

Please **HONOR** the copyright of  
these documents by not  
retransmitting or making any  
additional copies in any form

(Except for private personal use).

We appreciate your respectful  
cooperation.

---

Theological Research Exchange Network  
(TREN)

P.O. Box 30183  
Portland, Oregon 97294  
USA

Website: [www.tren.com](http://www.tren.com)

E-mail: [rwjones@tren.com](mailto:rwjones@tren.com)

Phone# 1-800-334-8736

---

ATTENTION CATALOGING LIBRARIANS

**TREN ID#**

Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)

**MARC Record #**

A STRATEGY TO TRANSFORM GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
INTO A MISSION-FOCUSED CONGREGATION

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MICHAEL KOOY  
APRIL 2011



## ABSTRACT

### **A Strategy to Transform Grace Community Church into a Mission-Focused Congregation**

Michael Kooy

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2011

This ministry focus paper presents a strategy to transform Grace Community Church from an internal, member-care focus to an external, community-serving focus by cultivating a new sense of identity and calling for the pastor, the congregational leaders, and the congregation. Grace Community Church was formed in 2005 out of three inwardly focused, Chicago-area Christian Reformed Churches. Those leading the consolidation fostered a new vision for a revitalized, community-serving ministry and the development of a church plant. This shift requires a new ecclesiology and sense of identity for the leaders and congregation.

Part One looks closely at the dynamics of the inner-focused church culture out of which Grace Community Church arose. The paper will identify how shifts from within the culture of the Christian Reformed community and pressures from outside the community create the opportunity for a new vision and values for congregational life at Grace Community Church.

Part Two examines the message Christ gave to the Church of God's coming kingdom and how that message is applied to the Church in its ministry within its community. The model Jesus used in preaching and applying the values of the kingdom of God will also be described.

Part Three presents the strategy for cultivating the congregation's self-understanding as it relates to a vision of God's mission in the world. It will describe how the preacher-leader affirms Jesus' call to discipleship and to the particular ministry of Grace Community Church. The strategy will also present ways of developing awareness of God's call to mission within the leadership of Grace Community Church. And finally, the strategy will develop specific ways to guide the local congregation to live out God's calling and mission in the ministry of Grace Community Church.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 284



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
<b>PART ONE: THE CONTEXT FOR MINISTRY AT GRACE COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH</b>	
Chapter	
1. A DESCRIPTION OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH AND ITS HISTORICAL ROOTS	10
2. THE CHALLENGE TO THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE	31
<b>PART TWO: A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION</b>	
3. A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE CONGREGATION'S SELF UNDERSTANDING	49
4. THE ROLE OF THE PREACHER-LEADER IN GOD'S MISSION	76
5. JESUS' MODEL OF DISCIPLEMAKING	90
<b>PART THREE: A STRATEGY FOR CULTIVATING A NEW SELF UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONGREGATION</b>	
6. CONNECTING THE EXTERNALLY FOCUSED VISION TO THE PREACHER-LEADER	108
7. CONNECTING THE EXTERNALLY FOCUSED VISION TO THE CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS	117
8. CONNECTING THE EXTERNALLY FOCUSED VISION TO THE CONGREGATION	134
CONCLUSION	154
APPENDICES	161
BIBLIOGRAPHY	173

## INTRODUCTION

After their forty-fifth wedding anniversary, Bill told the story of how he and Sue were married. Days after their engagement, Bill met with his pastor at the First Christian Reformed Church of Roseland, a Southside neighborhood church in Chicago. “Who is this bride to be?” the pastor asked. “What is her name?” “Sue Mejeur,” Bill answered. “Mejeur. Mejeur doesn’t sound Dutch to me,” the pastor said with a worried look. “Is she one of ours?” “Oh, yes she is,” Bill replied. “She was raised in Kalamazoo Heights Christian Reformed Church and teaches first grade in Roseland Christian School. She comes from sturdy Huguenot stock.” “Ah, that’s good,” the pastor replied with a satisfied smile. “I will marry you two.”<sup>1</sup>

Bill knew that the expression “one of ours” meant that the pastor was asking if Sue belonged to a Christian Reformed Church. He also knew that the pastor took it upon himself to ensure the “purity” of the church, guarding its doctrine and keeping the congregation distinctively Reformed. But Bill also knew that, in application, “distinctively reformed” meant Dutch Christian Reformed. The churches existed to guard and protect the Reformed Dutch community from the world around them. Dr. Robert Swieringa, A.C. Van Raalte Research Professor at Hope College, Holland, Michigan and specialist in Dutch immigration history, writes of the Dutch Reformed churches in Chicago: “The church stood at the center of the community and defined the

---

<sup>1</sup>This personal story was shared with the author at Grace Community Church, November 2008. The story is reproduced here with permission.

religious culture that differentiated the Dutch from other groups.”<sup>2</sup> The church separated this religious-ethnic group from its larger community, preserving the group’s identity in distinction from its context.

The Dutch Chicago religious-ethnic community developed a series of separate societies, schools, and health services that were focused on caring for those within this community. Swieringa comments, “One could live from the cradle to the grave among fellow believers and enjoy a measure of security not available to those outside the pale.”<sup>3</sup> However, the consequence of these separate organizations was to isolate the religious-ethnic community from the communities in which they exist. A generation of people lived their lives having significant relationships only with people carrying Dutch surname; those raised within the bubble of this Christian subculture find themselves unable to identify with those outside the bubble.<sup>4</sup>

The culture of isolation and self-preoccupation creates the problem this paper seeks to address: an inner-directed ministry. The problem this paper will attempt to solve is the Dutch Reformed understanding of the church as an isolated, internally focused culture, whose values and vision center around the care of the members and the maintaining of the church institution by marrying within the same church culture and educating children in separate schools to help ensure that they take their place within the church culture as adults. Reggie McNeal describes an internally focused church as

---

<sup>2</sup> Robert P. Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2002), 77.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> An illustration of this result is seen in the observation of Grace Community Church’s Church Planter, John Wilczewski, who notes that some CRC members in his ministry bemoan that they simply don’t know how to relate to people from non-Dutch backgrounds.



providing “club activities for club members who then rate the services they receive.”<sup>5</sup> In an internally focused church, the church exists to serve the members, rather than the church being the members who are carry on Jesus’ mission to the world. As members become focused on maintaining this church culture, they tie their source of security, identity, and hope to continuation of the church institution.<sup>6</sup> The result of this inner focus is a reduction of God’s call to the church to be about his mission in the world.

A church living as an isolated culture, whose values and vision center around the care of the members and the maintaining of the church as institution that exists apart from the members and provides services for the members, fails to reflect the Bible’s vision of Christ’s church as a people sent to witness to and live for God’s kingdom. Throughout the Bible, one encounters a God who is on a redemptive mission in the world, to reclaim the crowning achievement of his creation, people, and to redeem this world as his own.<sup>7</sup> The Bible also depicts the Church as God’s chosen instrument called to represent him in his mission to redeem the world.<sup>8</sup>

This paper presents a strategy to transform Grace Community Christian Reformed Church (hereafter, Grace Community Church) from an internal, member-care focus to an

---

<sup>5</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 50.

<sup>6</sup> Illustrating this danger, Neil Cole identifies the personal cost to Christian leader whose identity is tied to the church as institution: “As the institution goes, so goes this person’s sense of worth and well-being. If the institution is threatened, the leader’s own security is threatened.” Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 37.

<sup>7</sup> McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1998), 100-101.

external, community-serving focus by cultivating a new sense of identity and calling for the pastor, the congregational leaders, and the congregation. As the pastor, congregational leaders, and congregation regain a sense of who they are as those sent by God to serve his world, they will more readily serve their community in a way that testifies to the kingdom of God.

This paper will present this strategy in three parts. Part One will describe the need for the strategy. Part Two will outline the theological foundation for the strategy. Part Three will build from the theological foundation to describe how the externally focused vision will be applied to the ministry of Grace Community Church, applying the strategy to the pastor, the church leaders, and the congregation as a whole.

In describing the need for the strategy, Chapter 1 will look closely at the dynamics of the inner-focused church culture out of which Grace Community arose. As an immigrant denomination, the Christian Reformed churches in Chicago took a defensive posture toward their larger community, becoming isolated from interaction with “outsiders” and shifting the local church’s ministry inward toward taking care of those inside the church body. Chapter 1 will present this problem by describing the current context of Grace Community Church and then describing the historical roots underlying that context. In describing the historical roots of the current context, the chapter will identify the role played by three cultural institutions which were used to maintain the isolation of the Dutch Reformed church community from its immediate context in the city of Chicago. This chapter will also describe how the preacher-leaders within this community defended the institutions and practices which isolated the church

from its community. As depicted in the opening paragraphs, preacher-leaders in the Dutch Reformed community understood their roles as that of ensuring the purity of the community, a purity often defined in terms of an ethnic and denominational identity.

Chapter 2 will identify how shifts within the culture of the Christian Reformed community and pressures from outside the community created the opportunity for a new ministry focus for the newly founded church called Grace Community Church. The pressures from within the Dutch Reformed community centered on shifts in practices in two “legs” of the “three-legged stool”: Christian schools and marriage. These shifts within these cultural institutions added to the church’s realization that its identity could no longer be found in its Dutch heritage and caring for “our own.”

Chapter 2 will also identify how pressures from outside the church community contributed to the growing realization that the church’s identity could not rest in its ethnic character and caring for members within the ethnic group. Leaders within the Christian Reformed Churches began to critically re-evaluate their values and practice of ministry. This chapter will also describe how the preacher-leaders sought to resolve the tension through the formation of an externally focused, community-oriented ministry named “Grace Community Church.”

Part Two will present the biblical and theological foundations for the strategy. Chapter 3 will describe God’s redemptive purpose in the world, which is to build his kingdom in Christ by his Spirit through the ministry of his people. This mission forms the basis of the new identity for Grace Community Church. In Reformed theology knowing one’s unique identity and purpose is derived from one’s relationship to God in

Christ. This relationship is basic to the development of a strategy for cultivating a new self-understanding for the preacher, the leaders, and the congregation of Grace Community Church.

Chapter 4 will address the issue of the new identity of the church by focusing on the preacher-leader's identity within the mission of the church. Jesus called his disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom that he had taught them; in the same way, preacher-leaders are called by Christ to equip and challenge the Church to represent that kingdom in their daily lives. As the preacher teaches this message of the kingdom, he or she will expound the implications of God's kingdom agenda for the congregation's identity and ministry. The implication of God's kingdom agenda for the congregation's ministry is that they exist to serve Christ and others. In light of this truth, the preacher-leader is called to articulate how his or her congregation will shift its focus of ministry to the community of which the church is a part.

Jesus' call to discipleship begins in denial of the self; the denial of the self means the denial of a sense of identity that arises from anything other than one's relationship to God. The chapter will also describe how Jesus call to discipleship is furthered in the disciple re-centering their life on Jesus' teachings; following Jesus means that Christ's presence and his teachings are the center of one's universe and the basis for one's new identity. Together, Chapters 3 and 4 provide the theoretical foundation for the strategy.

Part Three will present the strategy to transform Grace Community Church from an internal, member-care focus to an external, community-serving focus. Chapter 5 lays out the path that the preacher-leader must take; Chapter 6 lays out the path that the

congregational leaders must take; Chapter 7 lays out the path that the congregational members must take.

The path the preacher-leader must take is to affirm his or her sense of calling to discipleship, to ministry, and to the particular congregation of Grace Community Church. This sense of mission will give the preacher-leader boldness and integrity to call congregational members to a new identity in Christ. Chapter 5 will describe how the preacher-leader will develop disciplines which enable him or her to confront his false sense of self and open him or her to God's gracious presence and leading in his or her life and ministry. The chapter will also show how the preacher-leader builds on his or her calling and disciplines in developing mentoring relationships with peers as well as with leaders within the church.

Chapter 6 will describe the path church leaders would take in forming a new identity toward an externally focused ministry. This chapter will describe the various types of leadership needed within the church and will focus on their roles of identifying God's vision and applying it to the ministry of the church. The chapter will identify concrete steps to develop the church's ministry around an externally focused vision, enabling the leaders to speak to and embody the life of God's kingdom, aligning the church's ministry structures with that mission.

Chapter 7 will develop ways to apply the vision for externally focused ministry to the life of the congregation. It will develop specific ways to guide the local congregation in living out God's calling and mission in the ministry of Grace Community Church. The church's identity is founded in God's redemptive purpose; the church exists to be God's

instrument of reconciliation in this world. Chapter 7 will also describe the tools to be used to measure change over a specific time period.

As a “product” of the Chicago Dutch-Reformed culture, the transformation described in this paper is a reflection of my own journey. As pastor at Grace Community Church, I am calling members and other leaders to a transformation that I have begun in my own ministry. While away from the Chicago CRC community for two decades, I have gained experience in and appreciation for the “inner work” of prayer and silence and solitude that is crucial to gaining and sustaining a new vision for the church’s ministry. This experience is one of the main reasons I felt led to accept the call to serve as pastor of Grace Community Church.

I have been at Grace Community Church for three years, a period of time which has enabled me to better understand and appreciate the unique history behind the formation of Grace Community Church as well as the challenges facing the preacher-leader in guiding the church into the new reality of an externally focused vision. These past three years at Grace Community Church have led me to see the unique challenges in developing and applying a new ecclesiology to an existing congregation. Over the past three years, I have come to hear the stories of the past, stories of the events that have shaped the early ministry focus of the Christian Reformed churches in Chicago. At the same time, researching and writing this paper has enabled me to clarify that story and begin to see and describe how God has been moving this congregation to a new ministry focus, needing a new ecclesiology and philosophy for ministry. It is with that early story and identity that this paper begins in Part One.

PART ONE  
MINISTRY CONTEXT

## CHAPTER 1

### A DESCRIPTION OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH AND ITS HISTORICAL ROOTS

Grace Community Church is a result of a number of seismic shifts that have occurred in the tectonic plates undergirding church life among the Christian Reformed Church (hereafter, CRC) in the Chicago area, shifts that began nearly forty years prior to the formation of the church. In the mid to late 60s and early 70s, there were cultural shifts occurring as the baby-boom generation was coming of age and the era when the Protestant mainline churches had been the religious establishment was ending.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the internal life of the Chicago area CRCs was also changing, as this chapter will identify. As unsettling as these cultural changes may have seemed, these changes provided an opportunity for the development of a new ecclesiology and a new church designed to adapt to these changes and use them as occasions for revitalization and renewed focus in ministry. However, to understand this shift, this paper will begin by

---

<sup>1</sup> For a description of these cultural shifts, see Anthony B. Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2003), 3-11.



presenting a profile of Grace Community Church and a description of the cultural context underlying its formation.

### **A Profile of Grace Community Church**

Grace Community Church is a four-year-old church with a 105-year-old history. Grace Community Church was formed by the consolidation of three CRCs in Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn, Illinois, first ring suburbs around the city of Chicago. The names of these churches were: Evergreen Park CRC, Park Lane CRC, and Kedvale Avenue CRC.

At their highpoint in the late 60s and early 70s, the three churches had 730, 1100, and 750 members, respectively, for an aggregate total membership of 2,600 people.<sup>2</sup> After this date, these churches experienced a steady decline in population that coincided with a generational migration to suburbs farther southwest. By 2003, two of these churches had 135 members and the third had 175 members.<sup>3</sup> Given these trends and the makeup of the congregations, each of these churches asked itself about its long-term viability. For example, Evergreen Park CRC had an insufficient number of people willing to serve as council members and current council members were being asked to extend their terms beyond the three years mandated by CRC Church Order; Evergreen Park and Park Lane began joint evening services due to dwindling attendance.<sup>4</sup> Despite

---

<sup>2</sup> Christian Reformed Church in North America, *Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1974* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1974), 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. Compare this decline to the membership growth of CRCs further southwest. In 1970, Faith CRC in Tinley Park, and Orland Park CRC and New Life in New Lenox were not yet established. By 2003, they had been founded and they reported 614, 1256, and 435 members, respectively. For a detailed breakdown of this membership shift, see Appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> William Weidenaar, JD, past chairman of Evergreen Park CRC council, in a personal interview with the author, May 2008.

gains from two other nearby CRCs that had closed their doors, over half of Kedvale Avenue's members were living in second- and third-ring suburban communities, making difficult the active participation of those members in midweek activities as well as ministry with the immediate neighborhood.

However, at the same time, these two suburban communities were experiencing a slow revitalization. Younger families wishing a shorter commute to city jobs were moving back into the old neighborhoods and rebuilding the houses. Leaders in the three churches wanted to join in the community revitalization and recommit themselves to vital ministry with the villages of Oak Lawn and Evergreen Park. Arising from the context of conversations between the pastors in each of the churches, the councils began to hold joint meetings to discuss common ministry vision and, eventually, a plan to consolidate. The joint councils met for nearly two years, their work climaxing in each of the congregations adopting a consolidation agreement in February 2005. The consolidation proposal had two components: the revitalization of the consolidated parent church and the development of a new church plant in the community. It was the dream of the consolidation team that the new church plant would "show the way" to the parent church for a greater connection within the community. They believed that the positive vision of church planting and the synergy created by new Christians would further revitalize the mother church.

The leaders of the churches are attempting to resist a 125-year trend of CRCs in the Chicago area. Families moved from the city core to first-ring suburbs in the post-World War II era; in the 1970s and 1980s, families were moving from the first-ring

suburbs to villages ten and twenty miles farther from the city core. With each of these population shifts, the question was raised: Should the Church follow its members? As Swieringa writes of the Dutch Reformed congregation's answer in Chicago: "Their answer was simple: relocate. Sell the old churches and parsonages and build or buy new ones where the members had relocated."<sup>5</sup> Grace Community Church exists as a resistance to this trend; those that stayed in the community wished to keep a Reformed witness to the faith in the towns of Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn.

Grace Community Church leadership has identified the southeastern corner of Oak Lawn as the ministry community for the mother church and the southern half of Evergreen Park and portions of Beverly and in Chicago as the ministry community for the church plant. The demographics of Oak Lawn as of the 2000 census are: out of a total of 55,245 people, 93 percent are White, 5.3 percent are Hispanic and 1.2 percent are African American.<sup>6</sup> These demographics are similarly reflected in Grace Community Church with 97.5 percent White, 2 percent African American and 1.5 percent Asian out of a total of 448 people.<sup>7</sup> Commercial and retail businesses occupy about one-third of the village, with some industry in the southern and northwestern areas. Although the community's largest employer is Christ Hospital and Medical Center, most residents work in Chicago. Oak Lawn's population grew from 8,751 in 1950 to 60,305 in the 1970s as White residents moved from Chicago's Southside to the suburbs. A significant part of

---

<sup>5</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 211.

<sup>6</sup> *Ministry Area Profile 2008, Grace Community Church* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, 2008), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Christian Reformed Church in North America, *Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2009* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2009), 400.

this movement from Chicago's Southside to the suburbs was hundreds of Dutch reformed families fleeing the racial change within the city.<sup>8</sup>

The age breakdown of the congregation shows that approximately one-third of the church is less than thirty-five years of age while one-half the church is older than sixty-five years of age. To the eye of a visitor, Grace Community Church is an aging congregation. However, there are a significant number of young families that enthusiastically endorse the ministry orientation of Grace Community Church.

Grace Community Church exists in a community where the largest single denominational affiliation is Roman Catholic, comprising just over 30 percent of the religious preference of people in the community.<sup>9</sup> Nearly half of the new young families moving into Grace Community Church's neighborhood wish to be in the parish of St. Catherine's Catholic Church and School, two blocks from the campus of Grace Community Church. Grace Community Church members have developed connections with many of their Catholic neighbors; in two of the women's Bible study groups, more than half of the members have a formal connection to the Roman Catholic churches within the community.

Grace Community Church is governed using the Presbyterian system. Responsibility for refining and promoting the vision as well as final decision-making rests in the hands of the elders. Grace Community Church has divided the elders into two groups: administrative elders, who supervise the staff and set the direction for the life of

---

<sup>8</sup> Derk Bergsma, *A Tale of Two Churches: An Analysis and Critique of the Process of Decision Leading to Relocation from City to Suburb* (unpublished Paper, University of Chicago, no date), 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ministry Area Profile*, 15.

the church, and shepherding elders, who organize, direct and participate in the caring ministry of the congregation. The elders work as a team with the pastors to discern how to embody the mission of Christ in their particular community.

At the time of consolidation, the council shifted from a committee structure, where members make decisions and watch over ministry, to a team structure, where the goal setting and decision making are made by those actively engaged in the ministry. The council has developed a ministry organizational plan that decentralizes ministry decisions. the council sets the overall vision and then grants permission to the ministry teams to find creative ways to implement and expand that vision. This has led to a permission-granting culture within the leadership. This new structure for ministry has resulted in over half of the members being actively involved in Grace Community Church's ministries.

Grace Community Church has many gifted leaders. The leaders' interactions with members is colored by the sense of mission that they share. The leaders exhibit a high degree of maturity avoiding reactivity in their decision-making and taking the time to go back to the broader vision that was affirmed in the consolidation process.

The church is financially stable. In the process of consolidation, the church became owner of three campuses. One of the three was sold to the village of Evergreen Park for \$1.2 million; after needed upgrade and maintenance to the remaining properties, the congregation has \$860,000 remaining. These assets have been set aside by the council to be used as a resource for the church plant in the conversion of one facility into a community center. The remaining assets are earmarked for funding new ministry

ventures and the redevelopment of the Oak Lawn facility in order to make concrete the new vision in the revitalization of the “mother church.”

Grace Community Church is Reformed in theological orientation. In its consolidation agreement, Grace Community Church expressed the desire to provide a uniquely Reformed perspective within the communities of Oak Lawn and Evergreen Park. The Reformed faith accents the sovereignty of God in salvation and in our lives as well as a carefully articulated vision of the outworking of the kingdom of God. The literature that accents the missional nature of our God and the call of the Church to be engaged in that mission resonates deeply within the heart of the Reformed faith. This theological orientation will resonate well with the theological foundation for the strategy which will be developed in Part Two. Given its theological orientation, Grace Community Church is well positioned to develop an externally oriented, community-serving ministry.

### **Historic Ministry Value: Preservation of “Reformed Identity”**

The Dutch Calvinists in Chicago held their doctrinal beliefs and practices close to their hearts and would make any sacrifice to preserve the faith of their fathers.<sup>10</sup> Members of the church community will quickly rally around the cry of “preserving our Reformed identity.” One of the reasons given for the establishment of Grace Community

---

<sup>10</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 77.

Church and for the development of a church plant was “to maintain a Reformed witness” in Evergreen Park.<sup>11</sup>

“Maintaining Reformed witness” is the expression used to identify the widely accepted value within the Dutch Reformed community of preservation of the core of the Christian Reformed beliefs. Within the history of the Chicago area Christian Reformed churches, many organizations and societies were established with the purpose of preserving the Reformed witness. As Swieringa writes of the Dutch Reformed community; “The people’s clear sense of identity came from their churches and their theological convictions.”<sup>12</sup> The preservation of that identity shaped by theological convictions was utmost in the minds of the leaders.

However, the accent of the Reformed community in the Chicago area Christian Reformed churches is distinctively Dutch. In the history of the CRC, there was a blending of theology with ethnic heritage, a mixing of church and tribe. Swieringa states, “The Dutch counted on their religious heritage to preserve their ethnic identity.”<sup>13</sup> The identity of the churches was not simply religious or theological; it was also an ethnic identity.

Dr. Herbert Brinks, former archivist for the CRC, notes how this trend began in the early days of immigration in the late 1800s: “Most Dutch immigrants remained in their ethnic communities, finding comfort from their churches and pleasure in the

---

<sup>11</sup> Grace Community Church, “Consolidation Agreement,” adopted by the congregations of Evergreen Park, Park Lane, and Kedvale Avenue CRCs on February 2005, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 745.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

company of their own people.”<sup>14</sup> The immigrants found security within the religious and ethnic communities. Philosopher Henry Stob remembers his boyhood in the early 1900s, growing up in a Dutch Chicago neighborhood. He writes, “What fashioned the Dutch people in our neighborhood into a community was the local church.”<sup>15</sup> Given the interconnection of the theological and ethnic bases for identity, preservation of Reformed identity could also be understood as short-hand for preservation of ethnic identity.

Dutch Christian Reformed churches have both informal and formal networks that educate, socialize, provide worship, engage in mission, and extend care literally from the cradle to the grave.<sup>16</sup> The results of this network have been both the survival of a strong ethnic identity and isolation from the broader community in which they are a part. As Herbert Brinks notes, this isolation was the original intent of the immigrant community; “It was clear from the beginning that the original Dutch settlements . . . were designed to encourage ethnic isolation as a strategy for preserving family values and religious precepts.”<sup>17</sup> Desiring to maintain an ethnic and religious culture that was rooted in their Dutch heritage, the Dutch Reformed community remained isolated from the broader Chicago community.

The intentional isolation was successful in preserving a Dutch Reformed identity. Herbert Brinks notes that a Dutch Reformed presence remains today in Chicago “in large

---

<sup>14</sup> Herbert J. Brinks, “Netherlanders in the Chicago Area,” in *Origins: Historical Magazine of Calvin College and Seminary Archives*, volume 1, number 1 (1983): 6.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Stob, *Summoning Up Remembrance* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1995), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 77.

<sup>17</sup> Herbert Brinks, *Dutch American Voices* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 11.



part to their attachment to the church as well as to their strong race (nationality) consciousness.”<sup>18</sup> The connection between the two was so strong that it has been argued by Richard Ostling, former Religion Editor for *Time* magazine, that the CRC will die precisely because all ethnic denominations are eventually thrown into America’s melting pot.<sup>19</sup> The concern to preserve ethnic identity has been bundled up with the preservation of the Reformed identity.

However, succeeding generations are seeing that the religious and ethnic identity need not be intertwined. Speaking at the Christian Reformed Church’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Dordt College professor James Schaap stated, “What Reformed Christians can bring to the table is not simply an ethnic identity, but a world and life view that is shaped by the Bible and which is based on a strong commitment to the world God loves and to the mission God sends us on.”<sup>20</sup> The theological heritage of the Chicago area CRCs is wide and deep. The heirs of that tradition inherit a well articulated theology that is foundational to an educational system which includes elementary schools through institutions of higher education. As Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Seminary states, “That commitment to a robust intellectual life, as manifested in a profound commitment

---

<sup>18</sup> Brinks, *Dutch American Voices* 78.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Ostling, quoted in James R. Schaap, “What About a Bicentennial? A Plenary Speech Given at the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church,” *Pro Rege*, volume 36, no.1 (September 2007): 25.

