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GROWING AN EMERGING CHURCH WITHIN AN EXISTING
CONGREGATION AT NEWBURGH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

Growing an Emerging Church within an Existing Congregation at Newburgh United Methodist Church

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2010

This ministry focus paper will develop a process for growing an additional worshipping community of postmoderns that exists in unity within the Newburgh United Methodist Church family and that seeks to jointly participate in the *missio Dei* of its context of Southern Indiana. The emerging church community of postmoderns at Newburgh is named “the Joshua Tree.” The church within a church concept, as presented in this project, is central in creating space for a new community with a new ethos to emerge. The premise of this paper is that postmodernity exists in Southern Indiana and that the existing traditional congregation, which currently struggles with ministry to postmoderns, can transition to thrive in this new ethos through its relationship with the Joshua Tree.

This paper contains three parts. The first part presents the context in which this project has emerged and explores the milieu of Southern Indiana and the cultural changes occurring from modernity to postmodernity. It also examines the Indiana United Methodist Church (UMC), both its real and felt need to reverse decline in membership and gain younger disciples of Jesus Christ. The second part articulates a theology of worship using biblical, historical, and tradition support. It establishes the foundation through an ecclesiology of worship and mission and provides an understanding of the challenges of growing a church within a church from a systems perspective. The third part sets forth a strategy for growing the Joshua Tree Emerging community. An assessment of this new community is included and followed by concluding remarks.

Content Reader: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

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INTRODUCTION

This ministry focus paper will develop a process for growing an additional worshipping community of postmoderns that exists in unity within the Newburgh United Methodist Church (NUMC) family and seeks to participate jointly in the *missio Dei* of this context. It discusses the process of how one local church evolved from a modern mindset into a vital ministry in a postmodern world. Herein is a description of NUMC developing a space where a distinctive new community of postmoderns could emerge not joined or defined by doctrine, dogma, creed, or methodology but by particular mission. Thus is the task of growing a new community of people with a postmodern worldview within an existing church.

It is important to understand what this project is not. It is not about adding a new contemporary worship service to reach the unchurched, nor is this project about creating an innovative alternative worship service or “Generation X style worship” to connect with young people.¹ These efforts to attract young adults to worship are not the aim. Rather, the intention of this project is a change in ethos because more will be required to be the Church in postmodernity. Indeed, growing a church within a church at NUMC is a process of cultivating a new community whose very shape and practice emerge from a postmodern ethos and speak to postmodern followers or would-be followers of Jesus.

¹ Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 56. The term “Generation X” is derived by Coupland in this same book. He uses the term for people who were born between the late 1950s and 1960s. Generation X now generally refers to people born roughly between 1964 and 1980, although there are some variations in date range. A “Generation X style worship,” or Gen X worship, refers to flashy attractive worship that resembles a rock concert. An example is seen in the Vineyard Church moment according to Donald Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 84.

Merely adding a contemporary service or Gen X worship is simply a change in mode and method. Therein, the church within a church concept as written about in this project offers the needed distancing and differentiation for a new ethos to emerge.

There is a growing shift in the ethos of the modern era to the postmodern era. “The times they are a-changin’” are the familiar words of Bob Dylan from his song by the same name.² These words may be truest regarding the rise of postmodernity, who some believe came out full-fledge against modernity in the 1970s.³ The late evangelical scholar Stanley J. Grenz wrote: “We are in the midst of a transition from the modern to the postmodern era. . . . Whatever else it might be, as the name suggests, postmodernism signifies the quest to move beyond modernism.”⁴ To fully grasp postmodernity, an understanding of modernity and the Age of Reason that has informed it is necessary. However, one aspect of postmodernity that initiated the challenge and controversy to a Christianity forged in modernity was the postmodern distrust of metanarratives.⁵ With the collapse of the metanarrative, the big stories which offer overarching explanations of life, surfaced the idea that absolute truth—if there was absolute truth—could not be fully known. Consequently, there was more than one story to tell, more than one reality unfolding, and more than one truth; or, at least, the truth was too large and multidimensional to fully know. This presented a challenge to Christian thinking and the mission of the Church as understood from the lens of modernity.

² Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are a-Changin’*, Columbia Records, studio album, 1964.

³ Stanley J. Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ Scot McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church,” *Christianity Today*, January 19, 2007, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=40534 (accessed March 31, 2009), 3.

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger in their study of emerging churches in the United States and the United Kingdom believe that “churches have seriously misread culture and misread the church’s mission.”⁶ Church leaders must raise this question: “How should the churches respond to this ethos shift?”⁷ The Church cannot reboot to an earlier version of reality called modernity but must press forward remapping and renewing the way. Grenz advises, “We dare not fall into the trap of wistfully longing for a return to the early modernity . . . for we are called to ministry not to the past but to the contemporary context, and our contemporary contest is influenced by postmodern ideas.”⁸ These words were published in 1995, but the questions have not been settled. Even today the postmodern controversy still stirs. The question whether churches should embrace or shun postmodernity, or if it even truly exists, continues. What adds to the challenge is that a change in ethos also may require a shift in primary centers of value and meaning, in what James W. Fowler calls one’s “Stage of Faith and Self-hood.”⁹ Fowler defines faith as “an integral centering process, underlying the formation of beliefs, values, and meaning.”¹⁰ Therefore, the Church has the challenge of not only emerging in

⁶ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸ Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 10.

⁹ James W. Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Theology and Pastoral Care Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

a new ethos, but part of this transformation is a faith development process as defined by Fowler.¹¹

The challenge for the Church is multifaceted but necessary. The premise herein is that in Southern Indiana postmodernity does exist and is shaping values, beliefs, and culture over and against modernity.¹² That is to say, there is a postmodern generation (though not defined by age) that shares a common mindset and outlook. It is to this reality that Christianity must find a way forward and that NUMC will need to find a way forward in Newburgh, Indiana. To live and do ministry in postmodernity will mean different things to different people. Emergent thinker Doug Pagitt once said that Christians will either minister “to postmoderns, with postmoderns, or as postmoderns.”¹³

The emerging church is a movement where many are seeking to do ministry in postmodernity with postmoderns. The challenge is that the emerging movement cannot be painted with a broad-sweeping brush due to its diversity and liquidity.¹⁴ It may be helpful at this point to define some terms. For this reason, Gibbs and Bolger have offered a definition of the emerging church by describing the practices of these communities:

Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses nine practices. Emerging churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome

¹¹ Chapter 5 will offer a more detailed discussion of postmodernity and Fowler’s Stages of Faith Development theory.

¹² Chapter 1 will present a detailed discussion on postmodernity in Southern Indiana.

¹³ I attended “TM711 Re-Imagining Church” led by Doug Pagitt and Ryan K. Bolger (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, Winter 2007). In this course, Pagitt made this statement. For more details regarding this topic see McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church.”

¹⁴ McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church,” also offers a description of some of the many facets of Emerging Church and seeks to raise the awareness that this movement is not one dimensional but rather dynamic and diverse. McKnight divides this movement into five different streams: prophetic, postmodern, praxis oriented, post evangelical, and political.

the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.¹⁵

Each of these nine characteristics on some level is a reaction against ways of being the Church in modernity. The term “emerging church” refers to churches who dynamically live these nine characteristics and who minister to and with postmoderns.

A further distinction occurs between the terms “emerging” and “Emergent” churches; therefore, emerging church should be differentiated from “Emergent.”¹⁶ Emergent refers to those Christians who agree formally or informally with the philosophy found in the Emergent Village.¹⁷ The term “emerging” connotes a slow and evolutionary process, while “Emergent” emphasizes the unexpected nature and shift. “Emerging” is more general and gradual. The emerging church refers to the larger global movement that is more church-centered, and therefore ecclesial, whereas the concept of “Emergent” is narrower since it is a specific organization with leaders.¹⁸

Bolger and Gibb’s definition of the emerging church is helpful as a lens for framing this movement, because their description illuminates the dynamic complexity of the emerging church as liquid and evolving. In the United Kingdom, some emerging church leaders were frustrated by this same complexity and the ease of misunderstanding.¹⁹

¹⁵ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 45.

¹⁶ For a discussion on the difference between “Emerging” and “Emergent” see Jason Carlson, “Emergent vs. Emerging Churches: Clearing Up the Confusion,” *Worldview Times*, May 11, 2007, <http://www.worldviewtimes.com/article.php?articleid-1645> (accessed July 20, 2009).

¹⁷ Emergent Village, “About Emergent Village,” <http://www.emergentvillage.com/about/> (accessed August 26, 2009).

¹⁸ McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church.”

¹⁹ From 2005 to 2006, I served in North England, Durham County in the British Methodist Church. While there, I observed and joined in some of the fresh expressions and emerging movement in the

Consequently, those in the Anglican and British Methodist Church have moved away from the term “emerging church” toward the term “fresh expressions of faith” or “fresh expressions of doing church.”²⁰ Indeed, those expressions of faith empowered by the British Methodist Church are called “Fresh Expressions.”²¹ The term fresh expression reminds one that this emergence is something more than a mode and form of doing worship.

As with most changes in the Church, the emerging church’s questioning of modern methods and ideologies has created a backlash.²² Those whose Christianity is grounded in modernity may feel the emerging church movement leads people astray. Indeed, with questioning came a shift in centers of meaning and purpose, as is seen in the move in emphasis from orthodoxy to orthopraxy. In other words, there is a shift in gaining adherents to believe right doctrine toward encouraging right action over and against belief. As values change, there is resistance.²³

More recently, another stream has surfaced, which is different in origin yet friendly with the emergent movement. This movement is called the “missional church.”²⁴ In their book, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch state that

United Kingdom. See also Fresh Expressions, <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/> (accessed October 2009).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² An example of the backlash against the Emerging Church can be seen in this *Life Way* publication and DVD set. The aim is to warn evangelicals of the apostasy they perceive in this movement. Ways of Life Literature, “Emerging Church Resources,” <http://www.wayoflife.org/emergingchurch/resources/index.html?gclid=CJyxpVWW0JwCFMQswodiVs7Og> (accessed September 1, 2009).

²³ See Chapter 5 for more details on congregational resistance.

²⁴ Friend of Missional, “What is Missional Church?” <http://www.friendofmissional.org/> (accessed September 5, 2009).

“a missional church is the hope of the post-Christendom era.”²⁵ They argue that an assessment of evangelistic efforts in the 1990s will reveal that in spite of all the activity in the United States and United Kingdom Church, numbers have declined. What is needed is a shift in ethos in the Church in this new area. Therein, the missional church could be included loosely among emerging churches, although its focus and purpose are defined more clearly.

Reggie McNeal, author of *Missional Renaissance*, has identified three shifts necessary to become a missional church.²⁶ For McNeal, the first one entails shifting from an internal to an external ministry focus. Second, there is a shift from program development toward people development; and third, there is a move from church-based to Kingdom-based leadership, in which a church’s scorecard of effectiveness must change. All three are necessary to work from a missional church framework. God is up to something new, a tectonic shift that challenges the very heart of what the Church is and does.²⁷ The missional church is a new way of being the Church. McNeal states: “Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or activity.”²⁸

Some readers may understand the emerging church and missional church as nearly polar opposite to traditional church, and therefore wonder why a local church

²⁵ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 17.

²⁶ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 6-14.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., xiv.

would choose this path to ministry in postmodernity.²⁹ Missional church web blogger Kline Webb believes it is nearly impossible for the traditional Church to make the shift to becoming missional. “They will not pay the price for admission,” he contends.³⁰ The problem is that understanding the missional church requires a transition in mindset in a way in which those who understand the Church traditionally have difficulty. Pagitt insists that the emergent church requires a break from any traditional forms of church as established methodologies and ideologies, because they are obstacles to the *missio Dei*.³¹ Pagitt believes a fresh start is necessary in order for the new community not to be drawn into old patterns. This would fit the Emergent philosophy of being abrupt and adamant about change. Still other leaders, such as Bob Whitesel, argue the starting ground can and often should be the existing Church and that the task of church leadership is to shape the existing church into a viable source of hope for the future.³² Missional leader Kurt Fredrickson offers a way forward for transitioning denominational structures.

The Christendom-based modernist church model will remain, and with attention to renewal will have opportunities to flourish in some places. New forms of church will also emerge with new missional vigor. This missionally engaged church is not a specific form or structure. It is rather a mood that can pervade any church form—traditional or non traditional, established or emerging. With the renewed thinking and practices of both the traditional church and emerging churches, based on a missio-ecclesiology, denominations will be moved by the Spirit towards missional

²⁹ Kline Webb, “Can Traditional Church Be Missional? Can It Emerge?” blog, entry posted January 27, 2007, <http://webbkline.blogspot.com/2007/01/can-traditional-church-be-missional-can.html> (accessed September 5, 2009)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Pagitt and Bolger, “TM711 Re-Imagining Church.” In this course Pagitt was emphatic in his belief that the Emergent Church required a clean break from traditional Christianity.

³² Bob Whitesel has encouraged this project and believes the starting point is the local church. Bob Whitesel, *Inside the Organic Church: Learning from Twelve Emerging Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 15.

engagement³³

Gibbs and Bolger in their studies of emerging churches asked the question of whether or not modern and postmodern churches could co-exist together, even sharing leadership from a local congregation.³⁴ British emerging church guru, Jonny Baker believes there is room enough to work together particularly in the context of the United Kingdom, because there this practice of adding congregations together has more history. Indeed, they have been doing this sort of thing now for years particularly with Fresh Expressions.³⁵

The task of this project is to grow a community that emerges from the ethos of postmodernity in Newburgh, Indiana empowered by an existing community that may have a more modern mindset. That is to say, NUMC leaders are called to empower financially and with supportive leadership yet release the new community to grow and form its own praxis and traditions in missions. The task is formidable. The aim is to share NUMC's church DNA rather than clone another version of the congregation. Resourcing and guiding (and staying out of the way) are that work of the leaders. The reasoning behind this effort is a conviction that in some contexts the existing local church can make the evolutionary shift. However, as stated above, some emerging and missional leaders believe this will not work. Each context offers a different opportunity to follow Christ in the world. Perhaps there are still communities who can tolerate enough diversity in

³³ Kurt Norman Fredrickson, "An Ecclesial Ecology for Denominational Futures Nurturing Organic Structures for Missional Engagement." (PhD diss, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2009), 251.

³⁴ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 39.

³⁵ Jonny Baker, "CMS Acknowledged Community of the Church of England," JonnyBaker Blog, entry posted March 24, 2009, <http://jonnybaker.blogs.com/> (accessed October 2009).

ideology and methodology—who have flexible enough leadership structures and ministers, clergy and lay—not only to grow a new mission-based community but to participate in the *missio Dei* in their context. If so, this enlargement of the local church ethos will be a faith transition and model for others in their own context.

Throughout this paper a guiding theological premise is that God is active in this world in His mission. The Latin term for this is the *missio Dei* or mission of God. Chapter 4 will unpack this premise over and against the mission of the church, *missio ecclesia*. However, the *missio Dei* throughout this project refers to the redemptive work of God in transforming this world. It is this world in which God is ushering in His Kingdom and saving through His Son (ref. Matthew 6:16). As followers of Jesus therefore, the aim is to join in His mission in the world.

This project shares the process in which Newburgh United Methodist Church has grown “the Joshua Tree” community, a church within a church. On September 7, 2008, at NUMC the fresh expression of doing church as the Joshua Tree community officially broke ground. The Joshua Tree is a social experiment. This shoot was connected with NUMC and yet has been free to grow as unhampered as possible toward a missional church mindset. NUMC’s call was also seeking its own missional church mindset only different. It’s task is to understand the aim is not simply to add new members like themselves to an existing church or even to clone the existing community in a new setting. Rather, it is the trial of a local church becoming bicultural in learning to tolerate differences, particularly of postmodern and modern ideologies and methodologies. It is not that NUMC will have to abandon its practices forged in modernity; rather, it hopes to make room by adding a space where a new

community guided by a different ethos can emerge. To this degree, the local church must bear a level of diversity while remaining a healthy and unified congregation.

This paper will contain three major sections. The first section will seek to provide an understanding of the particular religious ethos in Southern Indiana. This section will explore the local acceptance and resistance to postmodernity and subsequent challenges. Since this community is emerging from within the United Methodist tradition, it will be important to unpack the strengths of this connection as well as denominational obstacles. The aim of this first section is to provide a clear grasp of the milieu. Unlike a new church start or franchise, growing a new community of postmoderns at NUMC means discerning what is unique and particular and therefore God's *missio Dei* in this location and context. Lucid discernment and understanding of the culture are vital.

The second section will articulate a theology of worship using biblical, historical, and traditional support. Exploring past church methodology and theology and their relationship between worship and mission will help form the new. The plan here was not to hammer down a theology and praxis, nor to duplicate past traditions, but rather to bring traditional practices of the church into discussion with the new culture and let the new community inform NUMC and form new traditions. The hope is to understand both the communal worship practices at the Joshua Tree and how they unfold from the United Methodist framework as well as how they differ.

This portion of the discussion also presents a discussion on leadership. The Joshua Tree has needed to become a community where the leadership operates from within a non-hierarchical framework. Although the initial leadership came from NUMC, the goal has been to hold on loosely. This has meant making every effort to allow the Joshua Tree's

leadership to structure and style itself distinctively from that of NUMC. In modernity, power is centralized. Even when launching a new church or a multi-site there is a centralized leadership structure that functions with a central hub networking outward to the worship sites. The challenge is to evolve from old-world thinking about power and control.³⁶ The Joshua Tree leadership and structure needs to shift from the centralized, controlling web to empowering and collaborating. Rather, Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom offer a new-world metaphor of the starfish over and against the spider. That is, in the emerging new world, hierarchy is reduced, leadership and power are shared, and teams collaborate.³⁷ The church within a church at NUMC must be a movement, tapping into the power of leaderless organizations in which postmoderns may wish to participate as leaders.³⁸ Thus, postmodern leadership from outside the existing NUMC community has been essential.

NUMC's leadership explored the options and shared a common hope. Ultimately, the leaders were most concerned with the *missio Dei* in Newburgh and growing agents for the Kingdom. Beyond the many external signs of growth in NUMC, they believed God was doing something profound and their church's call was to be part of that mission. A discernment process was initiated regarding how the church could evolve to become a life-enhancing, Kingdom-honoring place of *shalom* in this changing world. The now dated but

³⁶ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York: Portfolio, 2006).

³⁷ George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 19.

³⁸ President Barack Obama's campaign strategy for the 2008 elections was a brilliant example of empowering postmodern participants at the grassroots level. The campaign strategy began as an organic people movement. See Monte Lutz, *The Social Pulpit: Barack Obama's Media Campaign Toolkit* (Chicago: Edelman, 2009), <http://www.edelman.com/image/insights/content/Social%20Pulpit%20-%20Barack%20Obamas%20Social%20Media%20Toolkit%201.09.pdf> (accessed August 26, 2009).

poignant questions of “What is Gospel? What is culture?” were explored. The answer required not just recalling what Jesus had done on the cross two thousand years ago but discovering what the living Lord was doing now in the *missio Dei* of Newburgh. NUMC’s task was to join in that work. The aim could not be simply to get people back into church. It needed to send people out as missionaries in the world. This was a new way of looking at church for some leaders. From the start, the leaders would need to become a community of interpreters learning discernment and finding ways to be agents for the Kingdom.

The third section will unpack the strategy for growing the emerging congregation within a church and assess the process. Key to this project is ideology that understands the process of cultivating a church within a church in postmodernity through the lens of Fowler’s Faith Development theory and Bowenian Family Systems thinking.³⁹ Therein, this part of the project also will include a chapter dealing with the vision and mission of this community as well as how to deal with resistance from the local community from a systems and Faith Development perspective.

The seven chapters that comprise this project attempt to paint a picture of one Midwest church’s attempt at meeting the challenge of postmodernity. This project is in no way prescriptive or a formula for all churches. Nevertheless, the hope is that this work

³⁹ Murry Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: K Aronson, 1978). Bowen is considered the father of Family Systems Theory. Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985) applies Bowenin systems to church congregations and synagogues.

might inspire other congregations to undergo the process of becoming effective for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom in this new age.

PART ONE

CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

SOUTHERN INDIANA RELIGIOUS ETHOS

This chapter will look at the current religious ethos and influences in Southern Indiana. Within this milieu are Newburgh United Methodist Church and its rich history of surviving and transcending even tragic obstacles. Herein, is an exploration of ideologies, methodologies, and resources that have aided the church in its survival and may benefit it within the church process detailed in this project. Additionally included are well-researched reports which explore the demographic breakdown of the local population by income, ethnicity, religious preference, and general acceptance of Christianity. Finally, NUMC is a connectional member of the United Methodist Church (UMC). This chapter will examine the benefits as well as the challenges in growing a church within a mother church that belongs to this denomination.

The Milieu

Newburgh, Indiana is a suburb of Evansville, Indiana and is a part of the southern border of the state along the Ohio River. Evansville is the third largest city in Indiana with 122,000 people, or 230,000 including the larger Evansville area and Newburgh.¹

¹ US Census Bureau including Vanderburgh Co and Warrick Co, see <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/18163.html> and <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/18173.html> (both accessed Feb 2010).

Historically, the Ohio River at Newburgh not only lays a geographic boundary but also marks the historic Mason Dixon line separating the Northern Union and the Southern Confederate states.² Newburgh, then spelled “Newburg,” made history in being captured in the first Confederate raid across the Mason Dixon Line.³ It is not a proud legacy; but, as the legend goes, not a shot was fired. Still, Newburgh and Evansville have embedded within the community’s ethos an image of their resistance against slavery and the slave trade. Local churches recall their participation in the Underground Railroad and helping escaped slaves make their way north away from bounty hunters.⁴ For the purpose of this paper, it is important to understand this communal memory. Despite its proximity to the South, this portion of Indiana contained a people who worked for the liberation and freedom of others. This ideal carried forward into both World War I and II, when local industries transformed into airplane plants and shipyards. As men left for battle, local women stepped into the workforce making Evansville the world’s largest manufacturer of Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) as well as producing thousands of P-47Ds Thunderbolt planes.⁵ Consequently, there is a sense of pride in the community as being vital to the

² Sons of the South, “Mason Dixon Line,” <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/slavery/slave-maps/mason-dixon-line.htm> (accessed September 23, 2009). Kentucky never signed the cessation agreement and considered itself neutral, according to Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, “Kentucky Members of the Confederate Congress: 1861-1862,” <http://www.kdla.ky.gov/resources/kyconfedcongress.htm> (accessed October 24, 2009).

³ Ray Mulesky, *Thunder from a Clear Sky: Stovepipe Johnson’s Confederate Raid on Newburgh, Indiana* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse Star, 2006), 9.

⁴ Underground Railroad, “Indiana’s Anti-Slavery League” (<http://www.undergroundrailroadindiana.com/> (accessed September 21, 2009). I was confirmed at Old North United Methodist Church in Evansville, Indiana. Old North Church was part of the Underground Railroad. About a quarter mile behind the house where I grew up was a log cabin where escaped slaves were reported to stay on their journey through town. In 1977, the cabin was burnt to the ground. The cause was said to be arson, although I could not confirm this fact.

United States. People see themselves as participants in what is right and good about America as they have stood for something in the past and still do today.

Someone from a major city may find it difficult to think of Newburgh, Indiana as a place with a rising postmodern population. There are many images that may come to mind with thinking about Indiana, but postmodern may not be one of them. However there are educational, economic and technological influences shifting this region's ethos. Educationally, Evansville has two graduate level universities, the University of Evansville⁶ and the University of Southern Indiana.⁷ Combined, they enroll over 13,500 fulltime students and employ 512 fulltime faculty. Both schools are represented by an over eight percent international and ethnic population.

Newburgh and the east side of Evansville have the highest population growth, many professionals have transferred in from the east and west coasts. Educated residents such as young doctors, business executives, and management professionals are the largest demographic at thirty-six percent.⁸ Many choose to reside in Newburgh because of Newburgh's convenience to Evansville's eastside. Also, taxes are lower in Newburgh's Warrick County than Evansville's Vanderburgh County. Some of the largest homes in the area are built in this region. All these factors contribute to making Newburgh a regionally admired place to locate.

⁶ University of Evansville, see <http://www.evansville.edu/aboutue/facts.cfm> (accessed Feb 2010).

⁷ University of Southern Indiana, see <http://www.usi.edu/information/> (accessed Feb 2010).

⁸ United States Census Bureau, "DR-3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000 Data Set: Census 2000 Summary Geographic Area: Newburgh, Indiana," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=16000US1852650&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP3&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-_lang=en&-_sse=on (accessed October 2008).

The Percept Report (PR) of this local region identifies Newburgh as a growing community with a potential population target of 31,958.⁹ This area has demonstrated a 32.7 percent increase since 1990, which translates to 7,876 people. The area's projected growth is 4.9 percent. This means a growth of 1,559 people by 2011. As expected, this popular area had a 24.5 percent ranking for prosperous families creating a high giving potential with the average household income approximately \$79,144.

Another aspect of Newburgh that demonstrates an influence of postmodernity is increased ethnic diversity. In 1998, Toyota Corporation began construction on a new two billion dollar manufacturing plant north of Evansville.¹⁰ Toyota's presence blessed this region both economically and with an influx of ethnic diversity. Evansville saw a rise in the expansion of foreign and exotic cuisine including authentic Japanese, Indian, Thai, and Vietnamese owned and operated by individuals who immigrated to the US.

The Religious Ethos

During this same time the region has increased its religious diversity. Newburgh has a new Muslim mosque (which makes the second in Evansville), a Hindu temple, and a Jewish synagogue. All were built within the past few years and are within a few driving miles from NUMC. Compared with larger US cities this growth may seem insignificant; however, they mark a shift in culture. These all indicate a higher level of ethnic and religious diversity than the survey's statistics show in has greater ethnic and religious diversity than the PR may indicate. According to the PR, there is a low diversity rating

⁹ Percept, Inc., *Ministry Area Profile 2006* (Newburgh, IN: Percept, Inc., 2006), 4.

of .03 percent. However, it is difficult to assess this diversity rating. More so, ethnic diversity is difficult to accurately survey in the United States.¹¹ This challenge was compounded during the past eight years of the Bush Administration, as reasons to self-reveal one's non-Anglo-American ethnicity decreased. Nevertheless, there are several indicators of greater diversity in Newburgh than the United States Census or PR has indicated.

Amidst Newburgh's growing diversity, the PR indicates that NUMC itself had a low ranking of less than .01 percent diversity; however, in this area there was a high lifestyle diversity rating of 27.¹² There is some generational spectrum. In this PR, the area profile generations were defined: Generation Z (born 2002 and later), Millennials (born 1982 to 2001), Survivors (born 1961 to 1981), Boomers (born 1943 to 1960), Silents (born 1925 to 1942), and Builders (born 1924 and earlier).¹³ The largest were the Millennials at 29 percent, Boomers were next largest with 27 percent, and the Survivors came in at 25.5 percent.¹⁴ Target areas show an anticipated growth of 5.4 percent with

¹⁰ Toyota Plant's 2 billion dollar expansion in Southern Indiana, see http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0UDO/is_4_15/ai_80452118/ (accessed Feb 2010).

¹¹ Center for Disease Control, "National Center for Health Statistics," <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/dvs/popbridge/popbridge.htm> (accessed January 29, 2009). This article describes the gathering methodology of the United States Census: "Although efforts were made to use the best available data and methods to produce the bridged estimates, the modeling process introduces error into the estimates. The potential for error will be greatest for the smallest population groups."

¹² The Joshua Tree community has radically changed this ratio at NUMC, adding significantly more ethnic diversity than the original mother church. By the end of 2008, a regular part of the Joshua Tree included ethnicities such as Hispanic, Black, and Puerto Rican.

¹³ Percept, Inc., "Population by Generation," in *Ministry Area Profile 2006* (Newburgh, IN: Percept, Inc., 2006), 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

respective ratio change: Millennials at 30 percent, Survivors at 29 percent, and Boomers at 23 percent.

Table 1. Population Spectrum

<i>Concern Group</i>	<i>As related to the US average</i>	<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Ages</i>
29.0%	3.5% (above)	Millennials	8 to 27
27.5%	-7.7% (below)	Survivors	28 to 48
25.4%	15.9%	Boomers	49 to 66
9.3%	-10.5%	Silents	67 to 84
2.2%	-26.5%	Builders	85 and older
6.4 %	-4.6%	Gen Z	7 and younger

At NUMC the median age is thirty-seven years of age, with 49.2 percent being male and 50.9 percent being female. Interestingly, the predominant family structure is a traditional two-parent home with two or more children and high education (i.e., 91 percent of those aged twenty-five and over complete high school while the national average is 80.4 percent). In Newburgh, 30 percent are age twenty-five or older and are college graduates. This is higher than the national average of 24.4 percent in the United States.

Newburgh United Methodist Church

Tradition and History

Newburgh Methodist Church's first worship house was built in 1845.¹⁵ The church became a landmark, given its hilltop location overlooking the river. Some called the Methodist Hill "Amen Corner," as sounds of praise could be heard through the church

¹⁵ Sally Dias, "Newburgh United Methodist Church History," in *Church Directory 2002* (Madison, IN: Olan Mills, 2002), 4-5.

windows. Hardship was no stranger to the Newburgh Methodists. The church caught fire on two occasions, and in 1924 a new building was constructed amidst the backdrop of the Great Depression. Years later the Southern Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church purchased ten acres north of town and encouraged the church to relocate. In 1972 the move was made to the new sanctuary. The church grew quickly, expanded to a second service, and added a Fellowship Hall. In November 2005 another challenge hit. In the dark of early morning, Newburgh was struck by a tornado reaping injury and destruction across the community.¹⁶ Damages to the NUMC building were over \$200,000. However, after the disaster NUMC was able to serve the community through outreach, and it became a center for relief feeding three hundred people three meals a day. This experience inspired the church leaders to become more missional; and, plans were laid to build a Life Center complete with showers, a kitchenette, and rooms that could more effectively house a variety of ministries and missions in the future.

