

SELECTED CASE STUDIES IN HOW SENIOR LEADERS CULTIVATE
MISSIONAL CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

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Readers: Andy Seidel and Brad Smith

The thesis of this dissertation is that church leaders, who cultivate missional change, do not generally make a strategic decision to do so. Rather, missional change is precipitated by a significant crisis encountered by the church. When senior leaders respond to the crisis in a spirit of humility and discovery, the crisis creates an environment where missional culture-change can begin. These missional changes are expressed eventually in two ways: service to the community and a different way of worshipping as a community.

The body of this dissertation is divided into three parts. It begins with a literature review examining the following: (1) the historical development of missional ecclesiology, (2) the crisis theory of change, and (3) how missional transitions affect worship and service to the community. The dissertation continues with a presentation of the research procedure, arguing that the case study approach is the ideal way to study churches in the crux of missional transition. The case study research is then presented. The case study churches form an ideal study cohort since they share core similarities in governance, theology and staff structure. On the other hand, since they possess distinctly different cultures, their missional changes can be compared and contrasted. The case studies demonstrate that when crises are responded to properly, missional changes do, in fact, occur.

The dissertation concludes with a chapter outlining nine principles for how churches can move in a missional direction along with ideas for further study.

CONTENTS

Chapter

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Rationale for the Study	
	The Development of the Hypothesis	
	Hypothesis for this Study	
	Potential Benefits of this Study	
	Chapter Preview	
	Definition: Missional Church	
2	PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
	Hypothesis Area 1: Synthetic Overview of Missional Ecclesiology	
	Beginnings of Missio Dei	
	The Enlightenment Construct and Missio Dei	
	Missio Dei after World War 1	
	Rejection by Evangelicals	
	The Evangelical Reappraisal	
	Practical Benefits of the Missio Dei Construct	
	Summary	
	Hypothesis Area 2: The Role of Crisis in Leadership Development	
	The crucible model	
	Corroboration in other authors	
	Crisis and other disciplines	
	Types of crises	
	Biblical examples of the crucible model	
	Two observations on the biblical model	
	Examples of the crucible model in church history	
	Summary	
	Hypothesis Area 3: Moving from Crisis to Missional Vision	
	Separation Phase	
	Liminal Phase	
	Reengagement Phase	
	Summary	
	Hypothesis Area 4: Serving the Community	
	Historical background	
	Recent evangelical shift	
	Theological reappraisal	
	Renewed interest in common grace	
	Public schools as a target for service	
	From shotgun service to targeted service	

Summary
 Hypothesis Area 5: Energizing Missional Worship
 Historical background
 Six common worship values in missional churches
 Summary
 Summary and Conclusion

3. RESEARCH PROCEDURE.....66

Qualitative Research Theory
 Reason for Choosing the Case Study Format
 The Research Problem
 The Development of the Hypothesis and the Case Study Problem
 Collecting Data
 Analyzing the Data
 Conclusion – Reporting the Case Study

4. CASE STUDIES AND RESEARCH RESULTS.....80

Introduction
 History of Irving Bible Church
 The Initial Period – The Growth of a Traditional Bible Church
 The Transitional Period –The Growth toward a Contemporary
 Megachurch
 The Hypothesis Revisited
 The Crisis – 2002-2005
 The Culture-Change
 Definition of Culture and its Application to IBC
 Interpreting the Culture-Change in Light of Roxburgh and Romanuk’s
 Work
 Creating Safety in the Change Process
 A Careful Reshaping of Existing Vision
 A Shift to Centered Set Thinking
 Summary
 The Service Orientation
 An Organic Approach
 A New Staff Member Dedicated to the Missional Area
 A Serving Passion Emerges at IBC
 Modeled by the Senior Pastor
 Summary
 The Worship Shift
 The Challenges of the Seeker/Performance Model
 Russ Ware’s Shift in Thinking
 Changes in Worship
 Summary and Conclusion – Irving Bible Church

- Christ Chapel Bible Church – History
 - The Initial Period – From inception to the crisis of 1986
 - Phase Two: From the crisis of 1986 to the crisis of 2002
 - The Years 1986 to 1997
 - The years 1997 to 2002
- The Hypothesis Revisited
- The Crisis – 2002-2005
 - A parking problem
 - A building campaign
 - Conflict erupts
 - Humility and learning in the crisis
 - Evaluation of the crisis
- The Culture-Change
 - Culture and Its Application to CCBC
 - Interpreting the Culture-Change in Light of Roxburgh and Romanuk’s Work
 - A reshaping of existing vision
 - Summary
- The Service Orientation
- The Worship Shift
 - A comparison
 - The spiritual growth campaign
 - The blending of worship, the arts and evangelism
 - A new direction with the arts and worship
 - Summary
- Summary and Conclusion – Christ Chapel Bible Church
- Chapter Four Conclusion

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY.....159

- Chapter Review
 - Chapter One
 - Chapter Two
 - Chapter Three
 - Chapter Four
- Concluding Insights
- Implications for Further Study
- A Final Word

Appendix

- A. An Outline of Missional Changes at Grace Community Church, Bartlesville, OK.....178
- B. Definition and Characteristics of Missional Church.....188

C. The Vision and Values of Grace Community Church, Bartlesville, OK.....193
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....195

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is by now a truism to speak of North America as a mission field. Our concern is the way that the Christian churches are responding to this challenge.¹

Darrell L. Guder

One of the most important considerations in breaking the [missional] code is to break from our own preferences. Simply put, being missional does not mean doing things the way we like them. It means to take the gospel into the context where we have been called.... You cannot be missional and pick what you like at the same time.²

Ed Stetzer

Rationale for the Study

Ten years ago, few books addressed the North American culture as if it were a mission field. That has changed. After the publication of Darrell Guder's groundbreaking book, *Missional Church*, and the rediscovery of Lesslie Newbigin's missional ecclesiology, an explosion of books hit the market, many purporting to explain how churches can go missional.³

A list search on Amazon.com reveals multiple pages of missional books ranging from erudite theological tomes, such as Arthur F. Glasser's work, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible*, to missional works with

¹ Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 2.

² Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 50.

³ Chapter two of this dissertation will present the most important of the recent missional works in six categories.

denominational slants, to highly practical how-to field manuals that give step-by-step instructions.⁴

This trend has been noticed by magazines such as *Christianity Today*, *Leadership* and *Charisma*, which regularly feature articles on the serving work of missional churches. Riveting stories are popping up all over the blogosphere about churches in the thick of cultural change, shifting from an inward focus to an external focus, seeking to serve their cities for the advancement of God's kingdom.

At a recent Missional Church conference, Alan Roxburgh suggested that ten new titles were either under contract or about to be published with the term *missional* in the title or the subtitle.⁵ This, of course, would have been unheard of five years ago. Clearly, missional ecclesiology is coming into its own as a way of conceptualizing ministry.

Gone is the dewy-eyed idealism of the old social-gospel crowd, where service was done for the sheer glory of service. In contrast, the church has witnessed the emergence of highly energetic lay leaders creatively strategizing to be conduits of God's common grace so they can then be conduits of God's saving grace. As they serve, their missional theology is sophisticated enough to remind them that God is responsible for the results, and therefore, they can serve with generosity and authenticity, no strings attached.

However, the concept of *missional* is different fundamentally from other adjectives applied to church. Terms, such as *emergent* and *emerging*, have been applied ad nauseum to describe so-called cutting-edge churches reaching young postmoderns. But the terms are now used so broadly that they have ceased to have real meaning, with

⁴ Rick Rouse and Craig Van Gelder, *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 43ff.

⁵ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Beyond the Church Doors: Developing a Missional Culture in Your Congregation* (Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas: Howard G. Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership, March 31-April 1, 2008).

each writer investing the term with his own new angle. Going further, some emergent thinkers seem to be jettisoning major chunks of the historic Christian faith altogether, edging toward old-fashioned liberalism with its inevitable theological double-speak.⁶

The term *missional*, on the other hand, has evolved to have a precise definition, rich in theological significance in at least the following four areas: theology proper, Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.

Some theologians, inspired by John Stott and Lesslie Newbigin, are developing comprehensive biblical theologies that portray God’s pre-existing and eternal mission—his *missio Dei*, as the organizing principle of the Bible.⁷ *Missional* has become a precise term with a growing body of scholarly and popular writing to support it.

Many churches, however, are at a loss as they think practically about how to transition toward *missional* forms of ministry. First, they make a mistake when they assume that being *missional* is a strict either-or proposition: “Either we are missional all the way, or we are not missional at all.”

This is not true. Most existing churches, which determine to move in a *missional* direction, enter a *liminal* journey at some point in their ministries, feeling strongly drawn by God to move into their communities with expressions of service.⁸

⁶ This is the criticism leveled against much of Brian McLaren’s work especially, Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialities, 2004). Indeed there has been strong pushback on the emergent movement by younger pastors who feel emerging churches are sacrificing doctrine to accommodate culture. Kevin De Young and Ted Kluck, *Why We’re Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).

⁷ A case in point is Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006).

⁸ The term *liminal* (latin for threshold) has become a technical term in missional literature that refers to a transition in the life of a church that leads toward a missional understanding. Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation: Leadership & Liminality* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997), 23-25.

When a church moves in this direction, it is a multi-year transition, but one of great excitement and reward, provided certain attitudes are in place among the senior leaders.

Many Christian leaders have trouble defining *missional* ministry accurately. Does it mean they have a great mission's program? Does it mean a church must engage in social action but never verbally share its faith? Does it mean worship styles must change? This lack of clarity prevents many churches from moving toward what is clearly a genuine work of God in North American culture.

The Development of the Hypothesis

The genesis of this project was my belief that Grace Community Church of Bartlesville, OK needed to move in a new direction following the merger of Phillips Petroleum with the Conoco Oil Company in late 2002. As part of the merger agreement, Phillips Petroleum's corporate headquarters moved to Houston, and Bartlesville became home to the global shared services division. It was unclear at first how many employees would be retained, and for a city that had prided itself as an oil town, the loss of the headquarters was felt acutely and ushered in an identity crisis that lasted roughly three and one half years.

During this time, a significant number of Grace Community Church's original members transferred to Houston, including many leaders, who had enthusiastically embraced the vision and served skillfully. While the church continued to gain new members during this time, and was successful in planting churches in central Cuba, the culture of Grace Community Church had changed. There was a growing conviction that the church needed to consider the City of Bartlesville—even though in the Bible belt, as a mission field, but the leadership did not know how to transform this conviction into a viable strategic plan. The D.Min. program at Dallas Theological Seminary created a

valuable opportunity to study how churches move in a *missional* direction—especially churches in crisis.

The research question in the initial phase of the study was as follows: How do senior pastors of existing churches shift their church in a *missional* direction? The validity of this question was confirmed in the opening pages of *The Missional Leader* in which Roxburgh and Romanuk assert, “The frequently heard cry of church leaders who have captured [the vision of incarnational servant ministry] is, ‘How do we transition from a consumer model of church to one that is essentially missional in nature.’”⁹

Culture-change is painful and frequently divisive, but transitioning from a consumer-driven culture to an outwardly-focused *servicing* culture is a massive shift with potentially explosive repercussions among long-standing members. Understanding how *missional* culture-change takes place would not only be of great value to me in my own church, it would assist me in helping other church leaders foster *missional* change as well.

As this researcher began to explore potential hypotheses, I initially thought that senior leaders initiating *missional* change did it in the conventional way: set down a strategic plan, recruit leaders, cast vision, and move confidently in a *missional* direction. Early reading, however, suggested that this was not the way *missional* culture-change takes place.

On the contrary, the most important contributions in the literature suggested that *missional* change is quirky, non-linear, and generally precipitated by a crisis.¹⁰ While the “crisis-might-lead-to-missional-change” theme occasionally shows up in *missional*

⁹ Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), xiii.

¹⁰ Alan Roxburgh offers a helpful perspective on the non-linear direction of missional change. *Ibid.*, 84-103.

texts, few authors seem to connect the dots that crisis is most likely *the* key that God uses to spark *missional* change.

The authors that make the connection suggest that crisis changes the way leaders think and pray about their church. These leaders in crisis ask the following questions: What is God saying to us in this crisis? If we were missionaries to this city, how would we think differently about our strategy? What is God already doing in our city? What would it mean for us to see ourselves as sent ones on a mission?

Hypothesis for this Study

After more reading, the proper target for study was not the senior pastors but the senior leaders who made up the primary leadership team. Then the following hypothesis emerged for this project: Church leaders, who cultivate *missional* change, have encountered a significant crisis. For that crisis to spark lasting *missional* change, the crisis must be large enough to bring the key leaders to a place of brokenness, so that they are open to new direction.

When that crisis is responded to in a spirit of humility and discovery, it creates an environment where *missional* direction can take place within the church. This *missional* change is expressed in two primary ways:

1. Service to the community (an external change)
2. A different way of worshipping as a community, especially using the main worship event of the church consistent with *missional* purposes—an internal change

Hypotheses such as the above can either be prescriptive or descriptive; this one is descriptive. Not all churches encountering crisis will move in a *missional* direction. Some leaders are seized with anxiety and revert toward rigid and brittle leadership styles. Others slouch into safe legalism. Still others live vicariously through

the ministry models of other churches, serving up to congregants a seasonal vision du jour, which is high on presentation but low on substance.

Churches primed for healthy change, however, see crisis as an invitation to a journey that discovers God's new direction for ministry and expresses the servant presence of Jesus. The central hypothesis of this dissertation suggests that crisis provides fertile soil for *missional* change, provided senior leaders are spiritually discerning learners.

The major research section is an integrated case study of two Dallas Area Churches: Irving Bible Church and Christ Chapel Bible Church. Both churches began their journeys as inwardly-focused Bible churches but moved toward culturally-sensitive *missional* churches in the aftermath of a crisis.

These churches make for an ideal study cohort. They share strong similarities in size, theological orientation, governance, and commitment to the exegetical exposition of the Scriptures, but their respective cultures are different. Irving Bible Church seems edgy, envelope-pushing, and almost rebellious, yet their worship often features ancient-modern themes. Christ Chapel Bible Church, on the other hand, feels traditional at first. But beneath this veneer of tradition, the church exudes deep passion for the fine arts in various forms, using them as a vehicle for reaching one section of the city, while reaching into a different part of the city with their service.

Potential Benefits of this Study

Senior leaders in churches recognize that massive shifts are taking place in their culture, requiring fresh, and sometimes counterintuitive ways, of engaging secular and postmodern people. The seeker/performance model, pioneered by Willow Creek Community Church, so helpful in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, does not seem to

attract young postmoderns.¹¹ Younger Christians regard other structured models with suspicion as well.¹²

Increasingly, this group even looks at megachurches with suspicion, wondering if behind their massive size is a pastor whose real passion is power instead of God's kingdom.¹³ Church leaders wonder if a *missional* approach to ministry might be the only way to connect with postmodern people, who feel the church is out of touch with emerging spirituality and hopelessly isolated from the needs of hurting people.¹⁴

This dissertation will help senior leaders investigate *missional* change in the following five ways, each reflected by a major component of the above hypothesis.

1. It answers a question that many leaders in *missional* transition ask: "What exactly is a *missional* church? And how did the notion of *missional* ecclesiology arise? Is it the latest fad, or does it have a legitimate history?" Understanding the rise of *missio Dei* theology will help senior leaders explain that *missional* concepts are not passing fancies but a mindset about ministry that is theologically rich and immensely practical.
2. It explains the role of crisis in *missional* change. All churches experience crises, and they are either destructive or redemptive to the future of the church. This

¹¹ Wade Hodges and Greg Taylor, "We Can't Do Megachurch Anymore: What Happens When an Attractional Church Is Compelled to Go in a Different Direction?" *Leadership* (Winter 2007): pg. 49-51.

¹² Sarah Cunningham, "Interview: Dissing Illusionment—Counter Culture Currents," *Leadership* (Winter 2007): 17.

¹³ The feeling among younger Christians that the megachurch movement is inauthentic has been exacerbated by revelations that some pastors "cook" the numbers to make their ministries look better. See Warren Cole Smith, "Numbers Racket: Survey Results on Megachurch Growth Do Not Add Up," *World Magazine* (Dec. 1, 2007): 26-27.

¹⁴ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 56-61.

dissertation explores how two churches handled their crises and what they learned in the process about *missional* ministry.

3. For culture-change to be successful, senior leaders need to be outstanding learners. This dissertation presents a philosophy of culture-change based on a learning model.
4. Churches in *missional* change tend to move into their surrounding culture in predictable ways. This dissertation shows why many churches “going missional” serve their neighborhood public schools first and then branch out from there.
5. As churches move into a *missional* ministry, they tend to think about their worship services differently. The research suggests that *missional* churches can have dramatically different worship styles, but all *missional* churches share six common convictions about worship. This dissertation explains what those convictions are and why they are so important.

Chapter Preview

This dissertation follows a conventional five-chapter format. After the introduction, chapter two consists of a literature review based on the five elements of the hypothesis: *missional* ecclesiology, crisis, culture-change, service and worship.

While an historical overview might not ordinarily appear in a literature review, it is necessary in this case since *missional* ecclesiology is a fairly new field and capable of misinterpretation. This section is brief enough to not be burdensome but detailed enough to provide clarity. Hence, it is called a synthetic overview.

Chapter three describes the case-study research methodology, along with a discussion of how the research instrument was developed from the hypothesis. The setting for the main case study interviews is then presented.

Chapter four provides the main research documentation of the project. Two case studies are presented: Irving Bible Church in the Dallas area and Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth.

Chapter five presents conclusions that follow the five components of the hypothesis and then offers ideas for further study, including possible dissertation topics. This section also offers suggestions for how senior leaders might think differently about their leadership culture so that when crisis comes, it can foster *missional* change.

Definition: Missional Church

For the purposes of this dissertation, the following is a concise definition of the term *missional* church:

A *missional* church is a highly unified body of believers,¹⁵ intent on being God's missionary presence¹⁶ to the indigenous community that surrounds them,¹⁷ recognizing that God is already at work.¹⁸

¹⁵ The importance of unity shows up consistently in missional literature, and it is rooted in Trinitarian theology. The Triune God is eternally unified in his mission, and believers under the headship of Christ must be unified in the accomplishment of His mission as well. Hirsch has an excellent discussion of this in Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 217-241. This concept of unity was also championed by Newbigin in a short work based on his Kerr Lectures at the University of Glasgow called, *The Household of God*. See Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basic Readings* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 31. In his latter years, Newbigin decried the privatization of the church in modernity and felt it was antithetical to the spread of the gospel. See, Michael W. Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missional Ecclesiology" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utrecht, 2000), 420.

¹⁶ This is based on Jesus' statement in John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." This was an important cornerstone to Newbigin's missional ecclesiology. See, Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I am Sending You," 277.

¹⁷ The needs of the indigenous culture have always been taken seriously by biblical writers as evidenced by Paul's message to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill in Acts 17:16-34. Stark asserts that Christianity was an urban movement in the first century, with Christians especially concerned about serving specific needs in their cities—Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Religion and Conquered Rome* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 30-31. See also, Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 76-94, 161.

¹⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22-23.

Taking seriously the notion they have been sent by the risen Christ to be the agents of God's preexisting mission, *missional* churches embrace a distinctly countercultural mindset. On the one hand, they engage a lifestyle of common ground with the world, yet without moral or spiritual compromise. On the other hand, they are not afraid to challenge assumptions, even the idols, within the culture that harm and enslave people.

Missional Christians generally display common ground with the world, first through generous acts of service, but also through the arts,¹⁹ and at times, through positions of leadership within the community or the state. Having earned the right to be heard, they lovingly invite friends to a different way of life in Christ within their transformed community.²⁰

¹⁹ The importance of the arts has recognized by many in the missional movement not only as a basis for common ground with the culture, but, following Newbigin, and as a way of creating culture that awakens the world to the reality of Christ. See, Andy Crouch, "Creating Culture: Our Best Response to the World Is to Make Something of It," *Christianity Today* (Sep. 2008): 25-29. Tim Stafford, "Re-Imagining Reality: Artist Makoto Fujimura Launched the International Arts Movement to 'Re-Humanize' the World," *Christianity Today* (Sep 2008), 31.

²⁰ Newbigin's highly nuanced philosophy of cultural engagement has been crucial to the movement and is concisely summed up by Goheen. "The church is part of the cultural community that embodies idolatrous faith commitments. On the other hand, the church is called to be part of a new humankind that embodies a different story. The incompatible stories intersect in the life of the church, producing an unbearable tension; the church must separate itself from the idolatrous story that shapes its culture and yet participate in the ongoing development of the cultural community. Living in this tension, the church challenges the idolatrous story of the culture with an alternative way of life shaped by the kingdom. A missionary encounter prohibits the church from either withdrawing into a ghetto or being accommodated to the cultural story. Newbigin resolves the tension with his notion of 'challenging relevance' or 'subversive fulfillment'. The church is called to embody the cultural forms yet at the same time subvert them and give them new meaning shaped by the gospel. In this way, the church is both for and against its culture. It identifies with the form of its culture but stands against the idolatry that gives meaning and direction to [it]. Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I am Sending You," 423-424.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing interest in recovering the missionary calling of the church is evident from many theological works of the twentieth century, especially in the aftermath of the great World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910.²¹

Alister E. McGrath

Hypothesis Area 1: Synthetic Overview of Missional Ecclesiology

Beginnings of Missio Dei

The modern missionary movement is traced generally to the publication of William Carey's *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (1792) and the subsequent establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society.²²

For the next 125 years the explosion of missionary activity around the globe was nothing short of astounding.²³ By the inauguration of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the Christian faith had moved from a mostly European

²¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basic Readings* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 31.

²² Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), 306.

²³ Latourette called the period 1815-1914 "the great century" because every time the growth of the church was repudiated by modernism, it responded with vibrant expansion. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1975), vii, 1063.

phenomenon to a global world faith.²⁴ At the time, it seemed that Western-style Christendom would continue to flourish in foreign lands unabated for years to come, while also advancing at home.²⁵

This expectation was fueled both by pioneer missionaries who opened up new fields, and the creation of new missionary societies which often crossed denominational and confessional barriers.²⁶ Their passion was to unify the body of Christ and mobilize resources for worldwide evangelization. As church members back home heard stories of God's powerful work in exotic lands, they too sensed the missionary call and prepared for service.

However, the "long nineteenth century" of missionary advance must be understood within the framework of the prevailing worldview of the West.²⁷ By the close of the eighteenth century, Europe was well into the era of the Enlightenment. The Wars of Religion following the early Reformation (c.a. 1562-1648) and the excesses of the radical reformation had left Europeans weary of all religion—both Catholic and Protestant. Simultaneously, there was a rapid increase in scientific discovery sparked by the publication of Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* in 1687.

²⁴ Ruth Tucker, "William Carey Father of Modern Missions," in *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, ed. John D. Woodbridge (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 307.

²⁵ This was the assessment of Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the *Christian Century*, reporting on the World Missionary Conference. "Everyone feels the presence in the conference of a power not ourselves, deeper than our own devices, which is making for a triumphant advance of Christianity abroad. And not less are the delegates thrilled by the sense that the conference foreshadows a new era for the church at home." Charles Clayton Morrison, "The World Missionary Conference," *Religion Online* (1910) <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=471> (accessed on 13 January 2008).

²⁶ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Complete in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999).

²⁷ The long nineteenth century is a term, either describing the period either from 1789-1917, (French Revolution through World War 1), or the period 1815-1914 (post-Napoleonic Europe to World War 1). See Robert Weiner, *The Long 19th Century: European History from 1789-1917*, The Teaching Company (2003), <http://www.teach12.com/ttcx/coursedesclong2.aspx?cid=8190&pc=History%20-%20Modern> (accessed on December 8, 2007). See also, Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 1063.

These negative attitudes toward religion, coupled with intellectual advances in the sciences, led to the following radical idea: Perhaps humans can discover truth through unaided reason, bypassing divine revelation altogether.

The Enlightenment on the European continent lasted for approximately 150 years (c.a. 1650-1789)²⁸ and culminated in the atrocities of the French Revolution. After 1799, the European continent, wary of rationalism but still clinging to it, shifted into literary and artistic romanticism at best and intellectual skepticism and atheism at worst.

In Britain and America, however, the spiritual climate was different. The First Great Awakening spawned evangelical fervor on both sides of the Atlantic. Methodism and Pietism brought renewed interest in a personal relationship with God and a reformation of morals. Moreover, evangelicals in the decades to come, especially in Victorian England, developed a zealous commitment to social action, which was epitomized in the work of the Clapham Sect.²⁹

The modern missionary movement thus began in this climate of evangelical renewal, but nevertheless, was set within the broader context of post-enlightenment romanticism.

The Enlightenment Construct and Missio Dei

As the missionary movement progressed into the nineteenth century, however, remnants of the Enlightenment worldview left an indelible mark on attitudes toward missions. Pocock, speaking broadly about this period, suggests, “Christianity and Western Enlightenment principles tended to coalesce in the missionary endeavors

²⁸ This period spans from the Treaty of Westphalia to the French Revolution.

²⁹ Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 445.

launched from Europe and North America.”³⁰ Jongeneel agrees: “To understand this new development [missio Dei], it is necessary to go back to the age of the Enlightenment which, for the first time in history, did not regard mission as God’s very own work but as a purely human endeavor. Thereafter, a very anthropocentric theology emerged....”³¹

In examining the broad sweep of nineteenth century missionary advance, Nussbaum, too, suggests that, “People became so convinced of the importance of human initiative that they hardly thought of God as being active in mission.”³² Indeed, at times, mission became completely divorced from its biblical and theological underpinnings and was identified with Western imperialism and colonialism.³³

In fairness, not all missiologists were conformed to the prevailing enlightenment model during the nineteenth century. Charles Pettit McIlvaine (1799-1873), for instance, reveals a strongly God-centered *missional* understanding as early as 1839.³⁴ While not specifically using the term *missional*, the journals and letters he penned

³⁰ Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rhee and Douglass McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 11. Nussbaum following Bosch develops this further in Stan Nussbaum, *A Reader’s Guide to Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 78-79.

³¹ This assessment of Jan Jongeneel is mentioned in Michael, W. Goheen, “As the Father Sent You: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Utrecht, 2000), 420.

³² Nussbaum, *A Reader’s Guide to Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 95.

³³ Bosch suggests that the missionary drive during this period is rooted in four motivations: 1) soteriology – saving individuals from damnation, 2) culture – introducing people to the Christian West, 3) ecclesiology – expanding the church or a denomination, 4) post-millennial theology – hastening the kingdom through the Christianization of the world. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: orbis, 1991), 389.

³⁴ Charles P. McIlvaine, “The Missionary Character and Duty of the Church,” in *A Series of Evangelical Discourses Selected for the Use of Families and Destitute Congregations*, Vol. 2 (Columbia, OH: Isaac N. Whiting, 1839), 309-328.

while aiding wounded soldiers during the Civil War reflect his strong conviction that he had been sent to serve as a representative of Christ's preexisting mission.³⁵

Missio Dei After World War I

In the aftermath of World War I, this anthropocentric view of mission began to change in the work of Swiss theologian Karl Barth.

Barth plays an important role in bridging the gap between the separatist fundamentalism of the 1920s that eschewed meaningful involvement in culture, and humanistic liberalism that sometimes equated culture with God.³⁶ Barth's theological approach had the following three strengths that were particularly helpful to the revitalization of a missiology that was both Christ-affirming and culture-affirming:

(1) His theology is rooted in biblical exegesis, and therefore less dependent on preexisting theological and philosophical bias³⁷; (2) His theology is thoroughly Christocentric, stressing Jesus' role as the revealer of God³⁸; (3) His theology is highly Trinitarian.³⁹ While these three developments might seem like a reiteration of Reformation principles, Barth's neo-orthodox pedigree, intellectual prowess and creative

³⁵ C.P. McIlvaine engaged in missional activities on both sides of the Atlantic. He has the distinction of being the only American to lie in state in Westminster Abbey (a plaque commemorates the spot). A friend of Charles Simeon of Cambridge, his life story was compiled by William Carus, Simeon's successor. William Carus, *Memorials of the Right Reverend Charles Pettit Mcilvaine*, 2nd ed. (London: Eliot Stock, 1882), 7, 249-251, 269-271.

³⁶ Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 577-579.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 578.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 588.

³⁹ Peter Toon, *Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity* (Wheaton, IL: A Bridepoint Book, 1996), 46-47.

genius forced liberals and fundamentalists alike to wrestle with his ideas.⁴⁰ “At the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, Karl Barth...[articulated] mission as an activity of God himself.”⁴¹ Using the term, *actio Dei*, Barth suggests that the inter-Trinitarian relationship within the God-head is the source of all mission.⁴²

Bosch reiterates that Barth’s influence broke radically from the Enlightenment approach to mission by grounding mission *first* in God and *not* in the human endeavor of the church (emphasis mine).⁴³

If Barth’s hypothesis were true, then God’s eternal and inter-Trinitarian mission would be ontologically prior to the commands of Jesus expressed in the Great Commissions —found at the end of the four gospels and at the beginning of the Book of Acts, and would provide the foundation for them.⁴⁴

The following year, (1933) German missiologist, Karl Hartenstein expressed similar views. However, rather than using the term *actio Dei*, a term coined by Barth, he employed the term *missio Dei*: the mission of God.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 238.

⁴¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389. There is some disagreement about precisely when Barth first suggested this. Wright following Hoedemaker suggests that Barth first proposed this in a lecture in 1928. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 62-63. See also L. A. Hoedemaker, “The People of God and the Ends of the Earth,” in *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction*, ed. A. Camp, L. A. Hoedemaker, and M. R. Spindler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 165.

⁴² In Barth’s view the Trinity was “the first principle of all Christian faith and thought and life.” Thus Barth sets the stage for a Trinitarian view of mission. Toon, *Our Triune God*, 47.

⁴³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

⁴⁴ The obvious biblical justification for this is John 20:21b, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.”

⁴⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62-63.

This emerging concept of *missio Dei* suggested that from eternity past, the Triune God has been on a mission. To fulfill that mission, he engages in a series of sending acts. The Father sends the Son into the world at the incarnation (John 1:14). The Father guides his Son during his ministry (John 5:31). The Son sends the church into the world after the resurrection (John 20:21). The Son sends the Spirit into the world at Pentecost (John 14:16-17; Acts 2: 1-4). And the Spirit sends the church into the world post-Pentecost (Acts 4:31).

The real crystallization of *missio Dei*, however, came in 1952 at the meeting of the International Missionary Council in Willingen, Germany in the work of Georg Vicedom.⁴⁶ According to Vicedom, “Mission flows from the inner movement of God in personal relationship”.⁴⁷

In the aftermath of this meeting, there is a definite shift in thinking—from the church as *possessing* a mission, to God being a missionary God, and the church *participating* in his mission (emphasis mine).⁴⁸ Indeed, Pachuau suggests, “Since, the middle of the twentieth century, this understanding of Christian mission as *missio Dei* has enjoyed such popularity that it has come to be recognized almost as a theological consensus.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 63. See also, David Claydon, “Aims of Mission: *Missio Dei*,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie, Samuel Escobar and Wilbert Shenk (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 16-17.

⁴⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*. 63.

⁴⁸ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 183 n. 9.

⁴⁹ Lalsangkima Pachuau, “*Missio Dei*,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie, Samuel Escobar, and Wilbert Shenk (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 232-233.

In this concept, mission is not primarily the activity of the church but an attribute of God.⁵⁰ The emphasis is not that Jesus gave the church a mission. Rather, the emphasis is, Jesus invites the church into God's preexisting eternal mission.

Rejection by Evangelicals

The evangelical branch of the church did not embrace this new theological understanding of mission immediately.

The first reason was theological. Young suggests that the concept of *missio Dei* went through a thirty-year dark period, roughly from the 1960s to the 1990s, because the ecumenical movement, driven in part by process theology, hijacked the term and made it synonymous with God's work in history.⁵¹ *Missio Dei* was associated with a social gospel that met needs but did not stress personal salvation: "[It] was used as a way of showing how all religions were advancing God's work, and evangelicals were rightly suspicious."⁵²

The second reason was cultural. From the 1920s through the mid-1940s, evangelicals, especially in the United States, were placed on the defensive. Confronted with problems such as denominational liberalism, the Fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and the Scopes Trial, many Christian leaders led their flocks into a shell of

⁵⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

⁵¹ Mark S. Young, "Turning Theology Inside Out: *Missio Dei* (Part I)," in *D. T. S. Chapel Missions Week* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005). See also John Stott's historical assessment of Rauschenbush's social gospel claim, "The Kingdom of God is the Christian Transfiguration of the Social Order" in John R. W. Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today: Fully Revised Edition* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1984), 9. Also, the missional language contained in Vatican II, though biblically accurate, certainly did not endear protestant evangelicals to the missional cause in the middle 1960s: "The Church on earth is, by its very nature, missionary since according to the plan of the Father it has its origin in the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." As quoted in, Darrell Guder, "The Worthy Walk of the Missional Congregation," *Walking Worthily: Missional Leadership After Christendom. The Annual Peyton Lectures* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2007).

⁵² Young, "Turning Theology Inside Out."

legalism and cultural isolation that lasted well into the 1970s. During this time, in some traditions, radical separation from culture was seen as evidence of true Christian spirituality.⁵³

Two British evangelicals were instrumental in changing this.

The Evangelical Reappraisal

John Stott (and Christopher J. H. Wright)

In his works, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (1975) and *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (1984), John Stott, an active participant in the emerging *missio Dei* conversation, and a founding leader in the Lausanne Movement, affirms the God-centeredness of mission.