<sup>20</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 33.

to Christian education at all levels of academic life, has surely been one of the CRC's defining strengths."<sup>21</sup>

The Christian Reformed heritage underlying Grace Community Church provides a rich theological framework which can enable a renewed identity grounded in God's mission. The Reformed Christians in Grace Community Church will need to learn to keep alive the older sayings of Reformed faith in the hope that it will help fuel a greater understanding of this new identity.

### **The Three-legged Stool: Maintaining Identity through the Institutions of Church, Christian School, and Marriage**

Living in America's "second city" and rubbing shoulders each day with people of various religious and ethnic groups, one would think that a religious-ethnic group like the CRC in Chicago would soon be melded in the melting pot of urban America. Instead, it has survived for more than one hundred years. Swieringa studied two historic Reformed churches in Chicago, one of the Reformed Church in America (hereafter, RCA) and the other of the CRC. Both churches originated from Dutch immigrants who shared identical doctrine; however, four generations later the RCA churches declined by 25 percent while the CRC grew and multiplied by 300 percent. Swieringa accounts for this variance for two reasons: on one hand, the CRCs received more immigrants from the Netherlands in that time period; on the other hand, the CRCs maintained their subculture through "the

---

<sup>21</sup> Richard Mouw, "Assessing the Past, Anticipating the Future," in *Grace through Every Generation: 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of the CRC* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church, 2007), 13.

three-legged stool” of church, marriage, and Christian school.<sup>22</sup> The CRC retained its members and grew “because of the Christian school system, especially the Christian high schools, where young people found their marriage partners.”<sup>23</sup> As the CRC members established Christian schools and other societies for their and their children’s involvement, they retained a large majority of their children and experienced significant internal growth.

However, preserving one’s ethnic and religious identity through a school is not unique to the Chicago Dutch Reformed community. The Polish Catholic community in Chicago also preserved its ethnic and religious identity through a church-owned school. Social historians Melvin G. Holli and Peter d’A. Jones note, “The most important adjunct of a Polish parish was the parochial school. The school was often built first, with church services held in the basement until a more suitable house of worship could be built later.”<sup>24</sup> By the 1920s, every Polish parish in the city and the suburbs had its accompanying school. A secondary, sociological function of a private or parochial school is to assist in maintaining a group’s identity.

CRCs have encouraged their members to establish private, Christian schools where the teachers could be free to teach all subjects from the perspective of the Bible. This practice was reinforced by the metaphor of a “three-legged stool.” The metaphor of the three-legged stool refers to the need for cooperation between the institutions of the

---

<sup>22</sup> Robert Swieringa, “Ethnic Glue and a Three Legged Stool: The Chicago Experience,” *The Outlook* (March 2004), 5-11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Melvin G. Holli and Peter d’A. Jones, *Ethnic Chicago, a Multicultural Portrait*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1995), 179-180.

church, the family, and the Christian school in training children born within the CRC community. The metaphor came from the experience of Dutch dairy farmers milking cows by hand, sitting on a three-legged stool. If one leg were longer than another or if one leg broke, the “sit” was uncomfortable or impossible. Similarly, if the legs of home, school, and church are balanced, “a child will see the world rightly and live in it well as a citizen of Christ’s kingdom.”<sup>25</sup> As church and family and school cooperate in training a child, that child may come to see the world as God intended it and be equipped to be an agent of reconciliation in God’s world.

These are noble expectations. However, an unintended consequence of the emphasis on the “three-legged stool” was the ensuing isolation of CRC members from their larger community. Swieringa comments, “Most willingly lived from the cradle to the grave within the cocoon of the church communities.”<sup>26</sup> There was a deep comfort found in being held safe within the fold of the Dutch Reformed community.

This comfort extended into the practices for marriage within the community. In a previous generation, leaders within the CRC in Chicago became so concerned about finding marriage partners from within the Reformed community that Classis Illinois formally addressed the issue.<sup>27</sup> They decided to “encourage, support, and promote our

---

<sup>25</sup> “Report on Christian Day School,” *Acts of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 2005* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 2005), 352.

<sup>26</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 747.

<sup>27</sup> A “classis” is the regional ecclesiastical body within the CRC, parallel to a presbytery in a Presbyterian denomination.

schools and societies, so that our youth may find adequate fellowship in them.”<sup>28</sup> A rarely mentioned secondary benefit to the development of the Christian high school was to find places for CRC young people to meet, date, and marry. In this way, the Christian high school helped to perpetuate and preserve the religious-ethnic identity of the CRC in Chicago.

Children who were raised within the fold of the Chicago area CRCs were expected to marry within that fold. Henry Stob, the youngest of ten children, recalls how, when he was thirteen years of age, “Seven of my brothers and sisters were now married, all of them to persons of Dutch extraction who held full membership in the CRC.”<sup>29</sup> I personally recall hearing a chapel address given to my college class that used Exodus 2:1 as its text: “Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman.”<sup>30</sup> The text was used as an example of a godly practice needing to be emulated today. Students were challenged to find spouses of their same “tribe,” of the same Reformed congregations from which many of the students originated. Such instructions were rarely as blatant, but were well understood.

Dutch Reformed young people were warned against marrying an “outsider.” Swieringa explains, “An ‘outsider’ was defined in terms both national and religious as

---

<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 492. The expression “our schools” was ecclesiastical shorthand for the private, Christian schools which the CRC encouraged parents to establish and support.

<sup>29</sup> Stob, *Summoning*, 49.

<sup>30</sup>Rev. John Piersma, chapel address given at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, 1976.

one neither Dutch nor Reformed.”<sup>31</sup> The illustration that opens the introduction is a concrete example of the way this practice was reinforced.

Some Christian Reformed members defined an “outsider” as including spouses from the RCA, a sister denomination. The Chicago area RCAs consciously sought a plan of Americanization throughout their history; rather than maintaining separate schools, they sought to permeate the life of the community as a witness. However, as Swieringa points out, the more open Reformed view of relationship with the broader community was seen as a step toward worldliness.<sup>32</sup> Jean, a senior member of Grace Community Church who is a lifelong member of the Dutch Christian Reformed community in Chicago, comments with wry humor how her elder sister was forbidden by her father to date a young German man. However, Jean’s sister did marry the young man, over the initial objections of her father. Ironically, Jean comments, her brother-in-law became the most theologically conservative member of her family.<sup>33</sup>

A consequence of this high degree of intermarriage is that “everyone is related to everyone else.” CRC members rehearse these connections. In a practice somewhat similar to the internet game, “Six Degrees of Separation from Kevin Bacon,” CRC members may try to find a personal connection between themselves and someone that they both know or are related to. Once the connection is found, the strangers quickly

---

<sup>31</sup>Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 492.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>33</sup> This personal story was related to the author in a private conversation; the conversation is recorded here with permission.

affirm their kinship with each other with a smile or a pat on the back. The nickname for this practice is “Dutch bingo.”<sup>34</sup>

But another consequence of the intermarriage is that many of the first three generations of Dutch CRC members lived “from cradle to grave” within their extended family, church, school, or societies. This behavior isolated them from the communities in which they lived and greatly limited their contact with people outside the religious-ethnic group. The religious-ethnically defined church, with its compatriot school built by parents of that church, combined with practices fostering marriage from within those school and church circles worked effectively in preserving the identity of the Dutch Reformed churches in Chicago. As mentioned above, preserving this identity worked powerfully to isolate the CRC members from their community.

However, for three generations, this isolation did not stand in contrast to any other ethnic group within Chicago. In a recent broadcast, Richard J. Daly, late mayor of Chicago, described the ethnic diversity within the city during his tenure as mayor (1955-1976): “They take patches of every description and put them together. Then they make one quilt. That’s our Chicago that I am so proud of.”<sup>35</sup> Ethnicity played a key role in the way Chicagoans lived within the larger city, an ethnicity that was usually combined with a religious identity. Chicago has distinct Irish Catholic communities, Arab Muslim communities, Jewish communities, Polish Catholic communities, and many more. Within the context of this highly diverse and segregated city, the preservation of a Dutch

---

<sup>34</sup> William Weidenaar, JD, past chairman of Evergreen Park CRC council, in a personal interview with the author, May 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Richard J. Daly, radio interview, rebroadcast on Chicago Public Radio, June 2010.

Reformed community seemed normal, if not expected. Though they shared the same neighborhood with Polish Catholic residents, the Dutch Reformed church members preserved their identity in isolation from those neighbors. The key to maintaining that identity was the “three-legged stool” of church, school, and marriage. The three-legged stool had the benefit of preserving a religious identity, but it also had the consequence of greatly limiting the contacts of church members with the outside world.

However, as Holli and Jones note, the Polish Catholic residents also preserved their identity in isolation from their neighbors: “The Polish ethnic group provided such a wide range of institutions that it could perform nearly all the services its members required—religious, educational, political, recreational, economic—without recourse to the host society.”<sup>36</sup> Sociologist Dominic Pacyga identifies a similar reality about the city of Chicago: “Different white ethnic groups shared the same neighborhood, but they segregated themselves socially by creating separate institutions, such as churches, schools, clubs, stores, taverns, and even street gangs.”<sup>37</sup> The reality of the ethnic and cultural isolation within the city of Chicago made the isolation seem a normal part of life in Chicago.

### **The Role of the Preacher in Forming Congregational Life in Dutch Chicago**

The CRC is an immigrant denomination that walled itself off from American culture. The bricks that made up that wall were composed of the community’s religious

---

<sup>36</sup> Holli and Jones, *Ethnic Chicago*, 177.

<sup>37</sup> Dominic Pacyga, “Chicago’s Ethnic Neighborhoods: the Myth of Stability and the Reality of Change,” 617, quoted in Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 747.



and ethnic identity. The name the CRC initially chose for itself, True Reformed Dutch Church, signified both theological identity as a “true” expression of the Reformed faith and its ethnic identity as a “Dutch Church.” The preacher played a key role in forming, defining, and defending this community in its isolation.

The everyday life of a Chicago Dutch Calvinist was centered in the church. The church was the hub of the community, defining life in the church community and life in the outside community in religious terms. Swieringa writes, “While mannerisms, dress, lace curtains, and a miniature windmill on the front lawn might betray their Dutchness, it was in the religious realm that it came to fullest expression. The church was the one institution brought from the motherland that they could preserve.”<sup>38</sup> The church was the heart of the Dutch Reformed community and at the center of the church stands the preacher.

Edgar Schein, in his book, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, indicates that cultures spring from three sources: the values and assumptions of organization’s founders; the interpreted experiences of group members as the organization grows and evolves; and new values and assumptions brought in by new members and new leaders.<sup>39</sup> What Schein states in general terms is illustrated in the formation of the CRCs in Chicago. The preachers in the Chicago CRCs made a deep and lasting imprint on the culture of the church as it defined itself in contrast to its community.

---

<sup>38</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 77.

<sup>39</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, Third Edition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 225.

One of the roles of the preacher was to ensure the orthodoxy of the church membership. In its earliest years, Koene Vanden Bosch was pastor of the First CRC of Chicago. Vanden Bosch was the founding pastor of the denomination in 1857 and for its first seven years its only pastor. While in Chicago, Vanden Bosch squelched a protest regarding profession of faith, the ritual by which people become confessing members within the CRC. One member believed that a personal testimony of his conversion to Christ was sufficient to become a professing member; but Vanden Bosch insisted on a profession accompanied by a demonstration of a knowledgeable acquaintance with the Reformed confessions.<sup>40</sup> For the next two generations, the practice of profession of one's faith included a careful and, in many cases, detailed examination of how well the one professing faith understands the Reformed confessions. Making a profession of faith meant facing a catechetical grilling.<sup>41</sup> The message was clearly communicated that to be CRC meant that members had a firm grasp of Reformed theology and confessions. In this way, the founding pastors ensured and defended the Reformed theological identity of the Dutch community.

On occasions the pastors together would act to defend the Dutch Reformed community. The Classis, which was comprised of one minister and one elder from each of the region's churches, made it clear that the expectation and purpose of Christian school support was to help provide an environment for Christian Reformed young men

---

<sup>40</sup> William Weidenaar, JD, past chairman of Evergreen Park CRC council, in a personal interview with the author, May 2008. A similar report is found in Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 116.

<sup>41</sup> Schaap, *Bicentennial*, 19.

and women to find Christian Reformed mates. Working together, the preachers shaped the cultural value of preserving the Dutch Reformed identity of the church community.

The role of the preachers in defining and shaping the culture of the CRC is so dominant that Swieringa structures his historical narrative of the early development of Chicago area CRCs according to the “era” of each succeeding preacher. For example, he describes the character and development of the First Reformed Church in Chicago as “The De Bij Era,” identifying the distinctive contributions of Rev. De Bij in shaping the life of that community.<sup>42</sup>

Examining the preacher’s role in the formation of the Dutch Reformed community provides insight into the formative role the preacher-leader may have at Grace Community Church. As stated previously, a culture is shaped by the values and assumptions of its founding leaders as those leaders provide solutions to its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. However, as changes occur in the external context of a culture and as new members and, particularly, new leaders enter that culture with new values and assumptions, the culture will change.<sup>43</sup>

The forces that led the parent congregations of Grace Community Church to become internally focused and isolated from its broader culture are the concern to preserve its Reformed heritage intertwined with the particular form that heritage took in the Dutch Reformed tradition. The ethnic and theological identities are so intertwined that one may wonder if it is possible for the Chicago area CRCs to continue as

---

<sup>42</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 119-133.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

theologically defined and not ethnically defined.<sup>44</sup> The burden of this paper is to identify a way for Grace Community Church to move from this internally focused identity to an externally focused identity. The next chapter will describe shifts within the cultural context of the Chicago CRCs that opened the door for the development of that new identity and the formation of Grace Community Church.

---

<sup>44</sup> Dr. James Schaap sought to answer this question regarding the CRC as a whole in his address to the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the CRC. Schaap's address is referenced above. The address is relevant for this paper because of the parallel changes occurring both within the community life of the CRCs and within the broader North American culture that has prompted the beginnings of Grace Community Church.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE CHALLENGE TO THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Over time, changes in the lifestyle of members within the community of faith and increasing involvement within the broader culture of Chicago began to break down the isolation of the Dutch Reformed community. The pressures against the isolation of the community arose from within the community as well as from the changing cultural environment around the community. These pressures were tests and challenges of the communities' core beliefs about itself and its role in the community. This paper will demonstrate the role that these core beliefs played both in maintaining integrity within the community while at the same time putting pressure on those values which were non-essential.

#### **Tension between Espoused Values and Ministry Focus arising from Within the Community**

“You don’t have to be Dutch to be CRC! Though there was a time when I wasn’t so sure about that.”<sup>1</sup> Lynn was raised in a devout Catholic home, and she met and married Gord Vander Meulen, a member of the CRC from infancy. Early in their

---

<sup>1</sup> Personal conversation with Lynn Vander Meulen, who became a member of the CRC at Kedvale Avenue CRC, one of the parent churches of Grace Community Church. Her story is used by permission.

courtship in the late 1960s, Gord wanted Lynn to learn more about the CRC and supported her as she attended private sessions with his pastor in preparation for membership in the CRC. Lynn was thankful that her future husband's family and friends welcomed her into the church openly. At the same time, Lynn had also heard undercurrents of church members questioning whether she really belonged in the CRC, since she is not Dutch and was raised Roman Catholic. So, with some militancy, Lynn exclaimed, "You don't have to be Dutch to be CRC!"

Lynn sees her faith life as a continuum. She already had a saving faith as a Catholic; her move into the CRC was one where her faith grew as the CRC helped her understand the Bible more broadly and more personally. Lynn is not alone in this experience. During the period from the late 1950s through the 1970s, more young people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds entered the Chicagoland CRCs through marriage to a CRC young man or woman. With an increasing non-Dutch population, the exclusive connection between the Dutch ethnic identity with Reformed religious identity was being challenged. Members were saying to one another, "You don't have to be Dutch to be CRC, and you don't have to be CRC to be Christian."

Lynn's story is typical of a shift that was occurring within the Chicago area CRCs beginning in the early 1960s. A shift was occurring in the institutions that maintained the CRC's identity in contrast to the culture of Chicagoland. The pressures arising from within the community focused on the cultural institutions making up the "three-legged stool": marriage, school, and church. Beginning in the era of the Baby Boomer generation, there was a shift away from marriages exclusively between fellow Dutch,

CRC young adults.<sup>2</sup> While it is difficult to gain a clear demographic, the Membership Records of the Park Lane, Evergreen Park, and Kedvale Avenue churches have been used to identify the number of marriages between CRC people with Dutch surnames to those with non-Dutch surnames in the period of 1965-1980. This list has been compared with the number of marriages currently in Grace Community Church which are of mixed ethnic heritage.

Today, many families within Grace Community Church include non-Dutch parentage. Out of 217 households listed in the membership record, a total of 47 households have at least one member who is from non-Dutch ethnic background, comprising just over 20 percent of the total congregation. These members have life experiences that do not identify with the Dutch heritage of the CRC and RCA.

The increasing number of marriages in the CRC with non-Dutch partners creates a climate for confronting the misuse of marriage to maintain an ethnic identity. It creates an opportunity to begin to see attributes more significant than ethnic identity as being the binding force within the community of faith. It also creates the opportunity to come closer to the reconciled people Christ calls us to become.

Adeline was raised in a conservative Polish Catholic home and in the mid-1960s she was coming into the CRC. She was marrying Bernie, a lifelong CRC member of Dutch parentage. Adeline recalls feeling initially shunned as she sought entrance into the Dutch Reformed community. Few people approached her at worship services or church

---

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the author has used the generational divisions and distinctions as defined by Gary McIntosh in *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).



social events to welcome her; none welcomed her to their homes. She recalls overhearing CRC members speaking to one another about how she did not “fit in” with the rest.<sup>3</sup> Today, however, Adeline shares her story with others from Grace Community Church who readily apologize and acknowledge the pride of their past.

The view that one does not need to be Dutch to be CRC was challenged directly by marriages across ethnic and religious lines. Marriage as an institution that had formerly maintained the ethnic identity of the Dutch CRC congregation has weakened, leaving opportunity for people to repent of past excesses. While Grace Community Church’s pastor encourages Christian singles to marry other Christians, the expectation that those spouses be Dutch CRC is no longer present. This enables the Church to affirm the value of the Reformed faith with less of the ethnic and cultural baggage from the past; members are freer to respond to God’s call because it is God’s call – not because it is part of an ethnic ritual.

In defining a culture, Edgar Schein sees how a group’s shared assumptions enable the group to both integrate its life, internally, and adapt, externally, to the environment in which it exists. However, those shared assumptions hold sway only insofar as they are perceived as valid and are “to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”<sup>4</sup> In effect, the culture of the CRC was changing due to the change in marriage practices. When newcomers like Lynn joined the

---

<sup>3</sup> Personal conversation with Adeline, who became a member of the CRC at Park Lane CRC, one of the parent churches of Grace Community Church. Her story is used by permission.

<sup>4</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 17.

church, she could affirm that the correct way to perceive life in the church was not to be a child of a Dutch immigrant but to be a child of God through faith in Jesus.

At the same time that marriages were lessening the role in maintaining the ethnic identity of the church, the local Christian school was experiencing an increase in the numbers of students from other ethnic and denominational backgrounds. The Southwest Christian School board sees its mission as serving Christian families of the Southwest Chicago region with quality Christian education. The region is large and is served by three campuses, one in Oak Lawn, the village of Grace Community Church, another in Palos Heights, approximately ten miles southwest of Grace Community Church, and a third in Tinley Park, approximately twenty miles southwest of Grace Community Church.

A CRC-related church periodical posted an article in 1961 by an influential pastor within the CRC, Dr. P.Y. DeJong. Speaking of the migration of members from the city to the suburbs, Dr. DeJong asked, “Should the Church Follow its Members?”<sup>5</sup> In light of the Bible’s call to make disciples of all nations and the strategic advantage of owning church buildings within an ethnically changing neighborhood, Dr. DeJong argues that the mission of Christ urges church members to continue to support a ministry within the city’s neighborhoods which they were leaving.<sup>6</sup> The same question that prompted Dr. DeJong’s article is currently being asked by the Board of Southwest Christian Schools. Given the continual movement of the traditional supporters of Southwest Christian School, the school’s Board has been considering establishing a new school

---

<sup>5</sup> P.Y. DeJong, “Should the Church Follow Its Members?” *Torch & Trumpet*, vol. 10, no. 11 (April 1961): 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

campus in New Lenox, Illinois; New Lenox is one of the newest suburban developments in Southwest Chicago, being about thirty miles southwest of Grace Community Church. Envisioned in this plan is a shift farther south and west from the community in which Grace Community CRC is located, refurbishing its Palos Heights campus to accommodate students from the Oak Lawn area and, then, closing the campus in Oak Lawn.

This movement of the Christian school is noteworthy in that the Oak Lawn campus has the highest concentration of students from churches other than the historic Dutch Reformed churches when compared to the other campuses in the Southwest Chicago Christian School system. According to statistics compiled by the Development Director at Southwest Chicago Christian School, in 1999, 22 percent of the students at the Oak Lawn campus were from churches other than the historic Dutch Reformed churches.<sup>7</sup> By 2008, 44 percent of the students were from churches other than the historic Dutch Reformed churches; nearly half of all students come from non-Dutch Reformed churches. In comparison, in 1999, only 17 percent of the student body at the Tinley Park campus were from churches other than the historic Dutch Reformed churches; by 2008, that percentage grew to 33 percent of students at the Tinley Park campus.<sup>8</sup> The Oak Lawn campus would appear to have succeeded in achieving their mission of providing quality Christian education for children of Christian parents in the

---

<sup>7</sup> Southwest Chicago Christian Schools, "Southwest Chicago Christian Schools Long Range Proposal" (Palos Heights, IL: privately published, November 2008). Appendix B contains the chart illustrating the shifting ratio of students from "Supporting" churches, meaning RCA and CRC churches, and "Community" churches, meaning all churches not from the historic Dutch Reformed denominations.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. See Appendix B.

region. In terms of overall enrollment, though, the numbers of students at are not high enough for maintaining the private school in its present form. The financial concerns lead the Board to believe that the best option is to consolidate the Oak Lawn area students with those of Palos Heights, in a new building on the Palos Heights campus.

In 2008, pastors and other CRC community leaders wrote the Southwest Christian School board requesting that the board reconsider its policy of excluding non-Reformed parents from being part of the school's society.<sup>9</sup> Since its inception, the Christian school was governed by an independent Board elected by members of the Christian School Society. One of the criteria for Society membership is that the prospective member be a member in good standing of a church in the CRC or RCA denominations. Since the majority of parents who send children to Southwest Christian School are not members of these churches, a pivotal governance position is withheld from every one of these parents. The pastors' and community leaders' letter asks that this membership criterion be changed to allow for non-supporting church members to be eligible for and vote in elections for School Board membership. If adopted, this change would bring more change to the culture of the school by a large infusion of "outsiders." As Schein states, "Shared assumptions can be changed by changing the composition of the dominant groups or coalitions in an organization."<sup>10</sup> In effect, welcoming a new coalition of people into Society membership who are empowered to vote for and become Board members

---

<sup>9</sup> Appendix C contains the December 15, 2008 letter addressed to the Southwest Chicago Christian School Board. The letter was signed by five local CRC pastors, the President and a former professor of Trinity Christian College, and the Director of Advancement for regional Christian schools.

<sup>10</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 306.

destroys the original culture and begins the process of new culture formation.<sup>11</sup> The pastors' and community leaders' letter affirm that this would be a positive change in the life of the school in that the "outsiders" share a common commitment to Christ and his kingdom; their involvement may foster a change within the school and the CRC community to expand its role within the community at large.

The proposal to open the school Society to people outside the historic Dutch Reformed community reflects the change that is occurring within the culture of Grace Community Church. Because of its identification with the Christian school, seeing the school as one of the three formative cultural institutions within its subculture, members at Grace Community Church have become aware that the "glue" that binds them together is not ethnic identity but a larger purpose within its ministry context. Along with the shift in marriage practices as outlined above, the proposed change in the composition of the school Society has led members of that community to challenge the exclusive connection between the Dutch ethnic identity and the Reformed religious identity, and to re-assess whether the former practices and values should be carried into the future. This shift became the occasion for a fresh hearing of the Bible's teaching of the kingdom of God.

In their book, *Culture Shift*, which attends to the factors that shape a church culture, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro state that "a church's culture represents the intersection of three values you are to steward: God's kingdom agenda, who you are, and your unique setting."<sup>12</sup> When church leaders see and understand the Bible's teaching

---

<sup>11</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 307.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 20.

about God’s kingdom, as they live it out and find ways that it can be expressed in their community, then a new culture will develop. As Grace Community Church leaders have become open to discerning God’s kingdom agenda for the church community and its relationship with their ministry context, the church’s cultural identity began to change.

### **Tension between Espoused Values and Ministry Focus Arising from Outside the Community**

Not only were tensions arising between the values of the Dutch Reformed community and their focus of ministry from within the community, but the Chicago Dutch Reformed community also experienced tension because of influences arising from outside the community. The external forces upon the Dutch Reformed community are the many and varied influences from the larger culture. As James Schaap stated in his speech entitled “On the Future of the CRC,” given at the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the CRC as a denomination, “Today the new paradigms that shape us, even as a denomination, are created, for the most part, by forces much larger than we are—forces like technology, globalization, and our own ever-increasing affluence.”<sup>13</sup> As the Church interacted with the changing American environment, it underwent significant change. However many the forces that are leading to the change, this paper will focus on a single external force that led to a reexamination of the values of the community and their ministry focus: a significant population shift of the community caused by a steady migration to suburbs farther southwest from the city core. As the CRC’s of Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn continually lost members through migration to the suburbs, the remaining members

---

<sup>13</sup> Schaap, “On the Future of the CRC,” 19.

began to ask about their own future as a congregation. As one former ministry associate with Congregation identified, with the steady loss of members, the churches had to confront the reality of their own death. Out of that confrontation arose a vision that led to the formation of a new congregation, Grace Community Church.

Throughout its history, the Dutch Reformed Community in Chicago was extremely mobile, as members moved from farther and farther from the city core where their immigrant forbears first lived in Chicago. Swieringa writes, “The Dutch Reformed in Chicago shared with their compatriots nationally a common value system and worldview, but the habit of suburban migration gave them a unique character.”<sup>14</sup> Each new generation took flight and moved farther out, selling their homes and businesses and churches as they left the expanding ghetto.

The CRCs of Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn, Illinois are both the beneficiaries of that migration and suffered loss from the migration. Kedvale Avenue CRC, for example, one of the three forbears to Grace Community Church, was considered the extension of the 2<sup>nd</sup> CRC of Englewood, a Southside neighborhood church in the city of Chicago, and of 3<sup>rd</sup> CRC of Roseland, a Chicago church in the far south side of the city.<sup>15</sup>

However, for forty years prior to the founding of Grace Community Church, the CRCs of Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn, Illinois experienced steady, seemingly irreversible decline. This decline was due to the migration of families from the area to suburbs farther south and west. At the same time, the CRCs of those suburban

---

<sup>14</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 746.