NUMC has a spirit of survival. The church has transitioned through wars, fires, tornados, relocations, and building projects, with the most recent being the completion of the Life Center in 2008. However, these factors are not what make NUMC most atypical among other churches, including United Methodist congregations in Indiana. The Indiana UMC Conference has experienced a loss of members and decline in attendance the past several years. Other churches have experienced loss, causing some to close completely. Against denominational decline, NUMC increased attendance in 2007 to an average of

¹⁶ At 2:00 a.m. on November 7, 2005 a tornado blew through Southern Indiana killing twenty-two people and injuring 230. Newburgh people fortunately only suffered injury and property damage. CNN, "Tornado Kills 22 in Indiana," November 7, 2005, <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WEATHER/11/06/indiana.tornadoes/index.html> (accessed January 15, 2009).

427 people in worship and in 2008 grew to over a five hundred weekly average.¹⁷ The growth caused congestion in both current worship services, as they reached their capacity.

NUMC is located near two mega-churches, making NUMC the third largest church in Newburgh. Crossroads Christian Church is the largest followed by First Christian Church.¹⁸ These mega-churches are both unique, though strongly evangelical, with a contemporary style of worship. NUMC offers something different. Indeed, there are two different style services in the sanctuary: a traditional service and a blended contemporary worship. The third alternative at NUMC is the emerging community, the Joshua Tree, which is the church within a church.¹⁹

Although many churches in this area are in decline, some have attributed the decrease in attendance to the postmodern shift in culture. Interestingly, NUMC has been growing. There are a few explanations for this growth in church attendance. First, NUMC is experiencing transfer growth. This is not to say conversions are not occurring as well. NUMC had several reports of first-time professions of faith among the seventy-five new people. However, transfer growth does raise the question regarding the ultimate contribution to God's Kingdom, as growth in numeric attendance is not synonymous with Kingdom growth. The Percept Report of family receptivity in this region showed preference of historic Christianity. Contributing to this in part are the many people in transit wanting to connect to a place where more traditional Christianity is practiced. This

¹⁷ United Methodist Church, *Journal of South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church: Statistical Report* (Bloomington, IN: United Methodist Church, 2008), 627.

¹⁸ For information regarding the two mega-churches near NUMC, see Crossroads Christian Church, <http://www.crossroadscristian.com/> (accessed August 17, 2009) and First Christian Church, <http://www.fcn.org/> (accessed August 17, 2009).

¹⁹ Details of how this came to be are explained in Part Three of this project.

helps explain some of the transfer growth; nevertheless, transfer growth does not explain the entire increase.

In the PR, among those tested, there is a preference for historical Christianity. To score strongly as having a preference for historic Christianity indicates some involvement with their faith. This does not specify denomination or non-denomination or whether historic Christianity refers to orthodox (i.e., right belief), orthopraxis (i.e., right practice), or something else. However, a preference for historic Christianity in the PR is contextual. This means the preference refers to the traditional forms practiced by those surveyed. It is not surprising that the region would score high on tradition, since Southern Indiana is politically conservative and Republican. The state, until this last election, had not voted for a Democrat since Lyndon Johnson forty-four years ago.²⁰ Seeking a conservative stronghold in historic Christianity may be one reason for the growth in each of these three churches.

Still, a growing population in Newburgh was not attracted to Christianity in any of its current forms. This is evidenced by an increase in the percentage of people not connected with any church or religion. This changing cultural context requires a new exploration of the Gospel and church and a need to rediscover the *missio Dei* in Newburgh.

Resources

This paper contends that the concept of a church within a church may be a way forward for some congregations, particularly NUMC. Growing an emerging community

²⁰ John King, "Obama Looking to Turn Indiana Blue," CNN.Politics.com, September 16, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/09/16/indiana.battleground/index.html> (accessed January 27, 2009).

in any context has challenges. However, the dimensions of complexity in this process can increase when the mother church is covenanted with a denomination. Such was the case of the Joshua Tree at Newburgh. The Joshua Tree has emerged as a positive testimony to the possibilities when a mother church and its denomination truly bless the mission. The process, however, must include transitioning the mother church and denomination for the new mission. Fredrickson contends:

Denominations are not a relic of the past. Denominations will continue to exist and even thrive in a post-modern, post-Christendom world, but the structures and practices of denominations will change because of new cultural realities. A reimagined church constituted out of a new missio-ecclesiology requires repentance, a *metanoia* that calls the church to its knees relinquishing past customs, methods and structures, as well as its past privileged status.²¹

Most important in the case of the Joshua Tree was that the denomination and mother church became servants in their respective capacities to this new community and not the other way around. Had the United Methodist Church or NUMC reversed this flow, the experiment would have been in serious trouble. In fact, this flow was a key to its success. The denomination and mother church became servants, as Jesus came to serve and not be served for one's personal sake. This flourishing dynamic is also due to the key leaders in the church. The Reverend Mark Dicken, the lead pastor, as well as staff and key laity, have offered stability and a leadership structure that facilitate the growth of servanthood in the mother church. More so, they have empowered the availability of space and resources for the Tree community to emerge.

There are many benefits and challenges to working within an existing church and denomination. These benefits include a rich history and presence in the world with the

²¹ Fredrickson, "An Ecclesial Ecology", 250.

cumulative wisdom of generations of leadership and polity from which to draw. Additionally, there are tested traditions and theology informing methodology and structure with access to possible grants and other types of funding. Other advantages include a people group who have invested in the product and stand eager to participate, sufficient space or facility for team formations, and a staff that can provide invaluable insight regarding the process of the mother church and thereby helping to minimize conflict. Indeed, the aim is not to split the mother church but rather to enhance it.

Each of these blessings also brings challenges. The history of the mother church or denomination may bias perception. Regardless how well the new movement differentiates from the denomination or mother church, the affiliation in name or location may produce a preconceived notion and therefore unintended consequences. Traditions and theology can be an obstacle, because some decide in advance how God should and will work. This was the error of the Pharisees (John 7:45-52).²² The Pharisees had decided in advance how God would reveal the messiah, and they missed it. Following Jesus is always a work of trying to catch up with God, who is out in front. Even right theology and thoughtful traditions may bring about blinders.

Clearly grants and funding are a boon, but most gifts come with instructions. Anyone who has ever received money from a parent or foundation knows the gift comes with overt or covert expectations. Resources are a blessing, but they seldom arrive

²² In John 7:52, the Pharisees said, “From Galilee. . . . Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.” “Look into it” signified what the Pharisees already had decided about how the Messiah would come, according to their view of Scripture. All Scripture has been taken from *Holy Bible: International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), unless otherwise noted.

without strings attached. Even those who wish to be helpful may not understand the vision and true needs of the new community.

The same can be said for people who wish to physically help. Any movement requires participation on varying levels from the mother church. To exist in unity and mission means there must be some points of contact. The important point is not just to invite the right people. Rather, spending significant time in formation with those who wish to participate is what matters. Nevertheless, the process is not just about those who will be leaders in the new community but also about leadership in the mother church. It is imperative to have the lead pastor's support and blessing in this process. Within the United Methodist system, the bishop's support is also essential. Fortunately, the Indiana bishop was eager back this experiment as was the lead pastor.²³ In this process, the higher leadership must be more than supportive; they need to offer their blessing for the process to continue.

Theology

God is always larger than any theology or system of thought about God. It is not surprising then that Wesleyan theology of the United Methodists and what is considered Emergent/emerging theology share some similarities. Interestingly, Methodism embraced many theological underpinnings of the emerging church decades before this movement. It is the polity that has differed more than the theology. For instance, Gibbs and Bolger's definition of "emerging church" starts with practice over and against doctrine. In the

²³ As an ordained United Methodist elder in the Indiana Conference, I am under appointment. Therefore, I am required to be appointed to a charge by the bishop. Bishop Mike Coyner was supportive and

Wesleyan philosophy and emerging thought is right praxis. Rueben P. Job summarizes the Wesleyan way of living in these practices, expressed in *Three Simple Rules*: (1) Do no harm, (2) Do Good (3) Stay in Love with God.²⁴ Consequently, the Wesleyan philosophy that God meets people where they are and calls them to right living fits well with emerging practices.

Emerging churches and Wesleyan thinking share the premise that God is already at work. Wesley called this work of God “prevenient grace,” the grace that goes before.²⁵ Prevenient grace (sometimes called “preventing grace” in old English) is Wesley’s term for God’s preemptive superintending work that awakens one into an awareness of God as well as knowledge of one’s need for God. Since God is already at work, human beings can join and participate in God’s activity through practices even before they become aware or have knowledge of God.

One of the characteristics of postmodernity is the focus on the here and now and the experience at hand. Therein, Wesley’s thought not only of prevenience grace but also assurance is important. Wesley coined the term “assurance,”²⁶ understanding it differently than the modern Calvinist. For the Calvinist, “assurance” meant being assured

helpful in the process along with Rev. Dicken. Indeed, Rev. Dicken initiated, participated and backed the whole venture.

²⁴ Rueben P. Job, *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007); see also United Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), General Rules, para.103.

²⁵ John Wesley, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation: Sermon 85,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 366-446 (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1872; repr., Global Ministries: The United Methodist Church, <http://new.gbqm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/85/> [accessed October 26, 2009]), states that “prevenient grace draws out” and that “the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning His will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against Him.” For more on this sermon and others, see John Wesley, Albert Cook Outler, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley’s Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

²⁶ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 125.

that one was saved for heaven.²⁷ One could rest in peace knowing where one's eternal soul eventually would reside. Wesley's use of "assurance" was not about a future date in heaven but about the present experience. That is, one could know the experience of forgiveness now. People could be assured by the gift of the Holy Spirit that having confessed their sins they were instantly forgiven. Assurance meant having the experience of forgiveness now in this life. Wesley emphasized that the Gospel was for this world and its very redemption.

Polity

Having discussed some of the common theology in the emerging church and the Methodist movement, there are polity differences that must be addressed. For the Joshua Tree, the polity needed to be worked out from the beginning. A church within a church begins with overt and sometimes covert practices. When the community can meet and for how long, who decides, what resources are available from the mother congregation, what is acceptable practice within the facility, and who will pay for the utilities while the facility is in use are some of the issues of polity to be worked out.

There is the question of clergy leadership and ordination. Although it is not the scope of this project to explore the validity of ordination, the question must be addressed

²⁷ Jean Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1964), 517 and 520; see also Richard Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications Issued During the Eighteenth Century: A Chronological Arranged and Annotated Bibliography of all Known Books and Pamphlets Written in Opposition to the Methodist Revival During the Life of Wesley* (London: C. H. Kelly, 1902). The Reverend Arthur Bedford misquoted Wesley's teachings saying that Wesley understood that Christians could be assured of salvation. In response, Wesley wrote in a letter dated September 28, 1738: "The assurance of which I alone speak I should not choose to call an assurance of salvation, but rather (with the Scriptures), [This] is not the essence of faith, but a distinct gift of the Holy Ghost, whereby God shines upon his own work, and shows us that we are justified through faith in Christ. . . . The 'full assurance of faith.'" Green, *Anti-Methodist*, 2.

regarding the relationship between the UMC and the Joshua Tree leadership. There is a real question of the role, if any, of a clergy class in postmodernity. This relationship will be further discussed in chapter 4. Another issue is the question of membership: Will the new emerging community have its own membership, membership within the mother church, or will membership even necessary? What must the new people believe? As for Holy Communion, who can partake? How often should it be practiced? Who is prohibited? What must happen before participation? All these issues have as much to do with polity as the theology behind them.

In the United Methodist Church there is great liberty in some polity and less in others. In baptism, for example, the method or mode is not this issue.²⁸ That is, the amount of water is optional. Whether the water is sprinkled, poured, or the person is submerged is not the point. Even what the person believes, the age of accountability, is not the primary point. The main concern is that one is baptized, as Scripture instructs, “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19) and that one only needs to be baptized one time (cf. Ephesians 4:5). Holy Communion is another challenge. In the United Methodist Church one does not need to be a member of the church nor even a previous follower of Jesus to participate.²⁹ Jesus ate with sinners, so all are invited to the table. The important issue is a willingness to partake in the practice. All who come to the table will be served. However, the presider must be an ordained elder in the United

²⁸ The United Methodist Church, *Book of Resolutions* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), 8013.

²⁹ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*, para. 323; see also The General Board of Discipleship, *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (Nashville: The United Methodist Church, 2004), <http://www.gbod.org/worship/thmbooklet.pdf> (accessed September 21, 2008).

Methodist Church.³⁰ Polity is an issue even for emerging churches, and how these practices will be explored within the new community is an essential part of the process. The important point is that these concerns and praxis must be worked out in collaboration with the Joshua Tree.

Vision

In the Indiana United Methodist Church there is a real and felt need to reverse decline in membership and gain younger disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, the decline in itself is evidence of the postmodern shift. Past methodologies and techniques have not had a sustaining impact on the downward trend. Therein, Indiana's UMC bishop has been encouraging able churches to add additional worship services geared at gaining younger worshipers; the thought is that attractive, youth-targeted worship will gain additional younger disciples.

However, NUMC seeks to be the church in Newburgh in a postmodern age. Although the denomination is calling for more of a Gen X style of worship, the real need is for a community that can impact the culture and world for the Kingdom. NUMC leaders have seen the need to create a space where a new community can emerge, where people can become interpreters of the Spirit and producers of theology by their daily lives, where Jesus is seen in believers' love for one another, where inculcating arts and social justice all are acts of worship, and where the calling is to become co-creators in the Kingdom on earth. This movement, forming community of this kind, is the emerging

³⁰ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*, para. 331. Elders are ordained to a lifetime ministry of service, word, sacrament, and order and are charged to "administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and all the other means of grace."

church.³¹

The premise of this project is that there is a changing ethos. Therein, the challenge of many churches in the United States and the Western world is that their Christianity was formed in modernity. Many seek a way to be the Church in a postmodern age. For this reason, the next chapter will explore the shift in culture from modernity to postmodernity—particularly in Indiana.

³¹ Andrew Perriman, “What Does the Emerging Church Stand For?” *Open Source Theology: Collaborative Theology for the Emerging Church*, <http://www.opensourcetheology.net/node/1294> (accessed October 24, 2009), argues that the Emerging Church is about re-igniting the imagination and creativity for two reasons: first, the Emerging movement is a reaction against the stagnation in the arts in the contemporary Church; and, second, the need to “see things differently, and conceive new ways of being, doing and expressing.”

CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL CHANGE

In his 2009 inaugural address President Barack Obama stated, “What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them—that the political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply.”¹ President Obama describes a shift in ethos that some call “postmodernity.” Postmodernity does not necessarily mean that modernity and its gains are now obsolete; rather, it may be fairer to argue that postmodernity stands on the shoulders of modernity, incorporating what it can but discarding what is irrelevant. Like a river that has changed its course, former bridges no longer may apply. Traditional methodologies and ideologies are losing meaning and power, as culture shifts. The Church must rediscover itself in this new ethos. Fredrickson states, “The denominational church always exists in culture and shapes and is shaped by that culture, but the denominational church must be not be subverted by that culture. Therefore, the church must be aware of its context. Mission only occurs in context.”² Therein, the aim of this chapter is to investigate postmodernity and then look at its influence in Southern Indiana insofar as NUMC may forge a way forward.

¹ Macon Phillips, “Barack Obama’s Inaugural Address.” The White House Blog, comment posted January 21, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address/> (accessed September 2009).

² Fredrickson, “An Ecclesial Ecology”, 14.

Modernity and Postmodernity

This chapter offers a description of postmodernity as an ethos emerging over and against modernity. However, postmodernity is not the only ideology that has emerged against modernity. The relative recent rise in fundamentalism is also a reaction. Consequently, to understand the ideological forces shaping Newburgh it will help to explore this changing ministry context. Newburgh is a community that has a level of differentiation, that is evident in the variety of religious communities in the area and the relative peace in which they exist. Nevertheless, as Newburgh grows more diverse, there is a reaction to this diversity, a movement toward fundamentalism. There is a growing Christianity that is more fundamentalist and evangelical.³ Many of the ideological and methodological problems inherent in this project result from the changing ethos, including the fundamentalist reactions to modernity. Consideration of these influences of ethos may enrich an understanding of the milieu in Newburgh, Indiana.

The nature of postmodernity and its challenge to the Church must be explored. The question is whether the nature of the change can be articulated as a worldview or if postmodernity is simply chaotic and unknown. John William Drane, author of *McDonaldization of the Church*, draws a distinction between post-modernity and postmodernity.⁴ Drane prefers to hyphenate the term “post-modernity,” because it “draws attention to provisionality and continually evolving nature of the changes.”⁵ Drane

³ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalist in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1993), 4.

⁴ John William Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2000), 7.

⁵ Ibid.

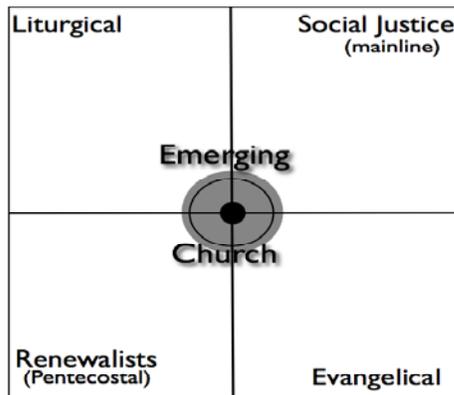
desires to differentiate between an articulated worldview and emphasize the chaotic and confusing journey toward a new way of being.

Gibbs and Bolger in their notable work, *emerging churches*, appeal to history in describing this movement. Gibbs and Bolger contend that from the Roman emperor Constantine AD 313 until the 1950s the Church in Western culture has held a central position—thus, the Age of Christendom.⁶ The Protestant Reformation and the Age of Reason ushered in a gradual loss of the Church and its power and control. However, since 1950 an even more major shift has occurred in the West, ending Christendom and beginning a post-Christendom period where the Church has lost position and importance as the center of culture. Likewise, Phyllis Tickle has drawn a framework to understand this shift. Tickle terms it “the Great Emergence,” for the Great Emergence is a movement not unlike the Protestant Reformation in that every five hundred years or so the Church undergoes a major reorientation and reorganizing.⁷ Lessons can be drawn from history and used as a framework for understanding postmodernity. Therein, for Tickle, postmodernity can be described—and even to some degree comprehended—by mapping the movement into four quadrants. Emerging church borrows from each of these traditions. At the same time there are others who resist and retreat to the far corners in each quadrant, shown in Table 2.⁸

⁶ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 18.

⁷ Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 55.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 137, adapted from “The Rose,” description of Emergence.

Table 2. Emerging Church Map

Since the 1970s there have been two reactions against modernity pertinent to this project. First, postmodernity was a reaction insofar as the metanarratives of modernity no longer could provide meaningful answers to the questions of the day. Therefore, a new way of understanding became necessary, a new manner of being needed to emerge. The second reaction was the rise in a new fundamentalism—although, in fact, the number of fundamentalists had been growing since the turn of last century.⁹ Fundamentalism is a reaction against modernity, but perhaps it is more recently an attack against modernity that gained energy as postmodernity emerged.

Newburgh, Indiana has not been isolated from the rise in postmodernity or the rise in fundamentalism. Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences—leading scholars in the study of the phenomena of modern religious fundamentalism—write: “The task of understanding fundamentalism is urgent for citizens at a time when these movements are too frequently catalysts in an unsettled

⁹ Nancy Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Fundamentalism Project, vol. 1, by eds. Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1.

world.”¹⁰ Fundamentalist-like movements are emerging around the globe with rapidity never before seen.¹¹ Gabriel A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan, and R. Scott Appleby in their article, “Fundamentalism: Genus and Species,” offer a description of the ideological characteristics that are visible in fundamentalist movements.¹² A primary dynamic of fundamentalism is its reaction against how religion and the Church are losing their power to the rise of secularization. Secularization is the process in which religion comes to occupy a less and less central place in the affairs of importance to the community. For example, a school or university may define the town rather than the Church. Secularization is not anti-religious; nevertheless, the process of secularization alters the traditional power structures. Fundamentalism seeks to push against this process. However in the past thirty years there has been a rise in new fundamentalism. In this same period postmodernity has emerged. The fundamentalism reaction against culture change is therefore evidence of the presence of postmodern shift.

¹⁰ Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, eds., “Introduction,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, vol. 1 of the Fundamentalism Project (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), xi.

¹¹ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds. “Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, vol. 1 of the Fundamentalism Project (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 814.

¹² Gabriel A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan, and R. Scott Appleby, “Fundamentalism: Genus and Species,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, vol. 5 of the Fundamentalism Project, eds. Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 409.

Anglo-American Postmodernity

The ethos in Southern Indiana is not simply modern or postmodern but a hybrid of overlapping ideologies, including fundamentalism. At the edge of the Bible Belt, it is expected for there to exist a percentage of people who share evangelical or even fundamentalist worldviews.¹³ Newburgh is no exception. However, Fowler, in *Faithful Change*, offers a lens in which to understand postmodernism in Indiana. Fowler contends that the postmodern consciousness is something in which all are involved.¹⁴ Fowler lists several experiences evidencing a growing postmodernity. For example, there is the “experience of global systems of economic interdependence and mobility.” As local jobs relocate from one country to another, as interest rates and markets fluctuate, there is a growing awareness of an interconnection.¹⁵ With the rise in the availability of information, including personal access to one’s tradition and history come a building concern and regard for one’s own heritage and culture. There is also the experience of understanding “ecology interdependence and the fragility of the earth’s biosphere” along with knowledge of an escalating consumption of fossil fuels.¹⁶ Daily, ordinary people as well as world leaders can experience “instant global communication” and information

¹³ “Bible Belt” is term coined by Henry Louis Mencken to express his pejorative distaste for both religion and the South, according to *American Experience: Monkey Trial*, “People & Events: Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956),” PBS, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/peopleevents/p_mencken.html (accessed January 15, 2010).

¹⁴ James W. Fowler, *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Changes of Postmodern Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 172.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

from throughout the world.¹⁷ Indeed, there is a rise in technological and media-interpreted culture. With use of new technologies in computers, new cosmologies emerge which were previously unimagined. Moreover, there is the “end of the world of Cartesian epistemology and of positivism in science” as that world has been superseded by quantum physics, chaos theory, and the theory of relativity.¹⁸

All this suggests that postmodernity exists in Newburgh, Indiana, although it may differ in degree from other cultures in the United States and abroad. To grasp the distinctiveness of postmodernity in Southern Indiana, it may prove helpful to compare it to another culture. For example, I spent two years in the United Kingdom, Northern England. I learned from the British and some of their experiences of the emerging church and asked myself this question: “What is the difference between postmodernity in England and in the United States?” To obtain an expert, third-party perspective I also posed this question in an email to Nancey C. Murphy, author of *Anglo-American Postmodernity*,¹⁹ to see if she saw any differences in postmodernity between the United Kingdom and the United States. Over a few email conversations, Murphy reported she was not aware of anything distinct between the United States and the United Kingdom.²⁰ Murphy’s response was disappointing, given the fact she distinguished between Europe and England in her studies of postmodernity.²¹ For Murphy’s regard of postmodernity, the English Channel was more defining than the Atlantic.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nancey C. Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

²⁰ Nancey C. Murphy, e-mail messages to author, June 15, 2007 and June 24, 2007.

²¹ Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 8.

Given my personal experience, Murphy's dismissal was cause to re-examine the idea that there were differences between postmodernity in the United Kingdom and the United States except perhaps in density and degree.

The term "postmodernity" has emerged en vogue. Still, it is difficult to define. Originating from the French reference to a movement in architecture, the term has evolved to refer to a way of talking about the changes that have taken place in Western culture that differ from modernity.²² Indeed, it is a reaction against the structuralism and driving ideologies of the economics and philosophy of modernity. According to Murphy, in postmodernity, there have been three areas of change from modernity: epistemology, philosophy of language, and metaphysics.²³ Modernity can be mapped along these three interdependent axes. The first axis was that of epistemology. That is, there was "a degree of optimism regarding the foundationalist," an over-certainty among scholars and scientists about the universe particularly within Western thought. In modernity there was the belief that everything had a cause and effect and this could be discovered. This certainty has diminished. The second axis was linguistic noting an expressivity or emotional view of language.²⁴ This shift is most evident through communication in pop culture, such as using words for how it feels. A high school student may call someone "beast," who is popular or "awesome." The word's meaning has shifted, now communicating something more that may be quite different from the previous definition. Third, there is the metaphysical axis, which moves from individual or collective to systemic. According to Murphy, "Thinkers who had managed to transcend all three of these polarities or debates, without simply

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

returning to premodern modern” were postmodern. Therein, postmodernity can be said to be a rejection of reductionism in all its forms, including rejection of reductionism in science, but also the substitution of holism for foundationalism in epistemology.

The communities where I served as minister in North England vehemently resisted this postmodernity—however, not as fundamentalists. Rather these communities were fortified pockets of modernism, attempting to be unaffected by postmodernity. Economically these towns were poor and held the highest unemployment levels in England.²⁵ Therein, their allegiance to modernity was a tactic, at least economically, proving to be unsuccessful. Some families’ unemployment was systemic going on three generations. Resistance to postmodernity—rather than the economy—in effect, was contributing to the region remaining financially stagnant. Nevertheless, amidst the postmodernism of the greater United Kingdom, these communities had found safety in their rigid, modernist stronghold and there they remained. The Northeast is one of the most monocultural, change-resistant areas in England.²⁶ One would be challenged in that region to find a rejection of modern values. With the postmodern world edging in around them, they have battled against it.

The United Kingdom and the United States, though sharing a common language and history, are distinctive. It is true that “England and America are two countries divided

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵ “The unemployment rate stood at 7.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2008, higher than the UK rate of 5.4per cent,” according to the Office for National Statistics, “North East Summary,” <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1126> (accessed September 24, 2009).

²⁶ “Highest proportion of the population classed as White British, 94 per cent, compared with 84 per cent for England in 2007,” according to the Office for National Statistics, “North East: Population and Migration,” <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2229> (accessed September 24, 2009).

by a common language.”²⁷ The cultures that at first may appear similar really are quite diverse. For example, church affiliation and attendance is a significant variation. Bolger and Gibbs, in *emerging churches*, affirm that there is a decline of major denominations in both countries.²⁸ Accordingly, church attendance in the United States weekly averages are less than 40 percent the population; however, the United Kingdom averages 8 percent. In the United States, politically red states have higher attendance rates than those designated as blue. Blue states may be more postmodern than red.

Emergence of Postmodernity in Southern Indiana

Newburgh is experiencing signs of postmodernity and resistance, although the resistance is more religio-political.²⁹ On the surface the battle for culture seems to be around the political fault line, however a deeper look reveals it is about ethos. The population growth in the past five years has challenged the fabric of the culture. More so, it is a forewarning that there is a real need to prepare for a growing postmodernity. Similar to Fowler’s signs of a change in ethos, Gibbs and Bolger identify six signs in their work in the United States and United Kingdom.³⁰

To varying degrees in Newburgh these six are evident—if not in concrete example, there is an indication in ideological changes. First, there is an increasing marginalization of the Church, as mentioned earlier in this discussion. In Newburgh this

²⁷ Ned Sherrin, *Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20-31. Sherrin attributes this quote to George Bernard Shaw.

²⁸ Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 19.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

reality is experienced by the Church in a lessening of power and priority in the community. This is evident in the competition for people's time as extracurricular activities take precedence over church activities. Church therein moves to the periphery in importance and power. Second, there is a shift from westernization to globalization. The Toyota plant moved in north of town more than a decade ago. Toyota becoming an American manufacturer compares somewhat to the merge of Anheuser-Busch, America's largest brewer, merge with ABImbev and moving its headquarters from the heartland of the United States to Belgium. The line of America is blurring with globalization. Even among religions, there is a buffet of choice. Many postmoderns find this reality exciting due to their willingness to embrace religious pluralism, particularly in Eastern religions.³¹

Third, communication technology is shifting from print to electronic. Evansville's local paper, the *Evansville Courier Press*, is struggling like many newspapers in this country as people turn to the Internet or cable television for their news needs.³² The shift is also evident in browsing the local Barnes and Noble or Border's Books. The physically shelved stock available entails just half of the books supplied only a few years ago. In an effort to retain market value, products like the Amazon's "Kindle" or the "Sony Digital Reader" have emerged that allow readers to access books electronically.

Fourth, there is a shift from nationally and industrially based economy to internationally based information and a consumer-driven economy. Whirlpool Corporation, after thriving in Evansville for over fifty years, recently announced the

³¹ Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 164.

³² Frank Ahrens, "Newspaper Industry Struggling," February 20, 2005, MSNBC, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7000036> (accessed September 23, 2009).

closing of its plant and plans to move its operations it to Mexico.³³ Information technology is growing to replace the labor market. This area has seen a high demand for media developers, web designers, network and Wi-Fi technicians, and computer designers. One of the largest and growing firms in Evansville is The Berry Plastics Corporation. Although many new employment opportunities are opening at Berry, even their molding production lines require some technological competence.

