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SELF CARE FOR THE FIFTY-PLUS GENERATION
AT IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH PUYALLUP, WASHINGTON

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
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EDWIN L. SCHULTZE
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ABSTRACT

Self Care of the Fifty-plus Generation at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Puyallup, Washington

Edwin L. Schultze

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

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In light of the issues facing the aging, such as ever-changing health issues, changing circumstances, and issues surrounding work and relationships, it is incumbent upon the Christian community to help the middle-aged and older to stay abreast of what is taking place in the arena of self-care and holistic living. The Church, according to the New Testament, has a mandate and a command to preach and teach, to convert and to renew. As part of these commands, the Church should offer opportunities for information and renewal in the areas of health, well being, and self-care. With the need for better self-care as the focus of this paper, the aim of this project is to develop an effective ministry to encourage self-care for people fifty and older at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Puyallup, Washington through focused teaching and small group interaction.

This project is comprised of three parts. Part One will determine the need for more fifty-plus ministries at Immanuel, based on the number of potential participants and the current lack of adequate program for this age group. This section will include a discussion of the location of the congregation and current outreach to the fifty-plus generations in the community. Part Two will discuss the theological implications to help members of the church and the community to recognize the need for treating the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. Part Three will present the strategy for providing avenues of teaching and sharing that enhance healing and well being for the individual and the church through forums and small groups. The topics will include dealing with the aging process; healthy relationships with adult children; responsibilities of grandparenting; care of aging parents; making preparations for retirement and living in retirement mode; finding meaningful relationships in the church and community; and aging and sexuality.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 300

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INTRODUCTION

Making a concerted effort to take positive steps for self-care can be a challenge for people fifty and older, and for anyone for that matter, child or adult. We are taught from early childhood to drink lots of milk, eat our vegetables, wash our hands, and brush our teeth. Throughout life, principles of self-care and self-discipline are encouraged in three primary areas: taking care of our bodies through exercise and diet; taking care of our minds and emotions with information that stimulates and renews our thinking and reinforces positive attitudes toward self and others; and for some, attending to our spiritual selves, to build strong character and steely resilience as life's challenges impact daily living and to uphold a belief system that gives hope for a future with God in eternity through faith in his Son Jesus Christ.

In his book, *Finishing Well*, Bob Buford recounts an interview with renowned theologian Dallas Willard. Willard is discussing a conversation that he had with a leading expert in the field of the mind and the brain, and its effect on the body. Willard states that there is a two-way interaction between the brain and the mind:

[Buford states,] “I suspect this would be a very powerful factor for people in the second half of life.” [Willard responds,] “Oh, yes. This certainly affects the aging process. We’ve heard forever that attitude makes a difference, and that’s an empirical fact. People with a hopeful, forward-looking, confident attitude will find that things are different in their lives. They’re upbeat, they’re more physically fit, they’re generally happier, and of course, this goes hand in hand with research into the effects of prayer on well-being, which is now empirically established.”¹

Over the years people can become lacksidazical, complacent, and even resistant to good self-care practices. Often they find that as they are moving toward the second half

¹ Bob Buford, *Finishing Well* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2004), 12.

of life, not having a forward direction with life goals prevents them from being all God intended for them to be. Certainly there are also those who are taskmasters when it comes to physical exercise, diet, mental stimulation, and spiritual renewal and these individuals work at maintaining good health and wellness perhaps to the opposite extreme.

In light of the issues facing the aging, such as ever-changing health issues, changing circumstances, and issues surrounding work and relationships, it is incumbent upon the Christian community to help the middle-aged and older to stay abreast of what is taking place in the arena of self-care and holistic living. The Church, according to the New Testament, has a mandate and a command to preach and teach, to convert and to renew; as part of these commands, the Church should offer opportunities for information and renewal in the areas of health, well being, and self-care. Dr Ray Anderson, in his book, *Self Care*, explains how Jesus and St Paul exhort and demonstrate the call and fulfillment of this aspect of the Great Commission:

For God has called us to peace and, I might add, to health and not sickness, to safety in relationships and not to terror, to self-respect and not to self-condemnation, and to well-being emotionally, spiritually, and physically, not to being hurt. Self-assertion as a claim upon the mandate of God that each person be treated fairly and humanly in a relationship is honored by Him and blessed by Jesus. He recognizes and responds positively to the blind and sick who press through the crowds, even over the protests of the disciples, to be healed. Paul asserts himself in demanding that he be treated with dignity and respect as a Roman citizen when treated wrongly by the magistrates in Philippi as well.²

Thus the challenge of this ministry focus paper is that of self-care for that population in the fifty-plus age group at Immanuel Lutheran Church (hereafter, Immanuel) in Puyallup, Washington. The fifty-plus group, comprised of about two

² Ray S. Anderson, *Self Care* (Pasadena: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000), 109-10.

hundred members, makes up approximately one-third of the church. Of those two hundred, about 30 percent are between fifty and sixty-five years of age, and approximately 70 percent are sixty-five and older.

In the community of Puyallup and the location of Immanuel, there is a particular need to address self-care issues. The church is located in what is called “old town,” the original part of the community, and it was established in 1963. Like many of the homes and businesses which had their origins in the early nineteen hundreds, Immanuel is an aging population and many of those who are active members there have been a part of the congregation from birth or early childhood. Some of these members are set in their ways while others are interested in continuing to grow and learn about life and health issues. Those in their fifties and early sixties are, for the most part, open to change and renewal in the areas of health and self-care. In speaking with several individuals in these age groups, there has surfaced great interest and excitement on their part for the church to invest its time and energy on their behalf.

The fifty-plus generation at Immanuel is the focus audience for this project paper for two reasons. First, there is a lack of ministry to those members who are between fifty and sixty-five years of age. The need surfaced about a year ago during an informal discussion between Immanuel’s senior pastor and me. He indicated at that time that this age group was a neglected group in terms of a specific ministry. As we brainstormed various possibilities, I suggested considering topics that could help them with transitional issues for the second half of life. This ministry need “clicked” for him and thus we began narrowing the topic to self-care and holistic health.

The second reason that the topic of self-care after fifty has taken on special meaning is a personal reason. In my own life, I have experienced the aging process, including retirement, health changes, and a move to a different community and state after thirty-five years, which resulted in the loss of longtime friends and neighbors. These transitions have impacted my life. The topic of self-care has become more important to me ever since I moved past the age of in my own life, and I have now reached my early seventies. In my personal health, I have dealt with diabetes and open heart surgery, along with some depression following the surgery. These experiences have helped me focus on better self-care in terms of exercise, mental and spiritual renewal, avoiding workaholism, and trying to slow down and not place so much pressure on myself. There is still much work yet to be done and much personal growth in the area of self-care still to do.

Since I began the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Seminary over six years ago, I have become more aware of these needs for myself and for others in the church and retirement community. My coursework in the program has included self-care for pastors and church workers from Dr. Archibald Hart; learning about families of origin and building strong families through the church from Drs. Jack and Judy Balswick; and ministry to all generations in the family, conflict management, and holistic living from Dr. David Augsburger. These courses have sensitized me to the broader needs that the Church can provide for its membership. With the need for better self-care as the focus of this paper, the aim of this project is to develop an effective ministry to encourage self-care for people fifty and older at Immanuel through focused teaching and small group interaction.

This process will involve a teaching model by offering educational forums on a number of topics relating to self-care. The topics will include dealing with the aging process; healthy relationships with adult children; responsibilities of grandparenting; care of aging parents; making preparations for retirement and living in retirement mode; finding meaningful relationships in the church and community; and aging and sexuality. Additionally there will be other topics added as the needs surface among the participants in this ministry.

These topics will form the basis of the presentation with follow-up small group discussion after each presentation. The small groups will report back to the large group and share information at the close of each presentation. Additional sharing and attention will be given to those topics in which more interest is indicated.

Presenters will include local health and social service personnel, as well as pastoral staff at Immanuel, including myself. These individuals will present topics pertaining to holistic health, social needs, and personal issues that are age specific to the fifty-plus generations. In addition to local or regional resources and pastoral staff, videos and online resources relevant to holistic health topics will be made available to supplement the teaching resources when presenting this material.

The approach will have a theological emphasis based on Old and New Testament teachings that are relevant to holistic teaching about the renewing of mind, body, and spirit. Content focus for second-half-of-life issues and concerns of the members at Immanuel will be emphasized. Both interviews and surveys will be used to determine the interests and needs of the group.

As was noted above, the target group of people for this project are members of Immanuel as well as individuals in the surrounding local community who are fifty years of age and older. This includes many busy fifty-to-sixty-five-year-olds who are still working, as well as retirees in the congregation and the community. There has been a definite lack of ministry concern for them at Immanuel over the past several years. This group has also been preoccupied with personal and family concerns, but as they move toward an “empty nest,” they have more opportunity to address personal needs and interests.

Slowing down our fast-moving society and offering options for better self-care is not only a responsibility of the individual and the community, but the Church as well. The purpose of this project is to heighten awareness and to provide direction for this age group in the area of self-care as it applies to their physical, mental, social, and spiritual concerns. This project is comprised of three parts. Part One will determine the need for more fifty-plus ministries at Immanuel, based on the number of potential participants and the current lack of adequate program for this age group. This section will include a discussion of the location of the congregation and current outreach to the fifty-plus generations in the community. Part Two will discuss the theological implications to help members of the church and the community to recognize the need for treating the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. Part Three will present the strategy for providing avenues of teaching and sharing that enhance healing and well being for the individual and the church through forums and small groups.

With these goals in mind, this project will begin in the spring of 2012. In September 2012, a series of forums will be established as well as small group gatherings

for the fifty-five-plus generation at Immanuel and in the surrounding community. In 2011, there will be the continued dialogue with the Immanuel church staff and leadership to put in place this new ministry.

Hart, in his book dealing with life's hidden addictions, ends discussing self-hatred, worry, entertainment, food, sex, shopping, codependency, control, exercise, work, and other addictive issues. He concludes the book with the following exhortation: "Listen to a prayer of Moses, that great man of God. 'Seventy years are given us! And some may even live to eighty. But even the best of these years are often emptiness and pain; soon they disappear, and we are gone. . . . Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.'"³ It is my hope and prayer that this project will indeed help the fifty-five and over generation at Immanuel to spend our days wisely and profitably as members of God Kingdom here on earth.

³ Archibald D. Hart, *Healing Life's Hidden Addictions* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1990), 249.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CHALLENGE

CHAPTER 1
COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The Early History of Puyallup

One of the early pioneers to the Northwest was a man named Ezra Meeker. He was instrumental in the founding and establishment of Puyallup, Washington in 1862. Meeker became known as the “hops king of the world.” He was Puyallup’s first mayor, and he was extremely instrumental in developing and helping the community to exist and thrive. At one point, when it appeared that the community would not survive, he took money out of his own account to make sure the local economy and businesses would not fail. It helped, of course, that he was wealthy and the president of his own bank. Meeker was an excellent businessman who was involved in farming, particularly in the hops industry, and instrumental in bringing about the early arrival of the railroad to the community.

Meeker was a pioneer trailblazer, leaving for the West in 1852 and first settling in Iowa. However, the cold Midwest weather prompted Meeker, his young bride, and their seven-month-old child to travel the Oregon Trail as far as Portland, Oregon. Arriving with only three dollars in his pocket, a pair of oxen, a wagon, and three cows, he was

encouraged by his brother and father to move further north to the Puget Sound area where pioneering was just being established. “By 1853, the Meekers had reached the Puget Sound country, and settled permanently in Puyallup in 1862. Here Meeker developed an extensive and profitable hop-raising business.”¹

In their book written about the early history of Puyallup, authors Lori Price and Ruth Anderson note the success that Meeker enjoyed:

Ezra Meeker said his crop brought more than half a million dollars that year (1883). Always one to take advantage of an opportunity, Meeker formed his own hop brokerage company and spent several seasons in England acting as a selling agent for the Valley growers. He soon became known as the ‘Hop King of the World.’ With their new affluence, hop farmers built elaborate new homes. Arguably the most opulent was that of Ezra Meeker, with its 17 rooms, including a billiard room and ballroom. It was said in 1890, when it was completed, to be the showplace of the Pacific Northwest.²

With Meeker’s leadership in the community and his desire for the community to succeed, one may wonder why Puyallup was not called Meekerville or a name similar to honor this pioneer. At the time of the incorporation of the city, Meeker designated the name of this community “Pallyup,” honoring the Native American tribe that had inhabited the Puget Sound area near Mt. Rainier for centuries.

The Puyallup tribe, which numbered about two thousand during Meeker’s time, had occupied the area for thousands of years. On one of their current websites, information is provided about the Puyallup tribe history. The website states, “The Puyallup Indians have lived along the shores of Puget Sound for thousands of years. In

¹ Washington University Libraries, “Ezra Meeker, the Quintessential Pioneer,” in the series, *Northwest of the West: the Frontier Experience on the Northwest*, November 7, 2010, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/frontier/local/case8.html> (accessed October 1, 2011).

² Lori Price and Ruth Anderson, *Puyallup: A Pioneer Paradise* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 41.

our native language we were known as S'Puyalupubsh, meaning 'generous and welcoming behavior to all people (friends and strangers) who enter our lands.'"³ The tribe lived in villages from the foothills of Mt. Tacoma, which is now called Mt. Rainier, along the rivers and creeks to the shores of Puget Sound. In late 1854 the tribe settled on reservation lands in the Puyallup community area. A document from the tribe's website describes this treaty:

The first European settler of the Puyallup region was a Dr. Tolmie, who arrived in the early 1830's. He, an Indian guide, and a number of other natives made their way through the valley in which about 2,000 Puyallup lived. Many more settlers would aggressively encroach upon the area over the next couple of decades, which exerted a hugely negative impact on the Puyallup and neighboring tribes.

Finally, to try to shore up their way of life, the Puyallup tribe established relations with the U.S. government on December 16, 1854. Under duress, they and other tribes negotiated with Isaac Stevens, the Washington territorial governor and Indian agent. The result was the Treaty of Medicine Creek, by which the tribes ceded most of their territories, but reserved certain lands and rights—including fishing rights.⁴

Currently the tribe numbers about 3,800 members, with a small percentage of the tribe having no Caucasian lineage. They have come to play a reasonably significant role in the life of the area through the establishment of several casinos and the building and operating of gas stations in the area. Although the casinos hire local people and produce excellent revenue, they also create an atmosphere in which people can become addicted to gambling and are then subject to this problem.

³ Puyallup Tribe of Indians, "Home page," Puyallup Tribe website, <http://www.puyallup-tribe.com/> (accessed June 10, 2011).

⁴ Puyallup Tribe of Indians, "Home page," Puyallup Tribe website, http://www.Puyallup-tribe.com/history/treaty_of_medicine_creek/ (accessed August 29, 2011).

On a more positive note, the tribe provides education for approximately nine hundred youth from pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The school, named after an early chief, provides opportunities for Native Americans throughout the Northwest to receive a good education. Students are also made aware of their heritage and culture. The website of the Chief Leschi schools states, “Do not forget the culture that came before your own because only when we know where we have come from can we understand where we are going.”⁵ This concept is important for all people to consider, especially in relation to the topics of this paper, including self-care, family histories and well-being, application of family history, denominational history, and community setting.

In reviewing the history of the Puyallup area, one of the shrines in the heart of the old downtown area is a tribute to Meeker’s influence and impact in the community. It is the showplace home he built in 1890, known as the Meeker Mansion. The seventeen-room, Victorian-style home is one of the landmarks visited by the estimated one million visitors to the community and area each year. The local chamber of commerce points this out in one of its public relations flyers:

Situated at the foot of scenic Mount Rainier, Puyallup is home to the sixth largest fair in the country, the largest street festival in Pierce County, the highest grossing Farmer’s Market in the state, a unique outdoor art gallery, and the historic Meeker Mansion and Liberty Theater. Along with an exciting antiques district and a wide variety of unique shops and eateries in the downtown area, Puyallup welcomes well over a million visitors into town each year while still maintaining its small town warmth and charm.⁶

⁵ Chief Leschi Schools, “About Us” page, Chief Leschi Schools website, <http://www.leschischools.org/about/> (accessed June 10, 2011).

⁶ Puyallup Chamber of Commerce, *Puyallup Main Street Association Flyer*, 2.

Current Demographic Data

There is great significance to the thought behind the comments quoted above in the public relations flyer. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the downtown area took a near fatal blow when the city began to move southward away from the downtown area. The concept of building shopping malls was in full vogue when Puyallup brought about a new shopping mall and housing area south of the downtown area. This new shopping and business area called South Hill sprawls along an area of approximately ten miles from South Hill to its next-door neighbor, the community of Graham. The total area boasts a population of over a million people. What appears like a mid-sized city of thirty-five thousand people now has the feel of a sprawling city strung out over a large land area.

Puyallup has become a hub for shopping and service organizations as well as many medical providers. It has also become a bottleneck for those living in the South Hill area as they go to and return from work. Locals warn, “Don’t go on Meridian (the four-lane corridor of South Hill) at eight in the morning or at three in the afternoon.” In order for the old downtown area not to die, restoration of public buildings, businesses, and community activities became a priority during the 1980s and early 1990s, and continued until 2005. A new library and city hall were built during those decades so that today, the old downtown area with an upscale business district is a welcoming, vibrant part of community life and activity and an important part of Puyallup.

Immanuel is located in the heart of this old downtown area. In the period when businesses and churches were moving to the new South Hill area, Immanuel also considered moving from its downtown location and relocating to the new area of South

Hill. Instead, the congregation chose to remain downtown and expand within this location to reach out to the surrounding community. This outreach includes Puyallup High School, located across the street from the church, and the downtown area located two blocks from Immanuel. Thus the challenge for Immanuel has been and will continue to be how it decides to carry out its ministry to the surrounding area. There is much potential for outreach: to the downtown homeless, to the teens at the high school across the street from the church property, and the residents, both those who have remained in the area or those who have recently purchased and refurbished the older historical homes in the downtown area. As was noted with the move to the South Hill area and the overall expansion and growth of the community, Puyallup has grown from a city of a few thousand in the 1980s to a city of thirty-five thousand with about one million in the surrounding area.

In the past twenty years, Puyallup and its outlying area has developed business and industrial outlets while maintaining the agricultural base of small crop farming and lumbering. Warehousing, transportation, service-related businesses, and new medical facilities have taken over more of the farming areas on the outskirts of the city so that farming has a smaller role and impact in the community. Some of the leading employers in the Puyallup community are the MultiCare Good Samaritan Community Healthcare hospital complex, with 2,000 employees; Puyallup School District, with 2,313 employees; South Hill Mall, with 1,500 employees; Puyallup Tribe of Indians, with 1,940 employees; Costco Wholesale and Distribution, with 650 employees; McDonald's

Restaurants, 630 employees; and Recreational Equipment, Inc (REI), with 600 employees.⁷

The close proximity of Puyallup to major employers in nearby cities, such as the Port of Tacoma, a large shipping and receiving center for ships, Microsoft and Boeing Aircraft in nearby Seattle, and two military bases now jointly called Fort Lewis McCord, has helped Puyallup become a choice location as a bedroom community for people working at the above sites, all of which are located within a twenty-mile radius of Puyallup. A commuter train that runs seven days a week through Puyallup enhances travel to the sites in the Seattle area.

However, as with most of the national economy within the past two years, Puyallup also has suffered from the downturn in the job market. The unemployment rate, as listed in a report of 2004 Employment Statistics published by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, reported a labor force of 16,135 and an employment force of 15,319 with an unemployment rate of 5.1%.⁸ There is currently no new information by the local chamber of commerce for Puyallup and surrounding area. However, in a recently published newspaper article by the *Tacoma News Tribune* dated November 18, 2010, the October 2010 unemployment rate is listed as follows:

Washington's unemployment rate remained at 9.1 percent in October as the state rode five straight months of private sector job growth, officials reported Wednesday. In Pierce County (location of Puyallup), the unemployment rate dropped a tiny bit in October to 8.5 percent from an adjusted 8.9 percent in September. The number of people in the labor force decreased, too, by about 2,500 people. The October rate is almost

⁷ Puyallup/Sumner Chamber of Commerce, *Business Directory and Visitors Relocation Guide*, 9.

