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Developing an Effective Model for Intentional Discipleship at St. James United Methodist Church

Steven N. Ezra

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DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE MODEL FOR INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP AT
ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

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

BY
STEVEN N. EZRA
FEBRUARY 2012
ABSTRACT

Developing an Effective Model for Intentional Discipleship
at St. James United Methodist Church

Steven N. Ezra
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2011

The purpose of this ministry focus paper was to design an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida, that strategically helps individuals to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The motivation behind this purpose is that St. James, along with many evangelical Protestant churches, has not been as strategic about fulfilling this mission as it should have been. While church systems are not solely responsible for the spiritual growth of each person, systems produce what they were designed to produce. It was argued that one of the leadership tasks in this church is to create systems and environments where the shaping of Christian disciples can take place in compelling and sustainable ways.

The demographic and psychographic characteristics of the people in the primary ministry area and relevant historical events in the church’s history were considered. Next, a theological understanding of discipleship was developed by reviewing influential literature, examining United Methodist theology and praxis, and studying the biblical theology of discipleship. A clear definition of discipleship was established: A disciple of Jesus Christ is one who chooses to adopt Christ’s way of living as the way of living in this world as demonstrated by loving one another and bearing fruit. It is a person who is committed not only to Jesus’ way of life but having a personal allegiance to Jesus himself, evidenced in living a life of radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipling, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. As a result, a model of intentional discipleship was developed using The Methodist Way as a paradigm. This model follows school calendars, has defined starting and ending points, and was implemented across children, youth, and adult ministries so families can participate together.

Content Reader: Craig Kennet Miller, DMin

Words: 294
To my wife Karen and children Miriam, Elisabeth, Alex, and Daniel, who spent many days at home without a husband and father so I could develop my mind for God’s glory.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply appreciative of the congregations of Heritage United Methodist Church and St. James United Methodist Church for making this project possible. In their enthusiastic support of my continuing education, they provided me the time and resources necessary to complete this project. In addition, their prayers and encouragement gave me the strength to persevere in my studies even during seasons of extraordinary ministry demands.
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INTRODUCTION

During the last off-line Final Project Symposium sponsored by Fuller Theological Seminary, Richard Peace offered this critique of the evangelical wing of the Church in the Western world: “In the last century, we oversold conversion and undersold discipleship. Is selling Jesus without discipleship really salvation?”¹ As a Christian, converted and initially discipled within the charismatic movement of the Church and later formally educated within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition of the Church, and as an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, I have been fully immersed in the evangelical wing of the Church. Therefore, this statement from Peace regarding conversion and discipleship resonated strongly within me.

For all my Christian life, those evangelical churches have oversold conversion and undersold discipleship. The consequences of this erroneous understanding of salvation have been evident in each of the four churches in which I have served, including my current appointment: St. James United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida. The members of my congregation are generally nice people. They worship God, provide for their families, coach soccer, brush their teeth twice a day, serve with the local Parent-Teacher Association, pray at mealtimes, recycle their aluminum cans, and give to charity. They are good American citizens, faithful to their jobs and neighborhoods. They believe in God and in Jesus Christ, and they want their children in Sunday School. They are good people, many of whom experienced a crisis moment of conversion at some point

¹ Richard Peace, “Final Project Symposium” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, March 12, 2009).
in their lives, coming forward during an altar call or praying the sinner’s prayer in a time of need. They believe their salvation is found in Jesus Christ and hope other people experience this salvation, too.

The overall values and lifestyles of many, however, do not demonstrate discipleship but simply conversion. Regardless of what they say they believe, their behaviors do not differ much from their neighbors. Many do not consistently practice personal spiritual disciplines except in times of crisis. Few participate in communal spiritual growth opportunities such as small groups or classes intentionally designed for discipleship. As spiritual consumers, many are faithful to their church until a congregation down the road does something bigger and better. Then they move on to the church doing it bigger and better—that is, until an even “bigger and better” church appears on the horizon. When asked about preaching, many want sermons affirming their beliefs instead of teaching them how to live. As with most Christians in churches I have served, their overall values and behaviors are clear evidence of seeing Christianity as a system of beliefs instead of as a way of life.² They are converts but not disciples.

However, these converts are not solely responsible for their flawed understanding of salvation. The Church, evangelical churches in particular, must take responsibility for the role it has played in overselling conversion and underselling discipleship. Our organizational values and behaviors show that most of us in church leadership are content with making converts and keeping them happy—or at least, keeping them on the membership roster. As long as the bills are paid and children attend church camps and we

receive good press, we seem to be satisfied with the absence of a lifelong, systemic, and team-oriented pathway\(^3\) of discipleship for people that is strategic and clear—and consequently, accessible to converts. Perhaps this is an exaggeration. However, if it is true that some in church leadership have been dissatisfied with what their discipleship systems are producing, then sadly most have not experienced enough dissatisfaction to rectify the problem.

The residual costs of this systemic neglect or outright omission of strategically developed discipleship pathways are huge. Divorce rates are high in our churches,\(^4\) because we do not equip husbands and wives for healthy marriages or provide groups for accountability and support in marriage. People pray and read God’s Word only in moments of crises, because we do not teach people how to pray and read their Bibles daily and we do not hold them accountable or support them in practicing spiritual disciplines. People are poor stewards of the resources God entrusted to them and do not give at levels that honor God, because we do not equip people for holistic and lifelong stewardship practices. We seem to be content with defining discipleship as confessing Christ as Savior, showing up for worship, serving on committees when asked, and being nice to other people. We, the church leadership, are a major part of the problem.

\(^3\) Craig Kennet Miller, *NextChurch.Now* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003), 104-105. According to Miller, lifelong learning, systems thinking, and teams are ways of thinking in the twenty-first century that should influence our planning for intentional discipleship systems development.

The churches in which I have served as pastor are examples of this lack of systemic and strategic thinking about discipleship. The staff and lay leadership in each of these churches have not done a good job of intentionally creating and sustaining systems for discipleship. We have been experts at adopting the latest trends, programs, and methods from the hottest megachurches. We have strived to make our worship services as relevant as possible. We have expended vast amounts of energy and resources in providing individual pastoral care to members of the congregation. However, we have not done a good job of designing and implementing strategies that make biblical discipleship—“Christ-followership”—possible. We have not been intentional about discipleship.

St. James United Methodist Church, the church in which the author serves as senior pastor, is a prototypical example of this problem. St. James is a large, affluent, suburban church serving young families outside of Tampa, Florida. Its mission is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”⁵ Though St. James is a stable and healthy church by many measures, the church has oversold conversion and undersold discipleship throughout most of its history, as have many evangelical Protestant churches in the United States over the past few decades.

This must change. For a church to be the genuine Church, to become an authentic faith community, it must have an intentional discipleship strategy effectively producing

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disciples.\(^6\) It is true that individuals must embrace their role in spiritual growth by becoming more disciplined and intentional about practicing spiritual habits. Nonetheless, the Church must get serious about developing and sustaining a pathway for discipleship that enables individuals to grow.

The purpose of this project is to develop an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James United Methodist Church that strategically helps individuals to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. While the church is not solely responsible for the spiritual growth of each person, systems produce what they were designed to produce. Therefore, one of the leadership tasks at St. James is to make disciple production compelling and sustainable. In other words, we are responsible for creating and nurturing a system through which disciples can emerge and grow.

In order to accomplish this task, this project contains three major sections. The first section describes the ministry context of St. James by examining the demographic, geographic, and psychographic characteristics of the people in the primary ministry area. The second section explores the theological understanding of discipleship by reviewing current and influential literature in discipleship, examining United Methodist theology and praxis in discipleship and biblical theology regarding Christian discipleship. Upon this foundation of context and theology, section three proposes a model for intentional discipleship at St. James and describes the implementation plan in detail.

\(^6\) Craig Kennet Miller, “Innovative Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, January 15, 2009).
PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1
THE NEW TAMPA/WESLEY CHAPEL AREA OF FLORIDA

While St. James United Methodist Church reaches people from around the Tampa Bay area due to its proximity to Interstate 75, two key zip codes demarcate the primary ministry area: 33647 and 33543, which are known as the New Tampa and Wesley Chapel areas north of Tampa Bay, Florida.¹ The demographics and psychographics of these two zip codes are consistent with the people already in the congregation, and these two areas have been the focus of the church’s evangelistic efforts since its launch in July 1987. These geographic boundaries also comprise the primary borders within which most of the people live their lives apart from their homes and workplaces, such as schools, shopping, entertainment, and recreation. The New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area has the reputation of being a homogeneous population of upwardly mobile, affluent, and professional families.

The estimated population in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel was 74,578 in 2010, with a projected population of 101,589 by 2015. This projected 36.2 percent population increase is much higher than the projected 9.3 percent statewide growth rate. Whites

¹ This primary ministry area will be referred to as New Tampa/Wesley Chapel, though both New Tampa and Wesley Chapel include parts of other zip codes in addition to the 33647 and 33543 zip codes being studied.
(non-Hispanic) comprise the largest racial group in the ministry area, with 66.6 percent of the population in 2010. Hispanics or Latinos are the second largest racial group, with 14.5 percent of the population in 2010. The next largest racial groups are Asians and African Americans, each comprising 8.4 percent of the population. These percentages are projected to change slightly by 2015, with the white (non-Hispanic) population decreasing by 14.7 percent and Hispanics or Latinos increasing 7.4 percent compared to other racial groups. The Asian population is projected to increase 5.5 percent by 2015 compared to other ethnic groups. Therefore, while racial diversity is projected to increase over the next five years, whites (non-Hispanic) will remain significantly larger than other racial groups in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area.

The Primacy of New Suburbia Families

A company named Experian has created a demographic segmentation system called MOSAIC, which is used across the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church as the primary demographic and psychographic tool available for local churches. MOSAIC uses three hundred demographic variables including population by age and sex, population by race and Hispanic origin, marital status, educational attainment, households by type, households by income, median income by age, and employment by

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2 MissionInsite, FullInsite (report for zip codes 33647 and 33543, December 9, 2010), 10. The Asian racial category in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel is comprised of 43.1 percent Asian Indians, with Chinese a distant second at 19.3 percent.


4 St. James United Methodist Church is part of the South Central District of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.
industry to create sixty unique psychographic segments within twelve larger groupings. MOSAIC enables local churches to understand the general characteristics of the predominant people groups in their particular ministry areas. As such, specific local church reports are invaluable for designing and implementing ministries to reach specific population groups. Table 1 identifies the principal MOSAIC types in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel. This table also compares the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area to the entire state of Florida.

**Table 1. Top 15 MOSAIC Types in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 15 MOSAIC Types</th>
<th>New Tampa/Wesley Chapel 2010</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Florida 2010</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A07: New Suburbia Families</td>
<td>14,266</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>254,040</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H01: Young Cosmopolitans</td>
<td>6,199</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>161,341</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A05: Enterprising Couples</td>
<td>3,204</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>270,320</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E05: American Great Outdoors</td>
<td>2,677</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>977,977</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A02: Dream Weavers</td>
<td>2,256</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>51,412</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C01: Second City Homebodies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>480,560</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C02: Prime Middle America</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>119,285</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G02: Rural Southern Living</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>220,184</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A01: America’s Wealthiest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>21,760</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A03: White-collar Suburbia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8,404</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A04: Upscale Suburbanites</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>38,433</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A06: Small-town Success</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>29,402</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B01: Status-conscious Consumers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>29,062</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B02 Affluent Urban Professionals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>18,011</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B03: Urban Commuter Families</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>19,721</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Households</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4,632,681</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td>28,615</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>7,332,593</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


The biggest MOSAIC type for New Tampa/Wesley Chapel by a large margin is New Suburbia Families, representing 49.9 percent of the area. This type is defined as young and wealthy working couples—many less than thirty-five years old—with preschool children, concentrated in a rapidly growing perimeter community outside a major metro area. This is an almost perfect description of the stereotypical New Tampa/Wesley Chapel family. MOSAIC describes the New Suburbia Family lifestyle in this way:

The members of New Suburbia Families have crafted active, children-centered lifestyles. These families participate in a number of team sports such as baseball, basketball and soccer, shuttling kids and gear to activities in their SUVs and minivans. They go to kid-friendly destinations and frequent zoos, aquariums and campgrounds. At supermarkets, they fill their grocery carts with pizza, Pop Tarts and prepared lunch kits. This is one of the top-ranked types for owning toys, books and video games, and residents here never met a consumer electronics device they didn’t like including cell phones, gaming systems and home theater systems. With their relatively large families, money still needs to be managed. They maintain that price and functionality trump style when they purchase electronics and clothing at retailers like Target, Best Buy and Wal-Mart. Contributing to 529 college savings plans is a priority, but this segment can be debt heavy due to first mortgages and home equity loans.

Though they are educated and media savvy, these households are “often too busy to read a newspaper or magazine, although they will sit in front of a TV to watch network sitcoms and reality shows as well as sports and entertainment.” However, they do listen to the radio frequently due to their long commutes. In addition, they spend time online to research jobs and real estate, and to manage their investments. According to Tom Bandy, though New Suburbia Families are quite busy, they can be faithful participants in the life

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9 Ibid.
of a church if there are enough options in that church to meet their needs and desires. They consider spirituality to be important to their families’ lives; but, they will not settle for mediocrity, nor do they desire additional high expectations placed upon them by the church.  

**Affluence**

One of the key factors of New Suburbia Families is affluence. For 2010, the average household income in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel was $97,317. It is projected to grow 17.1 percent to $113,921 in 2015, a considerable increase. Compared to the state of Florida, which had an average household income of $68,140 in 2010, this ministry area is well above the state average in household income. This is expected to continue in the near future. The number of households making $100,000 or more annually is projected to increase 3.5 percent by 2015, whereas the number of households making less than $75,000 is projected to decrease 1.7 percent by 2015. To view the income data from a different perspective, there were 28,615 households in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area in 2010. Of these households, 5,028 had an annual income of $75,000 to $99,999, and 9,864 had an annual income of $100,000 or greater. In other words, 34.5 percent of the households had an annual income of greater than $100,000 in 2010, and 52 percent of the households had an annual income of greater than $75,000. At the opposite end, only 3.5 percent of families were below the poverty level in 2010, less than half of the state population.

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average.\textsuperscript{12} By most measures, the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area can be accurately described as affluent.

Another indicator of the affluence present in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel is housing. In spite of the recent recession that resulted in a substantial decline in housing values in Florida, the average selling price of a home in New Tampa was $252,932 in May, 2009,\textsuperscript{13} well above state and national averages. For a more recent snapshot of data, sixty single family homes were sold in the New Tampa area in December 2010 at an average selling price of $286,156.\textsuperscript{14} In the entire New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area, the value of 59.7 percent of owner-occupied homes in 2010 was greater than $200,000.\textsuperscript{15} Many of these homes are situated in gated communities. The housing data supports the reputation of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel as an area of affluence.

Education and Vocation

The residents of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel are more educated on average than the rest of the state and nation: 31.3 percent of persons age twenty-five and older have bachelor’s degrees, which is more than double the 14.3 percentage of Floridians overall. In addition, 17.2 percent of persons living in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel age twenty-five and older have graduate or professional school degrees. This is true of only 8 percent of

\textsuperscript{12} MissionInsite, \textit{FullInsite}, 9.