Fifth, there are changes in the understanding of human biology. This factor is most evident in the shift in ethos. With increased knowledge and mapping of human DNA, and understanding of cloning, the very nature and notion of what defines being human is challenged. As many people continue to rethink human sexuality and gender differences there are signs of growing tolerance, such as more people who are comfortably open about their homosexuality.

Sixth, many see a convergence of science and religion. M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, was a bestseller that came out in the late seventies. Peck was a noted psychiatrist and author in the field of psychological and spiritual literature. He contended that there was no difference between spiritual and mental maturity. Peck writes: "I feel it is important to mention . . . two assumptions. . . . One is that I make no distinction between the mind and the spirit, and therefore no distinction between the process of achieving spiritual growth and achieving mental growth. They are one and the same."³⁴

³³ "Whirlpool Closing," *Courier Press*, August 28, 2009, <http://www.courierpress.com/news/2009/aug/28/whirlpool-closing-the-issue-manufacturing-jobs/> (accessed October 24, 2009).

³⁴ M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 11.

There are also negative signs of postmodernity in Newburgh in the form *prima facie* evidence of postmodernity, as indicated by the reaction against this shift in ethos.³⁵ Tickle, as mentioned above, describes a quadrilateral of traditions: liturgical, social justice, renewalists, evangelical (see Table 2) in the emerging church population, or postmoderns gathered nearer the center. Tickle notes, however, that in each quadrant some will reject the draw to the center and retreat to the corner. She estimates about 7 percent of the population of each quadrant will react against the new ethos and refuse change. Although Tickle believes these people keep the rest of the masses honest, recognizing the loss inherent in coming together, they represent a minority. This reaction against postmodernity in fundamentalism can be understood as evidence of the emerging of this new ethos.

However, there is another paradigm for the postmodern consciousness. This paradigm is more forward looking. Postmodernity, or rather a postmodern consciousness, could be an evolutionary change and therefore understood as a “faithful change.”³⁶ Fowler, in his theory and research on Faith Development, describes seven stages of faith.³⁷ Stage 5, which Fowler calls “Conjunctive Faith,” is of particular interest in this project. Although it will be described more fully in Part Two of this overall discussion, for now it is important to understand that with Conjunctive Faith comes the ability to live in the tension of not having all of life’s answers. Fowler suggests “that structurally postmodern consciousness parallels the Conjunctive pattern of faith consciousness.”³⁸

³⁵ Tickle, *The Great Emergence*, 55.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 184.

³⁸ Ibid.

Therein, postmodernity is not simply a description of what is happening or what has led to this emerging ethos. Fowler's theory presents a description of faith in terms of stages that may offer insight into how to minister to and with postmoderns. Thus, the shift in postmodernity is not just about globalism; rather, it is about growth, faith development, spiritual maturity, and a forward-looking call of the postmodern consciousness.

For example, Drane tells of a missionary who returned from overseas. His words capture the heart of the challenge: "I guess my problem with church is not that I've lost my faith or feel like it's hopeless or that kind of thing. It's more that I am on board with it. I go to church and I hear sermons and I think. 'I just don't want to hear this.'"³⁹ Drane adds people are not leaving Church because they do not believe. Rather, he explains it seems to be a "consequence of people dealing with . . . maturity and growth."⁴⁰

This next chapter will explore a few specific examples of churches in this region that are attempting to minister to and with postmoderns. The journey will travel around the Midwest, namely because there are few known emerging churches in the Southern Indiana tri-state area. The aim of this exploration is not to bring home to Newburgh a program and duplicate what others are doing. Rather, this is a process of learning more about ministry in this postmodern shift. All the information gathered will be used to help grow the Joshua Tree.

³⁹ Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church*, 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVES ON WORSHIP COMMUNITIES

No strategy, tactics, or clever marketing campaign could ever clear away the smokescreen that surrounds Christianity in today's culture.

—Dan Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian*

With this brief comment, Kinnaman and Lyons describe the shift in culture against church culture.⁴¹ Similarly, thus far this project has explored the change from modernity to postmodernity that currently influences the ethos in Southern Indiana. The focus of this ongoing discussion now turns toward perspectives in worship, particularly those that have evolved amidst postmodernity. This chapter will look at church starts, or churches within a church, and how they engage in worship. Also, it will explore United Methodist worship particularly and its history at NUMC. Once again, it is important to understand that this project is not about creating an alternative worship or about being culturally relevant. Foremost this project is about becoming missional, discerning, and participatory in the *missio Dei*. This means that method or worship form and style will flow from mission. Regrettably, perhaps, the emerging church is typecast as worship with “cool candles,” “edgy music,” and coffee and conversation. In spite of efforts by emerging church leaders like Dan Kimball⁴² or Jonny Baker, many still believe the goal

⁴¹ Dan Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 11.

⁴² Kimball, *Emerging Worship*, 2-11. Kimball seeks to remove Emerging worship from simply a being style but rather calls Emerging worship a “life style.”

of the emerging church is to simply be relevant to today's society. This project, and the aim of exploring what others are doing in worship, is a work in not staying relevant or even pragmatic. Moreover, it is not a work in borrowing good ideas. Rather, it entails looking at culture and attempting to discern what God is doing—which in the Bible is referred to as having eyes to see and ears to hear (Ezekiel 12:2).

Worship History

In the Indiana United Methodist Church, there is a real and felt need to reverse decline in membership and gain younger disciples of Jesus Christ. Therein, Indiana's UMC Bishop is encouraging able churches to add additional worship services geared at gaining younger worshippers. One characteristic of United Methodism is variety not only in ideology but in methodology. However, in Indiana, the mode and method of worship is conservative: robes, choirs, hymns, with a lively sermon. This reality has been changing. Many churches have adopted some use of multimedia for worship and are attempting to stay current in music, form, and message. Across the state, the dress code has softened and become more casual in worship.

Against denominational decline, and as mentioned earlier in this discussion, Newburgh United Methodist Church increased by seventy-five people in attendance in 2008 to an average of 420 in worship attendance and reached capacity seating in its already established worship gatherings.⁴³ With a majority of transfer growth, and several new professions of faith, contribution to the Kingdom is difficult to assess; but, NUMC

⁴³ Daniel R. Gangler, "Indiana Conference Summary Report," Indiana Conference: United Methodist Church, <http://www.inumc.org/news/detail/1684> (accessed August 2009), reveals 2008 membership of 204,527 decreased 1,872 from 2007. Worship attendance stands at 121,591, which is down 2,467.

seems to be a living church where God is changing lives. Due to these factors, there was the need for a third service.

At the time NUMC saw this need, it was holding only the two worship services. These two worship services are still offered today. The first is traditional, and the second is a blend; and, they have relatively similar numbers in attendance. In the first service robes are worn by both pastors, the robed choir sings traditional music but is not afraid to offer an upbeat gospel twist occasionally. Liturgies are read and prayed, and the message is delivered. Both worship services (not including the Joshua Tree) receive the sermon and multimedia. What differs in the services is hymns versus praise music. The choir may sing in both services while the praise band only provides music in the second. The demographics are roughly similar, although there is a slight preference of young adults for the second service. However, the time may be more of a factor than music style. The youth are in the process of putting together their own youth service, which would meet on Sunday evening.

In the second service, when the praise band leads, robes are not worn. Music is contemporary and liturgies, if prayed, often are shortened. The service style is intentional, offering a choice in time and mode. There is debate among leaders whether time or style is the most meaningful factor for choosing attendance, because there is not a significant congregational shift in ideology between the services. People may have preferences; but, in general, NUMC does not suffer greatly from worship wars between contemporary and traditional music.

The Joshua Tree adds a distinctive expression of worship at NUMC. Although the Tree is still establishing itself, this expression of worship is unique not only in format but

information. The first two NUMC services are both lead and driven by pastor, in that the preaching pastor is in charge of overseeing worship. As worship leaders, the choir director or praise leader assists. In contrast, the Joshua Tree leadership team attempts to plan collaboratively and implement the worship experience. Although currently the Tree still heavily relies on the pastor for guidance, the aim is to become more of a “starfish” organization.⁴⁴ Evolution toward collaborative leadership is important.

The Joshua Tree faces a unique challenge, which differs from the other services. It is twofold. First, there is the matter of how to do ministry to and with postmoderns. Modern traditional and pragmatic approaches, such as adding trendy worship services, are not enough to gain followers of Jesus. The process requires discernment of the *missio Dei*. The methodology emerges from mission. The second challenge the Joshua Tree shares with the mother church. Indeed, the challenge is to discern God’s mission and to accommodate the Joshua Tree’s emerging style of growth. This process involves transitioning from a traditional modern ethos into a community who is willing and able to accept and tolerate a level of postmodern ideology.

Emerging Church Communities and Fresh Expressions

The following communities were chosen for inclusion in this discussion, because each has something in common with Newburgh United Methodist Church that pertains to this project: Mars Hill Community Church, The Garden, Crossroads, and Ginghamburg Community Church. In some instances, they had similar demographics or starting points.

⁴⁴ Brafman and Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider*, 8.

In others, their mission was of interest. Finally, for some it was their success in ministry with and to postmoderns that was notable.

The tri-state area was not large enough to find emerging churches or missional church. Indeed, at the start of the Joshua Tree project there were no emerging or missional churches in the tri-state area within a hundred-mile radius including Southern Indiana, North-Western Kentucky, and South Eastern Illinois. Consequently, the regional focus was widened to include Indianapolis, Ohio, and even Michigan. Two of the first four churches that were explored were making the transitions into ministry within a postmodern context within the framework of current church communities. In contrast, three more are listed as emerging churches. The problem, however, is that those most fitting the description of emerging were not in the Midwest. Although it was more important to see models where this is occurring locally, also taking into account other movements provides a fuller picture. The churches that finally were chosen for close study were visited by the Joshua Tree leadership team. Below is a description and analysis of these church communities.

Mars Hill Community Church

Mars Hill Community Church launched on February 7, 1999 in Grandville, Michigan.⁴⁵ Mars Hill openly states it is not an emerging church; however, one might argue that the congregation is missional and clearly successfully in empowering Kingdom people among postmoderns. Mars Hill was founded by Rob Bell and his wife, Kristen Bell, together with a few friends. R. Bell and K. Bell dreamed that church could

⁴⁵ Mars Hill Community Church, "History," <http://www.marshall.org/about/history/> (accessed August 7, 2009).

be “about desire, longing, and connection.”⁴⁶ Apparently, their vision worked because the church grew to over twelve thousand in weekly worship. In part, it may be R. Bell’s postmodern charisma that is the draw. Mars Hill’s mission is this: “Living out the way of Jesus in missional communities, announcing the arrival of his kingdom, working for measurable change among the oppressed.”⁴⁷ Mars Hill considers itself a community who is “devoted to building an engaged, passionate, spiritually healthy community of people. . . . We’re also devoted to engaging and impacting one another and others, believing that Jesus himself set an example of service and that we’ve been given the responsibility to follow it.”⁴⁸

What marks an interest is that this non-denominational church is not centered on R. Bell or his popularity with Nooma videos.⁴⁹ In fact, one cannot even purchase a Nooma video at the church. Conversely, the worship at Mars Hill Community consists of a diversity of Bible teachers and guests. R. Bell only speaks perhaps one or two times per month. This may be in part due to his rigorous international speaking schedule, but it helps Mars Hill not be centered around a charismatic leader but rather on mission. The church meets in a mall located in the round. Its liturgy and singing could be considered mundane in comparison with flashy Generation X or alternative worship. Still, the community is thriving and vibrantly engaged in mission.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mars Hill Community Church, “Mission,” <http://www.marshall.org/mission/> (accessed October 24, 2009).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Flannel, <http://store.flannel.org/> (accessed October 24, 2009). This is the official site for Nooma videos.

One experience of Mars Hill was on Ash Wednesday 2008. The liturgy and service were fondly familiar, similar to the Ash Wednesday service from the United Methodist tradition.⁵⁰ R. Bell that Wednesday was not the preacher; however, the message was smart and dimensional. The atmosphere was informal and simple. The crowd poured into the front areas instead of hanging out in the back areas. The leader dressed in black, unremarkable slacks and shirt, not unlike that of a stagehand or tech crew. The worship teaching was impressive and consisted of rhythm between themes or Bible series. Indeed, the first year the church met, Rob Bell took them through the entire Book of Leviticus.⁵¹ More recently the community spent thirty weeks in the Book of Philippians with teachers such as Kent Dobson, John Ortberg, and Richard Mouw.⁵² The church is Bible-centered yet does not feel evangelical or fundamentalist. R. Bell describes his theology as a narrative theology:

In the beginning God created all things good. He was and always will be in a communal relationship with himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created us to be relational as well and marked us with an identity as his image bearers and a missional calling to serve, care for, and cultivate the earth. God created humans in his image to live in fellowship with him, one another, our inner self, and creation. The enemy tempted the first humans, and darkness and evil entered the story.⁵³

⁵⁰ General Board of Worship, “Worship Planning Helps for Ash Wednesday.” http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item_id=45912&loc_id=733,32,48 (accessed October 2009).

⁵¹ Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 102.

⁵² Kent Dobson is a biblical historian who spent three years studying in Israel; John Ortberg is perhaps best known for his book, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002). He currently pastors at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California. Richard Mouw is president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

⁵³ Mars Hill Community Church, “Theology,” <http://www.marshill.org/believe/> (accessed October 24, 2009).

Mars Hill offers training and practice in spiritual disciplines like Lectio Divina, Daily Offices, and prayers of confession. With this blend, Mars Hill embodies a hybrid of the ancient and the modern, the traditional and the new. It is a fresh expression; yet, as Mars Hill intends, it is “without hype piled on.”⁵⁴

The Garden in Indianapolis, Indiana

The Garden is a church within a church that meets in an offsite campus of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.⁵⁵ In 2004 The Garden added its own offsite campus that now meets in Carmel, Indiana and sees the message via video. Current worship attendance at The Garden reaches over seven hundred between its two campuses.⁵⁶ St. Luke’s averages over thirty-five hundred among its campuses. Linda McCoy is the lead pastor at the Garden under Kent Mallard, who serves as the lead pastor at St. Luke’s. When questioned, McCoy states that “leading a church within a church has its own particular set of challenges.”⁵⁷ McCoy started The Garden when virtually no one in the region was doing this kind of service. The Garden considers itself a fresh perspective on faith with its tag line: “a progressive church for the 21st century.”⁵⁸ What is unique about The Garden is its creative use of movie, images, and reflection that emphasize the spiritual journey and how each person has a unique path and relationship

⁵⁴ Mars Hill Community Church, “History.”

⁵⁵ St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, <http://www.stlukesumc.com/> (accessed October 2009); see The Garden: A Fresh Perspective on Faith,” <http://www.thegardenonline.org/home/> (accessed August 2009).

⁵⁶ Linda McCoy, interview with author, The Garden at Beef and Boards, Indianapolis, August 2009.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ The Garden: A Fresh Perspective on Faith, “About Us,” <http://www.thegardenonline.org/about-us/> (accessed October 24, 2009).

to God. When The Garden first began, it was a novel idea with virtually no similar experience in the area. Here is its mission, as stated on its website:

[It is] to present a fresh perspective on what it's like to be a person of faith, on a lifelong path of connection with one who is greater than we. Because of that, we encourage folks to create their own spiritual statement, knowing full well that what we believe today will change and evolve just as we grow and learn and change throughout our lives.⁵⁹

The vision members share is for people to experience God in their lives and not just on Sunday mornings. They want each week to be a celebration of “fun, film, friends and food.”⁶⁰ The Garden meets in a dinner theater, avoiding the problem of lights and sound by virtue of the building.

The Garden has evolved since its inception. The newest option at The Garden is what they call the “Virtual Garden.” Currently, they are developing an online experience of connecting others to God’s love in breaking free of geographic boundaries. The Garden describes itself as a worship experience. Members aim is to draw upon relevant multimedia sources to convey a welcome theology believing that God loves unconditionally. “The Garden is an authentic, inclusive environment where every Sunday one will find a fresh perspective on faith. The Garden is progressive church for the 21st century.”⁶¹

In some ways The Garden is the community most like Newburgh in that its members share the methodology of a church within a church, even though members have chosen to meet offsite. Additionally, they come from the United Methodist tradition so they have had to emerge with all the virtues and challenges therein. Also, they share the

⁵⁹ The Garden: A Fresh Perspective on Faith, “Garden Vision,” <http://www.thegardenonline.org/about-us/garden-vision/> (accessed October 24, 2009).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ The Garden, “About Us.”

common pressures of the larger denomination in Indiana: the real and felt need to reverse decline in membership and to gain younger disciples of Jesus Christ. What is different is the size and demographic of the Indianapolis area as compared to Newburgh. Other differences include a long history now of continued growth and experience.

Crossroads Community Church

Crossroads Community Church is in Cincinnati, Ohio and was founded on March 24, 1996. Members of Crossroads describe their movement as eleven friends turning into thousands of people seeking truth and community. Crossroads began with about 450 people who showed up on the promise of “music, coffee, and real topics.”⁶² The aim was to cultivate authentic community, honest conversations, and explore what God was doing. Their welcome statement on their webpage is engaging. It reads: “Whatever your thoughts on church, whatever your beliefs about God, you are welcome here.”⁶³

The worship style has evolved as well. Changing musicians often adds a different yet similar atmosphere. Drinking coffee or other beverage is encouraged during worship and even expected. Crossroads has found a way to communicate its openness and hospitality in serving gourmet coffee brewed by a local brewer and free beverages with a variety of humorous postings offered for a sense of welcome. There is usually a quality band with an edgy grunge flair followed by a forty-minute message. However, the message is not the old evangelical “get saved for heaven” message. The message is much

⁶² Crossroads, “Our History,” <http://www.crossroads.net/about/ourHistory.php> (accessed October 24, 2009).

⁶³ Crossroads, <http://www.crossroads.net/> (accessed August 2009).

more focused on living in the Kingdom and being of service now. Recently, Crossroads focused on anti-materialism, where people fasted in the form of giving up the purchase of any new clothes for a period of time. Frequently, they send mission teams into the city.⁶⁴ This mission shift has changed their demographic, where one now can see an increase in diversity, meeting the needs of the local community.

Crossroads currently is adding a multi-site campus in Anderson. The new sites are not considered separate churches but grow as a “unified team.”⁶⁵ Their aim is to be one church in multiple locations with the same staff and message. The off-site locations will show the message on a video screen and will remind people that even in their main auditorium, they find that most people watch the screen rather than the live speaker.

Ginghamsburg Community Church in Tipp City, Ohio

Ginghamsburg Community Church in Tipp City, Ohio has a long history beginning in 1863 and comes from the United Methodist Church tradition. The community grew from ten to seventy-five but in 1970 increased to three hundred people.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, they have had to work at transcending all the traditional barriers to evolve and grow into a church that now serves over forty-five hundred in weekly worship.

⁶⁴ Crossroads, “ReachOut,” <http://www.crossroads.net/reachout/index.php> (accessed October 2009).

⁶⁵ Crossroads, “Multi-Site Strategy,” <http://www.crossroads.net/about/campuses.php> (accessed October 24, 2009). During July 2009 the Joshua Leadership team visited Crossroads. The senior pastor, Brian Tomb, spoke of this new satellite strategy as the message was offered from a video stream.

⁶⁶ Ginghamsburg Church, “Our History,” <http://ginghamsburg.org/history/> (accessed October 2009).

The mission at Ginghamburg is summarized as bringing people in; building them up; and, sending them out so they connect, grow, and serve.⁶⁷ Mike Slaughter is the lead pastor who has become a sought-after speaker for his church-growing talent and experience. Recently, Ginghamburg has become a multi-site church like Crossroads and The Garden. However, from Slaughter's initiation the church has birthed a variety of styles in which the worship is offered. Ginghamburg's recent Saturday evening recovery services are where they have witnessed the most growth.⁶⁸

Other Missional Churches

Of these four churches, none wholly fit into the missional church or emerging church framework described by McNeal or even Frost and Hirsh. With one leadership level, they each still operate from a pre-postmodern, pastor-centered model. Perhaps surprisingly, Mars Hill has the most collaborative leadership. Rob Bell, as a new evangelical, is not trying to make better church members but Kingdom people in the world. Although each of these still has a centripetal movement, all send people out in ministry in their lives. This is a Kingdom contribution. Of these four churches, only Mars Hill seems to be making the missional church shift in leadership.

Conversely, there are a growing number of churches who are seeking to be more emerging.⁶⁹ In Indianapolis, there is the Emergent Cohort, which is a support community

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ginghamburg Church, "Worship Together," <http://ginghamsburg.org/worshipoptions/> (accessed October 2009). Ginghamburg Church Staff, interview with author, Tipp City, OH, July 2008, stated that the Saturday Recovery Service was their fastest growing worship.

⁶⁹ Indianapolis Emergent Cohort, "Indy Emerging Churches," http://indieallies.meetup.com/7/pages/Indy_Emerging_Churches/ (accessed August 2009).

for Emergent leaders.⁷⁰ Indeed, no one model exists for these emerging communities. Perhaps this is due to a bit of cultural encapsulation in that it is difficult to see what these communities are escaping or how they are transcending some of the traditional entrapments. Of the four larger churches mentioned, most seem to fall into the Gen X and alternative worship models for doing church. Even Pagitt at Solomon's Porch, who is considered an Emergent Church guru, has had to work very hard to be missional.⁷¹

In England there are a few emerging churches that indeed have transcended not only the methodology but also the ideology of modern views of worship and church. For instance, New Horizons in Hermel Hempstead first asked these questions: "What can we do in this community? What does the community need?" before they did anything else. From exploring this question came the next step, and then they started setting off to help. They met people who had lost their way and who were losing hope from the loss of job, a relationship, or a bad choice. Instead of investing in a building they began investing in people's lives, changing and empowering people where they lived. There was a community built on social action, believing each person has a calling and a God-given ability.

From Birmingham, England emerged B1, a network community that met in different venues each week seeking a new format and release of creativity and conversation. This community was based on a shared interactive prayer and experience. The emphasis at B1 was to provide plenty of space for individuals to figure things out for

⁷⁰ Emergent Village, "Indianapolis Emergent Cohort," <http://www.emergentvillage.com/cohorts-locations/indianapolis-emergent-cohort> (accessed October 24, 2009).

⁷¹ Pagitt and Bolger, "TM711Re-imagining Church."

themselves. In this community, having the freedom of exploration was important. There may be a message or talk, but there was time for conversation and response. Often there existed more than one vehicle for response.

Another fascinating story comes from Liverpool in the emergence of the Fresh Expression called Somewhere Else community. Somewhere Else is a Methodist Church Fresh Expression that emerged when The Reverend Barbara Glassen was sent to Liverpool with no church and no congregation.⁷² That is, she was appointed by the British Methodist Church to seek and discover and forge her ministry. Over the twelve years prior, there had been an exodus of people from living in the city center; and, churches were closed down. Due to economic hardship and the loss of industry, the city center suffered decline. As evidence of the recovery materialized and understanding there was still a need for a Christian witness, in a rather prophetic move on behalf of the church, they sent a minister missionary back into the city center without a church.

Rev. Glassen spent months openly talking and building relationships with locals. During this time the idea of a bread-making mission grew. Those involved began making bread for people in the community as an act of hospitality and fellowship. They gathered and met one time per month. The group consisted of those interested in the community. The mission recently has grown to include an outreach to teach literacy and hygiene.⁷³ Each of these perspectives on worship, as well as many more, have contributed toward the thinking and model for how church might be different.

⁷² The Methodist Church: Open to God, "Service: Past Stories (Buzz 1-15)," under "From Liverpool City Centre," <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.content&cmid=708> (accessed October 2009).

This chapter surveyed several regional churches engaged in worship and mission to postmoderns. The next section of this project explores an ecclesiology of worship and mission. This Foundation section seeks an understanding of the challenges of growing a church within a church from a systems perspective and faith development theory. The aim is establishing a basis for understanding the Church's vocation discerning and participating in the *missio Dei* in Newburgh.

⁷³ Ibid.

PART TWO
FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 4

AN ECCLESIOLOGY OF WORSHIP AND MISSION

It is so easy to think that the Church has a lot of different objects—education, building, missions, holding services. . . . The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose.

—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

This chapter will explore an ecclesiology of worship and mission that hold together the Church's vocation of discerning and participating in the *missio Dei*. A portion of the discussion includes a United Methodist perspective on worship and mission as well as an examination of Wesley's union of worship and mission. It will argue that worship and mission became fragmented in modernity and in a postmodern *ecclesia* the two again need reuniting. Over and against the dualism of modernity,¹ postmoderns believe in one world and that this one world is worth saving.² Indeed, the theology of worship and mission go together, because mission and worship—although distinctive—are inseparable. To worship Christ is to participate in God's work in this community. Therein, a church is only “the

¹ Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 90.

² McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 3-4.

Church” when the congregation participates in the mission of God in the world. Such is the vein of what Lewis says above.³

This chapter sets forth an ecclesiology of mission and worship that participates in the *missio Dei*. In this, there are two objectives. The first is to explore the consequence of worship in modernity being differentiated from mission and how in postmodernity the two weave together again. Second, since this project involves growing an emerging church within an established United Methodist church, it will be necessary to explore how in this context Wesleyan theology of worship and mission may contribute. The hope is that the Joshua Tree and NUMC both become intimately involved in God’s project, a world-saving mission on earth.

In Chapter 2, this project discussed how modernity has given way to postmodernity and the decline of Christianity in the Western world. In response to the cutting question, “Why is today’s church so weak?” Dallas Willard has written: “Should we not at least consider the possibility that this poor result is not in spite of what we teach and how we teach, but precisely because of it?”⁴ In the past fifty years, worship and involvement in the Church have not necessarily inculcated the pattern of Jesus in the lives of His worshippers. In fact, through that lens, much of what happens in worship may be an adventure in missing the point.⁵ Today, many Christians would not claim even to be attempting to live

³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 169-170.

⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 40.

⁵ This phrase is borrowed from the title offered by Brian D. McLaren and Anthony Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point: How the Culture-Controlled Church Neutered the Gospel* (El Cajon, CA: EmergentYS, 2003).

as little Christs in this world, which according to Lewis is the point.⁶ As a Christian writer, Peck has argued that there is something wrong when Christians do not identify with Jesus.⁷ Missional thinkers Frost and Hirsch agree. They say, “It appears that a good church upbringing will do many marvelous things for you, but one of the unfortunate things it also does is convince you that Jesus is to be worshipped but not followed.”⁸

Biblical Foundations

This chapter is an ecclesiology of worship and mission. Herein, worship and mission are not separated. They are one. Worship and mission are not resigned to the Sunday morning hour or to any specific activity except one, honoring Jesus. One of the problems is that the ecclesiology of modernity fragmented the Church into compartments.⁹ Thus, modernity deductively divided Church into categories of worship, evangelism, mission, discipleship, and so forth.¹⁰ This division splintered worship from mission. As worship narrowed to preaching, singing, sacraments, prayer, and that which could be contained within the walls of a sanctuary, the concept of mission became “missions” and

⁶ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 18.

⁷ M. Scott Peck, *Further Along the Road Less Traveled: The Unending Journey toward Spiritual Growth—The Edited Lectures* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 210.

⁸ Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 17.

⁹ Ibid. See also Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 155, where he writes: “Not until the Enlightenment did this kind of separating of the ‘structuring’ and the ‘content’ of ideological perspectives come into play.”

¹⁰ In the monastic movement of the third and fourth century, men withdrew from society and separated life into sacred and secular divisions, according to Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, “Monasticism in Medieval Christianity,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art.” http://www.metuseum.org/toah/hd/mona/hd_mona.htm (accessed October 27, 2009). Even the monastic reformation in the twelfth and thirteenth century did not reunite, in spite of the vows of poverty among many monastics. In the Protestant Reformation, the divisions went in a new direction. Although the wall between clergy and laity diminished, in modernity the Church became compartmentalized.

was diminished to what missionaries do or to what the committee by the same name does. For the majority of Christians, their worship and missions activities were relegated to the sidelines. Willard contends that this problem was brought about by Christianity “being filtered through the Modernist/Fundamentalist controversy that has consumed American religion.”¹¹ A gnostic Christianity emerged that reduced the way of Jesus to merely agreeing with a few precepts. Christian life was mainly about getting into heaven in the afterlife, if one could affirm a few beliefs about Jesus. However, in this kind of Christianity, the world is disposable as the aim is to leave it behind. This gnostic influence still competes with biblical Christianity. However, if the worship and following of Jesus are one, then much of what happens in the worship service’s hour of gathering may not resemble the pattern of Jesus. Similarly, mission cannot be simply for the select few who travel overseas as missionaries. Rather, worship and mission are a paired lifestyle of those who follow Jesus in this world, a lifestyle which is shared with others in community.

Sunday morning worship has strayed far when understood through this missional lens. Jesus said, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Accordingly, honoring “the least” equates honoring Jesus. In Jesus’ famous message that has come to be called “the Sermon on the Mount,” He offers a description of those defined as “the least.” The least are found in the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and those who are persecuted and insulted for following the way of Jesus (cf. Matthew 5:1-12). In His acts of healing and compassion, Jesus offers insight into who are “the least” through

¹¹ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 41.