⁸ U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004 Employment Statistics (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004).

the same as it was a year ago, when there were about 6,000 fewer people in the labor force.

As for jobs, the county had a net gain of about 400 jobs from September to October. Gains in retail trade and educational and health services offset the loss of temporary Puyallup Fair jobs in September.⁹

Exactly how Immanuel has been impacted by the overall downturn in the economy is seen by the downturn in contributions and by a degree of insecurity and pessimism projected by members of the congregation. There have been families who have had to move out of the area to find work, and others who have chosen to stay have been out of work for several months. This trend is beginning to reverse itself, though, in recent months. In speaking with the staff at Immanuel, there is an indication that the congregation has maintained a positive attitude toward the future.

Cultural Influences

The recent economic downturn impacting the community and the congregation has been felt among church members, but there continues to be solid stability within Immanuel because of the long-term family histories in the community and the church. The stability of the community and Immanuel is due to these families who have stayed and maintained community and church life over the past twenty to forty years.

Thus, community life, family life, and church life format a degree of consistency and well-being for the people living in the Puyallup area. Events like the weekend farmer's market and the Southwest Puyallup Fair are important events for the community. The fair is the sixth largest fair in the nation, sponsoring various annual events during the year as well as numerous trade fairs. This atmosphere lends itself to

⁹ Curt Woodward, "Jobless Rate 9.1% in State," *The News Tribune*, November 18, 2010.

building traditions for family activities and a sense of community cohesiveness that affords activities for families on a regular weekly and monthly basis.

Church life is another stabilizing aspect of community life. There are many churches in the community. Some of the older mainline denominations, such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, and Episcopal, are located in the older downtown area and have been able to maintain a fairly stable membership. There are also many new congregations, both mainline and evangelical churches that have been the outgrowth of the community moving from the downtown area. They too provide a stabilizing factor in the health of the community. What the directional changes hold for both “old town” (as the downtown area is known) and the mainline churches that have chosen to remain in “old town” like Immanuel, is still being determined. These churches are working out new and effective ways to meet the needs of the population that has remained and to reach out with service and meaningful ministry to the growing surrounding area.

As in any community, the potential stability of the older congregations is a positive influence in the community and neighborhoods. But like church life in general in the Northwest (both Oregon and Washington are known for their very low church attendance history), the number of residents who are active in their churches is relatively small. In selecting my own neighborhood of fifteen households, only three households are active church attendees who are involved in congregational life, another three households attend irregularly, and the other nine do not attend at all. We live in an older neighborhood located within three miles from the downtown churches. A majority of these families have lived in this same location between ten and thirty years. Darrell L. Guder, in his book, *Missional Church*, reflects on the state of the Church and the difficult

and often frustrating missional efforts Christian make. He writes, “New forms of community, shaped largely by media and consumer choices, are displacing many of the former structures of community. But they carry with them a major drawback: they often do not bring persons into face-to-face relationships . . . many people desperately search for a face-to-face community.”¹⁰

Unfortunately, this is a problem and a struggle at Immanuel. Along with the stability that the longer-term history of traditional family life and regular church attendance brings to the community, there is a degree of rigidity and an attitude of “Why change? This is the way we have always done it.” To Immanuel’s credit, the barrier to change lessened when there was a pastoral change in 1995. A big part of the change at that time was adopting a contemporary worship setting along with keeping one service that was traditional. It was, however, the vision and the persistence of the new pastor and the leadership of the congregation that “brought a dying congregation back to vibrancy.”¹¹

The fifty-plus generations are a mix of those who have accepted the change to contemporary worship and those who are very set in their style of worship and attitudes toward change. The group with some of the more rigid thinking continues to cause some friction in the life and management of the congregation, and impacts somewhat the way business is conducted within the congregation. Even though great strides have been made toward growth and renewal, the degree of rigidity within the confines of some families has slowed this process. Unfortunately, those who have taken the greatest brunt

¹⁰ Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 43.

¹¹ Mark Zier, in a conversation with the author at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Puyallup, Washington, August 10, 2010.

of this rigidity have been the senior pastor and his family. Change has come at a cost of being the object of resentment toward change.

Another avenue that has been a catalyst for change and new thinking in community and church life is that of the influx of newcomers to the community during the past twenty to thirty years. This influx comes from individuals and families who have moved to the Puyallup area for work, who want to live within a reasonable driving radius of their work, and/or desire to live in a community with a small-town atmosphere and friendly hometown mentality. These families have had a positive impact on the community and church life as they bring new ideas and resources. For example, Immanuel runs a preschool with almost one hundred preschoolers. A large percentage of these children are from new families that have moved to the area because of work. This group has not been a very vocal or a very involved part of congregational life to this point. However, they are a potential group who could be a vocal and strong resource for the church in the future and are a current potential to impact congregational life as they themselves search for a church home.

Along with this group of people, other groups who have moved to the area are those who have retired from the nearby Army and Air Force bases in the Tacoma area and decided to remain in the area. There are also a large population of current military personnel and their families who are stationed at the combined Ft. Lewis-McCord army and air force base. The great value of both retirees and current military personnel is that these newcomers often bring with them a diverse cultural background and extensive life experiences due to being a part of the military and having lived in many different parts of the world. A few of these families are active members at Immanuel and many of these

families continue to impact the community in terms of business, schools, social, and political life.

Implications of Time Restraints

Families with young children and children of grade-schoolers and high-schoolers are often very busy raising their families, commuting to and from their work sites, and carrying out a myriad of family and personal activities. Those between the ages of fifty and sixty-five are often busy with similar activities. Thus, there is a time factor for many at Immanuel in terms of availability to receive ministry or to volunteer.

In many families at Immanuel, both parents are employed outside the home. The number of households in which both parents work outside the home is approximately 75 percent. In consultation with Immanuel staff, there are a total of 622 baptized and confirmed members with a total of 265 households. There are 211 individuals over the age of fifty. Of these, 146 (or 70 percent) are over sixty-five years old and 65 (or 30 percent) are between the ages of fifty and sixty-four.¹²

Considering again seventeen family units within a two-block area of my neighborhood as an example, there are six family units in which both parents work, one unit in which only the husband is employed, four single male units employed full-time, two units with males employed full-time and female part-time, three retired units with one unit both male and female employed part-time, one retired unit with male retired and female working part-time, one unit with female retired, and lastly, one unit in which both male and female are presently unemployed at this time Table 1 details the age range,

¹² Church records, reported by Judy Nix, church secretary, as of August 29, 2011, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Puyallup, Washington.

employment status, and number of dependents in each family unit. This test case is only one sampling, but it is representative of the fact that currently in the United States, in approximately 75 percent of families both adults in the household are employed either full-time or part-time.

Table 1. Employment Status, Age Range, and Number of Dependents at Home in Sample Neighborhood

Employment Status	Age Range	Dependents at Home
Husband and wife both full-time (1)	20-30	2
Husband and wife both full-time (1)	40-50	1
Husband and wife both full-time (4)	50-60	none (3 units) one (1 unit)
Husband full-time/wife part-time (2)	30-40	2 (1 unit)
	50-70	none (1 unit)
Husband full-time/wife homemaker (1)	40-50	3
Single parent/male full-time (4)	30-40 (1 unit)	none (3 units)
	40-50 (1 unit)	one (1 unit)
	50-60 (1 unit)	
Retirees: husband part-time/wife part-time (1)	60-75	none
Retirees: husband retired/wife part-time (1)	70 plus	none
Widow (1)	80 plus	none
Husband and wife, both unemployed (1)	50-60	none

Thus, family obligations demand much from the family today when both parents work outside of the home. Jack and Judy Balswick, in their book, *The Family*, point out that “discussions of marriage can no longer be considered complete without tackling the topic of dual-earner marriages. It is estimated that in 64 percent of two-parent families with dependent children both parents work. Only 8 percent of families today represent the traditional arrangement of the mother stays home with her children.”¹³ They go on to say, “The key to doing well is learning how to balance work and family so that neither impinges on the other in disruptive ways.”¹⁴ To do this they recommend the following:

Rather than react to difficult circumstances and pressures, they [couples] must anticipate problems and take intentional steps to prevent them. The couple will be most successful in coming up with a suitable arrangement if they (1) mutually contribute unconditional love, grace empowering, and intimacy to their relationship; (2) have an extra dose of cohesion and adaptability; (3) agree on priorities, recognizing what is essential and what is nonessential in their family and work roles; and (4) identify resources within themselves, their marriage, and the family and the wider communities that will help them meet the demands of their dual roles.¹⁵

All of this being said, it appears essential that for families to succeed, resources from the community and, where applicable, the local church, need to be available to help keep the family work/home balance in tact. In the community of Puyallup, these available resources become valuable factors in determining good self-care and family care for people who are raising a family or those whose children are grown and are establishing their own adult life patterns.

¹³ Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 94.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Community Outlook

There are three factors worth noting that make Puyallup a desirable place to live, raise a family, or continue to live in the mature time of life. These are the emphasis on education, the involvement of churches in the community, and the YMCA Fitness Center. Each of these factors contributes a great deal to the quality of life in Puyallup.

The Emphasis on Education

First, although Puyallup could be considered as having a small-town mentality, the educational system from grade school through high school provides well above-average schools. Even with the growth to the South Hill area, the needs of students and the building of schools in this populated area has been excellent. The two middle schools in the downtown area, grades seven through nine, have recently been remodeled and expanded. The South Hill area has two very excellent newer high schools and the oldest high school in the downtown area across the street from Immanuel has been remodeled, with a very excellent vocational building completed this past year. The commitment of money and energy toward the quality of education for the children in the community has not been neglected.

The needs of those youth who are on the fringe with the court system or not succeeding educationally also have various resources available to them. A drop-in center in the city provides a safe place for youth, an educational component of mentoring and counseling, and serves as a resource for youth who are court-mandated. This entire program is sponsored and funded by the local YMCA, the Youth for Christ ministry, and several local churches, including Immanuel. The youth pastor at Immanuel spends a

portion of one afternoon a week mentoring and counseling youth who come to the center from the juvenile court system in Pierce County.

The Involvement of Local Churches

Second, Puyallup has a history of having churches that are involved in the community; this includes both mainline and evangelical churches. There is wonderful support, particularly in the area of ministry to the homeless and needy. Several churches in Puyallup provide a noon meal by offering meals on a rotating basis during the week. Immanuel has taken on this responsibility each Sunday. Hot meals are provided by a crew of volunteers who, in addition to food, offer support and faith by visiting and caring about those who come each week. At Immanuel there are usually twenty to forty homeless who are served each Sunday afternoon and a group of about ten volunteers.

Another quality program sponsored by both mainline and evangelical congregations is called Cold Winter Nights. There are eight different churches that rotate their facilities providing a place to sleep and keep warm during the cold, wet Northwest winter. Again, Immanuel has participated in this program for the past ten years with one member of the staff being extremely pro-active in helping this population.

Immanuel provides another form of support for the homeless and needy in the community. Immanuel owns several rentals in the area around the church and as such provides very inexpensive apartment rent in one of its buildings for homeless individuals and families who are working toward transitioning to more stable living situations. The Balswicks discuss the need for churches to provide care and concern for people in various situations: “In seeking to become a community of faith the church must avoid the pitfall

of exclusivity and the tendency to accept only certain types of people. It must welcome the widowed, the orphaned, the handicapped, the poor, the single person, and broken families.”¹⁶ This call is to reach out to others who are less fortunate. Immanuel and a number of other churches have done and are continuing to do so.

The YMCA Fitness Center

The third factor that makes Puyallup a desirable place to live is the YMCA Fitness Center, also called the Mel Korum Family Fitness Center. It is the responsibility of all individuals to determine how they will live their lives and how they will spend their waking hours so that their lives can be as full and complete as possible. Part of this includes attending to one’s physical and social needs, and the local YMCA in Puyallup, known as the Mel Korum Family Fitness Center (hereafter, the Korum YMCA), is the hub of this activity. This particular facility was built in 2000 with a considerable amount of money given by one of the community’s most active businessmen on behalf of his father who had been in the automotive sales industry in the Puyallup area for over forty years.

Recently I attended a meeting in which Jerry Korum, the son of the couple for whom the YMCA in Puyallup is named, addressed the attendees. What was most remarkable about the talk and testimony by Mr. Korum was the assistance and support he had been given in his battle with alcoholism by a local church (one church leader in particular) and by a number of business leaders. His closing comments, though, had more to do with his family’s desire to provide a Christ-centered place for renewal, not

¹⁶ Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 360.

only of body, but also of mind and spirit. Thus the Korum YMCA provides ample opportunities for family-oriented physical renewal. While at the Korum YMCA, Christian music is played, and programs related to well-being and holistic health are available for all ages.

The Korum YMCA is a place where people come together, make friendships, and encourage each other, and where they have a place for healthful activities such as swimming, exercising, running, walking, basketball, gymnastics, handball, and other individual sports. On the website of the Korum YMCA, the following statements indicate the degree of commitment and dedication to healthy balanced living and to Christian principles that their programs promote: “With a mission to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all, our impact is felt when an individual makes a healthy choice, when a mentor inspires a child and when a community comes together for the common good.”¹⁷ The symbols of this particular YMCA are their four value principles of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

The value of the YMCA is confirmed by a great number of people. One such testimony is from a man in his mid-seventies who exercises there daily and plays racquetball there several times a week. Another is from a woman who just turned seventy-one who swims several times each week and works out on the weight machines. Both acclaim the benefits of their program and find wonderful camaraderie with people in their age group as well as those younger than themselves as they do their workouts.

¹⁷ YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties, “Who We Are: About Us” page, <http://www.ymcapk.org/we-are/about-us/> (accessed August 29, 2011).

They also value the Christian music that is piped in most of the areas and the daily reading of a Scripture during the time they are there.¹⁸

In closing this section of Chapter 1, these two testimonies serve as a guide for self-care and the value of exercise and physical activity, particularly for the fifty-plus generation. In his book, *Finishing Well*, Buford quotes Dr. Kenneth Cooper, who comments about physical and life well being. He states, “If you want to slow down aging, live a long, healthy life to the fullest, and then die suddenly you have to eliminate the three things that are working against you: smoking, inactivity, and obesity. As we grow older our bodies change, not so much because we’re older, but because we do less physically.”¹⁹ He goes on, “In other words a lot of the physiological effects of aging are not physiological at all; they’re adaptive responses. We’re seeing performance now in people in their advanced years—seventy-five, eighty, ninety years of age—that we never dreamed possible thirty or forty years ago. These are people who have heard the message, improved their lifestyles, and are now reaping the dividends.”²⁰

Health, well-being, good self-care, and spiritual renewal are a positive part of a well-balanced community lifestyle. Puyallup is such a community that offers growth through the many different community opportunities during the year. It is a good community in which a healthy lifestyle can be enhanced.

¹⁸ Clarence Aronson, in a conversation with the author in Puyallup, WA on October 16, 2010, and Mary Ellen Schultze, in a conversation with the author in Puyallup, WA on January 21, 2011.

¹⁹ Kenneth Cooper, as quoted in Buford, *Finishing Well*, 62.

²⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

MINISTRY CONTEXT

Immanuel Lutheran Church—A Downtown Congregation

Chapter 1 emphasized the renewal of the downtown sector of Puyallup. The renewal of the downtown area in the late 1980s contributed to its survival and ability to stay competitive with the newly developing South Hill business area two miles south. In addition to the importance of knowing this history of Puyallup, the vitality and place of Immanuel being a part of the downtown area impacted the decisions of the congregation during the 1980s. The congregation made the decision to remain in the downtown area of the community. This decision will be discussed in this chapter as it traces the development and growth of Immanuel from its beginnings and early history in the 1920s to the current ministry of bringing hope through Jesus Christ to the downtown neighborhood.

Established in 1921 in Downtown Puyallup

Immanuel's history begins with two Lutheran laymen discussing the possibility of a pastor from Tacoma, Washington providing worship services in the Puyallup area. One of the men lived on a small ranch near Puyallup and the other man was an active member

of a Tacoma congregation, Zion Lutheran. In the course of the discussion, the individual from Puyallup asked about the possibility of the pastor of Zion providing preaching services to a group in the valley who had been meeting for a few months as a Bible study group in a home setting.

Shortly thereafter the Pastor of Zion, Pastor Julius Huchthausen, met with two of the leaders of this Lutheran Bible study group in Puyallup to discuss starting worship services in the community. In September of 1920, Lutheran worship services were begun in a private home with a handful of worshippers from the Bible study group. However, after seven Sunday services, the home where the group was meeting became too small and the group moved to a larger home belonging to one of the other worshippers. Here in this larger home as many as sixty people gathered for worship each Sunday. This home also became too small for the number of worshipers who gathered there as this dedicated group of Lutheran Christians demonstrated a missionary zeal by inviting their friends and neighbors to worship with them.

From this location a nucleus of about eighty people relocated their worship setting to the Puyallup Public Library, renting the library auditorium. Services were held there until September 1921, when they decided to rent the local Seventh-day Adventist church in the downtown area. By November 1921, the congregation had grown to eight-four people with both German and English services conducted by pastor Bettenhausen from Zion Lutheran in Tacoma. By this time the congregation had purchased property in the heart of the downtown area and was well on its way to becoming a vigorous spiritual gift to Puyallup. As noted in the historical archives of the church's history: "Surely the first year in the congregation's history was a momentous year, beginning with the calling of

the first resident pastor, the adoption of a constitution and the official organization of the congregation, the incorporation with the state, the beginning of English services to reach out toward more people in Puyallup and vicinity, and the purchasing of a building site.”¹

Although this first group of Lutheran believers, with their newly called missionary-minded pastor, Pastor Harold Engelbrecht, may not have known about modern twenty-first-century principles of making disciples and developing plans for church growth, they certainly were adhering to the principle of why vision is essential in promoting growth and health in a church setting. John P. Kotter, a Professor at Harvard Business School and a frequent speaker at top management meetings around the world, speaks of this principle when he states:

Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future. In a change process, a good vision serves three important purposes. First, by clarifying the general direction for change, by saying the corporate equivalent of “we need to be south of here in a few years instead where we are today,” it simplifies hundreds of thousands of more detailed decisions. Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction, even if the initial steps are personally painful. Third, it helps coordinate the actions of different people, even thousands and thousands of individuals, in a remarkably fast and efficient way.²

This same kind of vision seemed to enhance the direction and growth of the new congregation so that on July 16, 1922, a new sanctuary was dedicated. By the close of the year the congregation had grown to 117 members and by 1924 that number had expanded to 135 people.

Change again came in 1925 when the congregation’s first pastor, Pastor Harold Engelbrecht, who had been at the church since 1922, left to pastor another Lutheran

¹ Ted Brachman, Immanuel Lutheran Church Archives, July 18, 1926.

² John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 68-69.

congregation in Tacoma. A new pastor, Pastor Theodore Brachman, arrived in October 1925. By the end of 1926 the congregation had grown to 149 members. Under the leadership of Pastor Brachman the congregation continued a steady pattern of growth. This growth prompted the congregation to consider purchasing additional land to build a larger church. The project culminated with the vision to buy another property, a patch of ground full of blackberry bushes, located directly across the street from the local high school in downtown Puyallup. This property was purchased in 1945. A second location was considered at the time, a property several miles south of the downtown area. The idea was discarded because that property was too far away from where members lived.

In 1948 a new structure was completed and dedicated on the property across the street from Puyallup High School. But during the next year, 1949, the congregation experienced another directional change when Pastor Brachman resigned to take a new pastoral position out of the area after a tenure of twenty-four years at Immanuel.