\textsuperscript{15} MissionInsite, \textit{FullInsite}, 15.
Floridians statewide.\textsuperscript{16} Compared to the rest of the state and nation, residents of the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area are more than twice as likely to hold undergraduate or graduate degrees. This is partially as a result of the proximity of the University of South Florida (USF), a large public university. USF employs a sizable number of working professionals from New Tampa/Wesley Chapel. However, there are many other workers in professional specialties or managerial and executive vocations living in the area. The data indicates that 30.7 percent of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents sixteen years of age and older work in professional and related occupations, and 21.9 percent work in managerial or executive positions, both well above the state percentages of 18.5 and 13.8, respectively. Overall, 81.8 percent of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents age sixteen and over work in white-collar occupations. In the state of Florida, 63.8 percent are white-collar workers.\textsuperscript{17} This fits with the MOSAIC description of New Suburbia Families as well as the second and third most represented types, Enterprising Couples and Young Cosmopolitans, both of which will be defined in subsequent sections.

**Family Orientation**

Another important descriptive insight for New Suburbia Families is their strong family orientation. By definition, they are “young, affluent working couples with preschool children concentrated in fast-growing, metro fringe communities.”\textsuperscript{18} The data indicates that many of the people in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel easily fit this

\textsuperscript{16} MissionInsite, *FullInsite*, 15.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{18} MissionInsite, *MOSAIC Descriptions*, 21.
description. According to MissionInsite, the average age of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents in 2010 was 36.2 (the median age was thirty-seven), lower than the Florida median age of 41.3.\(^{19}\) The reason for this lower average age is the large numbers of younger families with school-age children who live in this area, as Table 2 demonstrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 0 to 4</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>5,391</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6,099</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 5 to 17</td>
<td>6,528</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>14,944</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>19,705</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18 to 24</td>
<td>3,030</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6,732</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9,803</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 25 to 34</td>
<td>6,048</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>7,343</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10,480</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 35 to 54</td>
<td>11,721</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>24,631</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>29,881</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 55 to 64</td>
<td>2,439</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8,058</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>13,131</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 and over</td>
<td>2,394</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7,480</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12,490</td>
<td>12.3(^{20})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, 5.9 percent of the state of Florida’s population was 0 to 4 years of age in 2010, and 15.6 percent were 5 to 17 years of age. With this data, it becomes clear that the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area has a higher percentage of school-age children compared to the entire state of Florida in 2010.\(^{21}\) With greater numbers of school-age children, they logically will be more family oriented than areas with fewer children.

Viewing the data from a different perspective, over one-fourth of the population in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel in 2010 was seventeen years of age or younger. Their parents, generally in the 25 to 54 age bracket, represented another 33 percent of the population. Of the households with children under the age of seventeen living at home, 83.4 percent were headed by married couples. This is significantly higher than the rest of

\(^{19}\) MissionInsite, *FullInsit*e, 1.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
the state, where 69.4 percent of households with children were headed by married couples. In sum, while Florida’s reputation for decades has been as a low cost, low wage retirement haven, the reality is different. Wages are still low compared to national averages, but costs—especially housing and insurance—have increased dramatically in the past decade. St. James is located in the middle of an area with a strong majority of affluent families with children and teens. The area’s reputation of having upwardly mobile, affluent, and professional families is quantifiable, as the evidence demonstrates.

**Everybody Else: Pre and Post New Suburbia Families**

The other two MOSAIC types with sizeable numbers in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area are Young Cosmopolitans, who are a subset of the larger Aspiring Contemporaries group, and Enterprising Couples, who fit into the same larger Affluent Suburbia group as New Suburbia Families. Though there are demographic and psychographic differences between these three largest MOSAIC groups in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel, they share many characteristics. Examining the data and descriptions, one can safely assume that Young Cosmopolitans are those who aspire to be New Suburbia Families, and Enterprising Couples are those who have recently exited the New Suburbia Families stage in life. In other words, Young Cosmopolitans are pre-New Suburbia Families, and Enterprising Couples are post-New Suburbia Families.

The New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area’s reputation of being a homogeneous population of upwardly mobile, affluent, and professional families fits these three MOSAIC types. According to Table 1, 82.8 percent of persons in this area are New

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Suburbia Families, Young Cosmopolitans, and Enterprising Couples. Each of these types are marked by affluence, high levels of education, professional career choices, and a strong family orientation. These are the people whom Lyle Schaller explains want excellence, relevance, and choices when they are looking for a church home\textsuperscript{23} and whom Tom Bandy believes choice of church “depends on comfort, time requirements, and quality of programming (rather than heritage, theological depth, or ties of friendship or family).”\textsuperscript{24} This is why you frequently find these families in large churches: many large churches have a combination of excellent programs and low expectations, which is attractive to these three MOSAIC types. Their lives revolve around home, work, and school. They are affluent, well educated, and child-centric, and they are extremely busy due to these factors.

Young Cosmopolitans

The Young Cosmopolitans, making up 21.7 percent of the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area, are part of the larger Aspiring Contemporaries grouping within MOSAIC. This larger grouping describes persons who are “young, mostly single, ethnically diverse, online active households living in new homes or apartments with discretionary income to spend on themselves.”\textsuperscript{25} What differentiates the Young Cosmopolitans from the rest of the Aspiring Contemporaries grouping is also what brings them closer to New Suburbia Families. They are white-collar professionals earning above average income in

\textsuperscript{23} Lyle Schaller, \textit{The Very Large Church} (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 90.
\textsuperscript{24} MissionInsite, \textit{Mission Impact}, 40.
\textsuperscript{25} MissionInsite, \textit{MOSAIC Descriptions}, 58.
managerial, executive, information services, and finance jobs. They are highly educated, being almost twice as likely to hold graduate degrees as typical Americans. Though they may or may not be married and most likely do not have children, busyness is a key characteristic of their lives.\(^{26}\)

The demographics and psychographics of this MOSAIC type lead to a description of their lifestyle that is unsurprisingly similar to New Suburbia Families:

Young Cosmopolitans households work hard and play hard. They have prosperous leisure lives, traveling frequently for business and pleasure, and enjoying city-quality amenities such as restaurants, movies, theaters and the nightlife. They like to stay fit by jogging, lifting weights, doing yoga and working out on cardio machines at health clubs. As consumers, they patronize high-end stores like Bloomingdale’s, J. Crew and Victoria’s Secret. They’re also big purchasers of all kinds of tech gear, including iPods, BlackBerry devices and Xbox consoles. Their desire to stay abreast of the latest styles extends to home design, and they fill their condos and apartments with furnishings from Crate & Barrel, Pottery Barn and Ikea. The members of Young Cosmopolitans like to look good and feel good, whether they’re on the town or at home.\(^{27}\)

When it comes to affluence, education, and vocation, Young Cosmopolitans are quite similar to New Suburbia Families. They share many cultural values related to spending, health, and technology, and their calendars are similarly full but with different types of activities. There is, however, one important difference between Young Cosmopolitans and New Suburbia Families: family orientation. Since many are single and many others are married but without children, family orientation is not a predominant characteristic of Young Cosmopolitans. Having children generally results in greater attention paid to the family unit and development, which entails a reordering of priorities of time and

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\(^{27}\) Ibid.
resources. Because Young Cosmopolitans typically do not have children, they have not experienced this natural reorientation towards family.

This is an important consideration for developing an effective model for intentional discipleship, because without the family orientation, Young Cosmopolitans are not as interested in church involvement as New Suburbia Families are. As Tom Bandy writes: “The first thought of adults with young children is to return to the church where they were brought up.” New Suburbia Families type generally considers faith and church “to be an important component to a balanced, healthy life.” This is not true of the Young Cosmopolitans. Their interest in faith and church is low. They are “not particularly interested in the church because to them it is boring and unproductive … a sidetrack for an otherwise healthy and active lifestyle.” Apart from the difference in family orientation, there is substantial overlap between Young Cosmopolitans and New Suburbia Families. Once children arrive in the lives of Young Cosmopolitans, they naturally become more family oriented and subsequently more interested in spiritual things for the sake of their children, essentially moving into the New Suburbia Families type.

Enterprising Couples

Enterprising Couples are also quite similar to New Suburbia Families, except they are a little older and sometimes without children. This MOSAIC type comprises 11.2 percent of the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area. As is true of New Suburbia Families, this

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29 Ibid., 132-133.
type is part of the larger Affluent Suburbia grouping. They are “the wealthiest households in the U.S. living in exclusive suburban neighborhoods enjoying the best of everything that life has to offer.” Their lives are marked by affluence and educational achievement. They work in managerial and executive positions, and live on the fringes of major metropolitan areas in newer housing developments. As with Young Cosmopolitans, the lifestyle description for Enterprising Couples is quite similar to New Suburbia Families:

The well-off Boomers who comprise Enterprising Couples pursue an always-on-the-go lifestyle. They describe themselves as workaholics and multi-taskers who enjoy traveling, keeping fit and supporting the arts. They have high rates for going to concerts, museums, antique shows and dance performances. They try to make time each day for working out, preferably on cardio machines and stationary bicycles. Conservative when it comes to money matters, they are savers who maintain high balances in their IRAs, 401(k)s and 529 college savings plans. When shopping, they frequently use coupons and await sales before hitting retailers like Target, Kohl’s and Bed, Bath & Beyond. But these financially secure consumers still make a strong market for electronic devices, board games and athletic equipment.

Once again, spending, health, and technology are shared values, and busyness is a key component of their lifestyles. The overlapping values, beliefs, and practices of Enterprising Couples, New Suburbia Families, and Young Cosmopolitans are numerous. All three MOSAIC types share similar levels of affluence and education, and they follow the same executive, managerial, and professional career paths.

As with Young Cosmopolitans, Enterprising Couples are differentiated from New Suburbia Families in their family orientation, but for a different reason. Whereas the Young Cosmopolitans are generally pre-children, Enterprising Couples are generally

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31 Ibid., 19.
32 Ibid.
post-children. They are older than New Suburbia Families. Their children have grown up. Their children have left for college and careers and families of their own. Thus, if Young Cosmopolitans can be described as pre-New Suburbia Families, Enterprising Couples can be described as post-New Suburbia Families. These three MOSAIC types share similar values but are in different stages of life.

While Enterprising Couples are less family-oriented than New Suburbia Families as a result of their different household status, they are interested in the transformation of society and of the self, which leads to openness to faith and church involvement—“provided that it combines with personal fulfillment.” For Enterprising Couples, “spirituality is often a matter of moral philosophy or individual psychology, and the church is valued more for its social action or therapeutic benefits.” This is another important consideration for developing an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James, because Enterprising Couples’ interest in church involvement differs somewhat from New Suburbia Families.

**Living Within Restricted and Often Gated Communities**

These three primary MOSAIC types living in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area have another important commonality, which is important to understand in developing an effective model for intentional discipleship. These families and individuals often choose to live within restricted and frequently gated communities. They can afford

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33 Interestingly, since their lives no longer revolve around children, Enterprising Couples spend their time traveling, participating in the arts and cultural activities, and developing their physical and mental health, just like Young Cosmopolitans.

to live in newer planned communities offering a variety of amenities that also provide a measure of safety and social cohesiveness. Living in such communities is not strictly a New Tampa/Wesley Chapel phenomenon. Restricted and gated communities are common across the southern parts of the United States in metropolitan areas, and they are emerging in other areas around the country. However, it is very common in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area. Florida ranks second, after California, in having the most gated communities per state.³⁵

According to Blakely and Snyder, there are three primary categories of gated communities. These categories are chosen based on three different motivations. First are “the lifestyle communities, where the gates provide security and separation for the leisure activities and amenities within.”³⁶ Many restricted and gated communities in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel fit this category, because they are designed and marketed around golf courses and country clubs. The second category is “the elite communities, where the gates symbolize distinction and prestige and both create and protect a secure place on the social ladder.”³⁷ These are also found in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel, with the occasional celebrity or professional athlete residing behind the gates. The third category is “the security zone, where the fear of crime and outsiders is the foremost motivation for defensive fortifications. In this third category, existing neighborhoods are retrofitted with

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³⁶ Ibid., 4.
³⁷ Ibid.
gates or barricades.”38 This last category does not apply to New Tampa/Wesley Chapel communities, but the first two categories clearly fit the demographics of the area.

Choosing Economic Segregation

The first two categories are examples of persons choosing to live within a restricted and gated community due to their desire to “invest in and control the future through measures designed to maximize the internal life of the residents.”39 Most people have three goals in mind when they choose to live behind gated walls. First, they want prestige. Second, they want privacy. Third, they want protection. People who move into lifestyle communities and elite communities believe the physical barriers of walls and gated entrances staffed by security personnel twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, provide these things not only for their homes but also for their streets, sidewalks, and recreation areas.40

While it is true that their affluence can buy them a level of prestige, privacy, and protection in these restricted and gated communities, as a result they become segregated from major segments of society. Renaud Le Goix writes:

Because security systems and around-the-clock gates prevent public access, gated communities represent a form of urbanism where public space is privatized. They differ from condominiums and secured apartment complexes because they include public infrastructures and spaces behind the gates, which can otherwise be used by everyone, such as streets, parks, sidewalks and beaches. … Because they are

38 Blakely and Snyder, “Divided We Fall,” 4.
39 Ibid.
managed as private corporations, and push for political autonomy and an implicit selection of residents, the outcome is increased segregation.  

Whether intentional or not, persons living in restricted and gated communities in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area are largely insulated from what New Suburbia Families might consider undesirable elements in society: persons who do not share their affinity for pristine houses and exquisitely manicured lawns; persons who drive trucks for their jobs or businesses (signifying blue-collar occupations); and non-affluent persons who cannot afford the same level of housing and are thus kept from the neighborhood.

As a result of living in restricted and often gated communities, many residents of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel live economically segregated lives. This is not a new phenomenon. City planning and zoning laws often have been designed to “preserve the position of the privileged.” Gated lifestyle communities and elite communities, however, go beyond what zoning laws and city planning can accomplish:

They create physical barriers to access, and they privatize community space, not merely individual space. Many of these communities also privatize civic responsibilities, such as police protection, and communal services, such as education, recreation, and entertainment. The new developments create a private world that shares little with its neighbors or the larger political system. This fragmentation undermines the very concept of civitas, organized community life.  

Whether economic segregation is part of the motivation of those who choose to live in gated communities in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel is debatable. Regardless of the motivation, the result is the same. Persons choosing to live in restricted and gated communities live a life of prestige, privacy, and protection afforded to them by their

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42 Blakely and Snyder, “Divided We Fall,” 1.
affluence, education, and vocation. For many, it is also justified by their strong family orientation.