His compassion for the widow and orphan, reconciling the destitute and alone, and seeing God's activity in a foreigner as well a tax collector (cf. Mark 12:41-44; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 18:15-17; James 1:27). Contrary to a religious system that said God favored the obedient with wealth and status, Jesus sided with those who hurt and are in need. For this reason, He references Isaiah 61:1 and says this about God in Luke 4:18, "[He] anointed me to preach good news to the poor." In essence, Jesus attributed the act of the honor the least the same as honoring himself.

Indeed, it is in following Jesus and His way that He is honored and worshipped. Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee and called out to Simon Peter and his brother, Andrew and John, while they were fishing (Matthew 4:19). Jesus' words were simple yet life-altering, "Follow me." The Bible says these men laid down their nets and followed Jesus. Again, on five more occasions in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus called to those who became disciples and simply said, "Follow me" (Matthew: 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24: 19:21). Through following, they developed the pattern of Jesus in their lives in a way they would not fully understand until after His death and resurrection (cf. Luke 24:30-45).

Following Jesus always involves laying aside the self-centered will and instead willing a life of Christ through the displacement of self from the center of authority and replacing that center with the Jesus, His values and concerns. The Apostle Paul said it this way, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2). This is the pattern that Jesus established. He modeled it with His life and death, for it would eventually lead Him to lay down His life for humanity. Thus, Jesus calls, "If any want to become my followers, let

them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34, NRSV).¹²

Worship and mission must unite and flow over into the whole of life, thereby transforming followers to serve in honoring the least and those in need.

The Biblical Call

This chapter sets forth a low ecclesiology of worship and mission together with a high Christology. A low ecclesiology relativizes the visible Church and minimizes the qualitative differences of Church among believers and nonbelievers. A high Christology affirms the orthodox nature of the Triune God, as represented by creedal Christianity at the Council of Nicaea in 325.¹³ Doing this requires a definition of the Church as being more than organic—that is, the Body of Christ can be understood as an event.¹⁴ Karl Barth, the great theologian, understood Church as an event.¹⁵ Church as an event is a critical precept in that this happening is more than the gathering of believers. This is critical, because it lends understanding to what actually makes an experience of church “the Church.” The Church is more than the *ecclesia* who confess, “Jesus is Lord,” or the baptized body. It is not simply those who participate in observing the Sabbath, engage in liturgy, or embrace the sacraments—although these can serve as means of grace in a believer’s journey of

¹² *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹³ Kimlyn J. Bender, *Karl Barth’s Christological Ecclesiology*, Barth Studies (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 271.

¹⁴ Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

becoming more Christ-like in daily living. However, even more indicative of the Church, according to Barth, is the event when the people of God are doing His bidding.¹⁶

In Barth's discussion of "the active life," his ecclesiology takes shape.¹⁷ Barth contends that human life is on loan from God and therefore is summoned to execute the right use of freedom in obedience to God.¹⁸ When a person acts in this world, it affects others. Humans do not live or act alone but among other creatures and the environment. Believers, therefore, should not make existence an end unto itself or engage in self-complacency or simply self-enjoyment. Rather, Barth argues that as God's creatures "we are commanded to honor and protect life because of the active life, i.e., the life in and by which there can be this direction and achievement, has need of space and time and of opportunity."¹⁹ The active life is not simply activity or work but actions coupled with God's demand that a human should accomplish something. This "something" is not just anything but that which can be a contribution to the Kingdom. "If there is a human action which, as an obedient step into freedom in answer to the call of God, fulfils the essence of human action and the active life, it is simple but very strange action . . . of associating oneself with the community of the coming kingdom."²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Karl Barth and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3. pt. 4 (New York: T and T Clark, 2004), 470.

¹⁹ Ibid., 471.

²⁰ Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 153.

Before Barth, Wesley had a similar concept of the active life in defining the difference between the almost Christian and the real Christian.²¹ The real Christian was not merely a Christian through baptism or belief. That was not to say Wesley discounted this means of grace or the need to be a believer. For Wesley, however, the real Christian was about holiness of heart and mind that willed an obedient response at any given moment to Christ in thought, word, and deed.²² The almost Christian was one who may believe the right things but whose life did not fully exemplify Christ in love. Wesley broke down the Christian life into moments. By the grace of God's prevenience, who counsels and guides, one could follow Christ perfectly one instance at a time. Therefore, Wesley believed a Christian could not exemplify Christ when grouchy or discontented. If so, at that moment one was only almost a Christian. Wesley's aim here was not so much to condemn but rather to emphasize the high calling of Christ-likeness. The Christian was to be an example of Jesus and to love as God loves. This was Wesley's meaning of sanctification.²³ This high calling was more than an individual alone could obtain. Wesley had no intention of minimizing the need for Church or Anglican Communion and liturgy; however, he did emphasize that for the real Christian the call was living a life of inward holiness and outward acts of social justice. That is to say, Christians were not about promoting Church but rather transforming the world.

²¹ John Wesley, "Almost Christian" (sermon preached at St. Mary's, Oxford University, July 25, 1741; repr. Global Ministries: The United Methodist Church, <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/2/> [accessed January 12, 2010]).

²² Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 180.

²³ Kenneth J. Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 24.

Barth, in his ecclesiological coherence, held together the dialectic of the Church as an event and institution with the tension of the visible and invisible Church.²⁴ For a church to be the Church, there needs to be present both human witness and its serving as an encounter of Christ. For Barth, there were two tenets to his ecclesiology. The first was that the Church existed to reveal and witness to Jesus Christ in the world. It was not an afterthought but part of the very fabric of reconciliation. Second, the witness “originates in and is empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit.”²⁵ Although Barth in one sense narrows the expression of the Church, he does open the door for the larger conversation that is participation in the Kingdom work of God. The entryway to Church is through an act of obedience.

Joseph L. Mangina connects this concept of obedience with “The Active Life.”

Mangina writes:

Throughout most of the ethics of creation the church only appears in passing as when Barth denotes its central role of worship and the confession of faith. But when he discusses the “The Active Life,” the church comes into its own in a very striking way. The paradigmatic instances of obedience to God’s command and therefore human action, is when one enters Christian community.²⁶

According to Mangina, Barth was not arguing—and, it would be a mistake to believe—that he denies the Church or the continuous existence of the Church.²⁷ However, he did affirm that sometimes the Church is hidden or is invisible. What Barth wanted to protect is the idea that the Church happens as an occurrence, an event, even a grand occasion. It is not that the Holy Spirit causes an event and then leaves; rather, the “divine mystery of the

²⁴ Bender, *Karl Barth’s Christological Ecclesiology*, 271.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Mangina, *Karl Barth*, 153.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

church exists at every moment.”²⁸ That is, the event of the Church is not that God causes His people to come together and therein restricts it. Instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God unleashes human action with the ability to live as Kingdom people. It is in this sense that being the Church is worship. Worship is an event when members of a community of faith hear the call and responds to the *missio Dei*, the mission of God in their particular context. Worship is indeed obedience. If a church is not about God’s mission, it is not the Church but something else.

The *missio Dei* is a Latin term, which means “the mission of God in the world.”²⁹ According to Wessel Bentley, Karl Hartenstein coined the term in the 1950s in response to the International Missionary Council’s missions conference at Willingen, Germany. Bentley describes his concept of the *missio Dei* as a Barthian, Trinitarian influence.³⁰ The weight of the *missio* was not on the Church’s sending of missionaries, as in the *missio ecclesia*, but rather on God’s mission in the world for the redemption of it. Humanity is invited to participate in God’s work, but it is God’s initiative and activity. The shift here is profound, because the *missio Dei* can be lifted from *missio ecclesia*; but, the two are not always one.

At the heart of the *missio Dei* is the restoration of the Kingdom of God on earth. The whole purpose of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection was to make the Kingdom available now and forever. The way to the Kingdom is found in the pattern and faith of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ David J Bosch, *Transforming Missions, Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission*, (Maryknoll, New York : Orbis, 1991), 390.

³⁰ “Barthian” is a common term for one who ascribes to Barth’s theology. See Wessel Bentley, “Karl Barth’s Definition of Church in Politics and Culture: Growth Points for the Church in South Africa” (PhD research article, Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria,

Jesus.³¹ In this way, faith may be defined as “faithing,” living that active response to God in Jesus Christ.³² The Kingdom is not synonymous with the Church. The Kingdom is about restoring the righteous reign of God or goodness, purpose, order, and liberation along with peace on earth and joy. Jesus framed this mission through the way He taught His followers to pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:11-14)

Jesus invites His followers to participate in Kingdom work and activity. The central theme of Jesus’ ministry was about the Kingdom. Jesus talked more of the Kingdom than any other topic. The very meaning for His life was the restoration of the Kingdom of God and humanity.³³ The Apostle Paul’s teaching in Romans 8:18-20 is that “creation waits . . . in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” In essence, “Kingdom” is a word for the reign of God. God’s Kingdom is the sovereign rule of God.³⁴ Bishop N. T. Wright in his book, *Surprised by Hope*, notes: “Creation is to be redeemed: that is, space is to be redeemed, time is to be redeemed, and matter is to be redeemed.”³⁵ All of life is to be

2007), African Journals Online, <http://ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/viewFile/41241/8629> (accessed January 12, 2010).

³¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Faith’s Freedom: A Classic Spirituality for Contemporary Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 78.

³² Ibid.

³³ N. T. Wright, “The Kingdom Come: Public Meaning of the Gospels,” *The Christian Century* (June 17, 2008), <http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=4862> (accessed October 27, 2009).

³⁴ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 201.

³⁵ Ibid., 211.

redeemed as the new creation. Still, at the present moment, humanity is invited to join in to participate in the redemption. Consequently, in the end, everything that will have been done for the *missio Dei* will remain and be transformed. There is one world and one mission, which belong to God.

Kingdom work is the mission of the Church. It is to become an “outpost” for God here on earth.³⁶ Indeed, the Kingdom is always a cultural expression of God’s love in action, a missional outpost that is a sign of God’s presence and redemption. God’s mission and love incarnate in culture is the Kingdom. Included in this love must be the process of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Lesslie Newbigin believes the Christian missional dilemma always has been about sharing the Gospel in a pluralistic world.³⁷ The rise of postmodernity adds the challenge of sharing the Gospel where the ethos now celebrates pluralism—that is, celebrating diversity for its own sake. In this setting, Christian claims of exclusivity are politically incorrect and sound barbaric. Nevertheless, Christianity claims to tell people the truth. The logic of the Christian mission is sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ—indeed, the truth that is God’s love. Newbigin cautions, however, that “to be a Christian does not mean to be a possessor of all truth. It means to be placed on a path by following which we are led toward the truth.”³⁸

Many have argued that this is where the *missio Dei* and the *missio ecclesia* part company, where the gap between Kingdom and Church surfaces. Veli-Mattie Kärkkäinen, in *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, offers an ecumenical spectrum of historical perspectives

³⁶ The term “outpost” was introduced by Tony Campolo, “Outposts” (presentation the United Methodist Men’s Eighth International Congress series at Purdue University in Lafayette, IN, July 13-15, 2001).

³⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grands Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 116.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

regarding the Church and the Kingdom.³⁹ His work explores the boundaries in defining the Church. He looks back at its history and identify common themes and beliefs—including the understanding and role of right belief, doctrine, the Eucharist, salvation, preaching the word and right administration of the sacraments, the Spirit and spiritual gifts, ordination, the reality of the invisible church over and against the visible church.

John Fuellenbach, in *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, sees that membership in the Church does not necessarily constitute being part of the Kingdom of God.⁴⁰ The Church has a mission, a sacramental mission. The Church's call is to point to the reality of the Kingdom by carrying on with the mission of Christ and the reality of God in this world. A believer's mission is to proclaim in word and sacrament, an offering of hope that something more is yet to come. The Church is to be committed to point toward the Kingdom now and coming. Furthermore, the Church is intended for all creation. This means that the Church is to give testimony to the Kingdom, and thereby its aim is to be a blessing in the name of Christ. Likewise, Gerhard Lohfink argues that the Church's primary purpose is to be the Body of Christ and light for the world and that this is a believer's witness.⁴¹ Therefore, Christians should ask, "What Kind of Church does Jesus want?"

For Jürgen Moltmann, professor of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany and renowned and prolific voice in liberation and Christianity, contends that God's Spirit—whose mission derives from Jesus' life, death, and

³⁹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 32.

⁴⁰ John Fuellenbach, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, vol. 33 of American Society of Missiology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3, 24.

⁴¹ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 77.

resurrection—is moving to fulfilling God’s plan on earth.⁴² For Moltmann, there is no separation in the mission of the Church and the mission of Jesus. They are one in the same. That is, with God’s Spirit, His active existence among humanity is putting in order His reign so the world will be transformed, as called in Jesus. Where humanity finds itself now is the time in between, flanked by the resurrection and the fulfillment of history. The Church lives between Jesus’ life and death and resurrection and in the universal future in which that history will reach its fulfillment. What is most engaging about Moltmann’s work is his tying together of the Church and Jesus. Moltmann writes: “We cannot start from the concept of church in order to find the happenings of Christ’s presence; we have to start from the event of Christ’s presence in order find the church.”⁴³ Moltmann answers this question: “Where is the event of Christ?” Christ is truly present when He promises to be, and the true Church is the Church that reflects the glory of God. The true Church will share in the burdens of Jesus and the resurrection. This is a high calling and more responsibility than most Christians care to share.

The night before Vatican II, Karl Rahner wrote *Do Not Stifle the Spirit* as a call for openness.⁴⁴ In this he warned that the Spirit “can never find adequate expression simply in the forms of what we call the Church’s official life, her principles, sacramental systems and teaching.” For Rahner, the Church could not contain the Spirit. Indeed, the Kingdom is too large for the Church. The Kingdom is about the love and truth of God that is both larger and at the same time more particular. The gospel writer John shares, “A time is coming and

⁴² Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit Ecclesiology*, 67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴⁴ Karl Rahner, *Do Not Stifle the Spirit: In Theological Investigations*, vol. 7 (New York : Herder, 1971), 72-87.

has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23); yet, Jesus also said, “I am the Truth” (John 14:6). Here the Kingdom and mission are incarnational. In both their seeking and finding, God works through His people to accomplish His plan in love and truth. As a psychiatrist, Peck once described love as “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.”⁴⁵ That is to say, love goes beyond oneself, enlarging the self. Ultimately, any act of real love—as so defined—then would be considered participation in the Kingdom, because God is love.

Becoming the Church

It is the missional church, the emerging church, and fresh expressions of the Church which are trying to live out the *missio Dei* in a new age of postmodernity. In identifying with the mission of God in the world, McNeal has identified in *Missional Renaissance* three shifts necessary in church thinking and praxis.⁴⁶ First, for McNeal this means shifting from an internal to an external ministry focus. Second, there is a shift from program development toward people development; and, third, there is a move from church-based to Kingdom-based leadership in which a church’s scorecard of effectiveness must change. All three are necessary to work from a missional church framework. God is up to something new that challenges the very heart of what “church” is and does.

⁴⁵ Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*, 81.

⁴⁶ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 6-14.

The missional church is a new way of being the Church.⁴⁷ McNeal states: “Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or activity.”⁴⁸ The missional church movement supersedes denominations, doctrinal stances, or even theologies of local churches in that those who see it understand that God is active in the world. McNeal argues there are visible signs of this movement, such as the “emergence of the altruism Economy.”⁴⁹ This “Economy” is an explosion, which McNeal describes as “the positive inclination of people to believe that they can and should make a difference.”⁵⁰ There are signs of this throughout the business world. Indeed, celebrities and businesses alike seek ways to make a positive impact on the planet. One example is the One movement, which helps the poor and the oppressed.⁵¹ Another is how people like Bill Gates and Melinda Gates, Bono, and Angelina Jolie work to reduce AIDS in Africa and offer treatment to those who have the disease.⁵² It is not uncommon now for local businesses to offer a percentage of sales for community projects or safe water overseas. McNeal contends this explosion of good is also a chance for the church.⁵³ Essentially, the call of the Church is to participate in what God is doing and thereby gain influence within the culture. This involves being aware of human needs and offering a way to bless.

⁴⁷ Aside: The missional church is a new way and not the original way of being church in that we can only go forward in the culture context in which we exist.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ ONE, “ONE History,” <http://www.one.org/c/us/about/754/> (accessed October 2009).

⁵² Look to the Stars: The World of Celebrity Giving, <http://www.looktothestars.org/charity/478-direct-change> (accessed October 2009).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, sometimes the Church misses the mark and, as Barth would argue, in those instances is not Church. After Hurricane Charlie 2004, a church in Florida organized the means in which to feed the suffering victims.⁵⁴ This ministry served warm meals to hurricane victims. However, a few servers took this opportunity to offer high-pressure evangelistic sales.⁵⁵ The cost of a meal became listening to a hellfire-and-brimstone message with an invitation to follow Jesus. Apparently, the workers assumed those who were victims did not know Jesus. How much different the evening might have felt for those involved, if they had just focused on loving and serving simply because they were filled with Jesus' love. They would have been true evangelists.

Building a Community of Interpreters

The process of growing a community who shares in a corporate desire to live as followers of Jesus participating in His mission is the aim of the Joshua Tree. The renewal and redemption of God's creation in Christ is the goal of this participation and is called *participati Christi*.⁵⁶ All the other activities of the Church are for this single purpose. However, following Christ is not one-dimensional. The *participati Christi* requires the need to cultivate the skill of discernment of the Holy Spirit—a weight not to be born alone but in a community of interpreters (cf. Acts 2:42-47).

⁵⁴ Ray Miller, interview with author, Evansville, IN, July 2007. Miller participated in this food ministry.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 29.

In Trinitarian terms, this participation is to join in the *perichoresis*.⁵⁷ *Perichoresis* is the relationship among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a bond understood as equal and dynamic. The *perichoresis* is sufficient and exists within a condition of mutuality. Therefore, theologically God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit form a self-sufficient community that does not require or need humanity or creation. There is no dependence; rather, from and through His love, God creates and loves the world. George Cladis contends that the relationship among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit interacts in a “circle dance.”⁵⁸ In this circle is a model for communities, which can be gathered and can birth leaders through its implementation on the human level; it is an approach that can be used in churches for the purpose of formation and leadership.⁵⁹ Cladis views leadership as a round table where God’s calling emerges from within a community. In the true spirit of community birthed in creativity, a team approach is collaboration. Jesus promises, “The kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21). That is to say, the Kingdom of God is near wherever two or more together seek Christ’s will. Christianity is meant to be lived in community.

Perhaps it would be easier if the Christian way meant not having to deal with people, places, and situations; however, God has not set life up to function like this. This tension exists. Indeed, God has the Christian life to be lived together in the fellowship of the Kingdom, with human beings always inviting and expecting others to join them. Jesus says, “Wherever two or more are gathered in my name, there I am” (Matthew 18:20).

⁵⁷ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 210.

⁵⁸ Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 4-16.

⁵⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 210.

More so, the community who seeks truth together engages in a corporate family activity. John 4:23-25 states: “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” This reality is not merely pragmatic, in there is so much more that can be accomplished together. It is not merely through combining resources the communal efforts muster more influence. Rather, the very nature of family life together, loving as God loves, is about the formation of community. Therefore, the spirit of that collaboration—where two or more come together seeking God—embodies both the actual work and fruit of the Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit and Collaboration

Although the glorious labor and fruit of the Kingdom, collaborative communities are not easy. McNeal forces some tough questions, which need be addressed in forming collaborations. He contends there must be a process to help people prepare for the future by starting the process of visioning.⁶⁰ For this process, there is no formula—particularly because “vision is discovered, not invented.”⁶¹ McNeal understands that the calling of God emerges through listening not only to the core people but also to those on the fringes. The vision process is a work of raising consciousness, looking around to see what is happening in Newburgh and the Evansville area. However, McNeal states he is moving away from the idea that the pastor is or should be the primary “vision architect.”⁶² It is not that the pastor

⁶⁰ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 95.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 100.

cannot be the architect of the vision; rather, he just sees few pastors with this talent. McNeal argues that pastors who do not have the gift of visioning need to submit to God's vision revealed in the leadership team.⁶³ People were created for community, and in community and collaboration the Spirit is discovered.

Structure of Leadership

Cladis argues that, in this present time and culture, team leadership is the most effective way to lead the church and that a team approach is a biblical approach to leadership in which people are transformed into followers of Jesus Christ.⁶⁴ Indeed, team-based leadership is modeled in the very nature of a triune God. A team approach rests on a pragmatic, teleological, and theological basis.

In postmodernity there is a leveling of traditional hierarchal power structures, as non-hierarchical leadership becomes ever more important among postmoderns. Throughout history, with the documented abuse of authority in hierarchical organizations, it is enough to stir discomfort in the use of the Church's power, which shares this shaded past.⁶⁵ Here Brafman and Beckstrom juxtapose leaderless organizations with traditional, authoritarian, hierarchical forms.⁶⁶ Over and against past hierarchies, these new organic communities may be quite refreshing.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ A few examples of the misuse of power: the collapse of Enron Corporation in 2001, the United States invasion of Iraq unsupported by the United Nations, the early genocide of the American Indian and the African slave market, the rise of Nazi Germany against Jews, and the Christian Inquisitions.

⁶⁶ Brafman and Beckstrom, *Starfish and the Spider*, 23.

Nevertheless, there is something misleading about the term “leaderless” even in postmodernity. “Leaderless” implies not merely an organization without traditional authority but that these organic communities are without any leadership. This is a chimera. Leadership adapts as needed in form and structure when it comes to people movements. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is an example of a leaderless organization. In AA there are trusted leaders who assist in the group so as to carry out its primary mission and help other alcoholics to recover from alcoholism, but they do not govern. In the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, Tradition Two states: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern”⁶⁷ AA grew from two men who had enough inspiration (and pain) to share what they discovered in helping each other. AA evolved by repeating the pattern Bill Wilson and Bob Smith began, one alcoholic helping another. Over time, the group examined what it had done to stay sober; and, when this was put down in a book, the AA Program solidified.⁶⁸ Indeed, “the Program” emerged not from a master plan but rather from the community’s shared experience.⁶⁹ Still, Wilson and B. Smith are esteemed by millions of AA members and supporters for their selfless leadership.⁷⁰ The essential point here is that there is really no such thing as literally a leaderless organization. The difference is that there may not be a master plan; however,

⁶⁷ Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, <http://www.aa-louisiana.org/trad.htm> (accessed November 3, 2009).

⁶⁸ Alcoholics Anonymous., *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of AA* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1988).

⁶⁹ Joseph R. Myers, *Organic Community: Creating a Place Where People Naturally Connect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 145.

⁷⁰ Bill Wilson, Alcoholic Foundation (New York), and Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism* (New York: Works Pub., 1946), 155..

leadership occurs even by giving away power as Wilson and B. Smith modeled. Even more profound was that God limited Himself in Jesus incarnated as a human being to share His power. Therefore, when it comes to forming community, the real question is about the form and pattern of leadership and not whether or not leadership will exist.

Similarly, the challenge at NUMC is to form a community, a church within a church, which has inculcated the values of a less hierarchal leadership. That is, the Joshua Tree leadership's praxis and ideology need to emerge from within its active community and according to the values of postmodernity. The aim is to work together as a collaborative team, to co-create this community as it seeks to live God's mission in its particular context, with the goal of being led and governed by the Holy Spirit.

In the United Methodist Church, there is the matter of leadership by both the clergy and the laity. There exists a challenge in leading from a more round-table, team approach. As an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, the task and responsibilities include creating opportunities for the church family and others to encounter Christ in worship and elsewhere.⁷¹ Theologically, it is pertinent to ask the question whether ordination is merely a human institutional ranking or if somehow ordination participates in commissioning the real election and call of God. Certainly this is not a new issue.⁷² However, at the heart of this debate lies the question of God's calling and purpose. Scripture tells of God choosing and appointing leaders for particular purposes.⁷³ Indeed God sets apart not only

⁷¹ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*, para. 330-335.

⁷² Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Word, 1998), 34.

⁷³ Some examples include the call of Noah to build the ark (Genesis 6:13), Abram's faithful call to the promised land (Genesis 12), and Moses being sent to the Pharaoh to free the Hebrews from Egypt (Exodus 3).

occupations, as in the Levites (Numbers 18:1), but whole people groups—as the Hebrews—for His purpose and calling (Leviticus 26:12). This translates in the New Testament to the reality that all followers of Jesus belong to the priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Therefore, whatever authority and leadership mean in the church, in the case of the Joshua Tree ordination no longer can be confused with an elevated status or even a higher calling.

Fortunately, God is present as a guide in this task through Scripture, the human spiritual community, and the Holy Spirit. The task is discernment. The participants themselves must become interpreters, hear for themselves God’s call, and collaboratively respond. In the early Church, the community gathered and waited on the Holy Spirit before being filled and going out in power (Acts 1:8; 8:14-16). In this way, team leadership is called also to be obedient and to seek to interpret God’s call. Leadership in emerging church ministry has been compared to “midwiving.”⁷⁴ The work of growing leadership in an emerging worship community is to create a space for the community to birth and grow, a process that waits on the Holy Spirit. God may invite His people to participate in the birthing; but, when the child arrives, the midwife knows she only assisted and that the real work was in the natural birthing process.

United Methodist Theology, Worship, and Mission

In growing a church within a church, it is crucial to understand the biblical calling of the Church and to work out an appropriate ecclesiology. Since the mother church of this project is United Methodist, it is necessary to explore its definition. Embodying an ecclesiology of the Church is as important as embracing theology and Christology, for they

⁷⁴ Steve Taylor, *Out of Bounds Church: Learning to Create Communities of Faith in a Culture of Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Emergent YS, 2005), 54.

go together.⁷⁵ The United Methodist tradition defines the Church in its preamble to the

Book of Discipline:

The church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redeemed and redeeming fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the church seeks to provide for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believer and the redemption of the world. The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world, and its very dividedness is hindrance to its mission in that world.⁷⁶

This encompassing definition focuses on shared beliefs and practices among the community both currently and historically. This statement declares adherent churches' calling and responsibility to the world and to one another. Included is an assertion that leadership in the United Methodist Church is about inspiring the worship of God, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. Indeed, this phrase that "the church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world" establishes the aim as not to save people from but, conversely, redeem them within the world. In this way, the *missio ecclesia* is inseparable from the *missio Dei*.

Wesley's Theology of Mission

This chapter is concerned with the United Methodist theology of worship and mission. United Methodists look to the teachings of Wesley for a theology of worship and mission. Wesley had a pastoral theology that was pragmatic, experiential, and not content

⁷⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 67.

⁷⁶ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*, pt. 1.

to allow anything to remain theoretical.⁷⁷ For this reason, his life and ministry united worship and mission. Wesley preached, “There is no holiness but social holiness.”⁷⁸ He believed that holiness was not just an inner experience but more so an inner love seeking outward expression through social justice. In this sense, true religion for Wesley was always political and the connection between faith and works was non-negotiable. One could know the peace and assurance of the forgiveness of God, but this was not the end. The experience was a gift to be used to love as God loves in the world. For example, Wesley strongly opposed slavery and was an early influencer of abolitionist William Wilberforce.⁷⁹ He wrote about the proper use of money and prison reform.⁸⁰ His ethics of social holiness are summarized in this poem:

Do all you can
By all means that you can
In every way that you can
In all the places you can
To all the people you can
As long as you can.⁸¹

Wesley lived a life connecting personal and social holiness. Although he was never poor due to his book sales, he died giving away his last cent. For Wesley, the soul is on a quest to become sanctified and perfected, holy as God is holy.⁸² The quest is about both an inward experience and an outward response. To aid in this process were means of grace

⁷⁷ Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 112.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. This poem was written later to capture the Methodist spirit.

such as Holy Communion and Baptism and other acts of piety and service that help perfect the soul.

Wesley's knowledge and comprehension of worship grew from his history with the Anglican Church,⁸³ which understood the necessity of the Holy Eucharist. As a response to this free grace, one desired to perfect the soul through acts of charity and generosity. For example, an act of kindness, offering help to the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing those in need, or visiting those imprisoned all served as a way to tame the will and grow in perfection. The important point here is that Wesley did not separate the inward way of worship with outward acts of justice. They both were the Christian life. Still, sacramentally, worship was a necessity based on the shared need of Holy Communion and to sustain one another in faith and the Christian walk. It is not that God is limited to the Church; rather, it is that God through the community as a source of strength and regeneration, equipped the followers for the cause of Christ. Worship is where the sacraments were shared, and the fellowship of believers received empowerment for the mission.

The early Methodists were divided into societies that organized into classes and bands to empower one other for personal holiness and social action.⁸⁴ These classes and bands could be considered fresh expressions of faith for the day. Bands consisted of five to

⁸² John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, ed. Thomas Jackson, 366-446 (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1872; repr., General Board of Global Ministries, <http://gbgm-umc.org/UMhistory/Wesley/perfect3.html> (accessed October 29, 2009).

⁸³ Wesley was an Anglican Priest trained at Christ's College, Oxford, along with his brother Charles Wesley. Samuel Wesley, their father, was also a priest in the Church of England. See Global Ministries, "Samuel Wesley: Father of John Wesley," <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/Wesley/quiz/1b.stm> (accessed October 1, 2009).