The Church Moves to a New Location in 1948

In 1948 a new era began with a new church building and location and the calling of a new pastor. It seems to be a characteristic of people of German heritage that they are industrious and task-minded; with this mental toughness and economic approach to life, the congregation forged ahead with the building of a new sanctuary. This first phase of what later was to be a four-part building plan was completed in 1948. Volunteer labor and materials covered approximately 90 percent of the building costs so that by the time the new sanctuary had been dedicated, the money for the project was provided and the congregation had no debt once the building was completed. By this time church

membership had grown from the original 60-plus members in the 1920s to 281 members in 1941 and to 550 members in 1951.

This new era with a new sanctuary also included the calling of a new pastor, Pastor Erwin Gerken from the Portland, Oregon area. Pastor Gerken became the third resident pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church. His tenure continued for a period of thirty-eight years until his retirement in 1987.

Pastor Gerken, who was affectionately called Pastor Erv, began his second call after graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri to Immanuel. He had previously served a Lutheran congregation in Beaverton, Oregon for four and a half years. Under Pastor Gerken's leadership, the congregation continued a steady growth pattern and reached a membership of fifteen hundred by the mid-1960s. Part of the ministry of Pastor Gerken was a personal involvement in the community in which he became a member and leader in Rotary and other service-oriented organizations. Pastor Gerken's involvement in the community and his willingness to minister to the downtown business community helped to move the congregation toward a decision to purchase additional property in the block surrounding the church. This involvement by Pastor Gerken and the leadership of the congregation in community action allowed it to become more and more a connected and a meaningful part of the downtown community of Puyallup.

In 1953 the congregation launched a second phase of the four-part building plan with the construction of a new sanctuary. In a brochure promoting and launching of this new energetic project the following challenges were made:

Now it is time for us to move forward again. The parish hall (current sanctuary) is no longer adequate for the divine service. Chairs are used every Sunday. Many sitting on the west side cannot see the pulpit and the altar. The chancel is not kept sacred with people running through it day after day. Moreover, the acoustical problem is such that it cannot be solved. The singing church is no longer the singing church. . . . The question is not so much, can the members and friends of Immanuel afford such a House of God, but can they afford not to. Not to do so, at the earliest possible convenience means to be ungrateful to the Lord for His past blessings, hampered in our present work and limited in our opportunities for the future.³

By 1954 this challenge given to the congregation became a reality with the completion and dedication of a new five-hundred-seat sanctuary connecting the old sanctuary and the new building. The addition was dedicated on March 20, 1955. Again much of the labor and materials were provided through volunteer services and some from donations of materials from downtown businesses. Some ten thousand hours of volunteer work, along with donations that included a Reuter Pipe organ, dropped the cost down to \$66,000 with only a few thousand dollars not covered at the time of the completion of the building. The new sanctuary seated 480 people with additional room in the balcony, and it also had the availability of the old sanctuary or parish hall for additional overflow.

Just five years later, in 1959, the congregation built a four-bedroom brick parsonage on one of the lots owned by the church in the two block square of property that the church was slowly buying and developing. The parsonage was completed in October 1959. It too was primarily built by the workmanship of donated labor and material from members.

The pattern of continued growth then moved to the building and dedication of the third phase of the building plan with the completion of a new educational wing in 1966.

³ Immanuel Church Board of Directors, letter sent to Immanuel membership, September 1953.

This addition contained fourteen classrooms, a library, a conference room, a pastor's study, and a church office; this phase also entailed a remodeling of the parish hall now known as Brackman Hall, honoring the former pastor of the congregation.

In recording the history of the congregation for the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1996, Vern Rockstad, a long-time member of the congregation, notes the position of respect and honor given Immanuel church in its national church magazine, the *Lutheran Reporter*, in January 1960. He states,

Immanuel was then honored in the Synod's Lutheran Reporter as one of the synod's landmark churches by having a number of pictures taken showing Immanuel's lay people at work both within the church and on their jobs throughout the area. The article cited the progress of Immanuel because of the efforts of its outstanding hard working laymen, and the hard working Christ centered youth who attend regularly, serve on church boards, and perform duties during the worship services.⁴

Pastor Gerken's ministry spanned a thirty-seven-year period from 1950 to 1987. At one point during the mid 1970s, membership grew to 1450 members. Along with this numerical growth, additional staff was added to care for the pastoral responsibilities. Some of those support staff included a director of Christian Education who began his ministry in 1971 and an assistant pastor who came in 1976, a director of Christian Education and youth worker who came in 1971, a series of twelve student pastors or vicars from 1964 to 1975, and an assistant pastor in 1976.

During this time, the congregation initiated new programs in Christian Education and outreach ministry as well as the training of Bible study leaders who led the congregation through a two-year Bible Study program called the Bethel Series. About half of the congregation went through this program. Even though Immanuel had many

⁴ Vern Rockstad, report given at the 50th Anniversary of Immanuel in 1971.

positive aspects of growth and well being, it remained a pastor-driven church.

Unfortunately, this was the tendency and character of the church after the Second World War and into the 1950s and 1960s. Greg Ogden states in his book, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*, “Historically, the church has been entrapped in institutionalism. The institutional church resembles a corporation with the pastor as its head. Locked into a hierarchical structure, the clergy are ensconced at the pinnacle of the pyramid.”⁵ Because of this theme and because the church had a very strong pastoral leader, dependence developed over the years on pastoral presence and leadership.

In 1970 Pastor Gerken suffered a serious heart attack. The student pastor, Roger Berg, was assigned to the congregation for that year, and the elders assumed the work of ministry. Pastor Gary Kubista served at Immanuel as assistant pastor (assisting Pastor Gerken) for a brief two-year period from 1976 to 1978. In 1979, Pastor Berg was called back to the congregation as the new assistant pastor, replacing Pastor Kubista. Pastor Gerken and Pastor Berg served together until 1984 when Pastor Berg left the ministry. Pastor Gerken later resigned in 1986.

Staff changes continued from 1984 to 1994. During this time a director of Christian Education, Heidi Borg, served from 1984 through 1992; a new lead Pastor, Pastor Bill Clements, served from 1986 to 1993; Dale Sturzenegger, a deacon (lay pastor), served from 1986 to 1989; and Pastor Ken Boetcher, a retired pastor, served as

⁵ Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2003), 28.

the interim pastor from 1993 until September 1994 when Pastor John Bierman became the fifth senior pastor of the congregation.

In evaluating this period in the life of the congregation, the best one could say is that overall the additions and changes had their positive and negative values. After the retirement of Pastor Gerken, the numerical size of the church decreased. Some of this was due to the general change in society's view of church and the overall lack of attendance in the Northwest United States. Other factors were two ministerial problems during the later years of Pastor Gerken's ministry and during the ministry of Pastor Clements.

First of all, this ten-year block of time ushered in two issues with the assistant pastors. One left the ministry for personal reasons by making a choice of the gay lifestyle and the other left because of marital infidelity. Along with these personal problems, the change to a more relaxed pastoral style of Pastor Clements unfortunately did not have the same effect on the members' response of Immanuel that the strong, firm, gregarious, and somewhat rigid leadership of Pastor Gerken had given the congregation during his tenure at Immanuel.

When Pastor John Bierman accepted the call to the congregation in September 1994, the congregation had shrunk to a membership of 200 and a church attendance of a little more than 100. However, with time and a new direction, the congregation began to grow again and to realize the purpose of its ministry to the downtown area.

The Decision to Remain Downtown

The decision to remain in the downtown area came about five years into Pastor Bierman's ministry and was preceded from 1995 to 2000 by several watershed events. These events were significant in drawing the community and the church together and in establishing a new direction for ministry at Immanuel.

The initiation of these events began in the fall of 1995 when Immanuel, under the direction of Pastor Bierman's wife, Sharleen, began a pre-school program with a class of sixteen children. Over the next several years the program grew to the point of its current numbers with three classes of children ages three to five with over one hundred children in attendance. Over the period of the past fifteen years, many new members have joined the church based on the experience of parents first bringing their preschoolers to the program and then becoming interested in church for themselves and their families.

A second directional shift came shortly after the arrival of Pastor Bierman with the arrival of a new staff at Immanuel. At that time Amy Schweim was called as the director of children's ministry. Shortly thereafter, the ministry to children grew and both she and Pastor Bierman slowly began introducing a more contemporary style of music in the worship setting. In addition to the formal liturgical service, a second service with a format of contemporary music with a band and singers was introduced.

Resistance both to these changes resulted in a confrontational meeting in 1997 when an attempt was made to force Pastor Bierman to resign. With the help of the Northwest District President, Pastor Warren Schoemaker, and with the support of members, this potential rift was avoided, and slowly the congregation began to grow both numerically and with a sense of purpose for ministry within the downtown area of the

community. Attendance began to increase, and the renewal was based on a desire to redirect ministry toward outreach and service, as well as a desire to provide education for children and youth. Thus ministry moved more toward reaching out to the younger and mid-life generations and including them in the process of spiritual growth in the downtown part of the community where many of the new young families lived.

Stated Purpose of the Congregation

In 2008 a church consulting firm, Abbey Road, was hired to help the congregation continue its vision of ministry within the radius of the church's location. In a letter sent to the congregation by Pastor Bierman, the following explanation was shared:

Over the last year the leaders of Immanuel and the staff have been involved in a process to define our core values and directions of the church. Out of this came a perceived need to go further with developing a Master Plan for the church. . . . Having said all this about Master Planning, why are we doing this? It costs money, time and effort! The answer is a simple one: we are a congregation that is not content to just exist or ourselves, but for others who do not know Jesus Christ. Immanuel is a church with a great heart for this community! Yes it would be cheaper, easier and more relaxing to just exist, but that is not what God is calling us to be and to do.⁶

The new vision and mission statement that was formulated by the congregation in 2008 established the vision and mission that Pastor Bierman references in his letter. The vision of Immanuel Lutheran Church is "Reaching Lost People with God's Life-Transforming Hope in Jesus Christ," and the mission is "Sharing God's hope by doing whatever it takes for God to transform lost people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ." There are also eight core values for sharing this hope that are the principles of belief of the congregation. They are: "1) Lost people matter to God; 2) All believers are ministers in

⁶ Pastor Bierman, letter to the Immanuel congregation, October 8, 2008.

God's Church; 3) Prayer is a vital part of our relationship with God; 4) In the Word, Baptism, and Holy Communion, we continually experience the grace of God; 5) Jesus Christ is the one and only way to be reconciled to God; 6) God continues to transform the lives of all believers; 7) Worship is essential to the life of the Christian Church; 8) The Bible is the inspired Word of God and our source for living the Christian life."

Over the next several months several avenues were pursued in order to evaluate the church. A congregational survey called the Transforming Church Index was used to help determine strengths and key issues. A study of the local community was also undertaken. Finally, a series of focus groups were held within the congregation which focused on determining the key strengths and issues of congregational life. Several strengths were noted, including: 1) a warm, friendly, and accepting (grace-filled) atmosphere; 2) home groups; 3) authenticity (people are real); 4) spiritual events (Alpha, 40 days, and Kingdom weekends); 5) local mission projects (Freezing Nights and Phoenix housing); 6) the preschool; 7) the youth group (for those who are in it); and 8) the preaching, which was described as being real and down to earth.⁷ Several issues/concerns were also noted, including: 1) the lack of a strong spiritual foundation (discipleship and adult education); 2) confusion, dissension, and disinterest regarding a potential ministry of the church called Avenue of Hope (which will be discussed further below); 3) the lack of fellowship since there are three services; 4) a weak volunteer base: lack of support for staff and

⁷ This information is a summary of what was gathered in the focus groups held at Immanuel between October 21, 2008 and November 10, 2008.

programming; 5) not enough small groups; and 6) no clear process for dealing with issues (ineffective board/staff interactions).⁸

Over the past two and a half years the issues raised by Abbey Road and the various focus groups have been addressed with some positive results. The adult educational concerns have been fortified through a series of teaching programs both on Sunday with adult forums and on Wednesday evenings with an adult education class. The result has been an increase in attendance for the classes and in worship. The basis of these classes has been evangelism, discipleship making, and developing small group ministries. Encouragement by the pastoral staff has lent itself to lay people pursuing and develop home Bible study groups. So far, several new home groups have been started.

Also, confusion and lack of support of one of the church vision projects called the Avenue of Hope caused the congregation to change direction with the project. The original plan for this project was that of a two-story multi-use structure including office space that would be rented to the downtown community, a coffeehouse with seating for the local drop-in population of homeless and other downtown occupants, and a gym for use by the youth of the church and community. The downscaling of this project has turned out to be a coffeehouse called “Three” where high school students from Puyallup High can congregate before and after school, where small groups meet for Bible Studies and fellowship before or after school, and where the community can come to study, use high-tech computer hardware, listen to Christian music, and share their hurts and problems with staff and volunteers who operate the Tuesday-through-Sunday, non-profit

⁸ Focus groups, October 21, 2008 to November 10, 2008.

coffeehouse. Since opening in November 2010, Three is turning out to be a successful ministry to Puyallup High School and to the larger downtown area.

Other changes that were made involved the elimination of one of the contemporary worship services so that the service opportunities now available focus on two worship services: an 8:00 am liturgical service and a 10:30 am contemporary service that is very seeker-friendly. Between these service times, ministry to children, youth, and adults occurs with classes for the various age groups. This change creates more overlap of members on Sunday morning and a greater sense of fellowship.

Other new projects include the new home Bible Study groups, better communication among leadership, staff, and congregation members, and staff support by the deacons of the congregations. Deacons are the designated lay spiritual support people for the membership and the staff. Each deacon has been assigned a staff person for the purpose of providing support.

There is still work to be done in all of these areas, but more attention is being given to help resolve the issues and to bring the needs to the congregation by giving direct attention to problem areas as they surface. Some difficulties continue to be present in the congregation, often due to the anxiety that is created when individuals feel they are not able to speak their hearts and minds directly to one another or to the pastoral staff. Ronald W. Richardson, in his book, *Creating a Healthier Church*, discusses gaps in communication between people in church life. He explains, “Triangles are basically about people’s level of anxiety. . . . Learn to recognize these triangular patterns in relationships in the church and some of the underlying emotional difficulties that drive them. Learn how to be more comfortable in triangles, less reactive, more focused, and

able to define your own beliefs and direction, and stay in emotional contact with the other involved people.”⁹ This has been and to an extent continues to be less of a challenge in 2011 than it was in 1994 when Pastor Bierman first came to Immanuel.

Targeted Population and Need for Ministry to This Age Group

The need for ministry to the fifty-plus generation began with a conversation I had with Pastor Bierman several months ago. The direction of our talk focused on what, if anything, was being done to enrich the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical well-being of this population in the congregation. As the conversation developed, excitement over the possibility of ministry in the area of self-care and holistic living brought encouragement that this project would receive support from Pastor Bierman and from those who would benefit from this ministry—the fifty-plus generation. In talking with one couple about this project, the husband was particularly interested in the topic of self-care. His interest in better physical health care for this population was very evident and he was interested specifically in educating his peers in the area of physical fitness and nutrition. This kind of interest has been an encouragement as this project is being shared among the membership at Immanuel.

Currently, those in the fifty-plus group could attend a Bible study for adults on Sunday morning and/or Wednesday evening, as well as a Bible study and fellowship gathering for seniors (age sixty-five and up) once a month. All of these classes tend to address doctrinal and biblical texts.

⁹ Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 129.

Certainly there is wonderful value having these studies both for growth in faith and knowledge of the Christian faith. However, the direction of my conversation with Pastor Bierman turned toward addressing the needs of the fifty-plus generation in regards to issues such as being empty-nesters, raising high school and college-age children, dealing with single working adult children still living at home, or care and responsibility for an aging parent or parents. Issues such as balancing work, family life, and personal agendas were talked about as well. Jack and Judy Balswick, in their book on the family, point out just one of the issues that surface for the fifty-plus generation. They state, “Around the age of fifty, people who are at the peak of their earning capabilities may find it necessary to provide emotional and economic support to both young adult and elderly family members. The responsibility of caring for parents and/or adult children can come as quite a shock, especially after looking forward to a time of freedom to enjoy the fruit of one’s active years of labor and raising children.”¹⁰

Immanuel must consider what, if anything, could or should be done in this area of giving emotional encouragement for this type of situation. Certainly, it is not a question of whether anything should be done to address self-care for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel, but rather the question is whether there are time and staff available to address the self-care issues that are being discussed and considered as pastoral care needs. Although the staff is sufficient and effective for the size of Immanuel, the workload of teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and education takes on full-time responsibilities in the care of parishioners and evangelism. The current staff includes: a senior pastor, an assistant pastor of family life and pastoral care, two directors of Christian education, one

¹⁰ Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 165.

for the children's ministry and one with youth and college-age, a full-time secretary, a part-time pastor to shut-ins and seniors, a financial manager, a staff of six for the preschool program, and a paid manager/staff for Three, the coffeehouse ministry to the students of Puyallup High School, across the street from the church.

Part of the philosophy of the staff and leadership is the ownership of the laity to pursue some of the ministry in the congregation. This philosophy has been a welcome trend, giving permission to church members to be creative and adventuresome with new ministry ideas. No ideas are ever turned down per se and many have been given full support and the go ahead by leadership. But that being said, it still appears that the staff is responsible for the majority of program ideas and their implementation. At this point, Immanuel's pastoral staff has not initiated any plans to develop a self-care ministry for the fifty-plus generation. This then presents the challenge to lay members to step forward with the development of a creative approach to a ministry of self-care. In my particular case, my ministry at Immanuel is effectively lay involvement even though I am an ordained clergy, due to the fact that I am technically retired and volunteering in ministry.

My ministry at Immanuel has been slowly evolving over the past three years after my wife and I moved to Puyallup about three years ago. We had previously lived in Salem, Oregon for almost forty years where I had been involved in full-time institutional chaplaincy. After retirement from chaplaincy, I was on staff part-time as a pastoral care and counseling minister at a large non-denominational church in Salem. Since moving to Puyallup, the professional aspect of ministry has become volunteer work on my part in the community and at Immanuel.

My lay volunteer ministry the past three years has included maintenance and repair work, both at the church and with the remodeling of Three, the new coffee shop; playing guitar in one of the church bands that provide the worship for the contemporary service on Sunday; occasionally working with the youth group on Sunday mornings; and most recently becoming a deacon (or lay leader) assisting with worship and spiritual direction in the life of the congregation. My wife and I have also added one other ministry to support pastoral care ministry by beginning a grief support group for those who have lost loved ones in death or who have experienced other types of losses in their lives. This program will begin in June 2011.

Other support and personal ministry has been directed toward staff in the form of occasional luncheon engagements with the male staff at Immanuel. During these times, I have been able to develop trust and provide feedback and support for both the lead pastor and the assistant pastor, professionally as well as personally. Perhaps this has been a gift to staff that I have been able to provide as a pastoral counselor and pastoral friend. Gary Harbaugh, in *Pastor as Person*, describes the problem pastors and/or their families face in sharing personal or professional concerns. He writes,

To whom can they turn? It is hard to find persons in the parish with whom the pastor or members of his or her family can really talk, and there are those who question the wisdom of doing so, even if a compatible person can be found. As for the use of professional resources, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist, there are still many pastors who feel there would be a stigma attached to their “going public” with a need to get their life in order.¹¹

In addition, providing support for the fifty-plus generation is of special interest for me because this topic is one that would have been of great interest to me when I was

¹¹ Gary L. Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 56.

fifty. I would have appreciated my church giving special attention to my needs as a member of the fifty-plus generation, thus my heartfelt concern is to provide education and support for this population. Self-care as a topic in today's postmodern world perhaps seems a little selfish, but when viewed from the vantage point of the stewardship of life and placing value on the individual, it becomes very meaningful. Believers ought to support and serve one another as Christians, and reach out to others in our circles of influence, in the total stewardship of life and well being.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1921 Immanuel became a congregation. It was at this point in time that this body of believers became identified not only as a part of the body of believers called “Lutheran” but also as a part of the larger body called the “communion of saints” or “universal church.” This community is based on all who hold true to the belief of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, unlike the Church on earth with its membership of those who may or may not have this same faith in Christ. In this chapter the focus will be a review of the literature pertaining to those who profess Jesus as Lord and Savior and how their faith in Him is lived out in their lives.