<sup>15</sup> Christian Reformed Church in North America, *Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2004* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2004), 17.

communities were the happy recipients of increasing growth, in large part due to the migration of CRC members. Based on information available from the *Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church*, an annual compilation of membership statistics for each congregation in the denomination, one can see the steady decline and simultaneous growth of suburban churches farther southwest. Also, using statistics that differentiate confessing members from all members, in light of the CRC polity which identifies baptized children as non-confessing church members, one can identify the relative age of the congregation. The higher the percentage of “all members” to “confessing members,” the larger number of children present within that congregation.

Appendix 1 depicts the demographic shift that occurred in the forty years prior to the founding of Grace Community Church. This changing demographic which was brought about by factors external to the life of the CRCs in Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn, Illinois became a significant factor in prompting church leaders to attempt to try a different model for church life. In its consolidation agreement, Grace Community Church declared, “New forms of ministry will likely need to be considered in order to minister effectively . . . to communities in which the demographic characteristics have changed.”<sup>16</sup> The awareness of the changing demographic created an openness to consider new methods and measures to minister within its community.

Schein describes the reason for that readiness to change. Over time, strongly held shared assumptions can result in a strong culture, which is an advantage for the organization if the external environment of that organization remains stable. “However,”

---

<sup>16</sup> Grace Community Church, *Grace Community Church Plan of Consolidation* (Chicago: Ruff, Weidenaar, and Reidy Law, Ltd., 2005), 7.



asserts Schein, “if there is a change in the environment, some of those shared assumptions can become a liability.”<sup>17</sup> Recognizing that liability and wishing to remain as a viable agent within that environment, the basic choices for survival of the organization are either: 1) rapid transformation of parts of the culture to enable it to be adaptive to the environment through an organizational “turnaround”; or 2) the destruction of the organization and its culture enabling it to be reorganized by different values.

### **The Preacher-leader’s Role in Resolving Tension**

To rapidly turn around an organization, strong transformational leaders are needed.<sup>18</sup> Faced with a changing internal culture and a shifting external context for ministry, strong pastoral leadership was needed to initiate and guide a process of reorganization and consolidation. In the case of Grace Community Church, such leadership was in place to initiate and be a central part of the process of consolidation, a process which gave birth to a new church culture. Those leaders were the pastors and council chairs of each of the three CRCs that gave birth to Grace Community Church.<sup>19</sup>

The leaders who led the consolidation efforts forming Grace Community Church knew that they were bucking the trend of the past one hundred years. Given a renewed awareness of the call of God to focus on ministry within their environment, the leaders wanted to form a new church which intentionally ministered to its community. For

---

<sup>17</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 312.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>19</sup> The following information on the role of the pastor and council chairs was obtained through personal interviews with Calvin Aardsma, Pastor of Park Lane CRC, March 2010, Duane Van Loo, Pastor of Kedvale Avenue CRC, October 2009, and William Weidenaar, Chair of Evergreen Park CRC council, May 2008. All information is released with full consent of those interviewed.

example, Bill Weidenaar, past chairman of Evergreen Park CRC council, described the movement of CRC members from the Englewood neighborhood in Chicago to Oak Lawn and Evergreen Park in the previous generation. Noting that Englewood has become a neighborhood with nearly the lowest income and highest crime in the city of Chicago, Bill comments, “I just wonder what would have happened if those churches would have stayed. Could we have affected the Englewood community for good?”<sup>20</sup> This sentiment reflects similar comments about the CRC’s move out of Englewood expressed by Derk Bergsma, a professor at nearby Trinity Christian College. In an article describing the way the CRCs moved from the Englewood neighborhood in the early 1960s, Bergsma comments, “With a constituency wholly integrated economically and politically into its environment, it ought not to be too much to expect a church to take seriously the quality of life of its community.”<sup>21</sup> However, without a structured conceptual framework to reconsider its role within the community, it would be impossible for the people to consider another option. The CRC community leaders noted that it was time to change the model for the church.

Prior to the formation of Grace Community Church, no CRCs have tried this model of staying within a changing community. The constant population shift to the suburbs in large cities led CRC preacher-leaders to ask the question: Should the Church follow its members?<sup>22</sup> Every generation of Dutch Reformed congregations in Chicago

---

<sup>20</sup> William Weidenaar, JD, personal interview with the author, May 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Bergsma, *A Tale of Two Churches*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> DeJong, “Should the Church Follow Its Members?” 19.

found themselves in this situation. Their answer was simple: relocate. Sell the old churches and parsonages and build or buy new ones where the members had relocated. As Swieringa comments, “In Chicago, the option of keeping an old church for mission outreach, in obedience to the scriptural mandate to preach the gospel to every creature, was given short shrift.”<sup>23</sup> The preacher-leaders behind the formation of Grace Community Church had another vision.

Duane Van Loo reports that he knew the church’s history of migration. However, he saw connecting with the community as a matter of “following the gospel’s claims.”<sup>24</sup> The Bible’s call to make disciples of all nations was controlling the preacher-leader’s thoughts and actions as they considered options for the future of the local church in Oak Lawn and Evergreen Park. In speaking about the orientation toward ministry within their community, Oak Lawn CRC preacher-leader, Phil Leo, said, “We are putting a stake in the ground and saying, hitherto has the Lord helped us . . . and from here we shall witness to the world.”<sup>25</sup> The preacher-leader is taking initiative in challenging the church to look outside itself to its own community in understanding their purpose and future. Speaking of Park Lane CRC’s history and its potential future, Calvin Aardsma states, “I came to Park Lane as Pastor because of its interest in reaching out to its community. The sudden

---

<sup>23</sup> Swieringa, *Dutch Chicago*, 211.

<sup>24</sup> Duane Van Loo, personal interview with the author, October 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Phil Leo, personal interview with the author, August 2007.

loss of significant families to communities farther southwest led to a widespread awareness of the need for reaching the community.”<sup>26</sup>

Each of the churches that became a part of Grace Community Church was facing a steady decline in members. The loss of a critical mass was making it difficult for each of the churches to continue their ministries and support themselves financially. Duane Van Loo stated, “Given the reality of the impending demise of the church, the preacher-leaders and others on the leadership team knew that they needed to do something radical or the end would soon come for the church.”<sup>27</sup> The pastors requested and were granted the formation of a task force consisting of leaders from each of the three churches, Park Lane CRC, Evergreen Park CRC, and Kedvale Avenue CRC. These preacher-leaders and church representatives met over two years to dream about that would develop a richer ministry to the community of Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn, drawing its members and ministry from those living in the community.

Prior to the formation of the consolidation team, representatives from Evergreen Park and Park Lane had been meeting to discuss a possible merger. However, when the preacher-leaders invited Kedvale Avenue representatives to the discussion, the tone of the discussions changed. Calvin Aardsma reports that when Kedvale Avenue CRC joined the discussions, he and Pastor Duane Van Loo of Kedvale Avenue CRC realized “consolidation is a different step than merging. Consolidation allowed a broad culture

---

<sup>26</sup> Calvin Aardsma, personal interview with the author, March 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Duane Van Loo, personal interview with the author, October 2009.

shift, developing a new, ‘third way’ coming out of the parent congregations.”<sup>28</sup>

Consolidation allowed the development of alternate worship services, the possibility of a church plant, and the concept of an ongoing revitalization project which would further a community-oriented ministry. All three churches found something positive in the idea of turning the separate congregations, each with its own culture, into a new church with its own sense of unity and purpose.

The process of consolidation was led in significant ways by the preacher-leaders of the parent churches. They led the consolidation team and the church councils to envision a revitalized congregation that sought to shift from the internal ministry focus of the past toward an external ministry focus, seeking to allow creative ways to connect with the ministry context and there represent Christ and his kingdom. Additionally, the preacher-leaders led selflessly through the consolidation process. Approximately one year into the two-year consolidation discussions, both Duane Van Loo and Calvin Aardsma realized that for this new culture to move forward there would need to be new leadership. Both agreed to tender their resignations once the churches chose to consolidate.<sup>29</sup>

The process of consolidation showed the crucial role a preacher-leader can play in renewing the ministry focus of church. The preacher-leaders were central to the process of change, identifying and focusing on a new vision for their congregations, selflessly focusing on its future in living out that vision. The role played by the preacher-leader in

---

<sup>28</sup> Calvin Aardsma, personal interview with the author, March 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Duane Van Loo, personal interview with the author, October 2009.

the formation of Grace Community Church helps to illustrate the way the present preacher-leader can continue that process of revitalization and lead Grace Community Church toward an externally focused ministry.

PART TWO

A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

## CHAPTER 3

### A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE CONGREGATION'S SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The first two chapters have described the self-understanding of the CRC, which was internally focused, seeking to insulate its members from the perceived evils of the American culture of which they were a part. However, the chapters also described how conflict with the values of the cultural institutions that maintained that isolation precipitated a situation where the leaders began a process of reflection and change within the Church community to orient its ministry toward the wider community. The seeds for an externally focused ministry were planted in those internal and external changes.

In this chapter as well as Chapter 4, this paper will provide a theological framework for a different self-understanding for Grace Community Church. This chapter will present the biblical and theological basis for seeing the Church as an instrument of God's mission in the world as he seeks to build his kingdom in the Church's community. This theology of the Church in mission can provide a basis for a new self-understanding for the congregation.

In addition, this paper will identify the biblical and theological foundation for the role of the preacher-leader within the local church. The preacher-leader has a unique role



in leading the local church into mission: he or she is to articulate the Bible's teaching of God's mission and apply it to the context of the local church in ministry. This biblical and theological foundation for the role of preacher-leaders in the ministry of God's Church and kingdom will provide the basis for identifying the particular ways the preacher-leader can lead the congregation toward a new identity and ministry.

### **The Biblical Concept of the Mission of God**

“At certain times and places it is particularly urgent that the Church both understand the shaping it has inherited from its context and hear the gospel's word that calls the Church to alter its life,” writes Darrell Guder in *Missional Church*.<sup>1</sup> Guder calls believers across North America to hear the gospel afresh in order to determine how to serve God best in their own situations. What Guder most wishes North American Christians to hear is the gospels' call to mission, how God has called and sent his people to be his agents to restore and heal creation. Guder states, “‘Mission’ means ‘sending,’ and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history.”<sup>2</sup> What Guder identifies as urgent for believers in North America is timely for Grace Community Church: seeing the mission of God not just as an activity of the Church, but as the expression of God's purpose to restore and heal creation. This section will define that mission as it provides the basis for an understanding of the Church and the realization of its identity today.

---

<sup>1</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

God's mission in the world can be summarized in this way: God's mission is to reconcile all things to himself in Christ by the power of his Spirit. Through his Spirit, God is working in the world to restore and heal lives of people in his world through Jesus. Following Jesus, people may experience renewal in their purposes and lives. As Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Lesslie Newbigin, esteemed British missionary and theologian, points out that God's mission can only be rightly understood in terms of the work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this restoration of all things.<sup>3</sup> God the Father is restoring life to its fullest expression by the renewing presence and power of the Spirit of God, through Jesus Christ, in whom God is restoring all things (Colossians 1:20).

This mission of God encompasses the story of the Bible. Arthur Glasser, Dean Emeritus of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, depicts God's reign and rule over all of creation and over all the people of the world as the heart of the mission of God, a mission depicted in the Bible. This picture of the mission of God "brings together the message of Old and New Testament narratives because the Kingdom of God is one of the central, overarching themes of the Bible."<sup>4</sup> Reggie McNeal echoes Glasser's conclusion, stating that "the Bible serves as a narrative to help the people of God understand his mission in the world and their role in it."<sup>5</sup> The story of God's mission to reconcile the world to himself is found in God's initial promise of a victor who would

---

<sup>3</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1989), 117-118.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: the Story of God's Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 20.

<sup>5</sup> McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 26.

crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). It is found in God's call to Abraham, where he blessed Abraham and promised that all people would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:2-3; see also Genesis 22:17-18). The mission of God is found in God's promise keeping at the time of Moses, drawing Abraham's descendants to himself and calling them to live as a light to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). The reconciling mission is seen in godly King David and the promise of a future king who would inherit David's throne in God's kingdom (2 Samuel 7:11b-16). Jesus called this reconciled world "the kingdom of God," a kingdom he came to bring in a unique way in his life and ministry (Mark 1:15). The completion of that story of God's reconciling mission is seen in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth of Isaiah and Revelation (Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-7). Throughout the Bible's story, God is working to reconcile the world to himself. This is his mission.

Jesus' life and ministry is central to God's reconciling mission. Jesus was sent by God to accomplish God's will (John 6:39), a will which was explained throughout the Old Testament as God extending his rule in this world. In coming to fulfill the promise of God's rule (Matthew 5:17), Jesus explained how the sweep of the Bible, beginning with Moses through the Prophets, all hinged on his life and ministry (Luke 24:25-27). As the late David Bosch, Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa, states, Jesus' ministry gave expression to the dynamic mission of God in the world, "particularly as this was portrayed, first, in the story of the covenant people of Israel and then,

supremely, in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bible’s message of God’s mission came to fullest expression in Jesus.

Jesus’ being sent by the Father to accomplish his mission shaped Jesus’ teaching. The center of Jesus’ teaching was the kingdom of God.<sup>7</sup> He was sent to announce the coming of God’s kingdom (see Mark 1:15 and Mark 1:38). As Arthur Glasser writes, “The ministry of Jesus is a vivid demonstration of the dynamic character of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the message Jesus gave to the disciples to share as he sent them worldwide to make disciples was the message of the kingdom of God, come in Jesus through the power of the Spirit. Jesus called his disciples to go with the good news, saying, “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matthew 10:7).

Jesus clearly states that the purpose of his mission was the preaching of the kingdom of God; Jesus said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God . . . because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). Jesus highlights his awareness both that he was sent by the Father and that he was sent to announce “the kingdom of God.” Since this gospel of the kingdom is central to Jesus’ mission, it is important to gain clarity on what Jesus meant by the phrase “the kingdom of God.”

The late Reformed New Testament theologian Herman Ridderbos identifies key characteristics of “the kingdom of God” as Jesus teaches it. Two of these characteristics

---

<sup>6</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 89.

<sup>8</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 200.

are especially relevant to this paper: first, Jesus' teaching that the kingdom of God is theocentric in character, and second, Jesus' teaching that the kingdom of God is "personal," the expression of God's presence here and now. In describing Jesus' teaching as theocentric, Ridderbos means that the coming of the kingdom "consists entirely in God's own action and is perfectly dependent on his activity."<sup>9</sup> The coming of the kingdom is nothing less than the great divine breakthrough anticipated in Isaiah at "the rending of the heavens" (Isaiah 64:1) and expressed in Jesus' baptism when the heavens were split and the Spirit of God broke through to alight on Jesus, initiating his ministry on earth (Mark 1:10-11).

The theocentric character of Jesus' teaching about God's kingdom is preeminently "the kingly self assertion of God, of his coming to the world in order to reveal his royal majesty, power, and right."<sup>10</sup> This assertion of God's rule appears very clearly from the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer: "hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10). These three petitions amplify each other. The coming of the kingdom is also depicted as the performance of God's will; carrying out God's revealed will on earth gives God glory and expresses the presence of God's kingdom. Dallas Willard affirms this concept of the theocentric character of God's kingdom in defining God's kingdom as "the range of his effective

---

<sup>9</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, trans. H. de Jongste (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1962), 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

will, where what he wants done is done.”<sup>11</sup> The coming of the kingdom is first of all the display of the divine glory, the reassertion and maintenance of God’s rule on earth.

In describing Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom of God as “personal,” Ridderbos means that the coming of God’s kingdom is God himself extending his dominion; the coming of the kingdom describes “the Divine action of the king.”<sup>12</sup> In short, in the coming of God’s kingdom, God himself is present. For example, in the parables of the man who sowed good seed in his field (Matthew 13:24), of the king who would take account of his servants (Matthew 18:23), of the landowner who hires laborers in his vineyard (Matthew 20:1), and of the king who made a marriage feast for his son (Matthew 22:1), the point of comparison is found in what the chief character has done or will do when he is present. In the same way, God himself is acting to bring his kingdom. It is God who is present, extending his dominion.

The personal character of the kingdom is affirmed in Willard’s assertion about the “kingdom of the heavens.” Willard states that Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom of heaven affirms that God is immediately present with us in our world.<sup>13</sup> Jesus shows us a “God-bathed world,” where his presence is seen everywhere by those who live for him.<sup>14</sup> When Jesus affirms that “the kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15), he is affirming that in this stage of redemption history initiated by Jesus, God is here and is constantly

---

<sup>11</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ridderbos, *Coming of the Kingdom*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> See Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 73-74.

<sup>14</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 76-77.

available here and now.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the kingdom of God is how God is beginning to thwart the power of sin and death that distorts and mars God's creation here and now, being present in the world, working toward the day when God will fully reconcile all things to himself in Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

The kingdom of God is the culmination of God's mission to reconcile the creation to himself, making real in the lives of the people of this world what was accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus. "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:17), establishing his rule through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ in turn calls all to come and follow him, giving promise of the reality of new life in him; this reality is spoken of in these terms: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Ruling through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, God overcomes the power of sin and death that distorts the creation and bring a harbinger of a future world fully reconciled to God.

The mission of God is derived from the nature of God. Mission means "sending" and it is a key biblical concept describing God's action in human history.<sup>17</sup> God the Father sent the Son into the world to build His kingdom. God the Father and the Son sent the Spirit into the world to draw people into this kingdom life. In short, the God of the Bible is a missional (or a sending) God. As Guder states, "This Trinitarian point of entry

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>16</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 187-188.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5. See also McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 21.

into our theology of the Church . . . leads us to see the Church as the instrument of God's mission."<sup>18</sup>

### **The Church as an Expression of the Mission of God**

As an expression of his character as a sending God, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sent the Church into the world. Central to understanding the Church is God's initiative in calling and equipping the Church for his mission in the world. That mission begins with God, is grounded in Christ's redemptive work, and is moved forward by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit draws and renews the hearts of those who hear the message of God's kingdom. Together, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit begin and advance God's mission. Bosch accents how the mission of the Church is rooted in the mission of God. Bosch writes, "The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son, and Holy spirit sending the church into the world."<sup>19</sup>

As Newbigin states, "The mission of the Church is to be understood, can only be rightly understood, in terms of the Trinitarian model."<sup>20</sup> The mission of the Church does not spring from any action of the Church; the mission of the Church arises from the nature of the God who sent his Son and his Spirit and then his people to accomplish his mission.

---

<sup>18</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

<sup>20</sup> Newbigin, *Gospel*, 118.



Of utmost importance in describing the character of the Church's mission in the world is this fact that it is rooted in God's mission. The Church's mission is an expression of God's heart.<sup>21</sup> Jesus taught that he was sent because of the depth of God's love for his world (John 3:16). The Church is empowered by the love of God as it engages in God's mission: "Christ's love compels us," stated the Apostle Paul in speaking of a believer's motivation for mission (2 Corinthians 5:15). Newbigin affirms the Bible's teaching that God is the initiator of the Church's mission: "It is of the greatest importance to recognize that it remains his mission."<sup>22</sup> The mission of the Church begins in God, is empowered by God, and its results depend on God. Glasser summarizes this biblical emphasis, stating, "When we consider the many texts that refer to the work of the Holy Spirit-in-mission, we see that this Spirit is the primary agent of mission, and human beings are secondary."<sup>23</sup> In sending his disciples to announce the coming of God's kingdom, Jesus said, "Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:19-20). God will bring his kingdom; God is working toward the day when all things will be made new (Revelation 21:1-6). The mission of the Church flows out of God's mission of sending Christ and his Spirit to inaugurate his kingdom.

---

<sup>21</sup> McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Newbigin, *Gospel*, 116.

<sup>23</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 263.

This emphasis in the mission of the Church flowing out of God's mission frees followers of Christ from the burden they might take on themselves of "building the kingdom" themselves. As Guder comments, "The verbs *to build* and *to extend* are not found in the New Testament's grammar for the reign of God."<sup>24</sup> Advancing the kingdom is God's work, who works to advance his mission through the Word and Spirit of Christ. This emphasis on the Church's mission flowing out of God's mission is also significant in that it enables the Church to avoid the trap of seeing its work as "a good work" and to seek to justify itself by works. Rather, attention to God's mission frees the Church to receive this mission and its correlate rule of God as a gift that one is welcome to enter. The mission of the Church is not done through believers' hard work; it is accomplished by God's Spirit who, through the invitation of the Church, moves people to receive his rule and enter the realm of his grace and goodness.

The Church is not the sole agent of mission but is, rather, a demonstration and place of God's mission in the world. The active agent of mission is God's Spirit. It is the Spirit that leads God's people into God's mission, empowering their ministries. Glasser states, "The Spirit must primarily be seen as the driving force behind any and all movements of the people outward . . . Mission means movement from Christ by his Spirit to the world he reconciled."<sup>25</sup> The message of the gospel is not a message of human wisdom; it is "a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). As the Spirit draws people to Christ, they become part of a community of faith whose life in Christ is a

---

<sup>24</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 263.

demonstration of God's love (Romans 5:8). The local church is a community that lives by the Spirit of God, who empowers each one to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> In the life of Christ's Church, the result is that believers are free to live into and enjoy the mission and correlative kingdom that Christ has given them. The Church rests in knowing the God who is on a mission and joining him in his work.

### **The Incarnation as a Framework for Mission**

Connecting God's call to him with the calling of the Church, the resurrected Jesus announced to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). Jesus, who was sent by the Father into the world to initiate his redemption of this world, continues his mission through the Church. Jesus' call to his disciples points to an essential element regarding the Church's mission: the Church is sent into the world on God's mission in the same way that Jesus was sent in the world. In John 20:21, Jesus uses the phrase "just as," which is used often in John's gospel to depict an analogy between the Father and Son that is applied to the relationship of Jesus to his disciples.<sup>27</sup> For example, in John 15:9-10, Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." The Father's love for Jesus is an analogy to the manner of love Jesus has shown to his disciples. The Father loved Jesus unconditionally, freely, in a creative way. So Jesus loved unconditionally,

---

<sup>26</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 265.

<sup>27</sup> See H.R. Balz and G. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, translation of *Exegetisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, volume 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1993), 226.

freely, creatively. Also, seeing the way Jesus loved his father, in a similar manner the disciples were to love him: by following his commands. The phrase “just as” indicates an analogy in manner.

The word “send” is also unique in its meaning. Jesus uses the word ἀποστέλλω to describe his “being sent” from the Father. Of 136 occurrences in the New Testament only 12 appear outside the Gospels and Acts. In John, particularly, ἀποστέλλω is related primarily to Christology.<sup>28</sup> The use of the word is rooted in Jesus’ being sent by the Father on the Father’s purpose; in turn, Jesus sends his people with the Father’s purpose in mind. In John 20:21, the verb ἀποστέλλω is in the perfect tense, meaning that the action of his being sent is still in force. New Testament scholar Gerard Borchert comments on the perfect tense, noting that “the use of the perfect in reference to the commission of Jesus should be understood to indicate that the mission of Jesus still continues and that the divine mission is not merely in mortal hands.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus is on God’s mission, a mission that continues today. Though he works through his people, he has not relinquished his mission. He is working through his people on God’s mission. Jesus reaffirmed this sending in an earlier Bible passage, John 17:18. Praying to the Father about his disciples, Jesus says, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” As Borchert comments, “The Greek verb ἀποστέλλω carries the idea of being sent for a purpose or being sent on a mission. Apostleship must accordingly be

---

<sup>28</sup> Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 141.

<sup>29</sup> G.L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 25B: John 12-21 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 306-307.

understood not so much as a status but as a purposeful calling to a mission by Jesus.”<sup>30</sup>

Like Jesus, those who follow him as disciples are also being sent on God’s mission to the world.

Applied to Jesus’ “sending” of his Church, there is an analogy between the way Jesus expressed his “sentness” and the way the Church lives out its being sent. The center of the analogy between the manner of Jesus being sent and the Church being sent is found in the incarnation of Jesus. “God’s mission has been most clearly revealed in the incarnation,” McNeal writes.<sup>31</sup> The incarnation of Christ is the way in which Jesus fulfilled his calling to be sent to the world. He embodied the presence of God with his people, acting and speaking in every way from within the culture of the first-century Jew. Jesus’ life and ministry embodied the word of God in that culture; John writes, “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Glasser speaks of Jesus’ incarnation as the heart of Jesus’ “sentness”: “His ministry reflects the absolute essentiality of contextualizing both the messenger and the message if the Word of the Lord is truly to be heard in concrete historical situations.”<sup>32</sup> In an analogous way, the mission of the Church is expressed most fully when it, filled with the Spirit of Christ, “incarnates” a fully human life within its ministry context.

The incarnation is not only a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith but, as Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch state, it is also a theological prism through which one can

---

<sup>30</sup> Borchert, *The New American Commentary*, 203.

<sup>31</sup> McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 201.

view his or her task in the world.<sup>33</sup> Just as Christ crossed the gap between divine and human life, reaching across in his creative, self-giving love to broken sinful life in order that the reconciliation between God and humanity may become reality, so Christians follow Christ to enter the world of those with whom God placed them, embodying that grace of God to bring reconciliation and grace to the broken people with whom they live.

Frost and Hirsch identify five implications of how the incarnation informs the Church's mission in God's world. These five implications clarify what it means to be sent to the world by Christ in the same manner in which Christ was sent to the world by the Father. First, the incarnation provides a conceptual framework that enables the Church to enter fully into the context in which God has placed it.<sup>34</sup> As seen in Part One, the CRC of the Chicago area had sought to isolate itself from its community. While the impulse to preserve the unique character of the gospel from a Reformed perspective is understandable, the Church did so in a way that it separated itself from the context in which the members lived. Developing ministry in light of Christ's summons to be in mission, as well as in light of being sent to the community, would encourage church members to find ways to be fully present with others within their immediate geographical setting.

Secondly, the incarnation as a conceptual framework for the Church's mission means that the Church will identify with the community in whatever way possible

---

<sup>33</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

without compromising the truth of the gospel.<sup>35</sup> The tradition of the CRC in Chicago was to guard the gospel; however, the way that guarding was implemented kept the church members from identifying with the cultural life of the people groups of Chicago. The cultural life with which they identified was solely with the Dutch ethnic group, exhibiting a form of cultural pride in the life of the Church. Living out Christ's mission in their community would encourage the members to understand the perspectives, causes, and grievances of the people in the neighborhood in which the church members live and minister.