The primal mission is God's, for it is he who sent his prophets, his Son, his Spirit. Of these missions the mission of the Son is central, for it was the culmination of the ministry of the prophets, and it embraced within itself as its climax the sending of the Spirit. And now the Son sends [believers] as he himself was sent.⁵⁴

While Stott correctly roots mission in the proper place—God not man, his work, at times, seems to convey a weakness in that evangelism and social action are expressed as the *sine qua non* of mission. Evangelism has been considered the cornerstone of mission traditionally, and the inclusion of social action seemed a valuable – indeed a biblical emphasis as Stott provided leadership at the initial Lausanne

⁵³ Schaeffer depicts the painful consequences of these extreme views of separation in his memoir. See Frank Schaeffer, *Crazy for God: How I Grew Up as One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2007). And yet, ironically, it was his father Francis Schaeffer, who paved the way for a renaissance of appreciation for the arts and philosophy among evangelicals.

⁵⁴ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 22.

Conference (1974), but in the years following, evangelical *missional* theology has evolved a fuller conception of mission.

Stott's protégée, Christopher J. H. Wright, updates his mentor's thinking in his groundbreaking theological work, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Like other *missional* authors, Wright grounds mission in the Triune God, but rather than limiting mission to evangelism and social action, he looks broadly to the saving acts of God in the Bible as our example of mission.

A missional hermeneutic of the whole Bible will not become obsessed with only the great mission imperatives, such as the Great Commission, or be tempted to impose on them an assumed priority of another (e.g., evangelism or social justice or liberation or ecclesiastical order as the only "real" mission). Rather we will set those great imperatives within the context of their foundational indicatives, namely, all that the bible affirms about God, creation, human life in its paradox of dignity and depravity, redemption in all its comprehensive glory, and the new creation in which God will dwell with his people.⁵⁵

Might Wright be liable to the accusation, "if everything is mission, then nothing is mission?"⁵⁶ On the contrary, in drawing the book to a close, Wright avoids this problem by carefully categorizing God's *missional* acts toward his creatures and then constructing a specific *missional* agenda including such practical things as responding to

⁵⁵ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 61.

⁵⁶ This was the criticism evangelicals often leveled against proponents of the social gospel movement that did not distinguish between the world (Eph 2:2) and God's Kingdom goals (Matt 6:33). However, social gospel adherents had a much deeper problem. In reality, most were embracing some form of the non-Christian worldview of panentheism.

the AIDS crisis.⁵⁷ But the man who, more than anyone else, is seen as the father of *missional* ecclesiology is Lesslie Newbigin (1909-98).⁵⁸

Lesslie Newbigin

After his theological education in Cambridge, Newbigin became a missionary to India under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, eventually becoming a bishop in 1947. When Newbigin first arrived in India, he was firmly in the camp of the Christendom model—that the missionary venture involves a concomitant importation of Western values and culture along with the gospel. But as his ministry progressed, he recognized this model was inadequate, and he adopted a model of engagement with the world based on Paul’s example of common ground without compromise (1 Cor 9:19-23).

However, once common ground was established and trust earned, Newbigin proposed challenging the prevailing cultural assumptions and presenting a better way in Christ.⁵⁹

When he returned to England in the middle-1950s, Newbigin realized that England had changed dramatically and had become a more difficult mission field than India.⁶⁰ England, and indeed the West, had become post-Christian and postmodern.

⁵⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 535.

⁵⁸ Ruth Tucker calls Newbigin the premier missiologist of the late twentieth century. She credits the strength of his particular missiological understanding (contra McGavran’s homogenous unit principle) to his conviction about community. Newbigin taught that diverse communities displaying the supernatural headship of the risen Christ cause people to “see” God. This understanding of unity amidst diversity plays a profound role in missional church ecclesiology. Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 455-457. See also Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 29-35.

⁵⁹ Goheen, “As the Father Has Sent Me, I am Sending You,” 423-424.

⁶⁰ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 456.

Therefore, the missionary principles that he had used for decades in India needed to be used back in England.

Newbigin protégée, Michael Green, suggests Newbigin's apologetic at this time begins to display a strong rejection of the enlightenment rationalism that sought to prove Christianity through reason alone. Rather, his emerging apologetic was rooted in experiencing the person of Jesus in the context of a countercultural community.⁶¹

In his work, *Household of God*, Newbigin suggests,

But a salvation whose very essence is that it is corporate and cosmic, the restoration of the broken harmony between all men and between man and God and man and nature, must be communicated in a different way. It must be communicated in and by the actual development of a community which embodies – if only a foretaste – the restored harmony of which it speaks. A gospel of reconciliation can only be communicated by a reconciled fellowship.⁶²

Newbigin's extensive bibliography of articles and books, beginning in 1933 and continuing to his death in 1999, displays intellectual texture and vigor on many fronts, but he is especially strong as he proposes his philosophy of crossing cultures with the gospel message. His mature *missional* ecclesiology conveys an important tension. He proposes being culturally sensitive, and yet, radically countercultural at the same time.

Newbigin's presentation of this biblical tension presented an exciting field of exploration to a new generation of missiologists increasingly concerned that North America had become a mission field.

⁶¹ Michael Green, "The Apologetics of Lesslie Newbigin," in *The Lord is My Light: RZIM Zacharias Trust Summer School* (Oxford: Keble College, Oxford University, 2005), 3.

⁶² McGrath, *Theology: The Basic Readings*, 131.

The Gospel and Our Culture Network

While fresh works on *missional* themes began to appear in the 1980s-90s—most notably, DuBois⁶³ and Van Engen⁶⁴, it was the work of Darrell Guder in 1998 that set the stage for the massive interest in missional ecclesiology today.

In the mid-1980s, the *Gospel and Our Culture Network*⁶⁵ was founded largely as a response to Newbigin's work, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for Churches*. The founders claimed that, "Bishop Newbigin and others have helped us to see that God's mission is calling and sending us, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church in our own societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves. These cultures are no longer Christian."⁶⁶

Guder, then professor of evangelism and church growth at Columbia Theological Seminary, was convinced that a theological revolution was needed in the area of ecclesiology that answered the question, "What would the church look like if it were truly *missional* in design and definition."⁶⁷ He assembled five additional writers, who would review the salient literature, engage with theologians and practitioners about their recent discoveries, and then write a book.

⁶³ Francis Dubose, *The God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission* (Nashville, TN: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1983).

⁶⁴ Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991).

⁶⁵ The *Gospel and Our Culture Network* is a "network of Christian leaders from a wide array of churches and organizations, who are working together on the frontier of the missionary encounter of the gospel with North American assumptions, perspectives, preferences and practices." See, www.gocn.org (assessed, 15 November 2008)

⁶⁶ Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

In the past ten years, *Missional Church* has become a surprise bestseller, and the fountainhead of a new genre of books addressing *missional* themes. *Missional* literature, since Guder falls into the following six broad categories.⁶⁸

1. biblical and theological foundations for mission
2. missional praxis
3. polemics against the Christendom model of church
4. leadership training for missional ecclesiology
5. periodical and internet resources on missional ecclesiology and methodology
6. missional methodology from other disciplines

The Explosion of Literature since Guder

The first category consists of the biblical and theological foundations for mission. Seven works especially stand out in this category. Christopher J. H. Wright's work argues that mission is the organizing principle of the Bible.⁶⁹ Works by Kaiser and Glasser also trace God's mission through the Bible.⁷⁰ Bosch's work, *Transforming Mission* combines biblical theological methodology with historical theology. While he only scratches the surface on *missional* themes, his protégée Stan Nussbaum updates Bosch's work in *A Reader's Guide to 'Transforming Mission'* and delves more deeply into *missio Dei* concepts. A final work in this category is the *Dictionary of Mission*

⁶⁸ Alan Hirsch also categorizes the various genres of missional literature. However, this researcher believes the categorization in this present work is more complete than Hirsch's and takes into account a broader array of books. See Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional: The word is everywhere, but where did it come from and what does it really mean?" *Leadership* (Fall 2008): 20-21.

⁶⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 21-22.

⁷⁰ Arthur Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003) and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

Theology, which weaves concepts in *missional* ecclesiology and *missio Dei* into its 160 plus articles.

Of these five books, Wright's is most practical when it comes to applying God's mission to current issues such as the AIDS crisis and the stewardship of God's creation. Additionally, Michael Goheen's Ph.D. dissertation (2000) at the University of Utrecht is the finest study in print on the missionary ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin.

The second category of *missional* works consists of books on *missional* praxis as applied to various denominations and para-church contexts. Milfred Minatrea writes from a Southern Baptist perspective. Van Gelder, Rouse, and Kiefert address how *missional* churches operate in a Lutheran context.⁷¹ Van Gelder also notes that Catholic theologians have been wrestling a *missional* understanding of the church, along with *missional* praxis, since the 1960s.⁷² Roxburgh offers helpful insights about *missional* transitions in a Presbyterian context. Robert Lewis shows how churches in the Bible church movement have transitioned toward *missional* ministry.⁷³ Hirsch and Frost write as Australians addressing how churches in the West can transition to *missional* ministry. Within this category, Hirsch is the most engaging writer but is typically more theoretical than practical. Gibbs and Bolger's work *Emerging Churches*, while not *missional* per se, addresses *missional* praxis themes in the chapter "Serving with Generosity."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Lutheran *missional* works all display a strong emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit to lead the congregation in their *missional* ministries. This Spirit-led emphasis is not a prominent feature outside this denominational emphasis.

⁷² Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 87, 187n.

⁷³ Robert Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence: Bridge Building Stories to Help Reach Your Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

⁷⁴ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

A third category of books with *missional* themes consists of the polemic against churches that have decided to withdraw from active engagement with the culture. Reggie McNeal's, *The Present Future*, is a prophetic call for the North American church to reject the Christendom model and embrace *missional* ministry.⁷⁵ Michael Frost's *Exiles* is written in similar vein, although its political slant, at times, weakens it considerably.

The fourth category consists of books that train leaders to provide leadership in a missional context. Roxburgh's *The Missional Leader* is superb, as is Mancini's work *Church Unique*,⁷⁶ and Stetzer's *Breaking the Missional Code*.⁷⁷

A fifth category consists of periodical articles and Internet resources about mission. It seems that new websites are popping up almost monthly purporting to help churches move in a *missional* direction, such as Friendofmissional.com. Many of these Internet sites link to articles on what specific churches are learning through their *missional* transitions. Case in point: one site links to a PDF case study on the *missional* transitions taking place at College Hill Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) in Cincinnati, OH, a church that found new *missional* life after a painful crisis.⁷⁸

A final category consists of books that do not address *missional* themes directly. Rather, they provide helpful information from other disciplines that undergird *missional* concepts. The books by sociologist Rodney Stark have been useful to *missional*

⁷⁵ McNeal, *The Present Future*, xv-xvi.

⁷⁶ Mancini, *Church Unique*.

⁷⁷ Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006).

⁷⁸ After years of cutting edge evangelical ministry in the Cincinnati area, College Hill Presbyterian Church encountered a theological crisis in their confrontation with the more liberal PCUSA denomination. In the crisis they sensed God's movement into missional ministry. Stephen Eyre, "Can the Church Be Converted: How 'Missional' Came to College Hill Presbyterian Church," *Theology Matters: A Publication of Presbyterians for Faith, Family and Ministry* (Sep/Oct 2004): 6-10.

writers who ask, “What was Christianity like during its pre-Constantinian days, and how can we learn from its experience?”⁷⁹ Stark vividly portrays the commitment of Christians to serve their specific cities with hard data and wonderful historical anecdotes.

Practical Benefits of the Missio Dei Construct

At this point, the question might be asked, “So what? What practical benefit did the *missio Dei* construct give to conservative theologians and missiologists? And why in the post-Newbigin era was *missional* ecclesiology embraced so passionately?”

The answer seems to lie in the profound encouragement that the *missio Dei* concept gives to those on the forefront of mission in cultures far from Christ, especially those who are engaged in mission in the North American context. If God the Father is already at work, showering his creatures with instances of *common grace*, and if God the Holy Spirit is already at work convicting the world of its need for *saving grace*, then believer priests can have confidence that God has preceded them in mission.

The believer’s resultant role is not to do the heavy lifting; God is doing this already. The believer’s role is to prayerfully discern where and how God is working in his specific location and come alongside him in the work he is doing already. It would seem that this theological construct empowers risk-taking faith in the process of fulfilling the mission.⁸⁰

Furthermore, *missional* theology seems to provide a motive for compassionate service that is rooted in the nature of God. If God is continually at work in extending

⁷⁹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996). See also, Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), and Rodney Stark, “The Rise of Christianity” in *Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007), 282-338.

⁸⁰ This was the experience of Don Richardson in his work with the Sawi tribes in Irian Jaya. See, Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1975).

common grace as part of his mission, then believers can extend themselves in common grace, as well, as they seek to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission.

Summary

As North American culture continues its drift into the murky waters of postmodernism, the *missio Dei* construct encourages pastors and laypeople seeking to engage in authentic and life-changing ministry. They are encouraged to reach boldly into their respective indigenous cultures seeking common ground without compromise, challenging idolatrous practices, and trusting that God will use them as his transforming presence.

Having surveyed the history and background of *missio Dei*, this study now moves to the pivotal question, "Why and how do busy pastors introduce *missional* change into their congregations?"

It begins with a crisis.

Hypothesis Area 2: The Role of Crisis in Leadership Development

In 2002, Warren Bennis made a claim that is rare in leadership literature. He suggested that he, along with his co-author, had made a new leadership discovery: "We have developed a theory that describes, *we believe for the first time*, how leaders come to be. We believe we have identified the process that allows an individual to undergo testing and to emerge not just stronger, but equipped with the tools he or she needs both to lead and to learn" (emphasis mine).⁸¹

⁸¹ Warren Bennis, *Leading for a Lifetime: How Defining Moments Shape the Leaders of Today and Tomorrow* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), 4.

The Crucible Model

Initially, their research was designed to study generational differences in leaders. Interviewing eighteen leaders between the ages of 18-35 whom they termed “the geeks,” and twenty-five leaders 70 and over whom he termed “the geezers,” their objective was to observe how leaders grow and change relative to their culture. Their ultimate desire was to crystallize a comprehensive theory of leadership, but their research moved in an unexpected direction. One theme proved common in each leader’s life: crisis. Each leader had experienced one or more painful events that became their defining moment and propelled them into greater levels of leadership effectiveness. This was true irrespective of the decade in which they came of age.

This discovery led them to their radical claim.

The Bennis and Thomas model is based on the metaphor of the crucible. A crucible is a small but highly durable laboratory container that can be lowered into a furnace and then superheated. Chemists and metallurgists use them for causing chemical reactions or mixing metals such as copper and tin into bronze. Obviously, the interiors of crucibles at work are hot and messy.

When applied to leadership, a crucible is an obstacle or trial that becomes a defining moment in the leader’s life and an opportunity to create meaning.⁸² As Bennis says, “[The crucible] describes a powerful chain reaction of change and growth, but only if the leader responds to the crucible in the proper way.”⁸³

In their research, Bennis and Thomas observed that leaders’ crucibles varied. Some lasted for months, others for years. Some were intense, others relatively mild. Some were personal and others related specifically to the organizations they led.

⁸² Ibid., 4-5, 107-108.

⁸³ Ibid., xxvii.

The common thread in each leader was the effect of their respective crises. The crucible reshaped the leader's sense of meaning, causing them to reframe their personal history and think differently about their future.

Corroboration in Other Authors

In the years since its publication, Bennis' model has had a powerful influence on others who write about leadership.⁸⁴ In his book, *True North*, Bill George, following Bennis, postulates a crisis model as well. George calls these crises "transformative experiences," defining them as follows: "A transformative experience may come at any point in your life...for many leaders [transformations] result from *going through a crucible*" (emphasis mine).⁸⁵ Like Bennis, George suggests that these experiences cause leaders to reframe their stories and increase their own self-understanding. This reframing is often called, "meaning-making"⁸⁶ or "the founder's tale."

Writing from a distinctly Christian perspective in *Leading with a Limp*, Dan Allender also suggests that crises are integral parts of leadership development: "In order to reclaim the joy and passion of leadership, we must walk the valley of the shadow of death and name the cost of leadership.... Every leader must count the cost of leadership, and the cost includes...crisis.... No one escapes these twists and turns in the valley."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ His influence as the elder statesman of leadership theory is clear from the "Warren Bennis" imprint at Jossey-Bass publishers. Clearly, anyone writing under this imprint is going to have studied Bennis and taken his theories into account.

⁸⁵ Bill George with Peter Sims, *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007. 45

⁸⁶ Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, *Leading for a lifetime: How Defining Moments Shape the Leaders of Today and Tomorrow* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), 4-5, 107-108.

⁸⁷ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Turning Your Struggles into Strengths* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 28-29.

Crisis and other Disciplines

From a psychiatric standpoint, for a crisis to do its transformative work, it must appear to be more than the leader can bear. The sense that the crisis is “unbearable” leads to invaluable soul-searching. Mary Townsend suggests that a crisis is as follows:

...a sudden event in one’s life that disturbs homeostasis, during which usual coping mechanisms cannot resolve the problem....Crises occur when an individual is exposed to a stressor and previous problem-solving techniques are ineffective. This causes the level of anxiety to rise. Panic may ensue when new techniques are used and resolution fails to occur.⁸⁸

This lack of control and disequilibrium causes people to seek help, either in mentors, counselors or friends. For the crucible to have its intended effect in the leader, the leader must have a process in place so that he can forge transcendent meaning out of the crisis and then reframe his life story in a way that gives new hope.

Types of Crises

Based on case studies, stories and interviews in the field of *missional* ecclesiology, it appears that the kinds of crises, which lead to *missional* change, fall into at least eight different categories:

1. Spiritual crisis: The leader comes to a place of doubt about some aspect of theology or even the goodness of God. During the crisis phase, he encounters a personal “dark night of the soul.” As he begins to resolve this issue, he thinks differently about the mission of the church.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Mary C. Townsend, *Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing: Concepts of Care*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis Company, 2003), 205.

⁸⁹ Tomlinson cites an example of this in the preface to his controversial book. Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Christian Evangelical: Revised North American Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: emergentYS Books imprint of Zondervan, 2003), 18. This was also the experience of Russ Ware at Irving Bible Church. See chapter four of this work.

2. Cultural crisis: The leader experiences frustration that the North American church, in general, and his church, in particular, are failing to engage postmodern culture with relevant expressions of ministry. As the leader and his team wrestles with the implications of this for his own church, he comes to see *missional* ministry as a way of re-engaging people who are fed up with church.⁹⁰
3. Mid-life crisis: This could also be called “the half-time crisis.” The leader thinks, “I’ve given the bulk of my ministry years to a consumeristic flock who constantly demands more. What am I going to do in my remaining years to advance the kingdom?”⁹¹
4. Interpersonal crisis: A senior leader will clash with a ministry partner. This conflict crushes expectations and creates tremendous pain. As the leader works through that pain, he comes to see his ministry in a different light.⁹²
5. Moral crisis or *potential* moral crisis: A senior leader confronts the presence of a habit in his life that is out of control. As he effectively engages this struggle, he begins to minister from the vantage point of the healing he has experienced.⁹³

⁹⁰ A growing cluster of authors is deeply concerned that the church has failed to engage the postmodern culture. Their work has resonated with younger pastors seeking to reach peers in their own cohort. See, Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007). Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*. Sarah Cunningham, “Interview: Dissing Illusionment—Counter Culture Currents,” *Leadership* (Winter 2007): 17. Katie Galli, “Dear Disillusioned Generation—the ‘Failed Experiment’ Called the Church Still Looks Better than the Alternatives: The CT Review,” *Christianity Today* (April 2008): 69. David Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 191-226.

⁹¹ Milfred Minatrea has observed this in his consulting with seasoned pastors. Milfred Minatrea, “Personal Interview with the Author,” (Dallas, TX: 26 July 2007).

⁹² This seems to have been the experience of Dieter Zander at Willow Creek Community Church. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 323-328.

⁹³ Chuck Colson exemplifies this. A convicted yet released felon, he starts Prison Fellowship as a way to serve prisoners and transform the prison system. Many pastors who have started Celebrate Recovery ministries in their churches have done so because they detected the presence of an addictive habit in their lives. They now minister out of the strength of their recovery.

6. Situational crisis: A church that once occupied a vibrant place in an urban area is now surrounded by poverty and pain. Or a church that was once highly focused stalls out. The pastor thinks, “Do we move? Do we shift our vision? Or, do we stay and minister—*missionally*, in the spot where God has placed us?”⁹⁴
7. Health crisis: The leader, or a member of a leader’s family, goes through a crisis of physical or mental distress that requires extensive treatment.⁹⁵
8. A managed crisis: Chase Oaks Church moved toward a *missional* ministry through a managed crisis. At the beginning of their transition, they faced five challenges: an imminent pastoral change, a location change, a name change, a shift in worship and a realignment of ministries. The convergence of these issues certainly constituted a crisis. Through skillful management of these challenges, they were able to move in a *missional* direction.⁹⁶

Biblical Examples of the Crucible Model

If the crucible model of leadership development is valid, then we should see extensive examples of it in the Bible. Indeed, the biblical data on crisis-leading-to-

⁹⁴ College Hill Presbyterian Church (Cincinnati, OH) moved toward missional ministry in a crisis brought on by denominational conflict. To cast vision during the crisis Stephen Eyre suggested, “The missional process is the shift from the church as an institution in a Christian culture, to a community in mission in a non-Christian culture.” Eyre, “Can the Church Be Converted: How ‘Missional’ Came to College Hill Presbyterian Church,” 6-10. Barrett et al. also suggest that crisis is a common precipitating cause for missional change. “A congregation’s sense that it has a missional vocation, and its idea of what that vocation is, comes about out of the crucible of struggle.” Lois Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 53.

⁹⁵ Lon Solomon of McLean Bible Church was motivated to start a ministry the handicapped after the birth of his special needs daughter. This was reported by McLean’s Front Line pastor, Todd Phillips, “Personal Interview with the Author,” (Dallas TX: 29 July 2008). See also, Lon Solomon, *Brokenness: How God Redeems Pain and Suffering* (Potomac, MD: Red Door press, 2005).

⁹⁶ Staff Discussion, “Group Interview with the Author,” (Plano TX: Chase Oaks Church, 25 July 2008).

leadership-change is extensive. It would appear that every major leader that God uses experienced some form of testing. Typically that testing is severe.

In the Old Testament, Job endures a severe illness and in the process learns about the presence and power of God.⁹⁷ Abraham waits more than twenty-five years for the birth of Isaac, the son of promise. He is then asked to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22). Joseph is imprisoned for over thirteen years. His imprisonment becomes formative to his eventual leadership as prime minister over Egypt.⁹⁸ In Genesis 32, Jacob wrestles with God and “becomes incapacitated at the center of his human power.”⁹⁹ But he then becomes the progenitor of the twelve tribes. Moses is forced to flee Egypt and tend sheep in the wilderness for forty years before he begins to serve God as liberator (Exod 2:11-5:23). Elijah faces three years of solitude at the Cherith brook before confronting the pagan clergy set in place by Jezebel (1 Kgs 17:1-7). Daniel is forced to adapt to secular culture in Bablyon as a prelude for serving three of the most powerful kings in the world (Dan 1-4). Jonah is prepared to minister in Nineveh through his painful crucible experience in the belly of the great fish (Jonah 2).

In the New Testament, the Book of Acts becomes a model for the church discovering its sending identity through crisis and conflict. In Acts 6:1-6, crisis stimulates *missional* serving. In Acts 8, crisis, in this case persecution, stimulates *missional* going. In Acts 11, a crisis prompts the church to learn to minister to those on the margins, and in Acts 15, theological conflict prompts the church to make new theological discoveries that further stimulate mission.

⁹⁷ At the he end of God’s revelation to Job he is humbled yet restored to ministry (Job 42).

⁹⁸ Joseph’s crisis ultimately leads to powerful serving opportunities: Genesis 37-48.

⁹⁹ Arends offers an explanation of how failure empowers leadership effectiveness in her discussion of the Jacob narrative. Carolyn Arends, “Here’s to All the Losers: Why Defeat at the Hands of God is Magnificent,” (*Christianity Today*, 52 no. 7 July 2008) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/july/20.50.html> (Assessed 15 November 2008) 1

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg. The biblical model of leadership development is clearly built on the concept of the crucible.

Two Observations on the Biblical Model

The biblical data suggests that two critical things take place in the crucible experience. First, as the leader is forced to place his agenda aside, he learns something experientially about the person of God that previously was known only in a theoretical way.

Paul's thorn in the flesh is a classic example. Rodney Stark suggests that Paul may have covered over 10,000 miles in his missionary journeys.¹⁰⁰ For someone committed to the athletic rigors of travel, not to mention his itinerant tent making, this thorn had the potential to be immensely discouraging.

However, after his three seasons of prayer, Paul makes fresh discoveries about the existential presence and power of God. Paul says, "He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor 12:9).

This leadership insight then produces within Paul a more courageous submission to God: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then, I am well-content with all weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).¹⁰¹

Paul's attitude toward his crucible is counter-intuitive. He is well-pleased, because he knows the outcome: increased spiritual power. Following the general pattern

¹⁰⁰ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 135.

¹⁰¹ See also, Timothy Savage, *Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 169-171.

of Bennis and Thomas, the Sloan Leadership Model (M.I.T.) uses the term “sense making” for intuiting leadership discoveries in the crucible.¹⁰² Paul was able to “make sense” through prayer, reflection, and bold acceptance of his circumstances in light of God’s transcendent meaning.

A second observation about the biblical model is that the leader “in crucible” refines his theological understanding, or he discovers new insights about theological concepts. While Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8), systematic theology is frequently in flux. Theologians speak of “developing doctrine.”¹⁰³ Rodney Stark suggests that theologians are often forced to wrestle with the Scriptures in fresh ways as they confront new realities in culture.¹⁰⁴

Jeremiah 29:4–7 offers a fascinating example of this. The recently displaced exiles face a crisis of identity. Their city lies in ruins. Their temple has been reduced to rubble, and the instruments of worship have been removed to the temple of Marduk (Dan 1:1-2).

Moreover, they are living in the city of Babylon, the city of Nimrod (Gen 10:8–9), the city of so much negative prophecy (Ps 137:8–9). This crucible of epic proportions could have destroyed their faith, but in the midst of that crucible, Jeremiah pens a prophetic letter providing insights that must have seemed radical. God instructs them to do the following four things: (1) build houses and plant gardens—build a financial presence, (2) take wives and start families—build a domestic presence, (3) seek

¹⁰² Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sloan Leadership Institute, “Leadership: Building Your Personal Development Plan! People and Organizations, Fall 2005” (Power Point Presentation) http://ocw.mit.edu/NR/rdonlyres/Sloan-School-of-Management/15-668Fall-2005/885F458F-2E1A-4005-BDD2-4060236717C6/0/lecture_15.pdf (accessed on 24 May 2008).

¹⁰³ For instance, the doctrine of eschatology developed later than the doctrine of the Trinity.

¹⁰⁴ Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008), 24-32.

the welfare of the city—cultivate a civic presence, and (4) pray for the city—have spiritual influence.

While it might be argued that the exiles knew something about God’s care for the Gentiles, they learned new theological truths that they would not have learned apart from the crucible. The crux of their learning could be stated this way: common ground *with* secular culture is a vehicle for advancing God’s work *in* the culture, provided there is no moral compromise. This would be the same principle upon which Jesus and Paul would build their ministries with tax collectors (Luke 5:27–32) and Gentiles (1 Cor 9:19–23).

Examples of the Crucible Model in Church History

Looking back through church history, many leaders experienced crucibles that radically shifted the direction of their ministries. When Martin Luther became the de facto leader of the Protestant Reformation, he pioneered new theological positions. Many of these positions had to be worked out quickly as he translated the Bible into German and as he did exegesis in preparation for his daily preaching and teaching.¹⁰⁵

To develop these positions, Luther would have to suffer. Embracing Psalm 119:71, Luther sought to learn theology experientially through his suffering. He developed the conviction that suffering was an important key to understanding what the Scriptures mean and how they apply to life.¹⁰⁶ He suffered from kidney stones, headaches, ear infections, constipation and hemorrhoids.¹⁰⁷ He said, however, that these

¹⁰⁵ At the height of his ministry, Luther preached, on average, every other day. He wrote approximately 130 publications per year. And he taught regular classes at the university. John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God’s Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther and Calvin* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 86-92.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

were the trials that made him a theologian. This was what the movement needed from Luther at this nascent stage.¹⁰⁸

Charles Haddon Spurgeon offers another example of the crucible model. On October 19, 1856, when Spurgeon was 22, massive crowds jammed into the largest public building in London. Someone cried, “Fire!” During the ensuing chaos, congregants, fearing for their lives, bolted from their seats. Some were killed; others were injured. Spurgeon spent the next several weeks in seclusion, suffering depression and anxiety from which he never fully recovered.

At a time when authenticity was in vogue in the general culture—but not in the church culture, Spurgeon’s deep struggles propelled him to levels of authenticity unknown among evangelical pastors.

Moreover, Spurgeon’s ministry was *missional* long before the word came into vogue. Through Spurgeon’s leadership, over thirty ministries were started to meet the desperate needs of London’s poor, including orphanages and homes for elderly women.

Summary

The crucible model of leadership is well established within three literary streams: the biblical narrative, church history and current works on leadership. However, the presence of a crisis does not automatically guarantee leaders will make *missional* changes. For *missional* change to take place, a certain kind of learning environment must also be present within the crucible. It is to that subject that this work turns next.

Hypothesis Area 3: Moving from Crisis to Missional Vision

In the initial research for this work, it was suspected that missional transitions in churches were primarily organizational in nature, led by senior pastors who learned the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 106.

principles of engineering missional transitions, then mandated them on the strength of leadership charisma.

This suspicion was fueled by the massive literature from the “church effectiveness movement”¹⁰⁹ (c.a. 1990-2004), most of which is still in print and selling well. Mancini argues that this movement came about in the early 1990s as church growth writers recognized that church growth techniques did not always work. A slightly different genre emerged: the “leadership effectiveness” genre, cast within the worldview of modernity.¹¹⁰

However, the majority of *missional* authors following Guder¹¹¹ reject the church effectiveness model, assuming that North American culture has long ago slipped the bonds of modernity and become thoroughly entrenched in postmodernity. Therefore, modernist notions of church effectiveness no longer apply and even frustrate change.

Without necessarily embracing the postmodern worldview, *missional* authors such as Roxburgh, Hirsch, Kiefert and Frost ask, “What are the new processes for

¹⁰⁹ This term is used by Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 29-31.

¹¹⁰ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 31-32. An example of a modernist approach to church growth would be the works of Carl George which proposed a highly structured church using the globe model and conceptualizing the senior pastor as the C.E.O. Shortly after the Meta-church model was adopted by Willow Creek Community Church, it was subsequently adopted by most churches in the Willow Creek Association. For several years, it was likely the dominant small group model among U.S. churches. Today the vast majority of church leaders admit that it did not work, in part because its modernist notions about control were becoming irrelevant. For further information on the meta-church see, Carl George, *The Coming Church Revolution: Empowering Leaders for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994); Carl George, *How to Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993).

¹¹¹ There are subtle distinctions among missional authors regarding missional change. Stetzer and Minatrea, (from their Baptist perspective) and Van Gelder (from a Lutheran perspective) are much more conservative in their change models. Those with no denominational ties tend to be more radical.

moving toward missional ministry, given the reality of postmodernism.” Today, Roxburgh is the author most published in the field of *missional* change.

Basing his change model on the research of anthropologist Victor Turner,¹¹² Roxburgh explores the sociology of transition in three phases: separation, margin (also known as *liminality*), and reengagement.

Separation Phase

In the separation phase, a group loses its connection with an older, more established and more comfortable order. Roxburgh suggests that churches are currently experiencing this separation phase on two levels.

At the macro-level, the North American culture has changed radically in the past twenty-five years. The Christendom model, which suggested that the church was the chaplain to society, lasted in the West from roughly 313 A.D. into the late twentieth century. As the Christendom model has crumbled steadily, church leaders have sensed their marginalized status acutely. Olson shows that church attendance is in decline,¹¹³ McNeal explains that church is seen increasingly as being irrelevant,¹¹⁴ and even within the evangelical community, some authors suggest the local church, as currently conceived, is not just irrelevant but actually pagan.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the church experiences

¹¹² Victor Turner is an English anthropologist who gained notoriety by updating the work of French ethnographer, Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957), and his three-fold structure of rites of passage. Turner’s seminal work is set forth in Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction, 1995).

¹¹³ Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*, 177-180.

¹¹⁴ McNeal posits this, in part, because the church refuses to admit that most people in North American culture are thoroughly postmodern in orientation. Consequently, the church assumes modernity, and preaches to, modernity. See McNeal, *The Present Future*, 54-55.

¹¹⁵ While this author disagrees emphatically with the premises and historicity of following work, it is part of the missional conversation. Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Spirituality?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices* (Carol Streams, IL: BarnaBooks, 2008), See ch. 1, pg. 1ff.

and increasingly strained relationship with the state and the secular university, largely because of their disagreement about the origin of life and the sanctity of life in the womb.

The new reality is that the church no longer enjoys the central place in North American culture as it once did. On the contrary, like the arms of the inelegant octopus shrouded in inky camouflage, the church is one strand among many realities and an increasingly marginalized strand at that.

At the micro-level, churches are changing as well. The modernist ideal of the omni-competent, senior pastor-dominated church has led to a crisis among pastors.¹¹⁶ Hallmarks of the church growth movement—contemporary worship, small groups, and the use of spiritual gifts, were neither producing the church growth, nor the spiritual growth that were expected.¹¹⁷ Discouraged pastors wondered what they were doing wrong, not realizing that their increasingly marginalized, minority status, was the result of broader culture shifts.

Moreover, Roxburgh and Romanuk have underscored that the kind of change taking place in the postmodern matrix is not predictable change, but “discontinuous change,” a change so profoundly different and unsettling that leaders quickly realize they are unprepared for its onslaught.¹¹⁸

When church leaders finally realize that they are in crisis, and fully accept this reality, they enter a new phase, the liminal phase.