The Communion of Saints and the Fellowship of All Believers

One significant concept for this project is the communion of saints and the fellowship of all believers. The term “communion of saints” refers to the teaching of Scripture that all who profess faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins are part of the universal Church here on earth. Two works have influenced this in particular: first, “The Christian in Society” in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 44*, and second, “Sanctification” in

Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 3, by Francis Pieper. Each work will be discussed regarding its contribution to this topic.

“The Christian in Society” in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 44*

The first work that is being reviewed is a volume by Dr. Martin Luther, entitled “The Christian in Society.” The particular section in the volume that is being reviewed deals with the topic of the Christian in society. In this document Luther attests to the powerful influence of the Word of God as it impacts the decisions and behavior of those who believe in God and ultimately Jesus Christ. He states in his introduction, “How men live, like what they believe, depends wholly on their response to the unceasing activity of the living God in their midst. Whether as revealed in his Word or as hidden in his world, it is untimely God alone who reigns over the whole creation.”¹

The background within which Luther prepared his thesis on good works is one in which this dualistic tension related to the work of God and the corresponding resistance to evil is present. Luther considers how both God and Satan impact the decisions of men and women, who act as the agents of both. He discusses the influence and impact of the gospel of Jesus Christ and those who represent it, whether for good or for evil, for righteousness or unrighteousness, either positively (via good works) or negatively (via hurtful actions) affecting others.

The document was originally intended as a sermon for Luther’s own parish church in 1520 where he was the parish pastor in addition to his work as a professor at Wittenberg University. The document took on a larger context when it was published for

¹ *Luther’s Works, Vol. 44*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1966), xi.

distribution throughout the Roman churches in Germany. The theme of the Treatise on Good Works was a point of view that emphasized the concept that an individual's works or efforts did not make him or her acceptable to God and that good works can originate solely from faith in Christ through the understanding of the Gospel in his life. Luther notes that it is not the Church (Roman Catholic) that provides the opportunities and circumstances for their activity but God himself.

From the point of view of the Roman Catholic Church at that time, the prescription for good works was that of fasting, pilgrimages, fixed prayer recitation, going to mass, all related to church activities. Luther, on the other hand, asserted that "there are no good works save those which God has commanded, that the first and most precious good work is faith in Christ; that in this faith one work is like another because there is no distinction between them; and that this faith is the source from which all truly good works issue."² Everything done in faith for Luther was an act of service to Christ even if it was to suffer and endure pain and hardship throughout life.

In this treatise Luther's direction is the premise that there are no good works except those God has commanded and no sin except that which God has forbidden. The basis for good works and sin, according to Luther, are God's Ten Commandments. Thus, for example in Matthew 19:16-22, when the rich young ruler asked Jesus how one could inherit eternal life, he was given the directive to keep the Ten Commandments, which he claimed he had done. He was then given the directive to go sell all he had and come follow Christ. To that he went his own way, being a wealthy person who was unable to make this choice. The act of keeping the commandments and doing good were

² *Luther's Works, Vol. 44, 19.*

associated with trusting and following Christ; Luther claimed that the highest and most precious of all good works could follow.

Thus in this thesis Luther connects behavior and relationship with God and one's neighbor to the understanding and application of the Ten Commandments as they apply to faith in God and service to people. There are in this section a number of examples regarding each of the commandments as they relate to the believer's response to God and neighbor. Luther writes, for example, "Faith, therefore, does not originate in works; neither do works create faith, but faith must spring up and flow from the blood and wounds and death of Christ. If you see in theses that God is so kindly disposed toward you that he even gives his own Son for you, then your heart in turn must grow sweet and disposed toward God."³

Luther in this document makes application from each of the Ten Commandments and applies the idea of keeping each commandment to how believers are to live lives of faith and good deeds that please God and help one's neighbor. The conclusion that can be reached in this thesis is that everything the Christian says, does, and acts upon in faith is service to the Lord and fulfills God's purpose for us here on earth. As one's life of faith and knowledge increase so can one's care and concern for God, our world, and others, all of which influences and affects one's being a part of the communion of saints and members of the body of Christ.

³ *Luther's Works, Vol 44, 38.*

“Sanctification” in *Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 3*, by Francis Pieper

The second document in this section dealing with the life of faith and good works is a doctrinal textbook of the Lutheran Church entitled *Christian Dogmatics*, written by Francis Pieper and used as a textbook at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois in the 1960s. The section on sanctification will be explored as it relates to faith and good works in the life of the Church and the Christian.

Published in 1920, this volume dates back to a much earlier time in the history of the Lutheran Church. One of the criticisms of the first two volumes of this text has been the doctrinal position on creation, the natural knowledge of God and the revealed knowledge of God recorded in Scripture. The criticism was based on the lack of research of scientific information in the determination of the validity of doctrinal truth. In this third volume, Pieper defends the Church’s position on faith and good works as an in depth matter. He states, “Considerable space has been given to the doctrine of the Christian life, or the doctrine of sanctification and good works. First, Scripture describes the Christian life not only in general, but also in its many and varied phases. Secondly, the Scriptural order which obtains between Christian faith and Christian life is in our day, too, disarranged and in most instances completely inverted.”⁴ By this he means that in the Christian community by and large, Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Armenians, and modernists place sanctification before justification and regard Christ’s saving work as inadequate. This theme of the proper relationship of justification and sanctification, i.e., good works or the lifestyle of the Christian, becomes the center focus of discussion in this volume on sanctification.

⁴ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1953), vii.

Pieper defines sanctification in both a wider and a narrower sense. “In its wide sense, sanctification comprises all that the Holy Ghost does in separating man from sin and making him again God’s own, so that he may live for God and serve Him. It includes the bestowal of faith, justification, sanctification as the inner transformation of man’s perseverance in faith, and the complete renewal on judgment Day.”⁵ Pieper does go on to state though that “in its narrow sense sanctification designates the internal spiritual transformation of the believer, the holiness of life which follows union justification.”⁶

Pieper expands on these two concepts of sanctification in terms of the relationship between justification to sanctification and good works. Both, he states, go hand in hand. Where there is faith, there are also sanctification and good works. But Pieper emphasizes that sanctification and good works proceed from being justified or being saved, not the other way around. The concept is that we love him (Jesus) because he first loved us and saved us, and thus we respond accordingly in our Christian lives. The motivation for this kind of lifestyle is the Gospel, not the Law or Ten Commandments. They are not necessary for salvation, nor do they add to the assurance of salvation. Only faith in Christ as Savior can fulfill that.

Pieper then answers the rhetorical question: Why then bother with good works or living a Christ-centered lifestyle? Pieper offers three valid reasons: 1) because God wants his followers to serve him, not sin and Satan; 2) because good works are an external testimony of God’s grace and the hope of salvation in the life of the Christian;

⁵ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

and 3) Christians are to live Christ-like lives as a witnesses to the world because the believer in Christ has the hope of salvation, and this then becomes an opportunity for others to accept Christ into their lives as their Savior and Lord.

In terms of quality and quantity of good works the Christian produces, Pieper notes that it was Luther who restored the truth that good deeds flow from an appreciation of the Gospel; that being saved by the grace God has made all acts of service, even the lowliest, noble; and that good works flow from a grateful heart even though they are flawed because of sin as it affects all of humankind. The persons of faith in Christ are pronounced good and acceptable by God through Jesus Christ and thus the good works, though flawed, are acceptable as well.

Pieper then discusses the value or purpose of good works. First of all, he writes, they are God's work. Once an individual comes to faith in Christ, he or she no longer belongs to this world. The Christian's true home is heaven and God wants his children to stay in this world for a time to serve him, especially for the cause of sharing the Gospel. This reflects his love for this sinful world, and it focuses on the ultimate purpose of life on earth, which is to portray this love for the world through good works.

Christians need to care for all aspects of their lives on earth for as long as God gives breath and life. One way to do this is by taking the best possible care of their bodies, minds, emotional states, and souls. Everything the believer does, says, and cares about reflects this kind of care for themselves and others.

The Christian Life: Growing in Faith through Fellowship and Teaching

A second significant concept for this project is the Christian life, particularly growing in faith through fellowship and teaching. Two works will be presented: first, *Creating a Healthier Church*, by Ronald W. Richardson, and second, *Life and Works of Surgeon*, by Henry Davenport Northrop. Each work will be discussed regarding its contribution to this topic.

Creating a Healthier Church, by Ronald W. Richardson

This book deals with the practical side of the belief system of a local church. Richardson discusses what takes place within the life of the congregation, and he focuses on renewing damaged or broken systems within the local congregation and promoting healing within the membership of a church. The author is both a parish pastor and a pastoral counselor, having served in a local church and as the administrator of a counseling agency.

Richardson addresses the leaders of congregational life. He includes the heads of boards and their membership as well as ushers, greeters, and those assisting as individual representatives within the leadership of the congregation. Richardson bases his ideas on a family therapy model developed by Murray Bowen, a professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University in Washington, D. C. Bowen's model was developed in the 1950s and 1960s.

One of the main ideas in this model is that of the importance for members of a congregation to connect with one another for the congregation to be healthy and successful. The author states, "People can only be understood fully within the context of

their relationships. No one lives or acts in isolation, and we all are affected by each other's behavior."⁷ Richardson believes that, generally speaking, church members do not consider the emotional significance of relationships with others as they affect their faith, and they often do not realize that how they respond and behave in relationships does not model their faith and beliefs.

Along with connecting faith and feelings in times of stress (either as individuals or as a congregation), the act of pulling together, acting collectively, and quelling anxieties as a process becomes a valuable asset for a healthy congregation, a family, or an individual. Also, the author points out that some people are very self-serving and narcissistic in their thinking and behaviors even if they claim to be Christians. He notes, "These selfish expressions of individuality are essentially about the failure of a person to grow up emotionally. Biblical admonitions to love others make little impact on these immature people because they are not able to move from loving self to loving others."⁸

Richardson discusses two additional helpful concepts. One is called "differentiating" and the other is called "reactivity." Differentiation, Richardson suggests, is "equivalent to the biblical concept of wisdom, which is a quality independent of a person's intelligence quotient and educational degrees. Wisdom has to do with people's ability to effectively use what they know."⁹ It in effect has to do with being able to make good decisions on the basis of one's information and to be comfortable with one's inner self in doing so. This is extremely useful in church life, family life, and in

⁷ Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996), 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

interpersonal relationships. It allows individuals to be comfortable when connecting and being intimate with others.

Reactivity, on the other hand, is an emotional reaction to feeling threatened or afraid. Issues in congregational life may trigger fear, uncertainty, or the feeling of not being safe. This then triggers reactivity, which on the surface looks like compliance, rebellion or opposition, power struggles, or emotional distress. All of these patterns have an underlying sense of fear and anxiety, and they cause unsafe feelings in that environment. Hopefully as congregations and individuals learn to understand them, their faith, and their family histories, the learning curve for healing in congregational life, family life, and interdependent relationships can be healed and advanced. The value of providing educational and emotional teaching for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel is based in part on what creating a *Healthier Church* is trying to say.

Life and Works of Spurgeon, by Henry Davenport Northrop

Henry Davenport Northrop's work, *Life and Works of Spurgeon*, is a very old volume, written in 1892.¹⁰ The language is archaic but the value of the document is that it is very descriptive of the life and ministry of C.H. (Charles) Spurgeon. It speaks to how powerfully the hand of God led and directed the life and ministry of this wonderful pastor and preacher.

Charles Spurgeon came from a family of pastors. His father and grandfather had that title and toiled in the parish ministry. Spurgeon himself never had a formal ministerial education but after his conversion in his teenage years his zeal for the ministry

¹⁰ Henry Davenport Northrop, *Life and Works of Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon* (Philadelphia: Thompson Publishing Company, 1892).

and his love for people and preaching became evident. As a young man just past his twentieth birthday, he became the pastor of a dying church in London, England. In time, through his popular preaching, the church outgrew the building it was using and had to build a larger edifice. Spurgeon drew large crowds of people to the church. They were from all walks of life. Spurgeon also carried out a great ministry of caring during the crises and major health epidemics in London by ministering to and comforting many families in the death of their loved ones.

Spurgeon's other interest in ministry focused on establishing orphanages for both boys and girls, and a college for the preparation of new ministers. He was a prolific writer and published countless sermons, many of which were used as written by other pastors with positive results. Spurgeon was an engaging speaker and a hard worker, and he had a heart of compassion for people. Even though he ministered for well over thirty years, he died at a relatively young age of fifty-seven.

In summarizing his life, clearly God had his hand on Spurgeon to bring him to a conversion experience through the preaching of the Gospel as a teenager, and then to commission him to preach the Gospel to the edification of hundreds and thousands of people in England. Two of his sermons will be evaluated in this section as a way of considering how he touched the lives of so many people.

In his sermon entitled, "Hands Full of Honey," Spurgeon bases his thoughts on the passage in the book of Judges in which Samson takes honey from the carcass of a lion, gives it to his parents, but does not tell them how he obtained it. A reflection upon these verses focuses on three ideas: 1) a believer's life has conflict, which is represented by the lion; 2) the believer's life has blessings, which are represented by the honey; and

3) the believer's life leads him or her to communicate with others about God's blessings. Spurgeon discusses the fact that the Christian is in a battle with the devil as a roaring lion. The devil is a very real enemy of the young Christian as well as the seasoned believer. But God also provides blessings amid trials and asks the believer to communicate God's love and care. The major idea in this sermon is that of the value of trials: Spurgeon writes, "When you are able to feel in your own soul that you have overcome a strong temptation, the fiercer it was and the more terrible it was, the louder has been your song and the more joyful your thanksgiving."¹¹

The second sermon is of significance for Lutheran Christians in that it is based on the theology and beliefs of Dr. Martin Luther. The sermon is entitled "The Luther Sermon at Exeter Hall" and is based on Galatians 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." In this sermon written for those studying for the ministry, Spurgeon briefly recalls the life of Martin Luther and points out the central theme of his theology, that "the just shall live by faith." He also talks about John Bunyan's book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and that faith is more than a creedal belief but must be acted upon. Overall, Spurgeon lifts up the life and work of Luther and points out that he was not only a great theologian and believer but he was one who lived out his faith by his actions and his position as a church reformer. Spurgeon writes in this sermon: "They tell us that Luther ignored good works. It is true he would not allow good works to be spoken of as a means of salvation; but of those who professed faith in Jesus he demanded holy lives. Luther abounded in prayer and

¹¹ Northrop, *Life and Works of Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon*, 99.

charity.”¹² With this in mind, it is evident that for Spurgeon, the life of faith and service was very much connected. The application for the ministry at Immanuel is that of reaching out to others with the gifts and talents God has provided to the congregation.

Growth in Christian Faith through Emotional and Spiritual Renewal

A third concept for this project is that of growth in Christian faith through emotional and spiritual renewal. Two works will be presented in this category as well: first, *Deep Change* by Robert E. Quinn and second, *Self Care* by Ray S. Anderson. Each work will be discussed regarding its contribution to this topic.

Deep Change, by Robert E. Quinn

In his book, *Deep Change*, by Robert E. Quinn, the author comes from a secular viewpoint as he is a professor teaching business courses; nevertheless, his words can and do apply to those in the Church. One of the challenges that Quinn makes has its application in church life. He speaks to the issue of the risk that church leaders must take when they propose and promote organizational changes. He states, “When internal and external alignment is lost, the organization faces a choice: either adapt or take the road to slow death. Usually the organization can be renewed, energized, or made effective only if some leader is willing to take some big risks by stepping outside the well-defined boundaries.”¹³ Certainly this has been the case at Immanuel. Had Pastor Bierman and his staff not risked the need for deep change, the church possibly would no longer exist or would be a very sick and dying church. And for individuals within this church body, to

¹² Northrop, *Life and Works of Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon*, 209.

¹³ Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1996), 5.

fail to dig deep within themselves and examine what they treasure in their personal and spiritual lives, this same sickness and death may well occur before its legitimate time arrives.

When confronting and addressing this level of change, Quinn suggests that individuals and organizations work toward continuously addressing the need for change. He states, “To attain excellence, an individual, group, or organization must care enough about an activity to insist that it fully meets and exceeds the demands of its audience (either internal or external), and this involves a fair amount of risk. Personal and organizational excellence demands experimentation, reflection, and evaluation, and these things in turn lead to learning and growth.”¹⁴ Quinn’s suggestions relate to the need to offer a program of self-care for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel. The tendency for people to become lethargic and set in their ways often develops over a period of years; unless there is a challenge to change and a desire to be renewed in body, mind, and spirit, the tendency for most individuals is to avoid the challenge.

To comply with this kind of challenge, though, is not all that easy. In fact it is often quite difficult. Both vision and a plan of action are necessary in order for change to take place. Quinn explains,

One person can make a difference. One person can make deep change in an organization. However, deep changes come at great cost. Enacting change means taking some risks. When we take the necessary risks, we become self-empowered. We begin to better align our internal self with our external world. As our internal power base grows, we become confident and make genuine progress toward our goal. We become energized and slowly begin to recognize that we can make a difference.¹⁵

¹⁴ Quinn, *Deep Change*, 165.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

Self Care by Ray S. Anderson

The final book that will be reviewed for this paper is *Self Care* by Dr. Ray S. Anderson, which addresses self-care and spiritual renewal. Anderson's book is comprised of two sections. The first section addresses the theological and psychological aspect of integrating body, mind, and spirit. One of Anderson's premises is that God is our creator and sustainer and the one who invests himself in the continuous growth and development of our lives through the social context and surroundings. He states, "When we speak of the self as created in the image of God, we must remember that the biblical view of the self is one of relatedness. Humans were originally created to be persons in relation."¹⁶ Finding fulfillment in this life, Anderson's suggestion is to be rooted in one's faith, grounded in love and relationships, and closely connected to one's own emotional and cognitive responses.

Anderson discusses the problem that being a disciplined and committed believer in Christ does not necessarily help resolve all the concerns and issues that an individual may have as a believer. For those issues which rob people of empowerment, Anderson believes that restoration from God is best accomplished in the mixing bowl of one's relationships with others. The capacity to love, to hold on to faith, and to maintain hope is best worked out in relationship with others. He writes (referring to the failure of the disciplined Christian life resolving all problems of the soul): "I agree. This is why I suggest that personal empowerment comes through a kind of spiritual healing that restores the self to its God-given capacity for faith, hope, and love in the context of

¹⁶ Ray S. Anderson, *Self Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing* (Pasadena: Fuller Seminary Press), 32.

human relationships. Offering assurance of pardon for sin without restoration of the self is religious malpractice.”¹⁷ This has been my own personal experience in terms of asking for and receiving forgiveness from God, Christ, and the individual I have offended or whose actions offended me. Unless there is the continued process of healing for the offender and the offended, there is no restoration of the spirit nor is there empowerment of the self. The individual’s spiritual and emotional growth becomes stagnant as well.

In the second section Anderson deals with the healing process and with the renewal of self. Issues like abusive behaviors and family violence are discussed. These have at their core negative thinking and feelings about self-worth and worth to God. He summarizes this by stating, “To make an effective intervention into this moral paradox of abusive behavior, the sense of moral outrage must be transformed into a sense of moral worth. The key to the ‘reframing’ of negative to positive self-esteem lies in a therapy of empowerment through unconditional love by which the narcissistic damage is healed, and the self-love originally intended by God is restored.”¹⁸ Anderson contends that healing can take place when people learn more about their inner motives and behaviors, their emotions, their actions, and their willingness to move from brokenness to wholeness in Christ.

