specific goal. Sustained focus causes lasting change. This is typically lead by Pastor Troy, is driven through the Strategy Team Meeting and occurs once or twice each year.

Strategy Team Meeting – Core Pastors and Departmental leads meet weekly with Pastor Troy to stay on the same page. During a strategic initiative or leading up to a catalytic event this meeting is where progress is reported and action driven.

Suncadia – This is a generic term that refers to an annual staff retreat in August. This retreat frequently took place in the Suncadia Resort area near Cle Elum, WA.

Teaching Pastor – This refers to the person who is preaching or teaching during a weekend gathering. Although our Lead Pastor, Troy Jones, is our primary Teaching Pastor, we have a team of several individuals who make up our Teaching Pastors.

Traffic Flow – This refers to entering or exiting traffic in the parking lot. It is difficult for any campus to grow when they run out of parking spaces or if it takes too much time to exit. This is particularly true when a campus only has one entrance/exit.

Think Orange – We want to partner with parents of our kids to reinforce what they learn during weekend services. Think Orange represents this philosophy.

Tribe – This is another way to describe a specific group or collection of people. All staff members are in a Tribe and play a roll in leading a Tribe.

Ugly Couch – This refers to a ministry or event that is no longer effective or relevant to the mission of New Life. We will end these at the right time while honoring people.

UNITE – This refers to the events and groups designed for women at New Life. UNITE organizes two events every year to encourage and equip women as well as numerous life groups that meet weekly throughout the year.

Vacation Bible Camp (VBC) – This is an annual weeklong day camp is for kids 6th grade and under that occurs in July. Daily chapels include music and teaching. Following kids are separated by age with small group leaders for various activities.

Video Venue – All gatherings outside of the Main Auditorium on the Renton Campus are video venues. These gatherings have live worship, and a live host pastor; the message is shown through video.

THINGS NOT TO SAY

Take Offering – We “receive” offerings, we don’t “take” offerings.

Balcony – The raised seating in the Main Auditorium at the Renton Campus is referred to as Stadium Seating not a Balcony or Balcony Seating.

AOG or Assemblies of God – We don’t avoid our affiliation with the Assemblies of God, we simply don’t lead with it. Instead say, “We partner with the Northwest Ministry Network”.

Exaggerated Statements – Don’t say “No one”, “always”, “never”, etc. (i.e. No one wants to serve in my ministry)

Cheesy Words – We avoid the cheese factor. Be authentic, don’t use churchy words, be real.

Free Gift – Redundant...just say gift.

APPENDIX G: FROM THE STREET TO THE SEAT

Church Name: _____

Pastor Name: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

The goal of this assessment is to help the first and second time guest connect to your church. Based on your reflections and observations assess the Sunday gathering of your church.

Give your Sunday gathering an honest assessment. Assess on the following areas on a scale of 1-5. (1 = this area needs to be rethought 5 = this area is strong)

Environments

1. Exterior of building (Is the landscape well kept? Is the building up to date?)
1 2 3 4 5

2. Outsiders (When I drive up to the parking lot is there a warm, updated and inviting environment?)
1 2 3 4 5

3. Lobby (How does the lobby feel when I walk in? Is it warm and inviting?)
1 2 3 4 5

4. Bathrooms (Are they clean? Enough of them?)
1 2 3 4 5

5. Signage (Bathroom, kids, auditorium, guest service)
1 2 3 4 5

6. Music (Is there music in the lobby?)
1 2 3 4 5

7. Colors of walls (Are they warm and inviting?)
1 2 3 4 5

8. Community (Is there a sense of community and relationships in the air?)
1 2 3 4 5
9. Branding of Church (Is there an consistent branding for the whole church?)
1 2 3 4 5
10. Dress Code (Does how people dress create a warm and welcoming environment?)
1 2 3 4 5

Host Teams

1. Parking Lot (Do the parking lot attendants create a warm and welcoming environment?)
1 2 3 4 5
2. Greeters (Do the greeters create a warm and welcoming environment?)
1 2 3 4 5
3. Ushers (Do the ushers create a warm and welcoming environment?)
1 2 3 4 5
4. Guest Services (Does guest services create a warm and welcoming environment?)
1 2 3 4 5
5. Age of Host Teams (Are there adults between ages of 25-35?)
1 2 3 4 5
6. Men involved (Are there manly men involved in host teams?)
1 2 3 4 5
7. Well defined (Do people know who to ask questions to?)
1 2 3 4 5
8. Pastors (Do the pastors create a warm and welcoming environment)
1 2 3 4 5
9. Host Teams Huddle (Do teams pray together before the service?)
1 2 3 4 5
10. Extra Mile (Do the greeters and ushers go the extra mile for people?)
1 2 3 4 5