A third implication of the incarnation as a framework for the Church's mission is closely related to the second, that of identification with a community. That is, the Church will embody a real and abiding presence with its community.<sup>36</sup> Church members will grow to understand their neighborhood's mood and rhythms; they will experience life in the neighborhood from the inside and not as intentional "outsiders." Church members will be an active part of the neighborhood celebrations, cultural events, and clubs. Church members will empathize with and be present with their community members as they deal with illnesses, personal crises, and sorrows. Chapter 1 outlines how the Dutch Reformed churches in the Chicago area strove to be separated from their community. Church Planter John Wilczewski reports hearing from a variety of business people within the Evergreen Park community that the Dutch Reformed people were friendly but

---

<sup>35</sup> Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

isolated; Wilczewski states that “they kept to themselves.”<sup>37</sup> Living into the call to incarnate Christ in their community will challenge church members to see themselves not as separate from their community but as one with their community.

Fourthly, the incarnation as a conceptual framework for the Church’s mission implies a “sending” impulse into the context in which the Church lives rather than an attractional impulse that seeks to draw people out of their immediate contexts.<sup>38</sup> Being sent into the particulars of the culture in which it ministers challenges church members to radically incarnate their expressions of faith; each church will look different depending on the character of the community of which it is a part. As seen in Chapter 1, the Dutch Reformed churches in the Chicago area exhibited a mono-culture, a unique Dutch immigrant culture, and to belong fully to that Church one needed to understand the history and character of that ethnic group. Living out Christ’s mission in its community would resist the stifling uniformity of the mono-cultural approach.

Fifthly, the incarnation as a conceptual framework for the Church’s mission implies that people will experience the presence of God on the “inside” of their culture and meaning system as a result of the embodying of the gospel in a culturally relevant way.<sup>39</sup> As the Apostle Paul points out, God “has not left himself without a testimony” (Acts 14:17); he shows himself everywhere in guiding and providing for his world. God is present, by his Spirit, everywhere (Psalm 139:7). Following God’s lead and stepping

---

<sup>37</sup> John Wilczewski, personal interview with the author, October 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



forward with discernment, a local church community is called to show and tell God's story in a way that uses the culture's forms of communication and patterns of association to show and tell the gospel in a way that "makes sense" to those who are part of a community.<sup>40</sup> The way in which the gospel can "come alive" in a culture happens in a myriad of ways. It may be in a community of believers where the church adopts the concerns of the community to give expression to the love and justice of Christ, exhibiting his kingdom in their context. It may be in a missional community that meets in a public space to live into the relevance of Christ's justice and mercy for that community. It may be in a missional community that transforms its private worship space into a public space for use by members of the community, again to show the hospitality of the God who opens his heart to all people. In contrast, the cultural life of the Dutch Reformed Church in Chicago may have created the impression that Jesus spoke with a Dutch accent and affirmed the unique values of the Dutch community; as a result, community members would have failed to see Jesus as one who identifies with them in their lives and in their community, and failed to see that he has moved into their neighborhood. Living out Christ's mission in their community would encourage church members to show Christ's identification with the community through their own actions of identification with the inner life of the community.

---

<sup>40</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 141.

## **The Mission of the Church: Witnessing to Christ's Kingdom**

In describing the way God's people might embody the life of Christ in their communities, the Bible uses the words "sign" and "foretaste."<sup>41</sup> As a sign represents something beyond itself and as a foretaste represents something yet to come, "the church points away from itself to what God is going to complete."<sup>42</sup> For example, when a local church incorporates people from different cultures and races living and worshipping together, it is a foretaste of the day the Bible anticipates, a day when people from every tribe, language, and nation will worship Christ together (Revelation 5:9). This reconciliation is a result of the work of Christ in the lives of people, bringing down a wall of division in order to create in himself one new humanity in the place of the two (Ephesians 2:15) and pointing people beyond the experience of the church to Christ, the reconciler. In contrast, when Grace Community Church members base their sense of identity and unity on a common ethnic background, they fail to be the "foretaste" and "sign" described in the Bible. However, as the church reflects more and more of what is coming in Christ's new world, it will be a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom in Christ.

The Church as a sign of God's kingdom helps one see the relationship between the Church and God's kingdom. As Guder bluntly states, "The Church must not be identified with the reign of God."<sup>43</sup> The Church is a fruit of that reign being extended through Christ's Spirit and the Church exists to point to that reign, but it is not identical

---

<sup>41</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 101.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 98.

with that reign of God. The Church is the gathered disciples who live by the power of God and desire to see God's presence and rule in their presence. As such, the Church is in a position of dependence upon and deference to God's reign. Ridderbos clarifies the relationship between the kingdom and the Church: "The *basileia* is the great divine work of salvation in its fulfillment and consummation in Christ; the *ekklesia* is the people elected and called by God and sharing in the bliss of the *basileia*. Logically, the *basileia* ranks first."<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, the Church is not divided from the kingdom of God. As God's people sent into the world, the Church points to that kingdom like a road sign points to a destination lying ahead. The Church is not identical with God's reign; but insofar as church members embody the principles of God's reign in the concrete situations of their lives, they show and tell a sampling of the full and complete arrival of God's kingdom like a sign anticipates an approaching destination. As Bosch states, "[The church] is a sign in the sense of pointer, symbol, example or model."<sup>45</sup>

The picture of the Church as a sign to the fullness of God's reign in Christ helps church members to see themselves as both different from the community in which they find themselves and yet identified with that community, being "in the world" but not being "of the world." Newbigin describes this tension, noting how, on the one hand, the Christian must identify with his or her ministry context in order to communicate the gospel effectively. He writes,

---

<sup>44</sup> Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 354.

<sup>45</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 11.

If the gospel is to be understood, if it is, as we say, to “make sense,” it has to be communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them. And since the gospel does not come as a disembodied message, but as the message of a community which claims to live by it and which invites others to adhere to it, the community’s life must be so ordered that it “makes sense” to those who are so invited.<sup>46</sup>

Newbigin describes the Christian life not as a flight from the culture, but a careful identification with it so that the Church can show and tell of God’s kingdom in a way that can be comprehended by those to whom God has sent the Church. On the other hand, Newbigin cautions against exhibiting a life of God’s kingdom in a way that is in essence really the life of the culture in which the Church is found. In North America, this can mean communicating a “can do” message, focusing on individual achievement and success by control of one’s environment, which has little to do with the life of self-denial and cross-bearing that Jesus calls his followers to take on.<sup>47</sup> While acknowledging that there is no such thing as a pure, unembodied gospel (one not embodied in a culture), Newbigin asserts that the way in which the life of Christ and the foretaste of the kingdom of God can be communicated in a given culture is through “the life of a community which remembers, rehearses, and lives by the story which the Bible tells . . . and in the actual personal encounters in which men and women who have themselves been called call others to follow [Jesus].”<sup>48</sup> It is through “doing” the story of the Bible as it is centered through worship and its life of discipleship, centered on sacrificial love of one’s

---

<sup>46</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 141.

<sup>47</sup> Newbigin also critiques the North American Protestant “mission” as being occupied by the question of saving the individual soul from perdition and marshalling its evangelism efforts in a singly focused rescue effort. While being saved from hell is a significant part of the gospel, it is not the New Testament center of Jesus’ call to a life of discipleship. Newbigin, *Gospel*, 124.

<sup>48</sup> Newbigin, *Gospel*, 147.

neighbors that the Christian will bear witness or point to the reality of God's kingdom found in Christ. In other words, it is through lives of loving service within the context of one's own community that the Christian will be a sign of Christ's kingdom.

The picture of the Church as a foretaste and sign of the kingdom of God is consistent with New Testament language about the relationship between the people of God and the reign of God. In speaking of the connection between God's kingdom and the life of the people of God, the New Testament uses the words "receive" and "enter."<sup>49</sup> Jesus depicts the kingdom of God as a gift one receives and is blessed. Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). Jesus depicts the reign of God as something that has been given; it is received as God's new reality in Christ. Willard states, the poor "are blessed as a result of the kingdom of God being available to them in their spiritual poverty."<sup>50</sup> They received the blessing of God's kingdom as a gift. Similarly, Jesus said that on the final day, God's kingdom will be inherited, received by those who follow Christ: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom, prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). The reign of God is spoken of as a gift one receives in Christ.

Jesus also asserts that the kingdom is like a realm or a zone that one enters. Jesus said that it is hard for those who are rich in this world to "enter" the kingdom of God (Luke 18:25). Likewise, Jesus states that "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in

---

<sup>49</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 94.

<sup>50</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 100.

heaven” (Matthew 7:21). The reign of God is something into which one is welcomed to enter by following Christ. It is not the result of human effort or correcting one’s attitude. Rather, it is entering the present reality of God’s rule in one’s immediate context; not focusing so much on what one does, but on how one does it, as Willard states.<sup>51</sup>

“Receiving” and “entering” the kingdom of God evoke a different type of engagement and different missional identity than the North American Church ideology of “building” or “extending” the kingdom of God, as Guder has identified.<sup>52</sup> The biblical terms “receiving” and “entering” also lead to a spiritual vitality that is consistent with Scripture. As Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr write in their book, *Leading Congregational Change*, spiritual vitality “is the life-giving power that faithful people experience together as they passionately pursue God’s vision for their lives.”<sup>53</sup> Encountering God’s holiness, experiencing the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, both individually and collectively, are essentials of Bible-based spiritual vitality.<sup>54</sup> The words “receiving” and “entering” lead to a Bible-based spiritual vitality by providing antidotes to anxiety and pride. Rather than fretfully striving to extend and build the kingdom of God, or rather than proudly acting as if it is the culmination of the kingdom, believers are free to witness to the kingdom and together embody a foretaste of that kingdom in the way it embodies the gospel.

---

<sup>51</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 284.

<sup>52</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 93.

<sup>53</sup> Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-19.

The words “receiving” and “entering” also free the Church from the power of legalism and self-righteousness. Legalism may arise in a community that asserts that God depends on the individual members to build his kingdom; members will anxiously strive to win others for God, fearful of “letting God’s kingdom fail” as a result of one’s personal failure. Self-righteousness may arise in a community as members strive to prove their value to God by their dutiful obedience; members will act as if they can accomplish life change and growth in others, a change that the Bible says only God can accomplish. Being a sign creates room for believers to be honest and “real” about their struggles in life, knowing that what they give witness to is not their own wisdom or virtue but the grace of God seen in the face of Jesus. Since the Church is a sign to God’s kingdom and since God brings the kingdom growth, believers are free simply to be themselves, developing authentic relationships where they can share who they are honestly as they reveal their identities in Christ. Such relational honesty rooted in authentic spirituality is foundational to the Church’s calling as a witness to God’s kingdom. As Herrington, Bonem, and Furr state, “Without authentic spiritual and relational vitality in a local gathering of believers, the church does not have the resources that are demanded to engage transformation and to influence the world.”<sup>55</sup> Those resources for transformation and influence ultimately come from the power and presence of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believing community.

---

<sup>55</sup> Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 27.

### **Conclusion: Mission as Essential to the Church's Self-understanding**

God sends believers. Like God did with Abraham, God now draws people to himself, through Jesus and by the working of his Spirit, blessing them that they might be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:2-3, Galatians 3:26-29, Galatians 6:10). As Bosch writes, "The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world."<sup>56</sup> Christians are sent by God to witness to God's redeeming power. That is who Christians are—a blessed and sent people. Believers exist not just for their own pleasure, but to serve Christ by testifying to his grace and power, receiving in joy his kingdom. The theology of mission outlined above illustrates that "being sent" is a basic fact of the Church's life that shapes all aspects of its ministry. In other words, this "being sent" is basic to the Church's self-understanding.

The mission of God is not something the Church does as one activity among many; it is who the Church is. The mission of God is not something people attend or join; it is an expression of what Christ has called them to be. It is with this in mind that contemporary missiologists have coined the word "missional," transforming the noun "mission" into the adjective "missional" that describes the Church's being. The Church is "missional" as it is sent by God to join him in his mission to renew and restore his world.

---

<sup>56</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.



McNeal defines the “missional Church” as “the people of God partnering with God in his redemptive mission in the world.”<sup>57</sup> God’s call to his people is to be sent into the world to represent the kingdom of God. The Church partners with God who has sent Jesus and his Spirit into the world to redeem it as his very own. The term “missional” effectively expresses this essential nature and calling of the Church as God’s called and sent people.<sup>58</sup>

The mission that Christ has sent believers on is essential to everything the Church does. For example, the Church’s worship is connected to its mission in that worship is the fruit of the gospel taking root and growing in the lives of those who hear it and take it to heart; their worship is a result of the message conveyed through those sent. Newbigin identifies the purpose and goal of the Church’s mission, defining “mission” as “the entire task for which the Church is sent into the world.”<sup>59</sup> Given this understanding, Newbigin adds, one can distinguish “missions” from the “mission” of the Church, defining “missions” as “those specific activities which are undertaken by human decision . . . to create a Christian presence in a place or situation where there is no such presence or no effective presence.”<sup>60</sup> As a missional entity, the Church will engage in specific activities which seek to live out its “sentness”; those activities are ways the Church may embody the presence of God in a specific community. While those activities may be referred to as “missions,” underlying the missions is the essential character of the Church as a people

---

<sup>57</sup> McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Newbigin, *Gospel*, 121.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

sent to redemptively embody Christ in his world. This reality of the Church as missional is basic to the vision needed for Grace Community Church to be transformed into an externally focused congregation.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ROLE OF THE PREACHER-LEADER IN GOD'S MISSION

“The key to the formation of missional communities is their leadership.”<sup>1</sup> So Alan Roxburgh begins his discussion of leadership in the missional community, an essay in Guder’s *Missional Church*. Roxburgh is rightly pointing out that leadership is a critical gift that God’s Spirit gives to his Church in order to lead God’s people as a missional community. Christ gave the gift of leadership to the Church in order to form people to be witnesses of God’s kingdom, seeing themselves as being sent into their communities to embody the presence of God. Leadership equips people for lives of service, viewing themselves as sent by Christ to be a foretaste of God’s purpose for his world.

The previous chapter described, biblically and theologically, how the Church is an expression of the unique mission of God in renewing the world. This description provides a basis for articulating an externally focused vision for Grace Community Church. This chapter will present a theological description of the key role that leadership plays in forming the community of faith toward its God-given mission. In particular, this

---

<sup>1</sup> Alan Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership: Equipping God’s People for Mission,” in Guder, *Missional Church*, 183.

chapter will present the leadership role that preaching plays in forming the missional mindset of a church.

### **The Preacher-Leader's Message: the Good News of God's Kingdom**

From the New Testament's perspective, the message of preaching is the coming of the kingdom of God. While nearly thirty different Greek words may be translated into the English word "preaching," these words are used in the New Testament to "represent the new phenomenon of the in-breaking kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup> The kingdom of God is God's rule in this world where peace and justice reign, where God is present to restore and heal life once broken. It is a kingdom that has come into human history through Christ Jesus and expresses the reality of God's presence with his people. The gospel that is proclaimed by preachers is the gospel of this kingdom come in Jesus Christ.

This understanding of the preacher's message begins with the preaching of Jesus. Jesus' mission was to inaugurate the kingdom of God in this world (Mark 1:38). In light of this mission, the heart of Jesus' message was the coming of God's kingdom (see Mark 1:15-16). Jesus himself stated that his preaching was about the kingdom of God that was coming in and through him. Early in his preaching ministry, on an occasion when he was overwhelmed by people who wanted him to heal them, Jesus told his disciples that he was going to move to other locale in Galilee. He said to his disciples, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, for that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43). Jesus understood that his primary purpose was to preach the good news of

---

<sup>2</sup> Michael Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 25.

the kingdom of God. Throughout his preaching, Jesus continued to elaborate the character of the kingdom of God. On numerous occasions, he used parables to describe that kingdom. As Glasser notes, “Jesus spoke about the Kingdom through parables that reveal what the Kingdom of God means.”<sup>3</sup> Mark 5:30 depicts Jesus asking, rhetorically, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like or what parable shall we use to describe it?” Jesus’ parables, many known throughout the world today, are descriptions of the kingdom of God, the center of Jesus’ preaching. Even as Jesus was completing his preaching ministry, his message is summed up as being about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 says, “He appeared to (the disciples) over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” In short, the center of Jesus’ teaching was the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

As the gospel Jesus preached was centered on the kingdom of God, so too the message Jesus gave to his followers as they make disciples was the message of the kingdom of God. Jesus called his disciples to preach the good news, saying: “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘the kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matthew 10:7). A preacher’s task, then, is to announce the presence of God’s kingdom.

The kingdom of God that is received as a gift and entered into by faith in Jesus is announced and given reality through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As people respond to that preaching in faith, they receive the gift of God’s kingdom through the Holy Spirit and are welcomed into that kingdom through the community of faith. The result of preaching the kingdom is the formation of a community of faith. As Michael

---

<sup>3</sup> Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 199.

<sup>4</sup> Guder, *Missional Church*, 89.

Quicke writes, “Preaching is nothing short of sharing the in-breaking of God’s good news to create new people in new community.”<sup>5</sup> As preaching announces the new reality of God’s kingdom, it is a key instrument by which God communicates his purpose for the world to effect change in the lives of those who hear and live its message.

Jesus called his disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom that he had taught them. As they do so, Christ’s disciples will be formed in Christ within the context of the community that God draws together through the preaching of his kingdom. Doug Pagitt writes of preaching’s formative role in developing Christian character in community: “We take part in these [Christian] communities because we believe they’re where we’re formed and shaped to become the people of God – people who are actively living in the kingdom.”<sup>6</sup> Through the message of the kingdom, people hear and respond to God’s call to live as his sent people in the communities in which they live.

Preaching communicates this message of the kingdom because it embodies the story of the Bible. The Bible’s story is the story of God’s mission to redeem his world through Christ, gathering people into a new community. The Bible “serves as a narrative to help the people of God understand his mission in the world and their role in it.”<sup>7</sup> As the story of the Bible is preached, people hear God’s hopes for humanity, God’s vision of how people could treat one another in love, and what life in the kingdom looks like. The

---

<sup>5</sup> Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Reimagined* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 18.

<sup>7</sup> McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 27.

preacher, in preaching this gospel of the kingdom, announces the presence of God's kingdom in Christ and calls people to embody that kingdom in Christ.

Preaching plays a pivotal role in forming Christian community, transforming people's lives so that they live by the purpose and values of the kingdom of God. Lesslie Newbigin describes the community forming effect of preaching the gospel of the kingdom; Newbigin states, "Its visible embodiment will be a community that lives by this story, a community whose existence is visibly defined in the regular rehearsing and reenactment of the story which has given it birth."<sup>8</sup> The gospel of the kingdom, heard and reenacted regularly within the community of faith, can transform believers into a community that is a sign to the kingdom of God.

Preachers are called by Christ to equip and challenge their audiences to represent that kingdom in their daily lives. This challenge is a form of leadership in the life of the Church. Roxburgh states, "The purpose of leadership is to form and equip a people who demonstrate and announce the purpose and direction of God through Jesus Christ."<sup>9</sup> In other words, the preaching that announces the presence of God's kingdom and calls people to embody its values matches the purpose of leadership as Roxburgh defines it. The goal of a preacher's preaching is to lead others toward embodying the values of the kingdom of God in Christ.

---

<sup>8</sup> Newbigin, *Gospel*, 120.

<sup>9</sup> Roxburgh, "Missional Leadership," 183.

## **The Preacher-Leader's Means: Articulating a Vision and Values for the Local Church**

Articulating a vision for an organization is a main way in which a leader leads an organization. Leaders look to the future with a vision of what could be for their organization. As Leith Anderson states, “Visions are in the eyes of the leaders.”<sup>10</sup> What the leader sees is a picture of a preferred future; this vision of the future, while not pictured down to the last detail, is clear enough to enable followers to imagine the way the organization could be in the future. Eddie Gibbs, Professor in the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, affirms this leadership role in the church, stating “the leader’s role in developing vision is first and foremost to lead the faith community in seeking the mind of God” in interpreting and applying the mission of God into their specific context.<sup>11</sup>

The preacher-leader plays a key role in the visioning process. Because of his or her message of the coming kingdom of God in Christ, and because of his or her mission of leading others toward embodying that kingdom in their daily living within the context of a community formed by God through that message, the preacher-leader will be consistently and regularly presenting God’s vision for life in his kingdom. Michael Quicke writes, “Authentic preaching has always opened up new ways of living and being in Christ.”<sup>12</sup> The preacher-leader thereby will be a leading spokesperson in guiding his or

---

<sup>10</sup> Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990, 1998), 170.

<sup>11</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005),

<sup>12</sup> Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching*, 32.



her church into God’s purpose for the particular congregation and will be the chief guide in articulating the values that are consistent with that vision. William Willimon, Professor of Christian Ministry at Duke University Divinity School, warns against preaching that ignores or avoids this vision. Willimon writes, “From my observation, far too many pastors are too willing to settle into present arrangements, too willing to manage the church as it is, rather than stretch themselves and risk envisioning the church as God intends it to be.”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, preaching and leadership belong together. As Quicke writes, “A church’s mission and vision should be most clearly articulated in worship through preaching.”<sup>14</sup> In order to gain clarity on the means available to the preacher-leader to articulate the vision and values for a local congregation, it is helpful to compare that task to the leadership task in other organizations.

The literature on leadership focuses extensively on the leaders’ role in articulating vision. For example, Kouzes and Posner’s *The Leadership Challenge* specifies various ways a leader builds the vision and values of an organization.<sup>15</sup> Kouzes and Posner’s book is solidly based on research begun over twenty-five years ago, asking hundreds of

---

<sup>13</sup> William Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 280.

<sup>14</sup> Quicke, *360 Degree Leadership*, 70.

<sup>15</sup> See James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge, 4<sup>th</sup> edition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), xii.

“ordinary people to describe extraordinary leadership experiences.”<sup>16</sup> As a result of their research, Kouzes and Posner identify five practices of exemplary leadership.

The five exemplary practices Kouzes and Posner identify are: “model the way,” which includes clarifying personal and corporate values and setting an example of those values through their daily actions; “inspire a shared vision,” which involves describing what could be the future of an organization and enlisting others in that vision; “challenge the process,” which includes seeking opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve as well as experimenting and taking risks in living out the new vision; “enabling others to act,” which involves fostering collaboration and building trust among those who have a stake in the vision as well as strengthening others on one’s team to act with greater competence in fulfilling the organization’s vision; and, lastly, “encourage the heart,” which recognizes the contributions of those who take steps toward realizing the vision as well as celebrating the values and victories of the organization. This summary of those five practices shows the key role leaders play in clarifying and inspiring an organization’s vision and values. This summary provides a backdrop to see how a preacher-leader may effectively be used to articulate a vision and values for a local congregation.

When Jesus calls preachers, he calls unique leaders for his Church. Preachers are given by Christ in order to enable his Church to live out Christ’s kingdom life. The Bible affirms that preachers are leaders given by Jesus to empower and enable believers to follow Jesus more effectively. Christ “gave some to be . . . pastors . . . to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11-

---

<sup>16</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, xiii.

12). As this passage implies, those called to be pastors are to depend on Christ who gives the gift of leadership. Those leading as pastors are called by Christ to use their gifts to inspire deeper visions of living out God's will for his community.<sup>17</sup> Those who are pastors are preaching leaders who declare God's word today so that by the grace of God people and communities are transformed.

Of all the leaders in a Church, none is more visible, none is more outspoken, and none has the opportunity to influence the life of the congregation more powerfully than the preacher-leader. As the preacher-leader preaches the message of God's kingdom and as he or she calls people to follow Jesus in living for God's kingdom, the preacher-leader portrays for people the Bible's vision for the life in this world. As the pastor preaches the Bible story, he or she will show God working through Christ to reconcile the world to himself (Colossians 1:19-20); he or she will show God at work in his mission. As the pastor-preacher expounds the meaning of that mission, he or she will identify ways in which that mission can be lived out in their life together as a church. In other words, the pastor who preaches the gospel of the kingdom functions as a key leader, articulating the Bible's vision of the preferred future. Again, Quicke affirms, "You can lead without preaching but you cannot preach biblically without leading."<sup>18</sup>

In a similar manner, Roxburgh describes the vision-casting character of leadership in a church tipped toward the kingdom of God. Affirming the power of the Holy Spirit to guide church leaders by his word, Roxburgh states, "The Spirit of Jesus leads the people

---

<sup>17</sup> Quicke, *360 Degree Leadership*, 59.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

of God's reign and their leadership into an eschatological future that is present among them now, even if only imperfectly."<sup>19</sup> Preacher-leaders in the Church are shaped by the reality of what God has begun in Christ, bringing the future into the present. Preacher-leaders guide people to live into this new reality, living in hope as they work for and wait for the full expression of the new reality. As preacher-leaders preach the Bible message of the reign of Christ, they inspire a vision for the present and future of the congregation's life. As preacher-leaders invite people into the implications of that future reality through their preaching, they inspire people to live out that vision of life given by God and encourage people to join with God in his mission to expand that kingdom everywhere and with everyone. Preaching, then, plays a crucial role in setting the vision for the congregation's life. Particularly, preaching plays a crucial role in shifting a congregation's vision toward an external vision of building grace-filled relationships with people throughout its community.

Anderson identifies a basic question which a leader must face regarding their organization's vision: Is its vision inward or outward?<sup>20</sup> As church leaders set an organization's vision, they will determine whether the organization is internally focused or externally focused. For example, a church's budget is weighed either toward the needs of the members or it is weighed to build connections with those not yet members. A church's schedule is set either for the convenience of the loyal insider or the convenience of the potential newcomer. Leaders determine how the organization lives out its vision

---

<sup>19</sup> Roxburgh, "Missional Leadership," 187.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, *Change*, 156.

by how it allocates resources and sets schedules; in doing so, leaders determine whether an organization's vision is internally or externally focused. Anderson states, "An organization's first priority is either serving itself or serving others."<sup>21</sup> Regarding a church community, as a leader presents a vision for the church's future, those leaders are called, then, to determine and color a picture of the future that is either externally focused or internally focused. In shifting a Church's vision from internally focused to externally focused, the leaders play a foundational role by setting the externally focused vision.

As the preacher-leader teaches this message of the kingdom, he or she will expound the implications of God's kingdom agenda for the congregation's identity and ministry. The implication of God's kingdom agenda for the congregation's ministry is that it exists to serve Christ and others; in light of this truth, the preacher-leader is called to articulate a vision for the congregation that shifts its focus of ministry to the community of which the Church is a part.