Based upon my experience as a Protestant chaplain in the adult prison systems and in youth correctional facilities for over thirty-five years, I can attest that the process of healing from the scars and experiences that shaped the personalities of those individuals is indeed possible. Those who were labeled “anti-social” and those who were

¹⁷ Anderson, *Self Care*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

dealing with personality disorders were able to make progress toward renewal and recovery as they identified the moral magnitude of their behavior and were able to grasp their own value to God in spite of what they had done. Anderson's book has personally impacted me as much as and perhaps more than any other I have read in the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller. Presenting this information as seminars are developed for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel will be one of those opportunities to share what I am learning about self-care with others, both those who are part of the body of faith as well as those who are without Christ in their lives.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

The Central Tenet of Lutheran Theology: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone

The threefold theme of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, namely John Calvin, John Zwingli, and Martin Luther, was based on the three theological themes of grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone. For Luther it was the foundation from which he drew his theological ammunition as he challenged the Roman Catholic Church of his day. It began with his own personal struggle of faith, which tortured his soul as a theological student and later as a professor and parish priest, when he questioned his own worthiness of being saved. Church historian Bruce L. Shelley comments, “Luther pushed his body to health-cracking rigors of austerity. He sometimes fasted for three days and slept without a blanket in freezing winter. He was driven by a profound sense of his own sinfulness and of God’s unutterable majesty.”¹ Try as he would, Luther was not able to free himself through good works and charitable acts, nor was he able to sense God’s pleasure after abasing himself before a God of retribution and accountability. It was later, as a professor at Wittenberg University where he read, studied, and taught from Romans

¹ Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 238.

3, that he discovered the theme of grace: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23).² It was from this theme of grace and faith that that he pondered God’s Word, which assured him of his own salvation. Thus the reassurance and comfort Luther gained from his own personal reflection as well as from being a teacher of the Word provided the understanding that his salvation depended not on good works nor on penance, but on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. In this way, Jesus provided a plan for freedom from the consequences of sin and eternal punishment, both for Luther and for all of humankind.

It is from this theological foundation that the local Lutheran congregation formulates and functions when it comes to worship, study, and fellowship within the community of faith, both individually and corporately. Pieper states, “All the functions with which the congregations are charged in every case presuppose faith in Christ, e.g., teaching and admonishing one another (Colossians 3:16-17; the practice of church discipline (I Corinthians 5; Matthew 18:17); the supervision of the teaching and the teachers (Romans 16:17; Colossians 4:17); the proclamation of the Gospel (I Peter 2:9); [and] Christian conduct (I Peter 3: 8-17).”³ Thus it is understood that faith in Jesus Christ as one’s personal Savior receives the primary focus when it comes to the preaching and teaching aspects in worship and Bible studies; in the development of Christian character; and in how those involved in the life of the church relate to one another, as well as to their families, neighbors, and co-workers.

² All biblical references will be taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 420.

The assurance of forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, received by a personal faith in Christ, has been the centerpiece of Lutheran worship since the beginning of the Reformation. Attendance at a Lutheran worship service today would be amiss if this aspect of theology were absent. For example, when an attendee worships at Immanuel on any given Sunday, that person would— through the hearing of the Word of God as it is read and proclaimed and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper observed on a regular basis —have the opportunity to experience grace: God’s love for the sinner proclaimed, the receiving of this love through faith in Christ, and the opportunity to grow in faith and in love for God and others. For example, on July 10, 2011, the worship services at Immanuel consisted of music and liturgy (hymns and contemporary worship songs), the reading of Scriptures (Romans 4: 13-25 and Acts 7: 55-60), the preaching of the message (“Living to Change the World,” based on the passage in Acts 7:11 about the death of Stephen), and an opportunity to receive the Lord’s Supper. Each of these aspects, in Lutheran theology, communicates the forgiveness of sins through the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

The theme of “grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone” is certainly not an exclusively Lutheran identity. Every congregation that preaches and teaches the Gospel of God’s love and plan of salvation proclaims this same message. An example of a personal experience of this occurring is that of a worship service that my wife and I attended recently (September 25, 2011) at an evangelical church in Puyallup. The congregation is affiliated with the Calvary Chapel church body, a community-based church that was started by Chuck Smith in the 1960s in southern California. This service, like that of the contemporary service at Immanuel, began with prayer and singing,

consisting of five selections of praise worship. The worship was followed by prayers by the pastor and a forty-five minute sermon on Acts 4: 1-31. The message was entitled, “Boldness in the Midst of Adversity.” The text described the boldness of Peter and John in sharing their faith in Jesus Christ following the healing of an individual who had been unable to walk from childhood. The message was a verse-by-verse exposition of the text presented quite well by the pastor. Following the service, there was a baptismal service later in day at a private home where six individuals were baptized.

Like this church group at Calvary Chapel, Lutheran believers, like all who proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, believe this theme of “grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone” is the woof and warp of the worship and daily life in and out of the church. Luther states, for example, “This life is a journey on which we constantly progress from faith to faith, from love to love, from patience to patience, and from cross to cross. It is not righteousness but justification; not cleanness but cleansing. We have not reached the goal, but we are all journeying toward it. Some have progressed much farther on their way than others. God is satisfied to find that we work with determination.”⁴ How this works within the local congregation will now be examined.

Growing in Faith through Worship and Study

Hopefully the worshipper in the pew at Immanuel week by week and year by year who hears the Word of God and the preaching of the Gospel has at least an opportunity to have his or her faith bolstered and strengthened and to grow in love for God and others. One example of how this takes place can be seen in a men’s small group Bible study at

⁴ *Luther’s Works, Vol. XV: The Christian in Society*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1966), 338.

Immanuel, of which I am a member. The group consists of eight men who meet once a week for study, fellowship, accountability, and support. An original group of five men have been meeting for over fifteen years, and three new men (including me) have been added more recently. All eight of us are weekly church attendees and five of us attend at least one other Bible study on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Six of the eight have been active church attendees since childhood and two since early adulthood. The ages of the group members range between fifty and eighty: four members are in their fifties; one member is in his sixties; and three members are seventy or older. Members of the group rarely miss a meeting and each member is an active contributor to the group discussions and active in their participation within the life of the congregation. Even though this small group Bible study has much to offer by way of spiritual growth, the group reflects the notion that Dallas Willard touches on when he states that it is not a matter of willingness to change and grow but how the process itself can be identified and implemented. Willard writes,

[The] problem was a theological deficiency, a lack in teaching, understanding, and practical direction. And the problem, I also decided, was one that the usual forms of ministry and teaching obviously do not remedy. As I now see it, and as we will discuss, the gospel preached and the instruction and example given these faithful ones simply do not do justice to the nature of human personality, as embodied, incarnate. And this fact has far-reaching implications for the development of human health and excellence.⁵

Willard's point gives credence to the fact that there is a need for and an interest in the work of discipline toward growth and change in the areas of building healthy bodies, minds, and spirits, and that teaching and group study can help. As the church provides additional avenues to promote growth and change, the goal of better health and

⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper 1991), 18.

excellence can be advanced. In addition to the biblical insights that are gained from this Bible study, the practical insights about life, relationships, and care for oneself are talked about and given great credence in their importance in the life of a believer.

Communion of Saints and Priesthood of all Believers

The opportunity to worship and study together in a formal way provides one of the ways by which people can come together for growth. The place of worship and study in the people's lives can help them in this growth as they come together in both formal and informal ways. As a part of the Sunday worship experience at Immanuel, a few minutes are devoted to greeting and visiting with each other. Whether or not the time is used for deeper and meaningful conversations, this opportunity opens up the possibility for people to connect and share in a way that goes beyond casual greetings. Even in times of casual talk the possibility and potential for growth is present. Leonard Sweet, in his book, *Learn to Dance the Soul Salsa*, stresses the importance of contact between people: "Jesus taught that whenever we discover truth, it is God who has taught us. No book is so bad that you can't get some truth out of it. No person is without some truth to teach us. No situation is without its truth. God is instructing us in the soul sciences and soul arts every second of every day. . . . That's why we should greet everybody as if they were the most creative, exciting people we had ever met. Because they are. They have something to teach us."⁶

Small group gatherings also provide many of these same opportunities on an even deeper level. Members can visit both before and after worship and they can create more

⁶ Leonard Sweet, *Learn to Dance the Soul Salsa* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2000), 63.

intimate fellowship and friendship opportunities. Even church meetings afford the people of God chances to connect and get better acquainted. Intentional ministry can take place when Christian brothers and sisters invest in one another's lives. Ogden observes that most people in the community of faith do not receive any in-depth ministry. He notes, "Ninety percent of believers have never had someone take them under their wing and make sure that the basic disciplines, doctrines, character qualities, or ministry issues have been inculcated in their lives. This occurs when someone invests himself in the life of another to guide him into the breadth of the new life in Christ."⁷ Opportunities are unlimited for this kind of faith building within the body of Christ and as a part of the fellowship of believers in the local congregation. At Immanuel, the care ministry called Stephen Ministry provides some of this kind of mentoring. Additionally, small groups, known as "Home Groups," often include a dimension of mentoring and lay pastoral care. The leaders and the more spiritually mature in the groups often mentor newer Christians or those who are experiencing personal or family issues.

Deepening Spiritual Growth and Changing Self-defeating Behaviors

There is value in being a part of the community of faith, serving as priests and caregivers of one another in both formal settings but also in the more relaxed settings of individual and small group interaction. First, study of and reflection upon the Scriptures provide an opportunity for spiritual renewal and change. An example of this can be illustrated by a recent discussion in our men's Bible Study. We have been studying the book of Nehemiah and the study guide that is used is from the *Serendipity Bible*. The

⁷ Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 151.

passage being discussed was Nehemiah 7:5, “I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return.” The passage then states that this was the first group of Jewish people to return from Babylon after their seventy years of captivity. The reflection question from the *Serendipity Bible* was: “Who have been the meaningful people in your spiritual journey? What has been passed on to you, spiritually from your forbearers and what one quality are you now developing as one of God’s people that you would like to pass on to your children and their children? How do you intend to do this?”⁸ These questions led to a lively and productive discussion by each person who was there. Numerous insights were shared by the group as a means to give support and encouragement. The majority of the study group has been together for a number of years and the trust level is excellent, yet with three new members, the discussion took on a deep personal sharing that brought the group even closer. This group is an example of how Scripture can lead to a life-changing process in the lives of people of different ages and walks of life. One of the newer members of the group shared recently, “I look forward to coming each week to this group where I can meet with other believers and come away with an even more positive outlook for the week.”⁹ This same individual more recently was severely burned on his feet at his work site. The response from the group was to rally around him and his family in prayer and support by visits, phone calls, and encouragement.

Small group Bible studies such as the men’s group, where trust and accountability are an important aspect within the group process, lend themselves to growth and healing.

⁸ *Serendipity Bible for Groups, NIV* (Littleton, CO: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1988), 210-11.

⁹ Jim Duress, member of the Men’s Bible Study, in a meeting on July 7, 2011.

In thinking about the overall value and purpose of worship, educational groups, and as individual relationships, what surfaces in a church that is healthy (or in the process of becoming healthier) is that individuals in the church are working on personal issues in their lives, and thereby they are becoming stronger in their faith and moving toward compassion and grace for others.

Reflecting God's Grace and Love through Concern for Others

Reflecting God's love and grace by way of concern for others occurs when members connect with each other before, during, and after worship services in the parish hall or at Three, the church coffee shop. This reflection of God's love and grace takes place when church members pray for each other, and when they seek to reach out to one another with a word of encouragement or a word of cheer. It is also at work when members show concern for the welfare of those dealing with sickness or losses in their lives, and sensing when there is a need to give support from the community of faith at Immanuel. Celebratory times as well are times of rejoicing and encouragement for both recipients and supporters.

Recently there was a brainstorming meeting at the Three coffee shop in which the focus of discussion was on ways to improve the ministry of the coffee shop. There were ideas of course that promoted business at Three, but more importantly there were several ideas that supported caring for others. Some of these ideas included: providing mentoring to the youth at the high school across the street from Three; providing computers for youth or adults who are unable to afford them or who do not have them in their own homes; providing spiritual and emotional support throughout the day for any

walk-ins from the school or community; and opening up the building in the evening for groups that would benefit from music and conversations being part of the atmosphere.

Another aspect of reaching out with God's love and grace is through concern for others in the neighborhood and the community. Immanuel has assisted with neighborhood cleanups, home repair of shut-ins and elderly homeowners, providing auto maintenance, and other acts of service in the community. In addition, weekly Sunday noon meals are provided for the homeless in the Puyallup area and providing temporary housing during the colder winter months as part of a program called Cold Winter Nights. On the last Sunday of September of this year, the congregation has chosen to not hold worship services, but rather go out into the community and assist people with yard and home projects. The activity is called Neighbor Helping Neighbor. Members have been encouraged to propose projects and sign up for the different opportunities to help others. Later in the day the congregation will gather for worship and sharing about the value and meaning for them in participating in the morning activities.

CHAPTER 5

THEOLOGY OF THE NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVE

Relationship of Faith and Good Works

Individual Lutheran congregations are considered independent unless they have a mission status and are supported by the larger body, the District and the Synod of the church. However, each congregation is subject to the teachings and doctrines of the Synod. Immanuel is a member of the Northwest District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

This being said, the readings from the Bible each Sunday have a prescribed plan in which the lessons—Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel—follow a set order of readings. The series is called a “periscope” series and follows the liturgical church calendar. The word periscope is a Greek word meaning “cut out.” These specific or “cut out” readings were used in the ancient Church, and by the time of Charlemagne in AD 800, a select one-year series had been adopted. Luther Reed, in his book on worship, states,

The Lutheran Reformation generally accepted the historic system. In fact by its emphasis upon the Gospel, and the Scripture generally, it strengthened the importance of the Service of the Word, the first part of the Mass. The Lessons were recognized as giving out the theme or tone of the day, as giving direction to

the sermon, and inviting new creation in hymns and melodies. Luther and his associates published homilies on these historic Lessons.”¹

The three-year series was adopted by the Inter Lutheran Commission on Worship in 1973. It was essentially an adaptation of the three-year series that was published by the Roman Catholic Church following the Vatican council of 1962-65. The Roman Church published the new series in 1969.

The church year calendar begins with the Advent season in December and concludes with the Trinity season at the end of November. The readings are chosen to fit the specific time of the church year and they follow the life of Christ and the life of the Church. For the most part, the same readings of the Scriptures are read in every Lutheran congregation in the United States and throughout much the world during the worship service that specific Sunday. The only exception would be if a congregation chose to select different scriptures because of a specific occasion or need at that time in their church life, or if the pastor wanted to address a particular topic or series with the congregation.

The text for the Sunday sermon is usually based on just one of the Scripture readings for that Sunday, but it could also be based on portions of all three lessons—Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel. At Immanuel, the Epistle and the Gospel lessons for the day are read at the traditional worship service and either the Epistle or the Gospel lesson is read at the contemporary worship service. The sermon for the day is based on one of these lessons. Generally at Immanuel, the text used for sermons is the Gospel lesson for that Sunday.

¹ Luther D. Reed, *Worship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 87.

The purpose and the advantage of using a lectionary series over the period of the church year is that a broad spectrum of the Bible is shared and there is a consistent theme that occurs from the lessons based on that particular date in the church calendar. For example, texts in Advent would relate to the preparation for the birth of Christ and his second coming, and those in Lent would relate to the death and resurrection of Christ, culminating with the account on Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of Christ. The Trinity season (summer months) would focus on the life and ministry of Christ and the life and work of the early Church; these readings provide an opportunity to preach and teach about life as a believer and how one is to live as a Christian. Over a period of three years there is opportunity to become quite knowledgeable about the life of Christ and Christ-centered living based on the readings from the thirteen Epistles and the four Gospels.

The proclamation of the saving work of Christ presented in the sermons preached each Sunday are an important focal point in Lutheran preaching and theology. Although the message of God's love in Christ is extremely comforting for those in the sitting in the pew, the sermons tend to lack emphasis on having a growing and active daily walk of faith based on following Christ and having a deepening relationship with him. Sermonizing about discipleship and Christ-centered living could be given considerably more emphasis and attention from most Lutheran pulpits. The concepts of how to live and behave as a Christian are not talked about from the pulpit as much as they might be. This is especially true regarding responsibilities that pertain to good decision-making or how the decisions a believer makes may affect his or her moral and ethical values or how unhealthy habits have adverse effects on health and well being. Willard observes that in terms of teaching believers to follow through with the teaching of Jesus Christ, the

Church in general does not do very well either from the pulpit or in the classroom. He states, “When do you suppose was the last time any group of believers or church of any kind or level had a meeting of its officials in which the topic for discussion and action was how they were going to teach their people actually to do the specific things Jesus said?”² It would seem somewhat heavy-handed to lay all the blame at the feet of the clergy or even the lay leaders, but the truth is that all are responsible to voice their feelings and share their thinking with clergy, leadership, and with one another. One of the goals of this project is to raise awareness for the staff at Immanuel, the core leadership, and the participants in the project itself. The aim is that the fifty-plus generation will be more aware of their needs, including their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. They should continually ask themselves how they can be better prepared to deal with the issues in their lives.

Lutheran churches tend to be weak in the preaching of practical application to the sermon texts as well as in the development of a holistic and balanced Christ-centered lifestyle. At Immanuel there are both positive and negative aspects in regards to the teaching and preaching of the Word. On the positive side, both pastors make their sermons quite practical and down to earth by using illustrations from their own lives and from common experiences people have in their lives. They often suggest practical applications at the end of each message that are encouraging and challenging. Both pastors apply the message from a biblical perspective so that the message leaves an impact for daily living. The preaching would be even more successful if more specific applications about living the Christian life were shared. This could help believers make

² Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 314.

life-changing decisions in the areas of self-care, and could be incentives for those in the pews to work toward making these changes.

A sermon given by the assistant pastor at Immanuel in July 2011 would bear this out. The assistant Pastor, Mark Zier, preached a mini-series of three sermons based on a number of the parables of Christ. The series began with a sermon entitled, “Fruitful Seed,” based on the parable of the sower and the seed from St. Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23. Practical applications from this sermon focused on the many distractions and difficulties that pull people away from God and destroy their interest in and connection with faith in Christ. Yet it is God who produces the harvest. His encouragement was to stay faithful to the work God has given us on his behalf. He also exhorted the listeners not to beat themselves up for inadequacies or inabilities that inhibit them from being as effective in living their faith or sharing their faith as they desire to do.

The second message was entitled, “Bloom Where You’re Planted,” and the text was again the Scripture lesson for the day from Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43, in which Jesus talks about the parable of the wheat and the tares. The idea here was that after the farmer plants his field, an enemy comes and plants weeds among the newly planted wheat; when the crop comes up, there is a mix of wheat and weeds. One of the major points of application here was for listeners to be content where God has placed them. A second application was to consider how one has been gifted and how one finds fulfillment in serving and ministering, even when the circumstances and surroundings where one may be are evil and difficult. The point was that each person is gifted individually, and that it is a process to discover or rediscover how each person can serve in God’s Kingdom, particularly in the surroundings where he or she is currently living.

The third and final message in the series was entitled, “Sharing the Treasure,” and the texts were a series of parables told by Jesus taken from Matthew 13: 13-33 and 44-52. The series of parables includes: the parable of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, the parable of the dragnet, the parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the leaven. The application was that each person is a treasure to God and all people are valuable just as they are. Those who are not saved also are valuable treasures to God and believers can share the treasure of the Gospel with them. All three messages were based on the Gospel lesson for the day with the second and third weeks’ lessons changed to better fit the series.

As well done and as practical each of these sermons was, and even though there were a number of significant points that both newer believers and mature believers would find helpful, the short amount of time for the sermon (only fifteen to twenty minutes) made it difficult to go in-depth with teaching and applying these passages. The time limitations and the ability of people to remember a limited amount of the message make it a challenge for any pastor to provide a solid base of Christian knowledge. Commenting about the learning process and spiritual disciplines, Willard writes, as noted above, “I finally decided their problem was a theological deficiency, a lack in teaching, understanding, and practical direction. And the problem, I also decided, was one that the usual forms of ministry and teaching obviously do not remedy.”³ It would seem that even at their best, more than good sermons and good teaching are needed to help people change behaviors and habits that contradict a close following of their faith in Christ.

³ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 18.