⁸⁴ Richard Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 79.

ten individuals who came together seeking to be honest and grow in their faith and discipleship. The first band, which Wesley later called the “third rise of Methodism,” became known as Fetter Lane Society.⁸⁵ In the beginnings the society followed two simple rules:

1. That they will meet together once in a week to confess their faults to one another and to pray for one another that they may be healed [cf. James 5:16]
2. That any others, of whose sincerity they are well assured, may, if the desire it, meet with them of that purpose.⁸⁶

Using the same structure, classes were for those exploring deepening their faith.⁸⁷

However, there were differences among classes and bands. For example, class meetings were divisions of the larger societies, usually separated geographically. Bands were smaller and for the more spiritually mature. Bands were separated by gender, age, and marital status. Both were similar in that they were led by the laity and were relatively small. Both became foundational in growing and sustaining this movement of Methodism and offered a way of growing disciples, which functions even today.

History of the *Missio Dei* in the United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church has the breadth and the ability to bring together an evangelical heritage alongside a history of social justice.⁸⁸ In Methodism the two are held together as the Church, and both paths are considered necessary in following Christ. United Methodism, with its Wesleyan influence, focuses on both the inward journey through prayer, sacraments, study, and meditation and an outward response in acts of piety, social

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ David Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 197.

⁸⁷ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*, 119.

action, and justice. Early in Methodism the emphasis was in following Jesus' example "who went about doing good" (Act 10:38) and loving one's neighbor (cf. Mark 12:31).⁸⁹ Much of the United Methodist distinctive history is a result of Wesley's theology of atonement and assurance. Wesley's assurance was not about being assured of heaven; rather, it was an experience that left one confident of the living presence and forgiveness of God. This experience offered a different trajectory from more Calvinistic evangelicals. The latter understood assurance as knowing one's final destiny in heaven. So their focus was to save people into heaven. However, for United Methodists the first aim was the mission about this present world. "The Church exists in and for the world."⁹⁰ The mission and the *missio Dei* are not about leaving but about staying, renewing, and redeeming this life. Life in Christ is about the salvation of the world. United Methodists understand this.

Relational Soteriology

Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation; however, "Saved from what?" is the question. This chapter has argued that Wesley focused not so much on saving souls for heaven as much as on the calling to become the kind of people God wants, perfected in holiness of heart and life. Indeed, this is the concept of the *missio Dei*, seeking the mission of God in the world and within the current context of one's life and the life of the community of followers in a church.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁹⁰ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*, pt. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid.

From a relational view of soteriology, the *missio Dei* means not just being reunited with God but also being made whole and alive again. For the leper, saving meant not only being cured from leprosy but also being restored in relationship to his family and community (cf. Mark 1:40-45). For the cripple, it means not only walking again but also the possibility of travel and fellowship with community (cf. Luke 13: 10-13). For the miner or laborer who loses a job, salvation comes in the restoring of useful and meaningful work. For the lost and lonely, it is a reuniting of the family or a new community as in the case of the unclean woman (cf. Matthew 9:20). A relational soteriology is about healing the estrangement and the fragmentations of life in learning to live in true community with God and one another. Bishop N.T. Wright of Durham in Church of England argues comments: “Precisely because of this re-discovery of who God is—history, theology, spirituality, and vocation [can] recover their proper relationship. For Jesus’ followers, finding out who Jesus was in his historical context meant and means discovering their own task within their own contents.”⁹² Salvation is thus to become Kingdom people on earth as in heaven.

⁹² Ibid.

CHAPTER 5
SYSTEMIC AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES
ON CONGREGATIONAL CHANGE

This chapter considers the challenge of growing a community of postmoderns, the Joshua Tree, who are undergirded by a community whose identity was forged in modernity (NUMC). In this chapter, this undertaking will be viewed through the lens of Fowler's Faith Development (FD) theory¹ as well as a Bowenian Family Systems (FS) perspective,² because both frameworks offer ways of thinking about the ideological issues around growth and resistance for individuals and the local congregation. FD theory provides a basis for appreciating the ideological diversity between a modern consciousness and postmodern consciousness.³ The Bowenian Family Systems perspective, as framed by the late Edwin Friedman, offers a paradigm for thinking about the local church as a family system, what it means for the church body to function as an emotional unit with its own levels of acceptable anxiety and diversity, and what happens when these levels are stressed and brimmed.

¹ Fowler, *Faithful Change*.

² Friedman, *Generation to Generation*.

³ Until now in this project, postmodernity has been referred to as an ethos. In this chapter and as pertaining to FD theory, the term "postmodern consciousness" is used in aligning with Fowler's locution that bridges psychology and religion.

As in any family, there are expectations. Being a church within a church means there is a significant unilateral commitment on behalf of the mother church toward the growth and development of the emerging church. There must be a process for inculcating a bilateral commitment between NUMC and the emerging Joshua Tree. Additionally, there must be a process for the mother church to clarify overtly its expectations as well as discerning the *missio Dei*. Therein, following the sections on FD and FS, this chapter will explore a framework for thinking about the educational and spiritual formation needs of the emerging church and the mother church's role in that process. As the emerging community continues to grow, the issue that both the Joshua Tree and NUMC must address is how to remain in unity with the *missio Dei* while still retaining its self-differentiated expression of being the Church.

Congregational Resistance

Postmodernity can be understood as an era while postmodernism denotes a system of thought, with the former often preceding the latter. However, this framework is not large enough in that it seems to flatten postmodernity in a static position on a time line. Rather, postmodernity is a dynamic ethos and therefore more like a movie than a still photo. In the Introduction of this project, postmodernity was described through observing emerging realities such as globalism over nationalism, informational technology over industrial machinations, spirituality over and against organized religion, non-hierarchical replacing hierarchical leadership, and even leaderless organizational movements.⁴ The list was not exhaustive, but it tried to capture the fluidity of this

⁴ See Chapter 2 of this paper for specific details regarding this portion of the discussion.

movement. This chapter will explore another dimension of this ethos: postmodernity as an issue of faith change and development.

Fowler, known as the father of modern structural faith development theories,⁵ is world-renowned for his pioneering research and publication entitled *Stages of Faith*.⁶ In *Stages of Faith*, Fowler names and compares the dynamics of the Stages of Faith with other psychological development theories. These include Erick Erickson's theory of Childhood Development, Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development theory, and Lawrence Kohlberg's Moral Development theory.⁷ Faith Development theory "attempts to account for the operations of knowing, valuing, and committing that underlie a person's construal of self/other relation in context of an explicitly or implicitly coherent image of an ultimate environment."⁸

⁵ On a personal level, I am indebted to Fowler for my own studies on FD theory at Emory University. Fowler was the director of my master's thesis where Stages 3 and 4 provided the backdrop for my work. See Todd Gile, "A Faith Development Approach Using Fowler's Stages of Faith as a Framework for Understanding and Working with Alcoholics Whose Christianity Is Fundamentalist: Utilizing the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous" (MDiv Thesis, Emory University, 1997).

⁶ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith : The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

⁷ See Erick Erickson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1963); Jean Piaget, *Child and Reality* (New York, Penguin Book, 1976); Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies* (New York Random House, 1967); Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," *Psychology Today* (September 1968): 25-30.

⁸ Barbara S. McCrady, William R. Miller, and Alcoholics Anonymous, *Research on Alcoholics Anonymous : Opportunities and Alternatives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1993).

Emergence of a Faith Development Perspective

Fowler understands faith to be more inclusive than mere religion of belief. He sees faith as deeper and more foundational.⁹ For Fowler, faith is a human phenomenon that is the “universal human burden of finding or meaning making.”¹⁰ Religion and faith often have been misunderstood and have come to be somewhat synonymous. For Fowler, “[F]aith is both more personal and more existentially defined than belief, understood in the modern sense.”¹¹ He defines it in the following way:

[Faith is] ...an integral, centering process, underlying the formation of beliefs, values, and meanings, that (1) give coherence and direction to persons’ lives, (2) links them in shared trusts and loyalties with others, (3) grounds their personal stances and communal loyalties in a sense of relatedness to a larger frame of reference, and (4) enables them to face and deal with the limited condition of human life, relying upon that which has the quality of ultimacy in their lives.¹²

Although it is not within the scope project to explore the entire spectrum of Fowler’s stages, an overview will be helpful. It is important to keep in mind that the stages also can describe not only individuals but also communities. Thus, the main concern in this chapter is those stages that most paint a picture of the modern and postmodern consciousness, namely Stage 4 and Stage 5.¹³ While Fowler identifies age progression with the stages, he suggests that age is a loose correlation. As with any developmental theory, people may follow their own schedule and timeline. To understand why Fowler’s seven Stages of Faith and Selfhood prove so useful within the framework

⁹ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 55.

¹⁰ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 33; see also Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 4, for Christian existentialism defining faith as man’s search for the ultimate and meaning making.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4-15.

¹³ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 152.

of the strategy contained in this project, it is important to know some basic information about each stage.¹⁴

Stage 0 is called “Primal Faith (Infancy).” This pre-language stage is considered a formative phase of faith development and a pre-stage, for this reason it is labeled with a zero. In infancy, there emerges recognition of separation which causes anxiety and motivates the child to contend with the threat of abandonment and deprivation.¹⁵ As a response to this separation, a growing trust develops in mutual relationships with loving parent or caregivers. As the strength of that trust grows, so does a foundation for later faith development.

Stage 1 is called “Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood).” It is characterized cognitively by pre-operationality—which is to say, the person literally is unable to operate on one’s own environment.¹⁶ With the development of language and the ability to speak about oneself and one’s surroundings, so emerges the Intuitive-Projective Faith.¹⁷ Persons in this stage utilize concrete symbols and images as means of sustaining and making meaning. As a result, stories have meaning that overtly differentiates good and bad as they symbolize frightening or inexpressible desires. A sort of magical thinking pervades.

¹⁴ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 122-210.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁶ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 122. The operational grouping of intellectual, pre-operational, concrete-operational, and formal-operational originates in the Piaget’s Cognitive Development theory, explained in Jean Piaget, *Psychology of Intellect*, vol. 32 of *Developmental Psychology* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge and Kegan, 1950), 53.

¹⁷ Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, 59.

Although this stage is common in early childhood, there are a limited number of adults whose faith can be described as Intuitive -Projective.¹⁸ Those best described by Intuitive -Projective Faith have not constructed an interior self. This would require the capacity for mutual interpersonal perspective taking that begins to emerge in the Synthetic Conventional Stage. Since they have not yet developed an internal sense of self, the identity of such persons is determined largely by the world around them. They simply assume their experiences and perceptions are the only available perspective.¹⁹ Many cults may draw people in this stage due to their dependence on external authority and limited capacity to differentiate imaginative thinking from fantasy. The development of the next stage is characterized by the emergence of what Piaget terms “concrete operational” thinking.²⁰ This transition is motivated by the need to comprehend more clearly the difference between reality and imagination. A sign transitioning to Mythic-Literal Faith is the acceptance at a literal level of myths and stories of the group as personal values and rules.

“Mythic-Literal Faith (Childhood and beyond)” is Stage 2. Like the Intuitive-Projective Faith, meaning making finds expression in the literal interpretation of stories.²¹ The ability to formulate concrete operations and facilitate limited problem solving emerges. There is a new consciousness of having one’s own story and the ability to

¹⁸ Ibid., 67.

¹⁹ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 123.

²⁰ Ibid., 149.

²¹ Ibid.

articulate it. Even as their story emerges, they are not able to be reflectively held.²²

Fowler suggests that one of the most important insights into understanding those with Mythic-Literal Faith is that the interiority of these persons is largely undeveloped, which means they have limited capacity at this point to differentiate between their own inner world and that of others.²³ Moreover, they consider their own understanding of the world to be normative for all. In this stage, knowledge is received and not constructed. As a result, there is little tolerance for ambiguity. Truth is external and received from authorities. Truth is all or nothing.

In his research, Fowler tells a story of a river that provides a simple metaphor to illustrate the difference in how a person with a Mythic-Literal Faith may perceive the world and make meaning differently than someone with a Synthetic-Conventional Faith, which is the next stage of development.²⁴ A Mythic-Literal thinker would describe a river from a personal perspective of floating down the stream. Conversely, one with a Synthetic-Conventional Faith has the ability to step out onto the riverbank and describe the larger flow of the river. Mythic-Literal thinkers cannot obtain a third-person perspective or understand another as truly other or separate.²⁵

For Mythic-Literal thinkers there is little capacity for metaphors or conceptual thinking.²⁶ The stories themselves create meaning, and the moral or purpose of the story

²² This stage may share commonality with fundamentalist ideologies. See Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, 59.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 137.

²⁵ Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, 88.

²⁶ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 149.

may be held in a one-dimensional way. Stories may become rules to be adhered to, because meaning is found in the symbol or the stories themselves. A Mythic-Literal person finds meaning and security in adherence to rules. For this faith, there is no occasion for the exception because such thinkers have no personal criteria by which to further evaluate the rule. Therefore, the context of when, how, why or whether there might be an exception is minimized. What is most important is how they measure up to the rule.

Ministry to those in this stage of faith narrative becomes the primary means of making and sustaining meaning. Although the Book of Proverbs can be understood at differing cognitive levels, for Mythic-Literal thinkers, the proverbs are boundaries. Clear, straightforward guidelines and instruction are meaningful. As the person and community begin to have the initial capacity of mutual perspective taking, the transition to Synthetic-Conventional Faith emerges.

In Stage 3, “Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescent and beyond),” formal-operational thinking emerges which is characterized by the ability to think about one’s thinking.²⁷ Having the ability to conceptualize in abstract, at this stage, a person can conceive of and assess the ideal and strive to live accordingly. Still, this stage is a tacit faith. Persons with Synthetic-Conventional Faith function from a strictly linear model of cause and effect and continue to have a limited capacity to understand the system that forms and informs them. As a result, they often are uninterested in analytical approaches to learning.

²⁷ Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, 66.

In Stage 3, relationships are extremely important for their ways of making meaning. In relationship with their community, people gain experience of identity from the community and roles they hold. These people best thrive in conflict-free communities and attempt to minimize the controversies, as disharmony is perceived as a threat to the community and to self. People gain the experience of identity from the community relationship and roles they hold. Fowler notes that these persons understand their congregation to be family to which they belong.²⁸ They bond with the community through things of commonality, such as shared values and beliefs. Since these people best thrive in conflict-free communities, a church within a church may be perceived as a threat to the unity—as may happen within the NUMC congregation. They may feel the Joshua Tree is a betrayal of their NUMC Christian family.

For the next stage to emerge, Fowler contends, two actions need to occur.²⁹ One must become dissatisfied with the previously held values and beliefs, and commitments while at the same time there is the emergence of executive ego.³⁰ There must emerge a critical questioning. Selfhood formerly was defined primarily by one's roles and relationships. Now this identity is challenged by the tension between inner and external beliefs, values, and commitments. For change to occur, the self must have the ability to claim its own worth and identity over and against external powers. This change is evidenced by the ability to self-differentiate (identity, values, beliefs) apart from the relationships and previous roles assigned to them. With the defining of self, persons of

²⁸ Ibid., 87.

²⁹ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 62.

³⁰ Ibid.

this stage have internalized a sense of identity and are no longer under “the tyranny of they,” as Fowler describes.³¹ People transitioning into this next stage are able to reflect on their former assumptions and to think critically about themselves. The emergence of the executive ego is evidenced by the ability to take responsibility for oneself as well as personal choices and actions. This is Stage 4, and it is called “Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adulthood and beyond).”³²

In Stage 4, persons are more conscious of social systems and institutions that form to inform them. They are aware that they have beliefs and values they have developed and changed. Having this awareness enables them to make informed choices of how or if they will contribute. These persons become aware of paradox; however, they avoid the tension of ambiguity. Rather, a person operating from this faith seeks and formulates answers linearly while searching for cause and effect.³³ Modernity may be characterized and driven by persons in this stage. In *Faithful Change*, Fowler notes:³⁴

The Enlightenment represented a movement in culture evolution where inherited symbols, beliefs and traditions were subjected to the scrutiny of evaluation of the critical reasoning. Similarly, the development of the Individuative-Reflective stage involves the critical examination and exercise of choice regarding a person or community’s previous faith perceptive.³⁵

Fowler further describes this Individuative-Reflective stage of faith as one in which symbols and rituals become demythologized. Once the symbol or ritual is

³¹ Ibid.

³² Fowler, *Stage of Faith*, 174.

³³ Aside: For a feminist critique of Stage 4 see K. Helmut Reich, “Do We Need a Theory for the Religious Development of Women?” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 7, no. 2 (April 1997): 67.

³⁴ Ibid., 170.

³⁵ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 168.

understood and comprehended for its meaning, it has lost its inerrant power, as those in this stage may believe. That is, for this stage of faith the symbols become representative of the thing that they stand for. Holy Communion is one example of how this thinking inters into community practice and thinking. The Catholic Church's doctrine of transubstantiation is the teaching that the elements literally become the body and blood of Christ, once the priest consecrates them. A genius of all the great religions is their ability to meet individuals or communities among the many stages of faith simultaneously. It is to understand the elements as the chemical and biological composite of Jesus' physical body and say the symbol is the thing. To many, the move toward explaining that the elements actually represent Jesus is to demythologize the ritual. Thus, the Protestant Church may be the start of the modern age.³⁶ Here, the ritual represents something else. In the next stage, Conjunctive Faith, the symbol and ritual are reunited with reality, as people who take Holy Communion now understand that the symbol and ritual are a form of participating in a reality beyond themselves.

This is Stage 5, "Conjunctive Faith (Early Mid-life and beyond)." Conjunctive Faith occurs as the interior self develops and one begins to listen to the inner voice of conscious. In Stage 5 one becomes willing to engage mystery and stay in the tension of "both/and" thinking, as the reductionism of Stage 4's "either/or" no longer is meaningful. The sense of self and executive ego are strong enough to engage in what Martin Buber initially termed the "I-Thou" relationship over and against simply an "I-It"

³⁶ C. Scott Dixon, *The German Reformation: The Essential Readings*, Blackwell Essential Readings in History (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 193.

understanding.³⁷ Indeed, in Conjunctive Faith people may be willing to engage and listen to those of other faiths, without fearing the loss of their own. Transition to Stage 5 requires a demythologizing and the ability to embrace a more than a literal understanding of symbols. That rationalism of Stage 4 modernism is transcended, and symbols open up a new level of meaning and interpretation. Opposites are able to be held in tension with no real need to unite or melt together. From this idea stems the name “conjunctive.” There is a danger of this stage—that is, there is a paralyzing effect of the need to not reunite. The opposites must find a way to reunite in order to move to Stage 6. Conjunctive Faith is the faith likened to the postmodern consciousness. For Fowler, the transition to this stage of Conjunctive Faith is in fact a culture-wide struggle toward postmodernism.³⁸

Stage 6 is “Universalizing Faith (Mid-life and beyond).” Although people in this stage are rare, they have incorporated the whole of all the stages. They have moved past the need for the tension that Stage 5 found so necessary. As in Stage 5, they have the ability to work with people on all stages; and, having successfully transitioned each, they experience no threat of returning or being drawn back to the precious stage. This stage is characterized by integration of the whole of the lives in mutual and missional endeavors. They have integrated each aspect so that they can live in the freedom and clarity of their mission. Some may characterize persons with Stage 6 faith as the saints or sages. Fowler names Mother Teresa, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. as examples. They were again able to find their state of being in that space between structure and anti-structure.³⁹ In

³⁷ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), 51.

³⁸ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 157.

³⁹ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 95.

this, they were able to remain detached yet devoted while channeling their lives in addressing controversial issues of injustice through love and peace without compromising their locus of authority.

Modern versus Postmodern Ideological Conflict

In *Faithful Change*, Fowler contends that FD theory can be used as a description for the modern as well as a postmodern consciousness.⁴⁰ Therefore, from the perspective of FD theory, the postmodern consciousness is more than a shift in culture. What often has been understood as a conflict in culture indeed may be about competing faiths.

Others have affirmed Fowler's FD theory in understanding postmodernity and cultivating an emerging church. Kester Brewin acknowledges Fowler's Conjunctive faith as postmodern in *Signs of Emergence* and says it "is a place of richness, ambiguity, multidimensionality, truth must be approach from two at least two or more angles of vision simultaneously."⁴¹ Adam Hamilton, in *Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White*, writes: "Fowler's stages have something to say to Christians. . . . Our culture is in the midst of an important shift in which more people will be able to accept paradox and to hold fast to compelling faith, while living with ambiguity."⁴² Alan Kevin Jamieson, in both his doctoral thesis⁴³ and a book entitled *Churchless Faith*,⁴⁴ uses Fowler's FD

⁴⁰ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 157.

⁴¹ Kester Brewin, *Signs of Emergence: A Vision for Church That Is Organic/Networked/Decentralized/Bottom-up/Communal/Flexible/Always Evolving* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007). 30.

⁴² Adam Hamilton, *Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White: Thoughts on Religion, Morality, and Politics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008). 29-30.

⁴³ Alan Kevin Jamieson, "A Churchless Faith: Faith Outside the Evangelical Pentecostal/Charismatic Church of New Zealand" (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 1998), 161.

theory and stages as a description for discussing why some are leaving the Church in postmodernity and asserts that they have outgrown their old faith and possibly that of their faith community. The intention of using Fowler's stages in this project is for FD theory faith to provide a lens for understanding faith development not only for individuals but also for communities.

Church communities, like individuals, share a normative Stage of Faith.⁴⁵ The three stages of faith descriptive of most adults are: Synthetic-Conventional (Stage 3), Individuative-Reflective (Stage 4), and Conjunctive faith (Stage 5).⁴⁶ While Synthetic-Conventional faith often is found with adults or communities of adults, Fowler describes this Stage 3 as having its roots in preserving "pre-Enlightenment forms of cultural consciousness."⁴⁷ The very fact that NUMC leaders are seeking ministry to and with postmoderns (post-Enlightenment) indicates that the normative faith, among at least the leadership of NUMC, is not about preserving Enlightenment forms of approach and thought. This experiment, growing a church within a church, assumes an ability to tolerate diversity and third-person perspective and taking that which is not available yet in a Stage 3 consciousness. People in differing stages frequently are threatened by one another.⁴⁸ In his book, *The Different Drum*, Peck has his own version of stages of faith that share commonality with Fowler's designations. Peck writes: "Mostly we are threatened by people in the stage above us. . . . If people are one step ahead of us, we

⁴⁴ Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith : Faith Journeys Beyond the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2002).

⁴⁵ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 166.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

mostly admire them. If they are two steps ahead, we usually think they are evil.”⁴⁹

The emergence of a Stage 5 post-Enlightenment community would not be tolerated from a community whose normative faith was Stage 3. The tension likely would split the two communities; however, if the two communities did make it through the tension, a stage transition would occur among those with Synthetic-Conventional Faith.

Stage 4 is important to grasp, because it describes the faith of many who are part of the NUMC community. Nevertheless, there is a further distinction that Fowler describes of Stage 4 faith. This is a variation within Stage 4 that likely will be a cause for conflict between temperaments. Fowler calls these temperaments the “Orthodox” versus “Progressive.” Both of these temperaments emerged in modernity.⁵⁰

Table 3. Fowler’s Comparison of Orthodox and Progressive Temperaments

Orthodox	Progressive
External locus of authority	Internal locus of authority
Literal or symbolic interpretation	Demythologizing interpretations
Organismic political metaphors	Social contract metaphors
Implicit, tacit, ideology	Explicit conceptual ideology
Freedom in economics terms	Freedom in terms of human rights
Justice as moral righteousness	Justice as equity and fairness
Blurring line between public and private lives	Clear line between public and private lives

In Table 3, Fowler contrasts these two temperaments for convenient comparison.

The Joshua Tree, a church within a church, at NUMC is geared toward growing a

⁴⁹ Ibid., 195.

⁵⁰ Fowler, *Faithful Change*, 171.

community with a more progressive process. Fowler compares the locus of authority. In this model, the progressive function from a more internal authority and are self-driven, whereas the Orthodox authority rests outside the self in rules, organization, or public expectations. The distinction depends on whether one functions with an internal or and external authority.

Today the Western world struggles with this modern/postmodern divide.⁵¹ This tension and the struggle of one against the other are perhaps reactions to the reality that modernity is fading. This may explain the rise of friction. As the very ideas that birthed modernity lose meaning and significance, some may strike out with contempt, a lack of charity in a last effort to remain vital, or from frustration at the loss of the world they know. Nevertheless, the modern world fades as postmodernity and whatever ethos may come next emerges.

Postmodernity can be described in terms of a Conjunctive faith.⁵² This faith and temperament can be viewed as both practical but postmodern. That is, this faith is pragmatic like its predecessor yet is not a reductionism. Rather, Conjunctive faith is an inductive embrace of mystery and wonder. The Conjunctive see a world where not all the facts are in yet. More information always is coming in that needs to be taken into account; there is no urgency to solve this tension. In fact, there is a preference to remain in the tension. Here myth and story that were demythologized in the previous stage return with deeper power and meaning. Truth is understood as contextual and multidimensional.

⁵¹ Ibid., 172.

⁵² Ibid., 174-175.

There are many stories to tell and multiple understandings, as in the example of Holy Communion above.

Systems thinking here is a holistic multi-perspective commitment to pluralism. Systems thinking requires the capacity to conceptualize beyond mere linear cause and effect yet incorporates dynamic interdependency. At the same time the individual self-differentiates, there is a desire to work collaboratively and communally as hierarchies are leveled out. Rather than the expert-versus-novice arrangement, there is a preference for the round table and the sharing of power in seeing all persons as potential contributors.

As the name indicates, Conjunctive faith comes from the ability to hold together competing ideas.⁵³ Truth is better understood in story and context rather than through the abstract cognitive and empirical investigation. The emergence of postmodernity and Conjunctive faith means the loss of a single metanarrative defined by all in exactly the same way and confidence in the foundational structures. Those with this faith seek leaders, whom Fowler describes as “firm yet flexible,” who can be grounded in their own tradition yet make room for plurality and diversity.⁵⁴ In church communities, people in this stage favor collaboration and supporting groups who maintain their cause.

Between Stages 4 and 5, as well as Orthodox and Progressive temperaments, conflict will arise. Peck claims the way forward involves acceptance and celebrating differences.⁵⁵ Ultimately, the aim is to find a way forward. Peck contends that the higher the stage the more conscious and aware one has become.⁵⁶ Therein, one may find more

⁵³ Ibid., 177.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Peck, *The Different Drum*, 186.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

tolerance and diversity among a community operating with a more Conjunctive faith than one with an Individuative-Reflective faith, and therefore more tolerance among Stage 4 than Stage 3.

NUMC is a church with over eight hundred members and a variety of types of people. Sheer numbers would indicate a variety of faith stages present. However, there are three stages descriptive of most adults with some variation in the progression between men and women. NUMC as a congregation is a more conservative church as the Percept Reported suggests.⁵⁷ Traditional Christian values lean toward a more Orthodox belief. The challenge then is cultivating a Stage 5 community in this milieu. For the Joshua Tree to be able to thrive, there must be a certain level of tolerance and difference in the NUMC community. For this reason, a systems view of the congregation provides a much needed perspective.

Systems View of Congregation

Church congregations may be understood to function like family systems.⁵⁸ The Family Systems perspective views the family as an emotional unit rather than as individuals. Such line of thought is based on this premise: to understand the emotional process in relationship, the entire system must be explored. It is not possible to understand relationships in isolation.

Bowen, a psychiatrist by training, theorized that the family behaves similarly to natural systems; therefore, he grounded his approach on the same natural laws and

⁵⁷ See Chapter 1 of this discussion for details.

⁵⁸ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 195.

principles as Natural Systems theory.⁵⁹ Friedman took Bowenian Family Systems thinking and applied it not only to the family with whom he worked but also to church congregations and synagogues.⁶⁰ Friedman contended that the same framework used for family systems also could be applied to whole congregations. Family Systems thought, according to Friedman, has five basic core concepts: identified patient, homeostasis, differentiation of self, the extended family field, and emotional triangles.⁶¹ Important for this project is how they apply to religious congregations.

The identified patient (IP) is the person who has developed symptoms or in a community may be presenting the problems.⁶² From Systems theory, the locus of the real problem does not reside in the individual (or symptom) but in the system. In healthy family systems, the anxiety is shared by the whole. When the anxiety becomes isolated to one person and unable to be shared within the system, that person may become the IP. Although in fact the whole family participates in the symptomatology, the IP becomes the focus and the family's containing perspective of the problem.

The concept of homeostasis often is referred to as a force that seeks balance in the unit.⁶³ All systems, natural and social, seek balance. As the Joshua Tree grows within NUMC, the system will seek balance. Virginia Satir, known for her systemic experiential

⁵⁹ Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 3-6.

⁶⁰ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 195.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23.

marital therapy, uses the example of family as a mobile.⁶⁴ Thus, when the components of a mobile are altered, the family is affected. If any part of the system changes, there is a force that seeks balance. Homeostasis is a force that makes changing the system difficult.

Differentiation

While homeostasis is the force that seeks balance in the components, differentiation of self is the work and process of it. Bowen hypothesized the Scale of Differentiation. Friedman illustrates the scale in figure 1 below. The arrows illustrate how points C and D interrelate. When one member of the system attempts to become more differentiated, another member may seek to restore homeostasis. As family members seek to differentiate, the family can become more functional and healthy.

Differentiation of self must not be misunderstood as emotional cutoff from the family. Differentiation of self is when members stay in relationship to the system emotionally yet do not become entangled in emotional triangles. Emotional triangles are binding. True differentiation of self is emotional maturity, which is the ability to be oneself within the system without taking on the emotions of the system. Differentiation is dynamic. That is to say, one does not just become differentiated, but rather it is a work in process of negotiating each new situation.

⁶⁴ Virginia Satir, *Conjoint Family Therapy*, 3rd ed. (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1983), 71. John Bradshaw, *Bradshaw on the Family: A New Way of Creating Solid Self-Esteem*, rev. ed. (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1996), 31, also uses this mobile example.