New Suburbia Families, Young Cosmopolitans, and Enterprising Couples are increasingly segregating themselves from less affluent segments of society by choosing to live in restricted and often gated communities. Blakely and Snyder believe it is a self-perpetuating and deepening societal problem with critical negative implications for the United States. This may not be a concern for many people, and a deeper level of research on this particular topic is outside the scope of this paper. However, it is relevant for developing an effective model of intentional discipleship at St. James, because when Christians live in economic segregation, it affects their discipleship pathway. When people living in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area engage in the life of St. James and seek to grow in faith, they sometimes experience guilt about their affluence and housing choices when they encounter the living Christ who seems to have a particular concern for the poor—the very people from whom New Tampa/Wesley Chapel persons have chosen to segregate themselves.

“Rich Guilt” Motivating Families to Community Service

In an article on downward mobility, Shane Claiborne writes: “I believe that the great tragedy of the church is not that rich Christians do not care about the poor, but that they do not know the poor. Yet if we are called to live the new community for which Christ was crucified, we cannot remain strangers to one another. Jesus demands that we

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43 Blakely and Snyder, “Divided We Fall,” 9.
live in a very different way.\textsuperscript{44} This different way runs counter to the drive for prestige, privacy, and protection that leads many to lifestyle and elite gated communities in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area. As a result of their housing choices, many New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents have kept themselves from really knowing the poor. It has prevented them from doing life together in community with them.

There is substantial anecdotal evidence within the church and in the greater New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area that when these segregated families have an authentic encounter with Christ, it can lead to “rich guilt” and become a prominent motivating factor in their involvement in community service. However, for many persons this community service is performed at a distance, with the church operating as an intermediary. Any effective intentional discipleship system must take this motivating factor into account, because having guilt instead of love as the motivating factor in community service leads to unbiblical expressions of discipleship:

Charity also functions to keep the wealthy sane. Tithes, tax-exempt donations, and short-term mission trips, while they accomplish some good, also function as outlets that allow wealthy Christians to pay off their consciences while avoiding a revolution of lifestyle. People do their time in a social program or distribute food and clothes through organizations which take their excess. That way, they never actually have to face the poor and give their clothes, their food, their beds. Wealthy Christians never actually have to be with poor people, with Christ in disguise. If charity did not provide these carefully sanctioned outlets, Christians might be forced to live the reckless Gospel of Jesus by abandoning the stuff of earth. Instead, thanks to charity, we can live out a comfortable, privatized discipleship.\textsuperscript{45}


\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
Guilt is an inadequate motivation for community service because it allows persons to stay in their segregated affluent community, keeping their distance from those on the outside. The only motivation that truly desegregates economically is love. For New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents, the issue is not compassion. Anecdotal evidence points to deep, authentic levels of compassion. The greater issue brought into focus by the sheer numbers of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents choosing to live with economic segregation is relationships. Guilt may lead to greater levels of giving and generosity, but it will not lead to building relationships with non-affluent persons as fellow human beings. Only love will motivate relationship-building across economic boundaries.

Community service is a prominent theme in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area. From churches to schools to the Chamber of Commerce, service is promoted as a key cultural value in the community. There are many nonprofit organizations dedicated to the cause of community service. New Suburbia Families, Young Contemporaries, and Enterprising Couples are expected to give back because they have so much. However, in spite of the feelings of atonement generated by community service, economic segregation remains a reality in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel, and this reality conflicts with the biblical value of love. As Claiborne has written: “Writing a check makes us feel good and can fool us into thinking that we have loved the poor. But seeing the squat houses and tent cities and hungry children will wreck our lives. We will never again be the same.”

An effective and intentional discipleship pathway for St. James must take economic segregation and the motivation of rich guilt so prevalent in the area into account. These

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46 Claiborne, “Downward Mobility in an Upscale World.”
are the realities and motivations New Tampa/Wesley Chapel persons bring into the church: economic segregation and guilt as a motivating factor for community service.

Living Adjacent to the University of South Florida

The final major ministry contextual factor for the people of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel is the proximity of USF. USF is a large public university, with colleges of arts and sciences, behavioral and community sciences, business, education, engineering, marine science, medicine, nursing, and public health in addition to its undergraduate programs. The main campus is located just fifteen minutes south of New Tampa. Though the university is separated from New Tampa/Wesley Chapel by an older, lower income area of Tampa, the influence and links between the two are significant.

Many persons living in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel are employed by the university as faculty, administrators, or staff. Others are indirectly affiliated with USF by means of their employment with institutions and organizations that support the university. Within St. James, there are many employees of USF actively participating in congregational life. That number is most likely higher. In addition to vocation and employment, many children of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel families are enrolled as students at USF. In past years, local students enrolled mostly due to convenience; but over the last decade, the reputation of USF has risen from an undistinguished medium-sized state university into one of the top research universities in the nation. Thus USF

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now has greater appeal to the affluent families of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel, who want and can afford the very best education for their children.

Being in such close proximity to a major research university brings many opportunities to the people of New Tampa/Wesley Chapel, including lecture series, college sporting events, exhibitions, and entertainment choices. Other major institutions affiliated with USF include University Community Hospital, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute, the Shriner’s Children’s Hospital, and the USF Sun Dome. Conversely, the appeal of the university draws thousands of students to the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area each year, many of whom are seeking a local church home away from home.

The proximity of USF coupled with the family orientation of many in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area contribute to the majority of families organizing their lives around school calendars. New Suburbia Families, naturally organize their lives around their children’s schools and activities as a result of their extreme family orientation. This means that for most of these families, the new year begins, not in January, but in September, when school starts. It ends, not in December, but in May, when school ends. This school year is broken up by a winter break, spring break, and a few other long weekends due to federal holidays. Summers are outside the normal year, reserved for vacations and sports. When September comes, a new year begins again. Even after children have graduated from school and left home, this schedule is so ingrained it tends to remain as a vestigial reminder of the child-rearing years.

To summarize the ministry context of St. James, the church is located in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area of Tampa Bay, Florida. Most persons and families in this
area are affluent and highly educated. They work in white-collar occupations—mostly executive, managerial, or other professional roles. Approximately half can be described as New Suburbia Families, and the other two significant types, Young Cosmopolitans and Enterprising Couples, are quite similar to them except for family orientation. Their affluence affords New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents the opportunity to live in restricted and gated communities, thus segregating themselves economically from much of the rest of Tampa Bay. Community service is offered and promoted faithfully by many, often motivated by feelings of guilt over their affluence and segregation. Their lives are strongly influenced by the school calendar due to their school-age children and their proximity to USF.

These demographic and psychographic findings are significant for developing an effective model for intentional discipleship plan for St. James. Many people in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area want and need a church that provides opportunities for service and spiritual growth, but any such offerings must be well organized, effective, efficient, and high-tech. Any successful church discipleship strategy must be accessible, family-oriented, and respectful of their intelligence. It must be offered with excellence and relevance to their lives. Choices must be provided—but not too many, because this could overcomplicate their already busy lives.
CHAPTER 2

THE PEOPLE OF ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

This chapter will move the contextual analysis from the area’s demographics and psychographics to describing the composition of the people of St. James more specifically. The description will begin with an account of the significant historical attributes relevant to the present discipleship theology and praxis. Next, the impact of unfocused leadership and missional emphases will be described to explain how an unfocused, haphazard discipleship process was inherited in 2008. Finally, the present status of discipleship theology and praxis at the church will be considered in order to determine the key factors in moving to a strategic and effective discipleship pathway.

History of St. James United Methodist Church

Before St. James was launched by the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1987, the New Tampa area largely was undeveloped. It consisted mostly of pastures and swamps, with a few “old Florida” homes and families. However, commencing in the late 1980s, multiple residential developments added thousands of homes to the area. Most of these homes are situated in new restricted and gated
communities to appeal to the growing number of young, affluent families in the Tampa Bay area as well as older, affluent couples retiring from northern states. In less than two decades, most of the old pastures and swamps were replaced by new housing communities with such names as Meadow Point, Pebble Creek, Hunter’s Green, Arbor Greene, Cory Lake Isles, Grand Hampton, and Tampa Palms. Many of these planned communities have golf courses or country clubs as their central identifying amenity, and most are marked by affluence.

Memory of a New Church Start

The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church was visionary enough to see the future population growth in this new area of Tampa, so it decided to launch a new congregation there. St. James United Methodist Church was conceived in July 1987 when twenty-three persons worshiped together for the first time in a rented house under the leadership of The Reverend George Norsworthy. ¹ With support from nearby Temple Terrace United Methodist Church, Norsworthy laid the foundation for this new church. He focused most of his energy on building new relationships with people in the area. After one year, the fledgling congregation moved into a rented storefront, and The Reverend Morris Hintzmann was appointed to be their new pastor. Hintzmann provided strong leadership and organizational development, and it was during his tenure that St. James was officially born. The church grew so rapidly under his leadership that they hired a part time pastor, The Reverend Michael Weeden, a member of the New York

Annual Conference living in Tampa while his wife was in medical school.² Like his predecessor, Hintzmann served St. James for only one year. He left to become the full-time executive director of Metropolitan Ministries, a major Christian relief organization in Tampa providing food and shelter for the homeless. To replace him, the bishop appointed The Reverend Clark Pickett, who would serve St. James for eleven years.³

Though the church is now twenty-four years old, there are still a significant number of people in the congregation who remember the early years of the church. In fact, a few persons remain who were counted among the first twenty-three attendees. Many of these longtime members currently serve in church leadership or have served in church leadership in recent years. They remember the years spent worshiping and growing in rented facilities. They remember when all the ministry energy and resources were poured into outreach, evangelism, and worship in order to attract new people to the church from the growing New Tampa area. They remember the times of rapid growth as a new church start under two short-tenured pastors and under the eleven-year pastorate of Pickett, who is remembered by many as a “phenomenal preacher and leader, the best we’ve ever had.”⁴

The memories of participating in a rapidly growing new church start continue to influence these longtime members’ opinions about the church’s mission, vision, and progress. As most new church starts do from necessity, St. James focused its energy and resources on outreach, evangelism, and worship in the early years in order to reach

² Paris, The History of St. James United Methodist Church, 1.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Mark Masi, interview by author, Tampa, FL, 2010. Masi is a longtime member of St. James who has served in a variety of leadership capacities within the church over the years.
people for Jesus Christ and build a self-sustaining congregation. Most new church starts experience excitement born of unpredictability, growth born of a singular focus on numerical growth, and faithfulness to God born from uncertainty. St. James was no exception. As a result of these memories, longtime members often have a hard time understanding why the church is not experiencing the same level of excitement and growth as was common in the early years. I have observed many who do not understand church life cycles or seasons, nor do they seem to recognize how a church’s vision and ministries must mature as it grows from infancy to adolescence to young adulthood, even when explicitly taught. While young churches tend to focus exclusively on outreach, evangelism, and worship, a maturing church needs its ministries to become more balanced. Care and discipleship of existing members are required as well as continued efforts at outreach and evangelism. Though excellent worship remains essential, other emphases such as service and generosity must receive increased attention.

Though the church is now twenty-four years old, the memories of being a new church start still resonate strongly with the members of St. James who experienced the early years. These memories continue to influence their perspectives on church growth, church health, missional priorities, and ministry success. As a result, they tend to be less concerned about Christian discipleship and more concerned about numerical growth. Al Tolley, a longtime member, spoke with me recently about his concern that worship attendance and giving metrics have not experienced significant percentages of increase over the past decade. Tolley said, “When I worked at Sears, if I didn’t increase my sales
percentages every year, it was viewed as a failure. … I’m just concerned that we’re not growing like we used to.”

Affluence, Power, and Expectations

As expounded upon in Chapter 1, the New Tampa area is marked by affluence and is populated by persons who are used to wielding power in their home, work, and church lives. They have high expectations of excellence in themselves and others, and this carries into their expectations of how a church should function. Since St. James was launched to reach families in the growing New Tampa area, the church always has targeted and attracted persons of affluence and power who bring high expectations. From this perspective, the appointment in June 1989 was a wise move by the bishop, because Pickett was an outstanding preacher and leader in the Florida Conference with a strong record in church growth and development. Over the next four years, the church grew to over five hundred members in three Sunday morning worship services, eventually renting space on all three floors of the office building for church offices and Sunday School. In the words of one member: “It was a challenging but exciting time.”

In February 1994, the congregation moved into its own building. The 15,000-square-feet multipurpose building was the first phase of a master plan which called for additional facilities for worship, education, and fellowship. The church constructed an education building in August 1998, effectively doubling its ministry space. Later the

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5 Al Tolley, interview by author, Tampa, FL, February 7, 2011. Interestingly, though his desire was to experience the excitement and growth of the early years once again, his solution was to divert more energy and resources into caring for existing members rather than investing in evangelism and outreach.

6 Paris, The History of St. James United Methodist Church, 1.
sanctuary was remodeled and expanded to seat five hundred people. Pickett’s tenure was a time of rapid growth and expansion. He proved to be a powerful and engaging speaker and leader, meeting the high expectations of the mostly affluent, highly educated, and family oriented congregation. In June 2000, the bishop moved Pickett to a church on the other side of Florida. When it was announced at St. James, the congregation received the news with great sadness. “Clark's [sic] been such a big part of why I go to that church,” said Jeff Leonard, who attends with his wife, Sara. ‘It makes you realize how lucky you are to have had him this long. We all kind of knew or feared it was coming eventually. It is shocking and sad.’"8 That feeling of surprise and loss was shared by most people at the time, and some still feel this way today, eleven years later.

To replace Pickett, the bishop appointed The Reverend Brian James as the new senior pastor. As evidence of the power and influence of St. James in the New Tampa area, a newspaper reporter was there to cover the story, as when Pickett’s departure was announced. The article began with these words:

It's easy to follow in the footsteps of someone who has failed. But replacing someone who is enormously popular, as Brian James has done, well that's another story. “I made it through my first Sunday,” joked James, who delivered his first sermon last week as minister of St. James United Methodist Church on Bruce B. Downs Boulevard. “No casualties.” James’ debut came days after the departure of the gregarious Rev. Clark Pickett, who was transferred to the larger Trinity United Methodist Church in Palm Beach Gardens by the state’s United Methodist conference. Pickett was senior pastor at St. James for 11 years, overseeing its growth from 100 members to 1,200 and the construction of its $2.5-million building.9

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7 Paris, The History of St. James United Methodist Church, 1.


Though the season of rapid growth was over, James led the church effectively in many areas. On June 13, 2004, he issued a challenge for St. James to raise $1 million in order to purchase twenty-two acres of land north of their existing property without a mortgage. The money was raised in ten days, just in time for the closing. This story is recounted to this day as an example the church’s affluence and power in the community; and it continues to be a major source of pride, feeding expectations about what could be possible in the future.