¹¹⁶ The modernist assumption was that the pastor was the “educated professional” set apart from the laity of the congregation. See, Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition, a Proposal for Leadership Communities to Take New Risks for the Reign of God* (Eagle, ID: ACI, 2006), 176.

¹¹⁷ Joseph Myers makes this point in his two books, Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003); Joseph R. Myers, *Organic Community: Creating a Place Where People Naturally Connect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

¹¹⁸ Alan J Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 8-9.

Liminal Phase

In the liminal phase (from the Latin, *limin*, or threshold), a group enters a transitional period with a purpose. In the works of van Gannep and Turner, the liminal phase refers to rites of passage in pre-industrial cultures: “Individuals [were] detached from their established and normal role in society by being placed outside the social nexus in an in-between state. After some ritualized passage of time, they [were] returned, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to a new place and status.”¹¹⁹

This concept of liminality is an apt metaphor for churches in *missional* transition precisely because of the assumption that church leaders should encounter this transition in community *as a team*. Moreover, this metaphor is entirely biblical. Modernist assumptions of church life, in practice, tended to be highly individualistic and sharply reduced the biblical notion of being an exile or a resident alien. But, as Newbigin suggests, if *missional* churches are going to be effective in the postmodern context, they must champion their countercultural identity, as a community, and offer a new expression of life in Christ.

Distilling the works of Roxburgh, Hirsch, Kiefert and Van Gelder, the following four-fold agenda for the liminal phase may be suggested.

1. First, the team becomes open to a renewed relationship with God as the pain of the crucible intensifies.¹²⁰ They express this openness by engaging in corporate spiritual disciplines.¹²¹ An especially important component of this is the act of “de-catastrophizing the crucible”, by reflecting on God’s sovereign control.

¹¹⁹ Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation: Leadership and Liminality* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997), 24.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

¹²¹ Roxburgh writes about this in *The Role of the Abbot/Abbess*. Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition, a Proposal for Leadership Communities to Take New Risks for the Reign of God* (Eagle, ID: ACI, 2006), 180-187.

2. Second, the team stops thinking about their role as one of organizational effectiveness, and therefore, the team moves toward *communitas*. In Turner's terminology, *communitas* is the transformation of a group into an extremely close-knit team, in the context of external pressures. Because the team feels marginalized and senses they are endangered, they passionately commit to their common cause with renewed vision. Many groups in Scripture evidence this countercultural ideal of *communitas* including: Ruth and Boaz, the post-exilic community, and the leadership team in the church at Antioch. Hirsch cites the inner workings within Tolkein's, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, as an example of *communitas* in literature.¹²²
3. Third, the team nurtures a different leadership environment. Consciously moving away from the modernist, top-down, proclamation of new vision, they suggest a bottom-up discovery process where leaders speak with people about where and how God is working already. Roxburgh and Romanuk identify three different leadership styles that facilitate this—these typically sound irrelevant in the modernist construct but make perfect sense in the postmodern one.
 - Poet/leader – This leader's role is to describe life "the way it is" in all its pain, heartache and complexity. Then, he connects life "as it is" to stories in the Bible, so that Christ-followers relate to the biblical narrative and see themselves as pilgrims, exiles and aliens.¹²³ The key trait of the poet/leader is emotional intelligence and authenticity.
 - Prophet/leader – This leader is highly attuned to the surrounding culture and uses Scripture to give people fresh ideas about what it means to live

¹²² Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 217-241; Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 49-56.

¹²³ Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation*, 58; Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 163-168.

missionally and counter-culturally as an *exilic* community on the margins of society. In this schema, the prophet uses the pain of the crisis to call forth Christian courage through biblical stories.¹²⁴

- Apostolic/leader – This leader is not the entrepreneurial leader with all the answers. Rather, this leader creates team-based learning environments in which people can discover where and how to serve. The apostle operates on three assumptions: God’s Spirit is among God’s people. God’s preferable future can be discerned by God’s people. And, together, the community must draw out the future.
4. Fourth, this renewed *missional* leadership team then begins to experiment with *missional* initiatives. Many *missional* authors suggest a five-step *Missional Change Model*.¹²⁵ Roxburgh, Hirsch, and Kiefert suggest a *Missional Change Model* loosely based on Everett Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation model,¹²⁶ in which change is viewed as a zig-zag process or an S-curve. Robert Lewis does not use this terminology at all, but his work reflects this same kind of thinking in chapter 13 of his book *Culture Shift*.¹²⁷ Roxburg and Romanuk’s *missional* change model seems to have become standard in the literature. It is as follows:
- Step one: Awareness of the need for *missional* transition within the church. At this level, the church begins to sense the crisis within the wider culture, and simultaneously senses God’s nudge to exit their comfort zone. Sometimes,

¹²⁴ Ibid., 60-61.

¹²⁵ A summary of the model occurs in Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 105. Kiefert, following Everett Rogers’ “diffusion of innovation” theory offers a slightly different change model in Patrick Keifert, *We Are Here Now*, 51.

¹²⁶ Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 269-291.

¹²⁷ Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordiero, *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 155-168.

this step is precipitated by discussions with neighbors who surround the church.¹²⁸

- Step two: A growing understanding about what a *missional* transition might mean for the church. This step can be taken by reading books about others who have experienced *missional* change.
- Step three: Evaluation of what is currently happening in the church. Jim Collins dictum, “face the brutal facts,” is a start to the process of sensing God’s preferable future.
- Step four: Creating *missional* experiments within the immediate local community and then evaluating those experiments.¹²⁹ A crucial component of these experiments will typically be a renewed commitment to the biblical value of hospitality in which people use their most valuable asset, their homes, as beachheads for ministry.¹³⁰
- Step Five: Commit to a process of including others in *missional* change throughout the church so that the culture begins to change and a sense of *communitas* begins to develop.

Looking back over the preceding change model, one sees a dramatically different gestalt in *missional* leadership literature verses church growth literature.

¹²⁸ Meeting neighbors was the experience in the early missional transition of Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock. “Some of our staff said, ‘Let’s go meet our neighbors.’ We discovered our assumptions were dead wrong.” Ibid., 159.

¹²⁹ The case studies will show that churches in early missional transition experiment widely, many taking a shotgun approach. In the two case study churches the missional experiments were perceived as being great fun.

¹³⁰ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 155-158. For a detailed study of the biblical and historical model of Christian hospitality see, Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

Missional literature seems to be based on “touchy-feely” things such as environments, lengthy discussions, and poet/leaders.

Impatient, “type-A”, red-meat-modernists might rightly ask, “Where are the powerful and dominating vision-casters who enforce change?” But *missional* leadership literature intentionally shies away from the solo powerful leader paradigm, in part, as a prophetic reminder that the modernist Senior-Pastor driven model does not seem to be working effectively in the emerging postmodern context.

Will Mancini, a second generation *missional* author, offers a helpful corrective to those who ask, “Where is the vision?” The insights from his book, *Church Unique*, should be placed within the schema of Roxburgh’s re-engagement phase.

Reengagement Phase

After successfully coming through the *liminal* phase, the group is equipped to reemerge into a new world with new vision. Mancini’s method for discovering new vision is similar to Roxburgh’s step three in the *missional* change model, except that he proposes discussions based on the following three questions:

1. A local culture question: What are the unique needs and opportunities in the local context where God has placed us – especially our city?
2. A church culture question: What are the unique resources and capabilities that God brings together in us as a church body?
3. An apostolic question: What particular focus most energizes and animates the leadership team in our church, both paid and lay leaders?

Where those three overlapping circles intersect is the church’s unique “kingdom concept.”¹³¹ The kingdom concept is unique to each church. Moreover, it

¹³¹ This term is used in a specific technical sense by Mancini, *Church Unique*, 85-89, 94-98, 100-103.

suggests the direction of *missional* experiments (Roxburgh's step four). Ultimately the kingdom concept leads to the development of a concise *missional* vision. This *missional* vision is more than just a statement; it concisely describes the *communitas* passion of the church as a team of pilgrim missionaries.

Summary

Missional leadership literature is highly worldview conscious. All *missional* writers are unified in their conviction that the Christendom mode—often called the Constantinian model, is over. The church, no longer the respected chaplain to society, is now in a marginalized, relativized state. Moreover, the old modernist notions of church growth, fueled by strategy, marketing hype and technique, seem to produce skepticism and cynicism among a younger postmodern cohort.¹³²

Since these worldviews have changed, the leadership demands have changed, and *missional* authors are now passionate about exploring these new leadership demands.

The crux of their change model is as follows: As *missional* leaders experience brokenness, they call their congregation into a new spiritual experience. Leading them to embrace their exilic, or resident alien status, these leaders and congregants develop a sense of *communitas* around a *missional* vision. And then, they engage the world in a counter-cultural way of life, which is found in Christ.

Having explored the crisis theory of leadership and *missional* transitions, this work now shifts to practical questions: How do missional churches serve their cities? And how do missional churches worship?

¹³² One example of this is intent behind the web site, "Church Marketing Sucks," 2004-2006, www.churchmarketingsucks.com (accessed on 25 October 2008), a blog that takes the church to task for marketing efforts that often make the church seem ridiculous.

Hypothesis Area 4: Serving the Community

Historical Background

Following the example of Jesus of Nazareth, the universal body of Christ has enjoyed a glorious history of meeting significant needs within indigenous cultures around the world.¹³³ In the first three centuries, it was service, primarily, that contributed to the exponential growth of the church throughout the Mediterranean world.¹³⁴ Even the pagan Emperor Julian the Apostate admitted that religions rooted in polytheism did not have the horsepower to sustain service, especially when natural disasters such as plagues and fires swept through cities.¹³⁵

Moreover, during seasons of spiritual renewal (such as the awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries) Christians recommitted to the value of serving. For instance, England experienced a profound evangelical revival in the middle-1800s characterized by renewed a commitment to serving the poor.¹³⁶ Lord Shaftsbury helped enact laws protecting child chimney sweeps.¹³⁷ George Mueller created orphanages. William

¹³³ See for example, Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 125-170; See also, Vincent Carroll and David Shiflett, “Christianity and Charity,” in *Christianity on Trial: Arguments Against Anti-Religious Bigotry* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2002), 139-161.

¹³⁴ Rodney Stark, *Discovering God*, 318-320.

¹³⁵ Julian lamented, “Why do we not observe that it is in their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead, and the apparent holiness of their lives that they have done most to increase [Christianity]. As quoted in Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 75.

¹³⁶ Hoffecker re-conceptualizes the period of the enlightenment, suggesting that the period c.a. 1715-1815 should be termed “enlightenment and awakenings” and notes that each time an awakening occurred within a particular geographical context, there was a corresponding commitment to ‘involvement in public good works based on Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.’” W. Andrew Hoffecker, *Revolutions in Worldview: Understanding the Flow of Western Thought* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 277.

¹³⁷ John D. Woodbridge, *More than Conquerors* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 245-251.

Wilberforce, in addition to helping abolish slavery, worked for the protection of animals, a commitment that stemmed from his belief that Christians are stewards of God's creation.

But the advent of the social gospel movement in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century challenged this historic culture of service. Social gospel proponents served, but they had no use for evangelism. Evangelicals became passionate about evangelism, but they showed little use for social action. Indeed, in the aftermath of World War II, America witnessed an unprecedented multiplying of parachurch organizations dedicated primarily to evangelism, including organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ, Young Life, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Serving, for the most part, took a back seat to saving souls.

Evangelicals became reawakened to the historic value of serving shortly after the legalization of abortion in 1973 through the influence of two men.

John R.W. Stott's leadership in the Lausanne Movement—and the books he authored later, set the stage for “the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.” For Stott, the whole gospel included social action.¹³⁸

In his works, *How Should We Then Live* and *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, Francis A. Schaeffer awakened evangelicals to a cause with clear moral implications: abortion is the taking of a human life. Evangelicals who watched Schaeffer's films soon became passionate about serving unwed mothers in an effort to stem the tide of abortions across the country.¹³⁹ But this new foray into service was

¹³⁸ He spells out his agenda for social action in, John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today: Fully Revised Edition* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1984), 3-32. Moreover, this researcher has spent many hours listening to missionally based sermons delivered by Stott in All-Souls Church in London. A biblically grounded vision of social action became a primary goal of his exegetical work and is clearly evident in his preaching.

¹³⁹ This researcher attended a *Whatever Happened to the Human Race* seminar at Southern Methodist University in 1977 featuring Francis Schaeffer, his son, and C. Everett Koop. Schaeffer and

inconsistent. While evangelicals could become passionate about serving those in need overseas, they were not quite so passionate about serving the needy domestically, and while evangelicals became passionate about serving unwed moms, they were not quite so passionate about serving those stricken with AIDS.

Recent Evangelical Shift

Just as Darrell Guder's *Missional Church* awakened evangelicals to the missionary nature of the church, a cluster of new works from 1991-2001 awakened a new generation to the value of service; specifically, Steve Sjogren's books, including *Conspiracy of Kindness* (1993) and *Servant Warfare* (1996), give practical examples of churches reaching into their communities by being God's conduits of common grace.¹⁴⁰

But it is Robert Lewis' seminal work, *The Church of Irresistible Influence* (2001) that seems to have started a *missional* movement in practice.¹⁴¹ Lewis' book hits a huge nerve: here was a solidly evangelical church passionately devoted to working with their community, meeting needs in their community, and seeing significant fruit. Lewis' second work, *Culture Shift* (2005) solidifies his role as the leader in *missional* transitions among evangelicals.¹⁴²

Koop not only presented the problem in a compelling way, but strongly suggested that social action and even civil disobedience were options open to faithful Christ-followers.

¹⁴⁰ Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others – No Guilt, No Stress, Low Risk & High Grace* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1993) see especially, 149-165. Steve Sjogren, *Servant Warfare: How Kindness Conquers Spiritual Darkness* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light Publications, 1996).

¹⁴¹ Robert Lewis, *The Church of Irresistible Influence: Bridge Building Stories to Help Reach Your Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), see especially 140-155.

¹⁴² Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordiero, *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), see especially 135-168.

Theological Reappraisal

At the same time, as *missional* theologians began to apply their Trinitarian construct to the Bible, they focused on the serving nature of God.¹⁴³ Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah called him a servant (Isa 52:12-53:1). Jesus summed up his ministry as one of service: “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The Holy Spirit is seen as a servant in Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor” (Isa 61:1-2a). God the Father is depicted as a servant, especially in each of the Angel of the Lord passages where he is portrayed as encouraging Hagar (Gen 16:13), Samson’s parents (Judg 13:3-23), and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:1-18).

Renewed Interest in Common Grace

This construct of God being a serving God has encouraged evangelicals to reemphasize God’s role in common grace. If God is lavishly generous to those who may never bow the knee to his lordship, how can his followers do any less? Should they not, especially in light of Isaiah 61:1-2, and other passages, serve those on the margins of society?¹⁴⁴

Public Schools as a Target for Service

Churches moving in a *missional* direction, following Mancini’s kingdom-concept/discovery-process, were drawn toward prayerfully examining their local culture, especially those institutions experiencing chaotic changes. Mancini suggests that in many

¹⁴³ Examples of this include, Wright, *The Mission of God*, 65-67. And Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 56 n. 4.

¹⁴⁴ The servant passages in Isaiah, for instance, suggest this: 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; and 52:13-53:12.

cases, churches will discover tremendous needs in their local school districts. For instance, a church might recognize that, in certain parts of the city, “the education system is a huge failure; gaping community need is evidenced by high percentage of high school dropouts. [And] there is a huge concentration of public schools...around [our] church.”¹⁴⁵ Many *missional* churches find that their first foray into *missional* ministry is through the public schools because their children spend most of their time there, and they are most aware of their needs.

From Shotgun Service to Targeted Service

Following Lewis’ groundbreaking work, additional books have emerged telling stories about how churches are serving their communities.¹⁴⁶ Ten years after Fellowship Bible Church’s foray into *missional* ministry, leaders still look to FBC – this time as an example of mature *missional* ministry.

In 2005, The Kennedy School of Government released a case study entitled, “A Mega-Church Takes on Urban Problems: Fellowship Bible Comes to South Midtown.”¹⁴⁷ One of the important discoveries in this study is that FBC now targets their serving efforts to a specific part of their city. Rather than maintaining the shotgun approach that many *missional* churches adopted in their early transition, Fellowship Bible Church targeted a specific geographic area of Little Rock for an extended period of time with the intent to make sustained *missional* change. Their theme, “One Church, One School, One Neighborhood” emerged in 2003. Their goal was not a quick fix approach.

¹⁴⁵ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 103.

¹⁴⁶ Examples include, Rick Rushaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Denver, CO: Group Publishing, 2004). Candace McMahan and Jan Kershner, *Group’s Body-Building Guide to Outreach: Stretching Out to Your Community*, Best Practices Series (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2006). Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 135-153.

¹⁴⁷ Howard Husock, “A Mega-Church Takes on Urban Problems: Fellowship Bible Church Comes to Midtown” (Kennedy School of Government Case Program, 2005).

On the contrary, they looked at making changes over four generations or perhaps over 50 years.¹⁴⁸

Deeply rooted in the biblical concept of common grace, Lewis' strategy looks for sustained social transformation.

In Robert Lewis' vision, school mentoring would serve both as an end in itself—to improve student performance and provide a volunteer opportunity for church members, but also to serve as a means for Fellowship to raise its profile in the neighborhood and gain the confidence and trust of residents and local churches. Both would be important in helping Fellowship to realize its larger goals: what could be called the physical and moral reconstruction of south Midtown.¹⁴⁹

Summary

In *missional* churches, service is seen as a return to an historic value of the church, temporarily lost during the twentieth century. In the *missional* construct, service is profoundly local: “What are the needs in our immediate situation? And how can we meet those needs as an expression of God's common grace for long term sustained impact?”

The next practical shift that takes place in a *missional* church is a reappraisal of the role of the main worship experience.

Hypothesis Area 5: Energizing Missional Worship

Historical Background

From its inception, music and singing has been an integral part of the corporate worship experience (Matt 16:30; Mark 14:26), and an evidence of the filling of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:19). But the function of music within the corporate worship setting has been largely dependent on how the church views its role within its culture.¹⁵⁰

Seeker-targeted churches of the late twentieth century typically used the corporate worship setting as a highly presentational, almost entertainment experience to attract and retain “seekers.” Reformation based churches typically featured the old hymns of the faith, rich in theology, as a way of reminding members of their historic roots. Churches that were unsure of their role within culture sometimes experienced bitter divisions as younger pastors sought to introduce contemporary music into services.

The question can justly be asked, “How will *missional* churches use the corporate worship experience to facilitate *missional* ends?” It must first be pointed out that no predictable worship form exists among *missional* churches. In her book, *Treasures in Clay Jars*, Lois Barrett, et al. make the point that the forms of worship in their research churches were dramatically different—some featuring contemporary forms, others traditional.¹⁵¹

Nevertheless, churches in *missional* change evidence common core values as they think about the purpose of worship broadly, and as they consider how they might repurpose their main worship service in light of their emerging *missional* vision.

Six Common Worship Values in Missional Churches

Engage Spirituality

First, they recognize that postmodern culture has witnessed a rise in spirituality and a hunger for participation. Consequently, corporate worship settings in

¹⁵⁰ The role of the Catholic mass, for instance, in pre-reformation Italy is dramatically different from the function of the Lutheran worship experience in Germany just 20 years later. Three hundred and fifty years later, in Victorian England, Charles Spurgeon would view corporate worship in a way that was specific to his culture. For instance, hymns were sung without musical accompaniment.

¹⁵¹ Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, 101.

missional churches tend to be more participation based. Rather than congregants sitting in their seats for ninety minutes, singing songs and listening to a message, there tends to be increased movement within the sanctuary, inviting a kinesthetic experience of God's presence.¹⁵²

Worshippers might come forward to light candles, celebrating answered prayers. They might come forward to pray with members of a prayer team. If a worshipper receiving prayer is hurting, other worshippers might feel the freedom to surround her with the laying-on of hands, while the prayer team member leads. Creating this participational setting allows worshippers to minister to each other in the context of the service.

This higher level of participation helps to produce what Allen Ross calls the transcendence of time and space: “[When] we are caught up with the hope of glory [it] enables us to keep everything in this life in proper perspective. The church must do everything it can to make times of transcendence a regular part of spiritual worship.”¹⁵³

Meet the Needs of the Indigenous Culture

Building on this participational foundation, *missional* churches tailor their worship styles to the needs of the indigenous culture. Rather than trying to copy worship styles of successful churches in different regions of the country, they ask, “What are the needs of our local culture? And what are the worship forms that meet the real as well as the felt needs of our local culture?”

Stetzer and Putnam suggest a twofold process: first exegete the community and then assess how God is working in similar communities in our region. Evaluating

¹⁵² Bob Rognlein, *Experiential Worship: Encountering God with Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 151-158.

¹⁵³ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2006), 511.

these two matters helps leaders determine God’s unique “code” for their church’s worship ministry.¹⁵⁴ In many cases, churches may decide to use the top songs on the CCLI list (Christian Copyright Licensing International). But exegeting the culture may also cause churches to move in counterintuitive directions, even moving them to form a team of songwriter/artists who produce a worship style unique to the community.

Celebrate Missional Effectiveness

Third, *missional* churches use their main worship venue to celebrate how members have served during the week. As a church becomes more externally focused, and members serve in the community, *missional* leaders recognize that reporting these serving events is a significant cause for celebration. Their idea is as follows: “This *missional* service is not simply something our members are doing; this is something that God is doing in our midst and cause for great celebration!”¹⁵⁵

These celebrations include videos of successful serving events and interviews of people who have either served or been served during the week. Prominently featuring laypeople in mission helps break the elitism, which younger Christians feel is endemic in pastor-dominated churches.¹⁵⁶ Along with making heroes out of church members who are serving, younger *missional* pastors are reshaping their worship centers so that the pulpit is

¹⁵⁴ Stetzer and Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 23-28.

¹⁵⁵ Barrett et al. report that in one missional Catholic congregation, congregants came because of what God was doing through the church in the community during the week. Barrett et al., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, 113.

¹⁵⁶ This criticism is featured prominently in the works of Frost. See, Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 291.

not architecturally central.¹⁵⁷ This suggests that God is central and that God's mission is central to the church.¹⁵⁸

Use Main Worship Venues to Get Everyone “On Mission”

Fourth, *missional* churches tend to use their main worship venue as a way to get everyone “on mission.” This not only becomes a vision casting time for the believers, but it also becomes a way to communicate to the unbeliever that God is a missionary God. In his review of Newbigin's concept of *missional* worship, Goheen claims that,

The primary focus of Newbigin's discussion of worship is the enabling, empowering, and equipping...of the missionary church in the world. He expresses it thus, “If we are truly leading our people in the worship of the living God, there will be men and women who can go out from the church every Sunday with that testimony on their lips and in their heart.”¹⁵⁹

Christ Chapel Bible Church, for instance, uses annual spiritual growth campaigns to recast their *missional* vision and provide fresh serving opportunities for church members.

Nurture a Culture of Authenticity

Fifth, *missional* churches tend to be passionately devoted to a culture of authenticity that is celebrated in worship. Authenticity has increasingly become a prominent feature of North American postmodern culture. In 1999, Michael Crichton predicted,

¹⁵⁷ A central pulpit was a strong feature of Reformation architecture suggesting that God's word was central to the life of the church.

¹⁵⁸ Matt Chandler, “Group Interview with the Author,” (Highland Village, TX: Village Church, 30 July 2008).

¹⁵⁹ Goheen, “As the Father has Sent Me, I am Sending You: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology,” 270.

Authenticity will be the buzzword of the twenty-first century. And what is authentic? Anything that is not devised and structured to make a profit. Anything that is not controlled by corporations. Anything that exists for its own sake, that assumes its own shape. The modern world is the corporate equivalent of a formal garden, where everything is planted and arranged for effect. Where nothing is untouched, where nothing is authentic.¹⁶⁰

Authenticity in the church is analogous. When a local church seems consumed by perpetuating its own existence, it feels inauthentic, especially to its younger members.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, when a local church seems to be more interested in furthering God’s kingdom and giving away its ministry, people sense, “This is the real deal.”

Authenticity in the context of a worship service includes two prominent features: honesty on the part of those who have up-front speaking roles and freedom for the Holy Spirit to lead in the worship experience. For years, the critique of the “modern” church has been its inauthenticity. Young postmoderns reject organized, highly scripted and highly regimented religion.¹⁶² But when there is a context of honesty and unscripted freedom, the perception of authenticity causes worshippers to feel that God is at work.

Celebrate Exile Status

Finally, worship in *missional* churches is an opportunity for a church to celebrate its exile status. McGrath summarizes Newbigin’s missional ecclesiology this way: “For Newbigin, the church is at its core defined by its identity as God’s pilgrim [exilic] people on its way to the end of the age, and in the meantime, taking the gospel to

¹⁶⁰ Quote from Michael Crichton’s *Timeline*, as quoted by, James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), ix.

¹⁶¹ Frost, *Exiles*, 93.

¹⁶² Examples of this are discussed in Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*. And Cunningham, “Interview: Dissing Illusionment—Counter Culture Currents,” *Leadership* (Winter): 131.

the ends of the earth.”¹⁶³ Frost suggests that corporate worship can become a place for worshippers to remember their exilic identity and renew their passion to live in the tension of *identification with the world and distance from it*.¹⁶⁴

Summary

Missional worship, similar to *missional* service, is profoundly local, seeking to meet the needs of the indigenous culture. Properly conceived, *missional* worship does not resemble the worship of any other church. Rather *missional* worship is a celebration of the church’s *communitas* – a *communitas* based on a compelling vision and a sending God.

Summary and Conclusion

This literature review has followed the five topics suggested by the hypothesis.

1. The rise of *missio Dei* as a construct for ecclesiology.
2. The crucible model as a motive for leadership change
3. The *missional* change model
4. The shifts in service
5. The shifts in worship

This study now examines the validity of the case study format as a method of studying churches.

¹⁶³ McGrath, *Theology: The Basic Readings*, 131.

¹⁶⁴ Frost, *Exiles*, 286-287. See also, Mary Jo Leddy, “The People of God as a Hermeneutic of the Gospel,” in *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 309.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting.... The analysis strives for depth of understanding.¹⁶⁵

Sharan B. Merriam

Qualitative Research Theory

The research procedure chosen to study leaders who guide *missional* change was a qualitative research format rather than a quantitative study. The sine qua non of qualitative research is the case study. Merriam describes a case study as an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system.¹⁶⁶ Johnson adds, “In quantitative research, hypotheses are proposed at the beginning and are proved or disproved from the data at the end of the study. In qualitative research, a broad research question and method is proposed at the beginning, but findings emerge bit by bit throughout the study with new insights building a fuller and fuller picture.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, Revised and Expanded* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 6.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶⁷ William F. Johnson, “Spiritual Formation: A Qualitative Evaluation of a Small Group Course” (D.Min. Diss., Trinity International University, 2004), 99.

Case study methodology in the United States was initially developed in conjunction with the University of Chicago department of sociology in the early 1900s and was first employed in studying problems in immigration.¹⁶⁸

The case study approach fell into disuse for about thirty years, roughly between 1935 and the middle 1960s, because of a dispute between the University of Chicago and Columbia University, the latter arguing that case study methodology lacked scientific value, since conclusions could not be validated numerically.¹⁶⁹ However, as limitations of quantitative methodology became increasingly recognized—namely, its lack of face-to-face fieldwork, researchers returned to the case study approach as a scientific means of examining a particular entity. A breakthrough in case study methodology was accomplished with the publication of Glasser and Strauss' *Awareness of Dying* (1965), which employed a case study approach and generated a follow up book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.¹⁷⁰

For the past forty years, case study methodology has been used primarily in fields of sociology, anthropology, medicine, law and business. Harvard Business School has adapted the case study format to foster its goals of participant-centered learning, and many other graduate institutions have followed suit, including the Dallas Theological Seminary's D.Min. Department. In the past twenty years, a growing body of literature has developed around how qualitative research should be performed; typically, this research has specific application to a particular field.

The benefit of case study research is that it can produce intimate knowledge of an understudied or emerging field by virtue of the personal interactions gained through

¹⁶⁸ Winston Tellis, "Introduction to Case Study," in *The Qualitative Report* 3 no. 2 (July 1997): 3.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, Revised and Expanded*, 17.

fieldwork. This is especially true if the researcher has done an in-depth preliminary review of the salient literature and formed thoughtful, well-informed hypotheses.

Evangelicals have long been enamored with quantitative information, relying on the numerically derived research of organizations, such as Barna or Gallup to track trends broadly across the United States. However, when it comes to topics such as leadership transitions within a local church, a qualitative approach is much more helpful because of its quality of being “richly descriptive.”¹⁷¹

Case studies can be single or multiple-case designs.¹⁷² The choice about which approach to take will depend on the research problem and hypothesis. In intrinsic case studies, where the goal is to study a specific organization, group or event, or in case studies examining extreme cases, a single case study is adequate.¹⁷³ However, when a case study begins with a descriptive theory, multiple case studies are required to make use of pattern-matching techniques and replication logic.¹⁷⁴ The question then arises, “How many are needed?” Merriam suggests, “Two levels of sampling are usually necessary in qualitative case studies.”¹⁷⁵

In this present work, two cases were chosen: Irving Bible Church and Christ Chapel Bible Church.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷² Tellis, “Introduction to Case Study,” 4, 6.

¹⁷³ Dawson R. Hancock and Bob Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 36.

¹⁷⁴ Tellis, “Introduction to Case Study,” 4, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, Revised and Expanded*, 64, 65.

Reason for Choosing the Case Study Format

While theoretically a quantitative instrument could have been designed and executed to study churches in the midst of *missional* change, the qualitative approach was deemed best for the following six reasons.

First, it fit the needs of this researcher, who is leading a church in the process of *missional* change. Information gleaned by crunching numbers would not have provided the necessary information to study the research-problem and evaluate the hypothesis. Moreover, the personal relationships formed, and the stories gleaned through fieldwork were deemed essential for improving his personal leadership in this area.

Second, increasing numbers of evangelical churches in North America are transitioning to *missional* models of ministry. Most of these churches are in their nascent stages of change, and those changes tend to be messy. Most of these churches feel they are entering uncharted territory. The case study format is an ideal way of studying a bounded unit in the midst of complex change.

Third, the field of *missional* change is somewhat immature from a theoretical framework. Among *missional* authors, there are subtle—and sometimes not so subtle, differences of opinion about how to execute *missional* change. Southern Baptist authors, at times, seem to write from the older and more structured worldview of the church effectiveness movement.¹⁷⁶ Hirsch, Frost and Roxburgh write from within the cultural orientation of postmodernism. The framework that pastors in transition will embrace depends on many factors, but the case study format is ideal for studying how leaders engage variant conceptual frameworks.

¹⁷⁶ Mancini suggests that the church effectiveness movement was an updating of the church growth movement and roughly spans the years 1990-2000. While this movement is now out of date, many thinkers still write from this perspective. Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 31-32.

Fourth, this researcher was far more interested in substantive theory rather than grand theory: “Substantive theory has as its referent specific, everyday-world situations such as an innovative science program, the coping mechanisms of returning adult students, or stages of late-life development. A substantive theory has a specificity and hence usefulness to practice often lacking in theories that cover more global concerns.”¹⁷⁷ This substantive—real world information, was a desired outcome of this study and best derived through qualitative research.

Fifth, this researcher was more interested in the in-depth *process* of *missional* change rather than examining outcomes. Case study theoreticians use the term “thick description” to describe this sort of qualitative research. Thick description is an anthropology term describing the well-rounded highly-colorful study of an entity under investigation. Consequently, the case studies in chapter four tend to be rich in detail rather than terse and brief.

Sixth, the nature of the field and the nature of this researcher’s personality suggested the qualitative approach. Merriam suggests that those who excel at the case study approach possess high tolerance for ambiguity. They are highly intuitive and have a passion for listening.¹⁷⁸ These qualities fit this researcher well. Moreover, the field of *missional* change itself is somewhat ambiguous. Roxburgh suggests that the North American church culture presently faces the reality of discontinuous change within a postmodern worldview. The qualitative approach, therefore, also fits the reality of the research field.

¹⁷⁷ Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, Revised and Expanded*, 17.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

The Research Problem

Literature on qualitative research suggests that the case study design must begin with a statement of the problem. In most cases, the research problem suggests itself either through a review of the literature or from a dilemma faced by the researcher or his organization.

I developed my statement of the problem in three phases. In the initial phase, the question was posed this way: How do internally focused churches become externally focused and *missional*? That statement, prompted by a cursory knowledge of Rusaw and Swanson's book, *The Externally Focused Church*, proved too general.

The next statement of the problem was reformulated with particular reference to the role of the senior pastor in fostering *missional* change and was stated as follows: How do senior pastors lead *missional* change?

While that statement of the problem was more specific, further research revealed that many churches, perhaps most, tend to transition toward *missional* ministry, not in a highly structured manner, but in an unstructured way. And the senior pastor is often *not* the instigator of the *missional* change; on the contrary, it might be his executive pastor or another senior staff member.

The problem was reformulated a third time. What are the factors that lead to *missional* change within selected contemporary churches, with special reference to the senior leaders and the church culture?

The "senior leader" component was included recognizing that churches moving in a *missional* direction do so as a team. They often face a *liminal* situation that causes stress; within that stress, they experience a bonding called, *communitas*.

The "church culture" component was added, because *missional* ministry is not just a new technique or program. Rather, it involves a profound shift within the culture of the church and a concomitant shift in conceptualizing the church's ministry foundations.

The “selected contemporary churches” component was added, because the most valuable churches to study were ones relatively similar to the one that this researcher leads—namely, mainstream evangelical churches with similar forms of church governance and culture.

The “factors leading to change” phrase recognizes that *missional* change often comes from unanticipated stressors—either internal or external, exerting pressure on the church.