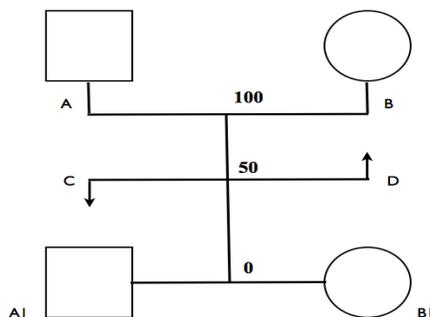


Figure 1. Friedman's Scale of Differentiation. Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, Guilford Family Therapy Series (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 28.

The scale represents a couple of both extreme of total differentiation and total undifferentiation. (For those unfamiliar with geneograms the male is the square and the female is the circle.) A higher level of differentiation in the family yields a higher emotional maturity in the individuals.⁶⁵ On Bowen's scale, the highest is "100." Most couples vary from "50" to lower on the scale. The scale is more a theoretical model, because no one really functions at the "100" level. Friedman says that a couple who was on the "100" level would be marked by "infinite elasticity" and possess an ability to move freely in and out of separateness and togetherness.⁶⁶

The extended family field is a larger frame for the family.⁶⁷ The family unit consists not just of those in the same household or parents and children. Rather, the unit is made of multiple generations. The family unit does not merely consist of family members present or even alive but those members from both the past and present, dead and living. Included in the extended family field are all the children, miscarriages, abortions, marriages

⁶⁵ Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 75.

⁶⁶ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 29.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

divorces, stepchildren, grandparents, and anyone else who has ever formed part of the family.

The final characteristic of Family Systems is the triangle. According to Bowen the triangle is the basic molecule of the family units.⁶⁸ The triangle is a description of the dynamic process of seeking homeostasis in the three-person system.⁶⁹ The basic influential factor on the triangle is anxiety. In times of low anxiety, the couple can remain relatively stable; however, when anxiety increases the couple seeks stability in a third person (or issue) to relieve the tension. Friedman states, “The basic law of emotional triangle is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with another, they will triangle in or couple upon a third person or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with another.”⁷⁰ This third person creates an emotional triangle. The three-person triangle has the ability to share and experience more tension than a two-person group, since the anxiety and tension are spread out.

Friedman identifies laws by which emotional triangles abide.⁷¹ Regarding the purpose of this project, it is important to note that a system reacts against attempts to change it and therefore seeks homeostasis. Moreover, “We can only change a relationship to which we belong.”⁷² The goal, therefore, is to be self-differentiated or self-defined within the system.

⁶⁸ Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 134.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁰ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 35.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 39.

Congregational Empowerment

Church congregations can be understood to operate like family systems.⁷³

Therein, borrowing from this Family Systems perspective brings a way to understand how church congregations are affected by and accept diversity. Plurality in a congregation may be threatening to the structure of the families. Friedman has argued that congregations operate similarly to families; and, like families, religious congregations allow for a certain amount of self-differentiation or self-definition. Therefore, the congregations who are less differentiated tend to be more homogenous, and congregations with greater differentiation are more diverse. As a result, plurality is intolerable and threatening to undifferentiated congregations.

When looking at the structure of family at NUMC, the level of differentiation must be high enough for the postmodern community to join as a church within a church. FD theory can be interpolated with stages as a lens for understanding the two religious communities, NUMC and the Joshua Tree. Each community consists of individuals who vary in some degree regarding their faith development. Moreover, individuals are attracted to communities that operate from the same stage of faith. In every community there is a normative stage of development, and there is an acceptable and tolerated level of differentiation. Fowler calls this norm “the modal level of development.”⁷⁴

Depending on the size of the congregation several stages may be represented; however, larger congregations will separate into subgroups that gather according to their

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 294.

members' needs, desires, and ways of meaning making. People whose faith functions cognitively and emotionally below the accepted modal levels often are respected less than those who measure up to the mode in knowledge, language, and behavior. There is a subtle pressure encouraging those persons to rise to the standard level of modality. Conversely, those persons who develop beyond the accepted modal level often are considered weird or eccentric; something is thought to be wrong with them. Occasionally, a community will look up to these persons as sages or prophets; however, frequently these persons are ostracized, even murdered for their threat to the community.

Spiritual Formation

The implications of Family Systems development and understanding are abundant. From the information presented in this chapter, several conclusions can be made. First, the people at NUMC gather in subgroups of similar faith development. Since NUMC was a church forged in modernity, the level of modality is likely to be Individuative-Reflective faith or rather the Individuating family. The community family overtly or covertly may pressure conformity with the group norm. Awareness of this dynamic may help leaders to keep it to a minimum.

Second, understanding that the Joshua Tree will be a different community from the start will require some training in diversity. Teaching the NUMC congregation to be inclusive is not the same as teaching them to celebrate diversity.⁷⁵ The hope is that NUMC will learn to celebrate the uniqueness in each of its ministries and subgroups.

⁷⁵ Charles R. Foster and Theodore Brelsford, *We Are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 113.

Third, the Joshua Tree seeks to be a Conjunctive faith community. This is evidenced in the way leadership is collaborative, mystery is embraced, and differences are empowered. There will be tension between distinct levels of modality of those with Individuative-Reflective faith and Conjunctive faith.

Fourth, the spiritual formation that takes place for the NUMC community and leaders will have to address the needs of the Individuated-Reflective faith and Individuating family. Deductive, concrete, linear reasoning is preferable to systemic thought. That is to say, when casting a vision in sharing the mission of the Joshua Tree, the vision can be shared in terms and language to which NUMC might be already be accustomed. The intention is not to have it end up as a political spin session; rather, its purpose is to remain mindful that there exist differences in the ways of construing meaning and faith, and this should be taken into account accordingly.

Fifth, spiritual formation for the Joshua Tree will consist of story. The stories of the individuals should be told. These will be the stories of the new community. Rather than abstract and doctrinally taught sermons, there needs to be room for experience and plurality by inviting other religions into the conversation in a respectful way and when able recognizing how and when the Church has been wrong. Formation consists of permission giving and freedom to explore as well as an encouragement to bless others. The Tree is a community of people who uphold the mysteries of faith and send people out as missionaries into their lives and interpreters of the Spirit, while seeking the *missio Dei* each moment. Spiritual formation for the Tree will take into consideration the empowerment of leaders, seeking to be co-creators, cultivating community, and tapping into that which is creative in the human spirit and offering it to God as worship.

To arrive to these conclusions regarding the spiritual formation of NUMC and the Joshua Tree, the structures of faith development were studied through the lens of FD theory and research. Family Systems thought was used as a vehicle to understand the local church as an emotional unit. What is important in a particular way for this project is that families and congregations seek a modal level of functioning and allow for a certain level of differentiation. For those outside the modal level, the system will attempt to convert them to be within a tolerable deviation. This will be a tension both NUMC and the Joshua Tree must be willing to embody and live through. Chapter 6 will begin sharing how the information presented thus far has been used in growing the Joshua Tree. It also will present a process for further cultivation of this emerging worshiping community.

PART THREE

STRATEGY

CHAPTER 6

A PROCESS FOR GROWING AN EMERGING WORSHIPING COMMUNITY

The Joshua Tree as a Missional and emerging church launched in Newburgh September 7, 2008. However, the planning and preparation for this new community to emerge was a two-year process. This chapter presents that process and the strategies used for creating and cultivating a fertile space at NUMC for this church within a church.¹ Therein, this chapter reviews a three-fold intervention process in education, formation, and transformation that was undergirded by Family Systems theory and Faith Development theory, as described earlier in this discussion. The aim was to prepare the NUMC congregation and its leadership for becoming an atmosphere where a postmodern emerging church could grow.

Preparing the Soil

The pre-strategy preparation began in 2006 when Rev. Dicken and a few key leaders—NUMC’s praise team leader, choir director, and the chair of the Council on Ministries—noticed the need for starting a third worship service and began

¹ It is important to note that with NUMC a strategy based in modernity was used in creating a space. However, Chapter 7 provides a description about growing the Joshua Tree community and how that process emerged. In working with NUMC, the strategy was top down. While working with the Joshua Tree, the process emerged through different methods for a distinctive ethos.

conversing about what it might look like.² Other than Rev. Dicken, at that time most NUMC leadership had little familiarity with postmodernity. However, as interest grew in the possibility of starting a new service, and before investing time and money in it, the leaders decided a task force was necessary to investigate the demographic data and explore its options.

In February 2007, the Joel Committee was assembled and commissioned by the NUMC's Church Administrative Counsel for visioning and planning.³ Rev. Dicken selected participants for the Joel Committee who demonstrated leadership excellence at church or in their profession. Among the members chosen were an international corporate executive, the dean of the University of Evansville's School of Business, seasoned school teachers and coaches, two teens who were active in the church, a former infantry logistics officer, a retired Newburgh mayor, and other accomplished business leaders. There were fourteen who initially committed to serve on the Joel Committee. The name for the task force was given by Rev. Dicken, who was inspired by Joel 2:28, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."⁴

The Joel Committee was given the task of "prayerfully and thoughtfully discerning God's vision for our church over the next 3-10 years in terms of, ministry, Mission, Staff, facilities, and share that vision with the church by December 31, 2007."⁵

² Rev. Dicken, interview by author, November 10, 2009.

³ Rev. Mark Dicken, letter to potential Joel Committee members, Newburgh United Methodist Church, Newburgh, IN, November 2006.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

In essence, the Joel Committee was to be a think tank for possibilities. The committee gathered and explored statistics from the Percept Report 2006 as well as the impending need for more seating in the existing services.⁶ For them, the question regarded starting a third worship service and anticipating whether the current growth patterns and trends would support it. In accord, the Joel Committee saw no need to duplicate the current two services, one that was traditional and the other that was blended-contemporary, in the new third service. Rev. Dicken was emphatic that the new service should not seek transfers from other churches but aim to make new disciples of Jesus Christ from people not currently attending any church.⁷ Therefore, in reviewing the projected demographic data as well as the church's mission,⁸ the Joel Committee saw there was a sufficient need and recommended moving forward with a new and distinctive style of worship service.

In response, Rev. Dicken explored various financial and staffing options. One possibility was to obtain grant money from a Lilly Endowment Renewal Program that resources both churches and pastors.⁹ With grant funds, Rev. Dicken believed he could investigate postmodernity learning for himself about how other churches were responding. The grant would help him study and visit other churches in the United States. However, as the grant opportunities were explored, another alternative surfaced: employing another pastor, trained in this area, who already had this experience and could

⁶ Percept, Inc., *Ministry Area Profile 2006*.

⁷ Rev. Dicken, interview by author, November 10, 2009.

⁸ "The mission of the church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." See United Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline*, pt. 5, sect. 1.

⁹ Lilly Endowment, Inc., "Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations," http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion_crp.html (accessed November 2009).

develop and lead the new service. The latter eventually was chosen. This is when I came on board, and the strategy contained within this project officially began.

Through the encouragement of Rev. Dicken, and the endorsement of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, NUMC decided to pursue hiring me in the fall of 2007 as the new pastor of emerging Ministries. Since the conference bishop must appoint ordained United Methodist clergy, the NUMC leadership solicited the Evansville district superintendent to request of the bishop¹⁰ and the cabinet to appoint me as an associate pastor at Newburgh. Bishop Mike Coyner and his cabinet were glad to empower this project at NUMC and appointed me to serve at NUMC starting immediately.

The financial investment of a new pastor as well as the challenge of going through the procedures for having an ordained pastor appointed to the church were evidence of NUMC leadership's commitment to this process. However, having pursued the idea of an additional service from a modernist mindset, this was not to say the leadership fully understood this new undertaking and the challenge of the shift of a postmodern ethos. Rev. Dicken was most aware of the risk to his charge and how this project could potentially impact NUMC.¹¹ Indeed, growing a church within a church easily could cause unhealthy division among the NUMC family. However, Rev. Dicken and I both believed in the possibility of the two to co-existing, each blessing the other and joining in the *missio Dei*. The contribution to the Kingdom as well as the process of helping NUMC become the Church in postmodernity made this endeavor worth the risk.

¹⁰ Until June 2008 the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church was separated between North and South Conference. Newburgh was in the South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church.

¹¹A "charge" is a United Methodist term for the church or churches a pastor has been appointed to lead.

Transitioning NUMC for Emergent Growth

My first task was to begin shaping a vision for a church within a church. I was concerned that the existing plan of merely starting a new third service for postmoderns was not a sufficient vision for the challenge ahead. Therein, in the fall of 2007 I had a series of conversations with Rev. Dicken,¹² sharing my vision for how this process might work. I described how an emerging church within a church framework was necessary. The concept of a church within a church would help create the physical and emotional space necessary for a new community. This differentiation from the beginning would help promote clear boundaries and health in the church family systems.¹³ The aim was to allow the emerging community emotional space to grow its own patterns of relating and ways of being without being a burden (or burdening) the existing NUMC. I explained that the concept of a church within a church was an attempt to distance the modern influence and allow room for the emergence of the postmodern ethos. Rev. Dicken affirmed this new vision. His only reservation was that the concept of a church within a church would need to be defined. This process of definition unfolded over time after dialogue with the emerging church, which ultimately came to be known as the Joshua Tree.

By the end of 2007, the project had evolved formally into developing a process for growing an additional worshipping community of postmoderns that exists in unity within the NUMC family. Rev. Dicken and the NUMC leaders affirmed this vision; and, framed in this new light, the project became a plan to grow an emerging church within a

¹² Rev. Dicken, interview with author, October – November 2007.

¹³ Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation*, 107-109; see also Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 30.

church rather than simply adding a new third service. The next step entailed helping the NUMC leaders define a new vision for success.

Defining Success

Definitions of success vary among cultures and time periods. A postmodern definition of success was needed for NUMC's present situation. Therefore, along with shaping the mission was the process of helping the NUMC leaders define success for this project. However, a new measure was necessary. McNeal states: "The missional church in North America needs to be measured in a completely different way from the metrics the traditional church has been using."¹⁴ At NUMC, this measure was a way of transitioning modern expectations toward a more postmodern aim. Although requiring some form of measurement, leaders began to realize the scorecard of effectiveness must change. A shift had to occur from internal measures to an external Kingdom focus.¹⁵ Furthermore, a description of success was important for the process, as it would serve not only as a guide but provide meaning and purpose for the work.

I implemented a concrete, strategic schema and methodology. What follows is a description of that schema. Further on in this chapter is the methodology. First, success was measured not so much in terms of numbers attending the Joshua Tree but from the growth in Kingdom contributions. Kingdom contributions, as described earlier, were the individual and community participating in the *missio Dei* in Newburgh. Success therefore was more than how many people attended but rather the number of missionaries and

¹⁴ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 67.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

hours of love and service the Joshua Tree sent out into Newburgh. Kingdom contributions were those acts of justice and mercy, prayer and service, arts and beautification in the area that occurred throughout the week.

Second, success was measured as the degree to which the leadership at the Joshua Tree became more collaborative than the traditional hierarchical structure. The process of growing a church within a church entails navigating much political and religious terrain. In the United Methodist Church, there is an order and manner in which things unfold. Stemming from the word “method,” the name “Methodist” should clarify this for any doubters. Indeed, there is an accepted hierarchy and order to which members of the denominational enclave adhere. The *United Methodist Book of Discipline* (UMBOD) is an impressive legislative history that dates back to the first General Rules of 1784. The United Methodist Church is a self-governing web whose connections share a common plan set forth in the *Book of Discipline*. The *Book of Discipline* shares the guidelines and expectations of laity and clergy as well as present understanding of Church. Although updated every four years, the *Discipline* holds the history, constitution, and doctrinal standards. Shared among all United Methodists is the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Therefore, the *Book of Discipline* sets forth the process and connection in which churches relate and support one another in this mission; essentially, it is “the Discipline.”

In this context and situation, hierarchy and order present both an opportunity and a challenge. The challenge was solving the problem for growing a church within this order and UMC Discipline in a way it would be liberated to become itself while holding loosely to the essentials and negotiating the non-essentials with the mother church. The

aim here was to help the Joshua Tree become less hierarchical but more collaborative. Therefore, success would be the degree to which the Joshua Tree demonstrated collaborative leadership within UMC parameters.

Third, and foremost, success was about growing a community of postmoderns that existed in unity with NUMC. Unity herein did not mean sharing methodology, belief, or culture. Unity was about supporting the other in God's mission. More than any other aspect, unity was a defining feature for the success of this project. This was an experiment in bringing together differing stages of faith and in an ethos-versus-ethos environment to see if they could stand together in unity seeking to participate in the *missio Dei*. That mission holds the two communities in agreement.

Nevertheless, the *missio Dei* and participating in it as the call of followers of Jesus, though the ultimate goal of the Joshua Tree, present a problem. Participation in the *missio Dei* is perhaps the most difficult measure. Gauging and assessing true participation in the *missio Dei*—the clearest acts of good will and charity, loving as Jesus loves (cf. John 13:34-35)—can be both subjective and elusive, at least from this side of heaven.

Change and Methodology in Preparing NUMC

As leaders began to develop an awareness of postmodernity, they also began to assess the Joshua Tree ministry through these new lenses. It was a process. Fortunately, the leadership and staff embraced this project and were able to affirm the mission. Indeed, after several months into the Joshua Tree project, Rev. Dicken said, "I have not placed the usual expectations of numeric growth upon the Joshua Tree. It is already larger

than most churches in Indiana.”¹⁶ Rev. Dicken had not given up numeric growth as an expectation; however, he had subordinated this expectation alongside a new understanding and measure. In this way, it appeared that the standard scorecard NUMC held indeed was changing.

Preparing NUMC to be differentiated enough to be both able and willing to accommodate the emerging growth required an intentional strategy. This process was not simple. Growing communities, one within another with competing stages of faith and tolerance, is thorny. Among the challenges named in the Introduction of this project were how to do ministry to and with postmoderns, both those who were already part of NUMC and those outside the community.

It was not a matter of attraction. Modern, traditional, and pragmatic approaches—such as adding trendy attraction-based worship services—have not demonstrated sufficient evidence of actually making disciples and gaining followers of Jesus who are people becoming participants in the mission of Christ in the world.¹⁷ The new community required the ability to discern the *missio Dei* through prayer and relationships with postmoderns. The methodology emerged from mission; NUMC needed to prepare itself for change.

Transitioning

Transitioning NUMC involved a dynamic process to employ education, formation, and transformation. This approach considered the theories of Family Systems

¹⁶ Rev. Dicken, interview with author, October, 6, 2009.

¹⁷ Kimball, *Emerging Worship*, 9.

and Faith Development, as discussed previously in this project. The aim was to transition NUMC with new information, community formation, and interventions to facilitate the transformation process.

The educational dynamic was the process of providing new information raising the awareness of both the existing church and its leadership about postmodern ethos. Education not only included ways of helping the NUMC become aware of the cultural shift occurring but also encompassed the reasons why a church within church was necessary. Educational components took the form of congregant communication strategies and teaching through sermons and monthly church newsletters. I began writing articles for the NUMC newsletter, as soon as I was hired in 2007. These articles were written for the purpose of not only providing general information about the Tree project but more so to encourage NUMC members to seek God's mission in a coming age and to remain a vital church.¹⁸ Later, beginning in February 2008, I sought ways to provide information through the Sunday school classes. I lectured in each adult Sunday school class as a guest teacher both casting a vision of the emerging church and seeking to plant a seed of interest.

The formational dynamic included the process of building the Joshua Tree leadership team.¹⁹ The church staff and the wider membership needed to be empowered to participate in the mission, if they so desired. However, the first formation of a leadership group started occurring with the NUMC staff in January 2008. This group included the youth minister, music ministry director, children's ministry pastor, and

¹⁸ See Appendix for a sample newsletter article from May 2008.

¹⁹ See Chapter 7 for details of this portion of the strategy.

education director. The staff was essential to the process and key to the transitioning process.

With respect to dealing with church staff, Cladis writes of the importance of eliminating competing cultures.²⁰ This key advice was almost ignored. Indeed, the failure to eliminate competing cultures could have been an obstacle in growing the new Joshua Tree community. Cladis contends that there is a need to know not only whom the new ministry will affect but who also sees a personal role and responsibility, however minor, to minister to the same population. For this reason, the plan included keeping the staff well-informed and included as much as possible.

The approach I took with the staff was that of a coach.²¹ That is, I came in not as the expert but rather as a facilitator. As I entered into the existing NUMC system, I spent much time listening and learning. The role of coach was about supporting the staff; helping the leaders to look at the data regarding postmodernity for themselves; and, in light of the evidence, allowing the data to inspire a desire to change. As a coach, I helped to clarify and instigate a conversation. The aim was that new information and dialogue would create an opportunity for change.

One of the challenges in educating the staff and other leaders was their familiarity with a contemporary style of worship. This knowledge did not aid the process. In fact, their prejudice for or against contemporary worship was an obstacle in truly hearing about this project and understanding it. People either were excited about a new contemporary service or irritated by it.

²⁰ Cladis, *Leading the Team-based Church*, 76.

²¹ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 255.

During a series of weekly meetings with staff, I led discussions about the challenges of ministry in postmodernity. Discussed also were logistical issues that might emerge in sharing time, space and resources with the Joshua Tree. I tried to remain a non-anxious presence and to focus on process, seeking consensus when it could be reached. This staff formation process continued for two months. Although no formal commitments were required of the staff, the meetings were completed in good cheer and seemed supportive of this project of growing a church within a church.

The transformational dynamic began in late 2007 and extended through the Joshua Tree's official launch in September 2008. Indeed, the NUMC is still transforming; however, during the time of preparation there were a few key emergent events. In Chapter 5 of this discussion, congregations were understood through the framework of Family Systems.²² In thinking about systems, transformation can be slow evolutions over time. However, this gradualism does not always offer the necessary impetus to overcome the system's homeostasis.²³ Homeostasis is the effort of the system always to seek stability and balance. Some system's interventions, therefore, in an effort to restructure the system actually will disrupt its homeostasis. Structural Family System theorist Salvador Minuchin contends that for change to occur in system, simple joining in the system does not promote change.²⁴ Rather, there is a restructuring and joining event that must occur. Minuchin states that change "cannot be performed without joining, but it will

²² See Chapter 5 of this ongoing discussion for details.

²³ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 23

²⁴ Salvador Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy* (Abington, UK: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 1999), 138 and 148. "Joining" is a term in family therapy described as an alliance or coalition with the system.

not be successful without restructuring.”²⁵ If there was to be emotional room for a church within a church, some restructuring was evident. Therein a few events were planned that were educational but also served as structural interventions.²⁶

One transitional event included the preaching series mentioned above, which took place in July and August of 2008. Rev. Dicken and I co-led a message series entitled “Back to Future,” to introduce the concept of the Joshua Tree as an emerging church to the general congregation.²⁷ I consider this a transitional event, a structural intervention, in that the messages reflected and taught on the modern Church in postmodernity. The message series caused visible concern. Although the educational preaching was a minor disruption, more resistance surfaced during this series than during the rest of the process. Most of the negative reaction did not focus on the project per se. One person commented to me that he felt the series a waste of his time. Another grumbled that he had come to hear the Gospel, and all he heard was about Church.²⁸ However, for most of the congregation, the series created a conversation about postmodernity and this strategic project of growing a church within a church. The congregation began focusing with new energy on this emerging ministry. Many began to wonder who they might know who could appreciate this fresh expression of church.

Deciding the day of the week for the Joshua Tree to meet, although not a transitional dynamic, was necessary in the process. Determining the day was a missional

²⁵ Ibid., 138.

²⁶ The additional benefit of these events tested the congregation’s resolve to be in relationship and ministry with those with a more postmodern consciousness.

²⁷ This title was inspired through thinking about the ancient -modern juxtaposition. See Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Evangelism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

²⁸ Congregants, interviews with author, Newburgh, IN, August 2008.

and pragmatic decision. Rev. Dicken and I inquired of the Joel Committee and others in the congregation who had a more postmodern mindset about when they thought postmoderns might attend a service. Days other than Sunday were discussed, such as Saturday evening or Wednesday gathering. The Percept Report only revealed that even the younger families in the Newburgh area had traditional religious values.²⁹ Had this project been creating a seeker-style of worship, Saturday may have been chosen. However, the Saturday seeker-service model does not really draw many postmoderns in this area.³⁰ All who suggested a Saturday evening service were Christians who either were looking for an alternative day other than Sunday for worship or who worked at church on Sunday.³¹

While serving in ministry in England, I observed that even non-churchgoers had a memory or perception of Church as a Sunday occurrence. They might not attend worship; but, in accord with the communal memory, Sunday was the day of religious gathering. I wondered if the same would be true of Newburgh. In thinking about how postmoderns might desire an ancient-contemporary experience, it made sense that having the Joshua Tree on a Sunday might add validity to the postmodern religious experience. For this reason, Sunday was chosen for the Joshua Tree experiment. The Sunday decision, however, created another dilemma: choosing a time that would avoid competition among existing NUMC services or activities. The issue of competition was mostly about shared

²⁹ Percept Report, *Religious Values*,

³⁰ Charles Arn, "Do's and Don't of Adding a Service," *Christianity Today*, under "Leading Outreach," <http://www.christianitytoday.com/outreach/articles/dosanddontsofaddingaservice.html> (accessed November 2009). This article was not part of the leadership discussion; however, it does note that that seeker styles of worship and alternative services often opt for Saturday.

³¹ Postmoderns, interview with author, Newburgh, IN, December 2007 – March 2008.

use of physical space and time commitments. Also, some of the Joshua Tree's initial leaders had other NUMC responsibilities.

Key to the transformation process was making room in the NUMC system for the emerging church. I searched for a way for the entire congregation to participate in making room for the new church within a church. The purpose was to involve the whole NUMC system in order to aid in the congregation's buy-in of the project and subsequently reduce sabotage.³²

One aspect of this project that related to the entire congregation was the Sunday morning schedule. Rev. Dicken and I polled the worship congregation, the Sunday school classes, and NUMC leadership regarding their preferences in Sunday morning schedule.³³ After weighing the options and opinions of those who shared, Rev. Dicken made the final decision to adjust the Sunday morning schedule by changing everything fifteen minutes. The 8:30 a.m. service moved to 8:15 a.m. while the 11:00 a.m. service shifted back to 10:45 a.m. Similarly the Sunday school hour, which fell between the two services, also was adjusted accordingly. Since the Sunday morning schedule was altered by fifteen minutes, it involved the entire congregation in the Joshua Tree project. As anticipated there was some negative feedback; change always comes with resistance in a system. However, remarkably the resistance was from a few who attended the first service and felt 8:15 a.m. was simply too early. However, there was no one reported as leaving the church due to this modification in the morning schedule. This fact suggested that generally NUMC was both supporting the new mission of growing a church within a

³² Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 223.

³³ The day was chosen first, but here is how this happened. In the end, choosing the day became a pragmatic consideration.

church and that there even was some flexibility in the system, something necessary for the growth process.

The third transitioning dynamic was the actual opening event on September 7, 2008. As new people began to make a home in the Joshua Tree community, the dynamics of NUMC began to change. The demographics at the Tree are more multicultural than NUMC. Essentially, the new arrivals stretch the identity and ethos of the mother church.

The Effects on NUMC

The NUMC congregation went through changes as a result of adding the Joshua Tree. This chapter has been about the preparatory strategy and process that altered the system and, to some degree, the NUMC leadership style. For example, one change came with Rev. Dicken, as he surrendered his master plan to allow for the Tree to emerge organically from the community that ultimately gathered. This shift helped NUMC leaders to step back and begin to let the process unfold. Indeed, once the Joshua Tree leadership team began forming, the leaders seem to trust the process and let go.

Regarding faith development and differences in ethos, NUMC now operates from a broader faith venue involving multi-stages. By adding the Joshua Tree, there is now room for people with a more Conjunctive faith and postmodern consciousness. However, adding the Joshua Tree also has added a level of tolerance in whole church. Although, there is minimal yet tolerable tension between the two communities due to distinctions in faith and consciousness, the fact is that it all could have been very different.

What binds these multi-ethos, bicultural congregations together is indeed mission and the will to participate in the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is larger than the ethos and

thereby allows those who would partake in it an ability to transcend their culture. The people that attend NUMC and the Tree might not normally mix, and they do not need to do so even in this set up; however, there is overlapping between the communities with a great deal of charity. The next step of living further into this ongoing strategy is to live existing as a church within a church over time. This involves indigenous leadership working together and guiding NUMC and the Joshua Tree into the future.

In Chapter 7, the focus will turn toward the formation of the Joshua Tree team, the naming of the Joshua Tree, the move toward collaborative leadership, the several months of preparing the team, and the general process for growing the emerging congregation. This section will outline the aim and time frame for team formation that includes building a community of interpreters. The aim is to collaborate in seeking the *missio Dei*. What emerged was a guideline for understanding church, worship, and mission in this Southern Indiana postmodern context. From the mission emerged the present worship style and structure that currently exists.

CHAPTER 7

THE PROCESS AND STRATEGY

Community—: it is a safe place to experiment with new types of behavior. When offered the opportunity of such a safe place, most people will naturally begin to experiment more deeply than ever with love and trust. They drop their customary defenses and threatened postures, the barriers of distrust, fear, resentment, and prejudices. They experiment with disarming themselves. The experiment with peace—peace within themselves and within the group . . . a personal experience so powerful . . . can become the driving force behind the quest.