Pastoral Moral Failures

Though James tenure at the church started well and he experienced many victories during his ministry, it did not finish well. On December 16, 2007, James confessed to his congregation in all three worship services that he was addicted to on-line adult pornography and would be leaving as the pastor of St. James, taking a leave of absence from ministry in the United Methodist Church. This was stunning news to a church that had experienced success after success in ministry. However, most of the congregation handled the news with compassion and forgiveness. Due to the prominence of the church in the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area, newspaper reporters were once again present to cover the story:

Worshipers at one of the morning services at St. James United Methodist watched intently as the Rev. Brian James stepped up to the pulpit to address the congregation. Before he even began speaking, some, including robed members of the choir, reached for their tissues and dabbed their eyes. This was the man they had trusted with their faith, their families and their own confessions. This was their guiding leader in the prominent New Tampa church that defines itself by the
slogan, “Imperfect people … following Jesus … Into the World.” And now James had an imperfection of his own to disclose.10

The congregation, while expectedly shocked and saddened, responded to James with grace and maturity. They were generous in their continued support of him, and the church continued moving forward in its ministries under the interim leadership of the Reverend Riley Short. Short was a retired clergyperson appointed to serve a six-month term until a new senior pastor could be appointed during the regular pastoral appointment season.11

What the newspapers and many in the congregation did not know was that Pickett, the predecessor of James, also was removed as the pastor of the church as a result of moral failure. Pickett had multiple affairs with women of the congregation during his eleven-year tenure. When it came to the attention of the district superintendent and bishop at the time, they decided to keep Pickett’s moral failures confidential and reappoint him to a church on the other side of Florida.12

St. James had two consecutive pastors leave as a result of moral failures. This is a significant dynamic with far-reaching implications for the present church culture and ministries. Though each pastor was responsible for his own actions and owned his moral failure, the congregational attributes of affluence, power, and high expectations contributed to their fall. According to the church’s district superintendent, this church had


11 I was appointed to St. James United Methodist Church effective July 1, 2008.

12 The bishop and district superintendent over Pickett were not the same bishop and district superintendent who put James on an involuntary leave of absence.
a deeply embedded culture of defining success by worldly standards. Affluent, professional, and business-oriented congregations often wrongly carry their business values and metrics into their church, and St. James is no exception. As a wealthy and powerful church in the community, expectations of sustained growth and excellence in every ministry area contributed to a high-pressure and high-performance atmosphere for these two pastors. The congregational pressure and demands on their time were so strong that they neglected to take care of themselves spiritually and emotionally. Because they neglected self-care, they became more susceptible to moral failure.

Though the congregation cannot be blamed for the moral failures of these two pastors, the factors that contributed to a high-pressure, high-demand atmosphere for the senior pastor remain: affluence, power, and expectations. There is still an expectation that the church can return to an era of rapid growth and development if energy and resources would be refocused on outreach, evangelism, and worship and away from developing other areas of ministry. This reality presents a challenge to the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship, because discipleship is not a top priority among many who have memories of St. James being a new church start.

Overselling Service and Worship, Underselling Discipleship and Generosity

As a result of the memories of a new church start and the affluence, power, and expectations in the congregation, St. James has a long history of overselling worship and underselling discipleship. The general consensus among longtime congregational

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14 Masi, interview. “This church has never had any sustained efforts at adult discipleship. It’s just never been a priority.”
members is that strong worship ministries attract new people but strong discipleship ministries do not. In a series of interviews I conducted before officially becoming the senior pastor of St. James, each of the seventeen staff members was asked, “What brings people to St. James?” The unanimous response was the excellent worship services and children’s ministries. From the foundation of the church, these ministry areas have received the majority of human and financial resources. In a community largely composed of affluent younger families, worship and children’s ministries must receive the most attention to ensure they are offered with excellence and relevance. In addition, a church must offer multiple choices in worship and children’s ministries in order to appeal to a population that is used to having numerous choices for almost all decisions made, from housing to food to entertainment.15

If the majority of resources in congregations are focused in two ministry areas, then other ministry areas will received a minority of resources. Discipleship is one of the two primary ministry areas suffering from systemic neglect at St. James. Though there are on-going adult Sunday School classes and small groups offered at the church, most were started by lay persons with their own ideas and agendas arising from their own needs and experiences. This has contributed to a sense of haphazardness in discipleship opportunities. There have been a couple of attempts to launch a churchwide system of small groups in the past, but those small groups did not continue or multiply.

One of the assertions made in Chapter 1 is that there is a discernable collective sense of guilt experienced by many of these families due to their level of affluence compared to most Americans. This feeling of “rich guilt” motivates many of these

15 Schaller, The Very Large Church, 90.
families to community service as a way to assuage their guilt. It is evidenced by performing many of these acts of service at a distance with the church operating as an intermediary instead of engaging in personal, long-term relational acts of service. As with worship, St. James has a history of overselling service in comparison to other areas of ministry, particularly sustained generosity. For example, the February 2011 monthly ministry report compiled by the executive director of ministries lists sixteen unique ministry activities for the month apart from the regular, on-going ministries at the church.\textsuperscript{16} Eight of these were service-oriented, including the children ministries’ and Special Connections\textsuperscript{17} ministries’ reports. In the past year, three new major ministry initiatives related to service began, in addition to numerous on-going service opportunities.\textsuperscript{18}

While service opportunities and missional giving continue to expand, regular and sustained giving to the congregation’s operational budget has been stagnant for over ten years. St. James has excelled as a congregation in times of spontaneous generosity. This is the kind of giving that happens at the last minute as needs and occasions arise. Whether it is for earthquake relief in Haiti or to sustain missions during a political crisis in Honduras, the church has responded with liberality. On the other hand, the church has lagged in strategic generosity, that category of giving that includes the tithes and offerings given toward the on-going operational expenses of a church. Many years of

\textsuperscript{16} Barbara Brosch, e-mail to St. James Leadership Board members, February 28, 2011.

\textsuperscript{17} Special Connections is a comprehensive ministry to persons with special needs such as autism or Downs Syndrome that enables them to participate fully in the life of the church.

\textsuperscript{18} These three new major initiatives were Second Saturday Servants, HeartF.E.L.T., and a homeless ministry initiative.
underselling generosity and overselling service have convinced many in the congregation that as long as they are generous with their time and talents, they do not have to be generous with their treasures. It will take time and strategic effort to change this culture at St. James.

For a variety of reasons, St. James has oversold worship and service and undersold discipleship and generosity. While these categories are not polar, when two ministry areas receive excessive attention, other ministry areas will often suffer from neglect. Discipleship, adult discipleship in particular, has suffered from neglect at St. James. This makes the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship challenging, because many years of habits and culture building must be overcome.

Moving from Instability to Stability at the Top Levels

When beginning ministry as the senior pastor of St. James in July 2008, I inherited a congregation that had been experiencing severe instability over the previous two years. Thanks to the strong leadership of Short during the previous six months as their interim pastor, many of the emotional and spiritual wounds from their previous pastor’s moral failure had been healed or were in the process of healing. The church was hopeful for the future and outwardly open to a new direction. Inwardly, however, their ability to trust a pastor had been deeply damaged. This section will explore the impact of unfocused leadership and missional emphases at St. James I inherited and how it affected their attitude regarding Christian discipleship. An unfocused, haphazard discipleship process was just one consequence of the church’s history and recent instability. Although there were other significant consequences, this examination will be limited to the impact
on attitudes toward the church’s organizational role in Christian discipleship because of
the limited focus of this project.

Pastoral Leadership

From January 2007 to July 2008, St. James had three senior pastors. After having
experienced one senior pastor for eight years and the previous senior pastor for eleven
years, this instability was an unsettling experience and distracted the church from
fulfilling its primary mission. The instability created a culture of uncertainty and distrust
in pastoral leadership. James, who had served the church since 2000, had been addicted
to adult on-line pornography since 2006. Though the congregation was unaware of his
addiction, it had a considerable impact on his ministry effectiveness. Though he
acknowledged that administration was not one of his strengths, his administrative
leadership was rendered even more ineffective as a result of his moral struggle. In the
absence of strong administrative leadership, factions developed within the congregation
that jockeyed for influence and power as they offered assistance to James. These factions
did not develop in a calculated manner or with intended malice. Groups of strong leaders
in the congregation saw their pastor struggling, and they wanted to come alongside him
to help for his sake and the church’s sake. They quickly found themselves in conflict, and
partisan lines were drawn. There was an air of suspicion, tension, and conflict that
enveloped most persons in leadership or adjacent to those in leadership, though they did
not know the cause at the time.

19 Nipps, “Pastor Tells His Flock His Sins.” In his final sermon to the congregation addressing his
moral failure, James stated, “I have preached, taught, visited, married, buried, I even administrated a little.”
This was his attempt to find some humor in the midst of great sorrow.
With James struggling to lead the church administratively, the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee asked him to take a one-month sabbatical in the spring of 2007 to clear his head and refocus on his primary mission as senior pastor. James reluctantly took the sabbatical, and returned to discover that the chair had usurped his authority over the church staff in his absence and made significant staffing decisions without his input. Though this Staff-Parish Relations chair was removed by the lay leadership of the church, the tense and conflicted atmosphere intensified. Some people left the church. Those who remained and who were part of the core congregation chose sides and became polarized about solving the church’s leadership problems. Meanwhile, James continued to struggle in his administrative functions. When his moral failure was discovered on December 11, 2007, he was removed from church leadership by the bishop less than one week later.

The bishop appointed Short as the interim pastor for six months, serving from late December 2007 to June 2008. While Short did an outstanding job bringing about healing and unity within the congregation, he left the polarized leadership factions intact because his primary responsibility was to restore a sense of openness, faith, and unity within the congregation at large and not to deal with administrative or long-term leadership issues. He stabilized what he could in preparation for the incoming senior pastor and focused on loving and encouraging the congregation in ways that only an experienced, white-haired, and Southern pastor with great faith, integrity, and excellent storytelling abilities could. I was appointed senior pastor of the church effective July 1, 2008, and has remained in this capacity to the present. Though the church is still dealing with the consequences of having a pastoral moral failure and interim pastor in short sequence, St. James has moved
to a greater sense of stability in pastoral leadership over the past couple of years. This makes the call for an effective model of intentional discipleship more easily received.

**Staff Leadership**

As a result of James’ weakness in administrative leadership, other leaders arose in the congregation informally and formally. By the time I arrived as senior pastor in July 2008, most church staff members were reporting to committees as well as reporting to the senior pastor. In addition to providing ministry support and coordination in their respective ministry areas, these committees were performing supervisory and administrative functions over staff members, which is an ineffective method of operation for large churches. Schaller writes: “The anonymity and complexity that are characteristics of the megachurch make it difficult for volunteers, who invest only eight to twelve hours a week in the life of that worshiping community, to make informed decisions.”

As a result of having a committee-led ministry environment, most staff members felt disempowered and demoralized. They were experiencing a lack of autonomy in decision making that most professional staff persons ordinarily would expect to have. Mindy Schiller, the Director of Equipping, said, “I don’t know why the church even needs professional staff members if they are not going to treat us like professional staff members but as go-fers.”

In his last few years of ministry at the church, James had a flat organizational structure, with seventeen staff members reporting directly to him. Recognizing the

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20 Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 170.

21 Mindy Schiller, interview by author, Tampa, FL, June 17, 2008.
inefficiency of this model, Short implemented a temporary staff team structure that created four staff ministry teams, each with a team leader, who reported to the senior pastor. This was the staff structure inherited by the author in July 2008. One of the first pastoral initiatives I undertook in the summer of 2008 was to change the staff structure. The church needed an appropriate organizational chart for a church of this size. With support from the necessary lay administrative committees, the director of adult discipleship position was eliminated for financial reasons, and the director of senior high ministries was fired for lack of productivity. The children’s ministry staff positions were reorganized, the assistant pastor was redeployed as the pastor of congregational care, and the director of missions role was expanded into the director of missions and outreach. In addition, an executive director of administration was hired, and the director of worship and arts was elevated to an executive role. As the senior pastor, I made these latter two changes to help manage the church staff.

Though the staff obviously experienced a lot of changes in a short period of time, it was necessary for the long-term health of the staff and church. The church needed to shift from a lay-governed and lay-led model of ministry into a lay-governed and staff-led model of ministry in order to provide more stability and higher levels of excellence in ministry. The next step after the staff reorganization was to begin changing the church

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22 This may seem counterintuitive considering that this final ministry project focuses on the need for strategic and effective discipleship at St. James. However, the person serving as director of adult discipleship had been ineffective in this role. Her responsibilities and the responsibilities of the director of equipping were combined into one staff role and given to the former director of equipping.

23 In 2009, it was reported to the Florida Conference that St. James had over 1,200 members and averaged almost one thousand in worship on a weekly basis.
culture to enable the staff to lead their ministry areas. The staff model and church culture continue to evolve. They are by nature on-going processes.\footnote{In 2010, the church hired an executive director of ministries to coordinate and lead all ministries of the church other than worship and arts and administration. This freed the senior pastor for preaching and teaching, vision casting, and relationship building with key leaders and influencers.}

Lay Leadership

Much of the instability the congregation experienced with their pastor and the staff experienced on a regular basis was exacerbated by the instability of the lay leadership structure at St. James. As described earlier, there was an absence of strong administrative leadership by the senior pastor due to his spiritual gift mix and his moral struggle. Therefore, other leaders emerged in the last two years of his ministry. Though almost all were well-intentioned, factions developed, and the leadership environment became unhealthy. People stopped assuming the best of each other and began to work against each other. When the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chair was asked to leave the church, some core members of the laity left with him and began to worship in his home on Sunday mornings. A few other persons loyal to the chair remained at St. James, which deepened the level of suspicion and mistrust. The spiritual atmosphere became so toxic that a few faithful persons resigned from their leadership roles and left the church. A few other lay leaders resigned but stayed at St. James, hoping that the church eventually would become healthy again.

When Short replaced James, he strove to create a new sense of unity and purpose within the congregation. One of his methods to achieve this goal was splitting the Administrative Board into a Ministry Servants Council and Administrative Servants.
Council, effectively doubling the number of laity in key leadership positions. While this served the purpose of involving more laity in decision making to create a greater sense of ownership and unity, it also created another layer of bureaucracy that made decision making more difficult. As a result, instead of inheriting one board, one Administrative Board chair, and one lay leader to work with, I inherited two boards, two board chairs, and two lay leaders to work with in July 2008. Short’s action contradicted one of the maxims of leadership in large churches: “The larger the size of the congregation, the smaller the size of the governing board.”

Therefore, from August through November 2008, I worked with the Administrative Servants Council and other key influencers to reorganize the lay administrative structure of St. James to better lead and serve a church of its size. With the support of the Administrative Servants Council, key influencers, and the district superintendent, the reorganizational plan was brought to the annual business meeting and approved. The two-board structure was eliminated and replaced by one Leadership Board overseeing four administrative committees: Trustees, Finance Committee, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and the Committee on Lay Leadership. The number of Leadership Board members was reduced to fourteen while the other committees retained nine members. All other committees were repositioned into ministry teams under the leadership of staff members. These teams would not need to go through the Committee on Lay Leadership for approval of members, nor would they need to seek approval from multiple layers of committees to determine ministry actions.

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25 Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 115.
The primary reason for these changes was because “the structure of a pure democracy in congregational governance and the high level of performance expected by the constituents of the megachurch are incompatible.”26 St. James needed a smaller, more flexible lay leadership structure. They also needed to entrust the day-to-day operations of the church to the staff and focus instead on vision and oversight. The reduction and clarification of the lay leadership structure was a key element in moving St. James from instability to stability. Without the changes to the lay leadership structure and staff structure, the church would still be wrestling with decisions about credit card machines or paint colors for the hallways. Now they are much better positioned to hear specifically from the Lord what vision he has for the church.