In summary, teaching by means of the sermon at Immanuel has both strengths and weaknesses, particularly as it relates to connecting the message of the Gospel (faith in Jesus Christ) to practical daily living. The strengths of the messages are that they are very sound Christ-centered messages given by both pastors, practical in life applications, and having variety because each text is approached somewhat differently by the two presenters. The weaknesses are the time restraints which inhibit going in depth with a text, a very light surface approach to digging into the textual material itself, and a somewhat shotgun approach to problem solving of practical issues that Christians and seekers face.

Relationship between Stewardship of Life and Grace in Lutheran Theology

This chapter now turns to the relationship of grace and stewardship of life. Stewardship of life refers both to being good stewards of God's Kingdom affairs and being good stewards of one's own personal well-being—physically, emotionally, mentally, relationally, and spiritually. Anderson speaks to the relationship of spiritual growth as it affects growth in all areas of life. He states, "I would agree that growth involves a person's movement toward health, but I would assert that this is also a spiritual process of dealing with one's need for divine grace."⁴ He suggests that living one's faith is an integral part of growing not only spiritually but also in the emotional and relational aspects of life. Rather than compartmentalizing faith as a separate aspect of life here on earth, believers must integrate healthy lifestyle habits: to maintain physical and mental

⁴ Ray S. Anderson, *Christians Who Counsel* (Pasadena: Fuller Seminary Press, 1990), 59.

health, to grow in knowledge and skills in one's relationships with others, and to maintain a balanced view of one's worth as a human being and as God's child.

It is important to consider what it means to be a good steward, first of all, as well as how this stewardship applies to the life of faith for the individual who believes in and trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Jesus describes this responsibility in his parable of the faithful servant (or steward) in Luke 12 when he tells about a servant who is placed completely in charge of taking care of his employers business and people. He is on task daily even though the owner never checks up on him. His reward is even greater responsibilities and financial success in the future. Likewise, the opposite is true for the servant who fails to understand that the owner will ask for accountability. Hurtful things will take place for that servant. Jesus concludes the parable by saying, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48b, NKJV). Jesus is focused here on awareness, being and staying on task, and accountability with the gifts and responsibilities that a believer in Christ has been given. Believers must not assume that there will not be a time or a day when one's stewardship of life and behaviors will not be accounted for.

A second example given by Jesus is the parable of the unjust steward found in Luke 16: 1-13. In this parable Jesus describes a steward who manages a business for another businessperson. The problem occurs when the manager has not done a very good job taking care of the business for the owner. In his cleverness the steward figures out a way to handle the dilemma of his poor management: he goes to each of the debtors and tells them to pay an amount that is less than what they owe. In doing so he gains their

favor so that when the owner fires him he can rely on the goodwill of the debtors. In this parable the owner commends the manager for his quick thinking and underhanded business decisions, but reminds his hearers that faithfulness and consistency are important aspects of relationship with God and others. Jesus concludes by saying, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13 NKJV).

These two examples from the Scriptures apply to the arena of self care in the areas of physical well-being, emotional and mental well-being, social and relational well-being, and spiritual well-being (that is, doing the will of God in our lives). Each of these will be described by its negative state. Physical well-being suffers when one has poor eating habits and does not exercise; a lack of physical well-being is described as living a sedentary lifestyle with little interest or motivation for care of oneself in the physical realm. Mental well-being is poor when one has little or no interest in lifelong learning or in going beyond a narrow perspective of issues. Emotional well-being is poor when one is stuck in self-pity or worry about the future, money, or health; becoming overwhelmed with fear and frustration can make it more difficult to cope emotionally as one ages and faces new challenges. Relational and social well being are poor when one isolates himself or herself and becomes less inclined to reach out socially; such people also become self-absorbed with their own needs to the detriment of being able to reach out to others. Spiritual well-being suffers when one loses interest in spiritual matters, choosing to disconnect from the local church and community of faith, or becomes indifferent to the need for spiritual renewal. A very interesting concept is shared by Sean O’Connell and

John Kind-Farlow, authors *Self-Conflict and Self Healing*. They discuss self-deception in terms of decision-making that involves moral or ethical decisions much like the stewardship decision made by the steward in Jesus' parable. They state, "A normal person's thoughts and deeds can often be explained as being justified, or at least excused, by their circumstances and origins. But this is because a normal person is capable of choosing evil as well as good."⁵ It is easier to blame others and deny one's own responsibility for self-care by saying, "That's just the way I am," without doing any introspection or holding oneself accountable. Thus one's desire for better self-care is dashed by one's defense mechanism; this defense mechanism causes the individual to deny the reality or consequences of his or her behaviors and attitudes.

Even though some of these concerns and behaviors of the fifty-plus generation may be the results of poor decisions over the years, and others are the result of the aging process itself, there are areas of stewardship of body, mind, and spirit worth considering so that help might be given to the fifty-plus generation to live a healthier balanced life. One of the areas to consider is that of maintaining a good relational lifestyle with others. No man or woman literally is an island and although commentators and writers may talk about monastic living, God created people for fellowship, friendship, and relationships. Dr. Richard Swenson, a Christian medical doctor, gives an excellent prescription for people of all ages to follow. In his book, *Margin*, he writes, "God, however, is a personal God, and relationship is very important to Him. He created us as relational beings—not

⁵ Sean O'Connell and John Kind-Farlow, *Self-Conflict and Self Healing* (New York: University Press of America, 1988), 161.

because He had to but because it suited Him. We are relational and dependent whether we acknowledge it or not, whether we want to be or not.⁶

Being in healthy relationships can be difficult within the local church. Within the fellowship of a church, it is likely that individual members will not know or have a great deal of contact with most other members of the congregation. But developing an interest in other members, church visitors, or one's neighbors or co-workers can provide a way to enrich one's own life and the lives of those whom one seeks to know better. Richardson points out,

Togetherness is the biologically rooted life force that drives us to want to be connected to and affiliated with others. It is observed in every species of animal. It orients us to the group, or at least to those who are emotionally important to us. It is about our inevitable dependence on others and our need to be connected. It shows in our concern for others, our sensitivity to them, and our ability to listen to them, and to both seek and give nurturing. And it is, for example, a part of what makes teamwork possible. It inspires us to seek unity, in the church or in any other group we are a part of.⁷

A final aspect in the area of stewardship is that of being a good steward of one's entire person as believers recognize that they have a resident counselor, the Holy Spirit of God, residing within them. The Holy Spirit provides spiritual direction and inspires a desire to do one's best in regards to one's physical, mental, social, and spiritual well being. It is in fact an awesome opportunity as well as a great responsibility to be a good manager of the many gifts and opportunities God gives the believer in dealing with relationships and gaining insight into better self-care and developing a holistic lifestyle.

⁶ Richard A. Swenson, *Margin* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992), 238.

⁷ Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, 57-58.

Giving people over fifty an opportunity to enhance this in their lives is the focus of this project of self-care and better stewardship of body, mind, and spirit.

Instructions from Jesus and St. Paul for Holistic Living

It would certainly be worthwhile to explore what the Lord Jesus himself said about holistic living as well as instructions given by St Paul in his letters to the first-century churches. First of all, Jesus presents three specific truths related to living a healthy lifestyle and using good stewardship management. In Matthew 15:10-11 Jesus says, “Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” The issue that Jesus is addressing is that of ritual and tradition versus integrating Christian principles and moral aptitude into the core values and lifestyle of the believer. The application speaks to how a Christian processes, thinks through, and communicates his or her beliefs, ideas, and philosophy of life by example, action, and speech. It has to do with managing good stewardship practices. One adept way to think about the process would be by the phrase, “garbage in, garbage out,” whether the “garbage” refers to food, reading material, or what is viewed on TV or other media. Gary R. Collins, in his book, *The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers*, describes the damage that “sin garbage” produces: “People who fill their minds with pornography, media sexuality, and sexually explicit novels are more susceptible to immoral behavior when they get into tempting situations. Much of the sin that occurs in our actions has already been rehearsed in our minds.”⁸

⁸ Gary R. Collins, *The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers* (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group, 2001), 100.

In another passage, Jesus delineates exactly what is involved in the cost of redefining lifestyle changes and following a pattern of consistency and discipline for one's life. Luke writes,

Now it happened as they journeyed on the road that someone said to Him Lord I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and preach the Kingdom of God." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one having his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9: 57-62)

The issues that Jesus and these individuals were discussing were ones that had implication both immediately and in the future. In terms of good stewardship with health and wellness, consistency and commitment are major factors. In the area of consistency it is important to rule out certain things, particularly those items that are unhealthy and undesirable, and to put into place those items that provide direction and purpose for living. Choices that individuals make at age twenty may well speak well or ill of them when they turn fifty or sixty. Habits have a way of catching up with people for good or for ill.

In the Luke 9 passage, the focus is on immediate issues and relationships that are worthy of being addressed—a death in the family, leaving home without a farewell party, and the importance of having the security of a home versus living a nomadic, uncertain life. The issues focus on prioritization and determining one's values and one's purpose for living as it applies to good stewardship. In this case, it is a matter of being good stewards in terms of using time and talents wisely. Willard makes an excellent case for what motivates a believer to service. He explains,

Not every act that may be done as a discipline need be done as a discipline. I will often be able to serve another simply as an act of love and righteousness, without regard to how it may enhance my ability to follow Christ. There certainly is nothing wrong with that, and it may, incidentally, strengthen me spiritually as well. But I may also serve another to train myself away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness. In that case, my service is undertaken as a discipline for the spiritual life.⁹

The last illustration from the ministry of Jesus concerns the importance of forgiveness as a means of restorative self-care. In John 8: 3-11, the apostle writes,

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them. “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

This account vividly illustrates two elements of life: first, it illustrates the power of forgiveness that comes from God by way of a personal acceptance by Jesus; second, it illustrates an awareness by those present of their personal sinful behaviors, and the fact that these are often are projected on others because it is too painful for the individuals to take accountability for their own behavior. Jesus best summarizes the quality of life he would like people to live through encouragement: “Neither do I condemn you; go and live differently.” Willard pinpoints the problem when he states, “When we condemn another we really communicate that he or she is, in some deep and just possibly

⁹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 182.

irredeemable way, bad—bad as a whole, and to be rejected. We sentence that person to exclusion. Surely we can learn to live well and happily without doing that.”¹⁰

Not only does Jesus emphasize positive, Christ-centered attitudes and holistic living concepts, but St. Paul does as well. For example, in Romans 12: 1-2 (NKJV) St. Paul states that the totality of a believer’s personhood is to be focused on living sacrificially. He states, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The idea again is the tension of living both in the secular domain—a world dominated often by unhealthy thinking and behavior—and the world of the spirit controlled and orchestrated by God. The life of the Christian, Paul urges, is not to be molded and shaped by the thinking and values of the secular world, but rather by the Christian worldview of the meaning and purpose of life. The focus, in essence, is seeking and learning to follow the plan of God for one’s life and to serve Christ by moving away from self-defeating behaviors toward those that promote an attitude of service and self-awareness. Author Henry Cloud, in his book with John Townsend, *How People Grow*, discusses his own journey of healing and turning toward God’s plan for change in his life. He writes, “Changing meant turning from doing things my way to doing things God’s way. I had to learn to be honest about myself and my feelings. I had to learn to delay gratification. (The list could go on and on, as I was not then nor am I now short on

¹⁰ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 218.

dysfunction.) But the point here is that having the life and the growth we're looking for involves our changing into people who do things God's way.¹¹

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the concept that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer, and is his or her guide to living a more fulfilling and holistic life. In I Corinthians 3:16-17 (NKJV), St. Paul writes, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defines the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." Paul explains that individuals are responsible for how well they care for their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Believers are not at liberty to do as they please with these aspects of their personhood because God himself, in the Holy Spirit, indwells in each believer. Therefore, each Christian is responsible for appreciating and taking care of himself or herself. Cloud also writes,

For any of us to be motivated to grow, we must see doing things the "right" way as the only way life is going to work. Otherwise, doing things the right way is just too much work and, in the short term, not as gratifying—like the guy who knows for years that he "should get healthy," but never does until he has a heart attack and almost dies. After that, he sees health not as a "should," but as the way to stay alive.¹²

Another idea that runs parallel to good self-care is that of having Jesus as one's role model. For example, the Apostle Paul states, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:1-2, NKJV). There is no better incentive or motivation than to realize the sacrificial life that Jesus demonstrated

¹¹ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 238.

¹² *Ibid.*, 240.

both in his ministry and on the cross. He demonstrated a willingness and determination to do all his Heavenly Father had sent him to do on behalf of humankind. God's stewardship through care of our bodies, minds, and spirits directs each Christian to present himself or herself in a manner that brings about a sweet aroma to the throne of God.

Finally, the Apostle Paul exhorts his readers to maintain a cooperative attitude and a commonality of purpose through living in community and demonstrating good habits in regards to the stewardship of life. He writes in Philippians 2: 1-3, "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. But in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." Paul is not saying that the believer's self-worth is to be devalued and that believers should demonstrate a poor self-image. Rather, a strong and healthy self-image gives credence and acceptance to the place and value of others without destroying or devaluing one's own recognition of a strong sense of who he or she is in Christ. Anderson contrasts the effects of negative self-esteem to those of a positive self-concept. In his comparison he states, "Negative self-esteem is a self-perception of powerlessness which resorts to manipulation and exploitation of others for one's own self-gratification. Positive self-esteem results in true self-worth and produces the 'fruit of the Spirit.'"¹³

¹³ Anderson, *Self Care*, 107.

Theological Position of Stewardship of Life in Other Traditions

It is important to consider how non-Lutheran traditions address stewardship of life, the development of a Christ-centered lifestyle, and moral decision-making regarding self-care issues. In evangelical churches, the worship styles differ, but in most of them great emphasis is placed on preaching. This has been the case ever since the time of the first reformers, John Calvin and John Zwingli. Expository preaching of God's Word on a verse-by-verse and book-by-book basis is one of the most common methods of sermonizing in evangelical churches. Messages are generally longer than in liturgical services and more descriptive of biblical detail. The messages in evangelical settings are generally based more on a teaching model than the preaching model or homily used in the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church. The early Reformers were concerned about holy and right living and in keeping the rules set up in the early Church, such as banning alcohol, smoking, dancing, and playing cards. A life of piety was strongly advocated and taught in the Reformed tradition. Shelley describes the movement called "piety" in this way:

The intensely personal way the Pietist described regeneration often made Christianity a drama of the human soul. The heart of man was the scene of a desperate struggle between the powers of good and evil. In this sense Pietism was the fountain of all modern revivals. It set the experience of new life in Christ at the center of the Christian message and the Christian ministry. For this reason it is impossible to think of evangelical Christianity today without the imprint of Pietism.¹⁴

Pietism extended from the end of the seventeenth century into the revival movements of the twentieth century; it continues within the evangelical and charismatic movements of our time. Schwarz describes the influence and intent of the movement. He states,

¹⁴ Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 329.

“Pietism emphasized praxis pietatis, the devotion of the heart, a new relationship to the Bible, regeneration, assurance of salvation, evangelism, and sanctification. These terms in themselves show where the emphasis lay: it was a reform of spiritual life.”¹⁵

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Church in the post-Reformation period and particularly in this past century has moved toward the promotion of healthier lifestyles among its membership. The various councils and Vatican decisions have given credence to enhancing family life and better stewardship of one’s body, mind, and spirit. Values that have been emphasized include: the value of the unborn child, the dignity of death and dying, care for the aging, self-care, and simple living (that is, being less materialistic). Even though no restrictions are placed on alcohol or smoking, self-care has become more important as an aspect of good stewardship.

In summary, much can be learned from the various Christian traditions. Although most believers are surrounded by the Word of God, nevertheless they must receive and apply the teaching to their own lives. Each congregation as well can help their members and their communities to be better stewards in all of the different venues of life.

¹⁵ Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 90.

PART THREE

STRATEGY OF THE NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVE

CHAPTER 6

GOALS AND PLANS

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation the direction and emphasis for the Christian faith has been that of the forgiven life found through faith in Christ Jesus. The first Reformers and early Church fathers taught and directed people to the Bible and to living out their faith in more meaningful ways than ritual and obedience to rules. Francis Schaeffer, for example, points out in his book, *How Should We Then Live*:

They [the Reformers] refused to accept the autonomy of human reason, which acts as though the human mind is infinite, with all knowledge within its realm. Rather, they took seriously the Bible's own claim for itself—that it is the only final authority. And they took seriously that man needs the answers given by God in the Bible to have adequate answers not only for how to be in an open relationship with God, but also for how to know the present meaning of life and how to have final answers in distinguishing between right and wrong.¹

In the past one hundred years the needs and concerns of society (including church members) have changed from being those of a rural culture to those of an industrial society living in large cities and crowded living spaces. In the twenty-first century, with the multitude of technological advances, the need to be self-sufficient has changed to be more dependent on the services of others. This is particularly true of big city life and has

¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), 81.

become more of a way of life in mid-sized communities like Puyallup, Washington as well. Life in the twenty-first century has not become less complicated because of modern technology, but rather it has become more fast-paced and stressful. The Church as well has not made great strides or put forth much effort to help address people's needs and concerns in this faster paced lifestyle. All the modern conveniences and advances—whether in the field of technology, in the medical field, in the recreational and communication realms—are supposed to provide labor-saving opportunities and thus provide more personal time. But these labor-saving devices keep people from being active physically, mentally, and relationally. For example, using cell phones for texting is convenient, but it takes away from good old-fashioned interpersonal communication. The Internet, including the uses of Facebook and e-mail, seemingly should provide adequate opportunities to share ideas and feelings, but they also isolate people and keep them from sharing intimately.

The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, to which Immanuel belongs, has maintained a strong position on the teaching and preaching of the Word of God from pulpit and in the classroom. However, the synod as a major body has not been pro-active regarding the promotion of health-related topics in the yearly teaching cycle, such as psychology, physical fitness, health practices, and mental health. The Lutheran Church in general and Immanuel in particular have kept up with the need to communicate via the computer, and both organizations do a good job of reaching the congregation. Immanuel, for example, uses email to regularly communicate with its members, and each week the sermons are made available via podcast; these are found on the home page of SharingGodsHope.org. However, personal conversations by membership and staff could

gain more depth if people were intentional about talking with each other about health issues, concerns in family life, stress and anxiety, and life in general. It would enhance community life significantly if personal concerns would be addressed, just as spiritual concerns often are.

The issue at hand is not whether more could or should be done to help the people of God become more aware of the needs of mind, body, and spirit. Rather the issue at hand is how this might be done in the local church setting so that better self-care and the maintenance of a balanced lifestyle—spiritually, mentally, and socially—can be achieved. The purpose of this chapter will be to address the “how to” in providing a format and way to achieve the goal of better self-care for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel. Hopefully, if this can be achieved, the self-care ideas will catch on with the younger generations as well.

Discussion of and dialogue with people in the church can and does surface informally at such times as the coffee hour between worship services, as well as the time before and after Bible studies or church meetings. It also occurs when members chat informally with each other during the week when they visit in each other’s homes or meet while shopping or eating out. However, within the setting of more formal activities such as worship services, Bible studies, or other small group activities, there has been very limited discussion of those topics that speak to the need for better self-care. It is not that the need for healthier living and better self-care is not present, but the topic simply does not surface unless someone is sick or possibly dying. Kenneth Haugk, the founder of Stephen Ministry, a lay ministry in which one lay person reaches out to another lay member as a support and care giver, writes, “Christ created a community in our midst; He

wants us to appreciate what this means. We act on our sense of community when we build deep, loving relationships with other Christians. In a family with a loving Father, a giving Brother, and an empowering Spirit, can we do otherwise?”² As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Stephen ministry is a ministry of connection that Immanuel has embraced. Immanuel uses this platform as a means to help meet some of the emotional, physical, mental, relational, and spiritual needs of church members and friends in the surrounding neighborhood.

The task at hand, therefore, is to breach this gap in communication about health care and self-care, both within the larger Church body and particularly with the people at Immanuel. The task is to encourage believers to explore the issues of living a more balanced lifestyle, including having good self-care, time for reflection and redirection, stress prevention and management, and learning to have more positive relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances.