The Development of the Hypothesis and Case Study Design

Just as the problem statement went through several iterations, so too the hypothesis evolved. After discarding the notion that a senior pastor enacted *missional* changes through his clever strategic planning and strength of will, I began to listen to people in the early throes of *missional* change, and the one common denominator was crisis.

That crisis was certainly uninvited, but the crisis was often perceived as being surprising. It was as if leaders were saying, “How could this have happened to us? We knew better!” Or, “We never saw it coming!”

As I mulled over the literature and initial interviews, I decided to go jogging. Halfway through my run, there was a flash of insight: “Maybe it was the crisis—and the senior leaders’ response to it, that was the key to *missional* change, and maybe that crisis was the driving force in shifting the church culture so that worship and service went in new directions.”

This flash of insight, sometimes termed abduction, often takes place in the early phases of qualitative research and can narrow the direction of research.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 31.

The hypothesis was then stated as follows: Church leaders, who cultivate *missional* change, have encountered a significant crisis. For this crisis to spark lasting *missional* change, the crisis must be large enough to bring the key leaders to a place of brokenness so that they are open to new direction. When that crisis is responded to in a spirit of humility and discovery, it creates an environment where *missional* movement can take place within the church. This *missional* change is expressed in two primary ways: Service to the community—an external change, and a different way of worshipping as a community—an internal change.

Tellis and Yin suggest that the hypothesis suggests a structure to the flow of the case study. The case study is not designed to say everything about the entity under study, only those things relevant to the hypothesis.¹⁸⁰ The hypothesis, now in its final form, suggested a five-fold direction of study.

1. What is a *missional* church, and how did the concept evolve?
2. What is the role of crisis in culture-change?
3. How does one's response to the crisis facilitate healthy change?
4. How and why does a *missional* church move into its community to serve?
5. How does a church think about its worship differently, while *missional* change is occurring?

Because this hypothesis was developed early in my doctoral program, it became a grid through which this researcher could carry on informed discussions with church leaders in non-case study churches.

For instance, I was able to conduct an interview with the pastor of The King's Arms Church, a *missional* church in Bedford, England, specializing in ministry to the large homeless population in the center of the city. That interview both confirmed that the

¹⁸⁰ Tellis, "Introduction to Case Study," 4, 6.

hypothesis was valid, and it suggested additional questions, which might be posed to the case study churches.

Another preliminary interview was conducted on a church that was thought to be *missional*, but after a two-hour interview with the senior pastor and a separate interview with the executive pastor, this was technically not a *missional* church. The desire to be *missional* was there, and some initial steps had been taken, but the crisis within the church had not yet done its work to move senior leaders in a *missional* direction. This further helped refine this researcher's case study instrument.

After the hypothesis was finalized, the case study instrument was developed. The instrument posed questions in the following five areas:

1. Introductory questions about the history of the church and the leaders' understanding of what it means to be *missional*: What did they know about *missional* ecclesiology, if anything? How did they define *missional* ministry? Did they use the word *missional*, and if not, how did they cast vision for their external focus?
2. Questions about the nature of the crisis they encountered: Was it an external crisis? Was it an internal crisis? Who among the staff felt the crisis most acutely?
3. Questions about how the leaders responded to the crisis: Did they deny it? Did they embrace it? How did they strive to learn from it? How did the crisis serve to bond the staff? Was there any fallout from the crisis? How did the elders of the church respond to the crisis? Did the crisis invite self-disclosure or defensiveness?
4. Questions about the serving focus of the church: How did the crisis lead to service?¹⁸¹ What was their first foray into service? How did they identify needs in

¹⁸¹ This became a vital question. The literature suggested that crisis made people want to serve, because the crisis invited humility, and the humility caused the leaders to reread the life of Jesus. Inevitably Mark 10:45 challenged these leaders toward a mindset of service.

- their community? Did a culture of service emerge? Did they use staff to oversee service opportunities or use volunteers? What is the nature of their service at present? How did the church come to serve in the public schools?
5. Questions about the shift in worship: How did they conceive worship prior to the crisis? How did they think differently as the crisis progressed? How did they use the service in a *missional* way?

Collecting Data

The data collection process took place over an eighteen-month period, and it took place in six phases.

Phase one consisted of a group interview, which the Dallas Theological Seminary D. Min. program—the Large Church Cohort, scheduled with the church. Each group interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and included a short presentation along with time to ask questions.

This group interview was entirely preliminary, and it confirmed whether or not these churches might qualify as a case study target. Of the three group interviews, two qualified and the third needed further evaluation. That third church was finally rejected for a potential case study target, since it did not qualify as *missional*.

In phase two, I gathered data from sources at the respective churches. Both Irving Bible Church and Christ Chapel Bible Church have an outstanding website and extensive collections of printed materials consisting of brochures and flyers advertizing the ministries within the church. Irving Bible Church, in particular, expresses their ministry values throughout their church with posters, works of art, and ministry information booths. Consequently, part of the data collection process at IBC includes taking pictures for later evaluation. Moreover, there are some archival records provided by an Irving Bible Church elder that filled in some blank spots in their history.

In phase three, I engaged in direct observation, primarily by attending worship services in which *missional* values were expressed.

Phase four consisted of gathering the primary data through the focused in-depth interview.¹⁸² Interviews with both churches were scheduled well in advance and by design, included the senior pastor and the executive pastor. Each interview was approximately 60-90 minutes in length. Each interview was taped for later transcription, and each interview generally followed the case study instrument. During the course of both interviews, this interviewer's natural curiosity was enflamed by comments made by the pastors who were, for the most part, extremely honest. Some of the most valuable responses came when the interview went "off script" for a time, because stories were told that powerfully illustrated *missional* values.

Phase five also included interviews with the worship leaders of the respective churches.¹⁸³ These interviews were scheduled for two reasons: In IBC's story, the worship leader's crisis was a precipitating cause of their *missional* transition, and since changes in worship were part of the hypothesis, his perspective needed to be included. These interviews were conducted using questions from the worship section of the case study instrument.

Each interview was transcribed from the original tapes and extensively studied in the following months.

Phase six consisted of personal interviews with key members of the congregation. These interviews were conducted after the major interview with the senior leaders was completed. These secondary interviews were extremely valuable in providing background information and greater levels of depth to the stories told by senior leaders.

¹⁸² This is a term used in case study literature suggesting a formal question-answer format.

¹⁸³ This researcher met with the senior worship pastor at Irving Bible Church, but decided to meet with the *associate* worship pastor at Christ Chapel Bible Church because he leads the contemporary service.

Phase seven consisted of Internet research on relevant articles about the church. This proved valuable in the case of Christ Chapel Bible Church, because at the height of their crisis the Fort Worth media took note and wrote a series of stories chronicling the events.

Analyzing the Data

Yin suggests that, “Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study.”¹⁸⁴ Moreover, it involves three analytic techniques: pattern-matching, explanation-building, and time-series analysis.¹⁸⁵

This research majored on pattern-matching and explanation-building in the analysis of the respective churches. Moreover, both case studies were structured in precisely the same way.

1. They began with an historical overview of the church, with special reference to the history of their *missional* transition.
2. The hypothesis was then brought forth.
3. The cases then followed points two through five of the hypothesis: crisis, culture-change, serving the community, and the shift in worship.

Pattern-matching is the act of comparing the empirical results of the data with what might be predicted by the literature.¹⁸⁶ As the data was analyzed, I continuously interacted with the relevant literature on the *missional* church, along with literature on

¹⁸⁴ As quoted in Winston Tellis, *Application of a Case Study Methodology* (September 1997), www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/tellis2.html (Accessed September 9, 1008).

¹⁸⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 116-122.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

cultural change from secular sources; I then brought forth explanations in light of these resources.

Because I concluded that Irving Bible Church was closest in culture to my church, IBC became the core study, and Christ Chapel Bible Church became the comparative study, consequently the case study of CCBC is compared and contrasted continuously to IBC. This is an alternate form of pattern-matching.

Conclusion – Reporting the Case Study

According to Yin, “Reporting a case study means bringing its results and findings to closure.”¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the target audience must be kept in mind as the case is being written.

The initial audience for this case study consisted of fellow classmates in DM 506 and 507, the large church cohort at Dallas Theological Seminary.¹⁸⁸ After the case study was completed, an oral presentation and discussion was given. Since the students had also attended the group interviews, this presentation sparked lively discussion, and some challenges were made to this researcher’s observations and conclusions. Those challenges provided an outstanding opportunity to make helpful revisions to the case.

However, the ultimate audience for these case studies will be scholars researching *missional* churches who may discover this work through library research or as an online PDF file.

These case studies were written so that these scholars might derive three benefits.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 141.

¹⁸⁸ A secondary audience consisted of members of the staff of the respective churches.

1. They will know enough about the case study churches to compare them to their own. Hence, each case study has a detailed history tracing their *missional* changes.
2. They will be able to trace patterns in both churches vis-à-vis the hypothesis and the literature. Therefore, the case studies bring forth relevant literature where appropriate.
3. They will sense something of the spirituality of the respective churches. This is important due to the intersection of mission and spirituality.¹⁸⁹ Consequently, the case studies provide a rich description of the spiritual values of the respective churches.

This work now turns to the case studies themselves.

¹⁸⁹ Campolo and Darling suggest the convergence of spirituality and social action in Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling, *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism and Justice* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), 22-56.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES AND RESEARCH RESULTS

How can we love our community so much that if we were going out of business the city of Irving would raise the money to keep us here?¹⁹⁰

Steve Roesse

We would pull up to the church and there would be 147 signs in the yards around the church saying, “Stop This Church Expansion,” and “Historical District” and “We’re Taking Back Our Neighborhood”. And we asked ourselves, “How could we be in this neighborhood for 20 years and have the community hate us? And I want to put the emphasis on hate.”¹⁹¹

Ted Kitchens

Introduction

In current literature on the *missional* church, especially within the blogosphere, there tends to be a radical dichotomy between churches that are considered *missional* and those that are not.

Non-*missional* churches typically get saddled with labels such as, “attractational, programmatic and hierarchal” and are considered old-paradigm. *Missional* churches, on the other hand, are regarded as being on the cutting edge of ministry, because they creatively engage culture with meaningful acts of service.

Thinking in terms of this radical dichotomy may help young pastors launching new church plants and seeking radical expressions of vision, but for existing churches this either-or presentation is unhelpful.

¹⁹⁰ Steve Roesse, “Group Interview with the Author,” (Irving, TX: Irving Bible Church, 28 July 2006).

¹⁹¹ Ted G. Kitchens and Bill Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author,” (Fort Worth, TX: Christ Chapel Bible Church, 2 April 2008).

In reality, any existing church that determines to become *missional* is going to enter a process of vision change and culture-change lasting at least three years. During that process, the church might retain some vestiges of its old culture, even as it begins to embrace the new.

The question, therefore, for existing churches is not, “Are you *missional* or *attractional*?” but rather, “What are you doing to discover God’s unique mission in your city? And how is God leading you to come alongside him to fulfill it?” *Missional* churches operate on the assumption that God loves to work uniquely in the context of cities.¹⁹² This leads to the following questions: “What is God doing here? And where do we see evidences of his sovereign work?”¹⁹³

What makes a church *missional* is not a particular prescribed style of ministry, certain programs, or even a commitment to serve in poorer sections of the city. The essence of *missional* ministry is a theological conviction about the nature of the Triune God, that leads to an internal culture-change within the church, and ultimately to a set of actions outside the walls of the church.

The key questions are as follows: Does our church exist to meet the needs of our highly discriminating members who might go to other churches if (1) we do not ratchet up the quality and range of our ministry offerings, and if (2) we don’t make them feel good about their walk with Christ? Or do we exist to be a countercultural community sent by the risen Christ in the context of the Triune God’s eternal mission to advance

¹⁹² In addition to the biblical data suggesting God’s love for Gentile cities (see especially Jeremiah 29:4-7 and Jonah 4:11), Rodney Stark presents a sociological and historical perspective on how Christianity was actually an urban phenomenon. See Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Religion and Conquered Rome* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

¹⁹³ While not writing in a missional vein, per se, Henry Blackaby urges Christians to engage in this same process of prayerfully discovering where God is already at work and then coming alongside. See Henry Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994).

God's kingdom even if it involves sacrifice? Alan Roxburgh skillfully describes this orientation in his book, *The Sky is Falling*.

Throughout Western societies, and most especially in North America, there has occurred a fundamental shift in the understanding and practice of the Christian story. It is no longer about God and what God is about in the world; it is about how God serves and meets human needs and desires. It is about how the individual self can find its own purposes and fulfillment. More specifically our churches have become spiritual food courts for the personal, private, inner needs of expressive individuals. The result is a debased compromised, derivative form of Christianity that is not the gospel of the Bible at all. The biblical narrative is about God's mission in, through, and for the sake of the world, for God's purpose of saving it in love. *The focus of attention should be what God wants to accomplish and how we can be part of God's mission, not how God helps us accomplish our own agendas*" (emphasis mine).¹⁹⁴

When a church embraces this focus, they quickly develop a transformed identity. They see themselves as having been sent by the risen Christ into their particular, indigenous, community (John 20:21b). Then, having embraced their sense of mission, they strive to discern, through prayer and discussion, as a community, how they might become the transforming presence of Christ in that particular location.

Only then can they confidently move into their community with cultural flexibility and no moral compromise.¹⁹⁵

This chapter explores how *missional* change begins to take root within an existing church, and specifically how *missional* transformation took place at both Irving Bible Church and Christ Chapel Bible Church. These two churches will be helpful ministries to compare and contrast since both experienced their respective

¹⁹⁴ Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition, a Proposal for Leadership Communities to take New Risks for the Reign of God* (Eagle, ID: ACI, 2006), 12.

¹⁹⁵ Cultural flexibility with no moral compromise was clearly the pattern of Jesus (Luke 5:27-32, 7:34) and Paul (Acts 17:16-34; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

transformations in the same years, 1986 and 2002, and both churches never dreamed their ministries would move in a *missional* direction.

History of Irving Bible Church

The History of Irving Bible Church (IBC) can be divided into three periods: an initial period stretching from c.a. 1959 to 1987, a seeker-performance period stretching from 1987 to 2005,¹⁹⁶ and a *missional* period which began in 2005.

The Initial Period – The Growth of a Traditional Bible Church

In 1959, S. Lewis Johnston Jr. began teaching a series of home Bible studies in Irving, Texas. When his teaching load proved too demanding, he sought out a Dallas Theological Seminary student and gifted Bible study leader, Keith Gilmore, to continue the work.¹⁹⁷ In the summer of 1961, several of these groups banded together to purchase an old church building on Grawlyer Road.¹⁹⁸ IBC’s official launch took place on Easter Sunday morning 1962, with Al Classen serving as founding senior pastor.

During the decade of the 1960s, IBC enjoyed some of the finest expository preaching available in the nation. Charles Swindoll served from 1967-1971, and Stanley Toussiant served as IBC pastor on two separate occasions (1965-1967 and 1973-1977). The church flourished under Swindoll’s ministry, and in 1970, IBC constructed a new sanctuary that would serve the congregation for over a decade.

¹⁹⁶ The leaders at IBC did not specifically identify the changes during these years as transitional. In fact, during the decade of the 1990s the term “transitional” would have seemed demeaning in the context of their explosive growth. However, in analyzing the history of IBC, I believe this is an appropriate term in light of their missional changes.

¹⁹⁷ Keith Gilmore, “Telephone Interview with the Author,” (Bartlesville, OK: Grace Community Church, July 11 2007).

¹⁹⁸ Will Langstaff, Jr., Chuck Larson, and Suzanne Martinez, “Irving Bible Church a Case Study: A Journey to the Edge of the Envelope” (D.Min. Case Study, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2006), 2.

Sadly, the culture of the elder board during these early years did not match the excellent teaching. The board proved highly controlling. Rather than viewing the pastor as an equal member of the elder board, they saw him as someone to be managed, and at times, even micro-managed.

Chuck Swindoll reports several painful experiences with his elders, including one occasion when he was struck in the face.¹⁹⁹

The elder board also proved to be controlling in its attitude toward women. Many evangelical churches in the 1960s and 1970s took a strong view on male dominance, even to the point of asking women to stay silent when the church was gathered for worship.

The elders at IBC seemed to take an especially strong view. On more than one occasion, women were encouraged to keep silent. If they had questions, they could address them privately to their husbands when the church service was concluded.²⁰⁰ Current IBC staff members indicate that this highly patriarchal culture produced an undercurrent of legalism and a dysfunctional leadership culture, even as the church excelled in preaching God's Word.²⁰¹

Following the tenures of Toussaint and Swindoll, Ken Parlin arrived as senior pastor. Not possessing Toussaint's gifts of scholarship, nor Swindoll's gifts in communication, IBC's growth stalled, and during Parlin's fifth year, the elder board was deeply split over his performance.

In the early 1980s, three elders, in a series of highly contentious acts, made public their frustration with Parlin's performance, and the results in the church were

¹⁹⁹ This is a fairly well-known incident but was reported to this researcher in by Steve Roesse in Roesse, "Group Interview with the Author," 28 July 2006.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

disastrous. The remaining elders confronted the rogue trio, threatening church discipline if they continued to foster division.

In the fall of 1984, the three contentious elders left IBC to start Community Bible Church of Irving, taking with them approximately 35 percent of the congregation.

In December of 1986, the remaining elders at IBC asked Parlin and his Associate Pastor to leave. It was time to clean house and start fresh, but the church was struggling. A season of brokenness and pain commenced, which would last for almost a year. However, the wounds seemed to have a purgative effect on the congregation, especially the elders, driving them toward deeper levels of humility and prayer.

During the wilderness year, the church continued to enjoy outstanding Bible teaching. Men, such as Donald Sunukjian and Timothy Warren, served as interim pastors, and a series of outstanding Bible teachers filled the pulpit, including a young Associate Pastor from the opposite side of Dallas, Andy McQuitty.

A bright spot during these years is the gracious and wise leadership of Buist Fanning, who served as chairman of the elder board during this transition. Buist brought a sense of stability and hope to the hurting congregation.

Under his leadership, the board laid the foundation for a series of good decisions, one of which would be the hire of IBC's fourth senior pastor,²⁰² a choice that was pivotal to IBC's future.

Summary

In this first period of IBC's ministry, the church was blessed with exceptional teaching but suffered from a culture that stifled freedom and creativity—the hallmarks of

²⁰² The roster of pastors at IBC is as follows: Albert J. Classen (1961-1965), Stanley D. Toussaint (1965-1967), Charles R. Swindoll (1967-1971), Kenneth Barker [interim pastor] (1971-1973), Stanley D. Toussaint (1973-1978), Ken L. Parlin (1979-1986) and E. Andrew McQuitty (1987-present).

IBC today. That culture, originating with the elder board, tended toward legalism and control.

The mantra of many church leaders during the 1970s, “If you just preach the word, the people will come, and you’ll grow a healthy church,” did not prove true with IBC. After nearly a quarter century of outstanding expository teaching, the church was broken under the burdens of fractious leadership, a church split, and a rigid culture. Nevertheless, this crisis created a climate for change.

The Transitional Period –The Growth toward a Contemporary Megachurch

During the wilderness period, the church sought the counsel of Bill Lawrence. He suggested they examine a young Associate Pastor from Garland, Texas.

Andy McQuitty, then thirty-three years old, was a graduate of Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary. He was dismissive of the offer initially, and is reported as saying, “God help the next pastor who goes there.”²⁰³ Nevertheless, Andy joined the staff of IBC in October of 1987. Sunday worship at that point averaged 250 adults.

According to executive pastor, Steve Roese, IBC took a giant step forward in embracing a grace-oriented culture with the arrival of Andy.²⁰⁴ That is not to say that Toussaint and Swindoll were not grace-oriented *theologically*. Chuck Swindoll became a well-known champion of grace with his bestseller *Grace Awakening*.²⁰⁵ Rather, IBC’s culture of control did not allow a grace-orientation to take root until the crisis of 1986 when IBC members struggled intensely through their wilderness of pain.

²⁰³Langstaff, Larson, and Martinez, “Irving Bible church a Case Study: A Journey to the Edge of the Envelope,” 3.

²⁰⁴ Roese, “Group Interview with the Author.”

²⁰⁵ Charles R. Swindoll, *Grace Awakening: Believing in grace is One Thing. Living It is Another* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

During the next fifteen years, three significant events transformed IBC from a traditional Bible church in decline, to a contemporary megachurch with explosive growth.

New Ways of Thinking about Church

During the first three years of his tenure at IBC, Andy wisely chose to make no significant changes, determining instead to learn the IBC culture and become an instrument of healing.²⁰⁶ Then, in 1990, IBC elders traveled to the Navigators' headquarters in Glen Eyrie, Colorado to hear Rick Warren discuss his early conceptions of *The Purpose Driven Church*. Warren's biblically based and common sense approach to evangelism was highly attractive but represented a culture shift for IBC leadership.

According to Steve Roese, "We were a good Bible church, but really didn't care if people went to hell."²⁰⁷ After the conference, leaders were ready to accept the challenge that "churches need to love unbelievers as Jesus did."²⁰⁸

However, for the Purpose Driven Model²⁰⁹ to work at IBC, the elders understood that more and more leadership would need to be delegated away from the elders to the staff. This led to a gradual— a decade long, shift from an elder-dominated church to a staff-led church. That shift culminated in the hiring of an executive pastor. The roles stated in Steve Roese's job description replaced many of the leadership functions historically handled by IBC's elder board.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Roese, "Group Interview with the Author."

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 208.

²⁰⁹ The model developed by Rick Warren and expounded in *The Purpose Driven Church*.

²¹⁰ I am making this interpretation, not through direct discussion with IBC leadership, but as a personal observation.

Several years after attending the Purpose Driven Conference, IBC elders and staff trekked up to South Barrington, Illinois to attend a Willow Creek conference. Armed with the clarity of the Saddleback approach and the creativity of the Willow Creek approach, IBC's leaders were able to inject new vision and energy into the congregation.

IBC leaders crafted a fresh vision statement, which would have been impossible under the old guard: "To engage spiritually uninvolved people in the joyous adventure of pursuing Christ's best." Armed with new vision, the staff began to take seriously their mandate to treat the unbeliever with a sense of grace and acceptance.²¹¹

During this time, Sunday morning services shifted in approach from traditional worship and teaching to contemporary. Andy's messages, still biblically based, reflected his new insights into contemporary culture and the mind of the unbeliever. Sunday morning worship at IBC was consistent with what many seeker sensitive churches were doing around the country: there were multiple worship bands, dramas, videos and testimonials. Through the decade of the 1990s, IBC took on a worship culture inconceivable in its early years.

While it is outside the scope of this present study, further research into the relationship between the senior pastor and the worship leader as a factor in church growth would be profitable. Andy and Russ Ware were the two most visible leaders at IBC during the transitional phase, and their respective personalities played a strong role in shaping the Sunday morning worship experience.²¹²

²¹¹ This is a strong component of both the Purpose Driven approach and the Willow Creek philosophy. Bill Hybels' oft quoted comment in those days is that people matter to God.

²¹² A similar study could be made with Sammy Davenport and Bill Counts who served together for over two decades at Fellowship Dallas (formerly Fellowship Bible Church of Park Cities).

A New Building

With the growth of Irving, Texas and a ministry model that stressed outreach, IBC enjoyed numerical growth and began to explore new facilities in the mid-1990s. On May 19, 1996, IBC launched a capital stewardship campaign called Vision 2000 with the goal of transitioning to new facilities at a new location.

Andy's planning for the move was outstanding on several fronts. First, he skillfully honored the past. When he returned to Dallas Theological Seminary to pursue doctoral studies, he examined how church leaders equip their congregants to transition from an old facility—with all its memories, to the new.²¹³

His research surfaced creative methods for honoring the past while at the same time anticipating what God might do in the future.

For instance, IBC leaders held a final service at the old location with a fond look back at more than a quarter century of God's goodness.²¹⁴ Members were also asked to write their names on bricks, which would be laid in the walkway going in to the new facility. One month later, IBC leaders planned a follow-up dedication weekend, called "Seven Pillars," to dedicate the new facility.

Former Senior Pastor Stanley Toussaint brought messages and memories from his years at IBC.²¹⁵ These acts honored the sacrificial efforts of long standing members and helped them find closure with the past as well as look to the future with hope.

²¹³ Andy McQuitty, "Developing, Implementing, and Evaluating a Program to Prepare a Church Congregation for Facility Relocation" (D. Min. Diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1997).

²¹⁴ The service was called, Celebration of Remembrance, and took place on September 1, 1996. See David Fletcher, "Case Studies of Policy and Vision Implementation by the Executive Pastor" (D.Min. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004), 193.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Second, Andy and the elders planned facilities consistent with their newfound seeker-sensitive approach—facilities that would meet the needs of the unbeliever, while at the same time, serve the believer.

One centerpiece of their planning was a new worship center carefully designed to facilitate contemporary worship arts, including a state of the art sound system and lighting. This auditorium made a statement that the church was no longer the traditional Bible church of the past.

Another centerpiece of their new facility would be the Town Hall. The passion behind the town hall concept was not to remove people from the dangers and temptations of the world but to provide a place for common ground with un-churched and non-believing visitors.

Their hope was that this town hall would create a context for community, so that when guests arrived, they would feel relaxed and willing to meet new friends. Originally called, “The Ugly Mug Coffee Co.,” the shop was eventually renamed Mosaic to reflect their passion for unity in diversity.²¹⁶

IBC leaders quickly discovered that this town hall helped with Sunday morning hospitality and would be used increasingly by the community at-large as a convenient place to read, surf the Internet and meet friends. The sense of “24/7” hospitality offered by the town hall was soon regarded as a way to serve the community at large.

As is often the case when a church relocates, excitement over the new building attracted even more people, and IBC saw its attendance double between 2000 and 2002.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Steve, alternately, suggests that it came from the church in L.A.: Mosaic Church.

²¹⁷ Fletcher, “Case Studies of Policy and Vision Implementation by the Executive Pastor,” 193.

A New Executive Pastor

In late 1997, Steve Roesse was hired as the executive pastor. On paper, Steve's credentials seem ideally suited for the position: B.B.A. from New York University, M.B.A. from Cornell, and Th. M. from Dallas Theological Seminary.²¹⁸ Steve's real contribution, however, was his unique blend of leadership and hospitality gifts. Exuding a California-style casualness, he provided a relaxed leadership culture at IBC. Policies and control were kept to a minimum. There was a freedom and looseness that engenders creativity. And Steve's winsome relational style embodies the culture of grace that Andy sought to instill from the beginning.

But Steve's commitment to the vision was anything but casual. The motto appearing at the bottom of his e-mails captures his passion for getting things done: "Whatever it takes!" Clearly, Steve is a tremendous catalyst for ministry, while at the same time, a strong asset to Andy's overall leadership at IBC.²¹⁹

In a roundtable discussion with Steve Roesse and David Fletcher, founder and host of xpastor.org, Fletcher made it clear that Steve was the chief visionary at IBC. Steve did not disagree, but he made it clear that Andy is recognized as the leader.^{220 221}

This researcher has observed that executive pastors take on many of the operational roles historically handled by elders in traditional Bible churches. This is true in Steve's case. His job description includes three broad areas of responsibility: execute the vision of the elders and senior pastor, coordinate church ministries, and oversee adult

²¹⁸ Roesse, "Group Interview with the Author."

²¹⁹ Fletcher, "Case Studies of Policy and Vision Implementation by the Executive Pastor," 193.

²²⁰ Roesse, "Group Interview with the Author."

²²¹ Kouses and Posner point out that the leader does not always have to possess the vision *personally*, but he does need to own the vision of the organization and become its champion. As we will see, it appears missional vision in IBC's case developed through the staff collectively as a result of the crisis. Of course, Andy quickly owned the emerging missional vision and became a skillful spokesman for it. See James M. Kouses and Barry Z. Posner, *A Leader's Legacy* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

ministries including initiating new ministries.²²² This job description puts Steve in a strong position to implement policy as well as to shape the culture.

Shortly after Steve's arrival, he instituted three culture shifts that positively impacted the church: a leadership change, a communications change, and an emphasis change.

Annual Retreat

In 2000, Steve planned the first annual staff-elder retreat. In early December, staff and elders—with wives, broke away for a three day gathering. There was little on the agenda except to hang out, have fun, and discuss concepts from a book they had all been reading.

This event built unity and has increased good will between the two groups, but most importantly, it decreased any sense of intimidation that staff may feel toward elders—a problem that plagued IBC in the past.

Enhanced Communication

At a communication level, Steve—in conjunction with the worship pastor, Russ Ware, changed the way information gets transmitted at IBC. Rather than having a weekly bulletin crammed with information, they prepared, at significant expense, a monthly magazine called *Chatter*.²²³ The look and feel of the magazine is postmodern. It offers articles on culture, faith and stories of life-change. That ministry tool has been found in secular places in and around Irving including the local Starbucks.

²²² Fletcher, "Case Studies of Policy and Vision Implementation by the Executive Pastor," 196.

²²³ The magazine is not available on line, but information is provided to members about how to get it at Irving Bible Church, *Chatter*, www.chattermag.com (accessed on 15 November 2008).

Steve also oversaw the purchase of a banner printer. Consequently, IBC can change what they want to emphasize, and how they want to present it throughout their facilities, especially in the town hall. These banners are seen consistently by non-IBCsers who frequent the town hall for coffee. Like the magazine, the banners have a postmodern feel. Consequently, there is a strong congruence between the emerging culture at IBC and the culture of Irving.

Exploring Different Expressions of Historic Faith

The change Steve has instituted at the “emphasis” level is a little harder to describe. Traditional Bible churches and seeker sensitive churches of the late 1980s and 1990s taught theology from a modernistic systemic approach.

Modern Christian systematic theological methodology was born out of the worldview of seventeenth century enlightenment rationalism. Even though this worldview is now six hundred years old, most churches, sympathetic with reformation theology, still use categories of systematic theology in their teachings about the essentials of the faith: theology proper, Christology, angelology, and so on.²²⁴

Conservative postmodern theology does not reject those categories, per se²²⁵; rather, the emphasis is different. Theology is not seen only as the science of studying God but also the experience of pursuing God. It is a deeply experiential, even existential, theology.

²²⁴ As a Western and American scholar, this researcher passionately embraces this field of study but also recognizes that culture is changing both how theology is studied and presented. Jenkins suggests that as Christianity explodes in the southern hemisphere new theologies will emerge appropriate to their respective cultures. They will most likely not be presented in the categories suggested by 17th century European scholarship. See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Revised and Expanded (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 132.

²²⁵ The very idea of *conservative* postmodern theology is controversial and rejected by many conservative theologians. See J. P. Moreland, “Confident Ministry Amid Cultural Crisis: A Worldview Approach,” (Dallas, TX: Howard G. Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership, 2005).

Steve brought this emphasis into the staff, both through his choice in the books they read and the way he articulated his faith. This brought a new feel to IBC, a sense that God is big, mysterious, and up to something great and “why wouldn’t we all want to know this God personally?” This emphasis is diametrically opposed to the high-control culture of IBC’s first quarter century.

With Steve’s hire, the transition from traditional controlling Bible church to contemporary seeker-sensitive megachurch, high on grace, was complete.

Summary

From 1987 to 2002, IBC shifted from a traditional Bible church to a contemporary seeker-sensitive megachurch through a combination of factors: They chose a good leader. The elder board empowered staff to lead. They skillfully transitioned to a new building. They chose the Executive Pastor Model and then hired the right man for the job.

Anyone looking in from the outside would feel that IBC was at the top of their game...another sterling example of a successful big city megachurch. However, in 2002, IBC would encounter a second major crisis—the first occurring in 1986, that would shift the church into a significant new direction. They would move from a contemporary seeker-driven church to a *missional* church.

The Hypothesis Revisited

To understand what happened next, the hypothesis must be restated. Church leaders, who cultivate *missional* change, have typically encountered a crisis. When that crisis is responded to with humility and discovery, a culture-change takes place within the church.

This culture-change is expressed in two primary ways: service to the community, an external change, and a different way of using the primary worship service that reflects *missional* change—an internal change.

The above hypothesis suggests four areas of inquiry.

1. Crisis—Have senior leaders experienced a personal or spiritual crisis?
2. Culture—In what ways has the culture of the church changed to reflect *missional* values?
3. Service—What is the church's serving story? How did they learn to serve in ways consistent with their culture?
4. Worship—In what ways did the worship service change to reflect their newfound understanding of God's mission?

IBC's shift toward a *missional* church can be understood by examining these four areas.

The Crisis – 2002-2005

The literature review suggests that different kinds of crises might be catalysts for *missional* change. Current research into *missional* churches does not necessarily predict which kind of crisis will most likely lead to *missional* change, nor does it specify how severe that crisis must be—although it must be severe enough to disrupt existing ecclesiological assumptions.

Moreover, it does not seem to matter which person in the senior leadership system must experience the crisis for *missional* change to come. In many cases, it will be the senior pastor. However, *missional* change could be sparked by any one of the senior staff either separately or collectively.

What is important is that the culture of the senior staff not be brittle but flexible. A flexible culture is more likely to tolerate the messiness of a crisis, which leads to *missional* change.²²⁶ This was certainly the case at IBC.

After IBC moved into the new building, “a kind of malaise” settled over the leadership.²²⁷ However, in separate interviews, the senior leaders each described the crisis in slightly different ways.