As Kouzes and Posner indicate, leaders not only inspire a shared vision but they also clarify the values that undergird how that vision will be lived out. The leader not only articulates what is to be done but how that task will be done. This is true for the preacher-leader in a local congregation. Embedded in the Bible's message of the kingdom of God are values that shape how members of a congregation interact with each other and their community as they "seek first his kingdom" (Matthew 6:33). In light of this reality, the preacher-leader is called to clarify the values for the congregation's life as he or she teaches the message of God's kingdom.

---

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, *Change*, 156.

Aubrey Malphurs offers helpful guidance for understanding and clarifying values. With reference to a church, Malphurs defines values as “constant, passionate, sacred core beliefs that drive its ministry.”<sup>22</sup> There are five aspects to Malphurs’s definition as they apply to the life of the Church living out the vision of God’s kingdom.

First, contends Malphurs, values are constant within an organization; they do not and should not change. As a constant set of beliefs, they provide the glue that holds the different functions within an organization together. In the life of a church, values are an essential way that the church expresses its unity. Christ prays that the Church will express its unity as a way of witnessing to the world of the presence of God within us (John 17:23). Through shared values, church members join hearts and lives together in service of their one Lord, Jesus.

Secondly, Malphurs asserts that values are expressed passionately or deeply. Values do not simply appeal to the intellect; they stir one’s emotions and move a person to action. If there is a conflict in values, the internal dissonance will be great enough within an organization to bring great emotional energy to bear to resolve that tension. Christ fills us with his Spirit and empowers us; in response to his call we are moved to love him with our whole heart. This passion is expressed in those values he embodies which we also take on and express in our lives and ministry.

Thirdly, writes Malphurs, values are “sacred.” Values are rooted in truth, a truth held inviolable by those in the organization. For the Christian, values are sacred because they are rooted in the source of all truth, God and his dealings with his creation as he

---

<sup>22</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Values Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, 2004), 31.

works to build his kingdom in Christ Jesus. All which is true finds its ultimate source in God. Believers discern his truth when, in wisdom gained through wearing the glasses of Scripture and through the presence of God’s Spirit within themselves and his people, they see the deep and abiding ways God is calling them to express the values of the Kingdom of God in their lives and ministry.

Fourthly, Malphurs contends that values express core beliefs. Malphurs uses “core” to depict those beliefs which are essential, not dependent on any other beliefs.<sup>23</sup> Core values are those that are essential to the organization’s existence; without these beliefs, the organization would lose its purpose. For example, if a church lost its belief in God’s grace, it would no longer function as a church of Jesus but some self-help organization. These core beliefs are considered “beliefs” because they are held to be true without a demand for a proof. They are expressions of truth held because of the way they are connected to the core teachings of Scripture, which are all rooted in Christ and his mission on earth (Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21-23).

Fifthly, Malphurs explains that values drive a church as it adapts to changes and moves into the future. Malphurs writes, “While a ministry is vision focused, it is values driven.”<sup>24</sup> The primary beliefs of a church shape what is done and what is not done. Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro describe this same leading function of values, showing how church members, and especially a church’s leadership, decide in light of

---

<sup>23</sup> Malphurs, *Values Driven Leadership*, 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

specific values and thereby “change the quality of the environment that you create.”<sup>25</sup>

Consistent teaching of the values of the kingdom of God, worked into concrete practices of the believing community, can provide the concrete experience of living into the life of the kingdom of God, honoring the rule of God within the relationships and ministry of the local congregation.

As the preacher-leader teaches this message of the kingdom, he or she will expound the implications of God’s kingdom agenda for the congregation’s identity and ministry. As people hear the Bible’s story of the coming of God’s kingdom, the preacher-leader will show God is present in Christ, how God is immediately available and ready to guide and bless in Christ, how God’s kingdom is at hand. As the preacher-leader expounds the meaning of that kingdom for the life of the believing community, implications will be seen of how the followers of Christ can witness to that kingdom in their lives and together as a church. The implication of God’s kingdom agenda for the congregation’s ministry is that it exists to serve Christ and others. In light of this agenda, the preacher-leader will be articulating biblical values that shape how his or her congregation will shift its focus of ministry to the community of which the church is a part. In this way the preacher-leader will lead the congregation to develop an externally focused vision, seeing itself as a witness to the kingdom of God.

---

<sup>25</sup> Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 54.



## CHAPTER 5

### JESUS' MODEL OF DISCIPLEMAKING

In the gospel of Mark, immediately after Jesus began to teach the message of the kingdom of God, he began to gather disciples, saying, “Come, follow me” (Mark 1:17). It is as if the first step in witnessing to the present rule of God was to gather a community of followers who would learn what it means to live for God’s glory, to live doing the will of God in light of the kingdom he is bringing through Jesus. Announcing the kingdom immediately leads to the formation of disciples.

Chapter 3 described, biblically and theologically, how the Church is an expression of the unique mission of God in renewing the world. This description provides a basis for articulating an externally focused vision for Grace Community Church. Chapter 4 presented a theological description of the key role that the preacher-leader plays in forming the community of faith toward its God given mission. In particular, Chapter 4 identified the formative role preaching plays in forming the missional mindset of a church. Chapter 5 will build on that foundation and look at how the preacher-leader follows Christ in making disciples as he or she teaches the good news of the kingdom and as he or she helps believers live into the reality of God’s kingdom come in Christ.

This chapter will describe how the call to discipleship begins in denial of the self; the denial of the self means the denial of a sense of identity that arises from anything other than one's relationship with God. This chapter will also describe how following Jesus means that Christ's presence and his teachings are the center of one's universe and the basis for one's new identity. This inner transformation of the disciple, and especially the preacher-leader as a disciple, is crucial to effective leadership, since the quality of one's leading depends as much on the character of the leader as it does on his or her skill and function in leadership.

### **Jesus' Model for Discipleship: Self-denial and Cross-bearing**

In his teaching, as recorded in the gospels, Jesus presents a pattern for how to lead others toward embodying the values of the kingdom of God. Jesus called his disciples to follow him in his kingdom by denying themselves, taking up their crosses, and following him (Mark 8:34). Denying oneself, taking up one's cross, and following Christ in his kingdom are the means by which a disciple of Jesus moves toward living more fully by the values of God's kingdom.

The first step in that call to discipleship is denying oneself. The self one is called to deny is the pride-filled, self-centered person of the sinful and fallen life. John Calvin writes, "Each individual, by flattering himself, bears a kind of kingdom in his breast."<sup>1</sup> The kingdom of the fallen human heart stands in rebellion against God. In following Christ, this pride-filled self must be forgiven and denied.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics, volumes 20-21 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 694.

Willard reflects Calvin's thought as he describes the basic shift that can lead to the reordering of the human self as it becomes more like Christ. Christian discipleship "rests on this indispensable foundation of death to self and cannot proceed except insofar as that foundation is being firmly laid and sustained."<sup>2</sup> By self-denial, Willard and Calvin do not mean a denial of things or practices to oneself; rather self-denial is giving up on the project of being the ultimate point of reference in one's life. Following Jesus means that Christ is the center of one's universe.

Calvin and Willard see Jesus pointing to a second, complementary step of discipleship: taking up the cross. For Calvin, the cross is a symbol of obedient service. Jesus bore the cross in order to attest and prove his obedience to the Father.<sup>3</sup> Believers also bear a cross when they obediently follow God's leading, humbly relying on God's grace. Jesus' obedience on the cross is the epitome of suffering for the sake of righteousness. Those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness follow Christ in his suffering, bearing the cross in sacrificial obedience.<sup>4</sup> As believers obey God, even to the point of suffering for doing what is right and good, they find joy in sharing in Christ's sufferings (Philippians 3:7-10 and 1 Peter 4:13).

Willard adds a significant meaning of cross-bearing in light of modern New Testament scholarship: the biblical teaching of the cross as the epitome of *agape*, self-giving love. The cross that believers take lifts them up beyond their obsessive or partial

---

<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 64.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 703.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 707.

desires to the fuller character of love in service.<sup>5</sup> When believers give of themselves to others in service, they give a full expression of Christ-like love, a love seen best in his giving of himself on the cross (1 John 3:16).

The cross as the epitome of sacrificial love points to a consideration of how a disciple's acts of service may play a key role in one's formation toward Christlikeness. When believers give of themselves sacrificially, when they invest in the lives of those who are less fortunate, they imitate Jesus who humbled himself in service to the point of death on a cross (Romans 2:7-8). Sacrificial service is a reflection of Christ and is essential to a believer's growth in Christlikeness.

The two steps of self-denial and self-sacrificial service are the heartbeat of being a disciple who seeks to embody the life of God's kingdom. The two steps provide the content of preaching a life of following Jesus in the context of the coming kingdom of God. One of three core confessions of the CRC, the Heidelberg Catechism, affirms this biblical teaching of self-denial and self-sacrifice as basic steps in discipleship. The Catechism accents that as believers deny themselves, they are called to "put on" the character of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The catechism is reflecting the teaching of passages such as Colossians 3:12-14 and Ephesians 4:22-24. This biblical teaching of "putting on" Jesus Christ is rooted in the Bible's teaching of Jesus as the Second Adam, the one who perfectly reflects the image of God. As such, Jesus is the expression of what it means to be fully human.

---

<sup>5</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 68.

<sup>6</sup> *The Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1979), 44. See also Romans 5:15-17, Colossians 1:15 & 19 and 1 Corinthians 15:45.

As believers put on Christ, as they make his will their will, as they are transformed by a renewed mind to Christ, they live more fully like Jesus in every area of life. Since Christ is the expression of what it means to be fully human, those who become more like Christ are not otherworldly. Rather they live fully engaged lives in the cultures into which they are placed.

The good news of God's reign in Jesus Christ can shape the life of the Church. As people follow Jesus, they are being remade in the image of Jesus, denying their willfulness and adapting their lives to reflect more fully the life of Jesus. Biblically centered preaching will call people to take on this task, being transformed continually to live lives that embody God's kingdom (Romans 12:1-2).

### **Christian Leadership: Called to Discipleship and to Local Ministry**

God's call to be his disciple does not bypass the particularities of a person's life; rather God summons a person in the context of one's heritage, disposition, passions, concerns, and particular life situation. Ruth Barton, in her book, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, writes, "Our calling is woven into the very fabric of our being *as we have been created by God*, and it encompasses everything that makes us who we are."<sup>7</sup>

God's calling does not make a person to be something he or she is not; God calls a person to be the person he or she was born to be, the person God is remaking him or her to be in Christ. Christ's call to follow him is essential to the Christian's walk of faith. Jesus said,

---

<sup>7</sup> Ruth Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 77.

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Underlying one’s calling to ministry, then, is one’s calling to be a disciple of Jesus. This concept is found in the Bible’s teaching of calling. The Bible uses the word “calling” in a wide and a narrow sense. In the wide sense, “calling” refers to God’s invitation to faith; God calls people to trust in him and follow his will. God calls people “to be saints” (Romans 1:7). He called his people “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). He called people “to his eternal glory in Christ” (1 Peter 5:10). God calls people “into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). In other words, people are called to a relationship of faith in God through Jesus. Barton asserts, “In the New Testament, the idea of calling is almost synonymous with salvation and the life of faith itself.”<sup>8</sup> Eddie Gibbs accents this same biblical teaching: “The concept of calling is essential to the life of discipleship.”<sup>9</sup> Jesus’ first call to his disciples was, “Come, follow me” (Mark 1:17). Before sending disciples out on his mission, Jesus first called them to discipleship.

Applied to leadership within the Church, the broad sense of calling affirms a unity underlying that of both leader and follower. God’s calling applies to the totality of God’s people. Those called to leadership are, first of all, called to be disciples of Jesus. In other words, in Christ’s Church, leaders are not called in isolation from fellow believers; rather,

---

<sup>8</sup> Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 131.

leaders are followers who are part of a community of the called.<sup>10</sup> The members of the congregation are called by God to be disciples of Christ; the congregation as a whole is called to be a sign of God's kingdom. William Willimon affirms this broad sense of calling, a calling affirmed in being baptized into Christ, a calling basic to the life and ministry of the Church. Willimon writes, "*All the baptized share in Christ's priesthood to the world.* There are not laity presided over by priests, but rather all are priests by virtue of baptism."<sup>11</sup> Leaders are not to "lord it over" God's people (1 Peter 5:3) but are fellow servants with each other in the believing community. As Willimon states, a leader is a "servant of the servants of God."<sup>12</sup> Basic to the leader's calling is the calling to be a disciple of Jesus.

Affirming this basic sense of calling shared with all believers will free leaders to empower every member to engage in Christ's call to ministry as a sign to the kingdom. As Gibbs writes, this sense of being called with God's congregation provides a "necessary corrective, emphasizing that all who are called to salvation are also called to service in the world."<sup>13</sup> Leaders ought not focus on their calling to the extent that it marginalizes fellow believers around them. Instead, leaders "must orchestrate the *transference of the ownership of the church to the laity.*"<sup>14</sup> It is not only preacher-leaders who are called; all God's people, together, are called to be salt, yeast, and light in the

---

<sup>10</sup> Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Willimon, *Pastor*, 29.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 132.

<sup>14</sup> Willimon, *Pastor*, 281.

world.<sup>15</sup> When leaders emphasize their shared calling with all believers, they set the stage for believers to step up as witnesses to God’s kingdom.

In addition to this broader, basic sense of “calling” in the New Testament, there is also a narrow sense of “calling.” In the New Testament, the idea of calling is also used to describe an answer to God’s personal address to particular people in the specific situations of their lives. The Bible states, “Each one of you should retain the place in life . . . to which God has called him. . . . Each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to” (1 Corinthians 7:17, 24). The apostle Paul spoke of his sense of calling to a particular ministry: “called to be an apostle” (1 Corinthians 1:1). Paul links the particular role he played within the Church to the specific or particular call of God on him. That calling was lived out in specific situations and in specific activities; Acts 16:10 describes how, through a dream of a Macedonian pleading for help, a dream confirmed the next morning by his companions, Paul concluded that “God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

It is in this secondary sense of being called to a specific task and activity that Reformed theology speaks of being called to ministry. A preacher-leader is called to live out his or her relationship to God in a specific place in the life of the church. Jesus, by his Spirit, summons a preacher-leader to serve God in a particular place and time, equipping God’s people to live out God’s mission. The purpose of this secondary sense of calling is to equip a particular body of God’s people to serve God and its community (Ephesians 4:11-12). The calling of a preacher-leader to minister within a specific local

---

<sup>15</sup> Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 131.



church is a calling to inspire a shared vision from the Bible's picture of the coming kingdom of God. This secondary calling, writes Barton, is God's "summons to serve him in a particular way at a particular point in history."<sup>16</sup> In the setting of that Church, he or she challenges people to be disciples of Jesus, living in the reality of God's kingdom coming in Christ.

### **Christian Leadership: "Follow Me as I Follow Christ"**

The calling to be a disciple and the calling to leadership in a local ministry are inseparable. As Barton writes, "Before calling has anything to do with *doing*, it has everything to do with *being*."<sup>17</sup> The person of the pastor before Christ is foundational to him or her leading in a local ministry. His or her ministry in leading God's people arises out of and is expressed by being a disciple of Jesus and having experienced the blessing and power of that kingdom.

As they call people to the values of the kingdom of God, preacher-leaders also must themselves "embody the future that the group holds in view. They function as a prophetic sign of that reality" that is coming in Christ.<sup>18</sup> Preacher-leaders not only speak to the kingdom of God, they strive to express the values of that kingdom in their own lives. In addressing the issue of leadership in the church, the New Testament places character first and foremost. Speaking of the qualifications of leaders, Paul's first item of qualification is that "the overseer must be above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2). Preacher-

---

<sup>16</sup> Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>18</sup> Gibbs, *Leadership Next*, 152.

leaders who are called by Christ to equip and challenge the Church to represent that kingdom in their daily lives must do so themselves. As preaching's task is to evoke an alternative community that lives for the agenda of Christ, so preacher-leaders must enter into that reality themselves. Using an analogy of an athlete in training for a prize, the Apostle Paul speaks of his self-discipline in developing the character of Christ. Paul writes, "I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). Peter also reminded the leaders of the early Church that they had to be examples to their respective flocks (1 Peter 5:1-4). Peter stated earlier in his letter that being an example meant following Jesus' self-sacrificial pattern of love: "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). In the same way, the apostle Paul states that being an example meant following the example of Christ; Paul writes, "follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The process whereby the congregation and its leaders can be redirected to show Christ's love to those around them in specific ways begins with the transformation process in the life of the preacher-leader. To the degree that a preacher-leader is personally transformed, he or she is able to lead the way as the congregation changes. This personal transformation comes when the preacher-leader's relationship with God becomes a dynamic ongoing experience every moment of his or her life.<sup>19</sup> The Bible indicates that this transformation occurs when one consciously pursues "training in

---

<sup>19</sup> Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 12.

godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7). This training in godliness is built upon various spiritual disciplines which mirror Christ’s call to discipleship, namely self-denial and cross-bearing.

In *Renovation of the Heart*, Willard states that the genuine transformation of a person into the goodness and power of Christ Jesus can only be done through the work of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the process of becoming like Christ is a Spirit-driven process, forming the inner world of a person so that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.<sup>20</sup> Since the renovation of the heart is not a human attainment, those who wish to become like Christ must open themselves in such a way that God’s Spirit will do his transforming work. In their book, *The Leader’s Journey*, Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor explain, “The disciplines carve out the pathways for the Spirit to work . . . the God given means we are to use in our Spirit filled pursuit of growing into the heart of God.”<sup>21</sup>

However, Jesus also points us to where God will work in one’s heart. Following Christ, Jesus said, involves self-denial and cross-bearing as one strives to be like Jesus, seeing his example and following in his footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). Practicing self-denial and self-giving love will form Christ in a person—which is the goal of spiritual formation, “that Christ be formed in us” (Galatians 4:19).

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard outlines the disciplines that mirror Jesus’ call to discipleship. Willard identifies disciplines of abstinence and disciplines of

---

<sup>20</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 22.

<sup>21</sup> Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *Leader’s Journey*, 132.

engagement.<sup>22</sup> The disciplines of abstinence are those practices that intentionally guide one in “denying oneself.” Willard states that Christian discipleship “rests on this indispensable foundation of death to self and cannot proceed except insofar as that foundation is being firmly laid and sustained.”<sup>23</sup> As noted in the previous section, by self-denial Jesus speaks of giving up on one being the ultimate point of reference in his or her life. Preacher-leaders who follow Jesus make Jesus the center of their lives. Preacher-leaders willingly give up their pet projects, their self-focused visions, and their desires to build their own “kingdoms” in order to live by Jesus’ vision of life in this world and bring forth his kingdom.

The disciplines of abstinence are solitude and silence. By “solitude,” Willard means being alone for lengthy periods of time—long enough to be free from the effects of human contact. By “silence,” Willard means getting away from the sounds and noises of everyday life (other than the sounds of nature) and not talking. These disciplines provide an emotional and spiritual space that allows one to slow down the impulsive and “automatic” responses he or she might make in daily life. The goal of this is to come to terms with these responses and replace them with responses that are more suitable to life in the kingdom of God. In other words, solitude and silence open a person to God’s spirit with him or her; the Spirit is helping the person come to terms with his or her sinful patterns of living and guiding him or her to live by the fruit of that Spirit. The disciplines of solitude and silence also provide space to take the world off one’s shoulders and rest

---

<sup>22</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 357-364.

<sup>23</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 64.

more fully in God's grace. Rather than constantly managing things, one slows down to rest in God's management of things. Then one finds that the world is brimming with God's presence and goodness, goodness extended to birds and flowers and especially to his children. These disciplines of abstinence, writes Willard, "enable us to know what it is like to live by grace – rather than just talk about it."<sup>24</sup>

Cross-bearing is the second, complementary step toward which Jesus calls his disciples. In the Bible, the cross became a symbol of obedient service. Jesus bore the cross in order to attest and to prove his obedience to the Father; Jesus humbled himself in obedient service to the point of death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). Cross-bearing is not passive; it is actively choosing to suffer for the sake of righteousness. Cross-bearing arises out of one's intention to reflect the love and grace of Christ in one's everyday relationships. Preacher-leaders bear a cross when they obediently follow God's leading, humbly relying on God's grace. They give of themselves in service for the kingdom of God, following Christ in his suffering, finding joy in sharing in Christ's sufferings. (See 1 Peter 4:13.)

The disciplines which mirror self-sacrifice are what Willard calls "disciplines of engagement"; these are study and worship.<sup>25</sup> As solitude and silence have had their effect, a person becomes freer from the automatic, emotional reactivity that may have governed much of his or her experience. One no longer has to react to circumstances. Rather, one may begin to see oneself and his or her life "with clarity and divinely guided

---

<sup>24</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 360.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

insight so that we can make our choices on the basis of God's revealed truth rather than from the pressures brought to bear on us."<sup>26</sup> In order to act more freely on the basis of God's revealed truth, the disciplines of engagement open one to the transformational presence of God's Spirit who can guide one into that truth (John 16:13), transform one's heart to discern God's will (Romans 12:2), and transform one's heart to want to do God's will (Philippians 2:13).

The disciple of Jesus engages in study to place his or her mind and heart more fully on God and his rule. By "study," Willard means "taking the order and nature of the things studied into one's own thoughts and feelings and actions"<sup>27</sup> "Study" is not simply a matter of gathering information; rather it is learning how to think, feel, and act from the Bible, the example of Jesus, and the wisdom of other Christians. In study, the follower of Christ lives into the Bible's story, making it his or her own, and with the guidance of the Christian community seeks out God's rule for his or her life in particular ways. In Willard's words, disciples of Jesus "devote their attention, their thoughtful inquiry, and their practical experimentation to the order of the kingdom" as it is seen in Jesus, in the Bible, in fellow disciples, and in every good thing in culture and history.<sup>28</sup> Over time, one's patterns of mind and will are transformed in order to discern God's will in one's life. Through such study and through practical experimentation, together with other disciples of Jesus, one begins to live into the rule of God as seen in Jesus.

---

<sup>26</sup> Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey*, 134.

<sup>27</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 361.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

In *Renovation of the Heart*, Willard expounds on a process for personal transformation, a process which in many respects parallels that of “study” as described in *The Divine Conspiracy*. Willard develops a general pattern of personal formation through corporate reflection and experimentation using the acronym “VIM.” VIM stands for “Vision,” “Intention,” and “Means.”<sup>29</sup> By “vision,” Willard means Jesus’ vision of life in the kingdom of God where God’s will is done in the lives of people. This vision of life where God’s will is done incorporates “*partaking* of the divine nature through birth ‘from above’ and participating by our actions in what God is doing now in our lifetime on earth.”<sup>30</sup> Willard places the vision of the kingdom at the forefront of the process of spiritual transformation, effectively pointing the way to integrating that vision of life into the life of the believer. Willard affirms, as was stated above, that the vision of God’s rule is fundamental to actively seeking to become like Christ.

By “intention,” Willard describes how a person will trust God, believing what Jesus states about life in this world, and will decide to put into practice the teachings of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> “Intention” is more than just receiving information about Jesus; one actually decides to obey the precise example and teachings of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> By focusing on intention, Willard is affirming that the believer must be actively engaged in the process of spiritual formation. The believer’s study of God’s word, affirmation of Jesus’ life, and vision of God’s rule in Christ will not bear fruit in Christlikeness unless the believer consciously

---

<sup>29</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-89.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

wants to be like Christ. This wanting is the result of the Spirit's renewing work (Philippians 2:13), to whom the believer turns through disciplines of abstinence.

By "means," Willard describes how a person with the vision of God's kingdom and the solid intention to obey Jesus will seek out and apply the means for spiritual transformation that are at his or her disposal. The "means" a person seeks out and applies are related to his or her vision, understanding, feelings, decisions, and character. The search for the means of transformation arises, in the moment of need, as a result of the ongoing practice of disciplines of abstinence and of engagement, seeking to see, think, feel, and do the sorts of things Jesus would do if he were in one's place. The VIM model is a helpful way to envision and flesh out how the discipline of "study" can be lived out. Following this model roots every movement forward in discipleship within the context of Christ's vision of the kingdom of God, which is foundational for this paper.

To the discipline of study Willard adds worship. By "worship," Willard means ascribing majesty, goodness, and glory to God through every part of one's being—one's senses, thoughts, willing, and imagination.<sup>33</sup> Through worship, one embraces with his or her whole being the reality of God's kingdom, setting one's heart more fully on that which Christ is leading one toward. In worship, one's desires are deepened for the reality that is being studied and "the glow and power of our true homeland (becomes) an active agent in all parts of our being."<sup>34</sup> Through these disciplines of engagement, the disciple

---

<sup>33</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 363.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



of Jesus is conformed more to the image of Jesus, loving God with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength.

As preacher-leaders live out their callings as disciples of Jesus while in their unique roles in Christ's Church, they engage the process of personal transformation, which enables them to guide the corporate transformation of the local church to a new vision. As preacher-leaders affirm Jesus' call to discipleship and to the particular ministry context, they are free to live as those who are summoned and sent by Christ into God's mission. As preacher-leaders seek to become like Christ through the practice of spiritual disciplines, denying themselves as the center of the universe and taking up their crosses in sacrificial service, they will be given the spiritual strength needed to, with boldness and integrity, call congregational members to a new identity in Christ.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey*, 134-141.

PART THREE

A STRATEGY FOR CULTIVATING  
A NEW SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONGREGATION

## CHAPTER 6

### CONNECTING THE EXTERNALLY FOCUSED VISION TO THE PREACHER-LEADER

This chapter begins the description of a strategy for how the externally focused vision described in the previous three chapters will be realized in the life of Grace Community Church and her leaders. Chapter 6 describes the path that the preacher-leader must take; Chapter 7 describes the path that the congregational leaders must take; and Chapter 8 describes the path that the congregational members must take.

#### **The Goal of the Strategy**

The goal of the strategy is to outline a process of transformation through which the congregation and its leaders can be redirected from caring for and maintaining the inner life of the church only to also show Christ's love to those around them in specific ways. That strategy begins with the preacher-leader. It begins with the preacher-leader because he or she plays a pivotal role in inspiring a shared vision within the life of the congregation. As Roxburgh writes, "The key to the formation of missional communities is their leadership. . . . Ours is a context and a time that require leaders who lead from the

front, showing the way toward the recovery of a missional Church.”<sup>1</sup> Of all who play a leadership role in the life of the Church, no one is more often at “the front” in sharing vision and in articulating the values of God’s kingdom than the preacher-leader. As Peter Scazzaro states, “The starting point for change in any nation, Church, or ministry has always been the leader: As go the leaders, so goes the Church.”<sup>2</sup> In describing a strategy to develop an externally focused vision, this chapter begins with the preacher-leader’s life and calling.