Kids Ministry

1. Signage (Is it obvious where to take the kids?)
1 2 3 4 5

2. Themed (Do kids love the theme? Does this encourage kids to come back?)
1 2 3 4 5

3. Space (Is there enough space for kids? Nursery?)
1 2 3 4 5

4. Nursery (Do you create a safe, fun and irresistible environment for preschoolers?)
1 2 3 4 5

5. Elementary (Do you create a safe, fun and irresistible environment for elementary kids?)
1 2 3 4 5

6. Buzz about Children's Ministry (Do kids beg their parents not to miss church?)
1 2 3 4 5

7. Sign in (Is it obvious and convenient where to sign in kids? Are you caught up with technology?)
1 2 3 4 5

8. Adult leaders (Are there friendly adults who love kids visible?)
1 2 3 4 5

9. Nursing Mothers (Is there a place for nursing mothers that is convenient and clean?)
1 2 3 4 5

10. Unchurched (Would the unchurched person feel comfortable leaving their kids?)
1 2 3 4 5

Service Flow

1. Chair Set-up (Is the chair set-up done in such a way that creates community and energy?)
1 2 3 4 5
2. Stage Presence (Does the stage create a warm and welcoming environment?)
1 2 3 4 5
3. Announcements (Do you have too many? Does the 1st or 2nd time guest care?)
1 2 3 4 5
4. Insider language (Does the 1st or 2nd time guest feel like an outsider because of the language used?)
1 2 3 4 5
5. The Cheese Factor (Do your gatherings keep everything real and avoid the cheese factor?)
1 2 3 4 5
6. Media/Lights/Technology (Are your media/lights updated? Does it compete or compliment the mission of the church?)
1 2 3 4 5
7. Less is More (Is the service flow simple or full of clutter?)
1 2 3 4 5
8. Humor (Do you have moments where people laugh?)
1 2 3 4 5
9. Offering (does the 1st or 2nd time guest feel comfortable during this time?)
1 2 3 4 5
10. Transitions in service (Are the transitions seamless and do they complement the gathering?)
1 2 3 4 5

Worship

1. Authentic (Is the worship leader authentic in his/her stage presence?)
1 2 3 4 5

2. Anointed (Do you feel the presence of God?)
1 2 3 4 5

3. Less is More (Is the worship leader talking to much? Too many songs?)
1 2 3 4 5

4. Style (Is the worship style complimentary to who the church is trying to reach?)
1 2 3 4 5

5. Dress of Worship teams (Does this reflect how you want people to feel at your gathering?)
1 2 3 4 5

6. Language of the worship leader (Does the worship leader use language that an unchurched person would understand?)
1 2 3 4 5

7. Length of worship time (Is the length of worship appropriate for the missional pulse of the church?)
1 2 3 4 5

8. Volume of Worship (Does the volume compliment or compete with the gathering?)
1 2 3 4 5

9. Unchurched (How would an unchurched person feel about the service?)
1 2 3 4 5

10. Pastoring the people (Does the worship leader pastor the people?)
1 2 3 4 5

Preaching

1. Authentic (Is the pastor authentic in his preaching approach?)
1 2 3 4 5
2. Biblical Authority (Is the message Bible based?)
1 2 3 4 5
3. Anointed (Can you tell the pastor has heard from God?)
1 2 3 4 5
4. Application (Does the message apply to everyday life?)
1 2 3 4 5
5. Dress (Is the dress of the teaching pastor warm and welcoming?)
1 2 3 4 5
6. Likeable (Is the speaker likeable?)
1 2 3 4 5
7. Less is More (Does the speaker understand "less is more")
1 2 3 4 5
8. Unchurched (Would the Unchurched person relate to the message?)
1 2 3 4 5
9. Evangelism (Would I invite my Unchurched friend to hear the teaching?)
1 2 3 4 5
10. Included in Message (As a newer person do I feel included in the message?)
1 2 3 4 5

Assimilation

1. People in church (Did the church make me feel warm and welcomed?)
1 2 3 4 5

2. Website (Does the website do a good job at making me want to stick at this church?)
1 2 3 4 5

3. Service Language (Was it obvious in the service that this church is a place for 1st and 2nd time people to connect to?)
1 2 3 4 5