Andy articulated it this way:

We were very much like the church Robert Lewis described in *The Church of Irresistible Influence*. Lewis says, “We built this new building, and we were this big successful church, and we were looking around going, ‘So what?’” And I think that pretty well described us. We moved into this new building, and I don’t think it dawned on us...what a toll it had taken on us. We were steadfastly trying to *not* have our ministry be about building buildings, but you don’t get something like this built without giving it lots of attention. I think for the next 18 months [after we moved in] we experienced a malaise of spirit. Just kind of excited that we were in...*glad* that we were in...but we were saying, “So what?” I think that’s when it got born in our hearts, “So we have the building, let’s use it. Let’s use it as a training ground so that we can get people out and engaged in the community.”²²⁸

Steve was quick to clarify that “it wasn’t like we were falling apart. It was almost like a mid-life crisis. We began to ask the question, ‘What would it mean to love

²²⁶ It is interesting at this point to compare and contrast the difference in culture between IBC and Fellowship Dallas, a church that this researcher considered studying (and later rejected) as an example of missional change. While Fellowship Dallas had an elder board that handled ambiguity skillfully during a senior pastor transition, it seems that a brittleness developed among the staff of Fellowship Dallas based on a subtle attitude that one could demand God’s grace. That brittleness seems to have caused missional change to stall on the staff level.

²²⁷ Andy McQuitty and Steve Roesse, “Personal Interview with the Author” (Irving TX: Irving Bible Church, 10 April 2007).

²²⁸ Ibid.

our community so well that if we were going out of business they would raise the money for us to keep our door open?’ And we realized they probably wouldn’t.”²²⁹

As is often the case in evaluating a crisis, leaders remember things differently. In a separate interview with Russ Ware, worship pastor, the crisis seemed to cut much deeper into the heart and soul of IBC.

Russ Ware joined IBC in 1990 just as IBC was making its culture shift from traditional Bible church to contemporary seeker-sensitive church. His role as worship leader was a significant component of that change and IBC’s subsequent growth. As the decade of the 1990s progressed, so did his leadership responsibilities.

The seeker-performance model of worship demands much from the Worship Pastor, and under his direction, additional instrumentalists were trained, soloists rehearsed, and drama teams scheduled for performances.

Excellence was considered essential to the model’s effectiveness, and IBC’s mindset during this time was, “If we get the worship right...still that seeker thing...we can make this [place] rock and everything will be okay.”²³⁰

In one sense, the high-pressure environment at IBC during this time was consistent with Russ’ background. According to Ware, “My background was Southern Baptist, big Southern Baptist churches, big music programs, lots of pressure. I came into [the position at IBC] with a lot of that baggage and self-imposed expectations.”²³¹

But by 2002, the time of the crisis, Russ was exhausted. He wrestled with, “Where is this church going? Do we have a vision? Can we find it? I didn’t like where we

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Russ Ware, “Personal Interview with the Author,” (Irving, TX: Irving Bible Church, 11 April 2007).

²³¹ Ibid.

had arrived. I didn't like standing up in front of 2,000 people...the show...the programming...*the putting on of the show*...the non-participative part of our ministry."²³²

Russ continues, "In the spring of 2003 this was a church in which we did not know what the next step was. We were, like, wandering around on the plateau. We didn't know what the culture of IBC was, or was going to become."²³³

Easter 2003, IBC's first Easter Sunday in the new building, was ground zero for Russ' personal crisis: "We still had some vestiges of our old system, old ways we were doing things, (in worship). [We were] still trying to break out of the whole production/seeker mentality. [We still] had some baggage...pressure...*music-minister type pressure*...at that point. And it all just kind of came to a head that week. And I just crashed, and everybody could tell it."²³⁴

Following his Easter Sunday burnout, Russ took an emergency sabbatical for three months, but it was not long enough. Still in crisis, Russ resigned from the church and spent seven months at Horn Creek Camp in Westcliffe, Colorado. It was during this time that he encountered the beginnings of a personal renewal.

At his wife's urging, he picked up a copy of Brian McLaren's seminal book, *A New Kind of Christian*. Russ credits this book as a sort of first "inner light," the first steps in his healing process.

Even as his healing progressed, Russ was still engaged relationally with the staff at IBC, even to the point of consulting with the executive pastor about his replacement. Yet, after seven months, the position was still open, and Russ entered into a

²³² Russ Ware, "Group Interview," (Irving, TX: Irving Bible Church, July 27, 2006), as quoted in Langstaff, Larson, and Martinez, "Irving Bible Church a Case Study: A Journey to the Edge of the Envelope," 16.

²³³ Russ Ware, "Personal Interview with the Author," (Irving, TX: Irving Bible Church, 11 April 2007).

²³⁴ Ibid.

series of conversations with Steve Roesse about a possible return. That decision proved pivotal in IBC's transition toward becoming a *missional* church.

Russ' potential rehire raised three questions: Would IBC elders have the courage rehire a senior leader still wrestling with theological questions and nursing some wounds that came from the pressures inherent in the seeker-performance model? Most elder boards are willing to sign off on people who project an aura of having arrived both personally and theologically. Yet, Russ was still processing "basic questions of truth and God and Scripture."²³⁵

Would IBC elders and staff have the courage to rehire Russ even with his brutal honesty? Russ was quite frank about his personal crisis and was willing to talk about what was wrong with IBC from this vantage point— even with the elders.

The most important question was: Would the IBC staff have the courage to embrace Russ' crisis, and learn from it, rather than isolate and marginalize him?

It is a credit to Andy's grace-orientation and Steve's gifts of leadership that they were willing to fully embrace Russ, even though, by his own admission he was still in crisis. Indeed, Russ comments that, "the most difficult part of that whole process was my first year back."²³⁶

From November of 2004 to January of 2005, Russ reengaged with the malaise the staff was experiencing: "When I came back, everybody was like, 'We're not happy. We feel rudderless in worship. We feel rudderless in our church. And we said [to one another], 'What is it?'"²³⁷

About this time, Steve says,

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

We had dream sessions...brainstorming sessions. We did this with the staff. The question was, “If we could *do* anything what would we do? If we could *be* anything what would we be?” We began to read books...and we listened to people in the church.²³⁸ We began to ask the question, “What would it mean to love our community so well that if we were going out of business they would raise the money for us to keep our doors open? And we began to realize that they probably wouldn’t. So what does that mean? And what do we need to change. We were pretty open about it; we even talked about this in Sunday services. Eventually we had a whole month of messages about being *missional* and calling people to it.”^{239 240}

In January of 2005, Andy began a series called, “Out of the Box.” The gist of that series was a different conception of church. In the series, Andy said, “Ladies and Gentlemen, what we’re doing now is not church. We are the church.”²⁴¹ By that, Andy was suggesting that the essence of the church is not what takes place on Sunday mornings but what the scattered body of Christ does during the week. The central challenge Andy issued toward IBC in that series was this: “Are we on mission?” From that time forward, *missional* themes were introduced in the church consistently.

Evaluation of the Crisis

Russ’ experience raised an important question about *missional* transitions. Which leader’s crisis counts as sufficient for *missional* change?

²³⁸ According to Steve, the most important book was Erwin McManus’ book, *An Unstoppable Force*. But others included *The Present Future*, *Blue Like Jazz*, *Velvet Elvis*, and *A New Kind of Christian*.

²³⁹ McQuitty and Roese, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

²⁴⁰ During this time, Steve’s leadership embodied the kind of culture that Roxburgh and Romanuk speak about. “God’s future emerges from God’s people nonlinearly and unpredictably. Alignment assumes it’s possible to define outcomes from the front end. Such certainly is impossible in a context of discontinuous change. Alignment does not take place at the front end of a transformation; it emerges from experiments, dialog, and engagements together in the work of the emergent zone.” See Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006). 64

²⁴¹ Russ Ware, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

The answer in IBC's case is that it was not the crisis of one single leader. The interviews suggested that all the senior leaders, indeed much of the church, experienced some crisis during this time. The "malaise" of the congregation led to soul searching among the staff. The staff felt disoriented and "rudderless." This was clearly not a failure of leadership. On the contrary, throughout the stewardship campaigns and building campaigns, Andy proved to be an exceptional leader, skillfully using conclusions from his dissertation in the change-process. Steve, likewise, excelled in his leadership of the growing IBC staff. The crux of the crisis seems rooted in the simultaneous struggles of Russ and Andy. According to Russ, "Andy's story fits into this quite significantly. I didn't know it then, but I know it now. And I would say, personally, in his passion for ministry, he weathered a [rough] journey in the...three years (2002-2005). But he dealt with his crisis in a different way. His was 'just sort of lock down' and mine was, I can't be here.'"²⁴²

Andy's reticence to share the deeper nuances of his crisis in the interview with this researcher—whom he had not previously met, is understandable and consistent with Edgar Schein's observation: "The most obvious difficulty in gathering valid cultural data is the well-known phenomenon: when human subjects are involved in research, there is a tendency for them either to resist and hide data that they feel defensive about or to exaggerate in order to impress the researcher."²⁴³

The solution to the crisis, in many ways, was the catalytic leadership of executive pastor, Steve Roese. Rather than denying the crisis, or minimizing the crisis, or even spiritualizing the crisis, Steve embraced the crisis. He used the tension of the malaise to start a larger conversation that would eventually lead to a shared *missional*

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 204.

vision. Moreover, Steve dignified Russ' personal crisis, encouraging him to talk about it, even when Russ' "learnings" felt raw and unprocessed.

A further solution to the crisis was Andy's visionary leadership. Andy demonstrated a flexible/learning leadership style. He invited conversations about the malaise. He engaged staff in productive discussions, and eventually, he approached the congregation with a new direction, carefully tying it into IBC's historic vision. *Missional* activity soon followed.

The Culture-Change

Definition of Culture and Its Application to IBC

Edgar Schein defines culture this way: Culture is, "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."²⁴⁴

Three important concepts emerge from this definition. First, culture develops as a group solves problems. Problems inject tension into the existing culture and force action, healthy or unhealthy, productive or unproductive. Furthermore, culture develops pragmatically. Leaders ask, "Did certain solutions work and do they apply to a broad range of situations?" If so, the solutions tend to become implanted in the culture, and finally, cultures, in time, produce dogma. As certain solutions work, leaders verbalize that there are correct and incorrect ways of doing things.

IBC's culture in the initial period was somewhat paradoxical (c.a. 1959-1987). Externally, there was outstanding Bible teaching, which brought a sense of spiritual

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 17.

encouragement to members; however behind the scenes, there was a culture of micromanagement and control, which was often described as dysfunctional in interviews.

This paradoxical culture worked in one sense; the church enjoyed doctrinal purity and great teaching, but it did not work in another sense. It produced significant levels of pain among the paid staff, and it generated the sort of fear which is typically present in legalistic social systems.

IBC's culture during the transitional period became progressively grace-oriented (1987-2005). IBC was ripe for this sort of culture-change because of the departure of the three most controlling elders—in 1985, and the purging effect of the crisis-year which preceded Andy's arrival. Clearly, the primary catalyst for this culture-change from 1987 to 1996 was Andy. Rather than being a controlling leader, he is exceptionally gracious.

Interviews with the staff often suggested that Andy fit the profile of the Level-Five leader Jim Collins presents in his book *Good to Great*—a leader of exceptional humility coupled with strength of will.²⁴⁵

If this is indeed the case, it explains why he was able to stay the course in fostering a grace-oriented culture during the 18-year transitional period. Other more controlling leaders might have grown frustrated and bailed out.

IBC's culture began to change again in 1996 with the arrival of Steve Roesse. Steve's leadership style was geared naturally toward *missional* ministry, because he fostered a flexible learning environment.

²⁴⁵ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (New York, NY: Harper Business, 2001), 17-40

Interpreting the Culture-Change in Light of Roxburgh and Romanuk's Work

In their book, *The Missional Leader*, Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk present a three-zone model of *missional* leadership.²⁴⁶ The green zone represents emergent leadership. The blue zone represents transitional leadership, and the red zone indicates reactive leadership.

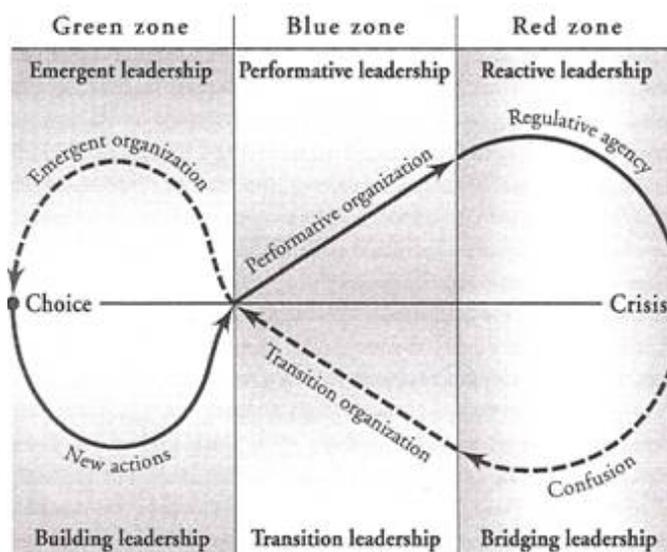


Figure 3.1. Three Zone Model of Missional Leadership.¹

Looking analytically at their history, it would appear that IBC entered the blue zone of performative leadership in c.a. 1990 when Russ Ware joined the staff as worship pastor, and IBC shifted to a seeker-performance model of ministry. During the decade of the 1990s, their “performative organization” flourished and IBC enjoyed explosive growth. By the end of the decade, they enjoyed megachurch status.

However, when IBC moved into the new building in 2002, the senior leadership clearly entered the red zone of reactive leadership. Questions such as, “What’s

²⁴⁶ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 41.

wrong? Where are we going? How are we going to get there?” dominated their discussions.

Russ’ state of mind at his return is emblematic of what happens in the reactive leadership phase; things are confusing...even messy: “I came back and in that first year there were some strains and stresses with where I was coming from philosophically. I came in pretty transparent about what I was still wrestling with...both theologically and with where I thought we were screwing up here.”²⁴⁷

By January of 2005, IBC senior leaders had moved into the green zone of emergent leadership. It seems the red zone—reactive phase of leadership, lasted for only two years. How was IBC able to find traction with a new *missional* vision and move forward during this time?

The key factor appears to be the way Steve and Andy handled the crisis: they adopted an attitude of humility and determined to be learners.

Roxburgh and Romanuk suggest that in the first three years of *missional* change, goals and strategies are secondary to assessing and describing the working of God. The authors suggest that the confusion of the red zone gives way to the emergent zone only if the leaders help each other and the congregation to sense God’s direction.

Rather than the leader having plans and strategies that the congregation will affirm and follow, *cultivation* describes the leader as the one who works the soil of the congregation so as to invite and constitute the environment for the people of God to discern what the Spirit is doing in, with, and among them as a community.^{248 249}

²⁴⁷ Russ Ware, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

²⁴⁸ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 28.

Steve and Andy did this when they engaged the staff and congregation with learning-oriented discussions.

Creating Safety in the Change Process

They created a place of safety in the red zone. Schein suggests that for cultural change to take place an organization needs to be unfrozen. Says Schein, “Unfreezing an organization requires the creation of psychological safety, which means that the leader must have the emotional strength to absorb much of the anxiety that change brings with it as well as the ability to remain supportive to the organization through the transition phase, even if group members become angry and obstructive.”²⁵⁰

Andy created the undercurrent of psychological safety through his grace orientation, and Steve applied that grace in his direct dealings with the staff and the congregation. This environment of safety created a fertile environment for learning and change.

An example of IBC’s commitment to learning took place in late 2005.²⁵¹ According to Steve, “people were rumbling over the messages.”²⁵² ecause Andy was

²⁴⁹ Other secular authors propose similar solutions when vision is changing or unclear. Schein says, “Organizations can use the *fuzzy vision model*, whereby “the...leader states forcefully that the present is intolerable and that performance must improve within a certain time frame, but then relies on the organization to develop visions of how to actually get there” (emphasis his). Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 315.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 416.

²⁵¹ Steve also embodies an idea brought forth in Steven M. R. Covey’s book *The Speed of Trust*. Covey says that one important way to generate trust is through authentic interaction among employees. “Be honest. Tell the truth. Let people know where you stand. Use simple language. Don’t manipulate people or distort the facts. Don’t spin the truth. Don’t leave false impressions.” Steve reinforced just this kind of culture during the crisis. Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

²⁵² McQuitty and Roese, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

preaching more *missionally*, people were concerned that Andy was not preaching biblically.

Senior pastors are often insecure about their performance as preachers, and these rumblings could have short-circuited the learning culture at IBC. On the contrary, the learning culture kicked in.

According to Steve,

At one point we asked all of our key staff to go meet with five people who were committed to the church who are involved. We found people who said, “Yeah, Andy is not preaching the word any more, but they couldn’t say why.” Other people were saying just the opposite. They were saying, “I’ve never been more excited about IBC, we’re finally getting to the heart of the word.”

The outcome of the interviews was good in that it took some pressure off us. While some people were upset things weren’t as they’d always been, more were excited [about our *missional* direction]. It gave us the freedom to move on.²⁵³

A Careful Reshaping of Existing Vision

In chapter 16 of *Organizational Leadership and Culture*, Edgar Schein outlines six conditions for culture-change

1. Survival anxiety or guilt must be greater than learning anxiety.
2. Learning anxiety must be reduced rather than increasing survival anxiety.
3. The change goal must be defined concretely in terms of the specific problem you are trying to fix, not as “culture-change.”
4. Old culture elements can be destroyed by eliminating the people who “carry” those elements, but new cultural elements can only be learned if the new behavior leads to success and satisfaction.
5. Culture-change is always transformative change that requires a period of unlearning that is psychologically painful.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ McQuitty and Roese, “Personal Interview with Author.”

Andy and Steve masterfully set in place conditions 2 and 3. They reduced learning anxiety by reading and discussing controversial books that brought them out of their comfort zone, and when they came to a conclusion about the problem to be fixed, Andy did not call for culture-change as much as he said, “We’ve got to get out of our comfort zone and engage people around us in service.” According to Andy,

It’s not so much a new vision as much as a reinforcement of the vision and an enrichment of the vision...a putting shoe-leather to the vision. The roll out of that *missional* mindset was not at all that new or startlingly different; I think if it startled anyone it was the intensity of it. We were modeling to people that we really mean business. We’re not just going to give lip service to this. It’s really going to happen. That was January of 2005.²⁵⁵

A Shift to Centered Set Thinking

One important component of cultural change is the shift from bounded-set thinking to centered-set thinking. Bounded-set thinking defines who is a member in good standing and who is not, based on certain criteria.

In bounded-set churches, regular attenders and members might feel excluded if they express doubts about certain essentials of the faith, embrace different political views, or disclose a past moral failure. IBC’s culture during its first phase featured a strong bounded-set orientation.

Centered-set thinking, on the other hand, does not emphasize the boundaries—although it does not exclude them. Rather, it emphasizes what is the core value at the center. As IBC has moved toward a *missional* mindset, senior leaders have made it clear that the person of Jesus—the servant Jesus, is at the center, and IBC leaders call people to the grand vision of following him and serving like him.

²⁵⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 307.

²⁵⁵ McQuitty and Roese, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

This has made IBC willing to partner with other churches and faith groups in Irving with a spirit of humility.

Andy claims,

If you think you are the only expression of the church, then it's tough to be *missional*. We're not going to be critical of other faith traditions. We can lock arms with others and partner together [in projects]. We can be *missional* with others who are *missional*. When we saw Evangelical Anglicans...loving Jesus and wanting to change the world, it gave us a realization that we weren't in this alone.²⁵⁶

Summary

IBC's success in shifting from the red zone to the green zone—Roxburgh and Romanuk's paradigm, was the flexible/learning culture that Steve Roese and Andy McQuitty had nurtured within the culture of IBC already.

If IBC had not moved toward this gracious/flexible culture during the decade of the 1990s, it is doubtful that they would have been able to learn from the crisis, discern God's leading, and make the shift toward *missional* ministry.

The Service Orientation

An Organic Approach

The above hypothesis further suggests that *missional* culture-change soon becomes externalized in concrete service to the city. This was indeed the case at IBC. In early 1995, IBC began experimenting with various service initiatives.

An earlier hypothesis for this study explored the possibility that *missional* churches approach service in highly systematic way: research the community, draw up

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

options, and choose the best option through prayer.²⁵⁷ However, this was not the case with IBC. On the contrary, service took place in a much more “organic” way:

We didn’t approach service with a scientific type method. We have people in the church who are connected in the community, particularly in the public school system. It was like people here had a heart for something. There was a huge crying need: “Let’s go do this.” We didn’t say, “Let’s stop and do some research and find [the best option].” The opportunities would come. They would resonate with us. And we would do them. We didn’t do surveys or...demographic research. We said, “Here are some people who are connected to some real needs within our community.... Some of the people had contacts that were significant. They provided us opportunities. And it was off to the races.”²⁵⁸

A New Staff Member Dedicated to the Missional Area

Shortly after IBC moved into the new building, Mark Herringer was hired to oversee the external ministries of IBC. He became the broker, so to speak, between what God was doing in the congregation already and those that were anxious to serve.

Mark’s role has been crucial to IBC’s continued effectiveness in multiplying service opportunities. Moreover, Mark’s perspective on his own personal ministry is congruent with his position in the church: he is a humble leader.

After spending twenty years in the secular marketplace, Mark attended Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, graduating with a master’s degree. During his seminary years, something bothered him. He discovered a tendency among pastors to overstate the success of their ministries. This led to a strong internal desire toward quiet service that does not call attention to itself. In fact, Mark declined to be personally interviewed, preferring instead that others describe the character of his ministry.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ This approach has been suggested in several missional books. See especially Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006).

²⁵⁸ McQuitty and Roese, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

²⁵⁹ Mark Harringer, “Telephone Interview with the Author.”

Mark's essential approach to ministry is to talk with IBC members and discover what God is doing through them in the community already. He then offers to come alongside and partner with their efforts.

According to Steve, "When Mark got here he would find a ministry and come to us and say, 'Do you realize that we have a pretty significant ministry to the gay community?' He would surface [other] stuff. And people would catch the heart and the freedom [of our approach], and they would embrace the ministry."²⁶⁰

A Serving Passion Emerges at IBC

A quick glance at their web site identifies a wide range of service options available to those who call IBC their church home, including,

1. Ministry to single parents
2. Partnering with Habitat for Humanity
3. Working with the AIDS community
4. Partnering with Cornerstone Church in the Fair Park area.

The leaders at IBC, however, are most excited about their work in with the public schools: "Five or six years ago we were disinvited from all the school campuses where our student ministers were going to have lunch with kids...*kicked out!* You know...first amendment, separation of church and state. We didn't make a big deal about it."²⁶¹

This turn of events could have discouraged IBC leaders and even sparked public criticism—even angry letters to the editors, as it has in so many churches. But the flexible learning culture of IBC prevailed:

²⁶⁰ McQuitty and Roese, "Personal Interview with the Author."

²⁶¹ Ibid.

[Then we discovered that] Sam Houston middle school is the lowest and poorest socioeconomic school in the Irving ISD. Ninety percent of the kids live in Title Ten government housing. Virtually no one has a real father. There is high ethnic diversity and little prospect for success.

We found out that a lot of the kids show up in the fall and they don't have basic rudimentary school supplies. We found out that for \$35 you can buy a backpack, notebooks, pens and all the stuff they need to get started for the year. So we put it out there to the congregation that they could buy a backpack filled with supplies. That first year we bought about 300 of them and just gave them to the kids. No big deal...we didn't put tracts in the backpacks or preach the gospel. We just gave them. The next year we had 600 plus backpacks.

Then we started praying for the kids. We put notes in the backpacks saying, "God bless you." And all of a sudden the staff and the administration realized, "Wow, there are no strings attached. They're just helping."

The next thing I know we're buying desk chairs for all the teachers because they're sitting on this old junky stuff. And they don't have decent equipment in their classrooms.

We're doing service projects to clear up the campus and beautify it. This service is producing some amazing breakthroughs. We started mentoring programs and lunch buddies. There was a program a month ago in which four ninth graders were honored. As seventh graders they didn't pass a single course, but they passed all their courses this year, and the only difference is that they worked with a mentor from IBC.²⁶²

Because of their effectiveness at serving in the public schools, they continue to look for unusual opportunities in the Irving ISD and to mobilize church members to meet them.

Steve remembers that parent-teacher nights were difficult at the Sam Houston middle school: "Several years ago they only had 87 parents show up. They said, 'Can you help us with this?' So we put on a carnival and gave free hot dogs. And 500 parents showed up. From 87 to 500 parents!"²⁶³

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

Many evangelical Christian organizations have been critical of the public schools, even, in some cases, suggesting that Christians should pull out altogether.²⁶⁴ It may, therefore, seem counterintuitive to serve within the American public school culture, but Andy has a different perspective: “I think public schools are ground zero for the culture. Every cultural issue surfaces there, from drug abuse to broken homes to sexual promiscuity. It is ground zero for all of this! [But since we’re dealing] with young people there is opportunity to reclaim and redeem.”²⁶⁵

Just recently IBC experienced a major breakthrough in their serving ministry within the Irving ISD:

The amazing full circle is this: We got an invitation from the superintendent of schools of the Irving ISD about two months ago. Parents were coming to the teachers at school saying, “Our kids are out of control and we don’t know how to discipline them.”

There are 33 school campuses in the ISD. The superintendent approached Irving Bible Church, based on our work, and said, “Can you come and teach parents on our campus how to discipline our kids?”

This is the school district that kicked us off five years ago [saying], “We don’t want your influence.” Now they’re asking us to come and lead them. A member of the Irving Chamber of Commerce has been trying to increase the quality of education in the Irving ISD, but he...realizes that you can’t change the quality of the schools until you change the parents and their relationship with the kids. We’re thinking we will have a chance to have a presence on every public school campus. And it just started with buying some backpacks.²⁶⁶

Modeled by the Senior Pastor

This *missional* vision raises an interesting leadership question: Where does the senior pastor serve? When asked that question, Andy responded that he frequently serves

²⁶⁴ Several denominations have suggested this, some even making official pronouncements, most notably the Southern Baptists.

²⁶⁵ McQuitty and Roese, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

alongside the body, “swinging hammers with the Habitat guys and stringing Christmas tree lights in inner city neighborhoods.”²⁶⁷

But consistent with the emerging service culture at IBC, Andy seeks to work in line with his gifts and personal passion. Since his teen years, Andy has enjoyed riding motorcycles. So now, each Christmas, Andy gathers with other bikers and delivers presents doing what he loves: riding his Harley!

Summary

IBC did not begin their *missional* initiatives in a systematic organized way but rather in an organic way. They discovered what people in their church were already doing. They affirmed their service, and they sought to partner with them while having a “serve the servants” mindset.

While IBC engages in a wide variety of *missional* ventures, they feel their finest work is with the public schools. Their years of patient service continue to open doors.

The Worship Shift

The final component of this hypothesis has to do with how worship begins to change as a church becomes more *missional*. The operative principle is this: As a church moves in a *missional* direction, the function of the main worship event of the church changes to reflect the church’s newfound passion to meaningfully engage the community. In IBC’s case, this meant they had to deal with the problems in the Seeker/Performance model.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

The Challenges of the Seeker/Performance Model

An inherent temptation is found in the seeker-performance model of worship: preoccupation with continuous evaluation and improvement.²⁶⁸

Seeker-performance worship teams tend to embrace the notion that they need to match the excellence of the secular world in their services. Lighting needs to be professional, sound systems state of the art, vocalists and instrumentalists near professional. Consequently, many seeker-performance worship leaders develop large budgets and hire professionals in an attempt to increase the quality of the music.

The leading question after a service might be, “Did we do well enough to excite our members and retain our visitors? How might we do better next week?” Worship planning meetings often become strategy sessions on how to satisfy the consumer rather than engaging people in the mystery and majesty of God.

Russ commented on this seeker/performance mindset when he said, “I remember a day when we used to talk about things like, “We need to get our flyers out for the next series, because we don’t want somebody to miss a Sunday and think, ‘Dang it, I missed something, I missed number three in the series!’”

The seeker-performance orientation places tremendous pressure on the worship pastor, and it was just this sort of pressure that precipitated Russ Ware’s Easter Sunday crisis in 2003 leading him to question this model of ministry.

²⁶⁸ Several missional thinkers have suggested this including Minatrea, “Personal Interview with the Author,” (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 26 July 2007); Russ Ware, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

Russ Ware's Shift in Thinking

During his time away from IBC, Russ read about what was happening in the emergent church, especially those worship forms that emphasized participative ways of engaging with God:

By the time I came back, part of my ministry excitement [was the] whole emergent thing, [and] it led me to a lot of ancient faith stuff. Probably the biggest thing intriguing me when I was gone, and getting ready to come back, was this sort of post-denominational stuff. That was really lighting my fire big time. It was sort of connected with ancient faith, with all that might mean. I realize that is a very nebulous term, but when I came back that kind of impact began to happen almost immediately.²⁶⁹

Rather than crafting services specifically to attract the seeker or to retain the Christian consumer, Russ and Andy began planning services so that the gathered IBC community could enjoy God's presence in a spiritual way that fostered passion for the mission.

Changes in Worship

According to Russ, the changes in the worship services seem to fall into the following three areas.

Simple Worship

Rather than ramping up more drama and special music, Andy and Russ brought in worship forms traditionally associated with pre-modern forms of spirituality: silence, kneeling, and reading Scripture aloud—even responsively, in the service. Yet

²⁶⁹ Russ Ware, "Personal Interview with the Author."

they wed these traditional forms with strong biblical teaching and contemporary music—sung in a more contemplative way.

At the heart of their worship today is *The Revised Common Lectionary of the Anglican Church*.²⁷⁰ This has become the foundation for their worship planning, and yet, they are not constrained by this in any way. At times, they combine the lectionary with other denominational, even Catholic, forms of worship.

Russ describes the development of their new worship:

I tell people, we are not looking for things to reject; we are looking for things to embrace. So [we've begun to include things] like... the Methodist Covenant prayer...or these very traditional, very liturgical, dialogs before communion and before baptism, and all these kinds of things.

[In time, these forms] began to expand more, and it wasn't long before we were talking "[historic] church calendar", and then it wasn't long after that we were talking *lectionary*. And I could talk for hours on what I think the impact of that has been, because I think it's been remarkable. I think the lectionary completely...finally...ultimately shatters the tyranny of the seeker mentality: "What's the next series going to be? What's the next big thing that's culturally relevant? Let's make our brochure for the next seven weeks."²⁷¹

One might ask whether Andy—the pastor who led IBC into megachurch status based on the seeker/performance model, is comfortable with all this: "We are very liturgical very much back to the traditions of the church, and there are not a lot of bells and whistles. We have worship and teaching. Sunday has simplified. We have time to be with God and respond. It's simple and it's satisfying!"²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Michael Perham, ed., *Revised Common Lectionary, Rev. Ed.*, (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1998).

²⁷¹ Russ Ware, "Personal Interview with the Author."

²⁷² McQuitty and Roese, "Personal Interview with the Author."

Highly Participative Worship

Milfred Minitrea, author and consultant to *missional* churches, observes that the more a congregation shifts toward a *missional* philosophy of ministry, the more worship will shift as well: “In *missional* worship the gathered body of Christ is presenting themselves to the Triune God *who sends*. The critical issue is not excellence but authenticity...not experiencing a ‘perfectly scripted service’ but experiencing the presence of God” (emphasis mine).²⁷³

From the time that Russ returned in November 2004 to present, worship has become increasingly participational. The following list reflects the flavor of this change:

1. If worshippers have seen God answer a prayer in the previous week they are invited to come forward and light a candle. If an IBC member helped a person come into a personal relationship with Christ, they light a red candle.²⁷⁴
2. If worshippers want to express a need, there is a bulletin board on an easel where they can express that need. Worshippers are then invited to come forward after the service and see if there is a need that they can meet.
3. The communion elements are set up at stations around the church. Ushers cue worshippers that they are free to come forward and take the Lord’s Supper by intinction.²⁷⁵ Many worshippers kneel on kneelers at the front of the stage and engage in prayer.
4. The vocabulary of the worship service has been broadened from traditional evangelical expressions. For instance each year, IBC celebrates Lent with a very meaningful journey toward the cross.
5. They have embraced the idea of “the postmodern cathedral”. This includes using slides, lights and candles, to create a physical expression of the

²⁷³ Milfred Minatrea, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

²⁷⁴ They discovered that the Catholic supply store was their best source for candles and lighters.

²⁷⁵ Intinction refers to the act of immersing a portion of the bread into a bowl of grape juice and then consuming it. This method of communion enabled IBC to easily serve worshippers coming forward for the elements.

ancient faith.²⁷⁶ In IBC's case, Cameron Ware utilizes slides that shine on various parts of the auditorium. These images are not captured on a screen, nevertheless, the images are still discernable and create a worshipful atmosphere.²⁷⁷

When Russ speaks about the interplay of worship and mission, he casts it in organic terms:

[Worship now] is an interplay of responding...sending...responding...sending. And that puts it in very *missional* terms. Now, we are *being* the church out in the community, but then we come together to respond to the life of the Spirit in us individually and as a community. And then we're sent again, both individually and as a community, to go on mission.²⁷⁸

Occasionally, Russ or one of the other worship leaders use a responsive reading from the Anglican lectionary combined with times for reflection. Regarding the Lectionary, Russ observes,

We're using the lectionary every Sunday. But, we've told people that we're not tied to it. We're free to part from it, but we haven't yet. What we've been doing is using the gospel passage...and basically...preaching the Gospel

²⁷⁶ Cameron Ware, "Personal Interview with the Author," (Irving, TX: Irving Bible Church, 29 July 2007).

²⁷⁷ Shane Hipps suggests that, "As images become major elements of the culture, critical reasoning gives way to a preference for the experiential and the intuitive. For the church, the result is a new appreciation for Eastern Orthodox practices and a retrieval of the medieval Catholic Church. Much of Eastern Orthodox theology is wrapped around the use of images and icons as part of worship, and the practice of contemplating icons is gaining popularity in the west. Shane Hipps, "But Now I See: Words Once Dominated Western Culture, but Now Images Are Changing Everything from Our Theology and Preaching to the Way Our Brains Process Information," *Leadership* (Summer 2007), 22.