Mission and Vision

In June 2008, I performed interviews with existing staff members at St. James in preparation for arrival as the new senior pastor in July. Some of the key findings of these interviews have been discussed previously. The most significant finding, however, was in response to this question: “What is the mission and vision of St. James United Methodist Church as you understand it?” It quickly became clear that there was no consensus answer to this question. In fact, the mission and vision statements had undergone an almost annual revision or replacement over the previous few years under the leadership of James. This created a level of uncertainty and instability among staff members, as well as uncertainty among the congregation at large. Many people could recite the vision

26 Schaller, The Very Large Church, 170.
statement at the time, but few knew if it was the current statement or a previous one or how long it would last. One of the staff members commented, “Every time Brian went to a conference or workshop, he came back with a new mission statement and a new focus for ministry.”

In the explorations of this section, it may seem that I am being unduly critical of the previous pastors, particularly James. Therefore, it should be stated that James did many things well during his eight-year tenure. He loved the Lord and loved the people of the church. He had strong gifts in shepherding and teaching. Much could be said about his gifts, strength, and heart, but the purpose of this section is to explore the impact of unfocused leadership and missional emphases on the discipleship pathway inherited in 2008. The lack of a clear and consistent understanding of the church’s mission and vision was a key factor in its haphazard and unfocused planning. One of the consistent hopes expressed by the seventeen staff members in June 2008 was for a consistent direction for the church. They wanted to serve and excel in their ministries. They wanted the church to fulfill its mission and build the Kingdom of God. However, they found it hard to do this as a staff team without a consistent understanding of the church’s mission and a clear and compelling vision for its future.

The Discipleship Pathway in Transition

The discipleship pathway at St. James is presently in transition. Many changes have been made in order to correct the previous imbalance in attention given to particular

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27 The mission statement of St. James United Methodist Church in June 2008 was “Imperfect people… following Jesus… into the world.” It was approximately one year old.

ministries and to move the church from instability to stability. Though the need for an effective model of intentional discipleship remains, the initial steps towards achieving this goal have been set in motion. In addition to the structural and leadership changes described above, the staff worked together for months in order to clarify the mission of the church. This would be the foundation upon which any ministry development and organizational goals would be built. This intent was not to create a unique perspective on and statement about the church’s mission. The intent was to clearly define the church’s mission, beginning with the universal Church, moving to the United Methodist denomination, and finishing with the unique history and characteristics of St. James. It was decided to adopt the official mission statement of the United Methodist Church as the official mission of St. James: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.\textsuperscript{29} With this critical element in place, other steps necessary for developing an effective model for intentional discipleship could commence.

Professionalization of Leadership Roles

As detailed in the previous two sections, the administrative structures and culture of St. James tended to resemble those found in smaller churches, not larger churches. For example, many people enjoyed direct access to the senior pastor and expected him to provide pastoral care to the entire congregation, though this is a practical impossibility in a large congregation. In addition, they took pride in being part of a close-knit family environment, though their closed circles of fellowship hindered many visitors and guests from becoming part of the congregation.

\textsuperscript{29} United Methodist Church, \textit{Discipline}, 87.
More significantly, the congregation had cultivated a congregational form of church government instead of an episcopal or connectional form, with most issues of importance voted upon by the entire congregation. While congregational forms of church governance can work well in small and medium-sized churches, they are inefficient for large churches. In his book *The Very Large Church*, Schaller enumerates eight operational beliefs of most large churches:

Most very large congregations, in some cases counter to their own constitution or denominational polity, operate on the assumption that (1) leaders are called to lead; (2) not every opinion deserves the same weight as other opinions; (3) informed opinions are more valuable than uninformed opinions; (4) most people will naturally prefer efforts to perpetuate yesterday over challenges to create a new tomorrow; (5) congregations are worshiping communities of people called to follow Christ, not political democracies; (6) the number one criterion in making decisions in ministry is not, “What do our people here prefer?” but rather, “What would Jesus advocate if he were speaking to us in this room today?” (7) the larger the number of people actively involved in making a particular decision, the more likely that process will result in a watered-down compromise rather than a bold step into the unknown; and (8) God’s call to the vast majority of the members of that very large church is to be engaged in doing ministry, not in attending committee meetings.  

St. James was not only operating outside the bounds of United Methodist polity in significant ways but also outside the effective operational dynamics of large churches, according to Schaller’s research. Many of the decisions and steps described in the above sections were intentional actions taken to move the church into a large church model of operation. This included

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30 This was an ecclesial problem as well as a practical problem. The United Methodist Church has an episcopal or connectional form of government, not a congregational form. In some decision-making contexts, St. James was not operating according to *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* but as an independent church. Opening the voting at the annual business meeting to all members and not securing proper approval for building programs were two significant examples of how the church was operating congregationally and not connectionally.

31 Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 114-115.
the development of an appropriate staff organizational chart, the creation of a staff executive team, the removal or replacement of ineffective staff members, the reduction in size of the lay leadership structure, the clarification of mission and purpose for lay administrative committees, the transition from ministry committees to ministry teams, the development of a clear mission statement and operating definition of discipleship, and the casting of a clear and compelling vision for ministry with frequency. This also included the transitioning of the church culture from a lay-led and lay-empowered church to a staff-led and lay-empowered church. In other words, this included the professionalization of certain critical ministry leadership roles.

Defining Discipleship with Consistency, Clarity, and Specificity

The current mission of St. James is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This statement provides a clear and biblical reminder of the primary task given by God to every church. However, in order for the mission statement to give direction and shape to all ministry development at St. James, discipleship needed an operating definition. This operating definition had to be consistent with biblical theology and United Methodist distinctives, clear enough to provide sufficient guidance and specific enough to enable the church to define ministry parameters. The specificity can enable the staff and lay leadership to know what ministries to initiate, expand, or eliminate. The result of this task will be explored in detail in Chapter 5 of this final ministry project. However, a brief summary here will suffice to enable the continued depiction of the discipleship pathway in transition at St. James.
After many months of collaboration, the staff of St. James adopted an operating definition of discipleship using United Methodist Bishop Robert Schnase’s book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Schnase’s work increasingly is being used in United Methodist congregations around the United States, particularly in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. If the mission of St. James is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, then the question “What is a disciple of Jesus Christ?” needs to be answered. Using Schnase’s paradigm, the following definition was developed:

A disciple of Jesus Christ is a person who practices Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Discipleship, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity in the everyday, ordinary living of the Jesus way of life. While we know there are different operating definitions of discipleship in the universal Church that are excellent and biblical, this is how we define discipleship at St. James United Methodist Church. This definition of discipleship gives direction and shape to all our ministry development as a church because it describes the expected behaviors of Christians individually and together as the body of Christ.

For marketing purposes, these practices were identified in a shortened form as Connecting, Worshipping, Growing, Serving, and Giving. This definition was adopted and implemented in 2009 as the operating definition of discipleship at St. James. These practices also provide the basis for consistent tracking of results to measure the effectiveness of the church’s ministry efforts.

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33 St. James United Methodist Church, *St. James United Methodist Church Playbook* (Tampa, FL: St. James United Methodist Church, Tampa, FL, 2011), 3.

Moving from Haphazard to Strategic Discipleship Planning

With a consistent, clear, and specific definition of discipleship in place, the staff of St. James began moving the church from haphazard development of discipleship opportunities to strategic discipleship planning. In previous years, most discipleship opportunities at St. James were originated by lay persons or staff persons as they developed a personal interest in a particular class, small group, or subject of study. While this led to a variety of discipleship opportunities being offered, there was no overarching strategy or system in place to help persons, adults in particular, move down a clear, logical pathway of faith development.

As will be expounded in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, intentional discipleship presupposes that each disciple must own his or her responsibility in being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is in the repetition of meeting together in smaller groups to learn about faith and life in Jesus Christ that persons are formed into Christians. Our faith grows best when we seek to understand Scripture, faith, and life in the nurturing of caring relationships with people who know and love us. While each disciple must own his or her responsibility to place himself or herself into a small community where spiritual growth is facilitated, it is the responsibility of the staff of St. James to develop a strategic and effective pathway for Christian discipleship in the church using a clear, systematic approach. While church systems are not solely responsible for the spiritual growth of each person, one of the leadership tasks in this church is to make disciple production compelling and sustainable.

35 St. James United Methodist Church, St. James United Methodist Church Playbook, 5.
The primary audience for this staff-facilitated discipleship pathway is comprised of new believers and growing disciples. It is primarily for those who have not yet learned to feed themselves spiritually. Part of spiritual maturity is learning how to feed oneself, not only to be motivated to grow, but know how real spiritual growth or discipleship happens practically. Mature Christians do not need the church to provide a pathway for their spiritual growth as much as new believers and growing disciples do. They know how to find the pathway themselves. Therefore, one of the key transition points in the discipleship pathway at St. James is to position the church staff in front of the creation and support of a discipleship pathway that enables persons to grow spiritually “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).36 While the staff will support, resource, and publicize opportunities for mature Christians, their main focus is on those who are still learning to feed themselves.37 St. James does not yet have this effective model for intentional discipleship in place. It is still in the beginning stages of moving from haphazard to strategic. The implementation of this final ministry project should push the church solidly into the strategic side of discipleship pathway development.

36 The Holy Bible: New International Version, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996, c1984). All Scripture is quoted from this version unless otherwise noted.

37 Miller, NextChurch.Now, 108. Miller offers a useful question to consider: “What does our faith community need to offer to help a person reach spiritual maturity in the first three years of being a part of the faith community?”
Shifting from Lay-Led to Staff-Led Ministry while Continuing to Empower Laity

The last transition under consideration is the shift from lay-led and lay-empowered to staff-led and lay-empowered ministries at St. James. As stated earlier, most staff members felt disempowered in ministry at St. James as a result of working in a committee-led ministry environment and seemed to be demoralized. They questioned their value and purpose in the life of the church. All were passionate above discipleship, but their primary functions in this ministry area had been limited to curriculum support and room scheduling, with occasional special event coordination.

The shift from a lay-governed and lay-led model of ministry into a lay-governed and staff-led model of ministry began with the ministry committees being repositioned into ministry teams under the leadership of staff members. While the laity still was strongly encouraged to initiate and lead ministries, the staff members will provide overall ministry visioning and coordination in cooperation with other staff members. With a clarified mission and vision, and with the full support of the senior pastor and Leadership Board, these ministry teams will no longer need to seek approval from multiple layers of committees to determine ministry actions, as long as they acted within the parameters of the mission, vision, and approved budget. The church had to professionalize executive and ministry leadership roles in order to provide more stability and higher levels of excellence in ministry. This is an expected paradigm in most large churches.  

This shift was a strong morale booster to the staff at St. James. Many staff members commented about how grateful they were for their newfound freedom to lead.

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38 Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 114-115.
ministries as they were equipped and hired to do. However, as stated earlier, this also meant that the staff needed to start taking responsibility for developing discipleship pathways systematically and strategically. Having authority also meant being responsible and having accountability. This was a new experience for some of them, and the transition was more challenging than they first imagined. However, with the other significant changes over the past two years, it is a necessary step in transitioning the discipleship pathway from its previous state into one that is focused, strategic, accessible, and effective.

This chapter has described the composition of the people of St. James as it relates to past and present discipleship theology and praxis through the categories of church history, leadership, mission and vision, and the present transitional situation. With the ministry context of the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area of Florida established and with a clearer understanding of the people of St. James, key findings about discipleship models must be considered before a plan can be developed. An effective discipleship system must be unique for this particular congregation, taking into account demographics and psychographics. It must consider the historical development or lack of development of discipleship pathways because the church’s history will influence the design of an effective model in the present.

In order to accomplish this task, the theology of discipleship must be investigated and explicated. An understanding of what the Bible says about discipleship is essential. In addition, an exploration of how discipleship has been understood and accomplished

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within the United Methodist tradition is essential. A healthy exploration should begin with discovering what influential authors have been writing about discipleship in the contemporary context. This last task is where this ministry focus paper continues next as an entrance into an overall theological reflection about Christian discipleship pathway development.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELEVANT TO DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze important literature that will contribute to the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James. A contemporary church model or pathway should not be developed in isolation from the rest of the Body of Christ because discipleship always has been a fundamental concern for the universal Church. As a result, countless theologians and researchers have contributed to the discussion from a variety of Christian traditions throughout its history.

The first section of this chapter presents systematic exploration at a broad level, analyzing three influential works on organizational perspectives and metrics. The second section examines four books focused on United Methodist discipleship, both historically and in current practice. The third section of this chapter considers four trans-denominational resources that have been influential over the past two decades in local church development.
Systematic Perspectives and Metrics

Since the purpose of this ministry focus paper is to design an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James using a clear and systematic approach, a review of relevant literature must begin at a systemic level. Human organizations are systemic by definition. Whether the organization is a club, biological family, church, or business entity, systems are essential to the organization’s functioning. For example, there are decision-making systems and decision-implementation systems. There are systems for planning and communication. There are systems for production and maintenance. Any of these systems may be acknowledged and formal, or they may be unnoticed and informal. Regardless, systems exist for the organization to function. As a human organization, a local church consists of different systems, formal and informal.\(^1\) If a church should be a “training ground for Christian witness and ministry to the whole world” and not a “holding pen for believers waiting to get to heaven,” \(^2\) then a systematic perspective of Christian discipleship must be considered, as should appropriate metrics to measure the success of the systems.

*The Very Large Church* by Lyle Schaller

When Schaller wrote *The Very Large Church* in 2000, his intent was to offer a new rule book for big churches because the American culture now “organized around big institutions is governed by a different rule book from that which was used in the old

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\(^1\) “You can have a worship service without a discipleship system, or a discipleship system without a worship service. But it takes both to have a faith community, a church.” Craig Kennet Miller, “Innovative Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition” (DMin course, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, January 15, 2009).

\(^2\) Miller, *NextChurch.Now*, 103.
culture composed largely of small institutions.” As part of the contemporary culture organized around big institutions, big churches are not simply bigger versions of smaller churches. They are different organizations that require a different type of leadership to develop different structures meeting different expectations than what smaller churches require. Schaller argues that those persons who wish to lead in large churches need to learn that the new large church environment “is defined by the culture, the societal context, clearly defined expectations, a theological belief system, a passion for evangelism, a high level of competence, creativity, innovation, and a new and different set of rules, rather than by local traditions or geographical boundaries or yesterday’s stereotypes.” St. James is in this new large church environment.

By Schaller’s classification, St. James is a “very large church” and is thus subject to these new rules in order to be successful in fulfilling its mission. Due to contemporary culture and characteristics unique to large churches, Schaller’s rules would require St. James to be a high expectation church, particularly in the area of discipleship. To have high expectations for discipleship and to create a discipleship pathway in a local church that enables people to achieve these expectations requires a systematic perspective on Christian discipleship. A leader cannot simply tweak an existing Sunday School class or add a new Bible study on Monday evenings. Larger churches require ministry development to happen at a higher level in order to be successful in their mission.