The strategy starts with the preacher-leader because, in the case of Grace Community Church, I as pastor play the principal role in articulating an externally focused vision. As I affirm Jesus’ call to discipleship, to ministry, and to the particular congregation of Grace Community Church, I am free to live as one who is summoned and sent by Christ into God’s mission. This sense of mission will give me boldness and integrity to call congregational members to a new identity in Christ. The chapter will also describe how I will develop disciplines which enable me to confront my false sense of self and open myself to God’s gracious presence and leading in my life and ministry. The chapter will also show how I may enrich my sense of calling and practicing disciplines by developing mentoring relationships with peers as well as with leaders within the church. These relationships help foster my sense of being summoned and sent by Christ to the particular ministry of Grace Community Church.

---

<sup>1</sup> Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership,” 183.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 36.

## **Cultivating Disciplines which Affirm and Express Christ's Call to Discipleship**

This pattern of personal transformation becomes realized in the cultivation of particular spiritual disciplines. The spiritual disciplines are the means by which preacher-leaders may be fueled for the life of discipleship lived out in their ministry contexts. As noted in Chapter 5, Willard outlines the disciplines that foster rest in and receptivity of God. These are disciplines of abstinence and disciplines of engagement. The disciplines of abstinence are solitude and silence; the disciplines of engagement are study and worship. By “solitude,” Willard means being alone for lengthy periods of time, long enough to be free from the effects of human contact. By “silence,” Willard means getting away from the sounds and noises of everyday life; he also means abstinence from talking. These disciplines provide an emotional and spiritual space that allows a person to slow down the impulsive and “automatic” responses he or she might make in daily life in order to replace them with responses that are more suitable to life in the kingdom of God. Ruth Haley Barton makes this point: “Engaging deeply in the process of spiritual transformation and choosing to lead from that place gives us the opportunity to forge a powerful connection between our souls—that place at the center of our being where God’s Spirit is at work, loving, transforming and guiding us—and our leadership.”<sup>3</sup>

Out of the intersections of God’s story and their stories, leaders discern and state a vision for their local congregations. In this way, the leaders exhibit and embody the values of God’s kingdom. In other words, the disciplines of solitude and silence are means by which preacher-leaders can confront the demands of the false, prideful self and

---

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, “Giving the Best I Have: the Process of Transformational Leadership,” *Christian Management Report* (June 2004): 1.

open themselves to God's gracious presence and leadership in their lives. These disciplines are significant for preacher-leaders to practice in that transformation of the heart only occurs by the Holy Spirit who renews people from the inside out.

To put this discipline into practice over a three-year period, as pastor of Grace Community Church, I will accomplish this pattern of solitude and silence by focusing on times of rest and solitude for each week, each month, and each year. Every week, I will take a twenty-four-hour period away from my regular labors to reconnect with myself, my family, and my friends, as well as to rest. I will spend part of that day participating in rejuvenating activities such as a walk through a Cook County Forest Preserve, joining my wife in making a unique meal together, nurturing my hobby of reading, visiting a local museum, or attending an afternoon concert at the Symphony. To foster my hobby of reading, I will actively participate in a neighborhood book club; to foster my time with family, I will maintain a monthly calendar that will have those dates for rest blocked out at least three weeks in advance. In addition to that day for rest and reconnection, I will devote time for solitude and silence every week. Each week, I will devote a two-hour time block that will be spent alone, away from personal interruptions or phone or email, time devoted to Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. The Bible reading will not be part of my sermon preparation for the upcoming week. To help me maintain a time of solitude and silence, I will be part of a small group that helps me be accountable and fosters Bible reading and prayer for one another.

Longer times of solitude and silence will be sought each month and each year. Each month, I will spend one day in solitude and silence, a time for Bible reading,

devotional reflection, meditation, prayer, and sleep. The purpose of this one day a month in solitude and silence is for me to step away from the pressures to which I may be reacting and reconnect with God's heart, God's vision, and God's calling on my life. This day may be spent in my office or off-campus; whatever the location, I will be without interruptions or distractions to devote the day to reconnecting with my calling and God's vision. Once a year, I will leave the Grace Community Church campus and my home for a period of three days or more to engage in a longer retreat of solitude and silence. In order to structure my time away, I may participate with a group in a spiritual retreat. However, the purpose of these three days is for me to spend intensive time reflecting on the direction of my life and to seek out God's vision and direction for the coming year. For the year 2011 and 2012, the Ridder Leadership Initiative Pastor's Retreats will fill this need for retreat, as the Ridder Leadership Initiative's purpose is to restore and renew preacher-leaders and congregations in their sense of calling, vision, and purpose.<sup>4</sup> The members of the congregation would be best served if they allow for and foster an environment where I can take this time for personal retreat and reintegration. I will maintain a sense of connection to my personal calling, my calling to ministry, and God's vision for the Grace Community Church through these periods of rest and reintegration. A sane rhythm of purposeful work and rest will allow for the reintegration of God's call in my life.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix D which contains the Ridder Leadership Initiative statement of purpose.

### **Mentoring Relationships: Practicing Honesty in Community**

Preacher-leaders need not undergo this personal transformation and renewal alone. They may develop relationships with mentors that can lead and guide them through the process; they may also develop peer mentor relationships which, through affinity, become places to challenge and nurture one another in their callings as preacher-leaders. Particularly, the disciplines of study and worship may be effectively accomplished in the context of a mentorship group which helps one another seek God's direction, celebrate, and "live into" his kingdom.

The formation of mentor relationships is significant because people will modify core parts of their lives, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, norms, and responsibilities to a much greater extent and with a higher success rate in a small group than they will alone. Herrington asserts, "Effective leaders dramatically increase the likelihood of change when they create a learning community that embraces the values of grace giving and truth telling."<sup>5</sup> In giving grace, a mentor can provide a safe context for a preacher-leader to address unresolved personal issues and loss. In telling the truth, a mentor can provide a clear picture against which a preacher-leader can seek guidance and direction in his or her process of growth toward Christlikeness.

Robert Clinton and Paul Stanley, in their book, *Connecting*, give concrete guidance regarding the formation of peer relationships to affirm and further a person's calling.<sup>6</sup> Two intensive mentoring relationships that would be valuable in the process of

---

<sup>5</sup> Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *Leader's Journey*, 145.

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Clinton and Paul D. Stanley, *Connecting* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992).



renewal for the preacher-leader are those of a “coach” and “spiritual guide.” Clinton and Stanley define a “coach” as a mentor whose main activity is to impart encouragement and skills to succeed in a task through a relationship.<sup>7</sup> Coaches help mentorees do more than they think that they can do by encouraging them and helping them learn “how to do things.” A mentoree is attracted to a coach because of the coach’s skill level. A mentoree is accountable to the coach for learning the desired skill. Preacher-leaders would be well served to develop relationships with coaches who can assist them in reflecting on their lives in ministry, who can help them see new opportunities for fostering a shared vision, and who can guide them through an evaluation of areas of personal strength and needed growth in reflecting the life of Christ in their ministries.

For 2011 and 2012, as pastor of Grace Community Church I will intentionally seek out a coaching relationship through the Ridder Leadership Initiative. Part of the initiative’s process includes the development of a monthly peer-mentor meeting with a pastor who has been through the Ridder Transformational Journey. During 2011 and 2012, I will monthly engage in meetings with a coach who will help create a relationship of honesty and grace as we walk through the transformational journey together.

In addition to coaching relationships, I will develop a peer mentor relationship which will function as a spiritual guide. Clinton and Stanley define a “spiritual guide” as one who mentors another by providing “accountability, decisions, and insights concerning questions, commitments, and direction affecting spirituality (inner life

---

<sup>7</sup> Clinton and Stanley, *Connecting*, 76.

motivations) and maturity (integrating truth with life).”<sup>8</sup> Mentors functioning as spiritual guides can join preacher-leaders in reflection on how their lives are being affected by certain challenges in ministry and how they are maturing in Christ. With the mentoree, the mentor as spiritual guide would spend considerable time in prayer, in open confession of the ways his or her self-focus has hampered ministry, and in reflection on how their lives could more fully reflect the life of Christ.

During 2011 and 2012, I will also deepen my relationship with peers to include spiritual guidance. I will meet monthly with a neighboring pastor for a one-hour meeting during which we can provide mutual support and care. In addition, at the 2011 monthly meetings, my peer mentor and I will complete reading and discussing Ruth Haley Barton’s book entitled, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. We will read one chapter per meeting in order to gain a model as well as to provide “talking points” for transforming the supportive relationship into one of spiritual guidance. In 2012, my peer mentor and I will attend a three-day retreat together in order to continue to deepen that relationship and structure it as one providing spiritual guidance. The goal of transforming the peer mentoring relationship into one of spiritual guidance will be to provide a grace-filled relationship in which I can explore the implications of my calling and the vision of God for the church community.

As I affirm Jesus’ call to discipleship, to ministry, and to the particular congregation of Grace Community Church, I am free to live as one who is summoned

---

<sup>8</sup> Clinton and Stanley, *Connecting*, 65.

and sent by Christ into God's mission. This sense of mission will give me boldness and integrity to call congregational members to a new identity in Christ.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONNECTING THE EXTERNALLY FOCUSED VISION TO THE CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS

This chapter will describe how to initiate change toward an externally focused ministry by attending to the leaders within the community of faith. There are various types of leadership within a community of faith. This chapter will describe those varying types of leadership and will focus on their roles of identifying God's vision and applying it to the ministry of the church.

#### **The Leader's Role**

As an organization, a church is an open system where leadership comes from various places within the organization. God's Spirit gives gifts to all his people and distributes them throughout the body to enable the body to function well as each one uses his or her gifts within the life of the organization. As a result, leadership happens on a variety of levels within the church. Different types of leaders lead in different ways throughout the differing circles of a church's life. The preacher-leader may communicate the vision of God's kingdom rule in Jesus, but it takes other leaders to translate this into concrete steps they might take to implement that vision. However, while this may seem a

daunting task, in an organization that is open to others, with gifts that are spread throughout the organization, leadership comes from anywhere and everywhere within the organization.<sup>1</sup>

The danger in not recognizing various leadership levels in a church is, on the one hand, to have a drawer full of vision statements with no appreciable change in vision. On the other hand, failure to recognize different levels of leadership could turn into methods of control and manipulation to achieve predetermined ends. Rather, change effectively occurs when differing-level leaders are recognized and set free to live out a new vision. Roxburgh speaks to the heart of preacher-leaders, warning against these twin dangers: “God’s future is not in a plan or strategy that you introduce; it is among the people of God.”<sup>2</sup> The preacher-leader cannot determine the future; rather, he or she must cultivate the people of God and nourish the conviction that God’s future rule in Christ is among them. In this way, the preacher-leader can “create a coalition of dialogue, energy, and experimentation among the people of the congregation.”<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will describe three of the types of leadership needed within the church and will focus on their role of identifying God’s vision and applying it to the ministry of a church. The chapter will identify concrete steps to develop and organize the church’s ministry around an externally focused vision, enabling the ministry participants

---

<sup>1</sup> Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: the Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2006), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2006), 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

to speak to and embody the life of God's kingdom, aligning the church's ministry structures with that mission.

### **Three Levels of Congregational Leadership**

In the ministry of a church, Robert Whitesel contends that there are three are different levels or forms of leadership that take place: the strategic, the tactical, and the operational.<sup>4</sup> The explanation of each of these levels of leadership will be explained in reference to the organizational structure of Grace Community Church. These three levels of leadership correspond to that of the council, the ministry teams, and the volunteer leaders within the various ministries.

#### **The Council: Strategic Leadership**

Strategic leadership is vision-oriented, looking ahead at the future of the organization. Strategic leaders tend to be the first to notice that change is needed and often are eager to move forward and may be the first to start moving in new directions. However, they are limited in that they tend to be "big picture people" who have a picture of what the results of a change will be but are not able to envision a step-by-step process to achieve the change.<sup>5</sup>

Comprised of the executive team which includes the pastors, the Shepherding Elders and the Service Deacons, the council meets regularly to see where the church is going and where it needs to go. Charged by Christ to lead in the mission of making

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert Whitesel, *Change Reaction* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

disciples of all nations, the council meets to maintain the vision and ministry values for Grace Community Church, hear reports of the various ministry teams accountable to it, and provide the resources for the ministry of Grace Community Church.

The council exercises this function as it reflects on the Bible's teachings and God's leading in the congregation in a process of corporate discernment. In light of this discernment, the council identifies and oversees the overall mission of the congregation, establishing and communicating the congregation's vision and values, and ensures the provision of the necessary resources for the overall ministry.

#### Ministry Teams: Tactical Leadership

Tactical leaders are the "go-betweens" that connect the council, which focuses on the big picture, with the volunteers who get things done. Tactical leadership is an integrated skill: Whitesel writes, "Tactical leaders grasp the strategic leader's vision of the future but enjoy those future plans into the ongoing and present life of the church."<sup>6</sup> Tactical leaders play a central role in planning: they develop plans, set timelines and allocate duties; they delegate and enable others to perform the ministry tasks. Whitesel adds, "Tactical leaders know how to bring big long-term projects down into easy, doable steps."<sup>7</sup>

The ministry team leaders are tactical leaders. Ministry team leaders are heads of a working and planning group that receive the long-term goals from the council and develop tactics to implement those goals within their defined areas of Grace Community

---

<sup>6</sup> Whitesel, *Change Reaction*, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Church's ministry. The ministry teams develop a specific strategy that integrates the future vision into the ongoing life of the church. In order to facilitate this task, ministry teams meet as often as needed to develop a ministry strategy, delegate responsibility, decide how to spend the resources allocated to them, and monitor ministry effectiveness. Ministry teams report to the council through either the Executive or the Shepherding Elders and Deacons, and they regularly report as to how they are using their resources to carry out the vision and values of the council. In light of their plans and goals, the ministry teams also monitor ministry effectiveness.

Though ministry coordination happens in the communication between the council and its ministry teams, ministry coordination also happens in the communication between ministry teams. Team leaders will meet as a group periodically in order to coordinate strategy, be mutually accountable, and ensure an integrated effort toward fulfilling the mission of Grace Community Church.

#### Volunteer Leaders: Operational Leadership

The vision and values for ministry are made concrete in the actions of the volunteer leaders within Grace Community Church's ministry. These operational leaders serve by implementing, adapting, and successfully improvising the strategic plan of the ministry teams, leading the specific expressions of Grace Community Church's ministry. Volunteer leaders have the knowledge, skill, relational ability, and dedication to implement the ministry strategy. Whitesel writes, "Once the parameters are defined and they see how their task fits into the bigger picture, the operational leader can accomplish



almost anything.”<sup>8</sup> Working in specific ministries, volunteer leaders implement and adjust the tactics that make visible the vision and dreams of the congregation’s ministry. Volunteer leaders have high-level ownership and sense of identification with Grace Community Church’s mission. These leaders experience the needs, utilize the resources, and see the results of Grace Community Church’s ministry. Volunteer leaders will meet annually with all other leaders in order to share concrete ways God is blessing their lives and ministries, collectively identify opportunities God may be bringing to Grace Community Church, and together brainstorm ways to advance Christ’s ministry more effectively at Grace Community Church.

#### The Unique Task of Strategic Leadership

The preacher-leader’s role is closely associated with that of strategic leadership. The description of the task of preaching given above has illustrated how a preacher-leader’s focus is on articulating a shared vision for the church. The unique function of strategic leadership is to help form a people from whom the life of God’s kingdom is called forth. Part of the skill set to be cultivated by the preacher-leader is the ability to teach and guide fellow leaders in understanding their various roles either in fostering the externally focused vision, in developing plans to make the vision concrete, or in implementing the vision in concrete acts of ministry. In other words, the unique role of the strategic leader is in envisioning for all members the various leading roles that all members can do. Using biblical metaphors such as “the church is like a body,” the preacher-leader and other strategic leaders can help all the others see the contribution

---

<sup>8</sup> Whitesel, *Change Reaction*, 38-39.

each one plays as they together seek to live out the externally focused vision within their ministry context.

At Grace Community Church, in 2011 and 2012 I will select six strategic leaders who will be invited to participate with me in the Ridder Leadership Initiative. Together we will form the “Ridder Team” at Grace Community Church and we will meet together monthly to discuss and apply *The Leader’s Journey* by Herrington, Creech, and Taylor. The “Ridder Team” will also participate in a twice-a-year retreat in 2011 and 2012 to develop a transformational process for change within the congregation. Through the meetings and retreats, the Ridder Team will learn and use mental models of discipleship, systems thinking, and the power of creative tension within the local church community, as together with the congregation we seek to live out God’s vision for Grace Community Church.<sup>9</sup>

### **Matching Ministry Structures to Vision**

This section will identify concrete steps to develop and organize the church’s ministry around an externally focused vision, enabling the leaders to speak to and embody the life of God’s kingdom, aligning the church’s ministry structures with that mission. It will do so by identifying three main goals to match ministry structure to vision, and it will list a strategy for expressing those goals. Those goals are: teaching skills for authentic relationship; identifying opportunities to engage in externally focused

---

<sup>9</sup> A summary and outline of the transformational process which will be taught and utilized is found in Appendix E.

ministry; and the re-visioning of existing ministries to apply the externally focused vision to every part of Grace Community Church's ministry.

### Teaching Skills for Authentic Relationship

A first goal for matching ministry structure to vision would be to teach skills for authentic relationships. This goal is significant in that it provides the foundation from which leaders can build a relationally honest and corporately discerned vision and apply it to the church's ministry. Without authentic relationships, the leadership community will not be able to function in a way that faithfully discerns God's leading in an externally focused ministry, nor will they freely lead others toward Christlikeness.

Authentic relationships can best be developed within the context of a mentor system. In the latter half of 2011 into 2012, I as pastor will guide the Grace Community Church council into the formation of a mentor system. With assistance from a neighboring pastor who has implemented a mentoring system for discipleship, the council will identify three to five relationship champions who show aptitude to mentor others in authentic relationships. Over the next six months, these "relationship champions" will be trained in systems thinking and the role it plays in the local church. They will be trained by leaders who are taking part in the Ridder Leadership Initiative. In 2012, the "relationship champions" will arrange for and guide small group sessions for the purpose of teaching mentoring skills to those with gifts and interest in mentoring within the congregation. In the latter half of 2012, with my guidance and the guidance of the church council, the newly trained mentors will form one-on-one mentoring relationships with

people who are less mature in the faith. In 2013, each newly trained mentor will enlarge his or her circle by inviting a third mentoree into the group. Using this model will multiply the number of people who are in mentoring relationships and will foster leadership development through an “iron sharpens iron” group of learning and accountability.<sup>10</sup>

I will also develop a small group among leaders in order to develop the practice of spiritual disciplines. As was seen above in applying the externally focused vision to my own life as pastor, spiritual disciplines play a crucial role in the development of discernment among leaders. The spiritual disciplines are the means by which leaders will be fueled for discerning God’s will for their lives as lived out in their ministry contexts. A small group can be a powerful way to foster the practice of the disciplines as the accountability implied within a small group encourages the faithful practice of the disciplines. In forming a small spiritual disciplines group for leaders, I will invite council members and other congregational leaders to participate for six months of their first year in leadership. This group would utilize a resource such as John Ortberg’s book, *The Life You Always Wanted*, a series of studies and practices on historic disciplines leading to personal transformation in Christ.<sup>11</sup> During the first year I will mentor one of the first-year participants to form a similar group for other current and potential leaders. By doing

---

<sup>10</sup> “Iron sharpens Iron” is a three-to-six-member accountability group plan that I have developed specifically for Grace Community Church.

<sup>11</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You Always Wanted: Six Sessions on Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 7.

so, the spiritual disciplines will continue to be fostered within leaders in subsequent years of their leadership.

### Identifying Opportunities for Externally Focused Ministry

A second goal for matching ministry structure to vision would be identifying opportunities to engage in externally focused ministry. As its ministry has been internally focused and concerned primarily with meeting members' needs, Grace Community Church has not focused on ministry needs outside of its own body. In order to foster an externally focused ministry, congregational leaders must find ways to identify ministry opportunities outside the congregation. This concern is particularly relevant for ministry team leaders, who function as tactical leaders. As ministry teams develop a strategy that integrates the future vision into the ministry of the church, they are uniquely placed to find ways to address ministry needs outside the body of the church.

In order to facilitate this task, in 2011, a team of social workers comprised of two social work student interns and one social worker will be contracted for six months to begin training two volunteer church members and me as pastor about ways to identify opportunities for external ministry. In addition, the social workers will survey the congregation and ministry area to identify two ministry opportunities that utilize the gifts and interests of Grace Community Church members. In the spring of 2011, the process of training and identifying needs will be repeated; however, in the second year, the previous years' ministries will be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in building

authentic relationships between members of Grace Community Church and people from within the ministry area.

Additionally, in 2011 and 2012, the Grace Community Church council president will meet with team leaders to discuss ministry and relationship opportunities among those with whom the ministry teams have interacted. These meetings enable ministry teams to communicate across their respective ministries and will encourage all leaders to develop “eyes to see” the needs within the community. In this way, ministry teams will share success stories and inspire one another to create new ways of doing ministry within the church’s ministry context. The ministry team leaders will also share with each other identified needs of people with whom a particular ministry team is serving, thereby broadening the opportunities for others to connect with these needs. In 2011 and 2012, at one of their twice yearly meetings, the ministry team leaders will review and discuss the “Ministry Area Profile” provided by Percept Ministries.<sup>12</sup> The review of this profile will provide a picture of the variety of needs within the ministry area of Grace Community Church, encouraging each ministry team to consider ways its ministry may match one of the identified needs. The ministry team leaders may brainstorm appropriate strategies to meet those needs from within the congregation or in partnership with an existing group within the church’s ministry area.

In addition to using ministry team leader meetings as a way to identify opportunities to engage in externally focused ministry, the church council will develop an External Ministry Team whose task it will be to identify ministry opportunities and

---

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Percept Group, *Ministry Area Profile 2008: Grace Community Church* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, 2008), 4.

promote them within the ministry teams at Grace Community Church. This team will be the individuals who are trained by and work closely with the social work interns. The team would meet its purpose by developing relationships with various organizations within the church's ministry area and find ways Grace Community Church members might partner with those organizations in meeting needs of the community. This team will partner with the nearby Advocate Christ Hospital, Hope Children's Hospital, and Ronald McDonald House to identify ways to connect with needs of families and individuals receiving health care. The team will also meet twice yearly with various Village of Oak Lawn officials to hear their perception of the needs within the community. They will also meet twice yearly with the Principal of the nearby Kolmar Public School, to hear possible ways the church may be of service to school children within the community. The team will also meet twice yearly with Oak Lawn Family Services to find avenues for hosting and assisting the agency in helping community families. The team will also partner with the nearby Trinity Christian College and St. Xavier College's sociology departments to arrange for student projects which will survey the community for particular needs and opportunities. The team will meet regularly to pray for the congregation and its ministry area, asking for guidance in the task of forming an externally focused ministry.

In 2012, the External Ministry Team will evaluate the effectiveness of the social work interns in helping identify opportunities for externally focused ministry with an eye toward developing a staff position. In the latter half of 2012, in consultation with the External Ministry Team, the council's Executive Team will develop a job description and

begin recruitment of a staff position to work in conjunction with the External Ministry Team to coordinate community resources, identify service opportunities, and equip members to participate in externally focused ministries. The position would be funded, in part, through proceeds of sale of Evergreen Park CRC and funded, in part, through a grant from a Leadership Initiative Grant available from Grace Community Church's regional church assembly.

### Re-visioning Existing Ministries according to Kingdom Values

A third goal for matching ministry structure to vision is re-visioning existing ministries to advance and apply the externally focused vision. In particular, the re-visioning of the existing ministries would be according to the values which arise out of the vision of Grace Community Church being an externally focused church where members intentionally cultivate authentic, grace-filled relationships. These "values" are, as Malphurs defines them, "constant, passionate, sacred core beliefs that drive a church's ministry."<sup>13</sup> The Grace Community Church council has identified six values that guide how the externally focused vision will be implemented.

The first value is that the Christian life is a growth process. Growth occurs as believers integrate God's grace into more of their personal lives and service. As a person grows in this grace, he or she becomes more like Jesus. Applied to the life of the local church, this means that the church is a "learning community," open to learning how better to serve Christ in this generation.

---

<sup>13</sup> Malphurs, *Values Driven Leadership*, 31.



The second value is that of gift-based team ministry. The local church is born out of relationships. Individuals become God's children, they are given gifts by his Spirit, and they participate in the new community he is building. As believers live out their relationships with Jesus, they use the gift he gives them to develop and grow relationships with people in the world. These relationships are essential to Christ's mission to one's community. As a local church body ministers together as a team, each person complements the gifts of the others, and together they more fully represent the presence of Christ in their community.

The third value is incarnational ministry. Christians are God's mission to the world. Like Christ Jesus, who left the comfort of heaven to enter our lives and show his love, believers are called to step out of their circles of comfort to enter the lives of their coworkers, a neighbors, or family members and show them love. As Jesus' disciple, it is a believer's goal to embody the life of Jesus, thereby introducing others to the God who forgives lavishly, who can restore hope, and who is rebuilding the world in Jesus.

The fourth value is global ministry through local connection. Believers should seek to join in God's worldwide mission by reaching out beyond the barriers of injustice and race, economic disparity, nationality, or barriers of hunger and need. The local church begins with its own neighborhood, extending its focus to the city, nation, and world.

The fifth value is to display grace as God's transforming power. God wants to use believers to give that blessing to others in this world. He wants to renew and change lives so that through his people all nations will be blessed. The way God renews people

and changes lives is by the power of his grace, breaking them and healing them in Christ. Believers seek to live by that same grace, showing patience, acceptance, and understanding to those they encounter.

The sixth value is spiritual health. Spiritual health embraces the nature of members' relationships with God and with each other. In one's relationship with God: believers should be honest about their failings; they should strive to live authentically, relying on God's grace; and they should passionately follow Christ as he is working in the world. In church members' relationships with each other, they should be honest about their hurts and needs, gracious and accepting toward others in their life struggles, and supportive of one another as they follow Christ's lead in their lives.

In 2011, 2012, and 2013, these values will be applied to the church's ministry structure, the church council challenging each ministry team to identify two "externally focused" values for its ministry to be implemented in the upcoming year. The council will also ask each ministry team to report quarterly to the council on efforts toward its goal. In their twice yearly meetings, the pastor and key council leaders will meet with ministry team leaders to present what has been done to implement the values, holding them accountable to the shared vision.