²⁷⁸ Russ Ware, "Personal Interview with the Author."

passages every week. Each week I try to weave one of two of the other [Scripture] items into worship, or even into the teaching, because they're designed to relate.²⁷⁹

One visitor expressed his first impression of worship at IBC this way: "The whole of the experience seems greater than the sum of its parts. Each part of the worship service, taken by itself was good, but the entire effect was deeply spiritual. I left sensing that I had communed with God."²⁸⁰

Including Stories in Worship

In both the traditional Bible church model and the seeker model, the senior teachers present well-structured sermons that provide little room for interaction. One highly noticeable change since Russ' return is that Andy invites laypeople to tell their stories during time-slots in the service that used to be reserved for his message: "We're always looking for opportunities to bring people forward to tell their story," says Steve.²⁸¹

Summary

With Russ' return in November 2004, IBC began to shift its worship approach from a seeker-performance model to a *missional* model of worship. Rather than seeking excellence to attract and retain, they are seeking authentic engagement with God with the profound sense that they are a *missional* community sent into the City of Irving by the resurrected Christ.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Roese, "Group Interview with the Author."

Summary and Conclusion – Irving Bible Church

Irving Bible Church encountered two crises: The crisis of 1986 brought Andy McQuitty to IBC. Andy's gracious leadership style allowed IBC to transition from a traditional Bible Church to a contemporary megachurch with tremendous influence in Irving and around the world.

The crisis of 2002-2005 caused the staff to ask, "How does an externally successful church engage the surrounding culture like Jesus would?" As they asked questions, and read books, and listened to the congregation, they formulated the beginnings of an answer: it begins with selfless service, and it culminates with authentic worship.

In general, it seems that *missional* leaders facing a cultural crisis shift from focusing on their *local church* as first priority to seeing *God's kingdom* as first priority. Their church and its welfare cease to be the end but rather becomes the means to the end.

The next church to be examined is Christ Chapel Bible Church located in Fort Worth, Texas.

Christ Chapel Bible Church -- History

The History of Christ Chapel Bible Church can be divided into three periods: an initial period stretching from c.a. 1979 to 1986, a growth period stretching from 1986 to 2002, and a *missional* period, which began in late 2002. Interestingly, IBC and CCBC encountered their two main crises in exactly the same year.

The Initial Period – From Inception to the Crisis of 1986

Birth and Organization

Christ Chapel Bible Church was birthed out of two separate conflicts erupting at McKinney Memorial Bible Church in 1979, a division among the staff and a conflict

among the elders. Seeking to make the best of a difficult situation, a sixty-person splinter group, composed of people from six different churches, met to lay the groundwork for a new church.²⁸²

Two former McKinney staff members, Jack S. Deere and John Smeltzer, led the group. They would ultimately become the founding pastors of the new church. In these early days, Christ Chapel met in a series of homes before obtaining space in a defunct Baptist Church. Their first public service was celebrated on October 5, 1980.

In time, the pastoral responsibilities proved too demanding for Deere and Smeltzer. Deere was teaching Hebrew and pursuing a Th.D. at Dallas Theological Seminary, and Smeltzer sustained a demanding counseling practice at the Fort Worth Counseling Center. After encouraging the two-man elder board to find a senior pastor, a search was initiated.

Jackie had known Ted Kitchens from their Young Life days when they were both enrolled in the Th.D. program at Dallas Seminary. They enjoyed working together and shared many of the same values. Ultimately, Ted was selected, and he joined the staff of the church on July 1, 1981, roughly nine months after the church began.

Ted's diverse background proved ideal for the new church. He was well-acquainted with the Fort Worth culture having grown up at Sagamore Hill Baptist Church and ultimately receiving a master's degree at Southwestern Theological Seminary.²⁸³ His doctoral training at Dallas Theological Seminary proved vital for the teaching ministry

²⁸² Bill Egner, *Learning from the Past to Guide Us into the Future: A 'First Person' Case Study* by Bill Egner, Executive Pastor Christ Chapel Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas, www.xpastor.org (accessed July 21, 2007). See also, Kitchens and Egner, *Interview by the Author*.

²⁸³ Fred Swank had a powerful influence on three Dallas area leaders: O.S. Hawkins served at First Baptist Church; Jack Graham served at Prestonwood Baptist Church, and Ted Kitchens has served at CCBC.

desired at CCBC, but it was his Young Life experience that provided the leadership engine for long-term ministry effectiveness at Christ Chapel.

According to executive pastor, Bill Egner, “Ted has a strongly entrepreneurial bent.”²⁸⁴ This bent allowed Ted to see beyond the walls of the church and encourage people to pursue ministries out in the community. From the beginning, Ted fostered a permission-giving culture that created a solid foundation for their *missional* transition.

When Ted arrived at CCBC, the church was functioning essentially as a new church plant with no offices, no telephone, and no program outside of the Sunday morning teaching.

The vision of the church in those early days was not *missional*. Taking its cues, in part, from Dallas Theological Seminary with its reputation for excellence in biblical exposition, Christ Chapel existed to provide the best biblical teaching in the city of Fort Worth.

According to Ted, “It wasn’t that we thought the city didn’t have any (Bible teaching), we just wanted to be the best there was.”²⁸⁵ For the next seven years, these three teachers equally rotated their preaching and teaching. Every six months, each would preach for two months and teach in an adult education format for four months.

The church enjoyed numerical growth over the next three years, and in February of 1984, they purchased the facility on Birkman Avenue, which formed the beachhead for their current campus.

Crisis and Split

In 1986, the church encountered its first significant crisis. Deere had been profoundly influenced by the writings of Christian psychiatrist and author, John White,

²⁸⁴ Egner, *Learning from the Past to Guide Us into the Future*, 5.

²⁸⁵ Kitchens and Egner, “Interview by the Author,” 2.

and sought to have White teach at an all-church conference. At the time, White lived in Anaheim and worked in John Wimber's fledgling Vineyard movement. During the exploratory phone call, White suggested he might teach on healing. Deere was shocked that White embraced belief in the operation of the sign gifts, but Deere respected White, and was open to listen to his views, albeit with some polite pushback.

At White's suggestion, Deere and Smeltzer traveled to various locations to hear Wimber speak and ultimately, visited Anaheim to attend a Vineyard Conference. Their growing attraction toward the signs and wonders movement proved highly divisive to the new church.²⁸⁶

Interestingly, when the church was founded, Deere and Smeltzer signed documents stating that if they ever changed their theology in such a way that it violated CCBC's doctrinal statement, they would immediately resign from the church.

Thinking they might, instead, shift the church into what they now considered orthodox and normative evangelical theology, they hesitated to submit their resignations.

Ultimately, Deere left in July of 1987, and Smeltzer resigned three months later. According to Ted, "When all the smoke settled, I was the one still standing."²⁸⁷

Summary

In the first period of CCBC's ministry, the church was blessed with exceptional expository teaching, but they struggled due to the following: (1) theological

²⁸⁶ A complete version of the story is contained in Jack S. Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: Discovering How God Speaks and Heals Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993). This researcher was a student of Dr. Deere in 1979 and profited tremendously from his teaching style and his pastoral heart. Moreover, he read Deere's book in its entirety to gain background for this dissertation and found it an outstanding piece of writing, well researched and warmly written. This researcher has high regard for Jack Deere.

²⁸⁷ Kitchens and Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author."

divisions caused by the importation of signs and wonders theology into a predominantly cessationist culture, and (2) the reticence for Deere and Smeltzer to resign quickly.

However, their departure allowed Ted to employ his gifts as the primary visionary leader of the church. In this area, Ted excelled.

Phase Two: From the Crisis of 1986 to the Crisis of 2002

After the church split of 1986, CCBC had a second start, a re-planting. While Ted might not have stated it this way at the time, his agenda, in retrospect, was to heal and stabilize. This was accomplished and more. During this period, CCBC grew from a small Bible church into a megachurch with over two thousand in attendance in weekend services. This growth can be viewed in two phases.

The Years 1986 to 1997

The theme during this phase was quality and capacity. Through Kitchens' outstanding preaching and music minister Louis Harris' traditional forms of worship, increasing numbers of people were attracted to the Sunday worship experience.

The Sunday Worship Experience

Ted met Louis during their time together at Sagamore Hill Baptist Church in east Fort Worth, and he invited him to join the staff of CCBC in 1984, two years before the crisis. Bill Egner describes Louis as a "larger than life guy" and a "genius" at leading musicians to perform at a high level.²⁸⁸ This may be due, in part, to his experience as a high school music director, but under Louis' leadership, the worship at CCBC went in a counterintuitive direction.

²⁸⁸ Bill Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author."

From the beginning of his tenure at CCBC, the Sunday morning worship experience at Christ Chapel was traditional. It was founded on a full orchestra providing a rich backdrop for hymns and a smattering of praise choruses. Many of the musicians were employed as professional musicians during the week and served CCBC on the weekends as their volunteer ministry.

It must be emphasized that as CCBC grew, their Sunday morning worship experience was counterintuitive to what was happening around much of America.

At a time when many Bible churches were morphing into megachurches and adopting the more contemporary worship forms pioneered at flagship megachurches such as Willow Creek or Saddleback, CCBC stayed relatively traditional.

Harris, however, not only maintained CCBC's traditional worship forms but also worked hard to continually increase their quality. Staying the course in this area proved a strong asset to CCBC. Many people came to CCBC, because their traditional Sunday morning worship fit with the arts bent of this particular section of Fort Worth.

Eventually, as they grew, CCBC did introduce more contemporary forms of worship at their 9:15 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. services.

The Infrastructure

During this time, the elders and staff also worked hard to develop the infrastructure of the church. Shortly after the split, CCBC did something that few Bible churches were doing at the time: they hired their first executive pastor, Chad Wheeler.²⁸⁹ Wheeler's hire was strategic in empowering Ted to be the strongest leader he could possibly be.

²⁸⁹ While Chad ultimately died of liver cancer, the stage was set for the eventual hire of Bill Egner who would provide executive leadership during their missional transition.

Ted can best be described as an intuitive-visionary and not a strategic planner. Ted functions best when he can generate ideas, cast vision, and get others to execute. The permission-giving ministry-culture that Ted fostered required a leader with specific skills such as Chad—and later Bill, to impose discipline on the implementation process. Chad ministered at CCBC for ten years before he tragically succumbed to liver cancer.

One of the models they adopted during this time was the life-stage system of pastoral care. As newcomers were enfolded into the life of the church, they were able to build strong relationships with each other and with their life-stage pastors.

Other infrastructural ministries were also set in place during this time including strong kids', youth and women's ministries.

According to Bill Egner, "Ted is a branch and prune guy. His entrepreneurial bent drives him to try new things, examine the results and then strengthen it or drop it."²⁹⁰

Ted's branch and prune style of leadership during this time, coupled with Chad's executive abilities, produced high levels of quality within the various ministries.

The Years 1997 to 2002

A New Executive Pastor

Bill Egner came to CCBC in 1997 with gifts well-suited for an executive pastor. Called out of the aerospace industry in California, Bill sensed God's leadership toward full-time ministry and enrolled at Dallas Theological Seminary. Upon graduation, he was hired as the life-stage three pastor: "But his gifts and skills became so evident to

²⁹⁰ Ted Kitchens and Bill Egner, "Interview by the Author."

the board that when it came time to find an executive pastor, the members of the board knew Egner was the exact fit for the church.”²⁹¹

The Stage is Set

Shortly after Bill arrived, two important threads set the stage for their eventual *missional* transition.

First, Bill presented a comprehensive spiritual growth plan to Ted that included service to the wider community. This was a strong value for Bill, and this had also been on Ted’s radar screen as early as 1996 when he launched *Community Ministries* and the *Judean Committee* as an outreach arm of the church. Both committees were charged with helping the needy in Fort Worth link with existing resources,²⁹² but due to inconsistent leadership, the committee languished over the next seven years.²⁹³

By 2001, Ted and Bill became aware of Robert Lewis’ *Church of Irresistible Influence*, and attended an early *i2* conference with select members of the staff. They were excited about the possibilities of reaching outside the walls of the church. Egner suggests that this external focus was a strong part of Ted’s ministry DNA:

While most of his passion for entrepreneurship undoubtedly comes from his own DNA, some of it may also be a kind of reaction against a tradition in churches that he may have perceived, along the lines of, ‘the only legitimate ministries in which to serve are those found within the church walls.’ In other words, ‘You may serve

²⁹¹ Rez Gopez-Sindac, *The C I Interview—Bill Egner, Executive Pastor, Christ Chapel Bible Church* (December 2003) www.churchexecutive.com/articleprint.asp?print=1&IndexID=261 (accessed July 22, 2008).

²⁹² Egner, *Learning from the Past to Guide Us into the Future: A ‘First Person’ Case Study by Bill Egner, Executive Pastor Christ Chapel Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas*. Available from www.xpastor.org (assessed 21 July 2007) 9.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

anywhere you like as long as it's in one of our internal church ministries.' But to a spiritual entrepreneur like Ted that ministry field is much too constricting.²⁹⁴

However, the pressing demands of the ministry in 2001 and early 2002 preempted external focus from being a strong priority.

A second thread proved key as they were about to face their crisis. According to Bill,

In the summer of 2002, Christ Chapel received a fax from Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, CA describing the opportunity to become one of the 'first wave' of churches to host a '40-Days of Purpose' all-church, spiritual growth campaign.... The ensuing spiritual results that fall were fairly profound, probably best summarized by a renewed sense of commitment to God's calling not only at the individual level, but on the corporate spiritual life.²⁹⁵

This campaign experience provided an important key to weathering the crisis that came next.

Summary

From 1997 to 2002, under Ted Kitchen's leadership, Christ Chapel Bible Church moved from the brokenness of a church split into a megachurch that remained highly sensitive to the indigenous culture of their particular region of Fort Worth.

This growth was accomplished as Ted fostered a permission-giving, entrepreneurial culture within the church, coupled with his "branch and prune" method of nurturing ministry.²⁹⁶ It was also accomplished through a high quality worship experience skillfully tailored to their particular section of Fort Worth: the Arts District.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ted Kitchens and Bill Enger, "Personal Interview with the Author."

Anyone looking from the outside would feel that CCBC was well-poised to continue on their trajectory of explosive growth, but the crisis that came next significantly altered their ministry direction.

The Hypothesis Revisited

To grasp what happened next, it is important to restate the hypothesis: Church leaders, who cultivate *missional* change, have typically encountered a significant crisis. For the crisis to spark *missional* change, the crisis must be large enough to bring the key leaders in the church to a place of brokenness so that they are open to a new direction.

When that crisis is responded to in a spirit of humility and discovery, it creates an environment where *missional* culture-change can take place within the church. This *missional* culture-change is expressed in two primary ways: service to the community—an external change, and in participative worship as a community—an internal change.

As in the previous case study of Irving Bible Church²⁹⁷, the above hypothesis suggests the same four areas of inquiry: crisis, learning in the midst of culture-change, a different way of thinking about corporate worship, and an emerging external focus.

The Crisis – 2002-2005

A Parking Problem

Like the proverbial frog in the kettle, a problem was brewing that interfered significantly with CCBC's relationship with its neighbors.

When CCBC purchased the property on Birkman Avenue in 1984, which is in the historic Arlington Heights neighborhood, the facility had been part of the neighborhood for about thirty years. With a mere twenty-seven parking spaces, the lot

²⁹⁷ See also, Rod MacIlvaine, "Missional Journey: How Irving Bible Church Reinvented Itself Twice and Cultivated a Missional Ministry" (D. Min. Case Study, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2007).

was barely adequate for a church of 100 much less a church of several thousand. Naturally, people began to park up and down the surrounding streets.

Because the neighborhood had been built prior to World War II, the streets and driveways were narrow. If someone parked too close to the edge of the driveway, the neighbors could not enter or exit their own properties.

Each Easter, the church sent out hundreds of Easter baskets to neighbors expressing their thanks and sympathy for the inconvenience that strained neighborhood relations.

While some undoubtedly appreciated this gesture, most remained frustrated. Each year, the church received nasty letters to the effect that, "I hope you don't think this is going to appease my family for you parking in front of our house."²⁹⁸

Increasingly, neighbors engaged in passive-aggressive retaliation. Case in point: neighbors would conspire to turn on sprinklers just prior to the time church let out, showering church members as they attempted to get into their cars. According to Ted, the parking problem "became like an infection. Like a yeast...it spread."²⁹⁹

Because of this, CCBC hired off-duty policemen to assist with the traffic flow, and they rented parking spaces adjacent to their property. This allowed them to shuttle people at a cost of \$75,000 per year. On the basis of financial expenditure alone, it could be argued that CCBC was working hard to preserve relations with neighbors.

Nevertheless, the Arlington Heights community experienced growing frustration with the church, and when they discovered a building campaign was in the works, the tension exploded.

²⁹⁸ Kitchens and Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author."

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

A Building Campaign

For many years, late-arriving visitors and members of CCBC would approach the crowded church, drive around the block, and not find a parking place. Frustrated, they would ultimately drive away. Ted knew this was a growing problem but had been reticent to engage in a building program, “partly because [he] didn’t want to go through the pain of the whole fundraising endeavor.”³⁰⁰

But by 2002, CCBC had grown to four full services with people regularly overflowing into two separate rooms to view the service by video. Christmas Eve 2002 was ground zero for their decision to build. According to Ted, “Hundreds and hundreds of people came to this candlelight service...it was a total nightmare...we had people standing outside with candles...and that’s when I began to think, ‘We’ve got to do something. We need some space.’”³⁰¹

Eight months later, they initiated a stewardship campaign called, “Building Lost Habits, Restoring Lost Values.”³⁰² In the campaign, Ted presented the vision of the church and the 7.5 million dollar campaign goal. One month later, in September of 2003, they scheduled a meeting in the fellowship hall of the church to inform the neighborhood about their plans.

The chairman of the building campaign assumed that few people would show up. He was wrong.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Egner, *Learning from the Past to Guide us to the Future*, 4

Conflict Erupts

According to Ted, they did show up, “and they had teeth and bats. If you’ve ever seen Frankenstein where they finally storm the castle to get Frankenstein and to kill the beast...well...we were the beast.”³⁰³

The leaders of CCBC discovered that a lot of people in the community were anti-faith; more than a few were part of the gay community, and so, the fight was on.

Signs were placed on the front lawns of 144 of the single family properties surrounding the church. Picketers showed up for several weeks wielding signs with slogans that declared, “Stop this church.” Local Fort Worth television studios sent crews to film the chaos, and the rumors about the church’s real estate dealings began to appear in tabloid newspapers.

A particularly damaging article appeared in the September 17, 2003 issue of the FW Weekly Metropolis, entitled, “A Wide Bible Belt.” In the article, author Betty Brink claimed, “The church’s minister, Ted Kitchens, and his wife, Lynn, live in Aledo, and records show they own close to \$1 million worth of properties in Aledo, Arlington, and Fort Worth.... Kitchens did not return Fort Worth Weekly’s phone calls.”³⁰⁴

The allegation was wholly unfounded, but it was fueled by the fact that many of the people who came to CCBC were from an upscale socioeconomic bracket. According to Ted, many came in Suburbans and Jaguars. It gave the impression that this was a rich church that did not care about its working class neighbors. Again, it was not true, but the impression became the reality in the minds of the church’s neighbors.

In her article, Brink took her allegations to another level.

³⁰³ Kitchens and Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

³⁰⁴ Betty Brink, “A Wide Bible Belt,” *Forth Worth Weekly* (Sep 17, 2003), <http://www.fwweekly.com/content.asp?article=1892> (assessed 26 July 2008) 1.

Swartzfager [leader of the grassroots neighborhood campaign to shut down the building program] likened the church's tactics to that of a "heartless corporation." One tactic the church has used, Swartzfager said, is to buy and bulldoze a house or two in the middle of the block near a home owned by an older widow or heirs. Then, with empty lots in the middle of the block, devaluing the houses on either side, the church makes an offer to "take the houses off their hands before the value decreases even more."³⁰⁵

Reality was quite different: CCBC had been purchasing homes surrounding the church. Some of the homes had come up for sale, others had been abandoned, and some were havens for drug dealers. CCBC was committed to purchasing these homes with integrity, paying full market price, and often above market price. Typically, homes were torn down to make way for additional buildings or parking space.

In the midst of the public outcry from the neighborhood, Ted received a call from the self-appointed leader of the neighborhood opposition.³⁰⁶ He said, "I think we can put this all to rest," if we set up a meeting at a neutral location. A neighborhood meeting was scheduled at the library of the local high school, and over 100 people from the neighborhood attended. According to Ted, "It was the most horrendous thing I have ever seen."³⁰⁷ Screaming, threats, and put-downs characterized the two-hour meeting. As person after person came to the podium, Ted became the lightning rod for the pent up anger of the neighborhood. Moreover, a Texas Christian University professor who heard about the conflict through the media was in attendance. His comments as a self-appointed expert added fuel to the fire.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ The Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association had been formed in October of 1999, and had a strong organizational base.

³⁰⁷ Kitchens and Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author."

Often as the services at CCBC were ending, church members were greeted with angry neighbors in a picket line wielding and shaking their signs. When Ted and Lynn arrived at their car, there were nasty notes under their windshield wipers.

Both Ted and Bill suggest that the crisis was so severe that they lost weight and sleep, but as the conflict wore on, they made some outstanding decisions.

Humility and Learning in the Crisis

A Framework for Understanding Crisis

The concepts of marginality and liminality, presented and discussed in the literature review, provide a helpful framework for better understanding how Kitchens and Egner approached the crisis.

Marginality

Marginality refers to the increasingly relativized status of churches within the context of North American postmodernity. *Missional* writers argue that as late modernity has shifted into postmodernity, the role of the church within the culture changed in ways that most leaders did not recognize.

For centuries, the church in North America had been seen as the chaplain to a culture that was predominantly Christian. The idea was, “Come to us and we will help you know God and make life work.” But in the postmodern context, the church, with its high view of absolute truth and strong views about morality, was viewed as a source of antagonism that was resisting society’s multicultural and relativistic drift.

Many churches saw themselves as fortresses against the encroaching darkness. Leaders were thus content to lob grenades of criticism into what they perceived as a decaying culture. But then, as those grenades exploded, they would retreat back into the fortresses of their churches, leaving people essentially unchanged.

While harsh critiques of culture got some traction in previous historical eras which were more sympathetic to the Christian worldview, these grenade-like critiques were now being interpreted through the postmodern worldview. And rather than producing life-change, they enflamed anger.

According to Roxburgh, “In late modernity, churches increasingly find themselves in a vast free market of spirituality and choices of complex proportions. They have become but one more special interest group anxiously seeking a market niche in the culture.”³⁰⁸

While the church, in general, is experiencing marginalization on a macro scale in Western Culture³⁰⁹, many local churches are experiencing marginalization on a micro scale as well, as they consider the immediate culture in which they find themselves.

The church facility on Birkman Avenue was constructed originally—long before CCBC moved in, to be a neighborhood church under the Christendom model: small local church meeting needs in the immediate vicinity.

But by the crisis in 2002, the culture had shifted: the Christendom model was obsolete. Indeed, the anti-faith people who lived in the Arlington Heights neighborhood had no use for any church. Moreover, the church had become regional, and therefore it was perceived as being largely irrelevant to the needs of its immediate neighborhood. It is easy to see why neighborhood leaders adopted the “heartless corporation” label and expressed hatred toward the church.

³⁰⁸ Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation: Leadership & Liminality* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997), 13.

³⁰⁹ See for instance David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

Liminality

Liminality comes from the Latin term *limin* which means, “threshold.” It “describes the transition process accompanying a change of state or social position.”³¹⁰ While marginalization is the external state of change that one cannot control. *Liminality* describes the internal change processes that can be controlled through our responses.

What CCBC does with their marginalized status is the process of *liminality*. Theoretically, they could have said, “We have been here since 1981, long before most of you were here. And we are going to win this battle.” Or, they could have sold the property and left the area. But CCBC embraced neither stance; rather, they accepted that they were in a liminal experience, and they applied four attitudes.

First, they embraced their brokenness. Ted saw the incongruity of the neighborhood’s hatred of the church, and in discussions with Bill and Ted, this researcher got the impression that they *grieved* over that incongruity.

This is how Mr. Kitchens described the experience:

We would pull up to the church and there would be 147 signs in the yards around the church saying, “Stop This Church Expansion,” and “Historical District” and “We’re Taking Back Our Neighborhood.” And we asked ourselves, “How could we be in this neighborhood for 20 years and have the community hate us? And I want to put the emphasis on hate.”³¹¹

Their brokenness was compounded by the public nature of the allegations. Not only were inflammatory statements made in local newspapers, but the story was eventually published in the Wall Street Journal, giving it national attention.

³¹⁰ Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation: Leadership & Liminality*, 23.

³¹¹ Kitchens and Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

The incongruity of this situation comes from a set of clear biblical values: Jesus called us to love our enemies (Matt 5:44). Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Luke 7:34). Jesus called us to love our neighbor (Mark 12:31). Their initial response of grief was consistent with biblical revelation.

As a result of this grief, the elder board committed to humble prayer: “We also spent a lot of time in prayer on the elder board, together and individually, not only about where we were going [as a church] but also, ‘what are we going to do *now*?’ And as I recall there were times of confession and repentance as if we had done something wrong.”³¹²

This led to a second condition. Their brokenness moved them to communicate skillfully to the congregation. To use a term made popular by Max Dupree, Ted engaged in “lavish communication” with the congregation on a weekly basis as their visible crisis progressed.³¹³

At least twice per month, Ted would move away from the pulpit, and according to Egner, say something like this: “‘Right now, I want to have a family chat. If you are a guest this morning, a special welcome to you, but I just need to spend a few minutes discussing some family business.’ Then [Ted] would give his update. ‘You’ve heard things on TV. You’ve read things in the newspaper and here’s the progress we’ve made.’ And Ted would end most family chats with these words: ‘It is incongruous that you could have a community that hates the church that is in the middle of it.’”³¹⁴

³¹² Kitchens and Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author,” 6.

³¹³ Max Depree, *Leadership as an Art* (New York, NY: Dell, 1990), 67.

³¹⁴ Kitchens and Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author,” 6.

These visionary family talks were essential in helping the congregation and the communities understand the humble heart of the leaders and their vision for reconciliation.

Next, they sought to steward their position in the neighborhood, even as they sought a win-win solution. CCBC had a stake in the neighborhood. Their church culture had grown, in part, because of their position at the edge of the cultural district. While moving was theoretically possible, staying was preferable. To steward their position, the leaders made some outstanding decisions.

The church hired a media consultant to train Bill in the finer points of handling the media. According to Ted, “Bill did a superb job of telling the media that we love our neighbors.”³¹⁵

Additionally, the church formed a committee of “very astute and wise men”³¹⁶ to work with their city councilman, and ultimately, the city council for the purpose of resolving the situation. Over a period of several months, they worked out an agreement that included parameters on how far into the neighborhood they would go and how they would handle parking.

This eventually proved to be a huge boon to the church. The city council approved a three story-parking garage that would honor the needs of the neighborhood and meet the needs of the church. Amazingly, the city council agreed to a bridge from the parking garage to the church that would cross a neighborhood road. This is a unique arrangement in the city of Fort Worth.

This led to a fourth experience as they went through their *liminal* stage. They turned their sights onto their immediate neighborhood and asked the question, “What can

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

we do in this neighborhood?” At this point, Robert Lewis’ book *Church of Irresistible Influence* was back on their radar screen. Their previous experience at an *i2* conference in Little Rock came back to mind. This gave them some sense of direction about how they might begin to be the transforming presence of Christ in their neighborhood.

Evaluation of the Crisis

CCBC’s extraordinarily difficult year (2002-2003) raises several important observations about *missional* transitions. The first observation comes directly from the hypothesis: for *missional* change to take place in a church, the senior leaders must be brought to a place of brokenness.

While the Bible records no specific self-disclosure of Paul’s brokenness in the weeks prior to the Macedonian vision in Acts 16:6-9, it would seem that the closed doors preceding that vision must have been frustrating.

Yet, out of that painful experience God brought new direction for ministry—direction that he most likely would not have received otherwise. Indeed, in another place, Paul discloses that while in Asia, he “was burdened excessively beyond [his] strength so that [he] even despaired of life” (2 Cor 1:8).

For Kitchens and Egner, the pain went far beyond what they thought they could bear, and yet, out of that brokenness came *missional* direction.

Another observation that flows out of this year of crisis comes from Roxburgh and Romanuk: “God’s future emerges from God’s people nonlinearly and unpredictably. Alignment assumes it’s possible to define outcomes from the front end. Such certainty is impossible in a context of discontinuous change. Alignment does not take place at the

front end of a transformation; it emerges from experiments, dialogue, and [new] engagements....”³¹⁷

For more than twenty years, Kitchens’ relationships with his executive pastors created outstanding alignment at the front end. Egner, with his aerospace engineering background, was highly geared to front end alignment.

But for *missional* transformation to take place, a crisis had to come first – before the new direction was discernable. This crisis sparked radical trust, and the *missional* future of CCBC began to emerge as Roxburgh and Romanuk suggest, in a nonlinear and unpredictable way.³¹⁸

Another observation has to do with Kitchens’ and Egner’s learning styles. In separate interviews, the team evidenced a phenomenon that Edgar Schien calls the “fuzzy vision” model³¹⁹. In this model, the leader states that the present is intolerable, and needs to change, but does not offer specifics. It is up to others in the organization to roll up their sleeves and work directly to foster the change.

Case in point: During the crisis, Kitchens met with the mayor and said, “If there is anything we can do for the city, let us know. We are here for you.”³²⁰ The mayor spoke broadly on a range of issues, but no one issue jumped out to Ted at the time.

Later that same day, Egner debriefed Ted on the discussion and noticed a pattern. The mayor was passionate about an under-resourced section of Fort Worth

³¹⁷ Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 64.

³¹⁸ Roxburgh and Romanuk’s model of responding to crisis and discontinuous change fits perfectly with the experience of CCBC’s senior leaders. See Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 64. See also, 45, 100, 104.

³¹⁹ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd Ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 315.

³²⁰ Kitchens and Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author.”

located in close proximity to CCBC: the Como district. In time, that area would become the focus of their *missional* activity.

It took Ted's fuzzy vision, "We're here for you," coupled with Bill's ability to notice patterns and discern direction. This pattern of fuzzy vision coupled with team discovery is a consistent pattern in *missional* transitions.

The Culture-Change

Culture and Its Application to CCBC

Schein's view of culture is appropriate to their CCBC's situation in the crisis. According to Schein culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that are learned as a group solves problems. As those problems are negotiated successfully, those assumptions become "frozen"—normative, and then are taught as strong values in the context of the transition story.³²¹

CCBC's culture prior to the crisis included three strong elements. First, there was a strong sense of competency. The worship and teaching were outstanding. Infrastructural elements were in place. The church enjoyed consistent growth into megachurch status, and finances were never a problem.

A second component of the culture included a sense of winsomeness. This came largely through the natural winsomeness of Ted's personality and his ability to attract similarly winsome leaders to his staff. Egner suggests that Ted is the kind of leader that makes people feel he has a personal relationship with them, simply through the Sunday morning worship experience.

Finally, the culture is socio-economically upscale. Even a casual observer might detect this from the kind of cars in the parking lot and the dress of the members.

³²¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 338-339

Competency, winsomeness, and financial means are a wonderful combination when they flow from the blessing of God, but they do not naturally lead a church to understand its brokenness and minister to those on the margins of society.

It is only when a crisis takes place that God's people begin to look past their own comfort and their personal needs to notice people struggling on the margins. This idea is borne out both by the Bible and history.

Viewed through the lens of the Bible, Jesus' ministry was directed to those on the margins. Isaiah quotes the Messiah as saying, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners, and to proclaim the favorable day of the Lord" (Isa 61:1-2a).

If Jesus was sent to people on the margins, then this should be a high priority in the ministry of the local church.

Viewed through the lens of history, Rodney Stark points out, contrary to Harnack,³²² that the early Christians were not the impoverished "down and outs" of society, but rather the middle class and upper class living in cities (33-313 A.D.).

As a series of crises hit the Roman Empire Christians with means were motivated to extend themselves to those who lacked means.³²³ The crises sparked *missional* faithfulness.

The crisis of 2002 disrupted the natural sense of competence within the culture CCBC producing a brokenness, which made them open to *missional* ministry.

³²² Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 32.

³²³ Ibid. See also, Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

Interpreting the Culture-Change in Light of Roxburgh and Romanuk's Work

As in the previous case study, the culture-change at CCBC can be seen against the backdrop of the three-zone model of *missional* leadership.³²⁴

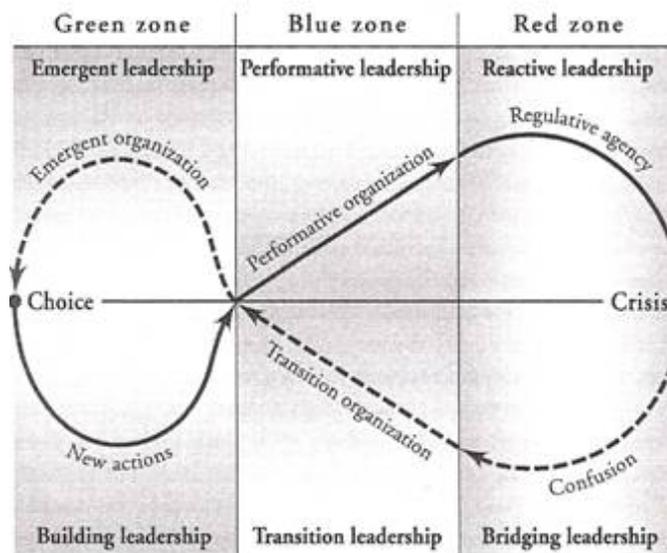


Figure 3.1. Three Zone Model of Missional Leadership.¹

CCBC entered the “green zone” of emergent organization during and after the painful church split that took place in 1986-1987.