A suggested starting place is with the leadership within the congregation. Staff awareness of self-care issues can take place with those who are in key leadership positions in the congregation, namely staff personnel and key lay leaders. In reaching out to give support to the staff, the deacons (lay leaders) are each assigned a staff member for whom they are to pray and check in with concerning their spiritual, mental, and emotional well being. The deacons are encouraged to check in regularly (at least monthly) with the staff members for whom they are responsible. The deacons also provide support when the staff members are addressing particular personal concerns. The

² Kenneth C. Haugk, *Christian Caregiving: A Way of Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 43.

deacons are able to speak into their lives on a personal basis, as well as exhort them to public proclamation of how God’s love for them has touched their lives. They may also publicly share the importance of support and care for one another, which helps bring the need for holistic living and good self-care to the forefront. Harbaugh explains, “Every pastor has some dependency needs. The pastor’s confidence in those needs being met or even being of interest to the world (environment, others, the congregation, God,) is related to (though not completely determined by) this earliest stage of development.”³ The stage he is referring to is that of the nurturing (or lack thereof) of the pastor’s earliest life experiences. My own early childhood and youth would testify to the need for nurturing and support as I grew up in a family in which there was alcoholism and mental illness. The lay leaders themselves should be attending to their own self-care needs as well. It is hoped that those in the congregation would give their support to the lay leaders, and the lay leaders in turn would continue to speak into the larger body, the congregation, of the need for self-care and healthy lifestyles.

In summary, the public proclamation and teaching of Lutheran doctrine is sound and practical as it taught at Immanuel. Members of all age groups—children, youth, and adults—have ample opportunities to grow in the Christian faith and character development. But the fifty-plus generation, in addition to other adult groups in the church, is not receiving as much teaching as they should about the stewardship of life related to health care, personal self-care, and social relationship building. Some would say that these responsibilities do not belong to the church but rather to social agencies, mental and physical health caregivers, and the secular community. The local church,

³ Harbaugh, *Pastor as Person*, 24.

however, ought to address these issues, both for those within the Christian community as well as visitors to the church.

Strategy Goals

The Church in general and Immanuel in particular tend to limit sermon and Sunday school topics to those which are directly spiritual and/or biblical. But there is a need to move to a more balanced approach. Issues related to Christian stewardship of life and holistic living, particularly information and teaching about self-care, should also be addressed.

It is important to note that much is already being offered by other agencies in the community such as the YMCA and the Health Care Network. Both of these groups do offer programs, such as the YMCA's Journey to Freedom class, in which individuals establish goals they wish to reach in their lives and work out a plan to achieve those goals, whether they are related to health, relationships, or spirituality. This particular program is offered through the spiritual department of the YMCA. In addition, the Health Care Network of the local hospital in Puyallup offers programs to assess physical and mental health, and the organization encourages healthy attitudes toward exercise and emotional support.

However, the local church can and should be a resource and a catalyst to help people consider the value concerning stewardship of one's physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. Larry Crabb, in his book, *Connecting*, makes the following observation concerning the church's involvement in helping people heal: "If ordinary Christians with no licensed credentials have the power within them to heal souls through

connecting, then perhaps the church should view it as its responsibility, as a normal part of its educational program, to equip people with a biblical understanding of change, to actively prepare people more meaningfully to connect.”⁴ Crabb is referring to the value of peer counseling and support ministry, but his comments also apply to lifting the vision of the local church to consider educating the whole person for renewal and better self-care.

The concern by the Church at large and the local congregation needs to be one that addresses the needs of the whole person and seeks to deal with the issues of health, well-being, and support for the emotional and relational concerns of each member of the body of Christ. This is why some churches have on their staff nurses, pastoral counselors, and directors of services to the older senior population. The first-century Church was a good example for the postmodern Church to exemplify with its concern for the care of widows and those who were in need. Members shared their possessions and money, their food and homes, and they offered fellowship and friendship that went far beyond superficial support. Luke writes, “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (Acts 2:44 NKJV). No doubt the primary concern was that of care and concern for their fellow believers’ physical welfare, but being of “one heart and one soul” surely indicates a concern for the welfare of mind and spirit as well. These early Christians focused on spending time with one another, and they took care to see that the overall needs of brothers and sisters in the faith were being addressed.

⁴ Larry Crabb, *Connecting* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), 154.

Therefore it is far more than simply a good idea to reach into the lives of one's fellow believers. Christians should learn to reach into the lives of others with a sense of what the New Testament Church believed and practiced, namely, being good stewards of all the talents, skills, and resources God gives each person. It is this kind of care that this project seeks to facilitate for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel. These members may or may not be widows or homeless, but they share similar life-stage issues such as parenting adult children, being empty nesters, and other issues related to health and relationships. In the fifty-plus age group, there are widows and widowers, divorcees, single individuals, and married persons. But most importantly, there are hurting people and people who likely would embrace new skills and new ideas about being better caregivers for themselves and others.

One way that the project that is being proposed will deal with these kinds of concerns for the fifty-plus generation will be through education and small groups. The educational aspect will be presented in seminar format with small group discussion at the close of each seminar. The first task will be that of determining what these programs will be in order to meet some of the needs of the fifty-plus generations. As Christoph Schalk and Christian A. Schwarz, authors of *Natural Church Development*, point out,

A church consists of people who are different and have a diversity of needs. Therefore it is important that you ask yourself which of the needs of a certain ministry focus group you want to meet through any particular ministry. Programs that ignore the needs of people can only be maintained through appeals to their guilt. They tend to disappoint those who participate (if there are any) since they do it only on the basis of a sense of duty or habit, not because the program helps in their own lives. But those programs also frustrate the people who lead them because a program that does not meet needs is not well attended.⁵

⁵ Christoph Schalk and Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), 179.

These authors highlight the importance of assessing the needs before offering a program that likely will not be well attended or snubbed. With the focus on self-care, it is important that the topics chosen for presentation fit the needs of those for whom it is intended.

In order to learn what needs are present in the lives of the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel, a questionnaire will be used as an assessment tool (see Appendix A). The questionnaire will give them an opportunity to indicate what topics and issues they would like to have addressed in the seminars and small groups. The purpose of having the fifty-plus generation address this questionnaire is twofold. First, it will help the leadership team determine the content of the seminars or programs, the format or approach to use, and which staff or other facilitators would be most capable to address that specific topic. The second reason for the questionnaire is to help raise awareness within the fifty-plus generation regarding self-care issues, and to inspire a desire to do something positive in terms of their own self-care. Anderson beautifully reflects the value of a process of coming together to learn and grow by way of sharing common hurts and concerns. He explains, “When we experience brokenness within a community of support and care, there is an interchange, a transfusion, if you please, so that what life flows out of us flows back into us, filtered through the fabric of intentional care. Within the life of the self in relation to others, there flows the pain of others as well as the joy of others.”⁶ Anderson addresses all people when he speaks of brokenness and the need for healing and renewal. Unfortunately, so many of us are practically blind to receiving new insights and support from the brokenness of living life. Even for those people who have not had great

⁶ Anderson, *Self Care*, 179.

amounts of grief, hurt, or suffering, they too could benefit from topics that promote health and well-being.

Strategy Content

In order to achieve the project goal of providing information to help the fifty-plus generation explore and place additional priority for self-care in their lives, Immanuel must promote the program data to the congregation and help them understand the value for holistic living. In the closing page of his book about self-care, Anderson describes how he was affected by connecting with others. He writes, “Ministry to those who were in pain often was my own greatest source of self-care. As my feelings came into contact with the pain of others, I felt myself in communion with the self of others. It was not the pain that created the bond, but the shared feelings, which brought our separate selves into communion.”⁷ Shared pain has a way of bringing people together and aligning them with a sense of identity and walking the same path. Shared pain as well helps give a sense of purpose and often the courage to do a better job of self-care with our own needs and concerns.

The first step to initiate the project of self-care at Immanuel will be that of publicity. Announcements will be made at worship services and in the monthly newsletter. The questionnaire will also then help determine the degree of interest as well as which general areas of self-care should be addressed.

The format itself that will be used once the topics are determined will be a seminar plan in which there will be a presentation and discussion (between forty-five

⁷ Anderson, *Self Care*, 240.

minutes and one hour), small group interaction (twenty minutes), and summary by the groups upon returning to the large group setting (ten minutes). The programs will be offered once a month for a period of nine months, beginning in September 2012 and continuing through May 2013.

One of the objectives is to provide a well-rounded program schedule for a period of nine months. Along with the feedback that will come from the questionnaire, several topics based on the makeup of the congregation will be considered. The first topic will be learning more about healthy relationship with one's adult children. In speaking with several members fifty and older at Immanuel, it has surfaced that there are a number of families at the church that span three and some four generations, many of whom live in the area or nearby. Many of these families have close ties with one another and are all members at Immanuel. Some relationships are very positive and the family members have good boundaries in their family lives, while others are enmeshed in unhealthy, codependent relationships or are estranged. Other families are less connected geographically. Some of these are also dealing with estrangement issues. Also, some who have very little family in the area find that they enjoy the benefits of connecting with other family systems for support. It will be important when considering this topic to address the establishment of healthy boundaries, as well as spiritual outreach to the younger generations who have left the faith or are "on the fringe."

A second topic will be responsibilities and relationships involved with being a grandparent or sur-grandparent. This for some means hands on duties of childcare and babysitting or living as extended families in the same home. For others it means grandparenting from a distance with visitation occasionally as a more minimal aspect of

the family dynamic. It will include again healthy boundaries and helping at times with decision-making and what is appropriate in terms of help with childcare or finances.

A third topic will be care of aging parents. Again, it will be a two-step program in which those who attend who are in their fifties or sixties are having to consider what steps will need to be taken now or in the future for their parents. The discussion with this seminar could be centered upon how children “parent” their parents when it comes to making decisions of independence and the need for special care or housing.

A fourth topic will be making preparations for retirement and living well in retirement. Both preparing for and living in retirement is a major issue for the fifty-plus generation, particularly those in their late fifties and early to mid-sixties. More people in these age groups than probably are willing to admit are not well prepared to transition to retirement, whether financially, emotionally, and/or mentally. Others may not be able to retire as soon as they had hoped due to the changes in the American economy and in considering their own retirement packages. This area is one in which Thrivent, the Fraternal Lutheran Life Insurance Company, has been helpful in the past in presenting seminars and sessions for those entering retirement. In the past, there has been much interest in these programs. The focus of this project is on self-care aspects rather than financial concerns, and Immanuel’s self-care seminars would be a good complement to the Thrivent seminars.

A fifth topic is dealing with the aging process. The areas addressed will be those that touch on changes that occur physically as well as mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The seminar will address how the aging process affects all of these areas and

the learning curve will be focused on acceptance and finding fulfillment as these changes occur.

A sixth topic is finding and cultivating meaningful relationships in the church and community. One of the more challenging aspects of moving to Puyallup, Washington three years ago after living in Salem, Oregon for nearly forty years was the challenge to build new friendships both in our church and in the neighborhood where we now live. This has been a growing edge for us and the seminar will address the issue of moving and changes that occur with new locations. It will particularly address current relationships and how to build on those relationships.

A seventh topic is sexuality and the aging process. Although this area of discussion could be a sensitive one, the approach will be that of a medical and relational model with more of a question and answer format being used. It has the potential of being a good topic to explore in terms of self-image and finding meaningful connection in marriage. The seminar could also address potential relationship development for singles.

In summary, each of these potential topics will continue to be evaluated, refined, or even changed. After reviewing the questionnaires and dialoging with interested members, the content of the seminars will gain additional focus. Another factor in the decision-making of each of the topics will be availability of seminar presenters.

The value of the small group cannot be overlooked. Although much emphasis is being placed on the seminar/forum concept with the various expertise of the seminar presenters, there is excellent value that can come from small group participation. An attempt will be made to have participants in the same small groups for each seminar.

This format will offer opportunities for participants to interact, give support to each other, and pray for the needs that surface in each group.

Each small group will then contribute their thoughts to the large group when the groups come back together at the close of each seminar. The groups will meet for twenty to thirty minutes after each presentation and then return for about ten to fifteen minutes for final discussion time in the large group. Each small group will have a leader, and certain guidelines will be communicated to the small group leaders. These guidelines include: 1) becoming better acquainted with others in the seminar group and in their small groups; 2) establishing prayer and support partners with one or two others for their small groups; 3) sharing resources and information pertaining to the subject matter; 4) refraining from advice-giving and commitment to group confidentiality; and 5) giving small group members opportunities to pray together and pray for each other outside of the seminar and group time. Christian A. Schwarz, in his book, *Paradigm Shifts in the Church*, discusses the value of small groups:

One of the decisive aspects we found in our study of small groups in growing churches is their “holistic” character. This means that they provide a situation in which individual Christians can find personal relationships and the opportunity to share spiritually. These small groups are places where “fellowship” has a strong affinity to “friendship.” The larger a church becomes, the more decisive is the function of small groups in the life of the church organism.⁸

It is not necessarily the intention that relationships develop during or after the small group sessions. But because Immanuel is not a large congregation and many of those who are likely to attend already know one another, this familiarity will bring them together in the small group settings. The challenge will be to bring together people who

⁸ Christian A. Schwarz, *Paradigm Shifts in the Church* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999), 172.

do not know others as well and to provide an atmosphere where their comfortability is enlarged.

Target Population and Development of Leadership

The development of the leadership aspect for this project will require considerable time and effort. The tendency in the past within the senior group at Immanuel has been that senior members expect to be served rather than to serve. This refers primarily to the Senior Group (aged 65 and over) that has met at Immanuel for many years. The challenge will be to motivate members of the fifty-plus generation to take ownership of the project and to be willing to serve in leadership capacities. Some members in their fifties, sixties, and seventies are quite active in the life of the congregation. These members will be presented with the vision for the program and they will be encouraged to devote some of their time to launching and investing in the project. Schwarz discusses leadership in which the leaders themselves empower others to use their gifts to multiply the leadership potential. He writes, "Leadership, however, does not express itself, as is sometimes supposed, in a dictatorial style, but in the fact that the gift is placed in the service of the body of Christ. Leaders of growing churches are helping the church members to find their calling. They concentrate their energy on empowering other Christians for ministry."⁹ At Immanuel, there can be an attitude among the fifty-plus generation that essentially says, "I served here for years and now it's the younger generation's turn." One problem with this attitude as it relates to the self-care project is

⁹ Schwarz, *Paradigm Shifts*, 187.

that this group in their fifties and early sixties *is* the “younger generation” among group members.

The Leadership Team

At the present time, it is still early in the implementation process to develop a leadership team. Once the pastoral leadership publicizes the proposed program to the congregation, those interested in leading will likely come forward, whether via the questionnaire or by giving personal feedback. At that time, a committee or team can be developed to help shape the program. In speaking with some of the members of the fifty-plus generation in the congregation, interest is being established. For example, one couple in their late fifties expressed a great deal of interest in being a part of the project, one spouse as a possible presenter and the other as a small group leader. This is a couple who has returned to church life after walking away from the church and their faith while in their thirties and forties.

Leadership qualities that will be sought are: 1) passion for this particular ministry; 2) adequate time to give to the project without feeling pressured to participate; 3) relational skills in the helping ministry; 4) spiritual awareness and a desire to share their spirituality with others; and most importantly, 5) willingness to take ownership for oneself in the growth process. Cloud and Townsend write, “When we are active in our growth, we tend to take more responsibility for our lives. The experiences of being involved, learning, taking risks, and talking to others about our lives increase the level of ownership we have in the process.”¹⁰ It is hoped that the members of the fifty-plus

¹⁰ Cloud and Townsend, *How People Grow*, 337.

generation will become excited about the project for themselves and will share this passion for self-care by encouraging others in their age group to participate. If the project is truly a success, there will be many more couples like the ones mentioned above.

Even though gifting, passion, availability, and relational skills are of great importance in determining the leadership team, it will also be important to provide training for those who will be small group leaders. Because the small groups function as catalysts for personal growth, certain skills are needed for those guiding and leading small groups. The required training will take the form of a video presentation by Henry Cloud, Bill Donahue, and John Townsernd. The video is entitled, “ReGroup: Training Groups to Be Groups.”¹¹

The video includes a four-session presentation that focuses on becoming connected, good habits and principles for life-changing groups, ground rules, and helping groups define their purposes. Although the video does not have any particular kind of group in mind, the discussion should prove to help the self-care small groups keep on focus, establish and maintain confidentiality and integrity, and provide insight and support for those in the groups. The purpose is to help each of the designated leaders to become capable in helping their group members to be active listeners and to give and receive feedback from one another. In the introduction of the video the presenters state, “You are about to embark on a revolutionary journey into what it means to be a safe, caring, and helpful small group community. ReGroup is a learning process, an environment where you will discover how to grow in faith as you build authentic

¹¹ Henry Cloud, Bill Donahue, and John Townsend, “ReGroup: Training Groups to Be Groups,” video series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

relationships and accomplish the purpose for which you gathered.”¹² By enhancing the ability of the small group leaders to do this, each of the small groups will have this same opportunity to be successful and relevant, both as a group and as individuals.

¹² Cloud, Donahue, and Townsend, “ReGroup: Training Groups to Be Groups,” video series.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

Summary of Strategy Content

Prior to launching the nine-month program, a pilot program of three seminars will be given between March 2012 and May 2012. The pilot program will include three seminars taught as a series. The first seminar will focus on physical health, diet, and exercise to help maintain physical well being and good self-care. The second seminar will address mental and emotional well being as people move toward the pre-retirement and post-retirement years. And the third seminar in this series will address spiritual growth and renewal during the second half of life, as well as the support systems of family, church, and community.

The first seminar will focus on physical health and the changes that occur with the aging process. Identifying health concerns and opportunities for self-care through exercise, diet, and recreational activities will be discussed. Possible presenters for this seminar will be two members of Immanuel: Dr. Jerry Duris, a family practitioner, and his brother, Jim Duris, a businessman who, now in his mid-fifties, is quite serious about good physical self-care related to exercise and diet.

The second seminar in this series will focus on maintaining a positive mental and emotional outlook about oneself and others. Concerns related to the aging process will be discussed, such as losses, changes in family dynamics, and interests and life goals. Possible presenters for this seminar are two members of Immanuel: Beth Zier, a family counselor who specializes in women's issues, and me, a pastoral counselor. I would specifically address issues that deal with pre- and post-retirement, including Issues related to one's emotional well being that impact the individual and family.

The last seminar in this series will address spiritual direction and spiritual health, specifically how the fifty-plus generation might incorporate these in the second half of life. Spirituality, the faith patterns of one's family of origin, and new opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal will be addressed. Possible presenters are Mark Zier, Associate Pastor at Immanuel, and me, a retired pastor.

The pilot program will be helpful in obtaining a clearer picture of how many people in the fifty-plus generation are interested in the program and would be willing to continue exploring self-care topics over a nine-month period. Schalk and Schwarz write, "No worship or church program or activity should pass without the responsible leaders asking themselves afterwards: 'What could we improve next time?' The big problem is that feedback—positive or negative—is often neglected in many churches. Lack of feedback frustrates co-workers, prevents critical but fruitful interaction within the ministry team, and finally institutionalizes mediocrity in the church."¹ It will be the task of staff, the small group leadership team, and me as volunteer coordinator, to determine the minimum attendance numbers that will be acceptable to continue the nine-month

¹ Schalk and Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 38.

program in the fall. A goal of at least 10 percent Immanuel's fifty-plus age members will be suggested as the minimum. This would mean that there would be at least fifteen people who by August 2012 have committed to attending the seminars.

Leadership Training and Pilot Small Group

Those who attend the three mini-seminars within the pilot program will make up the nucleus of the leadership group for the small groups as well as the steering committee for the project. The small group leader for each pilot session will be determined by those in their group and by a willingness of that person to be the leader. It may well be more efficient and effective to appoint small group leaders before the seminars begin. However, without knowing who will attend, the random selection process will be adopted. Following the seminars, however, the small group leaders or individuals who have expressed interest in serving as a leader will be invited to be part of this group. The task of selecting this group will belong to the pastoral staff and to me as volunteer coordinator of the project.