As noted above, the Ministry Team leaders play a key role in the implementation of the vision. It is on the level of tactical leadership which the Ministry Team leaders provide that the new values of Grace Community Church can be applied. The Ministry Team leaders will re-vision existing ministries according to the new values so that they advance and apply the externally focused vision. As they do so, they will report monthly

on the implementation of the vision with attention to the values presented above. Out of their report, the Ministry Team leaders will write briefly to the congregation in its monthly newsletter, highlighting their activities as well as how their activities arise out of the church's externally focused vision and values. Secondly, the council will quarterly invite a special report from two of its ministry teams to both reinforce the importance of applying the new ministry values to the ministry and to celebrate what God has accomplished through them within the congregation. Third, in addition to these quarterly meetings, at the annual Congregational Meeting the council will select two Ministry Team leaders to give a special report of their ministries, accenting the values they implemented and giving thanks for the way God has blessed the ministry. In this way, the congregational members will be given opportunities to support and implement the new vision and its values.

The church council will also re-vision the small group ministry of the church. The council will foster groups which include an external focus in their purpose statements. Each small group will engage in some form of externally focused ministry. For example, a knitting group can make caps for chemo patients at the local hospital and visit patients periodically. The Small Groups Team will provide training and an exchange of ideas for all small group leaders to identify opportunities for service in the community.

Finally and most significantly, the church council will re-vision its prayer ministry to be a key factor in advancing and implementing the externally focused vision. In particular, the prayer team will teach on listening prayer, encouraging ministry teams

to listen for God's guidance as they form strategies and tactics. In addition, the prayer team will regularly include requests related to the vision and its implementation in the "Prayers of the People" portion of Sunday worship services. In this way, the experiments and efforts at applying the externally focused vision to existing ministries will be undergirded with prayer to God, who is bringing his kingdom as his people follow his will.

### **Summary**

This chapter identified a strategy for cultivating the congregation's self-understanding as it relates to a vision of God's mission in the world and applied that vision to the leaders and ministry structures of Grace Community Church. This strategy also presented ways of developing awareness of God's call to mission within the leadership of Grace Community Church, enabling the leaders to align the church's ministry structures with that mission. This strategy also develop specific ways to guide the leaders of the congregation to live out God's calling and mission in the ministry of Grace Community Church, teaching the skills and coordinating experiences that will help church leaders see themselves as instrumental to God's mission to the world. In this process, specific steps will be taken to align the church's ministry structures with that mission.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONNECTING THE EXTERNALLY FOCUSED VISION TO THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

This chapter will develop ways to apply the vision for externally focused ministry to the life of the congregation. The focus of the chapter is on how the preacher-leader extends and sustains the change in ministry vision and values from his or her own life and ministry to church members' lives and ministries. This chapter will develop specific ways to guide the local congregation in living out God's calling and mission in the ministry of Grace Community Church.

#### **Preaching that Clarifies God's Call to the Congregation**

As identified in Chapter 5, the preacher-leader has a unique opportunity in the life of the church to foster a shared vision for the future of the church. As the preacher-leader seeks to inspire a shared vision of an externally focused church which builds authentic, grace-filled relationships with others in its ministry context, the role of the sermons becomes critical. Quicke states, "Preacher-leaders have the responsibility of keeping the tension between the present reality and God's future promise ever alive so that creatively

the Holy Spirit can transform people and communities.”<sup>1</sup> Though originating in a personal sense of call that is cultivated through Christian practices and in a collective sense of vision that is drawn from the Bible’s picture of God’s kingdom, the focal point for leading a congregation to an externally focused vision is preaching.

At Grace Community Church, in 2011, 2012, and 2013, the Bible’s vision of the kingdom of God will be the focus of an annual sermon series that clarifies God’s call to his people to be a community that is a loving, grace-filled presence in its community. In 2011, a sermon series will focus on the role of spiritual disciplines in opening disciples to see the power and presence of God their lives. In 2012, a sermon series will be preached on the Bible’s picture of how Christians matter to the world, using texts such as Jesus’ teaching about his disciples being salt and light or of Amos’s challenge to the people of God to make their faith real through living justly and showing respect at work or in community. In 2013, in the weeks between Easter and Pentecost, a sermon series will be preached on the images of the Holy Spirit from the Bible, identifying ways the Spirit is present to accomplish God’s mission in the world with God’s people. In this way, an annual sermon series would reflect God’s vision for the church’s future and his call to externally focused ministry.

As I as pastor seek to foster a shared vision for the future of the church through preaching, I need not take on this task alone. Rather, my sermons will be developed and delivered interactively, with many voices contributing to the process of sermon preparation and delivery. Through a Worship Renewal project, Grace Community

---

<sup>1</sup> Quicke, *360 Degree Leadership*, 176.

Church has developed a process for preaching that incorporates various members of the worshipping community in both the sermon formation and delivery. Project participants learned about the role of the sermon in worship and in forming a community of faith, both biblically and historically, reflected critically on the church's current practice, and experienced a variety of models of participatory sermon preparation and delivery. In 2011, a sermon preparation group (called "the Roundtable Sermon team") will be formed, meeting monthly with me to prepare a sermon for preaching and to evaluate the effectiveness of the previous sermon formed and preached collaboratively.<sup>2</sup>

In the Reformed tradition, the pastors and elders are to ensure biblically sound teaching and preaching in the church. At the same time, the Reformed tradition affirms the priesthood of all believers, which implies that worshippers are called, collectively, to "let the word of God dwell in them richly as they teach and admonish one another in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16). In other words, each worshipper is capable of contributing to the discerning of God's will as they share together his Word. Given this shared responsibility, Grace Community Church has developed a collaborative practice for sermon preparation and sermon delivery that utilize the community's gifts and experiences.

Collaborative sermon preparation and preaching further congregational renewal in at least three ways. First, as the Holy Spirit speaks through all believers, each believer has a contribution to bring that helps the congregation grow more Christlike. Secondly, collaboration creates ownership of text and its implications in the lives of worshippers.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix F for a form developed for this evaluation. The form reveals the church's desire to let God's word guide the congregation in living toward the reign of Christ.

Worshippers who contribute to the preaching of the word sense that this is God's word for them and for their worshipping community. As they clearly sense God's word for them, they are more fully equipped to live out the implications of that word. Thirdly, collaboration helps create a connection between pastor and worshipers that builds a deeper sense of community as together they strive to hear and live out God's word today. Collaboration gives expression to the reality that both preacher-leader and congregation are engaged in discerning God's guidance. Collaboration affirms that all parts of the church community are called to live into God's mission together.

Cultivating the externally focused vision through preaching effectively builds community and utilizes the resources God has given, namely the Bible and gifted preacher-leaders, to accomplish his purpose of calling his people to join him in his redemptive mission to the world. Quicke calls such leading in and through preaching "full-blooded preaching." He writes, "Full-blooded preaching must expand beyond teaching individual salvation to embrace the bigger purposes of leading saved people into God's new reality."<sup>3</sup> God is concerned with a growing mission, with calling his people to join him, looking outside themselves to the context for ministry in order to build relationships that embody his grace. Preaching that expresses such a vision will inspire people to move toward God's missional agenda.

### **Teaching Skills for Developing an Externally Focused Ministry**

This process of formation requires specific skills that preacher-leaders must practice and teach the congregation in order to put into practice an externally focused

---

<sup>3</sup> Quicke, *360 Degree Leadership*, 52.



vision. These skills are basic building blocks to forming an externally focused mindset. Roxburgh and Romanuk identify four skills needed for strategic leadership: fostering an externally focused mission in the imagination among the people; cultivating growth through specific practices of the Christian life; enabling people to understand and engage the complex environment and its multiple changes they face; and creating a coalition of dialog and experimentation among the people of the congregation.<sup>4</sup> These four skills are crucial to helping the preacher-leader apply the externally focused vision to the ministry and life of the congregation.

#### Fostering a Missional Imagination

In fostering a missional imagination, the preacher-leader seeks to inspire in the minds and hearts of the church community a picture of how life could be. However, using imagination is not about linear thinking and logical ordering; it is creative, intuitive, holistic, and outside the accepted frame of reference. Such an imagination is needed in order to live into a new paradigm of the Church and its relationship to God's mission. The preacher-leader needs to learn the language of imagination in order to help people see what has not yet been seen, in order to encounter the claims of Jesus in a way "that cause people to see reality from an alternative angle."<sup>5</sup> This skill is crucial for transitioning Grace Community Church from an inwardly focused, member-care orientation to an externally focused, community-engagement orientation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 148.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

A powerful tool to use in fostering a new paradigm in people's imagination is stories. Roxburgh and Romanuk assert, "Jesus introduces parables and narratives that cause people to see reality from an alternative angle."<sup>6</sup> Through use of stories, Jesus' listeners were challenged to drop the barriers that held them back from freely loving others, following God's intended inclusion in his kingdom. In 2011, the worship team at Grace Community Church will identify and arrange for one person each month to tell a story of God's presence, guidance, and transformation in the "traditional" worship service. In 2012, the worship team will identify and arrange for two people per month to tell their stories in that service. At the same time, in 2011, the worship leader in the "contemporary" service will "spontaneously" invite a person gathered to tell a story of God's presence and transformation once per month, expanding to twice per month in 2012. The purpose of this storytelling is to provide a context in which people can begin to imaginatively enter into the reality of God's presence and rule in their ministry contexts. Seeing this vision expressed vividly in their imaginations, congregational members would be free to find ways to give this vision concrete expression in their areas of leadership.

### Cultivating Spiritual Disciplines

A second skill for cultivating an externally focused ministry is that of cultivating three spiritual disciplines and habits of the Christian life. These historic spiritual disciplines cultivate the hearts and minds of followers of Christ, enabling them to discern and develop an alternative imagination as God's people. Roxburgh and Romanuk call the

---

<sup>6</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 147.

practice of the spiritual disciplines, “Christian formation for mission.”<sup>7</sup> In Chapter 5, spiritual disciplines were identified as essential for the preacher-leader to be transformed into the new identity in God’s kingdom. While developing the habits of spiritual transformation himself or herself, the preacher-leader is able to guide others into the practice of spiritual habits. The preacher-leader may confidently teach both the biblical bases for these practices and model the practices in his or her life. This intentional modeling and teaching will enable the preacher-leader to help others learn to practice and learn the habits of the Christian heart themselves.

One practice helpful for cultivating an externally focused ministry is historically called “The Daily Office.” The Daily Office is the practice of regularly setting aside time in one’s day and week and month to pause for prayer, Bible reading and meditation. The daily office allows the heart and imagination to regularly picture life from the Bible’s perspective, living into the passages through meditation and prayer throughout one’s day.

At Grace Community Church, in 2011, 2012, and 2013, I as pastor will teach this practice in worship by devoting a portion of the worship or the sermon itself to a five-minute exercise in actually performing the daily office together. Further, I will show models of the practice through the sharing of members’ stories. In the tradition of the Dutch Reformed churches, daily reading of the Bible was practiced around family dinner tables; the practice is lost today because of a shift from shared meals in a home. However, stories of the effect of this practice may be helpful in re-imagining new ways to follow the practice of the Daily Office in individual’s lives. Roxburgh and Romanuk

---

<sup>7</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 152.

write, “Only as we enter and struggle with the offices do we discover the challenge of the journey that faces us in shaping ecclesial communities in America.”<sup>8</sup>

A second practice of the Christian life that would be helpful in cultivating an externally focused church is hospitality. Hospitality is the practice of welcoming a stranger into one’s home. Hospitality is a significant practice in a culture where people feel like strangers to one another even in their own neighborhoods. A missional environment and a mindset of connecting to the community of which one is a part can be beautifully expressed in hospitality. Roxburgh and Romanuk contend, “Creating a gracious table does not have an agenda to convert the stranger but instead to create space to listen – nothing more.”<sup>9</sup> The preacher-leader will teach the habit of hospitality by practicing himself or herself.

At Grace Community Church, in 2011, 2012, and 2013, I as pastor will set aside an evening a month to welcome a few people into my home that are outside my immediate circle of friends. To help “demonstrate” the practice of hospitality, I may include one or two congregational members into this gathering. I will also teach about the role of hospitality in the culture of the New Testament, using the Advent season in 2011 and 2012 to focus on God’s hospitality toward people as depicted in the Bible. The worship team will also inspire members in the practice by identifying various members who can tell stories of times when they experienced hospitality and its impact on their lives, as well as stories of those who have extended hospitality and how it affected their

---

<sup>8</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 155.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

Christian lives. This will be done in conjunction with the once and twice per month storytelling described above in “Fostering a Missional Imagination.” In this way, I will model the practice of hospitality and guide congregational members in steps toward its practice.

A third practice of the Christian life that would be helpful in cultivating an externally focused church is study. In study, a person learns more of the Bible’s story, knowing its development and themes, and learns how to live into the implications of that story for his or her own and his or her church community’s life. The formation of this spiritual practice is crucial to forming a learning community. Seeing itself as engaged in a lifelong process of learning, the church community will be open to live out “the implications of Romans 12: the transformation of the whole self toward God’s kingdom,” explain Roxburgh and Romanuk.<sup>10</sup> Traditionally, the CRC has placed a high value on lifelong learning. Grace Community Church has a number of Bible study groups that meet in homes and others that meet during the week at the church building. In working with the various groups and the Education Team, the preacher-leader can shape the groups’ expectations, formal covenants, and curriculum to better incarnate the kind of missional learning practice needed to form a externally focused ministry. These three spiritual practices are taught not to add a set of new religious rules for the believing community but to create the environment where the imagination and practices of the people might be formed.

---

<sup>10</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 159.

## Understanding the Times

A third skill Roxburgh and Romanuk identify for developing an externally focused ministry is that of enabling people to understand and engage the multiple challenges they face in the environment in which the church community lives. In the early twenty-first century, North American culture is facing rapid and radical change; our culture is facing a time of radical shift from one paradigm to another, from modernity to postmodernity.<sup>11</sup> This shift in paradigm incorporates a shift from “science” and “reason” to an openness to the non-rational, non-scientific in life. This shift has created opportunities to show the value of faith and spirituality in shaping one’s values and the authenticity of one’s values.

Post-modernity, which rejects universal truths and accents the subjectivity of all claims to truth, brings with it a distrust of oral-aural based learning, such as a lecture from an “expert,” to learner-centered, experience-based learning where the learner discovers the truth. This shift in learning ought to lead to shifts in ways the Bible’s vision of the kingdom of God is communicated. Sermons will be more participatory in nature and people will want to “see” the value and integrity of one’s faith long before one is interested in “hearing” about faith’s content. This paradigm shift from modernity to postmodernity creates an opportunity for the believing community to show people the reality of the kingdom of God with greater clarity and vitality. Seeing the implications of the kingdom of God anew will create an opportunity to foster the missional imagination

---

<sup>11</sup> For a description of this shift, see Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching*, 69-74.

of the church community and enable a congregation to engage in an externally focused ministry.

A preacher-leader helps his or her congregation to understand the times by exegeting this shift. To do so, the preacher-leader needs to be a student of the culture. At Grace Community Church, I as pastor will develop a reading list for 2011 that includes resources that describe the character of the paradigm shift in our culture. In 2012 and 2013, I will work with the church's Worship Coordinator to invite and fund members' participation in the annual "Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Symposium." Each year, the Symposium includes a plenary speaker whose role is to help worship leaders understand more deeply contemporary North American culture. The Worship Coordinator will debrief this session within two weeks of the conference to reinforce the learning and identify ways to implement this understanding in Grace Community Church's worship. With this understanding, the worship practices and preaching will assist the congregation in making sense of the shift and developing a mind that looks for opportunities to change their practices to exhibit the life of God's kingdom within the changing culture.

In 2011 and 2012, I will teach the dynamics of change that occur within a community to the Ridder Leadership Team. Written resources of *The Leader's Journey*, by Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, and *Preparing for Change Reaction*, by Whitesel, will be taught to the Ridder Leadership Team to help them understand and explain the

role of leaders in managing change.<sup>12</sup> This will inform the leaders to help the congregation dream and think outside the box of their traditions and begin new approaches to reach their community.

### Creating Experimental Models

As people of the congregation begin to live into a new way of doing ministry, the change often erupts in resistance, confusion, and tension. As the church wrestles with questions about its role and involvement in the lives of people in the larger community, one of the roles of the preacher-leader is to foster connections between people so that they may talk to one another about their dreams and concerns and step into a new way of living and serving together in an externally focused ministry. In other words, they would experiment with a new model for relating to the community in which the church exists. As members see God at work transforming lives in the community, as they imagine ways to step into God's mission in the community, deepening their vision and character through spiritual disciplines and understanding of the times, they may envision particular ways God is leading them to engage in an externally focused ministry. As the preacher-leader hears these dreams being expressed, he or she brings together people who have held similar conversations, releasing them to develop a new way of ministry together.

At Grace Community Church, four members who were art teachers began to talk together about what they could offer the community. I had spoken with each of them about the shifts in public school curricula away from teaching the arts. I also shared a

---

<sup>12</sup> Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey*; and Whitesel, *Preparing for Change Reaction*.



newspaper article describing how a local school board member was hosting an after-school arts program for students from a nearby public school and wondered aloud whether that was a way to build stronger relationships with families within the church's immediate community. I met for coffee with the artists along with an intern and an elder from the church, and we brainstormed about ways they might sense God leading them in the use of their gifts in the community. The artists decided to host a three-week summer art camp for children from the church's neighborhood, inviting two other artists to join them. The artists promoted the camp as a way to build connections between neighbors while having fun playing with art materials. The preacher-leader facilitated an attitude of experimentation which allowed the art teachers to try out a model for engaging people from the church's neighborhood, a specific way in which church members sought to be externally focused in their life together. This ministry, called "Art Connect" will continue to be developed in the summer 2011. Art Connect will be expanded in the 2012 to include a once monthly class offered on Friday nights.

Each of the four skills presented in this chapter describe how the preacher-leader can apply an externally focused vision to the life and ministry of Grace Community Church. The skills to be used are not about managing an organization or fitting people into boxes of church programs that have little connection to people's vision or passion to connect with their community. They are skills used to open, shape, and release the imagination of the people of God, cultivating an externally focused ministry among the members at Grace Community Church.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 164.

## **Assessing the Congregation's Growth toward an Externally Focused Ministry**

Assessing the congregation's growth implies measuring against an accepted standard. When it comes to ministry, the standard to measure ministry would be the church's mission and vision. The goal of this paper is to develop an externally focused ministry at Grace Community Church. The development of an externally focused ministry is the standard by which to measure the growth of the ministry.

To show this connection between the vision of the church and a system for evaluating that ministry, this paper will present four characteristics of ministry evaluations drawn from the biblical and theological themes stated above. These characteristics shape how evaluation is done in light of the vision and mission of the church. For ministry evaluation that reflects the purpose and mission of the church, the evaluation system must: be controlled by a corporately discerned vision; be vocationally oriented; be performed in the context of the church's total ministry; and be relationally honest.

First, to develop an evaluation of ministry that reflects the purpose and mission of the church, the evaluation of that ministry must be controlled by a corporately discerned vision. In the CRC, church assemblies of the elders and the church council are to serve as places of corporate discernment. Leaders in those assemblies need to be open to God's leading through his word and Spirit. When elders meet, they will be invited to prayerfully consider how the life of Christ could be further manifest in their presence.

Out of that discerning community, the vision and mission of a particular church can develop.

As the leaders in the discerning community develop that vision, the preacher-leader will play a key role in helping form that vision. In the Reformed tradition, the preacher-leader is a “first among equals” within the leadership body. The function of the preacher-leader is defined in light of the biblical office of prophet, one who proclaims and applies God’s word to the particular situation of God’s people. However, the function of the preacher-leader is done within the context of elders whose function is defined in the context of the biblical office of the king, who both listened with care to the prophet but also who were to implement God’s word in their rulings and actions. As such, the preacher-leader faces a particular tension in the corporate discernment process: the preacher-leader needs to honor God’s leading both in himself or herself and in the leadership body as a whole. In order for the preacher-leader to function effectively within the discernment body, the preacher-leader must have a clear self-understanding of his or her role within God’s mission in that particular body. This self-understanding will create the mental and emotional freedom the preacher-leader needs to be a leader in the vision discernment process without controlling that process.

The challenge God gives leaders is to discern ways the congregation can embody the values of the kingdom of God within the local culture. In “The Hermeneutics of Leading in Mission,” Craig Van Gelder states, “God’s story has profound implications for Christian leaders as they seek to relate the purposes of God in the world as revealed in

and through scripture to their particular congregations and contexts.”<sup>14</sup> The church leaders must ask themselves, “How are we furthering the mission of Christ in our day and in our community?” It is from this perspective that ministry can be honestly evaluated.

In doing so, they need to be in tune with God’s story and make it their own. This process of living into God’s story in one’s own life is the backbone for the formation of a discerning community. Out of the intersections of God’s story and their story, leaders discern and state a vision for the local congregation. In this way, the leaders exhibit and embody the values of God’s kingdom. As the leaders enter into this process together, they begin to form a community of spiritual discernment as they live out and model a vision of the kingdom of God in the context of the local church. As Barton states in her article, “A Deeper Calling,” “Eventually this leads to the ability to clarify and articulate deeply held values, living them out in concrete ways.”<sup>15</sup> Through this inner transformation and collective discernment, the leaders together develop the vision for implementing Christ’s mission in their local congregation. Once the particular vision is identified, it then becomes the touchstone for evaluating all ministries and, in particular, the ministry of the preacher-leader.

Secondly, in order to develop an evaluation of ministry that reflects the purpose and mission of the church, the evaluation must be vocationally oriented. Here, “vocation” means the congregation’s sense of calling to ministry. Since the church is a

---

<sup>14</sup> Craig Van Gelder, “The Hermeneutics of Leading in Mission,” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, vol. 3, num. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, “A Deeper Calling: Cultivating an Organizational Culture of Spiritual Transformation,” *Christian Management Report* (October 2004): 2.

body that depends on a relationship with Christ, its head, evaluations need to be in the context of the congregation's sense of calling and relationship to Jesus. Evaluation ought to begin in a dialogue between the pastor and other leaders expressing how God is calling and leading them in ministry and then broadened to circles of communication with the congregation to sense how their experience of ministry reflects a deeper sense of purpose from God.

In order to identify and understand the congregation's and leaders' sense of calling, the primary means of evaluation will be personal interviews and surveys. By means of this communication, the evaluation can be a tool to strengthen the bond between the leaders of the body and Christ, their head. However, all who participate in a church are broken vessels. When pastoral and personal failures and inadequacies are shown, opportunities for repentance, change, and growth must be available; this grace can best be communicated in a personal, one-to-one conversation. Evaluating ministry in this manner will help foster an awareness of God's leading in the church's life and ministry and will enable the formation of an externally focused ministry to take root.

Thirdly, in order to develop an evaluation of ministry that reflects the purpose and mission of the church, that ministry ought to be done within the broader context of the church's total ministry. Since God has gifted and called all his people to ministry and since God has called the Church as a whole to make disciples, an evaluation of the ministry of the congregation is to be focused on the overall ministry of the congregation. The ministry evaluation will certainly take into consideration the particular ways Grace Community Church is released for ministry; is developing new, externally focused

relationships; and is engaged in coaching people for their personal development. Such an evaluation will bear in mind the consistency of these ministry ventures with all the ministries within the local congregation. It is unsound to evaluate the work of one ministry, say that of the preacher-leader, apart from the ministry that he or she shares with the entire congregation. Every aspect of the congregation's ministry will play a part in this evaluation. In evaluating its ministry in terms of developing an external focus, the work of one part needs to be performed in the context of the whole.

Tools most helpful for discerning the impact of pastoral ministry in the context of a church's total ministry are systems-based. Herrington states, "The better we understand the functioning and implications of a living system, the more effectively we undergo personal transformation and learn to lead with integrity."<sup>16</sup> As a result, in 2011, a church-based ministry evaluation will include the use of a Natural Church Development survey as a way to look at the broader system and see the track record of ministry done through all the members of the congregation. This ministry evaluation will be repeated in 2013. In addition to this ministry evaluation, in 2011 a survey and assessment will be given, one that utilizes insights of family systems theory developed for use by Herrington and Taylor for churches in the Ridder Leadership Initiative.<sup>17</sup>

Fourthly, in order to develop an evaluation of ministry that reflects the purpose and mission of the church, that evaluation needs to be relationally honest. The Bible

---

<sup>16</sup> Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> The Ridder Leadership Initiative is a systems based initiative for renewal of pastors and congregations based at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Jim Herrington and Trish Taylor work closely with the group of pastors and church leaders to initiate and sustain creative momentum for revitalization of existing ministries. The pastor and key congregational leaders at Grace Community Church are a part of this initiative.

teaches that the church grows in its ministry and best reflects the life of Christ when members speak the truth to one another; “speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). Honest communication helps the preacher-leader see the impact of her or her ministry within the body as a whole; honest communication also enables those leading the evaluation of the church’s externally focused ministry to see more clearly if it is living out the values that are articulated within the church body.

The Bible also teaches that the church is a unity with many parts working together organically in ministry: “From him (Jesus Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16). In light of this teaching, every member has a stake in the ministry of Grace Community Church. Since the church is a unity with many parts working together, the evaluation process needs to take into consideration the views and experiences of the larger body. Evaluation processes must be done in the context of the church body’s relationships, both internally and externally. In doing so, those initiating an evaluation can conduct surveys which enable individual members to reflect on their own ministries within the context of the whole. As they do so, the evaluation tool will affirm the externally focused ministry vision and will strive to find ways to celebrate ministries which have furthered that vision. Such celebration can occur in the annual congregational meeting as well as in periodic ministry reports during a worship service.

In this time of transition, the preacher-leader may become the lightning rod or the designated scapegoat for an anxious or malfunctioning system. Those evaluating the

ministry need to be honest about what they see happening in the church. Without awareness of the relational dynamics within the church and how they are affecting the ministry, the church members will improperly assess blame and try for a quick fix. Such a solution will only set the church's ministry on a track of slow death. However, viewing the church as a dynamic unity encourages evaluators to set the preacher-leader's task within the context of the overall ministry of all the members. Following such a time of reflection, the congregation's vision for an externally focused ministry would be confirmed and the church's ministry would be focused.



## CONCLUSION

This paper presented a strategy to transform Grace Community Church from an internal, member-care focus to an external, community-serving focus by developing a new ecclesiology which enabled the cultivation of a new sense of identity and calling for the pastor, the congregational leaders, and the congregation. In reviewing the context for ministry, the internal focus of the ministry of Grace Community Church's forefathers was illustrated. This internal focus was the result of a deep desire to maintain the church's religious and ethnic identity against the surrounding culture which was perceived as a threat to the church's identity. These churches clung to each other as they defined themselves over against their ministry context. While this internal focus helped preserve the heritage of the Dutch Reformed community, it also limited the fruitfulness of the church members' ministry as ambassadors for the kingdom of God in their community. However, the powerful cultural shifts that took place in the 1960s and 1970s and the adaptations to these changes within the ministry context provided Grace Community Church a unique opportunity to reassess the church's self-understanding in the light of the Bible's message of the coming of God's kingdom. While many may have felt threatened and anxious about these changes and subsequent challenges to their congregational identity, the shift in ministry focus from an internal, member-only focus to an external, neighborhood-ministry focus has given renewed purpose and energy to most of those within the congregation.