—M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum*

The previous chapter discussed the process that was necessary for preparing and structuring NUMC in a way to make room for the Joshua Tree’s growth. In this chapter the focus turns from the mother church’s process toward the formation of the Joshua Tree and its leadership team, a work that began in February 2008. Discussed herein is the course of action taken to create a collaborative team that could form a postmodern environment where “true community” could emerge.¹ Explored is the methodology that was used in gathering the Joshua Tree leaders, growing their awareness of postmodernity, engineering true community, and creating a missional team. As the leaders completed the formation, they were charged with the responsibility of shaping the atmosphere and format for the noon-hour gathering. This charge included the naming of “the Joshua Tree.” The discussion below explains why that name was selected and what it has meant

¹ Peck, *The Different Drum*, 70. “True community” as defined by Peck.

to the leaders. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the Joshua Tree, measured against the expectations of the mother church and its own stated goals.

Growing the Structure of Joshua Tree's Leadership

Leadership of the Tree required a postmodern approach that was less hierarchical and more collaborative. Achieving this necessitated a different role for the pastors, each taking his place as more equal team members.² As important as is structuring the leadership polity, more so was the aim of joining in the *missio Dei*. Therefore, the work was forming a leadership community that had this ability. The team needed training not only in ministry with postmoderns but in spiritual discernment and true community making.

Becoming a true community was essential to the process. As the pastor of emerging Ministries at NUMC, I had the task of forming the leadership team for the Joshua Tree. Before entering the ordained ministry, I was trained and educated as a counselor working with families, particularly those with issues of chemical dependency. As a result, I had many professional and personal involvements with twelve-step programs and communities. This experience gave me a particular lens for understanding church in comparison with this style of transparent community. In my experience, twelve-step communities are often better models of "true community" (as defined in this project) than the church. Due to my research of the emerging church and missional

² UMC roles for the clergy are defined by United Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline*, para. 330-335. However, the structure of the Church from history always has been a lay movement. A clergy's role is to empower. Therefore, the role of the clergy at the Joshua Tree was not that different. Aside from Holy Communion, which can only be performed by an ordained UMC elder, the round table was not unusual.

church, and contemplating what church could look like for postmoderns, it occurred to me that the twelve-step communities offered both an example of a leaderless organization and a model for true community. Indeed, the ideology and methodology of the twelve-step programs provide a proven process for community building. The methodology includes a program of working the twelve steps, sharing in meetings, and obtaining a sponsor as a guide.³ The ideology allows for individuality in self-diagnosis, the “Higher Power” concept, and inclusive membership practice. Moreover, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are shared guidelines.⁴ The meetings are free.

Not only could AA be a model for church in postmodernity particularly,⁵ but it could be characterized as a non-hierarchical, leaderless, organization gathering for a missional purpose.⁶ Since AA groups often meet in churches, the environment naturally suggested a church within a church.⁷ In his book, *Organic Community*, postmodern leadership consultant Joseph R. Myers confirms this connection.⁸ He writes: “Yes, it has ‘Twelve Steps,’ but these steps are a descriptive pattern for sobriety. They describe a

³ Learn-About-Alcoholism.com, “12 Step Program of AA,” <http://www.learn-about-alcoholism.com/12-step-program-of-aa.html> (accessed November 2009).

⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous, “The Big Book Online,” http://www.aa.org/bigbookonline/en_appendice1.cfm (accessed November 2009).

⁵ Silkworth.net, “Timelines in AA History,” <http://silkworth.net/timelines/to1936.html> (accessed November 2009).

⁶ Brafman and Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider*, 37.

⁷ Akron Intergroup Council of Alcoholics Anonymous, <http://www.akronaa.org/> (accessed November 2009). Akron, Ohio was the birth place of AA. Browsing through the Akron AA’s schedule, one can how several churches are the place the group meets. This is not to say AA is affiliated with any church or religion. AA’s preamble prohibits this affiliation stating: “A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes,” according to Orange County Alcoholics Anonymous, “About AA 12 Steps and 12 Traditions,” <http://www.oc-aa.org/1212.htm> (accessed November 2009).

⁸ Myers, *Organic Community*, 141.

healthy life.”⁹ However, it was in Peck’s *The Different Drum*, who also references the AA community as true communities, where I found a description of how postmoderns might function to create a true community or at least the opportunity for this to emerge.¹⁰ Peck’s work additionally included his own version of stages of faith and development, which were similar but distinctive from Fowler’s.¹¹ Therefore, I felt Peck’s description of community would serve as a guide in the Joshua Tree leaders’ formation along with borrowing some of the group guidelines and ideology from twelve-step communities.

Peck identifies several characteristics that he considers to be attributes of a true community as well as the stages of community making.¹² He begins with differentiating true community from its common usage. Often community is defined generally as a people living in an area or who have common interest. These definitions distort what is most true about community.¹³ In fact, most regional groups share little in common with the characteristics of true community.¹⁴ Among these aspects, and best defined biblically, true community is inclusive—that is to say, there is a commitment among those to accept and embrace others.

For this reason, I wanted the Joshua Tree leadership team to inculcate values of inclusivity.¹⁵ Inclusivity is more than just an open mind but a way of being in

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Peck, *The Different Drum*, 78.

¹¹ Ibid., 187.

¹² Ibid., 86-106.

¹³ Ibid., 59.

¹⁴ Ibid., 61.

¹⁵ Ibid., 62.

relationship with others so that they feel not only included but that they belong and are wanted. Inclusivity, according to Peck, has two key components: commitment and consensus.¹⁶ There exists a freedom that allows differing ideas among those in the enclave while keeping solidarity. This means having a willingness to be present emotionally and physically for the agreed time period. Consensus is a discipline which places the community above the individual. Individualism can be the enemy of community in there is no space where the individual will submit to the group. The aim, however, is not simply to be different but to work together to transcend differences for a common end reached through consensus.

True communities are dedicated to reality. In seeking reality, they are committed to a soft individualism. That is to say, there is a spirit of humility and an atmosphere where there is a sense that each individual can share a personal or solitary perspective and be respected. Peck contends that true communities are able to tolerate multiple perspectives and stories in understanding the whole of a situation.¹⁷ The members of a true community are able to individually and collectively contemplate the world around them as well as their inner world.¹⁸ Therein, a true community is a safe place to share vulnerability and express one's humanity. Indeed, Peck describes true community as a "laboratory for personal disarmament," whereas members not only learn how to seek peace and the rules for this process but they learn to experience and express compassion

¹⁶ Peck, *The Different Drum*, 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

and respect for others.¹⁹ This is not to say those in true community never fight or disagree. Rather, a characteristic of true community is that it has learned to fight gracefully with respect for the other while seeking to resolve the conflict.²⁰ There is a commitment to struggle together and heal the wound rather than avoid it. This work is communal, because in a true community the whole group shares leadership. Thus, true community can be described as a leaderless group, a collaboration where the members make decisions and set a course of action.²¹ Together, there is a sense of collaboration and group spirit.

A true community shares in a spirit of truth, peace, love, wisdom, and power.²² There is an experience of something larger than itself. Peck believes that in true community it is the experience of the Holy Spirit that guides and directs. Those in true community indeed are willing to listen to the manifestation of a Higher Power's will, even as an outgrowth of the collective group. Achieving this kind of community is an aim participating in the *missio Dei* in that true community is an experience of the Kingdom. Consequently, the process of the Joshua Tree's leadership formation worked to achieve this end.

Gathering Leaders

In gathering leaders for the Joshua Tree the key issues involved determining who should be leaders and how they should be gathered. Since an emerging church it is not an

¹⁹ Ibid., 69.

²⁰ Ibid., 71.

²¹ Ibid., 72.

²² Ibid., 75.

attractional model looking for the best performer, there is no need to pursue the most skilled and talented leaders.²³ Attractional churches seek to draw people into the church building. However, an emerging church is missional; therefore, it is made up of people who are willing to participate in the mission. The mission and participation therein are what matters.

However, in this particular setting for a church within a church, there were some additional expectations for the leaders who formed the new community. The leaders needed to be the kind of people who could exist in unity with NUMC. Since this experiment was a church within a church, the leaders needed to model respect for the mother church. This did not mean the leaders needed to be members of NUMC or even agree with all the church doctrines. Nevertheless, for the sake of unity, it was important that the leaders not have a grievance against NUMC that would become divisive. At the same time, the leadership team needed to be able minister to and with postmoderns. This meant that they needed the capacity to be self-critical and as necessary able to critique the church. That is to say, they needed to have both the ability and maturity to offer and accept words of encouragement and exhortation without becoming angry and defensive or withdrawing from the group.

Furthermore, leaders needed to have a postmodern consciousness or a high interest in developing one. In Chapter 5, it was argued that Conjunctive faith (Stage 5) is comparable with the postmodern consciousness. Conjunctive faith is the first faith stage with the developmental capacity to fully affirm and tolerate differences without losing

²³ Sally Morgenthaler and George Cladis, "Leadership as a Co-Creation" (lectures, Fuller Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry, Denver, CO, February 18-22, 2008).

one's selfhood and identity or having the emotional need to heal and convert the other.²⁴ Thus, true community can form within an atmosphere at this level of tolerance and differentiation while still remaining committed to one another. Since the nature of the developmental stages, people gather together according to their own stage. Therein, every church has a modal level.²⁵ In forming the Joshua Tree's leadership team the expectation was that the new community needed to become a church characterized by Conjunctive faith—that is to say, the modal level of community's faith needed to be Stage 5. Those with Individual-Reflective faith or Mythic-Literal faith would find they were not content in being part of a Stage 5 community.²⁶ They either would leave or seek to change the community. Moreover, their ethos was more modern which would make their focus potentially regressive. Therefore, it was important to achieve Conjunctive faith as a modal level among the leaders.

The Leadership Formation Process

The question was how to gather a leadership team for the Joshua Tree that could form a postmodern consciousness, operate with Conjunctive faith, learn to work collaboratively, exist in unity with NUMC, and still remain inclusive. In gathering the team for a ministry of an emerging church within a church, there was no set formula for this process. I want to affirm the postmodern idea that each church grows in a unique ground with its own particular personalities and circumstances. The emerging church is

²⁴ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 294. For further discussion on stage modality, refer to Chapter 5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Chapter 5 for details regarding faith development and stages.

like Vidalia Onions in that it is a product of its geographical heritage.²⁷ Onions grown anywhere else are not Vidalia. The aim of this portion of the discussion is not to prescribe a plan for all emerging ministries but rather describe the particular process of building the Joshua Tree leadership team at NUMC in its Southern Indiana context and to analyze that process.

Healthy communications were the first step. In a church the size of NUMC, there were several possibilities for communicating a vision of the church within a church. Indeed at NUMC almost half of the worshiping congregation attended a Sunday school on any given Sunday.²⁸ This high average suggested an effective approach to share the vision in smaller, more intimate settings. During Sunday school I taught both the concept and process while extending an invitation to Joshua Tree leadership formation. As discussed in Chapter 6, one aim here was in educating the congregation about the concept of a church within a church; the other was in gathering those who might be interested to become leaders in the Joshua Tree.

This Sunday visioning process began in February 2008 and continued through April 2008. Since the pastors at NUMC do not normally teach Sunday school, I collaborated with the director of Christian Education, who sent emails to each of the Sunday school leaders requesting they schedule with me. Individually, each class made arrangements for me to come in as their pastor and guest teacher.

²⁷ Vidalia Onions, "Vidalia Onion History," <http://www.vidaliaonion.org/vidalia-onion-history.php> (accessed November 2009).

²⁸ South Indiana Conference, "Local Church Statistical Profile: Church School," <http://www.sicumc.org/oldsicumc/statistics/StatisticalReports/StatSummary.asp?church=03350&Years=10> (accessed November 2009).

The Sunday school vision-sharing plan was to spend two Sundays in each class to share and educate them about the new community. I chose to use a DVD resource by Tickle, where she brilliantly describes the current state of culture and the emerging church, which she calls the “Great Emergence.” Tickle’s DVD message was purchased at the 2007 National Youth Workers Conference on Evangelism in Atlanta.²⁹ Tickle’s video lecture provided a launching point to explore postmodernity and the purpose for a church within a church.³⁰ Indeed, anyone seventy-five years old such as she who is invited to speak at a youth workers conference commands a certain respect. Tickle was chosen for her insight as well as for her character, and her age helped to sway those of the white-haired generation as well—seeing one of “their own,” reared in modernism, advocating the concept. The function of this DVD was to cultivate a heart for the Joshua Tree mission.

For the first lesson, each Sunday school class watched and discussed Tickle’s lecture. The following Sunday, I answered questions and shared the vision. The challenge again was to help the NUMC members understand the reasoning for a fresh expression of the church. From each Sunday school class there were a few who became interested (or knew someone who might be) in learning more about the Joshua Tree project. Those who were interested were invited to an Information Night, which was a gathering for all inquiring about how they might be able to participate in this project.

Information Night was Wednesday May 7, 2008 and met in the NUMC’s newly built Life Center. There were sixteen people who attended a nearly two-hour meeting. I

²⁹ Phyllis Tickle, “The Great Emergence” (presentation at the National Youth Workers Conference on Evangelism, Atlanta, 2007), DVD gen. sess. #3.

³⁰ Ibid.

shared a vision for the new emerging church within a church and emphasized that this undertaking would be as challenging as foreign missions. The team's task, for those who chose to participate, would be to build a receptive environment for postmoderns and help form that community to participate in the *missio Dei*. After casting the project vision, the commitment to leadership was outlined as this: being educated about postmodernity, engaging in the work of creating a true community, and learning to plan and structure the weekly Joshua Tree events which they would be expected to attend. All together, fourteen agreed to covenant weekly on Wednesday evenings for a formation period of twelve weeks. This was a good size in that fourteen was a small enough group for intimate community yet large enough to encompass diverse experience and gifts. During the formation process, the team decided that as leaders they would commit to the Joshua Tree for at least six months after the launch to help insure continuity.

The process of gathering leaders was intended to be inclusive, in that whoever wanted to participate was welcome. That is to say, the leadership was not based on gifts, talents, or even politics; rather, it encompassed a calling defined by interest in committing to the mission. The leaders needed to be able and willing to commit to the formation process. In this way, the leaders would self-select based on interest and ability to commit. Those most interested found a way to adjust their schedules to complete the formation process. My theory was that these would be the persons most eager to experience a postmodern expression of Church. There were a few who dropped out during the process, as they discovered their passions for ministry lie elsewhere or because they were not able to negotiate the time for formations in their schedule. Those people were encouraged to participate in the Joshua Tree and move into leadership later as they

were able. However, it was important for the initial shaping of the Joshua Tree that the leaders commit to the formation process, as it was originally set forth.

The obvious shortcoming in the Sunday school leadership gathering process was that it did not include potential postmoderns outside NUMC. Indeed, it was imperative to gain the outsider's perspective. Still, including people outside the NUMC required more creative ways to connect. Initially, even though several were asked, only one from outside NUMC committed to the formation process and became a leader. Eventually, over the course of the first year, the Tree's leadership evolved to include a majority of non-NUMC adherents.

Spiritual Formation of the Joshua Tree's Leadership

The Joshua Tree's leadership was guided to be responsible for creating a certain kind of environment; therefore, the process of forming the team was to begin nurturing a true community among them. Only in so far as true community was achieved would they have this to offer to others. In order for true community to occur, the meetings for formation needed to be a safe place where leaders could be themselves and communicate honestly. To create this safe space, there were some guidelines in communication. I established these guidelines and borrowed from my background as a counselor. Using these guidelines, at first, I helped the group learn how to spot these community-stopping communications. As the group began to inculcate them as a natural part of relationship with one another, leaders started to learn caring ways to confront one another on breaches. This was part of sharing leadership and creating a safe place.

Regarding the group process, there were three basic guidelines: “Beware of TTQ,” “No Leading the Witness,” and “No Fixing.” Although these names seemed novel, the group quickly learned to apply them. For example, TTQ meant “True but Too Quick.”³¹ TTQ was a guideline to protect one another from offering pious quick-fix answers that shut down questioning, sometimes by shaming the questioner. A TTQ violation was a warning when a group member answered a complex question with a simplistic answer. For example, the cliché “live and let live” may be a TTQ when used for someone who is struggling with a rebellious teenager; or, when a person questioning whether Jesus is really the son of God, another quickly quotes the Bible saying, “God’s ways are not man’s ways.” Avoiding TTQ was a discipline that helped to keep the leaders working on humility and reminded them not to focus on solving problems but rather on learning to listen and to be present. TTQ was also a teaching point to aid the leader in being Conjunctive and embracing mystery rather than reducing or denying it.

“No Leading the Witness” was a phrase borrowed from the legal community; however, in this group it was used a bit differently. The term often is applied in a court of law when the questioning attorney is accused of causing the person being examined to answer in a certain manner.³² In small groups, leading the witness is that annoying characteristic one comes across sometimes in Bible studies, where the leader has some sort of answer book (overtly or covertly displayed) and all the questions are designed to

³¹ TTQ was a commonly used expression I picked up while in seminary at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, in Atlanta during the years 1993 through 1997. There I heard the term attributed to Stephen Gunter, who was the 1994-2004 Arthur J. Moore Associate Professor of Evangelism at Candler; however, extensive research has turned up no further original source for the term.

³² Defined literally, it is “a query that suggests to the witness how it is to be answered or puts words into the mouth of the witness to be merely repeated in his or her response,” according to *West’s Encyclopedia of American Law*, 2nd ed., s.v. “leading the witness.”

lead the participants to discover a singularly narrow answer. This kind of a discussion does not permit room for questioning and exploration. Therefore, it does not facilitate a Conjunctive environment. Instead, the Joshua Tree leaders were coached to become facilitators rather than to try to be experts.

The final guideline, “No Fixing,” may seem self-explanatory. However, this one proved to be difficult. The “No Fixing” guideline was a discipline in respecting people and their personal ability to solve a problem. Team members were not there to fix one another or solve theological issues for someone. Moreover, when an individual shared a personal story or a struggle, the leadership team was called to resist making that speaker a project and trying to fix the person. In creating a community where true community can emerge, it was important that the leaders not shut down the formational process in fixing one another. Peck contends that true community emerges after the group gives up the need to control or fix one another.³³ Indeed, only after that need is surrendered and given up can the experience of true community begin to emerge.

These guidelines were used to steer the group in beginning to learn and grow together in their discussions on modernity versus postmodernity, ecclesiology and theology, as well as in sharing personal experiences. They become tools in working together as a collaborative team to co-create the Joshua Tree as a community seeking to live out God’s mission. The guidelines were not a master plan. As an expert on organic community, Myers contends for the removal of a master plan in order for true community to emerge.³⁴ These were the guides to create a safe place for community to starting

³³ Peck, *The Different Drum*, 97.

³⁴ Myers, *Organic Community*, 23.

forming. From the beginning, this community sought to be team-based with the goal of being both led and governed by the Holy Spirit. This guide caused leaders to rethink their efforts in light of the aim to create a safe space for true community to emerge.³⁵

Education and Training

The formational process necessarily included educational components in order for the fourteen participants to embrace collaborative leadership. First, the Joshua Tree leaders needed to learn to become a community of interpreters. If the leaders were unable to discern God's guidance and mission, the Tree would flounder. Therefore, the peculiar term "God sightings" helped to hone this skill and ability among those who have the gift of discernment. This is a type of "semiotic moment." emerging church and postmodern guru, Leonard Sweet teaches about creating semiotic moments.³⁶ He identifies semiotics as "the study of signs and the art of making connections, seeing the relationships between apparently random signs and reading the meaning of those relationships."³⁷ Semiotic moments can be described as serendipitous events which may seem to appear to be coincidence. Increasing one's awareness of them is the art of spiritual discernment.

First on the agenda at each formation meeting was a time to share God sightings. All took turns describing how they had seen God in action that week. Sharing God sightings created opportunities to both bear witness of God and listen to others'

³⁵ Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 9.

³⁶ Leonard Sweet, "Semiotics and Future Studies of Doctor of Ministry," George Fox Evangelical Seminary, <http://www.georgefox.edu/seminary/dmin/sfs/index.html> (accessed November 2009).

³⁷ Leonard Sweet, "Leonard Sweet on Signs, Signals, Churches and the Current State of Starbucks," Explore Faith.org: Spiritual Guidance for Anyone Seeking a Path to God, http://www.explorefaith.org/faces/my_faith/leonard_sweet.php (accessed January 15, 2010).

experiences. This discipline helped raise the team's consciousness of God's work in the world. The concept of God sightings was contagious and spread beyond the leadership team. Indeed, other areas in NUMC began talking about God sightings and looking for God in action. This exercise helped many people become interpreters of the Spirit and to practice a discipline of praying without ceasing (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17), as they began to recognize God's personal involvement in their lives. Naming a God sighting was prayer in that it became like a public confession and thanks. God sighting became a favorite activity during the formation.

This portion of the Joshua Tree leadership's formation included education about differences in postmodernity and modernity. Reading aloud the Beloit College Mindset lists to the leaders was powerful introduction.³⁸ The Beloit Mindset lists are facts that contrast the differences between generations in an interesting but informative way. The lists helped open the leaders' minds to discuss the differences in a postmodern world. Also, some time was spent each week exploring Kimball's DVD series, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*.³⁹ The DVD painted a picture of the challenges to be faced in postmodernity for ministry. As the title suggests, in the series many of those interviewed share that they like approve of Jesus. Nevertheless, when the word "church" is mentioned, their responses are less than favorable. The interviews with postmoderns and their perspectives on the Church and Jesus for a few were difficult to accept in that they were scathing critiques of Christianity, as it has been practiced. However, most of the team had a more postmodern consciousness and felt affirmed by the stories.

³⁸ Beloit College, "Beloit College Mindset List," under "Beloit College Mindset List for the Class of 2012," <http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2012.php> (accessed November 2009).

³⁹ Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*. The DVD comes as part of the book.

More information was needed to help the group understand how some churches were forming and growing fresh expressions of faith and emerging congregations. *Expressions: The DVD 1—Stories of Church for a Changing Culture* provided some ideas and possibilities for fresh expression of faith.⁴⁰ What helped the most was a road trip to visit other churches that were seeking to do ministry with postmoderns.⁴¹ Visiting other churches allowed the group to see how fellow brothers and sisters were adapting to ministry in a postmodern world.

Prayer in the training process was both educational and practical. The educational aspects of prayer were experiential activities. The aim, aside from connecting with God and discerning His will, was to learn a variety of ways to experience God. Some forms of prayer were taken from Pagitt's book, *Body Prayers*.⁴² The group also experienced Lectio Divina and the art of contemplative prayer along with the discipline of praying the Divine Hours. The leaders were exposed to both the Roman Catholic resources and Tickle's modern version of the ancient office of Divine Hours.⁴³ This form of prayer was used on the first meeting and occasionally later at the Tree. The formations were closed in the traditional manner of thanking God and asking for His protection and guidance. The closing prayers were sometimes shared among the leaders, as most were comfortable

⁴⁰ Fresh Expressions, *Expressions: The DVD 1—Stories of Church for a Changing Culture* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006).

⁴¹ These included those visits to The Garden, Ginghamburg Church, and others mentioned in Chapter 3 of this paper.

⁴² Doug Pagitt, *Body Prayer* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbook Press, 2005).

⁴³ The Works of Phyllis Tickle, "Books," http://www.phyllistickle.com/book_dh_fall.html (accessed January 14, 2010) contains an informative synopsis of her approach as well as details regarding this resource: Phyllis Tickle, *The Divine Hours* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

with praying aloud. Intercessory prayer was used as specific requests were made by asking people to remember a person or situation in their prayers.

Theological education was essential in the leaders' formation. One resource used was an online interview with Bishop Wright regarding heaven.⁴⁴ His concept of "life after life after death" was introduced and discussed. Bishop Wright's teachings proved important, as there prevail deep influences of rapture and left-behind theology in this region.⁴⁵ Although such thought about the rapture is not Wesleyan, it is a rival fundamentalist theology in Southern Indiana; therefore, it was vital for the leaders to understand that the aim at the Tree was not a focus on the end times but rather participation in the *missio Dei*.

At the Joshua Tree, rather than seeking to gain converts to believe the right things about Jesus, or making a decision, the emphasis was to share the *missio Dei*. Therein for this process I chose a lecture-style method of teaching, incorporating video, with open-ended discussion. The discussion lead to ideas about how to be in mission and participate in acts of love, justice, mercy, kindness, and thus all the fruit of the Spirit that sum up the Christian life (Galatians 5:22-23). As stated in Chapter 4, the aim is to be "little Christs" that participate in God's plan for transformation of the world and not to focus on leaving it.

⁴⁴ *ABC Video Podcasts*, "Tom Wright on Heaven," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AA0NLb0pXGI> (accessed November 2009).

⁴⁵ The term "left behind" refers to the Left Behind book series penned by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Left Behind Series, <http://www.leftbehind.com/> (accessed December 2009).

Naming the Joshua Tree

In Chapter 6, the process for cultivating NUMC for the growth of the new emerging church is presented. However, one distinction that needed to be made during that cultivation was a way for the new community to identify and recognize itself as a congregation. Thus, the leaders needed to name the new emerging church. This work of naming was a task exclusive to the leaders of the new formation team, as the general NUMC leadership was not part of this process.

The Joshua Tree's name was selected during a leadership formation meeting in May 2008. First the team brainstormed possibilities, and from several suggestions the list was narrowed. There was no vote; rather, by a process of seeking consensus after discussing the merits of each potential name, the Joshua Tree was chosen. The Joshua Tree name was rich with layers and meaning and metaphor that appealed to the group.

What made this name meaningful was how it continued to encourage people to discover new ways of connecting to the Joshua Tree imagery. For example, the leaders discussed how the Joshua Tree has a missional resemblance to that scruffy tree (actually yuccas),⁴⁶ by the same name that grows in the deserts of California. Joshua trees have the ability to survive in more remote areas and under harsher climate conditions.

Postmodernity is a difficult culture for the church in which to thrive, yet a fresh experience can spring up. Second, Joshua is the ancient Hebrew name for Jesus; in Aramaic, Jesus' name would have been spoken as Yeshua.⁴⁷ A third reason was deeper and more

⁴⁶ Desert USA, "Joshua Tree," http://www.desertusa.com/jtree/josh_month.html (accessed December 2009).

⁴⁷ From the Hebrew (Yasa) or Aramaic (Yeshua), according to *Harper Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 1860; see also Biblos, <http://refbible.com/j/jesus.htm> (accessed November 2009), s.v. "Jesus."

theological. Here the imagery is also about the Tree. In the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, there was the Tree of Life. Later in Romans, the apostle Paul compares the first Adam who brought sin into the world and humanity, in contrast with the second Adam that is Jesus who restores it (Romans 5:12-19). Carrying this imagery further, the first Adam was banished from the Tree of Life in Eden, whereas the new Adam in the form of Yeshua in the Tree of Life is again available.

The more the group contemplated the Joshua Tree imagery, the greater the theological connection grew and deepened in personal meaning for participants. The connection also was made with John 15, where Jesus describes Himself as the vine and His disciples as the branches. In this metaphor, productivity is connected irreducibly to Jesus for “apart from him you can do nothing.” Additionally, the U2 the rock band, which is perhaps one of the most successful postmodern bands of this era, has an album by the name of *The Joshua Tree*.⁴⁸ All of these aspects mentioned encouraged the leaders in their choice.

Preparing for the Joshua Tree Weekly Event

The Joshua Tree leadership team was charged with the responsibility of preparing a structure for the Sunday noon events. Throughout the formational process I emphasized to both the NUMC leaders and the Joshua Tree team that “emerging” meant “evolutionary,” and therefore they needed to expect change. Understanding this was a trial-and-error process, but it helped the team become decisive. Indeed, the tentative

⁴⁸ U2, *The Joshua Tree*, CD, Windmill Lane Studios, 1987.

nature helped them to know that their decisions were not eternal or necessarily for even more than a week.

In helping the Joshua Team plan worship, there were several resources used. Kimball's *Emerging Worship* provided a discussion tool for looking at different formats for emerging churches. The team was able to gain ideas from Kimball's book as a lens for understanding the churches visited. As described in Chapter 3, the road trips during which the team visited several churches regionally were discussed. Both the field experience and *emerging worship* helped the leaders being forming an overall vision for the Joshua Tree. The task often took the form of comparing and contrasting the missional church and emerging church over and against attractional contemporary worship. Thinking about church in this way helped the team formulate a vision.

During this process, I also shared with the team my experience of starting a church within a church at Peterlee Memorial Church in Peterlee, County Durham, United Kingdom in January 2006. Indeed, that experience of forming the Café Church at Peterlee was formative for the Joshua Tree. My agenda was to help shape the team's understanding and planning to have a missional end. The hope was that by experiencing how other churches were responding to postmodernity, the leaders would not simply replicate others but dream bigger and begin to embody the intention of *missio Dei*.

Since the Joshua Tree would meet in the NUMC Life Center, the leaders had to determine how to use the space. The Life Center was a new facility opening in late 2008 that included a stage, gym, classrooms, kitchenette, showers as well as an elevator to the main floor. The Life Center was versatile enough to house multiple activities. Seating would not be a problem, because the space was the size of a basketball court. However, to

transform the Life Center into a coffeehouse atmosphere required the use of two portable room dividers, eight by twenty-four feet, which were purchased to enclose the space and to make it more intimate. Seven floor lamps were purchased as well as a variety of candles as alternative lighting to the gym's florescent bulbs. Portable round tables that could seat eight were part of the set-up as well. The addition of floor lamps and candles transformed the atmosphere into a pleasant room in which to drink coffee and visit.