4. Guest Services (Is there relevant information available for the first and second time guest?)
1 2 3 4 5

5. Connection Card (Is the connection card easy to fill out?)
1 2 3 4 5

6. Bulletin (Is the bulletin user friendly for the 1st or 2nd time guest?)
1 2 3 4 5

7. Next Steps (Are next steps clearly communicated regarding how to connect to the church?)
1 2 3 4 5

8. Free gift to 1st and 2nd time guest (Is there a free gift to 1st and 2nd time guest?)
1 2 3 4 5

9. Strategy to follow up on 1st and 2nd time guests (Is there a clear strategy in place to follow up on 1st and 2nd time guests?)
1 2 3 4 5

10. Sticky Factor (Does it seem like I could make this my home church?)
1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX H: LEAD PASTOR ASSESSMENT

Name: _____

Church: _____

Email: _____

Best Contact: _____

Please answer these questions with complete honesty. All answer and results are kept confidential and will be used in the consulting relationship. Fill out the number that represents the condition of your congregation as it pertains your leadership as the Lead Pastor.

Credibility

I am committed to my church for the next five plus years.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Accurate Somewhat Accurate Very Accurate

I have the leadership capital to lead the church in strategic change.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Accurate Somewhat Accurate Very Accurate

I have led the church in successful change in the past three years.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Accurate Somewhat Accurate Very Accurate

The top influencers of my congregation trust me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Accurate Somewhat Accurate Very Accurate

The board members trust me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Accurate Somewhat Accurate Very Accurate

My congregation trusts me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Accurate Somewhat Accurate Very Accurate

APPENDIX I: RELAUNCH COHORT
CHURCHES AND PASTORS

Church: LifePoint Church
Location: Vancouver, WA
Church Established: 1938 (76 Years old)
Lead Pastor: Andrew Murch
Lead Pastor Age: 33

Church: Faith Assembly Christian Center
Location: Pasco, WA
Church Established: 1957 (57 Years Old)
Lead Pastor: Darrell Johnson
Lead Pastor Age: 57

Church: Maltby Christian Assembly
Location: Maltby, WA
Church Established: 1983 (31 Years old)
Lead Pastor: Dave Brakke
Lead Pastor Age: 53

Church: Stone Church
Location: Yakima, WA
Church Established: 1921 (93 Years old)
Lead Pastor: Jeff Duchemin
Lead Pastor Age: 38

Church: Citipoint Church
Location: Mt. Vernon, WA
Church Established: 1948 (66 Years old)
Lead Pastor: Mike Acker
Lead Pastor Age: 33

Church: Brooklake Community Church
Location: Federal Way, WA
Church Established: 1969 (45 Years old)
Lead Pastor: Scott Harris
Lead Pastor Age: 44

Church: Horizon Community Church
Location: Tualatin, OR
Church Established: 1977 (37 Years old)
Lead Pastor: Stan Russell
Lead Pastor Age: 54

APPENDIX J: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I give Troy Jones consent to use any and all my information in his doctoral project for the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. He may present any of my information to the Doctor of Ministry committee in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Ministry. This includes results on the pretest and posttest, information shared on the Relaunch Church Profile & Evaluation, and personal stories shared during the course of the project.

Date: _____

Pastor: _____

APPENDIX K: TROY JONES'S ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How are you growing? How are you keeping yourself fresh?
2. What bugs you? What makes you cringe?
3. What dates your church?
4. What have you fallen in love with that doesn't work?
5. If you started your church today what would they do and not do?
6. What is the next big strategic initiative? What is God saying?
7. Are you excited about Sunday morning?

APPENDIX L: RELAUNCH CHURCH
PROFILE & EVALUATION

Church Profile

Church Name: _____

Address: _____

Website: _____

What year did the church begin? _____

Leadership

Current Senior Pastor: _____ Starting Date: _____

Last 3 Senior Pastors (add length of tenure)

Name: _____ Dates of Tenure: _____

Name: _____ Dates of Tenure: _____

Name: _____ Dates of Tenure: _____

Attendance (Include total kids, youth and adults)

Today: _____ (weekly average over the last 4-8 weeks)

2013: _____ (weekly average for entire year; see ACRM)

2012: _____ (weekly average for entire year; see ACRM)

2011: _____ (weekly average for entire year; see ACRM)

Relaunch Cohort & Coaching Call Evaluation

How has the Relaunch Cohort & Coaching Calls helped you in the following areas?
(1 = Not Helpful; 5= Very Helpful)

Clarity of Vision

| | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Helpful | | Neutral | | Very Helpful |

Celebrating Wins

| | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Helpful | | Neutral | | Very Helpful |

Making Continuous Improvements

| | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Helpful | | Neutral | | Very Helpful |

Leading Strategic Initiatives

| | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Helpful | | Neutral | | Very Helpful |

Leading Catalytic Change

| | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Helpful | | Neutral | | Very Helpful |

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