This paper has included a theological grounding for this shift in ministry focus. It has briefly sketched out a new ecclesiology which is based on the Bible's teaching of the

mission of God. The mission of God is not just an activity of the Church, but is the expression of God's purpose to restore and heal creation. The Bible captures the heart of God's mission, stating that God's mission is to reconcile all things to himself in Christ (Colossians 3:20). Through his Spirit, God is working in the world to restore lives of people in his world through Jesus. Following Jesus, people may experience God's renewing presence in their lives and experience his guidance through his word and Spirit. God's call to his people is to be sent into the world to represent the kingdom of God. The Church partners with God who has sent Jesus and his Spirit into the world to redeem it as his very own. With this understanding of the Church, Grace Community Church has a firm basis on which to express its externally focused vision and ministry.

For this vision of the church to be effective, it needs to be taught and applied to the life of the congregation. The paper identified ways to apply the vision to the life of the preacher-leader, to the lives of ministry leaders within the congregation, and to the congregation's overall ministry. A key element of applying that vision to all three levels of leadership within the church is the practice of the spiritual disciplines.

The practice of the spiritual disciplines has been a key factor in my personal journey toward an externally focused ministry. Christ's mission on earth involves the renewal of God's people's lives as they seek first his kingdom. This applies to all in Christ's Church. For a leader, this implies that the core of what a leader brings to this ministry is his or her own transformed self, where Christ is formed in us. Spiritual disciplines such as solitude and silence ensure that the leader remains attuned to the leading of God in his or her life. In my own life, as pastor of Grace Community Church,

leadership with a new vision of what God is calling his church to be and to do requires an inner resilience and focus that can best be attained through a regular practice of these disciplines. Ministry that takes into account the spiritual growth and development of the leader will find ways to ensure that the leader spends time in the disciplines to put himself or herself in a “place” where God can do his renewing work by his Spirit.

This is significant because the Church moves ahead in mission only by the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit. For example, Paul is kept from preaching the gospel in a region of Asia Minor by the Spirit and then senses God directing them to cross over to Macedonia through a vision, inspired by God’s Spirit (Acts 16:6-10; cf. Acts 2:17). In short, the Holy Spirit moves the Church in mission. The Holy Spirit is the effective agent of God’s mission on earth. When a leader is attuned to the Spirit’s leading and is growing in confidence in the Spirit’s direction, he or she is enabled to set the vision and direction for the ministry of the local congregation. This belief accounts for why cultivating the spiritual disciplines is an aspect of applying the externally focused vision to the leadership of the preacher-leader, the ministry leaders, and the congregation as a whole. Leading God’s mission requires leaders who are willing to listen for the Spirit’s direction in their lives and in the church’s ministries.

As the Spirit guides the congregation to discern God’s leading, the congregation will develop the twin virtues of hope and an ability to discern the times. Discerning the times has already been identified as a key skill to be taught to the congregation as the externally focused vision is applied to the life of the congregation. This process of discernment enables the members of the congregation to see how God is calling them to

live into his mission in their specific ministry context. Discerning the implications for God's mission in the specific context will result in a new vitality and renewed hope for Grace Community Church, its leaders, and its preacher-leader. That hope is based on the picture of a new future which God is leading the church toward. As a conclusion, this paper will reflect on hope as a key to the discernment process.

The Bible's story of hope for the Church is not like a mystery novel. In a mystery, the way things turn out is unknown and uncertain until the end – and the events and people that lead to the conclusion of the mystery are often a surprise in the end. But the Christian life is not like a mystery novel. When Jesus comes back, evil will be finally cleansed from the earth. On that day, this entire creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. The whole world will be renewed and reformed. Lost loved ones will come back again; death will no longer separate families or tear at the hearts of widows. There will be no more AIDS, Avian flu, rheumatoid arthritis, Lou Gehrig's disease. There will be no more weeds that choke out our garden plants, nor math problems that refuse to be solved. Shopkeepers will no longer be frustrated by customers who refuse to pay for what was ordered; spouses will no longer be frustrated by family members who will not share what is really on their hearts. There is a place and a time coming when everyone will stand tall and proud and never feel ashamed or dirty, a time and a place when everyone will be filled with the light and life of God. That is the end of the story. That is how life will turn out.

Christian hope is built on nothing less than the picture revealed in the Bible. Philippians 2 teaches Christians that one day everyone in the world will acknowledge Jesus' authority and leadership. Revelation 5 encourages Christians by showing them the hopeful picture of people from every tribe and language worshipping together, praising God. People from many generations will worship together side by side from the heart, working together shoulder to shoulder in focused service. Friendships will be filled with respect and trust, and like iron sharpening iron, that turns conflict into opportunity for growth.

In anticipating the coming of that day, Jesus warned not to be like the servant who says, “‘My master is taking a long time in coming’ and he [the servant] begins to beat the menservants and women servants and eats and drinks and get drunk. No, it will be good for that servant to be about the masters business when he returns” (Luke 12:43). Jesus challenges his audience to understand the times and be active in them working toward and praying for the completion of his kingdom in Christ. Understanding the times is a depth perception – listening to the winds of change and perceiving the movement of God's spirit within it. Understanding the times is listening and looking to where evil lurks, and being able to identify its weak spots. Knowing the times sees where God is present and active in this world through Jesus, and joining him there. It is a depth perception of our life and times.

In the Old Testament, King David gathered warriors who came to David and helped him in battle. These experienced soldiers fought side by side with David, fully determined to make David their king. There was one group of men from the tribe of

Issachar. While the Bible does not say how skillful they were with sling shot or bow or shields, the Bible does say something about their ability to help direct the action. The men of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do (1 Chronicles 12:32). They had a depth perception of the present reality and they could see what needed to be done. David's army and God's mission were advanced because they understood the times.

Discerning the times is not looking back and saying yesterday was so much better of a time. In the face of the challenge of postmodernism, one may be tempted to turn back the cultural clock and long for a better day in the past. However, in the words of the Teacher in the book of Ecclesiastes, "Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these?' For it is not wise to ask such questions" (Ecclesiastes 7:10). Rather, the Bible calls believers to know the times and seek God's kingdom in it.

In order to discern the times one must listen to the Bible's message and see its implications for the present experience of God's people. Jesus described this process of discernment with these words: watch and pray (Matthew 26:41). As one prays and meditates on his word, he or she may watch and see how the word of God can confirm the direction God may be calling one to serve. The God who speaks to his people as they pray and the God who speaks to his people in the Bible is the same God who works in the community where he has called his people to minister. The movement of God's Spirit in the life of one who follows Jesus is to see where God is at work and join him there. Hearing God's call, cultivating that call in disciplines of the Christian life, discerning and inspiring others in an externally focused vision, and applying that vision to the life of the

congregation will cultivate a new tomorrow for Grace Community Church, one that is externally focused, cultivating grace-filled relationships with people in its ministry context.

APPENDIX A

CHICAGO SOUTH MEMBERSHIP RECORD, 1966-2008

Year	Evergreen Park	Park Lane	Kedvale Ave	Grace Comm.
	<b>Total members</b>			
1966	853	682	562	
1969	788	680	603	
1970	790	656	596	
1971	742	648	561	
1973	673	583	712	
1974	640	543	673	
1975	600	544	675	
1976	565	537	749	
1977	527	509	725	
1978	478	508	611	
1979	448	512	654	
1980	412	478	637	
1981	396	486	637	
1982	383	490	619	
1983	358	461	615	
1984	343	457	654	
1986	328	482	583	
1988	292	479	530	
1990	264	460	444	
1992	253	457	394	
1994	230	423	374	
1996	263	420	349	
1998	254	318	254	
2000	235	385	303	
2002	232	356	272	
2004	180	277	247	
2006				481
2008				378



<b>Year</b>	<b>Oak Forest</b>	<b>Palos Heights</b>	<b>Tinley Park</b>	<b>Orland Park</b>	<b>New Lenox</b>
	Total Members				
<b>1966</b>	222	647			
<b>1969</b>	241	853			
<b>1970</b>	304	853			
<b>1971</b>	350	961		275	
<b>1973</b>	434	997		496	
<b>1974</b>	504	953		602	
<b>1975</b>	493	959		660	
<b>1976</b>	547	946		697	
<b>1977</b>	587	938		697	
<b>1978</b>	629	905		795	
<b>1979</b>	622	888		864	
<b>1980</b>	630	906	121	855	
<b>1981</b>	659	941	157	907	
<b>1982</b>	635	932	189	945	
<b>1983</b>	623	916	231	958	
<b>1984</b>	551	890	270	993	
<b>1986</b>	575	777	376	1034	
<b>1988</b>	569	711	463	1160	
<b>1990</b>	552	580	549	1165	
<b>1992</b>	529	575	581	1263	
<b>1994</b>	538	559	658	1323	
<b>1996</b>	487	537	701	1290	
<b>1998</b>	481	516	734	1262	105
<b>2000</b>	403	565	700	1202	276
<b>2002</b>	447	678	564	1251	345
<b>2004</b>	402	729	614	1256	435
<b>2006</b>	482	789	451	1284	662
<b>2008</b>	583	742	458	1297	696

APPENDIX B

SOUTHWEST CHICAGO CHRISTIAN SCHOOL  
SUPPORTING & COMMUNITY CHURCHES

**Oak Lawn Campus**

<b>Church Affiliation</b>	<b>99-00</b>		<b>00-01</b>		<b>01-02</b>		<b>02-03</b>		<b>03-04</b>	
Community	78	22.2%	86	27.7%	98	31.3%	114	37.4%	96	35.7%
Supporting	274	77.8%	224	72.3%	215	68.7%	191	62.6%	173	64.3%
Total	352	100%	310	100%	313	100%	305	100%	269	100%

**Tinley Park Campus**

<b>Church Affiliation</b>	<b>99-00</b>		<b>00-01</b>		<b>01-02</b>		<b>02-03</b>		<b>03-04</b>	
Community	71	17.1%	143	31.9%	124	27.1%	124	28.1%	118	27.5%
Supporting	343	82.9%	305	68.1%	333	72.9%	318	71.9%	311	72.5%
Total	414	100%	448	100%	457	100%	442	100%	429	100%

**Chicago Christian High School, Palos Heights Campus**

<b>Church Affiliation</b>	<b>99-00</b>		<b>00-01</b>		<b>01-02</b>		<b>02-03</b>		<b>03-04</b>	
Community	141	29.9%	225	44.3%	215	39.2%	219	41.1%	210	42.3%
Supporting	331	70.1%	283	55.7%	333	60.8%	314	58.9%	286	57.7%
Total	472	100%	508	100%	548	100%	533	100%	496	100%

**Oak Lawn Campus**

<b>Church Affiliation</b>	<b>04-05</b>		<b>05-06</b>		<b>06-07</b>		<b>07-08</b>		<b>Total</b>	
Community	97	39.8%	108	43.4%	98	41.0%	97	43.5%	872	34.8%
Supporting	147	60.2%	141	56.6%	141	59.0%	126	56.5%	1632	65.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2504</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Tinley Park Campus**

<b>Church Affiliation</b>	<b>04-05</b>		<b>05-06</b>		<b>06-07</b>		<b>07-08</b>		<b>Total</b>	
Community	118	28.0%	132	31.5%	130	32.4%	130	33.8%	1090	28.6%
Supporting	304	72.0%	287	68.5%	271	67.6%	255	66.2%	2727	71.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3817</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Chicago Christian High School, Palos Heights Campus**

<b>Church Affiliation</b>	<b>04-05</b>		<b>05-06</b>		<b>06-07</b>		<b>07-08</b>		<b>Total</b>	
Community	187	38.6%	180	41.2%	164	40.1%	179	43.7%	1720	40.0%
Supporting	298	61.4%	257	58.8%	245	59.9%	231	56.3%	2578	60.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4298</b>	<b>100%</b>

## APPENDIX C

### PASTORAL LETTER TO SOUTHWEST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL BOARD

December 15, 2008

SCCS School Board Members,

We, the undersigned, would like to thank you for your selfless and tireless work on behalf of the entire SCCS school association. Your dedication and sacrifice in service to the families of SCCS and for the cause of Christian day-school education builds up children and young people who are learning to confess that, in every sphere of life, our world belongs to God. We also want to thank you for recognizing the increasingly complex and challenging context within which Christian day school education gets carried out. That familiar song about how “the times are a-changin’” is true in more ways than can be counted. As a board, you have understood these times and have taken on the seemingly impossible challenge of setting a plan that will help the SCCS association navigate the next 75 – 100 years of Christian day school education. Specifically, we have in mind here the tentative plan presented to association members in the spring of 2008 at informational meetings in Oak Lawn, Tinley Park, and New Lenox. Again, we extend sincere thanks to you as a board for wrestling openly and honestly with these challenges and for presenting a conceptual plan.

The purpose of this letter is to present our simple but firm conviction that a significant consideration with respect to the future of the SCCS Association must be the matter of board and association membership. As a board, you have consistently pointed out the reality of a shrinking Christian Reformed and Reformed church constituency going into the future. The heart of your proposed plan includes the consolidation of school campuses so that a future expansion in New Lenox can occur. In our opinion, it is quite clear that consolidation as a singular strategy will not be enough to help the SCCS Association successfully navigate the future. Consideration towards and action to expand the constituency of the SCCS Association beyond the traditional Christian Reformed and Reformed base must be taken by the school board. This would obviously require a

change to the current association bylaws so that individuals and families who do not belong to a church which adheres to the Reformed confessional standards could belong to the SCCS Association and serve on its board.

This expressed conviction should not be heard as rallying cry to throw out the rich and resourceful Reformed heritage upon which our schools have been built. We stand united in our belief that the SCCS Association must stay Reformed in perspective and that any future participation in board membership from individuals who are not from a church that adheres to the Reformed confessional standards must be limited by association bylaws to a minority.

We consider the grounds for our conviction on this matter to be intimately tied to our common identity in Christ Jesus, our Lord. They are as follows:

1. **We are called to hope.** A singular strategy of consolidation does not look to the horizon with a sense of hope but, rather, it displays a constituency intent on “battening down the hatches” in fear. In Christ, however, we anticipate and expect the new edges of growth as we are led into a future by the One who is making all things new. Christ will continue to lead us as we take a new direction for Christian and Reformed day school education on the southwest side of Chicago.
2. **We are called to justice.** A basic injustice is done to families from non-supporting churches who, without exception, pay full tuition and, in many instances, sacrifice greatly so that their children can attend SCCS but then are not given an official voice of any kind. Parents of students from non-supporting churches can and do volunteer at nearly every level, including serving as chair of the Parent Teacher League. But under our current bylaws, these same parents are denied a simple vote at the association and board levels. The SCCS bylaws need to be revised to make it possible for the voiceless to have a voice and for the disenfranchised to be included in Jesus’ name.

3. **We are called to hospitality.** The founders of SCCS had a vision for Christian day school education that has served our Reformed community for multiple generations. They likely had no idea that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, their vision would be embraced by a wide range of Christian families who, though equally committed to Christian education, have little to no experience with the Reformed tradition. The Christian principle of hospitality does not require us to forsake our Reformed principles but it does require us to find ways to welcome and enfold those who gladly partner with us in the cause of Christian day school education. Therefore, bylaws that restrict association and board membership to Reformed Christians only are, essentially, inhospitable. Instead, we are called to have open hearts and hands which form the primary posture of those found in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

As board members, you have already recognized that matters related to the future of the SCCS Association are not merely matters of bricks and mortar. Our cause of Christian day school education is directly connected to the ever-expanding kingdom of God that is growing in a myriad of ways and including an increasingly diverse people. We join you in praising God for this and want to assure you of our prayers as you labor towards this end. We are confident that God has called you to the position of board leadership for such a time as this. To an equal degree, we are confident that your agreement with and action on the position we've expressed in this letter will greatly assist in positioning the SCCS Association for a rewarding and expansive future.

Our sincere thanks are extended to you as a board for lending your concerned ear and prayerful heart to the matters we have shared in this letter.

Rev. Michael J. Kooy

Dr. David A. Larsen

Rev. Phillip S. Leo

Rev. W. Wayne Leys

Rev. Julius T. Medenblik

Rev. Roger Nelson

Dr. Steven Timmermans

Dr. Steven Vryhoff

Rev. Richard E. Williams

## APPENDIX D

### OVERVIEW OF RIDDER LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

The 2010-2012 Ridder Leadership Initiative  
Accelerating Momentum, Mobilizing Leaders –  
*Leadership Development for Sustainable Change*

The Ridder Initiative provides five learning events over the next 20 months, with pastors, congregational leadership teams, Jim Herrington and Trisha Taylor, and the Ridder Leadership Team. Our overall theme is Leadership Development for Sustainable Change...Developing, Maintaining, and Sustaining Momentum toward becoming more effective leaders in the mission of the church.

The Facilitators: Jim Herrington & Trish Taylor  
Trisha and Jim along with Robert Creech have coauthored the book *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. Jim has also coauthored *Leading Congregational Change*.

#### **Ridder Leadership Initiative 2010-2012 Outline**

##### **Preparation:**

Purposeful Living Training.

##### **Event 1: Pastors' Retreat- Houston, TX**

**Oct. 26-29, 2010** *Personal Transformation- Accelerating Momentum*

##### **Interim Work:**

Complete assignments from Retreat

- Develop accountability through monthly contacts with one Group B Pastor.

One monthly contact is to be in person for 2-3 hours.

-Recruit a Leadership Team and complete Purposeful Living with Leadership Team

- Complete assignments from *Personal Transformation* Retreat

##### **Event 2: Pastor and Leadership Team Retreat- May 19-21, 2011**

*Developing Momentum*

• *Pastors meet all three days*

• *Leadership Team meet Friday late afternoon until conclusion.*

• *Pastors and Leadership Teams will be expected to participate in all portions of retreat, including overnight at Retreat Center.*

##### **Interim Work:**

- Complete assignments from Event #2 Retreat

- Develop accountability through monthly contacts with one Group B Pastor.

One monthly contact is to be in person for 2-3 hours.

**Event 3: Pastor and Leadership Team Retreat- Oct. 27-29, 2011**

*Maintaining Momentum*

- *Pastors meet all three days, Leadership Teams meet Friday late afternoon until conclusion.*
- *Pastors and Leadership Teams will be expected to participate in all portions of Retreat, including overnight at Retreat Center.*

**Interim Work:**

Complete assignments from Event #2 Retreat

- Develop accountability through monthly contacts with one Group B Pastor.

One monthly contact is to be in person for 2-3 hours.

**Event 4: Pastor and Leadership Team Retreat- May 17-19, 2012**

*Sustaining Momentum*

- *Pastors meet all three days, Leadership Teams meet Friday late afternoon until conclusion.*
- *Pastors and Leadership Teams will be expected to participate in all portions of Retreat, including overnight at Retreat Center.*

**Interim Work:**

Complete assignments from Event #2 Retreat

- Develop accountability through monthly contacts with one Group B Pastor.

One monthly contact is to be in person for 2-3 hours.

**Event 5: Pastors' Integrative Retreat- Oct. 24-25, 2012** Group A and Group B Pastors



## APPENDIX E

### A SUMMARY OF THE RIDDER CONGREGATIONAL CHANGE PROCESS

RIDDER <u>EMPHASIS</u> :	Moving from organizational model to model of organism <i>(centered on people not programs)</i>
RIDDER <u>LEADERSHIP</u> :	Adaptive Leadership <i>(why &amp; how)</i> instead of merely Operational Leadership <i>(what &amp; when)</i>
RIDDER <u>PROCESS</u> :	Information → Practice → Reflection
RIDDER <u>STRUCTURE</u> :	<b>3 mental models:</b> <i>discipleship, family systems, using creative tension</i> <b>2 values:</b> <i>authenticity &amp; integrity</i> <b>1 goal:</b> God's mission

### MENTAL MODELS

*"A set of beliefs and assumptions about the world and on which we act and respond"*

- Mental Model of Discipleship
  - Radical obedience, *dealing with areas of habitual disobedience*  
*John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."*
  - Reflective living: *intimacy with Christ that isn't just information but  
relationship*  
*John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in  
me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you  
can do nothing."*
  - Real, authentic community: *community helps us tell our truth*  
*John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I  
have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all  
men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one  
another."*
- Mental Model of Family System
  - Anxiety in family systems creates *"vibrations"*
  - Leaders must be a *"non-anxious"* presence created by a *"differentiated self"*
  - Leaders must act with intention

- Mental Model of Generating and Sustaining Creative Tension
  - Looking for “*clear, shared, compelling vision*” (today systems work by consensus)
  - Must identify our current reality and God’s preferred future...the land between is the area of creative tension
  - In the land of creative tension exist integrity gaps where past leadership failures have potential to create a default future, which is the past repeated

## VALUES

- Authenticity
  - “*Saying what’s so*” (*as I see it*)
  - Expressing courage and consideration
  - Arising out of transformational living
- Integrity
  - Doing what you say you will do when you say you will do it
  - Must both keep and honor your word
    - “*Keeping your word*” is doing what you say you will do when you say you will do it
    - “*Honoring your word*” is making it right if you have failed to keep your word

## MISSION

- Central message of the Bible: Understanding that God is on a mission to redeem and reconcile the world to Himself and that He invites us to join Him in this work as His ambassadors. This is our “*end game*,” our ultimate goal!!
- The mission of the church is connected directly to the mental model of discipleship (*radical obedience, intimacy with Christ, authentic community*) leads to missional living and to the values of authenticity and integrity

## APPENDIX F

### SERMON EVALUATION FORM

Filling out this form will help Pastor Kooy and our Roundtable Sermon team in gaining a clearer picture of how sermons can better shape our church community in living into the reign of God in Christ. Guided by God's Word and Spirit, we pray that together we will express the implications of the sermon text for our life together as a community of faith wanting to develop authentic, grace filled relationships

- How did you experience the translation of the Bible's teaching from our group discussion to the delivered sermon? What might you have expected but didn't hear or see? What would you like to affirm and/or change about the way the challenge or promise of the text was presented?
  
- Please state briefly an example or two of how this sermon demonstrated that it was written for this current time and place.
  
- What specific opportunities or challenges did you sense God calling Grace Community Church to as a result of our study together or during the sermon? These may be challenges or opportunities that came to you during the sermon or may be something that came to you privately as you reflected on this passage.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allender, Dan B. *Leading with a Limp: Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press; 2006.
- Anderson, Leith. *Dying for Change*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990, 1998.
- Anderson, Ray S. *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Anderson, Ray S. *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Balz, H.R. and G. Schneider. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translation of *Exegetisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, volume 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. "A Deeper Calling: Cultivating an Organizational Culture of Spiritual Transformation." In *Christian Management Report*, October 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Giving the Best I Have: the Process of Transformational Leadership." In *Christian Management Report*, June 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Bergsma, Derk. "A Tale of Two Churches: An Analysis and Critique of the Process of Decision Leading to Relocation from City to Suburb." Unpublished Seminar Paper, University of Chicago, no date.
- Borchert, G.L. *The New American Commentary, Vol. 25B: John 12-21*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003
- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Marknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Bouma, Gary D. *How the Saints Persevere: Social Factors in the vitality of the Christian Reformed Church*. Monograph Series No. 4, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Monash University. Victoria, Australia: Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Monash University, 1984.

- Brafman, Ori, and Rod A. Beckstrom. *The Starfish and the Spider: the Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2006.
- Brinks, Herbert J. "The Americanization of Bernardus DeBeij." *Origins: Historical Magazine of Calvin College and Seminary Archives*. Volume 6, number 1 (1988).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dutch American Voices*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Netherlanders in the Chicago Area." In *Origins: Historical Magazine of Calvin College and Seminary Archives*. Volume 1, number 1 (1983).
- Clinton, Robert J. and Paul D. Stanley. *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992.
- Collins, Jim. *Good to Great*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.
- Easum, Bill. *Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: the Path to Spiritual Growth*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1988.
- Frost, Michael and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Gibbs, Eddie. *LeadershipNext: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Glasser, Arthur F. *Announcing the Kingdom: the Story of God's Mission in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Herrington, Jim R., Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor. *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Herrington, Jim R., Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

- Holli, Melvin G. and Peter d'A. Jones. *Ethnic Chicago, a Multicultural Portrait*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995.
- Kotter, John P. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996.
- Kouzes, James M., and Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Lencioni, Patrick. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Lewis, Robert, and Wayne Cordeiro. *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Macchia, Stephen A. *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Traits of a Vital Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Values Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, 2004.
- McIntosh, Gary L. *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002.
- McKenna, David L. *Power to Follow, Grace to Lead: Strategy for the Future of Christian Leadership*. Dallas: W Publishing Group, 1989.
- McNeal, Reggie. *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003.
- Minatrea, Milfred. *Shaped by God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Ogne, Steve, and Tim Roehl. *TransforMissional Coaching: Empowering Leaders in a Changing Ministry World*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008.
- Pagitt, Doug. *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

- Payne, LeAnne. *The Healing Presence: Curing the Soul through Union with Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.
- Quicke, Michael J. *360-degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *360-degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.
- Quinn, Robert E. *Building the Bridge as You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Deep Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.
- Rainer, Thom S., and Eric Geiger. *Simple Church*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006.
- Rendle, Gil. *The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Coming of the Kingdom*. Translated by H. de Jongste. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1962.
- Robinson, Anthony B. *Transforming Congregational Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Roxburgh, Alan, and Fred Romanuk. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Rusaw, Rick and Eric Swanson. *The Externally Focused Church*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2004.
- Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Schein, Edgar. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Steinke, Peter L. *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006.
- Stob, Henry. *Summoning Up Remembrance*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Swieringa, Robert P. *Dutch Chicago*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Ethnic Glue and a Three Legged Stool: The Chicago Experience." In *The Outlook* (March 2004).

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Tale of Two Congregations: Acculturation and Its Long-term Impact on Chicago's West Side Reformed Churches." In *Origins: Historical Magazine of Calvin College and Seminary Archives*. Volume 23, Number 1 (2005).

Van Gelder, Craig. *The Hermeneutics of Leading in Mission*. Journal of Religious Leadership. Volume 3, Number 1-2 (Spring/Fall 2004)

Whitesel, Robert. *Preparing for Change Reaction: How to Introduce Change in your Church*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007.

Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Renovation of the Heart*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.

Willimon, William. *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.