From 1987 to 2002, the church shifted into the “blue zone” of performative leadership, under the leadership of Messrs. Kitchens, Harris and Wheeler, and the church moved toward megachurch status.

As the neighborhood crisis of 2002 escalated and neighbors were yelling and screaming in public meetings, they faced all the raw confusion that comes with calamity. Ted says, “Each step was a step in the darkness, so to speak.”³²⁵

On one hand, they felt called to the property. On the other hand, they faced the untenable situation of neighborly hatred. In the heat of the crisis, they moved into the

³²⁴ Taken from Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 41.

³²⁵ Kitchens and Egner, “Personal Interview with the Author,” 6.

“red zone” of reactive leadership. As God led them in the direction of *missional* ministry, however, they moved back into the “green zone” of emergent leadership, and a new excitement began to ripple through this already vibrant church.

The humility Ted experienced in his first “green zone” experience (1986) seemed to make it easier to move back into a humble posture in his second “green zone” experience (2002-2003).

A Reshaping of Existing Vision

Like many Bible churches of the 1960s and ‘70s, the vision of CCBC was loosely based on Colossians 1:28-29 and was quite general: to glorify God by leading members toward spiritual maturity.³²⁶ The vision was reshaped in 1995 and then slightly revised in 2002 to read, “To stretch every involved person from the threshold of their spiritual pilgrimage toward becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ.”³²⁷

As is often the case, however, in reality, the written and verbal visions are quite different. As their *missional* transition continued, Ted zeroed in on two slogans, “the hands and feet of Jesus,” which came from Rick Warren’s book, *Purpose Driven Life*,³²⁸ and “Church without Walls”.³²⁹ It was this last phrase that stuck, and Ted began to incorporate this into sermons and vision casting meetings.

In many ways, “church without walls” is consistent with his parachurch orientation and his entrepreneurial bent, but “church without walls” has taken on fresh

³²⁶ Egner, *Learning from the Past to Guide us into the Future*,” Available from www.xpastor.org (assessed 21 July 2007) 6.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 135.

³²⁹ Bill suggests that Ted saw this phrase on a sign as he was driving through Fort Worth, and the concept immediately resonated with him. This phrase has been used in other churches, most notably, Without Walls International Church in Tampa, FL.

meaning as small groups have fanned out into the neighborhood for the purpose of serving their immediate and surrounding communities.

Summary

Like IBC, Christ Chapel Bible Church's movement to the "green zone" of emergent leadership came from a humble, flexible learning style. At any point, they could have led the church down a disastrous path of finding new property or ignoring the anger of their neighbors, but they sought a win-win: they wanted to have good relations with neighbors and to stay in the neighborhood.

The elders also exhibited humility as they explored whether this crisis was due to sin. When they sensed that sin might be present, they entered the disciplines of confession and repentance.

The Service Orientation

The above hypothesis further suggests that leaders who learn in the context of a crisis soon set their sights on offering concrete acts of service to the city. This was indeed the case with CCBC.

Like so many churches, who intend to move in a *missional* direction, CCBC set their sights first on serving within the public schools.

According to Ted, "We decided that...we wanted to become a church of irresistible influence in the city, so we immediately started working with the schools, *the public schools*. And by the way that was very difficult, because the public schools didn't want us to come into the schools, even to paint."³³⁰

³³⁰ Ted G. Kitchens and Bill Egner, "Group Interview with the Author," 9. Both IBC and CCBC encountered resistance as they first sought to enter the public schools to serve. In both cases, the quality of their service was so outstanding, this objection was quickly quelled. Moreover, in time, their service was actively sought by leaders in their respective school systems.

During their 40-Days of Community spiritual growth campaign, two influential women in the church made contact with public school officials and planned projects that the church could do within the community. Within weeks, over 900 people working in small groups started doing simple acts of service: they planted trees; they cleaned gum from the courtyard floor; and they repainted benches. Because the school staff was required to be on the premises, CCBC paid double overtime to any staff required to be present and oversee the projects. This act spoke volumes to school officials: CCBC was serious about service!

The response to these first forays into community service was greater than expected: “The ground swell from the community was like, you put in a dollar and ten came back out. It was unbelievable the stuff that came back positive.”³³¹ Ted added, “For us, the public school thing was a huge win, beyond what we’d really thought; it gave Christ a better name in the community.”³³²

As was the case with Irving Bible Church, CCBC’s “no strings attached” approach to service was rewarded with additional opportunities to serve. The CCBC staff cultivated relationships with public school leaders, and within two years, the church was able to offer more personalized forms of service including soccer clinics, parent training, tutoring and mentoring.

As the word spread, more public schools in the area asked CCBC if they would help them with special projects in their respective schools.

Ted was quick to point out that their *missional* service was rooted in Jesus’ example:

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

The goal is not necessarily to save them, because sometimes we don't get a chance to share the gospel. The end goal is to let them know that the church really does care. There is a sense that we are a part of the community [just like they are], and, "you're our neighbor." Just before the parable of the Good Samaritan, the question was raised, "Who is my neighbor?" And the answer is, "The person in need." We call ourselves a church without walls, and that means, we're going to go out there to the people in need...this *going out* is a huge part of it.³³³

Ted also felt that this *missional* service was an essential component to spiritual growth. CCBC was well taught: "I think most of our folks, unless they're pretty new to our congregation, they have the head knowledge. But so what? The bottom line is serving. So this [service to our community] is a spiritual growth endeavor."³³⁴

As they continued to make gains in the public schools, Ted again met with the mayor, who reiterated his strong interest in the Como area. Como is a racially mixed neighborhood struggling with poverty. Over 80 percent of the children in the elementary school qualify for free lunches.

As Ted and Bill explored how they might minister in the neighborhood, they approached an African-American pastor with a proposal to help repair the homes of widows in the area. Egner and Kitchens were surprised at the pastor's immediate response of distrust: "If a church can't take care of its widows and orphans, then shame on us," the pastor said.³³⁵

In his book, *City Signals*, Brad Smith suggests that when working in urban areas, it is important to develop trust "through small beginning projects and events."³³⁶ If

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ted Kitchens and Bill Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author."

³³⁶ Brad Smith, *City Signals: Principles and Practices for Ministering in Today's Global Communities* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2008), 86.

CCBC were going to make inroads into the Como area, they would need to develop trust over the long haul.

Through regular meetings and small acts of service, they eventually built that trust. In the fall of 2007, they set up a service event on the grounds of Como Elementary School called ShareFest. Anticipating the event, Ted said, “We’re going to cut hair for free, give away food, pull teeth, sing for them, wash their feet, pray for them, give vaccinations, and give clothes. We’ll also have a children’s jump zone.”³³⁷

According to Egner, the Como area is rapidly becoming their exclusive focus for *missional* service. Such high levels of trust have been built between CCBC and the Como area pastors, those pastors will frequently call Christ Chapel with names of needy people worthy of their help. CCBC in turn has developed a quick response network to needs.

In the future, CCBC sees community-based partnerships as a key way to engage the Como area. They are partnering currently with Buckner International to more skillfully know how to connect community needs with government services. Through their partnership with Buckner, they would like to see Como Elementary become an exemplary school in the Fort Worth area.

Recently, a mentoring program commenced connecting CCBC members and Como Elementary School students. One couple, retired and in their sixties, invited their mentee out to dinner. Shocked that the student did not understand how to order off the menu, the couple sought more proactive ways of ministering to their student.

To accelerate their mentoring ministry, CCBC is sending over 75 students from the Como Elementary School to a Christian camp in the summer of 2008. CCBC

³³⁷ Kitchens and Egner, “Group Interview with the Author,” 2 August 2007.

members sponsor students with the hope that more students will be open to mentoring next year, and more CCBC members will be open to serving as mentors.³³⁸

Summary

CCBC discovered the joy of serving their neighbors in the midst of the 40-Days of Community campaign following their crisis year of 2002-2003. Like many churches making a *missional* shift, CCBC began their foray into service by focusing on the public schools.

Their service was seen, not as an immediate bridge to share Christ, but rather as an expression of common grace and a fulfillment of Jesus' command at the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan: "Go and do the same" (Luke 10:37). Their conviction was that *missional* service would create an opportunity for people to see Christ in action ("the hands and feet of Jesus") and that eventually opportunities would come for people to hear the gospel.

Also, like many churches moving toward *missional* ministry, CCBC determined it would be wise to focus their efforts in one specific location of the city. This was the lesson learned by Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock,³³⁹ and it was a lesson that CCBC embraced as well.

³³⁸ Bill Egner, "Personal Interview with Author," (Dallas Theological Seminary, 29 July 2008).

³³⁹ Howard Husock, "A Mega-Church Takes on Urban Problems: Fellowship Bible Church Comes to Midtown" (Kennedy School of Government Case Program, 2005), 9.

The Worship Shift

A Comparison

At this point, it is helpful to compare the experience of the two case study churches—Irving Bible Church and Christ Chapel Bible Church, as they ventured in a *missional* direction.

The movement toward *missional* ministry at Irving Bible Church resulted in a marked shift in worship style.³⁴⁰ During the decade of the 1990s, IBC, like many megachurches, embraced the seeker-performance model. But during their crisis in 2002, this model did not fit their congregation, nor was it the passion of their worship leader, Russ Ware.

As their crisis progressed, they evolved a highly participational and kinesthetic worship experience. Exploring ancient-modern worship themes, they used candles, art, and imported elements of liturgy to help people, both believers and nonbelievers, engage with God in a deeply spiritual way.

As CCBC began their *missional* shift, their worship took a new direction as well; however, it looked dramatically different from IBC's. Their new worship emphasis evolved in two areas: A fall (and now spring) spiritual growth campaign, designed to give people a fresh perspective in external service to the community, and a movement to join art and worship to better reach the art community in Fort Worth.

The Spiritual Growth Campaign

CCBC did its first all-church spiritual growth campaign in the fall of 2002, and according to Bill Egner, “The ensuing spiritual result...was fairly profound, probably

³⁴⁰ MacIlvaine, “Missional Journey” 29-33.

best summarized by a renewed sense of commitment to God's calling, not only on the individual level, but on the corporate spiritual life [of the church]."³⁴¹

Flush with the excitement of the gains made, with *40-Days*, their follow-up campaign that next year was their building campaign, *Building Lost Habits, Restoring Lost Values*. It was in the aftermath of this campaign that conflict erupted in the church, but Kitchens and Egner realized that they were on to something significant with the fall campaign: "This fall campaign thing is genius, because you run people through a six week little short course of what you're trying to do as a church, and they...begin to get what you're trying to do. [They think]: 'We're in a group...studying the word of God together. We're serving [in the community] together, and we're preparing to share our faith.'"³⁴²

For the next three years, they used these campaigns to cast vision for their new *missional* emphasis and kick start new small groups. They prepared their own campaign in 2004: *Walking with the Galilean*. They used two prepackaged campaigns in 2005-2006: *40-Days of Community* and *Just Walk Across the Room*. In each campaign, new small groups were recruited, and the groups served together out in the community.

By the end of their '06 campaign, Egner and Kitchens felt they were equipped to engineer campaigns on their own. Here is how it worked: As the fall ministry season neared, people heard about the upcoming campaign, and they were challenged to commit to four things: listen to the sermon, participate in a small group, pray for their city, and get involved in service.

³⁴¹ Egner, *Learning from the Past to Guide Us into the Future*, Available from www.xpastor.org (assessed 21 July 2007) 4.

³⁴² Kitchens and Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author," 2 April 2008.

Rather than train new small group leaders, CCBC recruited hosts who opened up their homes for six weeks, and Ted “leads” the small groups by DVD. In the DVD, Ted recapped his message the previous week and asked the first question. From then on, the group members facilitated the group as a team.

Initially, video production was done professionally at Fox Studios with a teleprompter, but over the past five years, they discovered that “less is more.” Ted spoke for no more than ten minutes on each DVD, and then the group was ready to initiate their discussion.

This seasonal campaign concept, now in its sixth year, has been so effective, that Kitchens and Egner are now moving toward a fall and winter format.

The Blending of Worship, the Arts and Evangelism

With the move into their new building—completed in 2006, CCBC had a new resource to share with their neighborhood: their building. In late 2007, under the direction of Music Minister, Louis Harris, a team of artists gathered to prepare a production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

In separate interviews with members of the pastoral staff and congregation, it became clear that this production exceeded everyone’s expectations. One CCBC member claimed it was as good as the New York production. A CCBC pastor suggested it was on par with anything performed at the local Bass Performance Hall.

Not only were CCBC church members invited, but the wider neighborhood was invited as well. As they planned the production, Kitchens played a key role in casting the vision that a secular artistic production had elements that could spark genuine worship.

Anticipating the event, Kitchens said, “I am going to come out in a tuxedo at the beginning and let everyone know that in every work of art there are always major

themes: good versus evil, unconditional love, etc. ‘So be watching for those themes in *Beauty and the Beast*, and when it’s over I want to come back out and chat with you for a moment.’³⁴³

When the production was over, Kitchens presented a short explanation of transcendent themes and tied them into the gospel.

In Ted’s vision, major artistic productions such as these are part art, part worship and part evangelism: “Not only is this an outreach to our community, but it’s raised a [vision for the arts] within the membership of our church.... This is our first venture to see if God would use this idea of presenting secular artistic productions and wrapping them with truth to get the community more involved in what we’re about.”³⁴⁴

Not only was worship and evangelism combined in the *Beauty and the Beast* production, but artistic mentoring happened at every level. To accomplish the production, CCBC fielded a full orchestra, a technical team, singers, actors, and makeup artists as well as a stage crew.

Each member of the cast and crew was a CCBC regular and unpaid volunteer. But the experience put professional artists and lay “artists” together, the pros mentoring the amateurs. The result was a wonderful blend of community, worship and outreach.

This experience is consistent with the thinking of *missional* writers who are suggesting a dismantling of the secular-sacred dichotomy, and that great art, even secular art, often has components in it that can drive people to worship.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Kitchens and Egner, “Group Interview with the Author,” August 2, 2007.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Rob Bell has a helpful discussion on this in his DVD offering, “Everything Is Spiritual.”

A New Direction with the Arts and Worship

In 2002, following the lead of Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock, CCBC hosted its first Art Reach initiative to reach the arts community within the church. It was well received, but the crisis of 2002 caused this initiative to be placed on the back burner for six years.

Headed up by a handful of local Fort Worth artists, including Ron Cheek, CCBC's second Art Reach took place in February 2008. At the event, artists—both professional and amateur, prepared canvases, which were hung on exhibition-quality art panels in the foyer of the church. The experience was a huge success, set the stage for next year's Art Reach with the theme, "Liturgical Worship."

Cheek is an example of the artistic talent that graces CCBC. Cheek received his degree at the Florence Academy of Art in Italy and was trained as a realist painter in the "old master" style. After returning to Fort Worth, he opened a school for aspiring artists and often exhibits his works in Dallas-Fort Worth area galleries.

Under Ted's leadership, Cheek and others aim to create a community of Christian artists who can reach spiritually disconnected artists in the wider arts community of Fort Worth.

Convinced that art facilitates worship, and that *arts-sensitive worship* facilitates evangelism, this team of artists is working on a regular artistic venue at CCBC that will be launched within the next 24 months. "As artists worship together in the context of their art, there is huge potential for God to reveal himself and for people to draw closer to Christ."³⁴⁶

Going beyond an exhibition of the graphic arts, Art Reach would sponsor various events throughout the year: music, video, drama, dance, and testimony. In the

³⁴⁶ Ron Cheek, "Personal Interview with the Author," (Ft. Worth, TX: 26 July 2008).

testimonies, Christian artists would describe how their relationship with Christ affects their art and how their art ignites worship.

While these events might take place once per quarter—or even once per month, the leadership team plans to have small groups of artists meeting regularly for spiritual growth and creative encouragement.

Summary

In the aftermath of the crisis of 2002, CCBC began to see changes in their worship. Specifically, they began to use spiritual growth campaign as a way of encouraging people to get into small groups for the purpose of reaching into the community with acts of service. In these campaigns, corporate worship, individual study, and small group interaction were geared to *one* thing: exalting Christ and serving in his name.

At the same time, CCBC saw their new facility, at the edge of the Fort Worth cultural district, as a stewardship that could be used to reach into the community. Through the creative use of the arts, believers and nonbelievers have been able to experience the majesty of God and hear a simple yet clear message about Christ.

Summary and Conclusion – Christ Chapel Bible Church

Like Irving Bible Church, Christ Chapel Bible Church encountered two crises in exactly the same years. In 1986, CCBC encountered a church split due to differences in theology among the staff combined with the reticence of two of their founding pastors to resign. From 1986 to 2002, Ted's entrepreneurial leadership style allowed the church to heal and grow into a megachurch that knew its surrounding culture (the Fort Worth arts and business culture) and skillfully take steps to reach it.

The crisis of 2002-2005 came because CCBC had become a regional church that expanded into the neighborhood, and the neighbors responded with fear and distrust.

Thinking the church was out to destroy their historic neighborhood, they exploded in protest.

The incongruity of being a church that was hated by their neighbors grieved CCBC's leaders deeply. After a season of confession and repentance, they made a concerted effort to serve out in the community with humility, kindness and love. This service has resulted in substantial healing.

The crisis at CBCC has a wonderful ending:

Two of the key players in [our crisis] were two ladies that lived together across the street from the church. Every day, when we would walk out the back of the church, we could look right at their house. They loathed us, because they perceived we wanted to buy their home and tear it down.

Well, this past Easter I received a card from one of them saying, "This is the season of forgiveness. Would you forgive me?" I wrote her back and said, "Absolutely, I forgive you, and will you forgive us?"

And so a couple of days later I see her driving out of her driveway, and she stops her car and gets out, and I say, "Diana, how are you doing?" She said, "I am in a season in my life where I'm realizing that I'm a person out there on the edge, and I really need Christ. Do you think I could ever come over and worship with you?" This was a person who stalked me. She hated me. She was one of the vocal people in the library [in the fall of 2003].

So the very people who started the fire have come all the way around. And I can tell you, as far as I know, we have a superb relationship with people in our community. It's come all the way back around from people holding signs in protest, to people desiring to attend our church and falling in love with us. And it's because we've bent over backward to get into the community and to love them and do what's right: serve.³⁴⁷

Chapter Four Conclusion

When they commenced their respective ministry crucibles in 2002, neither Irving Bible Church nor Christ Chapel Bible Church could have predicted the beneficial outcomes: their crises shifted their respective ministry foci from internal to external and injected new passion into their churches. Their experience is consistent with the ideas

³⁴⁷ Kitchens and Egner, "Personal Interview with the Author," 2 April 2008.

presented in the literature review: When a crisis is responded to in a spirit of humility, learning and discovery positive changes ensue.

The spirit of learning and discovery was evidenced within three areas of senior leadership. Both senior pastors, McQuitty and Kitchens, are flexible discerners of culture; they are learners. Both executive pastors, Roese and Egner, have remarkable abilities to provide leadership under stress and in highly ambiguous situations, and both elder boards were willing to be led into humble prayer during the *liminal* phase of their crisis. Had these three dynamics not been present, and had there been a brittleness within these senior leaders, *missional* changes would certainly not have been possible.

Moreover, if crisis can bring positive change in a *natural* leadership environment as is argued by Bennis, George, and other secular leadership authors, then one might expect qualitatively different kinds of changes will ensue in a supernatural leadership environment like the church, the body of Christ. Indeed, the biblical literature that stresses God's sovereignty also stresses God's supernatural ability to bring good out of painfully difficult crises. Genesis 50:20 might well serve as the motto of *missional* churches during the marginalization and *liminal* phases: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result...."

In the final chapter, this work considers conclusions and implications for further study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

We (must) identify and name the idolatries, the false gods that our society worships.... Something like 90% of the population spends at least three-quarters of its free time glued to the television screen, hooked inseparably to those pictures of the good life which are being ceaselessly pumped into every living room in the country, the advertisements and the soap operas which provide an image of the good life more powerful than anything Islam or mediaeval Christendom ever managed to fasten on an entire population. Ours is not a secular society, but a society which worships false gods.

Lesslie Newbigin,
England as a foreign mission field, 1986

Consistent with the objectives of the Dallas Theological Seminary, D. Min. Department, this dissertation has been an *applied* research project.

As this researcher engaged in the qualitative study of two Dallas-area churches— (and a U.K.-based church), he was simultaneously active in applying missional changes into his own church. At times, these changes came as a direct result of his research; at other times, implications were drawn from the target churches, and then analogous changes were applied.

Therefore, this researcher has fallen into the role of both observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer in the general field of *missional* change.³⁴⁸ Hence, conclusions in this chapter will stem both from results drawn from the research and his

³⁴⁸ Gold offers a fourfold typology of participant observer roles in the qualitative research setting. They are: the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant and the complete observer. R. Gold, "Roles in sociological field observation." *Social Forces* 36: 217-213. This schema is connected to the Chicago school in the work, "Qualitative Research Methods: Participant Observation," http://uk.geocities.com/balihar_sanghera/qrpmparticipantobservation.html (accessed September 23, 2008).

personal experience in applying it toward his situation. This conclusion begins with a review of the research portion of the dissertation.

Chapter Review

Chapter One

In chapter one, the need for studying *missional* change in contemporary churches was set forth. The need stems from the reality that everyone seems to be talking about “going *missional*.”

Few churches, however, really understand what the term means or how the term was derived. Moreover, even fewer churches recognize that *missional* change often begins in the crucible of a seemingly insoluble crisis. The hypothesis of this work was then brought forth: Church leaders, who cultivate *missional* change, have encountered a significant crisis. For that crisis to create lasting *missional* change, the crisis must be large enough to bring the key leaders to a place of brokenness. When that crisis is responded to in a spirit of humility and discovery, it creates an environment where *missional* direction can take place. This *missional* change is expressed in two primary ways: service to the community—an external change, and a different way of worshipping as a community—an internal change.

Chapter one ended with a concise definition of a *missional* church, following concepts first articulated by British missiologist Lesslie Newbigin. The crux of the definition is as follows: A *missional* church is a community of believers who sees themselves as “sent ones” of the resurrected Jesus into their particular indigenous community; they therefore, orient their entire lives toward collectively being the transforming presence of Jesus in that place.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ While the definition comes from this researcher’s own study, the underlying concepts come from Goheen’s assessment of Lesslie Newbigin’s *missional* ecclesiology. Michael Goheen, “As the Father Has Sent Me, I am Sending You,” 423-424.

Chapter Two

Chapter two presented a review of the relevant literature related to *missional* change and began with a synthetic historical overview of missional ecclesiology. This is important given the reality that many church leaders today banter about *missional*, as if it is the next hot term in church growth.

On the contrary, the term *missional* comes from a theological construct synthesized in the mid-twentieth century—the *missio Dei*, which suggested that the inter-Trinitarian relationships within the God-head form the ontological basis for all mission: including evangelism, but going well beyond evangelism into general expressions of God’s common grace. The implication of the *missio Dei* is that because God has eternally been on mission, his redeemed people, made in his image, must be on mission as well.

The question was then asked, “Why might busy pastors be motivated to shift their churches in a *missional* direction?” The literature suggested that *missional* change, at present, is typically not a strategic decision, but rather, is birthed within the messy crucible of crisis. When a church encounters a crisis, it becomes God’s wake up call to recalibrate their mission, bringing it in line with his mission—specifically, what he is doing already in their indigenous situation. The literature review then examined three strands of literature—secular, Christian and biblical, showing that crisis, properly responded to, leads to healthy change.

The review then showed that churches in early *missional* change immediately shift in two ways: They begin to serve within their indigenous communities in humble quiet ways, and they change the function of the worship service, typically making it a place to highlight *missional* changes in a participatory setting.

Chapter Three

Chapter three examined the research methodology and revealed why qualitative rather than quantitative research is preferable in studying how churches

engage in *missional* change. Because all churches in *missional* change encounter crises, it was felt that the case study approach would yield “thick descriptions” of change dynamics.³⁵⁰ It is hoped that the stories flowing from this might help other researchers as they contemplate making *missional* changes in their churches.

Chapter Four

In this chapter, an integrated case study of two different churches was presented: Irving Bible Church and Christ Chapel Bible Church. These churches were chosen because of their similarity to the researcher’s own church, and because their *missional* changes—like most *missional* change, were quirky, non-linear and downright messy.

Moreover, the churches encountered crises in exactly the same years. Their respective crises of 1986 shifted them into megachurch status, but their respective crises of 2003 moved them toward *missional* ministry. As they progressed through their crises, both churches encountered precisely the same pattern predicted in the hypothesis and the literature review. They are as follows:

1. At the beginning of the crisis, they experienced what Roxburgh calls *marginalization*. They felt alienated from their existing mission, uncertain about how to engage their changing indigenous community, and at a loss about how to move forward.
2. As their crises crescendoed, they experienced *liminality* and *communitas*. Seeing themselves as exiles and aliens, they began to develop a stronger passion for God and for each other. Even before they understood how their changes would be played, out one thing was clear: they needed to serve as Jesus did.

³⁵⁰ Thick description is an anthropological term that describes not only human behavior but also its context. See Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973) Chapter 1.

3. Entering their *reengagement* phase, they were able to experiment about how best to reach into the community as a *communitas*. They did so in two critical areas: worship and service.

While these two churches have remarkably different cultures, several things are similar. Their senior pastors are good learners. Their executive pastors both have the ability to execute *missional* changes in highly ambiguous settings. And their elder boards adopted the same levels of humility as the staff. Indeed, in the crises, it appears that the spirituality of the senior pastoral staff led the elders into the place of learning that stimulated change.

Concluding Insights

Based upon the literature review and the case study results, this researcher offers nine concluding principles for churches considering—or in the midst of, *missional* change.

1. Senior leaders contemplating *missional* change must be decisive about whether they *will* or *will not* be *missional*. If they choose to be *missional*, they must count the cost.

The idea of *missional* ministry is popular today, but most people do not understand the precise definition of *missional*. Moreover, most pastors are not equipped to be the cultural architects of *missional* change. To compound the problem, American church culture is addicted to consumer-driven, attractional-thinking, and affluence-loving modes of ministry.

These idols are supported by an entire church seminar movement that still imposes a modernistic template over a postmodern culture, promising church growth to pastors who often, unconsciously, derive their self-esteem from the sizes of their churches.

The era of modernism is over!

Principles from the modernistic church growth and church effectiveness movements will only work in those places where pockets of modernism still hold sway among a Christian population willing to change churches: typically, the Bible belt and Christian Meccas, such as Colorado Springs, Grand Rapids and Houston.

To complicate things even more, most people are not willing to comprehend the nuanced definition of *missional* ministry; it is not a new idea but a radically different paradigm that, like all paradigms, takes some mental sweat to understand. For instance, most thinkers in the *missional* movement today do not believe large megachurches can be *missional*—the consumer-attractional component is too strong. Most thinkers do not think seminaries are preparing their graduates for leadership in a postmodern environment where the role of the preaching event is fundamentally different from the past.

Yet, in spite of all this, everyone still talks about being *missional*—hoping that by “going *missional*” they will shut off the exodus of people flowing out the back door, and then perhaps experience a new season of church growth.

Therefore, church leaders ought to make a strong and highly informed decision to go *missional*, all the way, or not at all. Those leaders who decline to make this move might say, “We understand what *missional* is, and it’s just not for us. We will still serve. We might even be somewhat externally focused. But we are not going to be *essentially missional*.”

This will sound contradictory to what has been previously argued in this dissertation (pg. 3, 81) that *missional* culture change is a quirky, non-linear, *liminal* experience that might last as long as three years. It is indeed a process that is generally unclear, and experiments ought to take place to “test the waters” of *missional* ministry. However, once it is clear that a *missional* avenue is open to a leadership team half-hearted decisions about *missional* changes will not suffice

for the rigors ahead. The path toward missional change is often rocky and very painful, and missional leaders must count the cost.

2. Churches already in the midst of *missional* change must, at some point, commit to *missional* ministry for the long haul as a radical way of life.

When a church makes *missional* changes from within its crisis, there will be a bittersweet honeymoon phase: painful yet pleasurable at the same time. Life takes on new meaning as the *liminality* within the crisis produces *communitas*. Some people, for the first time, will experience what authentic Christianity is all about.

Once the church, however, enters the reengagement phase, and the precipitating crisis subsides, that sense of *communitas* will fade. Passion for service within the community may also fade, and the church can revert back to an attractional-consumeristic mindset. Or, if the church experiences a large growth spurt, because of the *missional* changes, it might be easy to lose focus in the heady rush of success, rather than thinking strategically about what God wants to do next.

Therefore, senior leaders must continually ask, “How do we harness *missional* vision in the aftermath of our transforming crisis?” The answer lies in two areas: At least one senior leader must become a passionate cultural architect for continued *missional* change. He must ensure that mission is thoroughly woven into the DNA of the entire church, from children’s ministry to parking attendants. And second, senior leaders must make heroes out of courageous servers who show the way.

If church leaders do not make a conscious commitment to long-term *missional* ministry, it is probable that the passion will fade when the precipitating crisis subsides.

3. Churches must create a culture that tolerates and welcomes crisis within its senior leaders.

There are two factors in North American Church culture that prevent leaders from learning from the crucibles that might produce *missional* change. The first factor is that American pastors tend to be competitive, and competitive leaders, no matter what their field, are reticent to make their crucibles public.

Dan Allender asks the question in his book *Leading with a Limp*, “Why is it so rare for leaders to name their failures? What keeps leaders trapped in a siege mentality, cut off from the data they need in order to make better decisions: the three primary reasons [are] fear, narcissism and addiction.”³⁵¹

Some leaders, however, have good reason to fear the admission of personal struggles. Philip Burguières, CEO of Weatherford International, an oil services company, experienced his first season of clinical depression in 1991 and then again in 1996. When he resigned as CEO and checked himself into a mental institution, it made the front pages in the newspapers, and Weatherford stock fell by 10 percent.³⁵² There are risks to authenticity!

Any pastor who struggles with depression, anxiety, sexual temptation, or marital strife will probably think twice about sharing his struggles out of fear – fear of being judged by his congregation, or being compared to the former pastor, or being fired for not displaying higher levels of spiritual maturity.

The second factor that prevents leaders from learning in crises is the implied prosperity theology that exists in North American church culture. While many churches would quickly denounce that prosperity theology in principle, their culture assumes a certain level of prosperity theology in practice. They hold to an unspoken assumption that suggests being a Christian guarantees a certain level of

³⁵¹ Dan Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Turning Struggles into Strengths* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2006), 4-5.

³⁵² “CEO battles depression, encourages parity in insurance coverage,” Texans Working Together, <http://www.texansworkingtogether.org/burguieres.htm> (accessed May 22, 2008).

problem-free living. To experience crucibles like depression or anxiety suggests that the leader has not properly applied principles of spiritual growth. The failure of the North American church culture to accept that their pastors experience significant crucibles as part of God's leadership development will contribute to a lack of that development within the person they most depend on for leadership. Moreover, it is clear from the Bible that God intentionally brings his leaders through a variety of crucible experiences to test them in a well-rounded way. This was true of Jesus (Heb 4:15), and it is equally true of spiritual leaders in the church (Jam 1:2-3).

The crucible model presented in chapter two suggests pastors and elders should work hard to develop a culture that welcomes crucibles as a normal of the Christian life and as instrumental for leadership growth within the church. At the same time, the culture should ruthlessly root out a legalism that demands super-spiritual appearance-management from its leaders.

4. Senior leaders must be clear about the balance between common ground and their exilic status.

Common ground suggests that believers must *enter* the world. An exilic identity suggests that believers must *withdraw* from the world. These might seem mutually exclusive, except that this was precisely how Jesus lived and taught his followers to live.³⁵³

In the discipline of common ground, believers fully engage the world for the purpose of building relationships and showing common grace with the same lavish generosity that God displays. However, in embracing their exilic status,

³⁵³ Discipleship in the Gospels is often presented as a tension between two seemingly opposite qualities. For instance, Jesus was full of grace and truth, and by implication, his followers should be as well. Yet, these qualities are not mutually exclusive; rather, they involve a dynamic tension that makes the discipleship process fresh, exciting and radical.

believers refuse to derive their identity from the world, but from Christ alone in light of their eternal destiny.³⁵⁴

This balance is an extraordinarily difficult one to maintain, because it requires high tolerance for ambiguity, coupled with supernatural wisdom from God.

The concept of common ground has a rich history in the Bible. Joseph exhibits common ground as second in command to the Pharaoh (Gen 41:41-49). Daniel exhibits common ground in his service to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1-4), Belshazzar (Dan 5:17-29), and Darius (Dan 6:1-3; 24-25). Jeremiah commands common ground among the exilic community in Jeremiah 29:4-7.

Jesus' incarnation is an expression of common ground (John 1:14). Moreover, he exhibits common ground in his friendship with those outside the "accepted" community: the tax-collectors and sinners (Luke 5:27-32). Paul exhibits common ground in when he claims, "I have become all things to all men that by all means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:19-23). Common ground provides the context of "grace" where "truth" can be heard and idols can be confronted.

If senior leaders of *missional* churches concentrate only on common ground with the world, their churches will become like the world, at times attracting the culture, but never transforming it. Indeed, many emergent churches—hoping to be *missional*, fall into this trap and end up mired in compromise.

On the other hand, if senior leaders concentrate only on showing the better way in Christ, always confronting the idols of our culture, people will suspect that Christians are hypocritical and agenda-driven, "only concerned about saving me."

³⁵⁴ We also see an example of this in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 where the call to embrace exilic attitudes and actions is based on the shortness of the time (29) and the temporary nature of life (31).

A major component of discipleship in the *missional* church is going to concentrate on this area: How can I find common ground in order to show common grace, and still live as an exile and resident alien?