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3 Schaller, The Very Large Church, 14.
4 Ibid., 16.
5 Ibid., 17.
6 Ibid., 28.
While Schaller does not offer a particular model for Christian discipleship, his research on general church management and organization are relevant for developing an effective discipleship model. St. James is a very large church in a culture accustomed to big institutions with the accompanying high expectations of big institutions. Any discipleship pathway offered by St. James must not be haphazard or accidental but must instead strategically “concentrate on helping individuals progress from skeptic or seeker to believer to learner to disciple to apostle.”\(^7\) If the culture of large churches assumes that every person “can and should become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ,” then every large church must intentionally “challenge every pilgrim to fulfill the disciplines of a group designed to transform believers into disciples.”\(^8\)

*Natural Church Development* by Christian Schwarz

*Natural Church Development* is a very influential work in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. The book focuses on church growth organizational perspectives and metrics. The Florida Conference has embraced the Natural Church Development process (NCD) as one of two official local church revitalization processes and has trained a number of coaches to lead churches through NCD. Schwarz’ book offers a different approach to church growth than what usually is offered by researchers and consultants. He examined growth principles in the natural or biological world and appropriated them as principles for church growth. Schwarz strongly believes that God designed the church to grow automatically, so the key to church growth is a not human-

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\(^7\) Schaller, *The Very Large Church*, 21-22.

\(^8\) Ibid.
made program but a scientific process designed to remove obstacles from the growth God would naturally have for a church.\(^9\) Through empirical research, observation of nature, and study of Scriptures, Schwarz developed a church growth process which, he believes, is oriented towards principle instead of pragmatism, qualitative results instead of quantitative results, and “growth automatisms” instead of attempting to manufacture church growth.\(^10\) He believes the key to church growth is discovering the weakest of eight church characteristics\(^11\) and using principles from nature to develop an action plan to strengthen this weakest area.

While claiming that NCD is focused on qualitative results instead of quantitative results, Schwarz uses the social sciences and statistics to determine what the weakest ministry characteristic is for a particular church. He proposes a methodical, scientific process that helps churches define and understand their core ministry systems. This is quite helpful in the development of an effective model of intentional discipleship. The biotic principles remind leaders of the interdependence of all church systems and offer guidance for implementing systemic change by using growth principles found in nature.\(^12\) A significant limitation of Schwarz’ work is that he offers no concrete models or examples for developed ministry systems. However, this was not his purpose, and he

\(^9\) Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development, 6*\(^{th}\) ed. (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 7. On page 10, Schwarz states, “We should not attempt to ‘manufacture’ church growth, but rather to release the biotic potential which God has put into every church.”

\(^10\) Ibid., 13-14.

\(^11\) Ibid., 22-37. The eight quality characteristics are empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

\(^12\) Ibid., 66-77. The six biotic or biological principles of growth are interdependence, multiplication, energy transformation, multi-usage, symbiosis, and functionality.
might argue that this task would be impossible due to each church’s unique context. His purpose was to offer a process for churches to develop systems organically, contextually, and with available metrics in the NCD process for measuring success. In addition to the helpful taxonomy of core church systems, Schwarz’ explication of the six biotic principles are valuable in the development and implementation of an effective discipleship pathway at St. James.

*Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* by Jim Collins

This monograph is a companion to Collins’ highly influential business book *Good to Great*, intended to translate his research results from the for-profit sector into meaningful insights for the nonprofit sector. He begins by stating,

We must reject the idea—well intentioned, but dead wrong—that the primary path to greatness in the social sectors is to become “more like a business.” Most businesses—like most of anything in life—fall somewhere between mediocre and good. Few are great. When you compare great companies with good ones, many widely practiced business norms turn out to correlate with mediocrity, not greatness. So, then, why would we want to import the practices of mediocrity into the social sectors?¹³

His point is that the critical distinction between organizations is not profit versus nonprofit; it is good versus great. Collins believes the good-to-great principles he discovered in his research—Level 5 Leadership, Get the Right People on the Bus, Hedgehog Concept, and Culture of Discipline,¹⁴ for example—are not just for the business world. They apply to social sectors, including churches. The purpose of Collins’ monograph is to explore five significant differences between the for-profit sector and

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¹⁴ Ibid., 32-33.
nonprofit sector that must be taken into consideration in order for a non-profit organization to become great. First, the metrics of success are different. For non-profits, money is not a measure of greatness as it is in businesses. Second, power is more diffuse in non-profits, which makes governance and decision making more complicated. Third, getting the wrong people off the bus is usually more difficult in the non-profit sector. Fourth, the economic engine within the hedgehog concept must be redefined more broadly as a resource engine. Fifth, momentum in the non-profit sector is built not in the accumulation of financial resources but in the building of a brand or reputation.\footnote{Collins, \textit{Good to Great and the Social Sectors}, 32-33.}

Collins’ primary contribution to the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James is his clarity regarding the key factors contributing to greatness in an organization. As revealed in Chapter 1 of this ministry focus paper, the primary ministry area around St. James is composed of people who seek and expect excellence (“greatness”) in a church home. A discipleship pathway at St. James must offer excellence and choices, be relevant to the lives of people, and be effective in helping them become disciples of Jesus Christ.\footnote{Schaller, \textit{The Very Large Church}, 90.} The good-to-great concepts help in this developmental process. Though Collins does not offer much help in change management, nor does he offer any help with discipleship theology or praxis, he does offer excellent guiding concepts for developing greatness in all ministry systems, including discipleship. Staff and lay leadership, an honest assessment of the facts, a disciplined approach, and building momentum each will be essential to the development of an effective discipleship pathway at St. James.
United Methodist Discipleship Resources

As part of the United Methodist denomination, St. James must have a discipleship pathway that honors historic Wesleyan theology and fits within the parameters of current discipleship theology and praxis within the United Methodist Church. Though there is room within this tradition for structural diversity in ministry systems, there has always been an intentional (methodical) focus on the praxis of Christian discipleship. “The Wesleyan emphasis upon the Christian life—faith and love put into practice—has been the hallmark of those traditions now incorporated into the United Methodist Church.”

Any discipleship pathway must be methodical and efficacious in order to be truly Methodist.

As a result of the Methodist emphasis on systematic discipleship praxis, there are a plethora of historic and contemporary resources available within this tradition to guide the development of an effective model. A study of United Methodist theology and praxis must include the most recent edition of The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (Discipline) as a guiding document and must take into account the historic methodology of class meetings due to their continuing influence today. It must also include more recent work by Methodist leaders and scholars, because fulfilling the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world continues to be contextualized into every culture and era.

17 United Methodist Church, Discipline, 45.

18 Ibid., v. “The Discipline of the United Methodist Church, updated every four years, is the product of over 200 years of the General Conferences of the denominations that now form the United Methodist Church. The Discipline as the instrument for setting forth the laws, plan, polity, and process by which United Methodists govern themselves remains constant.”
This book is the primary organizational document for the United Methodist Church. It contains the official constitution, doctrine, and historical statements of the denomination, and it provides the legal structure for its organization and administration. As such, it contains everything a United Methodist congregation needs to know about parameters for ministry systems, including discipleship. There are some foundational beliefs and values that must be taken into account as well as an ecclesial governmental structure that must be honored. According to the Discipline, “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.”¹⁹ There is an acknowledgment and expectation that each local church will provide a pathway for individuals to follow in order to develop their faith in Jesus Christ and to support one another on the discipleship journey. Though each individual is ultimately responsible for his or her spiritual growth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, the local church has an essential role in the process. The Discipline provides critical insights into how Methodist Christians view the process of discipleship, both historically and today:

Christians experience growth and transition in their spiritual life just as in their physical and emotional lives. While this growth is always a work of grace, it does not occur uniformly. Spiritual growth in Christ is a dynamic process marked by awakening, birth, growth, and maturation. This process requires careful and intentional nurture for the disciple to reach perfection in the Christian life. There are stages of spiritual growth and transition: Christian beginnings, Christian birth, Christian growth, and Christian maturity. These require careful and intentional nurture for the disciple to come to maturity in the Christian life and to engage fully in the ministry of all Christians.²⁰

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¹⁹ United Methodist Church, Discipline, 87.
²⁰ Ibid., 92.
Methodist Christians view and have traditionally viewed Christian discipleship as a process or journey that requires intentional effort on the part of the disciple. Though the Holy Spirit plays an indispensable role in Christian discipleship, the individual must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this dynamic process. Since discipleship is a process, methods and systems have an important role to play.

Though the *Discipline* describes the United Methodist doctrinal heritage, history, and standards, and though it describes the theological task of the church and individual Christians, it is not a theological treatise. It is an organizational and administrative work. Therefore, it is limited in scope regarding the underlying theology of Christian discipleship. Its purpose is more organization and structure than theory and theology. However, since “the underlying energy of the Wesleyan theological heritage stems from an emphasis upon practical divinity, the implementation of genuine Christianity in the lives of believers,”²¹ it is a necessary resource in the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James.

*Covenant Discipleship* by David Lowes Watson

Covenant Discipleship groups are the modern United Methodist expression of John Wesley’s class meetings from the 1700s, through which disciples of Jesus Christ were systemically and intentionally formed. As Wesley acknowledged in his day, there are some Christians who deeply desire to live a profoundly transformed Christian life and are willing to be held accountable to one another in order to experience this

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²¹ United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 45.
transformation. Watson’s book *Covenant Discipleship* is the modern handbook for Christians seeking this kind of regular accountability in their Christian life. This book “is designed not only as an introduction to covenant discipleship groups, but also as a reference guide which can be of help wherever there are questions about the nature and purpose of a group, or of covenant discipleship in general.” Watson believes that the time is ripe for Wesleyan Christians to “re-discover and re-apply the open secret of our Methodist Heritage—methodical, faithful discipleship.” The key structure in the early history of the Methodist movement that provided for systematic and regular accountability for spiritual practices was the class meeting. Watson writes:

> There are United Methodists who have believed for some time—and are now even more convinced—that our heritage in Wesley’s early Methodist societies provides us with just such a model: the class meeting. Nor is it mere coincidence that informed colleagues from other denominations regularly point out to us that this is the genius of Methodism.

He devotes this entire book and two other corresponding resources to recovering and revitalizing the early Methodist class meeting in this new Covenant Discipleship movement.

The primary value of Watson’s text for developing an effective model of intentional discipleship is his clear and concise explication of the Methodist tradition’s methodical approach to Christian discipleship. By design, Wesley’s class meetings were simple, accessible, and functional. As a result, they were also effective at producing

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23 Ibid., xiv.

24 Ibid., xvi.

25 Ibid., 18.
disciples of Jesus Christ. The primary limitation of this resource is its singular focus on Christians who seek spiritual formation through relationships of accountability. Not every Christian is desirous of discipleship opportunities requiring a high amount of transparency. Watson perhaps would argue that they should be. Nonetheless, the reality is St. James has Christians at every maturity level, and even some mature Christians are hesitant to participate in such groups. Therefore, Watson’s text is primarily valued not as a model but for its excellent insights into historic Wesleyan theology and praxis concerning discipleship, informing the next chapter.

*Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase

One of the most influential books in American United Methodism over the past few years was written by Bishop Robert Schnase: *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Schnase was concerned to see so many United Methodist congregations struggling to make disciples of Jesus Christ, so he endeavored to research and write a resource to help clarify the disciple-making task for contemporary United Methodism. Since present church culture is highly influenced by Rick Warren’s five purposes,²⁶ Schnase examined the past and present of the Methodist tradition to devise a more Wesleyan approach to Warren’s five purposes. These five practices are radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. Schnase believes these five nouns and their accompanying adjectives—critically important for having a common language and understanding—effectively summarize the primary structure that God uses in each of his

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churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{27} Schnase believes that “by repeating and improving these practices, churches fulfill their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”\textsuperscript{28} In fidelity with United Methodist theology and praxis, Schnase wants to help the local church embrace its responsibility for making Christian discipleship possible, accessible, practical, and efficacious. Though these practices are individual, they are also communal. “The most visible way God knits people into community to fulfill the mission of Christ is through congregations.”\textsuperscript{29} As would be expected of one faithful to a “methodical” Christian tradition, Schnase is very concerned with results. He chose his terminology carefully and defined them clearly so churches could use his book to move “from abstract intentions to practical and personal directions for ministry.”\textsuperscript{30} Once the mission moves from abstract to practical, it can be then be demonstrably and measurably achieved.

Schnase’s work is a cornerstone for this ministry focus paper. The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, of which St. James is part, has embraced Schnase’s work as a model for local churches to once again become methodical about making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The conference offers workshops and seminars on these five practices, and statistical reports required from each local church have been revised to reflect Schnase’s categories and definitions. The leadership of St. James has embraced this model as a way to clarify the church’s

\textsuperscript{27} Schnase, \textit{Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations}, 7.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
mission and vision, and they have embraced the metrics as the primary way to measure success in the fulfillment of the vision. The key limitation to Schnase’s model is oversimplification. When one attempts to reduce the disciple-making process to its essential steps, there is the danger of oversimplification. Discipleship, though a process, resists oversimplification because every person is unique, and the role of the Holy Spirit cannot be removed from the process. In spite of this danger, Schnase’s model is the cornerstone of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James due to the church’s history, affiliation, and current direction.

NextChurch.Now: Creating New Faith Communities by Craig Kennet Miller

As a staff member of the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church, Miller offers an important perspective as well as holding a significant responsibility when it comes to Christian discipleship in the United Methodist tradition. Miller wrote this book to help the denomination create new “disciple-making faith communities” in order to fulfill the Great Commission. Miller believes that, by definition, a local church is a human organization containing, at a minimum, a discipleship system and a worshiping community. A group of Christians may participate in one or the other; however, in order for a group of people to be defined as a church, both systems must be present. There may be more than one church or faith community meeting in a single location or under one roof, but it is clear that Miller

31 Miller, NextChurch.Now, 4.
32 Miller, “Innovative Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition.”
equates a faith community with a church, and it must have, at minimum, a discipleship system and a worship service to qualify as a church.

His book *NextChurch.Now* is intended to offer guidelines and processes for new churches and existing churches to develop new faith communities. The primary contribution of this book for this ministry focus paper is “Chapter Seven: Shaping the Discipleship System.” Miller believes a systemic perspective is critical for churches to be faithful in their disciple-making task. He uses the language of organizations and systems, and he offers practical guidance in the creation of a system that helps people grow in their Christian faith. This may be a twenty-first-century way of thinking, but it is also a very Methodist way of thinking. Miller writes:

> Research in many different areas has revealed the interconnectedness of life. Rather than each of us doing his or her own thing, we know that our actions affect others. Systems thinking forces us to think of our work as a system in which relationships and tasks are interrelated and mutually dependent…. When the congregation pays attention to the whole system—to all the relationships and structures that make up the body of Christ in that place—they are able to address needs effectively as they arise.