Training of the small group leaders will be provided prior to the launch of the program. Schalk and Schwarz emphasize that "the quality of a small group is literally dependent on the qualification of its leader. That's why it is so important that (a) only those persons who are spiritually gifted for this task be called as small group leaders, and (b) these Christians be well trained for their ministry."² The process of training small group leaders will involve initial training prior to the nine-month project as well as a training meeting before each of the seminars. The initial training will involve using the

² Schalk and Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 96.

video presentation ReGroup for training small group leaders. Selected portions of the video will be used for a three-session training program.

Training meetings prior to the seminars will involve a review of the seminar material as well as a discussion of the questions that are available for use in the small group. Prior to each training meeting, I as volunteer coordinator will gather information about the upcoming seminar. Discussion will include what to do with topics that may be of a more sensitive nature and where confidentiality may particularly be a potential issue. Also, discussion will include when referrals are needed and how to make a proper referral to the pastoral staff or the volunteer coordinator. As Dan Allender and Larry Crabb, authors of *Encouragement: The Key to Caring*, point out, self-disclosure for its own sake has its pitfalls; they caution that only as a group bonds and develops deeper trust and commitment is openness in the small group advisable. The authors write, “Any group of people, whether married couples, friends, church staff, Bible study groups will run into serious trouble if they emphasize self-disclosure and emotional expression as premium values. A focus on the restraint necessary for surrender to God’s purposes strengthens character and enables people to maintain loyalty and commitment through even the stormiest of times.”³

Timeline

At the present time, the three-session pilot will take place from March 2012 to May 2012, and the nine-month seminar will take place from September 2012 to May 2013. The dates for both the pilot and the nine-month seminar programs may need to be

³ Dan Allender and Larry Crabb, *Encouragement: The Key to Caring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 43.

adjusted due to the fact that the senior pastor, Pastor John Bierman, has announced his retirement. The date for his scheduled retirement is February 1, 2012. At that time either a vacancy pastor or an interim pastor will be in place to guide the congregation until a new senior pastor is called and accepts the call to Immanuel. It is my hope and intention that the ground work for the pilot program can be worked out by January 2012 under the direction of Pastor Bierman, and that the stage can be set by the end of February for the nine-month project to be ready to go.

The timeline will therefore continue as planned unless placed on hold by the temporary pastoral change in February 2012. Following the pilot session, the first step will be gathering the leadership team, consisting of a pastoral representative, three participants selected from the pilot project, and the volunteer coordinator (which is my role). The leadership team will meet to map out the nine seminar sessions to be held from September 2012 through May 2013. The agenda will include choosing the topics for the nine seminars. This process will benefit from the feedback of those who attended the pilot seminars as well as from the questionnaire given to the fifty-plus members. The leadership team, with the volunteer coordinator's direction, will also contact potential speakers and schedule each seminar. Even though a number of the potential programs have already been designated, those in attendance will be given the opportunity to suggest additional or complementary programs.

The small group leaders will also be chosen from those who attended the pilot seminars. The volunteer coordinator will determine this group from those who have expressed interest in leading a small group. Training for the small group leaders will take place in August 2012.

Even though there may be some barriers related to the pastoral change in 2012, and though there is no certainty that there will be sufficient interest in the pilot program or the nine-month seminar project, the vision of offering a program of self-care for the fifty-plus generation presents a wonderful opportunity to enhance growth for this group at Immanuel. Leonard Sweet, in his book, *Soul Salsa*, writes about a sign that is posted just before a long bridge in Florida: “[The sign reads,] ‘It is against the law to run out of gas on the bridge.’ It ought to be a law to run out of creativity and spiritual energy before making it to the other side.”⁴ In scheduling the timeline and training, both creativity and spiritual energy will be a must in order to accomplish the goal of moving the project from vision to reality, and hopefully neither the leaders nor the participants will run out of gas before the project is completed.

Evaluation Process Formulated

An evaluation of the entire project—the seminars themselves, the timelines used, and the value of the programs for the participants—will take place shortly after the final seminar in May 2013. The leadership team will meet to evaluate the information gathered from the participants at the May 2013 seminar. The target date for the leadership team meeting will be the first week in June 2013. The criteria that will be considered while evaluating the project will include: 1) attendance and participation of the targeted population for the nine-month period; 2) evaluation of the post-seminar survey results; 3) the success of the small groups as a means of support and encouragement; 4) the degree of enthusiasm to continue the seminars in the future for

⁴ Leonard Sweet, *Soul Salsa* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 71.

those who participated or for new participants; 5) evaluation of the feedback of staff and the leadership team; and 6) a statement by volunteer coordinator regarding his intention to continue with the coordination of project.

Determining the value of the seminars and small groups can be evaluated to some degree by examining the feedback of the participants and the leadership team. However, there are intangibles that are more difficult to evaluate when determining the success or failure of a program. The participants themselves must determine whether they experienced growth or change as a result of their participation, perhaps in the form of a mental attitude or a new belief about God or the Church. Anderson observes that Christian community is priceless; a believer asks, “Does my small life count? Does what I do, despite my failures and even deliberate digressions from the good, really mean something in the end? I should hope it does! The gift of God’s Spirit, the community upholding my baptism, and the reality of belonging that grips me even when I suffer confusion, disorder, or sickness—all these compel me to hope and empower me to live.”⁵ It is with this thought in mind that the value of the seminars will also be considered as the leadership team and staff meet to determine the importance and relevancy of the program for the fifty-plus age group. Feedback from participants will be gathered at the close of the final seminar in May 2013. The participants will be asked what they gained from the seminars and how the program has changed their lives for the better. The participants will also be asked to comment whether or not they are interested in continuing the seminar project in the fall of 2013. If the consensus is positive, they will also be asked to suggest topics for the future seminars.

⁵ Anderson, *Christians Who Counsel*, 100.

An article in a Tacoma, Washington newspaper recently discussed the Baby Boomers' need to extend their youthfulness as they continue to age. The article reports how the Boomer-fueled consumer base, seeking to keep the dreaded signs of aging at bay, will "push the U.S. market for anti-aging products from about \$80 billion now to more than \$114 billion by 2015 on slowing down the aging process with all sorts of anti-aging products."⁶ The author of the article concludes with the following good advice: "Invest in yourself, in the simple things we know work. Get a good pair of running or walking shoes and a health club membership, and eat more fruits and vegetables."⁷ To this list a believer might add: "Find a church home, get involved, and find a support system that encourages and recognizes you as a gift from God." Realistically, those in the fifty-plus age group who will be attending the seminars are not the type who are seeking to prolong the aging process and slow down their march into the mature years of their lives. Nevertheless, these individuals do need exhortation regarding caring for themselves physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

Small Group Expansion

Depending on the level of interest by the participants in the seminars, the possibility of continuing to have small groups that developed from the seminar will be considered as a second aspect of the program. The post-seminar survey results, gathered at the May 2013 seminar, will address this question. Participants of each small group will be asked if they would like to continue to meet as a support group. Each group will

⁶ David Crary of *The Associated Press*, "Boomers Will Spend Billions to Counter Aging," *The News Tribune*, August 21, 2011, A3.

⁷ Ibid.

determine their desire and need to do so. The group would determine when and how often they would meet, and they would also establish the criteria for the small group as well as the discussion topics. These small groups would be designed to be support and educational groups rather than therapy groups. Supervision of these small groups would be assigned to a member of the pastoral staff as well as the volunteer coordinator.

In considering the purpose of a small group support ministry as a part of the outreach to the fifty-plus generation, Collins observes,

Sometimes activity and involvement with others can be the best types of therapy. Even so, many of us probably are guilty of what has been called the gold rush syndrome. In gold rush days the prospector didn't dare stop to help another man who might be having trouble. To do so was to lose time, and then someone else, maybe even the man who was helped, might beat out the helper in finding the best claim. The result was a highly individualized, self-centered, private existence. Like the men who passed by the wounded traveler before the Good Samaritan came along, we hurry on through life, engrossed in our own little worlds and perhaps bearing our own burdens. We push toward our own goals and fail to realize that to help another person has great therapeutic value for the help giver. This isn't the only solution to our problems, but when we help somebody else, we often get the greatest benefit ourselves."⁷

This advice should be taken very seriously by believers as they consider reaching out to their brothers and sisters, both those in the faith as well as those on the perimeter of faith. It also holds true for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel as they embrace issues of health and self-care for themselves and for others they meet along the journey of life.

⁷ Collins, *The Biblical Basis of Christian Counseling for People Helpers*, 207.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The idea of considering a ministry for the members of Immanuel who are fifty and older began with a casual conversation with the senior pastor, Pastor John Bierman, well over a year ago. At the conclusion of the conversation, I was encouraged to work on a project that would provide a ministry to this age group. Pastor John indicated that there was not a lot of ministry outside of the usual Bible classes that was directed to these members. The idea of seminars dealing with self-care resonated as an exciting possibility with Pastor John, and I was given the go ahead to work on the development of a program for them.

It is now a year later. The project plan that I have written is now completed and the opportunity to put the project in place is close to becoming a reality. One sadder development is that Pastor John is only a few months from retirement. He will retire on February 28, 2012, and the project is projected to begin in March 2012. There is a certain degree of sadness for me that he will not be here to be a part of this ministry and a certain degree of uncertainty regarding what that change may mean for the congregation and for this ministry. This of course is the challenge of ministry: to exercise one's faith and trust in Christ who ultimately has established and guides his Church here on earth.

It is important for Immanuel to focus on this particular age group. Members in their fifties, though most have not retired yet, are thinking and planning for their retirement years. Among those in their sixties, many have retired and are dealing with issues related to living in one's retirement years. Others in their sixties are still working either full-time or part-time, often due to the fact that their circumstances have changed. Some are raising their grandchildren, providing care for their parents or spouse, and/or

sharing a home with an extended family living. These concerns and personal life changes—including health, finances, loss of meaningful relationships, and finding fulfillment through service and spiritual growth—add to the demands of people in these age groups.

Larry Burkett, in his book, *Preparing for Retirement*, makes an interesting observation concerning retirement. His comments were made in 1992, almost twenty years ago. He writes, “Retirement, as we know it, is so new that most current retirees can still remember when practically no one retired. In my grandfather’s generation certainly few, if any, ordinary citizens would have seriously considered that they could stop working and play golf at 65 or so.”¹ Retirement benefit plans and social security are definite factors that have made retirement possible in our time. The large quantity of time and how the retiree uses this time is more to the point as Burkett continues, “Remember: God uniquely created each of us, including our endurance and durability and, as a result, not everyone will have the same ability to work at the various stages of life. Consequently, there will be varying degrees of retirement for all of us. The degree to which we slow down is not the fundamental issue here; ceasing all productive activity is.”²

Finances, family responsibilities, and health issues are not the only concerns for the fifty-plus generation. Finding meaning and purpose in life after fifty also takes on a new dimension as more time becomes available for Christian service or other volunteer activities. All of these topics provide ample material for seminars and group discussion.

¹ Larry Burkett, *Preparing for Retirement* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 25.

² *Ibid.*, 29.

Jack and Judy Balswick address the importance of finding one's identity in Christ perhaps especially as the retirement years come and lifestyles are in flux. The authors write,

Another factor is how people define themselves. Tying one's identity and life's purpose to advancing a career, to earning money, to accumulating material goods, or even to parenting one's children will not give sufficient reason for living once these activities are no longer part of one's daily existence. Scripture tells us, instead, that the core of our identity is to be found in relationship with Jesus Christ.³

They continue,

Finding the core of one's identity in Christ will release one to realize that meaning has to do with being true to oneself through authentic relating to others. Given their wealth of experience, older persons are in the unique position of being able to invest themselves in others. There is perhaps no more wretched evidence of self-centeredness than the loneliness experienced by elderly and persons who demand that other serve and cater to them. They have little to give and want to take even more from others. On the other hand, those who live in the context of a vital relationship with God and with others bring wisdom, richness, and meaning to life's last stage.⁴

It is the goal of this project to provide a platform to explore some of the issues facing the fifty-plus generation, and to give them opportunities to expand their horizon for stewardship with all the ways God would desire to use them in his Kingdom. The needs of the members at Immanuel are in some ways very different than they were in 1921 when the church was first organized. People then were in more agrarian occupations and retirement came later in life. The pace of life was not as fast and people seemingly had more time for neighborliness. Yet issues of family, church, and community were similar to what they are today, as they were based on the emotional and

³ Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 180.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 180-81.

spiritual coping skills people knew and used. The advancements in education and the social sciences have greatly multiplied since the early days at Immanuel. Yet human nature remains much the same, and people in the Christian community still struggle with self-esteem, family and church conflicts, and self-care.

J. Robert Clinton and Paul D. Stanley, in their book, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, discuss second-half-of-life issues and about finishing well. They explain, “To finish well does not mean to reach perfection, but like Paul, to keep pressing on toward it. So when your time comes to an end, you are still growing in your love for Christ and intimacy with Him, still pressing on to make Him known, still living as His disciple and loving the people God places in your life, and relentlessly seeking to know and do God’s will.”⁵ They go on to describe the characteristics of people who have finished well:

- They had perspective which enabled them to focus.
- They enjoyed intimacy with Christ and experienced repeated times of inner renewal.
- They were disciplined in important areas of life.
- They maintained a positive learning attitude all their lives.
- They had a network of meaningful relationships and several important mentors during their lifetime.⁶

It is my prayer and goal to be able to provide this kind of a ministry for Immanuel beginning in March 2012, first with the pilot program on self-care and later with the nine-month program. I have benefitted personally in the process of developing this project. I have learned a great deal about the community of Puyallup which I now call home, and about Immanuel, which has a rich history of mission-mindedness and social outreach to

⁵ J. Robert Clinton and Paul D. Stanley, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), 214.

⁶ Ibid., 215.

the community. I have found it rewarding to research the needs of the fifty-plus generation and to reach out to them even as I am also a member of this age group. My prayer is that this project may also have a larger purpose by being considered usable by other congregations who wish to address the self-care issues for the fifty-plus generation.

Two recent articles in the local newspaper, *The News Tribune*, spoke to the need for better self-care and the new demands that are being placed upon the fifty-plus generation. The first article spoke of the concern that obesity rate may go above 50 percent by 2030. The article noted that “based on trends, half of the adults in the United States will be obese by 2030 unless the government makes changing the food environment a policy priority, according to a report released Thursday on the international obesity crisis in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*.”⁷ The article points out two changes that need to take place:

Those changes include making healthful foods cheaper and less-healthful foods more expensive largely through tax strategies, the report said. Changes in the way foods are marketed would also be called for, among many other measures. . . . A team of international public health experts argued that the global obesity crisis will continue to grow worse and add substantial burdens to health-care systems and economies unless governments, international agencies and other major institutions take action to monitor, prevent and control the problem.⁸

Perhaps the solution to the obesity and health issue can be solved with the help of various agencies and government control. But somehow it would seem valid as well that each person has a God-given responsibility to be good stewards of his or her own health. This is just one example of the need for self-care for each of God’s creatures.

⁷ Jennifer Huget of *The Washington Post*, “Obesity Rate May Reach 50% by 2030,” *The News Tribune*, August 28, 2011, A3.

⁸ Ibid.

The second article dealt with the role this generation of grandparents has in the lives of their grandchildren. The author discusses how grandparents are becoming more and more involved in the lives of their children and grandchildren:

America is swiftly becoming a granny state. Less frail and more involved, today's grandparents are shunning retirement homes and stepping in more than ever to raise grand-children while young adults struggle in the poor economy. The newer grandparents are mainly baby boomers who are still working, with greater disposable income. Now making up 1 in 4 adults, grandparents are growing at twice the rate of the overall population and sticking close to family – if their grandkids aren't already living with them. Grandparents in recent decades have often filled in for absent parents who were ill or battled addiction, or were sent to prison. The latest trend of grandparent involvement, reflected in census figures released Thursday, is now being driven also by the economy and the graying U.S. population, including the 78 million boomers born between 1946 and 1964 who began turning 65 this year.⁹

The article concludes with these statistics:

Currently about 5.8 million children, or nearly 8 percent of all children, are living with grandparents identified as the head of the household, according to a 50 state census data released Thursday. That's up from 4.5 million, or 6.3 percent, who lived in such households in 2000. Much of the increase in grandparent caregivers occurred later in the decade after the recession eliminated jobs for many younger people, surveys indicate. The 8 percent share of children now living with grandparents is the largest in 40 years.¹⁰

Again, this phenomenon seems to be a sign of the times. Members of the fifty-plus generation are being called upon in new ways, and as a consequence they must take care of themselves in the midst of the new demands upon them.

The Church of today must also come to terms with the needs of its people, be they children, young adults, or middle-aged and older adults. The words of Jesus himself are so appropriate as one considers the topic of self-care and the many side issues that can be

⁹ Hope Yen of *The Associated Press*, "Grandparents Grabbing Bigger Role with Kids," *The News Tribune*, August 28, 2011, A3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

addressed by the Church. It is he who has said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30, NKJV).

Difficult times call for difficult decisions, and when making these decisions it is important that believers are grounded and rooted in the values of Jesus Christ. At the conclusion of their book on *The Family*, Jack and Judy Balswick make the appeal to do just that. They write,

The family has been greatly challenged and changed by modernity. We cannot simply succumb to the march of progress by adjusting the family lifestyle in accordance with whatever innovations are introduced into society. Rather, the challenges—fragmentation of consciousness, complexity of communication, disintegration of community, and dominance of commodities—make it imperative that we come up with fresh insights as to how to create a positive environment in which the family can give glory to God and through their relationships, show evidence of the salvation and freedom offered in Christ Jesus. This redemption, which enables us to meet the challenges of modernity, was purchased at a great cost and demands of us in turn a radical response.¹¹

It is not yet known what the response will be for the fifty-plus generation at Immanuel when the offer is made to help them examine the arena of self-care. Certainly there is a need, but the members themselves must acknowledge that need and desire to learn and grow in this way. My hope and prayer is that the response at Immanuel will be “yea” and “amen.”

¹¹ Balswick and Balswick, *The Family*, 347.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEMBERS OF THE FIFTY-PLUS GENERATION
AT IMMANUEL

Please indicate your first choice among the following questions. Also, please indicate your interest in attending a fall to spring series of seminars that will address a number of these topics.

1. What are the most important needs that surface for you?
 - A. Your physical well-being
 - B. Your emotional and educational/mental well-being
 - C. Your concerns with relationships-family/others
 - D. Your spiritual well-being and growth potential

2. What format would be most helpful in learning more about self-care within the four above areas (physical; emotional/mental; relational; spiritual):
 - A. Monthly seminars presented by professionals in each of the above areas with small group follow up
 - B. Monthly topics presented by Immanuel staff or volunteers from the church or community who are knowledgeable and/or interested in the topic
 - C. No small group discussion following any of the presentations but an opportunity for a question and answer period following the presentation

3. What specific topics would you like to learn more about in any of the four areas:
 - A. What are values of exercise and good nutrition for the fifty and older generations?
 - B. What does it mean to keep active when you have reached fifty or older?
 - C. What are helpful hints in dealing with my aging parents or my adult children?
 - D. What do I hope to accomplish in my retirement years?
 - E. How can I best serve my church and community after fifty?

These are only examples of the kinds of topics that might be discussed. Please add any others below:

APPENDIX B

POST-SEMINAR SURVEY FOR USE AFTER THE PILOT PROGRAM

Thank you for your participation in the pilot seminars. Please comment concerning the help and value these seminars have had for you. Also please indicate the extent of your interest in being a part of a fall series of monthly programs beginning in September 2012.

1. Were the topics helpful in terms of new learning or reinforcing your current knowledge on these subjects?

2. Did these topics speak to issues you felt are important in your life at this time?

3. Would you be interested in attending future seminars?

4. If so, what topics would you like to have discussed?

5. Which of the following topics would you be interested in: grandparenting; care of aging parents; retirement planning; finding balance with work and family; finances after fifty; sexuality in retirement years; spiritual renewal awareness; or other (please write your suggested topic or topics).

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