On the stage was a multimedia system with three new electric roll-down screens to supplement the band and presenter. The stage sound system and lighting provided the possibility that a variety of musicians could play their original music at the Tree. The leaders discussed the option of having a center area where a band could play in-the-round; however, the current sound system did not support this idea. In thinking about the stage and music, the leadership pondered their uses. At a contemporary praise and worship gathering, music is central. However, the leaders were asked to re-imagine this event and how they envisioned the role of music at the Joshua Tree. The leadership pondered whether the music should be live or prerecorded, contemporary or exotic and foreign, or whether music was even necessary at the Joshua Tree. The consensus was that music was necessary and what would be most suitable would be songs sung and written by local artists. A praise and worship time was not going to happen at the Tree. However, there was a fond agreement among the leaders for live special music.

One of the forming leaders for the Joshua Tree was the NUMC praise band director. His interest for this Joshua Tree ministry helped to guide and shape the musical selection and format. He was open to the idea of praise music not being a staple for the Tree and the idea of local musical artists performing original compositions. Due to his

talent, experience in leading music and bands, and his connection to musicians, his opinion carried great weight. Early in the Joshua Tree formational process, the team defaulted and had this person oversee music. For this reason, the Joshua Tree music leader built the band and oversaw music at the Tree. The music did not always need to be Christian but was selected according to the event theme. Although the lyrics were projected on the media screen, no one was expected to sing along.

The atmosphere for the Joshua Tree event embodied a coffeehouse atmosphere, because this venue was a format that felt friendly and comfortable. Moreover, the coffee culture brought with it a postmodern atmosphere. Springing from this genre, one leader who is an artist designed Joshua Tree coffee mugs. Another placed the design on a banner. A contract was made with a local gourmet coffee roaster. Thus, leaders collaborated on the penultimate goal of creating an informal coffeehouse ambiance with local live music.

What kept the Tree from being a Gen X style of worship was not so much the coffeehouse atmosphere but rather the ideology and mission. In contrast to Gen X worship, which is an attractional promotional effort to grow the Kingdom by growing the church, the Joshua Tree leaders created a space where experience, teaching, arts, and music were for the aim of empowering Kingdom contributions in community. In a lecture entitled “On Art and Mission,” Bishop Wright says, “Our task in the present is to implement the achievement of Jesus and thereby anticipate that final coming together. How are we going to do that? We are going to have to do that through politics, but we

also got to do in through arts . . . dance, music, playwriting.”⁴⁹ Bishop Wright rests this statement on the belief that acts of arts, poetry, music, love and kindness can be a contribution to the coming Kingdom of God. Jesus said it this way, “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!”(Matthew 25:40). In a sense, the hope of the Joshua Tree was be an event that was like “oxygen for the soul,”⁵⁰ inspiring creative missionaries in the *missio Dei*.

A noon start time came embedded with a need to serve food. During its road excursion to Crossroads in Cincinnati, the leadership experienced free food and beverages as an act hospitality.⁵¹ The leadership decided that similar hospitality needed to be offered at the Tree. Consequently, a high quality of food and beverage were encouraged. When the local coffee roaster was sought, a Starbucks-quality or higher level of flavor was expected. Generic soft drinks were discouraged. A variety of teas, fruits, and homemade pastries became available each week at a self-serve buffet. Hospitality fulfilled the missional objective as being an experience of grace. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Wesleyan concept of prevenient grace blesses before the recipient of that grace fully understands what it means. The spread of high-quality beverage and free food became the Tree’s expression of this grace.

Although the themes and activities change weekly, the Joshua Tree events have been framed in a similar pattern to create a necessary sense of predictability and security.

⁴⁹ N. T. Wright, “On Art And Mission,” Danwilt, <http://www.danwilt.com/nt-wright-on-art-and-mission-sacramental-theology/> (accessed January 14, 2010).

⁵⁰ Doctor of Ministry, “Fire for Your Ministry, Oxygen for Your Soul,” Fuller Theological Seminary, <http://www.fuller.edu/academics/school-of-theology/dmin/dmin.aspx> (accessed November 2009).

⁵¹ See Chapter 3 for details regarding the leadership team’s field research.

The noon events open with a volunteer reading the welcome message, and the time ends with Holy Communion. Although these activities vary, they provide a frame of comfort for regular attendees and newcomers, a signal for people to settle in and find their seat. During the gathering time the media screen projects a welcome message with some interesting graphic. The welcome person, who is chosen spontaneously among regular attendees, reads this opening liturgy each Sunday, adding the flavor and feel of a twelve-step meeting:

Welcome to the Joshua Tree. We are glad you are here.

The Joshua Tree is a community within Newburgh United Methodist Church. We are distinctively Christian, yet believe God is larger than our theology and tradition. Our goal is to share in the Kingdom of God in our time and place.

*“Whatever you thoughts on church
Whatever you beliefs on God,
You are welcome”⁵² at the Joshua Tree.
May you discover God now.*

This is a coffeehouse environment, so feel free during the hour to get up, refill your beverage and grab another snack, and make yourself comfortable. Relax and enjoy yourself.

Our theme today is: _____

The welcome reading often has been followed by the band or individual playing one or two songs prepared specifically for the theme (or not). Following, sometimes there is a more liturgical meditative prayer, or a movie clip, or a teaching or a personal testimony. Most of the activities are intermingled with time for the attendees to participate in a discussion at their table or among the whole group. There often is an opportunity to

⁵² This portion is borrowed from Crossroad’s approach to postmodern ministry, as shown in Crossroads Cincinnati Community Church, <http://www.crossroads.net/> (accessed November 2009).

participate through art, writing, sharing, or some experiential activity. Each week the event ends with Holy Communion as a time of sending the Joshua Tree as missionaries into Newburgh offering their lives. This has been a practice that connects the Joshua Tree with both the ancient and the modern Church. The time together ends with announcements.

The Tree's concept of tithes and financial offering was chosen, because many postmoderns are skeptical about the church collecting money, especially those who do not attend regularly.⁵³ A financial offering never is collected formally, but a basket is placed at the side of the room along the wall where people can contribute at will. That location was chosen away from the entrance and exit doors, so it is not central or confronting. Shared each week is the information that 100 percent of money gathered from collections is sent to missional needs. None of the offering goes to NUMC administration. In this way, its location and the words spoken about it are clearly an intentional effort to minimize the perception that the church seeks money from those who attend. The Tree as a whole community regularly decides through consensus where the money is sent.

Method of Assessment

A particular challenge has been to apply a method of assessment to the Joshua Tree as a Missional church within a church. The original thinking was to submit the Joshua Tree community to the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey to identify the

⁵³ Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*, 80.

strengths and weaknesses of the church.⁵⁴ Natural Church Development has been tried and tested to actually indicate the health of the church and focuses on improving weakness. However, in this context there were a few problems. To begin, the assessment of this project was not just about the Joshua Tree as a church but also about the relational dynamics of the mother church and the Tree project. Indeed, the thesis statement of this endeavor affirms that this project was about developing a framework for growing an additional worshipping community of postmoderns that exists in unity within the NUMC family and that seeks to jointly participate in the *missio Dei* of their joint Southern Indiana context. Therein, measuring the level of unity had to be part of the assessment. Moreover, this project was about growing a community of postmoderns. The Natural Church Development survey does not have the capacity to measure this aspect of the Joshua Tree. Finally, the process was about participating in the *missio Dei*, which also extends beyond the specific focus of the traditional NCD survey. Assessment needed to include an additional discussion that can measure both the depth and breadth of this factor. Each of these aspects has presented a challenge to evaluating the Joshua Tree project.

In dialogue with Rev. Dicken and some of the NUMC leadership, it was decided that particularly in the first year the Joshua Tree project required a method of evaluation that could assess both NUMC, its relationship to the Tree, and the Tree as a postmodern expression of church. A postmodern methodology was felt to be best for the latter. Therefore, Robert Schnase's *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* was selected as the

⁵⁴ Natural Church Development, <http://www.ncd-international.org/public/index.html> (accessed November 2009).

way for the Joshua Tree to assess itself.⁵⁵ Schnase’s approach offers a way to apply a method that emerges from a postmodern ethos, in that the assessment does not start with a grand narrative but rather emerges from particular activities the church actually does which the assessors see as important. Indeed, it is a ground-up methodology. The practices described by Schnase paint the picture of healthy, thriving, and vibrant congregations. Although the practices are similar to the descriptions of a health church in Natural Church Development theory, the methodology of assessment differs.⁵⁶

Schnase’s research shows that healthy churches have certain fruitful practices that he lists as “Radical Hospitality,” “Passionate Worship,” “Intentional Faith Development,” “Risk-Taking Mission and Service” and “Extravagant Generosity.” Each will be defined and sourced below. Against these measures, leaders hold up the five practices like a mirror and ask accordingly how their community is doing. Schnase argues these practices “not only describe the congregational activities through which God uses to draw people into relationship, they also chart a path for growth.”⁵⁷ Therein, by describing what was happening at the Tree in relationship to the five practices the leaders then could self-evaluate the progress and growth potential of the community.

In August 2009, NUMC participated in this self-assessment and compared its strengths and weaknesses. NUMC ranked its strengths as Radical Hospitality and its

⁵⁵ Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007). Schnase’s congregational assessment resource currently is used not only by the church cluster to which NUMC belongs—Blue Grass UMC, Santa Clause UMC, Jasper UMC, and Turning Point UMC—but others extending throughout Indiana and other UM conferences such as the Missouri UM Annual Conference. For more information, see also *Five Fruitful Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, <http://www.fivepractices.org/> (accessed November 2009).

⁵⁶ Natural Church Development key factors are “Leadership,” “Ministry,” “Spirituality,” “Structures,” “Worship Service,” “Small Groups,” “Evangelism,” and “Relationships,” according to see Natural Church Development, “NCD Survey and Coaching,” <http://www.ncd-international.org/public/profiles.html> (accessed November 2009).

weakness in Risk-Taking Missions and Service. The Joshua Tree began its evaluation in October 2009. By October 2009 the leadership had evolved to include non-NUMC people who were participating regularly in this ministry. In their evaluation, they assessed the Joshua Tree's strength to be Passionate Worship; most improvement was needed in Extravagant Generosity. Below is a discussion regarding what these conclusions mean and how leaders arrived to them.

Radical Hospitality

The first of the five practices advocated by Schnase is called Radical Hospitality (RH). Radical Hospitality is a fruit springing from love of God and one another. It is encapsulated well in Romans 15:7, which states: "We welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." According to Schnase, hospitality is "the active desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the enduring richness of life in Christ."⁵⁸ NUMC assessed its highest strengths to be Radical Hospitality. NUMC's hospitality has been evidenced in allowing the growth of this church within a church as well as funding this ministry, including the weekly provision of food and beverages.

The Joshua Tree leaders also felt RH was one of its strengths. Early in the Joshua Tree's growth process, the leaders learned to practice RH by learning to be welcoming to guests and visitors. To teach the need for this, I reminded the team how threatening it

⁵⁷ Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregation*, 8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

may be for a new person to participate in a new group.⁵⁹ There were weekly activities that stretched the leaders' boundaries in order to be more hospitable. From the start the leaders were encouraged not to sit together. The phrase "no clumping" became a warning for leaders, which they used to self-monitor and to call one another into radical hospitality. There were a few introverted leaders who found this practice very difficult. However, the "no clumping" guideline helped to remind them to extend themselves little by little beyond their comfort zone in this particular area.

Those who attended the Joshua Tree were invited to practice RH as a spiritual discipline and an act of love not just for the Sunday community event but as a practice for all week. Indeed, RH was a solid way to bless the world in Christ's name. The leaders learned this during the formations when they were sent out two by two. There were four pairs in all who went out to bless others, echoing Jesus' sending of His disciples in twos (cf. Mark 6:6-8). Pairs went out into Newburgh carrying groceries, paying patrons' bills at the Donut Bank, and giving away twenty-dollar gas cards. All the groups were encouraged to tell those they blessed, "I just wanted to make your day better. God loves you." The groups were encouraged not to share about the Joshua Tree unless pressed. The main purpose was not about bringing people in but extending God's blessing.

As the Tree has grown, one area where it has been hard to continue RH is from the welcome door to the buffet. Often there are enough people occupying that in-between space, but for someone new the next step might be confusing. Once people fill their plate

⁵⁹ While I was serving in ministry in England, there came to me a young couple who wished to have their child baptized. Part of the process for baptism was joining in the Sunday night Café Church discussions. When the young man entered the room he was shaking from being so nervousness. As he calmed down, he was able to share his fear of coming into a church.

and coffee they are not always sure how to proceed. The traditional remedy would have been to have greeters available; however, the leadership felt that too manipulative. The preferred option has been to continue to raise awareness among leaders and repeat attendees regarding RH. A sign ministry could be a next option to try. For example, at the beverage and food center a sign could say, “We invite you to eat, and meet someone new!” However, this is an issue leaders still are deciding how to resolve. Over past months, leaders have become better at welcoming those who are new. A few have spiritual gifts in this aptitude and have been taking the lead of welcoming and guiding people.

Passionate Worship

The next practice of fruitful congregation is Passionate Worship (PW). The measure of Passionate Worship is falling in love with God and being renewed and empowered for mission, as evidenced by these acts of love emerging from such events. This project has argued that worship and mission are inseparable. As discussed in the second and third parts of this project, the experience of God is a happening and event. Followers of Jesus prepare for that event, and from it they are empowered to live as God’s people.

The Joshua Tree leaders after one year assessed their greatest strength to be Passionate Worship. Perhaps this is due to the Tree’s experiential, multi-sensory participatory nature. However, it was the shared stories of ways people have encountered God and participated in the *missio Dei* which are concrete evidence in Passionate Worship. After she started attending the Tree, one lady said she has had a renewed creativity that had been dormant. Now she is drawing again for the first time in years.

Another said that after the Spiritual Festival (September 2009) she realized she had experienced a yearning for something like this for years and finally was encountering it.⁶⁰ The Spiritual Festival was a multi-station experiential event where stations such as a sandbox for play and mediation, massage therapy, Holy Communion, intercessory prayer, and confession booth were among the offerings. A harpist played in the background providing a soothing atmosphere against conversation while the melodious bong of a bass cleft hand bell cued transition between stations. It was from this experiential form of worship rather than dialectic sermonizing she most appreciated as Passionate Worship.

Intentional Faith Development

Intentional Faith Development (IFD) is a practice of fruitful congregations. There are some ways that the Tree offers activities to grow in knowledge of God. As has been argued, the Tree needed to offer the experience of Conjunctive faith—that is to say, a place where mystery and experience are important keys. Although many topics are discussed, deeper questioning requires more commitment and time. As a result, the Doubters' Club was started as an act of IFD. The Doubter's Club started meeting on Wednesday evenings as part of NUMC family programming.⁶¹ From the Joshua Tree, the Doubters' Club had six to ten participants. The original intent was to be a place for questioning. Over time this has evolved into a Bible study.

One of the advantages of being a church within a church is the use and availability of current NUMC programs to plug in for deeper exploration of faith in Christ. These

⁶⁰ Attendees of the Joshua Tree, interview with author, Newburgh, IN, September 2009.

intentional faith development programs on Wednesday have led some to begin attending one of the other two services available. In other words, once in the door and welcomed at the Joshua Tree, these attendees have become brave enough to try other programs offered by NUMC. Although this is not the specific aim of the Joshua Tree, it is fruitful in providing another door for people to connect further to Christ and others within His Body.

Risk-Taking Mission and Service

A fourth practice of fruitful congregation is Risk-Taking Mission and Service (RTMS). RTMS are activities that cost something; they include sacrifices and the possibility of danger. The twelve disciples of Jesus participated in RTMS when He sent them out to evangelize with only the power of God (Luke 9:3). NUMC leaders evaluated their RTMS as its greatest weakness. NUMC may not have felt the Joshua Tree was a risk-taking mission, such as crossing the seas to Malaysia. Nevertheless, the Joshua Tree embodies that same missional edge and intent. Over and against the urge to bring people in, the Joshua Tree's predominant activity is to send followers of Jesus out into the world of Newburgh and to be agents for the King. Living for Christ is risky. The way that the Joshua Tree is indeed a risk-taking venture has been its Conjunctive faith and how it permits mystery. The missional activities outside the church were outside some personal comfort zones.

For example, one endeavor that incorporated RTMS as well as RH was in giving away fifty Thanksgiving turkeys (November 2008). "Turkeys Away" was the theme for

⁶¹ On Wednesday evenings at NUMC there are activities for all ages along with many adult classes ranging from Disciple Bible Study, Financial Planning, Marriage Enrichment, to Choir and Bells. The evening begins with a catered meal.

giving each family at the Tree a turkey with the commission to go find someone to bless with a free turkey or to keep it as a blessing.⁶² Remaining turkeys were given away from the street corner to cars passing by. Also, once a month the Joshua Tree has sought to participate in a corporate community-blessing RTMS endeavor. Some of these outings have included a prayer walk, riverside clean up, Race-for-Cure,⁶³ and roofing a homebound woman's house.

Extravagant Generosity

The fifth practice of fruitful congregations is Extravagant Generosity (EG). The people at the Joshua Tree are generous. They are particularly generous in giving of their time and service. However, this was self-assessed by the Joshua Tree leaders as an area of desired growth. After one year, the Joshua Tree is not self-supporting and financially still is underwritten by NUMC. Although being self-supporting is not a primary aim, the Tree would like to fund more of its mission.

Money is such a sensitive topic with church visitors who have the preconception of the misuse of church funds on the part of pastors, evangelists, or committees. Therefore, at some point in the noon event participants in the Joshua Tree are made specifically aware that all the money collected from the Joshua Tree is spent on local missions. That is, any money collected does not go to the United Methodist Church or

⁶² This event was inspired by a television episode of *WKRP in Cincinnati*, "Turkeys Away," season 1, episode 7, October 30, 1978, The Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0742671/> (accessed November 2009).

⁶³ Susan G. Komen for the Cure: Greater Evansville, "Calendar of Events: September," <http://www.komenevansville.org/Calendar/MonthView.asp?Viewdate=09/01/2009> (accessed January 15, 2010).

even to NUMC; it all goes for local missional aid. So far, the Joshua Tree has contributed to several families' water or housing payments. Nevertheless, the pool of fiscal resources is not very deep. Economically, the Joshua Tree does not represent the same demographic as NUMC, as its average income is less. However, those who attend are more willing to support specific local needs, particularly those belonging to people they know. Therefore, improvement in EG can be made as more of those missions emerge from the group.

Evaluation

The assessment of NUMC and the Joshua Tree were based on what the churches were actually doing. Each was measured against the lens of Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity. The process of evaluation was shared by the leadership of Joshua Tree and NUMC. Alongside the self-assessment were questions that guided the leadership and aided in the process of answering this question: How is the Joshua Tree participating the *missio Dei*?

The NUMC leaders' first measure of success was the growth in Kingdom Contributions (KC). It would be convenient if KC could be counted with something like a Geiger counter or rather a KC counter; however, these are less overt. Rather than try to encapsulate the KC into a formula, a series of questions surfaced with which to dialogue and serve as a guide. This one was used: "How have you seen the Kingdom advance?" This question was asked in a variety of ways in the Doubters' Club and at the Joshua Tree for assessment purposes and also to create a space for semiotic moments, such as God sightings. As the community became aware of and learned to look for God in the world, they individually and collectively could answer these questions.

Several saw the Kingdom advance in acts of kindness and radical grace that are evident in the Tree's RH, PW, IFD, RTMS, and EG. Favorite God sightings were experiencing people who were disgruntled with church, finding friends, and beginning to grow in grace. One man in particular, a former Roman Catholic, had not attended church for fifteen years before coming to the Joshua Tree. For several weeks he did not participate in Holy Communion. However, when he finally chose to receive communion, he described that moment as one of most profound encounters of God he had ever experienced.⁶⁴

A further measure of success was the degree to which the leadership at the Joshua Tree became more collaborative than the traditional hierarchical structure. Leadership has evolved through my tenure as pastor of Emerging Ministries. As described in the beginning, there was a gathering of the leadership team. That team helped plan and form the events in which the Joshua Tree would participate. Now the leadership team has changed to not just including the original formation group members; but, as of September 2009, the leadership has enlarged to the whole Joshua Tree community—that is to say, whoever desires to participate. In this way, leadership is more inclusive and decisions, such as where the offering money is spent, and what special ministries should be accomplished, are growing in collaboration.

The extent in which the Joshua Tree lives in unity with NUMC is also a measure of success. Unity has not been an issue during this first year of the Joshua Tree's existence. The formation period before the launch effectively differentiated the Joshua Tree and NUMC. Although there were some comments that the Joshua Tree was too worldly, for the most part those comments never surfaced as a problem. Clearly, the

⁶⁴ Attendee of the Joshua Tree, interview with author, Newburgh, IN, March 2009.

leadership of NUMC and the Joshua Tree are standing in unity in mission and purpose although both work that out differently.

This project has been an experiment in community. Each chapter has contributed to this experience through gained knowledge, from preparing the mother church to drawing a leadership team. This chapter has been about the process of forming the Joshua Tree's leadership team and its resulting community. Initiating people in a movement, such as establishing an emerging church, cannot be franchised. No formula or canned programs placed over a milieu can create the kind of community being sought in this project. When Emergence happens, the results are not predicable. They are unique in every situation. However, shared here were some guidelines in communication that facilitated a safe space and community where such creativity has been birthed.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At the point of this writing, the Joshua Tree recently celebrated its one-year anniversary in September 2009. The concept of a church within a church is working; the Joshua Tree has become a vital fresh expression of church at NUMC. There is nothing comparable in the region. Over the first year, the Joshua Tree has grown to become a ministry of which the mother church stands proud. Attendance numbers of the Joshua Tree now average in the high fifties.¹ In comparison with NUMC and other United Methodist churches regionally, the Tree is more generationally and ethnically diverse than most.² The community's website, JoshuaTreeNewburgh.com offers to potential visitors a snapshot of who we are and extends a warm welcome through few words and a plethora of videos and photos.³

¹ South Indiana Conference, "Local Church Statistical Profile NUMC," <http://www.sicumc.org/oldsicumc/statistics/StatisticalReports/StatSummary.asp?church=03350&Years=10> (accessed January 15, 2010). The statistical records for the Joshua Tree are merged with NUMC's average attendance record included in the 2008 report showing an increase in worship by from 434 to 472. Not all of these thirty-eight were attendees at the Joshua Tree, not were all those in attendance at the Tree included in the 472 due to early attendance taking discrepancies at the Joshua Tree.

² The Joshua Tree's diversity is not included in these statistical reports, because detailed membership demographic information has not been collected. These are listed in comparison of other local United Methodist Churches. South Indiana Conference, "Local Church Statistical Details," <http://www.sicumc.org/oldsicumc/statistics/StatisticalReports/StatDetails.asp?church=03350&Years=10&StItem=ASIAN> (accessed November 2009) lists Asian demographics; South Indiana Conference, "Local Church Statistical Details," <http://www.sicumc.org/oldsicumc/statistics/StatisticalReports/StatDetails.asp?church=03350&Years=10&StItem=HISPANIC> (accessed November 2009) lists Hispanic demographics; and, South Indiana Conference, "Local Church Statistical Details," <http://www.sicumc.org/oldsicumc/statistics/StatisticalReports/StatDetails.asp?church=03350&Years=10&StItem=AFRICAMER> (accessed November 2009) lists Black/African American demographics.

³ The Joshua Tree, <http://www.joshuatreenewburgh.com/> (accessed January 15, 2010).

Moreover, the Tree's missional emphasis has been a source of appreciation among traditional church members. Although many came to the Tree after previous church backgrounds, there are a few who are without a Christian background; and, most who attend did not come originally from NUMC. Among their various backgrounds, they share a common commitment to hope and change and believe they can make a difference and even a contribution to the Kingdom of God. Over this year many NUMC leaders have expressed a sense of pride in the new community, even if they do not participate in the Joshua Tree. Most importantly, the Joshua Tree has been reaching its goal to be an emerging church within a church seeking to participate in the *missio Dei*.

Denominationally, the Joshua Tree is in line with the United Methodist international campaign to rethink church. The United Methodist 2009 "10 Thousand Doors" promotion invited people to understand church differently.⁴ The concept of ten thousands doors is a metaphor for opportunities to connect with Jesus, His mission, and the United Methodist Church. The doors are not a static imagery. Rather, doors swing both ways; that is to say, they provide both an entrance and an exit. To rethink church, the campaign posed this question: "What if church wasn't just a building?"⁵ Thus, as a denomination there is an effort to transform the Church in postmodernity. One answer to this question has been the Joshua Tree. Indeed, this line of questioning is what this project has argued from beginning to end; in postmodernity, there is a need for the Church to be more outwardly focused.⁶

⁴ Rethink Church: 10ThousandDoors, <http://www.10thousanddoors.org/site/c.ruI4KbMRIvF/b.4877557/k.BF1F/Home.htm> (accessed November 2009).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See the detailed discussion provided in Chapter 4.

In this project the ethos and faith challenges anticipated in the stages of faith were evident in the formation of the initial leadership team. However, after the initial settling in the opening months, for the most part there remains little disruption of the NUMC morning. In fact, NUMC as a community is pleased with the Joshua Tree's success. One leader said, "I saw the pictures of the Joshua Tree community out there cleaning up the river banks. We [meaning NUMC members] are the ones who should be doing those things. We are supposed to be the mature church."⁷ He lamented the fact that his Sunday school class, who is filled with many good Christians, is challenged to find workers for the mission work. However, he celebrates that the Joshua Tree participates in a missional expression of being the Body of Christ in the community each month and is able to do so as a result of its relationship with NUMC. The idea that the Joshua Tree community is a Missional expression of church was embedded from the start.

From the perspective of missional church and emerging church readings, the Joshua Tree is a fresh expression growing from its hybrid roots. That is, in many ways what was set up was a church within a church seeking to be emerging. Therefore, there are some continued growth areas. The tension resulting from the ethos-versus-ethos environment remains, particularly as postmodernity grows. Growth areas include continuing to work on being inclusive and open in leadership. This process continues to level out the structure of hierarchy both among the pastors and the Joshua Tree leaders. Collaboration is a continual work among the leaders. Just as the traditional structure solidified over time, the same will be true for the emerging church, if it is unable to keep

⁷ Jay Jacobs, chair of Staff Parish Relations, interview with author, Newburgh, IN, September 2009.

renewing itself in form and theology. Another growth area includes continuing to become more Missional. It will be important to continue to avoid the modernist trap in becoming an attractional worship event rather than a community focused on the *missio Dei*. Just as leadership can become embedded, so can the focus of the community. Therein, seeking again to bless the Newburgh people and to work to live their faith more outwardly must be the aim. I believe to the degree the *missio Dei* is not yet being lived, the Joshua Tree is failing.

One of the callings of this ministry has been to awaken an awareness of the living presence of God in Christ Jesus already present in people's lives. The hope has been to inculcate a living response as a result of it. Among those who are part of the Joshua Tree, there has been an attempt to instill a desire to be participants in the *missio Dei*. An effect of the Joshua Tree has been its benefit to NUMC. Although the aim was not to convert those with modern consciousness to a postmodern one, the expectation was to make room for the postmodern. In this process there have been some NUMC members and leaders who continue to understand the Joshua Tree project as an effort to get people back in church. It is difficult for those embedded in modernity to imagine the church differently. However, many are beginning to understand the aim of living as missionaries in our Southern Indiana context, contributing to the Kingdom, and empowering ministry to those who are in need.

The process was to grow a church within a church. When one grows something, one pays attention to the potting and makes sure there is enough space to cultivate. One pays attention to the sunlight, assuring that there is enough and not too much. One also waters the plant, and the plant grows. All this is organic and follows its own pattern.

Organic people groups are not that simple. The Joshua Tree must be not only a people group but an event empowering missionaries to be blessings for the Kingdom of God in Newburgh.

APPENDIX

NEWSLETTER MAY 2008: ARTICLE REPRINT

emerging ministries
... joining the missio Dei in Newburgh.

- something going on in our culture.
- some people have noticed the change.
- some call it, postmodernity -a new kind of Christian* is emerging.

- “I’ve never felt like I fit in the traditional church.”
- “I love Jesus, but I’m not too excited about Christianity in its current form or the church in its dominant expression.”
- “It feels like we’ve kind of missed the point of what Jesus was about.”
- “I’m not religious, and I’m not that sure what “spiritual” means - but I’m looking for something, some way of life or pattern that makes sense of things.”
- “I used to be active in church but something stopped working.”
- “The world’s in deep trouble. Sincere people of faith need to find some way to make a constructive, creative difference.”

If you can relate to a few of these statements, you may be interested in the emerging church at NUMC. I’d like to pull people like these together and encourage them in their search. On Wednesday May 7th, 2008 at 7:00PM, I invite you to join the first Emerging Ministries team formation. Come and learn more about this ministry and help us form the new church within a church here at NUMC.

Questions?

Call Pastor Todd (812) 853-2946

Source: Some of the questions came from Brian McLaren’s *Everything Must Change* online tour promo, now unavailable online. The creation of this newsletter article’s content also was influenced by Brian McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), while the title was inspired by Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures in a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001). Additional influences came from two more sources by McLaren: *Everything Must Change* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007) and *A New Kind of Christian* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

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