Underlying all of this is his belief—a core aspect of Wesleyan theology—that salvation is a process, a way of life. It begins with God’s justifying grace but continues with God’s sanctifying grace. Though one is saved in a moment, the transformation occurs over a lifetime. The insights in Miller’s book do not fully integrate with Schnase’s five practices model, the primary model for developing an effective intentional discipleship pathway at St. James. His research is at least four years older than Schnase’s research,

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34 Ibid., 104.
35 Ibid., 103.
and it is not as comprehensive as Schnase’s work. However, Miller’s research in the area of Christian discipleship and its systemic perspective in particular make his work valuable in developing an effective discipleship pathway for St. James. Limited to a discipleship perspective, it integrates well with Schnase’s work and offers a useful theological context.

**Influential Trans-Denominational Discipleship Resources**

A discipleship pathway for a particular United Methodist congregation must not be developed in isolation from other Christian traditions. Though an intentional and methodical discipleship process has been a fundamental element of the United Methodist tradition, Christian discipleship has been an essential part of the universal Church. There are a variety of resources from a number of traditions, historical and contemporary, that can inform the development of an effective intentional discipleship pathway at St. James. The following four non-United Methodist resources offer vital contributions to the development of a discipleship pathway at St. James.

*Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

This small but substantial work from Bonhoeffer, a twentieth-century Christian martyr, offers a worthy reminder of the privilege Christians have of gathering together to live their Christian lives in community. “Not all Christians receive this blessing,” Bonhoeffer notes. He was in charge of an underground seminary in Nazi Germany when

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this book was written,\textsuperscript{37} making his words about the practice of Christian communal life seem more urgent and poignant. \textit{Life Together} is more a pastoral epistle than a scholarly work or theological treatise, though it contains elements of both. Bonhoeffer offers practical advice on how Christians should do life together in community, beginning with a definition and exploration of Christian community. Bonhoeffer does not offer a model for discipleship but places Christian community within the context of discipleship, describing the spiritual habits and practices necessary for authentic Christian community to develop.

One important caution Bonhoeffer offers for this ministry focus paper is that a Christian fellowship is healthy when it sees that it is not a movement itself, but that it is part of a movement. A particular church needs to see itself as part of the universal Church, not as an entity alone. One of the consequential characteristics of most people at St. James examined in Chapter 1 is their desire to live economically segregated, choosing to do life with people like themselves. As a result of their affluence, they can afford to live in restricted and gated communities, thus shutting themselves off from persons unlike themselves. Bonhoeffer writes about the danger of economic segregation to authentic Christian fellowship: “The exclusion of the weak and insignificant, the seemingly useless people, from a Christian community may actually mean the exclusion of Christ; in the poor brother Christ is knocking at the door.”\textsuperscript{38} The design of a discipleship pathway at St. James must take this warning into consideration.

\textsuperscript{37} Bonhoeffer, \textit{Life Together}, 10-11.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 38.
The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard

Willard has been one of the most influential thinkers and writers about Christian discipleship in evangelical churches over the past few decades. *The Divine Conspiracy* is the third in a trilogy of books he wrote about Christian discipleship. The purpose of this final volume in the trilogy is to “present discipleship to Jesus as the very heart of the gospel.” Willard is concerned that most Christian scholars and leaders do not teach people to do what Jesus said we should do, which is to make disciples. He offers this book in the hope to “provide an understanding of the gospel that will open the way for the people of Christ actually to do—do once again, for they have done it in the past—what their acknowledged Maestro said to do.”

Willard’s primary thrust is to convince Christians that salvation is for life today as well as for life in eternity. When Jesus says people should follow him, they must understand that they can actually follow him. It is possible. Salvation is holistic; it is not simply insurance against spending eternity in hell. “Does Jesus only enable me to ‘make the cut’ when I die? Or to know what to protest, or how to vote or agitate and organize? It is good to know that when I die all will be well, but is there any good news for life?” This book is designed to convince people that there is good news for life today. The Kingdom of God is now here, and the way into God’s Kingdom is through Jesus Christ.

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40 Ibid., xiv.

41 Ibid., xv.

42 Ibid., 12.
“Jesus came among us to show and teach the life for which we were made.”\textsuperscript{43} This is the essence of Christian discipleship: “Learning from Jesus how to lead \textit{my} life, my \textit{whole} life, my real life.”\textsuperscript{44}

The significance of Willard’s argument cannot be overstated. When it comes to developing an effective model of intentional discipleship at St. James, the persons in the congregation must understand that a life of discipleship is possible. A person can become an apprentice to Jesus Christ and enjoy life in the Kingdom of God today if that person is willing to change ideas and practices of discipleship. When Jesus says, “Follow me,” we must understand that we can actually follow him in how we live our lives today. An effective model of intentional discipleship at St. James must make clear that non-discipleship does not have to be the course of one’s life. Real discipleship is possible when one chooses to walk that path. “The division of professing Christians into those for whom it is a matter of whole-life devotion to God and those who maintain a consumer, or client, relationship to the church”\textsuperscript{45} does not have to remain.

\textit{The Purpose Driven Church} by Rick Warren

Warren, the founding pastor of Saddleback Church, initially promoted the Purpose-Driven model in his book, \textit{The Purpose Driven Church}, and later augmented it with \textit{The Purpose Driven Life},\textsuperscript{46} which became the best selling hardback book in

\textsuperscript{43} Willard, \textit{The Divine Conspiracy}, 27.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 283.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 301.

\textsuperscript{46} Rick Warren, \textit{The Purpose Driven Life} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).
American history—indicative of the level of influence his Purpose Driven model has achieved. Warren’s model asserts that a real disciple of Jesus Christ offers worship to God, enjoys fellowship with God’s family, learns discipleship in becoming like Christ, serves God by being in ministry to others, and lives out evangelism along the way. These are known as the five purposes. Warren derives these five purposes from the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The Great Commandment is, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mt 22:37-39). The Great Commission is, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). Since his operating definition of Christian discipleship is worshiping, fellowshipping, discipling, serving, and evangelizing, Warren believes churches should simplify their systems to reflect this pattern, enabling the efficient creation of disciples who practice these behaviors.

The Purpose Driven model, similar to Schnase’s model, can be used individually and communally. It is a paradigm for churches as well as individual Christians. The model is clear and simple, which is essential for marketability and accessibility. It also has metrics: Members who commit to the Maturity Covenant tithe their income. Members who commit to the Ministry Covenant serve in ministry. Members who commit

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48 Ibid.
to the Missions Covenant share their faith. Therefore, one of the strengths of Warren’s model is these commitments provide metrics to determine if the model is successful.

The primary limitation of Warren’s model is the linear design of discipleship. The model assumes that disciples first will commit to worship attendance, second to the practice of spiritual habits, third to serving in ministry, and fourth to sharing their faith with others. In reality, spiritual growth does not always follow this linear pathway. Some people commit to service before committing to the practice of spiritual disciplines. Some new Christians will share their faith enthusiastically before making intentional commitments to spiritual disciplines or Christian service. However, Warren’s model for Christian discipleship does demonstrate the value of intentional design and strategic systems development for a church.

*Sticky Church* by Larry Osborne

Osborne offers a different perspective on discipleship pathways from Warren’s five purposes model and Schnase’s five practices model. The thesis of *Sticky Church* is that churches need to become “more sticky”; that is, churches need to focus as much on keeping the people they have as much on reaching new people for Jesus Christ. He believes this is “what Jesus called us to do. He [Jesus] didn’t tell us to go into all the world and sign people up. He didn’t tell us to draw big crowds. He told us to make disciples.” Osborne’s book proposes a model for churches to make disciples by offering a system of small groups based on the sermons in weekly worship services. He believes

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this is the key to keeping people engaged in the life of the church so they can become disciples of Jesus Christ. His church views these sermon-based small groups as the most important part of their communal life, even more important than the weekend worship services.\footnote{Osborne, \textit{Sticky Church}, 22.}

One of Osborne’s best insights related to the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James is that spiritual growth is usually not a linear process. Humans typically learn and grow on an as-needed basis: “Most spiritual growth doesn’t come as a result of a training program or a set curriculum. It comes as a result of life putting us into what I like to call a need-to-know or need-to-grow situation.”\footnote{Ibid., 42.} He believes that a sermon-based small group system takes this reality into account much better than the typical replicating small group model of discipleship. He believes his system is better able to “velcro people to the two things they will need most when faced with a need-to-know or need-to-grow situation: the Bible and other Christians.”\footnote{Ibid., 43.}

Osborne has excellent insights into the nature of spiritual growth as it relates to church discipleship pathways. His church’s pathway offers easy entry and exit points for persons who are reticent to commit to anything long-term. It offers a way of relational development appealing to persons in a highly mobile society, as well as taking into consideration the historical exposure most Americans have had to Christianity and its institutions.\footnote{Ibid., 143-146.} One key factor Osborne fails to consider, however, is how the American
educational system influences church discipleship systems. The American educational paradigm is linear, progressive, and cumulative by design. It presupposes that knowledge is gained systematically, not haphazardly. Each level of education or base of knowledge builds upon the previous knowledge level. There are exceptions to this, the Montessori model being a prominent example. However, this paradigm of intellectual growth is deeply entrenched in American culture. Consequently, most Americans bring their public education experiences and expectations into the Church. A model for intentional discipleship cannot dismiss this reality if it is to be effective.

This chapter has considered a selection of important and relevant literature related to Christian discipleship. The resources evaluated contribute significantly to the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James by offering important systemic insights and relevant Methodist and non-Methodist perspectives on Christian discipleship. Since St. James is part of the United Methodist denomination, its particular theological context must be examined in detail to determine how an effective model for intentional discipleship can be developed that honors Methodism’s historic and contemporary distinctives.
CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FOR DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAYS

The mission of St. James United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This is the church’s mission because it is the mission of the United Methodist Church.¹ Though the wording of this mission statement may be unique to the United Methodist denomination, this is the fundamental mission God gave to his Church (Mt 28:19-20). The general idea behind the formal mission statement is shared by Christians of all denominations and traditions. United Methodists believe they “share a common heritage with Christians of every age and nation. This heritage is grounded in the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which is the source and measure of all valid Christian teaching.”² This ministry focus paper deals with one aspect of the mission: developing an effective model for intentional discipleship that strategically helps individuals to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the

¹ United Methodist Church, Discipline, 87.
² Ibid., 41-42.
transformation of the world. This focus is perhaps unsurprising considering the legacy of Wesley, the spiritual father of United Methodism. Denominations and churches inheriting the Wesleyan legacy have a well-earned reputation for methodical approaches to Christian discipleship, or at least have the legacy of methodical approaches. Words such as strategic, intentional, or effective are common in Wesleyan theological reflection since they reflect Wesley’s approach to Christian discipleship.

Any model of intentional discipleship must take into account the *Sitz im Leben* of St. James. The church is firmly rooted in United Methodist theology and praxis, both by heritage and leadership. Unlike a growing number of attractional churches within United Methodism, St. James embraces United Methodist as part of its label and identity. A significant number of people in the primary ministry area prefer to worship in a church attached to a denomination for the stability and rootedness it provides. Consequently, due to heritage and contemporary identity, the distinctive characteristics of United Methodism and the tradition’s strengths and weaknesses must be analyzed in order to develop a model of intentional discipleship that honors Wesleyan heritage and that is effective.

**United Methodist Distinctives**

The United Methodist Church considers itself to be just one manifestation of the universal Church, acknowledging with all other Christian traditions the same basic Christian affirmations. United Methodists believe in the Triune God, the “mystery of salvation in and through Jesus Christ,” and that “God’s redemptive love is realized in

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3 The five aspects of the mission of St. James United Methodist Church are delineated and defined in chapter six. Intentional Faith Development, or intentional discipleship, is the third of the five.
human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in personal experience and in the community of believers.”¹⁴ In addition, they share with other Christians an understanding of God’s reign as a present and future reality and recognize the Bible as the primary source and authority for matters of faith. However, as with every Christian tradition, there are unique aspects of United Methodism, both in theology and praxis. Volumes have been written about the foundation, development, and contemporary manifestations of these distinctive characteristics. Four characteristics of United Methodism stand out as the most relevant to this ministry focus paper, beginning with its birth from experience.

**Birthed from Experience Instead of Doctrinal Disputes**

Among the major Protestant reformers, there were two basic approaches to doing theological reflection. The first approach began by considering God’s action with regard to humanity. The second approach began by considering humanity’s experience of God. One approach was not necessarily better than the other. They were both valuable and valid, but they were clearly different approaches that led to different emphases. The two most influential reformers associated with the first approach were Martin Luther and John Calvin. The most influential reformer associated with the second approach was Wesley. As a result, every Wesleyan doctrine is centered in human experience.⁵ This can be seen in the primary doctrinal source forms from each tradition: Calvin had his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; Wesley had his sermons, liturgies, and commentaries on Scripture.

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¹⁴ United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 43-44.

which all his preachers were expected to read and know.⁶ Apart from the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith, Wesley’s doctrinal sources were offered in experiential forms, not propositional forms. The form is significant. Wesley was concerned with practical theology. He wanted truth to be experienced in a believer’s life, not simply held in a framework of intellectual beliefs.⁷ This is not to say that experience was the primary source of theological reflection. The primary source for theological reflection for Wesley and in United Methodism is the Bible: “United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine.”⁸ Experience is a means of confirming the truth of doctrine, not of establishing doctrine. United Methodists examine “experience, both individual and corporate, for confirmations of the realities of God’s grace attested in Scripture.”⁹

As a result of this approach to theological reflection, the United Methodist Church was birthed more from experience than doctrinal disputes, unlike many other Protestant denominations. As the Discipline states:

The underlying energy of the Wesleyan theological heritage stems from an emphasis on practical divinity, the implementation of genuine Christianity in the lives of believers. Methodism did not arise in response to a specific doctrinal dispute, though there was no lack of theological controversy. Early Methodists

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⁶ United Methodist Church, Discipline, 59-74. In addition to the Bible, the texts used as primary sources for United Methodist theology are (1) The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, (2) The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, (3) The Standard Sermons of Wesley, (4) Wesley’s Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, and (5) the General Rules of the Methodist Church.

⁷ Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”

⁸ United Methodist Church, Discipline, 78.

⁹ Ibid., 81.
claimed to preach the scriptural doctrines of the Church of England as contained in the Articles of Religion, the Homilies, and the 

*Book of Common Prayer.*

Countering or reformulating Christian doctrine was not the primary emphasis of the early Methodists. They wanted people to experience the Scripture way of salvation (*ordo salutis*). They wanted people who had experienced God’s prevenient grace to accept God’s justifying grace and live synergistically with God’s sanctifying grace. It is fair to say that Wesleyan theology, and therefore United Methodist theology, is as much a theology of experience as it is a theology of the Word. Theology is crucial, but it is a means to an end, not an end itself. It is a means for transformed living.\(^{11}\)

**Connectional and Episcopal Polity with Some Congregational Polity Influence**

Wesley, an Anglican priest, never intended to create a new denomination. As with many Christian denominations, United Methodism began as a revival movement within an existing Christian tradition. To the end of his life, Wesley resisted separating the Methodist societies from the Church of England. He viewed it as an unnecessary and undesirable schism.\(^{12}\) The creation of a separate Methodist Episcopal Church in the fledgling United States of America in 1784 was more a missional decision based on political considerations rather than a theological decision.\(^{13}\) Therefore, due to its lineage, the Methodist Episcopal Church, now called the United Methodist Church, retains a form of church governance similar to the Church of England. This form of church governance

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\(^{10}\) United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 45.