To date, this researcher knows of no discipleship tool that equips *missional* Christians to find this balance from a thoroughly biblical perspective, and yet, this would be exceedingly helpful in missional churches.

5. Senior leaders who guide *missional* change must give up the idol of church growth and church effectiveness in favor of kingdom goals.

Over the past forty years, the church growth and church effectiveness movements have imported implicit bounded-set philosophies into their churches.

When a church considers itself a bounded-set, they strive to make it very clear who is *in* the church and who is *outside* the church. The church then conveys a culture of, “Those of us within this bounded-set are really the only ones who have it right. We won’t say it publicly, but the others are slightly off.”

Senior leaders with a bounded-set approach will inevitably rest their self-esteem on how many people sit in the pews on a Sunday morning to hear the sermon. Rarely will they consider other metrics. Therefore, the “shadow mission” of many churches is, “We’ve got to keep this place growing *numerically*, on Sundays, so that we’re a legitimate, valid, contemporary church making a difference in the world.”

Missional leaders, on the other hand, embrace centered-set thinking. At the center of all that they do is the resurrected and reigning Christ, whom they feel is intimately involved in every facet of the ministry as the chief shepherd of the church. Attracted to the center are a diverse group of people constantly flowing in and out of the church: members, regular attenders, non-believers, members of other churches partnering on specific projects, and people in town for a brief period of time. The boundaries of the church are highly permeable.

When churches have this centered-set way of thinking, their passion is not primarily the growth and health of their particular institution. On the contrary, they are thinking about how their institution contributes to kingdom goals within the local indigenous community. The question is not, “How many people sit and listen to the pastor’s sermon?” But, “How many people are *on mission* during a given week through our excellence in equipping?”

Sometimes, the biggest obstacle to *missional* change is a senior pastor, who refuses to change from bounded-set to centered-set thinking, either through self-esteem issues or denominational pressure.

Senior leaders in *missional* change must move toward seeing their church as a means to the end of kingdom advancement and not an end in itself. One way that senior pastors can do this is to have regular testimonials of people in their churches serving skillfully and sacrificially in their communities.

6. *Missional* churches must strive for high-participation worship experiences, tailored to the context of the indigenous culture. For twenty-five years, the trend among seeker-sensitive and seeker-targeted churches was low-participation/high-entertainment weekend events that make it easy for friends to invite friends to church, so that the senior pastor could present the gospel and challenge new converts.

Missional church enthusiasts have rejected this on three counts: (1) It assumes that the role of Sunday mornings is evangelism, not warm engagement with the living God; (2) It assumes that evangelism is mostly the role of the senior pastor; (3) It assumes that people are not attracted to spirituality. Not true! Low participation events were fine for seekers in the past, but today high-participation events help people connect with their hunger for spirituality.

Missional writers such as Minatrea, Barrett and Frost suggest that the role of worship in the *missional* church, therefore, must be deeply spiritual and requires a completely different orientation to the weekend event.

In a *missional* church, the weekend event is not the center point of the week. Rather it's an opportunity to celebrate the *missional* activities that have been going on throughout the week. It is also a time to equip people for their *missional* work for the coming week.

In a *missional* church, the weekend event is a deeply spiritual time in which the congregation senses its relationship to the Triune God in a way that invites mystery and awe. If the Triune God is a sending God, and the Trinity is deeply mysterious, then the worship of a *missional* church, by nature, must delight in that mystery.

Conversely *missional* churches will not take a modernist approach in their biblical teaching, striving to show how to live a more successful, prosperous, and well-adjusted life. Rather, they will talk about things like brokenness, the need for repentance, and joy in the midst of crucibles.

Missional churches view the weekend event is a time to celebrate specific stories of people on mission. When members of the congregation stand up and tell others of how God used their service, it not only creates unity around the vision, it also instills courage. Congregants feel, "If God can use them, maybe he can use me."

The weekend event is a time for high participation. Many *missional* churches have evolved a highly kinesthetic worship experience. They light candles for answered prayer. They come forward to prayer stations where laypeople lay hands on them. They use object lessons in the context of worship. This high participation helps the congregation feel their unity in Christ and invites active (rather than passive) engagement with God.

In *missional* churches the weekend event is carefully planned to allow for both structure and spontaneity. In many ways, *missional* worship events are difficult to plan. There must be enough structure to inspire confidence that the leaders are leading well but enough space to allow for the leading of God's Spirit. *Missional* worship leaders ask, "Is there anything we could inject into the worship experience that might increase participation as a community and enhance our reverence for God?"

Planning *missional* worship services is a challenge, no doubt, but this researcher found that the worship leaders in the case study churches were highly energized by the task, and found it not only much more meaningful, but fun.

7. Senior leaders in *missional* churches must surround themselves with cultural watchers who constantly interpret two cultures simultaneously: the local indigenous culture and national trends. And they must especially understand the worldview and gestalt of postmodernity and its relationship to modernity.

The period of modernity runs from c.a. 1450-1950, roughly 500 years. During this period, Western culture embraced several varieties of modernism: Christian modernism (1450-1650), enlightenment modernism (1650-1750), atheistic modernism coupled with awakening modernism (1750-1800),³⁵⁵ romantic modernism (1800-1914), and finally, totalitarian evolutionary modernism (1914-1960). Within all these varieties of modernism, one concept reigned supreme: objective truth could be known and should be fought over.

From 1960-1995, American culture entered a transitional phase fueled by the rise of pop culture, especially the proliferation of television, the explosion of information, the rise of personal computing and the Internet. During that 35-year

³⁵⁵ This construct of "awakening modernism" is suggested by W. Andrew Hoffercker, ed., *Revolutions in Worldview: Understanding the Flow of Western Thought* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 240-278.

period, with lightening quick speed, a paradigm shift of unprecedented proportion swept the United States, and because the U.S. is the major exporter of culture,³⁵⁶ these changes began to sweep through Western world. By 1995, the United States was immersed in the new postmodern paradigm.

The new postmodern worldview refuses to assign any meta-narrative over history or culture. All truth is relative. All truth claims are culturally derived. All positions are equal and legitimate. All peoples have rights. Through the ubiquity of travel, there is a melding of various cultures and religions.

But just as there were at least five varieties of modernism during a 500-year span, there will undoubtedly be varieties of postmodernism, both local to a certain city and national. *Missional* leaders, recognizing this reality must learn to discern shifts in culture and what these shifts mean for the church. By making use of this information in elder board meetings and staff retreats, they can then engage their culture with wisdom and skill. It is important to remember that in postmodernity cultures will be profoundly *local* and *global*. National and international trends will influence local cultures. But local cultures will increasingly pride themselves in being unique.

Without this commitment to learning, cultural flexibility becomes difficult. Indeed, many churches, heartsick at where culture is going, have determined to circle the wagons and withdraw from culture completely, cocooning themselves in a rigid Christian subculture.

8. Senior leaders in *missional* churches must develop a passion for their cities and the institutions within them.

³⁵⁶ American music, movies, television reruns, sports figures and slang tend to be known the world over. The exportation of American pop culture, for good or for ill, serves to shape niche subcultures around the world which are wholly dissimilar to America.

The works of Rodney Stark have shed light on the nature of Christianity in the pre-Constantine period. During this time, Christianity flourished in urban centers and took on the flavor of the local culture. This insight is corroborated in biblical revelation as God progressively reveals his passion for the city:

- He sends Jonah to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1, 3:1).
- He sends exiles into Babylon (Jer 29:4-7).
- Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).
- The Holy Spirit inspires missional movements into the cities of Asia Minor, Greece and Italy.³⁵⁷
- Jesus pens seven letters to seven churches ministering in seven distinct cities (Rev 2-3).

God clearly chooses to work, locally, in cities.

As *missional* leaders consider the biblical and historical record, they tend to look at their cities differently. Rather than being cultural critics, a posture that evangelicals have too often embraced, they seek a redemptive approach.

First, they strive to accurately describe the realities, even the idiosyncrasies, of local culture, and they look for ways of redeeming that culture. For many *missional* leaders, this means asking, “Where do the youth hang out? Who are the local bands they listen to? What is the state of the public school system? Where are there problem areas in our city and how can we be the transforming presence of Christ? Where are the pockets of poverty and why did poverty grow in these areas? Which faith-based agencies are doing a good job? Which are failing and why?”

³⁵⁷ This is reflected throughout Acts. See especially Acts 19.

Second, *missional* leaders, instead of lobbing grenades of criticism in newspaper articles and letters to the editor, must enter secular places with the proverbial servant's towel, ready to learn and especially, ready to serve.

9. Missional churches will move beyond categories such as charismatic versus non-charismatic forms of ministry. For many years there was considerable acrimony between cessationists and charismatics in the United States, each one critiquing the other either for their excesses or emotional conservatism. And yet as Christianity has exploded in the global south, Philip Jenkins suggests that most of the growth is not cessationist but continualist.³⁵⁸ The gifts of the Spirit are viewed as still being available. Indeed, Jenkins suggests, “the practice of healing is one of the strongest themes unifying the newer Southern churches, both mainstream and independent and perhaps their strongest selling point.”³⁵⁹

Many younger missional pastors are gravitating to this international missional perspective and are seeking to get beyond the “charismatic wars” that raged in the 1970s and 80s.³⁶⁰ While many of them still limit the expressions of tongues and the interpretation of tongues in their main services, they are seeking to include active prayer for healing for physical maladies, as well as emotional and spiritual oppression.

Implications for Further Study

³⁵⁸ Continualist is a fairly new term employed usually by Third-Wave evangelicals who would rather not juxtapose the terms cessationist with charismatic, since charismatic has come cultural baggage.

³⁵⁹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, Revised and Expanded* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007) 145-48.

³⁶⁰ The most ardent proponent of these “charismatic wars” has been John MacArthur. See John F. MacArthur, Jr. *Charismatic Chaos: Signs & Wonders, Speaking in Tongues, Health and Wealth, Charismatic Television, Does God Still Speak Today?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992) See especially, pages 35-44. Several contemporary theologians have attempted to answer MacArthur's objections, most notably, Jack S. Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, 45-86, and Sam Storms, *Convergence: Spiritual Journeys of a Charismatic Calvinist* (Kansas City, MO: EGM, 2005) 97-116

One of the most rewarding aspects of this research is that it generated so many ideas for additional studies on *missional* transitions. This researcher sees the following nine possibilities for further research. Since each of these ideas could eventually be worked into a dissertation, they will be stated in the form of dissertation titles.

1. Selected case studies of second-generation *missional* churches: what mission looks like in the second decade of a missional transition.
2. The *missional* leader indicator: a quantitative study of *missional* leadership traits based on the work of Roxburgh, Hirsch and Frost.
3. Selected case studies of *missional* churches immersed in public schools: How do they cultivate the opportunity to serve? How do they navigate the “separation of church and state” issue?
4. Selected case studies of *missional* churches that use the arts to engage their local communities: from the arts fair to artists in ministry.
5. The *missional* worship leader: selected case studies in how *missional* worship leaders move congregations toward higher degrees of participation.
6. *Missional* churches in niche communities: selected case studies in how *missional* cowboy churches or hip-hop churches serve their indigenous cultures.
7. Mission in Small Town America: Selected case studies in how churches transition to *missional* ministry in cities of 50,000 or less
8. *Missional* churches in politics: Selected case studies in how *missional* churches transform their communities by immersion in local and national politics.
9. *Missional* Discipleship: How *missional* churches train their members to find common ground without compromise and maintain their exilic passion.

A Final Word

The values of *missional* Christians are different from the seeker-driven or purpose-driven churches that became prominent in the 1990s. *Missional* churches are

generally not interested in becoming megachurches with a strong radio and TV presence. They are not intent on pioneering new ministry models or marketing their churches. They are not interested in wordy sermons that help parishioners feel better or know more.

On the contrary, they exude humility, service and sacrifice derived from their passion to be like Christ. There is an orientation to God's word that stresses grace and truth. They value brokenness, transparency and community. There is an earthiness about their culture. *Missional* churches love their city. They enjoy its idiosyncrasies and diversity—its “third places” and coffee shops! Not only are they deeply engaged in the culture of their city, they are reshaping that culture as they assist those in need.

Because *missional* churches are so different from traditional evangelical expressions of church, most begin as new church plants. However, some existing churches undergo a transition from contemporary to *missional*.

Anytime a church undergoes culture-change, it can be painful. Moving toward *missional* expressions of ministry can be painful, because the focus changes from “meeting my needs,” (an internal focus,) to “meeting needs like Jesus would,” (an external focus).

This dissertation has argued that most, if not all, churches moving in a *missional* direction do so because of a crisis. So the final word to leaders in transition is this: Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:24-25), learn to love your crucible, and the Christ who reveals himself from within it.

APPENDIX A

AN OUTLINE OF MISSIONAL CHANGES AT GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, BARTLESVILLE, OK

A congregation must become a place where members learn to function like cross-cultural missionaries rather than be a gathering place where people come to receive religious goods and services.³⁶¹

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk

Grace Community Church (GCC) in Bartlesville, OK was planted in early 1995 by five couples in their mid-thirties interested in developing a church strong on discipleship, small groups, and equipping parents to be the primary disciplemakers of their children.

Rod MacIlvaine began consulting with the group in November of 1994 and became the founding senior pastor in June of 1995. The church had a strong start because of its small group model, and by Easter 1999 close to a thousand worshippers jammed their new worship center on the day it was opened. The initial culture of the church was strongly seeker sensitive and reflected the upscale demographics of Bartlesville. Because of the high levels of doctors and corporate executives, it was often dubbed, “the doctor’s church.” This moniker was a hindrance, but it became the perception of many in the city.

The Crisis

In August 2002, Phillips Petroleum merged with Conoco Oil Company, and the unthinkable took place: The headquarters of Phillips Petroleum was relocated to Houston. At the time, CEO Jim Mulva assured city leaders that Bartlesville would emerge stronger because of the move. His reasons were two fold: (1) ConocoPhillips would be a stronger company financially, and therefore more impervious to a hostile

³⁶¹ Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 13.

takeover, and (2) ConocoPhillips would make Bartlesville the Global Shared Services division.

Nevertheless, for the next three years the city floundered, unsure of its emerging identity. Grace Community Church floundered as well. Almost 40 percent of its members were transferred out of the city, most going to Houston and some to Tempe, AZ. Moreover, many of those transferred were strong lay leaders, and their loss was a blow to GCC's strong culture of ministering through small groups.

For the next three and one half years, GCC, along with the city, fought to find its new identity. During this time the church continued to grow, although without the same passion as before the merger —passion that was the result of being a young church plant.

During this time, GCC excelled at overseas church planting, starting two churches in Russia, and over thirty churches in Central Cuba, as well as a training school for church planters. Nevertheless, Grace's distinctive role within the city remained unclear. Elders progressively wondered whether the vision they had embraced when the church was planted still fit the emerging reality of the city.

When MacIlvaine returned from his seventh trip to Cuba in the spring of 2006, he experienced a defining moment. He came back extremely passionate about missions in Cuba, but not his own city. The city had lost its identity, and the church seemed to have lost its purpose relative to the city. He spent three days on a prayer retreat in Dallas, and felt a need to call the church to renewed prayer. Later that summer, he attended his first set of classes in the Dallas Theological Seminary D.Min. program (large-church cohort) and began an intensive study of the *missional* church.

Convinced that this was not just another church growth technique but a completely different way of viewing ministry, he began to pray about initiating *missional* changes. He was convinced that *missional* changes needed to begin in three areas: vision change, more participation in corporate worship, and service to our community.

Transitions from the Fall of 2006 to the Fall of 2007

Prayer

MacIlvaine began with a series on prayer lasting six weeks, and at the end of the series did something not previously tried at GCC: he called people to write down the sins they needed to confess and come forward, nailing them to one of three wooden crosses placed in the front of the auditorium. He thought perhaps five might come forward. Practically the entire church stood in line waiting to pound their sins into the cross. As he later destroyed the pieces of paper, he realized that these were hugely significant sins. This had become a defining moment for the church.

Shifts in Worship

In the weeks that followed, the worship took a decisively different flavor. Rather than standing on the stage, Rod moved a smaller stage to the floor of the auditorium placing him in closer proximity to the congregation. This was done to model the increased humility needed as GCC transitioned in a missional direction. Each Sunday, church members were invited to come forward, as they felt led, to light candles as an expression of thanks to God for answered prayer. Stools were set up in front of the auditorium so that prayer team members might pray with those who sensed their need for prayer in the middle of worship. Posters of renaissance and baroque art were placed on easels on the stage and were used as object lessons during communion.

Communion changed as well. Rather than a passive communion experience where the elements were passed out on plates. Members were invited forward to take communion kneeling, praying, and then taking the elements. For those who struggled in some way during the week, MacIlvaine had a special communion space at the front of the stage where people could confess sin and then take the elements.

A Re-visioning Process

At the same time, the elders began a re-visioning process. This process actually started in early 2006, but in its early stages, it was based on a more inwardly focused and *attractional* model. At the 2006 fall elders' retreat, the vision discussions were recalibrated toward a decisively *missional* direction. The initial discussions were enthusiastic about *missional* ministry, but the elders wisely determined to slow down the process and wait on God for his leading, even as GCC was in the process of making significant *missional* changes. In the months that followed a subset of the elder board met regularly to discuss how to articulate the emerging *missional* vision.

Initials Forays into the Community for Service

In the winter of 2006, GCC set its sights on serving the public schools. Determining that it was best to start with its neighborhood public elementary school, Rod and the executive pastor met with the principal and gave him \$1,000 to use as he saw fit for the needs of teachers. They then asked if the school had some projects with which the church could provide assistance. This began a fruitful relationship with Ranch Heights Elementary School that included tutoring, helping teachers move into their rooms as the year began, and assisting needy students and their families.

At the same time, the elders determined they would assist the local mid-high school. Working with the principal, a series of projects was mapped out. Over the next two years, Grace would serve by sponsoring a back-to-school camp, renovating a teacher's lounge, painting the gym, painting the cafeteria and choir room, and beautifying the outside of the building.

As these *missional* changes took place, MacIlvaine taught the congregation the things he was learning about *missional* ministry. In the summer of 2006, he began to purchase the top books on *missional* ministry, and taught expository messages on the

biblical basis for mission and the *missio Dei*. The fall '06 series was called, "Out of Your Comfort Zone." The winter '07 series was a follow up called, "Into the World."

In early 2007, the church began to see *missional* traction among small groups. One group began serving city employees, bringing refreshments to the garbage men before their shifts began. Another small group decided to serve, collectively, as the room parent at a west side school in Bartlesville that was low on parent participation. Another small group took refreshments to police officers. Still another small group collectively sponsored a homeless individual seeking to help him move from the working poor category to middle class.

In the spring of 2007, a short-term Christian community was founded in Bartlesville called "The Commonwealth" and was composed of young men and women who felt called to travel across America seeking places to serve. The Commonwealth partnered with GCC on a variety of service projects. But when the flood of 2007 occurred, The Commonwealth was instrumental in serving those hit hardest by the rising waters. Moreover, they were willing to serve in additional projects initiated by GCC, at one point helping the High School do extensive cleaning after construction delays prevented students from returning to class.

Transitions from the Fall of 2007 to the Fall of 2008

During this time, GCC made significant progress in clarifying its vision as a *missional* church and in finding places to serve in the community. As the elders observed what God was doing among the congregation, and saw God's vision for *missional* ministry in the Scriptures, they gradually moved toward a different expression of the vision. For 11 eleven years, the vision had been, "To build a growing community centered on God's grace." A strong grace-centered culture had been a hallmark of the ministry at GCC, but the elders felt that in light of the church's current direction, this vision statement was not specific enough. The new vision was expressed as follows:

1. Grace Community Church exists to worship the risen Christ, connect people in life changing relationships, and serve our city.
2. Our ultimate desire is that we could be a significant agent of Christ's mission to our city and beyond.
3. We aspire to do this in a way that radiates God's amazing and unconditional grace.

This revised vision statement was worded to convey the ministry process. The people at GCC worship and connect so they can excel at serving outside the walls of the church. Serving is the end point. The elders came to believe that if someone sensed their call to serve within the city, it would model the ministry of Jesus (Mark 10:45), and it would open doors for evangelism. The worship, connect, serve theme became the third series on *missional* ministry given by Rod in the fall of 2007. In the aftermath of that series, the elders and staff were amazed at how many people understood the church's vision. The new DNA of the church seemed to be on everyone's lips: "We worship and connect so that we can serve." Rather than just comprehending the three words—worship, connect, serve, people progressively began to understand the more nuanced concept of the *missio Dei*: the Triune God has been on mission for eternity, and we believers have been invited to participate in his preexisting mission.

During the '07/'08 ministry year, the youth began to excel at service in the community as well. Youth pastor, Jeff Berg, championed the vision among the teens, who in turn embraced it with passion. They served in nursing homes. They sponsored a 72-hour serve-a-thon, and they engaged in random acts of service in the community. One youth started a youth-led organization called, "The MOB", standing for Mission On Bartlesville. This group met twice monthly, planning special service projects to convey common grace to the needy.

During the '07 Christmas season, GCC decided to suspend their long history of partnering with Samaritan Purse's *Operation Christmas Child*, and instead packed

shoeboxes for needy families living on the West Side of Bartlesville. This proved to be a huge win. The team working on this was actually able to get the kids whom they were discipling to deliver the boxes *along with* the adult who was discipling them. Needy kids were serving needy families and, they were learning the joy of being a representative of Christ in the process!

During this season, GCC leaders were convicted that many members were serving in various capacities throughout the city, but they were not connecting their service with a transcendent *missional* vision: the *missio Dei*. So the staff sleuthed out two important sources of information: Where were people at GCC already serving? And what was the total universe of serving opportunities in Bartlesville? The results were amazing: most GCC members were serving significantly someplace in Bartlesville. The challenge was to help connect their serving to the *missio Dei*.

For instance, some served at the SPCA. One might dismiss service to animals as not part of Christ's mission. However, William Wilberforce, convinced that care of animals is part of Christian stewardship, started an animal protection society in England, which became the inspiration for SPCAs around the world. Moreover, many people who work at SPCAs do so because childhood trauma caused them to feel safe only around animals. In the presence of animals, they felt free to love and be loved without fear. So the challenge was to teach people to think biblically and strategically about the nature of their service, even as they were doing things toward which they had been naturally drawn.

Some of the serving areas where GCC members were active already are:

1. A foundation that equipped working poor students to gain study skills and receive a scholarship.
2. The city council
3. A clothing distribution center
4. A shelter for women and children in danger

5. An organization that works with disadvantaged children and their parents on the west side of Bartlesville.
6. Boys and Girls Clubs
7. The local SPCA.

As the church continued to study where people were serving, the leadership discovered something else that was surprising: the church had a significant number of directors of non-profit organizations in attendance. This led them to the idea that networking would enable the church to be more strategic in serving the community.

Transitions from the Fall of '08 to the Fall of '09

The fall '08 ministry season began with a new twist. Following the pattern of Christ Chapel Bible Church, GCC planned and produced its first ministry campaign, entitled, *God of this City*—after the *Passion* song by the same title. As part of the campaign, the church formed small groups, produced small group materials (along with DVDs), and sought to equip members to be active in what God was doing within the city. The response was positive. The campaign was concluded off with an all-church event where MacIlvaine and the staff were able to recast the Worship, Connect, Serve vision, and describe how that vision would continue into the rest of the '08/'09 ministry season.

The fall '08 ministry season also saw the following gains in new ministry initiatives especially designed to serve Bartlesville:

1. The *Young Parents Discovery Group* (also known as “Loving Roots”) was started to serve young, unmarried, pregnant moms and their significant others. The group helps the moms understand what to expect in their pregnancies. It prepares them for the practical aspects of parenthood and provides a biblical perspective on loving a child. At the same time, the men receive instruction about what it means to be a father and husband. The ultimate purpose of this group is to help these young parents come to Christ, and possibly get married.

2. GCC started an AWANA program. While normally considered an internally focused ministry, GCC specifically launched this with an external focus, determining that this ministry fit the needs of parents in this indigenous location. The response has been overwhelmingly favorable.
3. GCC entered its fourth year of *Celebrate Recovery*, however, because of its *missional* emphasis, the *Celebrate Recovery* team is now serving together in the community as an expression of God's common grace.

Other Missional Changes Phased in at Grace Community Church

In addition to the above, Grace has continued to phase into the following *missional* changes.

1. Partnered with another church to stock a food pantry.
2. Sent a family from our church to revitalize a struggling church on the west side of Bartlesville as our missionaries to that area of our city.
3. Partnered with twelve other local churches to raise 45,000 pounds of clothing and medical supplies for AIDS orphans in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, then sent two representatives of GCC to deliver the clothing.
4. Sent twenty youth to Camp Barnabas to serve special needs adults for a week.
5. GCC has sought to be generous in the use of its most expensive asset, offering the building for community events: high school football banquets, high school POM banquets, Oklahoma Wesleyan University's winter dinner, and a local dance academy's winter exhibition.
6. To date, seven independent ministries have been birthed as a direct (or in some cases indirect) result of Grace Community Church's *missional* vision: (1) Grace Missions International—an independent mission board working in the Caribbean; (2) Oklahoma Missions of Love—an organization that raises materiel for AIDS orphans in Africa; (3) Vision Onward—a local mission organization that serves

the needy on Bartlesville's west side; (4) Loving Roots—a ministry to unwed mothers; (5) the Lowe Family Young Scholar's Foundation—a foundation that provides scholarships to the working poor; (6) Simiente Misionera—a pastor training facility in Cuba; and (7) REACH Ministries—a college serving movement on the campus of OU serving greater Norman, OK. This last ministry was founded by a GCC youth who wanted his college experience to be more than studies and parties. A recent REACH event met the needs of 180 needy children in Norman, OK.

Future Plans

Grace Community Church is currently surrounded by land currently in the process of development. In the next 18 months, a major street will be completed providing access to the church from multiple neighborhoods. Moreover, approximately 375 houses are slated to be built immediately adjacent to the property and completed within the next two years. At present, leaders at GCC are striving to add value to their existing facilities so that they can serve their new neighbors, and in turn, invite them into the exciting adventure of *missional* ministry.

APPENDIX B

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MISSIONAL CHURCHES

Definition

A *missional* church is a highly unified body of believers, passionately committed to being God's missionary presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that the Triune God has already been at work in that location and has a specific agenda for it.

The Attitudes of Missional Christians

Toward God

They take seriously the notion that they have been sent by the risen Christ into their particular culture, and they learn to love the diverse facets of that culture as Christ does.

Toward Themselves

They embrace the mindset that they are exiles and resident aliens whose citizenship is firmly rooted in heaven. They therefore seek to live a countercultural lifestyle in ways meaningful to that culture. This mindset empowers consistent humble—sometimes sacrificial, service.

Toward their Local Church

They believe their local church is not an end in itself that must be growing constantly into an ever more powerful institution. Rather, their local church is a means to an end: kingdom advancement. It is a beachhead within the culture for fulfilling God's preexisting culture. They, therefore, pursue kingdom goals even if it means their church

might not grow as fast. They are willing to partner with other churches and parachurch organizations if it might meet kingdom objectives.

Missional church leaders measure the effectiveness of their church differently—not by counting the numbers of people attending the main weekend service, but by assessing the numbers of people serving significantly in the city as a direct result of the church's leadership.

Missional church members do not enter corporate worship for the purpose of being entertained or for getting all their felt needs met; nor is their worship energized because of an implied promise of prosperity. They go to connect with the God who calls his people into mission, and with their fellow soldiers who are also on mission. They see the main worship event as a context in which they might hear from God.

Toward Christendom

They recognize that organized religion—even organized religion expressed by contemporary modernist Christianity, has often posed a problem for emerging generations of postmodern people. Therefore, they eschew all forms of legalism, spiritual appearance management, and ecclesiastical control, passionately exuding God's grace to all. They seek to major on the essentials of the faith.

Toward the World

Remembering that God works locally, they concentrate on the needs of their city. They know its distinct regions and cultures. They seek the welfare of their city, knowing that their welfare depends on its welfare (Jer 29:4-7).

Toward pain and brokenness

Missional churches recognize that Jesus—our missionary hero, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa 53:3), and that he learned obedience through the things he suffered (Heb 5:8). *Missional* churches are, therefore, radically opposed to

expressions of a health and wealth gospel that minimizes, or perhaps denies, the very thing that brings us into mission.

The Actions of Missional Christians

With Respect to Worship

They view corporate worship as a high participation event that celebrates God's eternal mission and the work that his people have done during a given week. They also view it as a time to strengthen their biblical worldview so that they can continue to live radically as exiles and aliens in the world. As they come to a corporate worship event, they go with intent to connect, minister and be equipped—not to be entertained or seen.

With Respect to the World

They practice the principle of cultural flexibility without moral or spiritual compromise as a way to express God's common grace. Expressions of God's common grace are as numerous as his acts depicted in the Bible, but in a *missional* church, expressing common grace involves six qualities:

1. Showing hospitality to strangers
2. Loving those of diverse races, political orientations, and sexual preferences without sacrificing biblical principle.
3. Serving those who cannot pay us back.
4. Being wisely generous with financial and material resources.
5. Taking a collaborative role among the arts community within a given culture.
6. Taking a collaborative role, even a leadership role, in the civic structures within a given culture.

With Respect to the Gospel

Once they have built a bridge of common ground through common grace, *missional* Christians find ways to express the person of Jesus. Sometimes, this takes place in the context of a serving event. Sometimes this takes place as the believer exposes friends to the destructive idols of culture. At some point, the believer invites his friend into the context of the redeemed community, where Christ is experienced and his message seen in action.

With Respect to Ordinary Life

Missional Christians are mindful continuously that they are living in the presence of the risen Christ and on mission 24/7. This mindfulness prompts them to spontaneously ask many questions during the day: “What is God doing in this situation? How is God directing me? Does this person need prayer? How might I show leadership right now?” In general, the *missional* Christian realizes that he leads best through prayer, often asking a person if he/she can pray about a matter at that very moment.

With Respect to Discipleship

Missional churches take spiritual growth seriously but with a *missional* bent. They do not disciple for the purpose of increasing head knowledge or producing pietistic Christians. They disciple for the purpose of *missional* life-change, realizing that if a Christ-follower determines to be “on mission,” he or she will become highly motivated to grow and change, seeking knowledge that empowers higher levels of service out in the world.

This discipleship also recognizes the powerful influence that spiritual warfare plays in the growth process. Because the evil one aggressively seeks to sidetrack Christians from this kind of life-style, *missional* Christians encourage high levels of accountability and dependent prayer.

With Respect to Cultural Trends

Missional Christians recognize that North American culture is postmodern and post-Christian, and in many ways, anti-Christian. They are committed to studying and learning about the culture so that they might be more effective at reaching it.

Conclusion

Lesslie Newbigin was right: Western culture is a mission field. The rules that governed Christendom (c.a. 313-1960) have changed. When exilic Christ-followers engage their world as “sent ones” of the risen Christ, they move back to that passionate intentionality exhibited in the first three centuries of Christian advance.

APPENDIX C

THE VISION AND VALUES OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH BARTLESVILLE, OK

A CONCISE SUMMARY

Vision

Grace Community Church exists to *worship* the risen Christ, *connect* people in life-changing relationships, and *serve* our city. Our ultimate desire is that we could be a significant agent of Christ's mission to Bartlesville and beyond. We aspire to do this in a way that radiates God's amazing and unconditional grace.

Our normal expression of the vision is: "Worship, Connect, Serve."

Values

Values Related to our Overall Mindset

Missionary minded – Every member thinks of himself (and his family) as a missionary to the community. Small groups serve together. Families often serve together. As missionary minded believers, we see ourselves as "resident-alien" and "exiles" whose top priority in life is kingdom advance.

Different definition of success – Success is the quality of service rendered and quantity of people equipped, rather than people retained. This is important because Bartlesville will continue to be a community where people are transferred in and out. We love it when we can give away our ministry.

High-intentionality – In making decisions we're always asking, "How will this help us manifest the servant-presence of Jesus in our community?"

Values Related to our Leadership

High expectations – When people join they do three things: engage *God* in corporate worship, engage *each other* in authentic community, and engage the *world*

through service. We have high expectations for ourselves (elders & staff) as we design places for people to serve.

Generous with resources – We will use our most expensive asset – our building – to create relationships with the community at large.

Simple clear structure – We are elder protected, staff run, lay empowered. No complexity. No confusion.

Values Related to our Culture

Arts and culture sensitive – We aim to engage secular people with a holy God through participative worship experiences. This is how God operated through history.

Common ground – We will aim to be culturally flexible with the world, but with no moral compromise. We're high in biblical content; high in cultural relevance.

Discipleship with a preference for action – We teach for life-change, specifically we want people to serve like Jesus did in the upper room by washing their feet.

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A missional church with a Great Commission passion will care about relevance—making the message clear. Cultural awareness, relevance, and engagement are an important element of missional theology and being on mission yet these are not the only elements. Our churches are to be biblically faithful, culturally relevant, and counter-cultural communities. It should be true of all churches as they pursue a missional position that they hold the mission of God as primary. The mission is not the mission; the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ is central to the mission. Instead, we need to ensure that missional is a driving force for how we live out God's work. I have already warned about the dangers of the theoretical without the practical. In *Introducing the Missional Church*, two leading voices in the missional movement provide an accessible introduction, explaining how the movement developed, why it's important, and how churches can become more missional. "Roxburgh and Boren offer the clearest explication of missional thinking." - Ryan Bolger, associate professor, *Church in Contemporary Culture*, Fuller Theological Seminary; coauthor, *Emerging Churches* "If you've ever wondered what 'missional' means and what real difference it makes in the life of the church, this is the place to start."--John R. Franke, Clemens Professor of Missional Theology, Biblical Seminary; author, *Manifold Witness* "A wonderful, imaginative exploration into what it means for the.