\(^{11}\) Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”


\(^{13}\) Craig Kennet Miller, *7 Myths of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 140-141.
is connectional. Local churches are not independent entities loosely affiliated with a denomination. In the United Methodist Church, each local church is constitutionally and legally part of an Annual Conference of churches. Each is obligated to follow the *Discipline* as “the instrument for setting forth the laws, plan, polity, and process by which United Methodists govern themselves.” They are structurally connected to one another. United Methodists believe “connection ties bind us together in faith and service in our global witness, enabling faith to become active in love and intensifying our desire for peace and justice in the world.”

The United Methodist Church polity is also episcopal, with bishops elected and appointed to serve as its primary administrative leaders and with district superintendents appointed to assist the bishops in providing administrative oversight for the Annual Conferences. The episcopacy is so integral to the historical identity as United Methodists that its constitution has a restrictive rule preventing any alteration to it. While United Methodist bishops do not have the same level of spiritual and administrative authority as Roman Catholic or Anglican bishops have, their spiritual and administrative authority is much stronger than most other Protestant denominational leaders.

Though the United Methodist Church is connectional and episcopal, it has not been able to avoid the strong cultural influence of independent churches during the last century. In 1983, church historian Martin Marty wrote an article in *Christianity Today*

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14 United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, v.

15 Ibid., 48.

16 “The General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away with episcopacy or destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency.” United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 27.
identifying what he believed was one of the most dramatic shifts of power style in the history of the Christian Church. He coined a term for this shift: *baptistification*. According to Marty, *baptistification* arose in response to the existing catholicization of the Western Christian world. While the Roman Catholic and mainline traditions experienced declining influence during the twentieth century, Baptist and other independent, congregational traditions experienced increasing influence.\(^{17}\) Though Marty deals primarily with issues of Christian initiation and identification, the *baptistification* of Western Christian churches also includes ecclesiology and polity. The United Methodist Church is dealing with increasing numbers of people who resist episcopal authority and connectional structures. Whether the source is theological or political, the results are the same: They are advocating for independence and local control for each church. They are becoming less supportive and amenable to the denominational structures, priorities, and leadership.

**The Primacy of God’s Grace**

The United Methodist Church shares with all Christians the defining beliefs of faith, including God’s grace. Wesley, however, combined grace, justification, assurance, and sanctification in a profound and practical soteriological approach that created a distinctive emphasis for “living the full Christian life,”\(^{18}\) as would be expected of a man whose theological reflection started with human experience. The *Discipline* encapsulates this succinctly:


\(^{18}\) United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 45.
Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life. By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit. While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as “prevenient grace,” continues in “justifying grace,” and is brought to fruition in “sanctifying grace.” … Despite our brokenness, we remain creatures brought into being by a just and merciful God. The restoration of God’s image in our lives requires divine grace to renew our fallen nature.\textsuperscript{19}

It is upon the framework of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace that United Methodist sees the primacy of God’s grace in all and through all. It begins with prevenient grace, the grace which draws an unrepentant sinner towards God. It continues with justifying grace, the grace of God that makes a new relationship with God possible when the person finally accepts God’s pardoning love. This is the point of conversion, though conversion may be a sudden and dramatic moment or a gradual and cumulative process. God’s grace also assures people that they belong to God. United Methodists believe assurance of a one’s present salvation is possible and expected. God’s grace then continues in sanctifying grace, which nurtures growth, transforming a person into the likeness of Christ. United Methodists acknowledge that, in reality, God’s grace is undivided. These divisions exist in theory only, for the sake of understanding.

In order to fully understand the United Methodist concept of God’s grace, two important clarifying points must be made. First, United Methodists believe God’s grace is “neither warranted by our efforts nor limited by our frailties.”\textsuperscript{20} Many Calvinists in Wesley’s day (and today) falsely accused Wesley of Pelagianism. Wesley was not a Pelagian. He taught a synergistic concept of salvation: human will cooperates with God’s grace in salvation. Persons must decide to accept or not accept the free gift of salvation.

\textsuperscript{19} United Methodist Church, \textit{Discipline}, 45-46.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 47.
However, Wesley also argued that the ability of humans to cooperate with God’s grace was enabled by God’s grace, thus in his mind staying within the Protestant dogma of *sola fide*. Second, United Methodists believe God’s grace is resistible. It is the nature of God’s grace to always give a person the freedom to resist God’s grace, whether the grace of drawing a person nearer to God or the grace that works to transform the person into the likeness of Christ. Though not his primary intent, this facet of Wesley’s teaching on grace ran counter to the Calvinist precept of irresistible grace. This contributed to the false charges of Pelagianism levied against Wesley. While Wesley and today’s United Methodists are not Pelagians, they do believe God’s grace is resistible, which means that “human beings do have a part to play in their own salvation”—though not in any way earning it.  

The Interdependent Relationship Between Faith and Good Works

United Methodists believe in the primacy of God’s grace. United Methodists also believe that if a “relationship with God is to be sustained, then it must be worked out in the world through an obedient discipleship.” God did everything needed for conversion. All we can do is accept or reject it. Faith is the only essential response, and even the capacity to have faith is enabled by God’s grace. However, when it comes to discipleship, there are things a person must do. It happens in cooperation with God’s Spirit, but United Methodists clearly believe “salvation evidences itself in good works.” There is a

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21 Watson, *Covenant Discipleship*, 34.

22 Ibid.

23 United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 47.
discipleship pathway for every Christian, and each Christian must continue walking on that pathway to work out his or her salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:13).

United Methodists “see God’s grace and human activity working together in the relationship of faith and good works. God’s grace calls forth human response and discipline.” This is why Methodist Christians have insisted that salvation is both personal and social. If one is truly saved, there is evidence of it in how one lives one’s life. Authentic salvation manifests itself in personal and social holiness, personal spiritual growth and service to the world.24 Watson writes: “When Wesley declared obedient discipleship to be necessary for salvation, it was not to earn salvation, but to sustain it. Good works are not the precondition of salvation, but the obligation and the privilege of those who have received salvation—if, that is, they wish to keep it.”25

This Wesleyan view of the relationship between faith and good works was controversial in Wesley’s day and it remains controversial today, particularly to two other influential Protestant traditions: Lutheranism and Calvinism. Watson continues:

It was this insistence on the necessity of good works which so many of Wesley’s evangelical critics found objectionable. Instead of regarding Christian service as an outpouring of grace in the lives of faithful disciples, a consequence of their commitment to Christ, Wesley put the issue quite the other way around. Good works must be performed in order to maintain faithful discipleship—otherwise Christian disciples are by definition repudiating their new relationship with God, and breaking the covenant of their salvation.26

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24 United Methodist Church, **Discipline**, 47.

25 Watson, **Covenant Discipleship**, 36.

26 Ibid.
While controversial among the larger Protestant traditions, this understanding of the relationship between faith and good works is essential to United Methodist theology and doctrine.

Though there are other distinctive characteristics of United Methodist theology and praxis, these four are the most essential for developing an effective pathway for intentional discipleship at St. James. A discipleship pathway must account for the experiential nature of United Methodist theological reflection. It must align with the denomination’s connectional and episcopal polity. It must take into account the role of God’s grace throughout the ordo salutis. Finally, it must honor core Wesleyan teaching:

Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice, and renewal in the life of the world. … There is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan tradition not only promote personal growth; they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world.27

**Strengths of United Methodist Theology and Associated Praxis**

The strengths of United Methodist theology and praxis are its distinctives. A method of theological reflection that begins with human experience, a history and polity that values strategic systems, a view of God’s grace that creates a distinctive emphasis for living the full Christian life, and a strong belief that “faith without deeds is dead” (Jas 2:26) exemplify Methodism’s strengths. At its heart, Methodist theology is a pragmatic theology. It is lived and practiced, not merely reflected upon. Wesley gave a necessary corrective to the sola scriptura and sola fide of Luther, which can lead to antinomianism. Wesley rightfully reclaimed the role of personal and social holiness in the ordo salutis.

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Sanctification, the practical, day-to-day reality of growing in the Christian faith, was brought back into the forefront and remains in the forefront of contemporary United Methodist theology. This section will explore three key strengths of United Methodist theology and praxis as they related to discipleship pathways: a pragmatic and systematic approach to discipleship, the cooperative agency of divine grace and human action for spiritual growth, and an understanding of soteriology that includes conversion and discipleship.

Pragmatic and Systematic Approach to Discipleship

The United Methodist approach to Christian discipleship has been pragmatic and systematic since the time of Wesley. This was part of his genius: He created forms and structures such as class meetings and societies in which followers of Christ methodically held each other accountable for their spiritual growth. His system gave rise to the words methodical and Methodist to describe His followers. Wesley’s forms and structures effectively produced disciples of Jesus Christ who believed that holiness was of the heart and life. As Watson wrote in his book, *Covenant Discipleship*, the Methodist way of discipleship appears to be nothing more than common sense:

> The reasoning of the early Methodists is quite easy to follow. If the call of Christ to discipleship does make requirements of us; if these requirements are clearly laid out in the teachings of Jesus; if they can be met only by availing ourselves of God’s grace—something which is clear to any Christian who has tried to meet them in his or her own strength alone; and if the church has found across the centuries that there are certain reliable channels for this grace; then good sense must surely dictate that Christians use these means of grace in the fullest possible way in order to fulfill their obligations to Jesus Christ.  

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Leaders of other denominations regularly point out to United Methodists that the class meeting, where disciples held one another accountable for practicing these means of grace on a regular basis, was Wesley’s genius. Since Wesley was pragmatic and systematic, his forms and structures enabling discipleship were pragmatic and systematic, and they worked. When Christians place themselves in community to learn and practice the Christian faith with others and to hold each other accountable in holy living, they grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Wesley knew, and many United Methodist leaders know today, that spiritual growth does not happen automatically or effortlessly. The call of discipleship requires relationships within a Christian community. “The practices of faith are too demanding without support from others. Other Christians help us pray, read Scripture, exercise love and forgiveness, and explore and respond to the will of God for our lives.”

Though many United Methodists have lost touch with their theological heritage of a pragmatic and systematic approach to Christian discipleship, the legacy remains. Some United Methodists continue to be fully engaged in such discipleship practices. They know that “the class meeting, by Wesley’s design, was the main unit of Methodism; it was the work horse of the Methodist structure. Preaching and teaching were vital for describing the vision, but it was the class meeting that carried the Methodist there.” When persons participate in pragmatic discipleship systems, their personal lives are transformed. When they engage the world around them, it is transformed. Thus the first

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29 Watson, *Covenant Discipleship*, 18


and second parts of the mission statement are fulfilled: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Cooperative Agency of Divine Grace and Human Action for Spiritual Growth

Wesley never taught salvation by works. He taught a more synergistic concept of salvation: human will cooperating with God’s grace in salvation, though God is the primary agent. This is seen most clearly in the part of Wesley’s taxonomy of grace called sanctifying grace. God’s sanctifying grace is God working within a person so the person can work. “The grace of God … creates the ability to perform what is required.”32 It is not works righteousness because God is the principal agent, not the believer. However, the believer still has something to do: a mission to fulfill, spiritual disciplines to practice. United Methodists “see God’s grace and human activity working together in the relationship of faith and good works. God’s grace calls forth human response and discipline. … We insist that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world.”33 The Christian way of life is made possible by God’s grace, yet it is resistible. Men and women have choices to make along the way. Empowered by the grace of God, they can choose to do no harm, avoid evil of every kind, do good as often as they have an opportunity, and to participate in all the ordinary means of grace. In this way, their faith grows.34

Understanding the cooperative agency of divine grace and human action for spiritual growth can guard against the ever-present dangers of hopelessness and

33 United Methodist Church, Discipline, 47.
34 Watson, Covenant Discipleship, 45-46.
wickedness. First, spiritual growth is not solely dependent upon human efforts. If this were true, humans should be pitied, because apart from God, men and women are sinners. They are broken and wounded, selfish and weak, incapable of any action that could truly be called good. It would be a hopeless, nihilistic state of existence. Second, spiritual growth is not solely dependent upon God. Men and women were not created to be puppets on the strings of a master puppeteer. If this were true, if it all depended upon God and no human effort was necessary, then there would be no basis for altruism or moral behavior in general. Understanding the cooperative agency of divine grace and human action can guard against these two dangerous errors. There is a synergy between God’s grace and human action. Though the grace of God is free and unmerited, the fact that God has first acted makes human response possible and necessary.35

Conversion and Discipleship Integral to Soteriology

In United Methodist theology, conversion and discipleship are integral to soteriology. A person cannot have one without the other, for a truly converted person is a disciple, and a disciple is one who has been converted to Christ. To be saved means that an individual has experienced and is experiencing God’s prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. United Methodist Christians believe the following:

God reaches out to the repentant believer in justifying grace with accepting and pardoning love. Wesleyan theology stresses that a decisive change in the human heart can and does occur under the prompting of grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In justification we are, through faith, forgiven our sin and restored to God’s favor. … This process of justification and new birth is often referred to as conversion. … [However,] We hold that the wonder of God’s acceptance and pardon does not end God’s saving work, which continues to nurture our growth in

35 Collins, Wesley on Salvation, 89.
Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to increase in the knowledge and love of God and in love for our neighbor.\textsuperscript{36} Conversion is made possible by God’s justifying grace, and discipleship is made possible by God’s sanctifying grace. Both included in what it means to be saved. United Methodists are saved from sin and saved for a life of Christian discipleship.

The reason this aspect of soteriology became integral to United Methodist theology is because early Methodists wanted to disassociate themselves from formalism, antinomianism, and predestination, which were each viewed as “anti-heart” religion or unsupportive of holy living.\textsuperscript{37} A concept of salvation that includes conversion and discipleship guards against these theological tendencies. If God’s grace is irresistible and he has already chosen whom he will choose for salvation, then it does not really matter what one does in the world today. If determinism is human reality, then no satisfactory theological basis exists for bearing spiritual fruit or doing good deeds. For John Wesley and for most United Methodists today, formalism, antinomianism, and predestination did not provide sufficient justification for Christian discipleship empowered by God’s sanctifying grace. Methodists believe what is happening in a person’s heart is inextricably related to what is happening in a person’s world. In other words, how we are doing is connected to what we are doing. This connection goes both ways. What we do with our hands influences what goes on in our hearts, and what happens in our hearts influences what we do with our hands. Spiritual growth, enabled by God’s grace, is both

\textsuperscript{36} United Methodist Church, \textit{Discipline}, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{37} Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”
personal and social. Therefore, conversion is necessary but not sufficient for true salvation in United Methodist theology and praxis. Salvation includes discipleship.

**Weaknesses of United Methodist Theology and Associated Praxis**

The strengths of United Methodist theology and praxis are also its weaknesses. Though beginning with human experience is not the usual approach to theology, it is theology. Methodists are theological people. The approach is different, but it is legitimate.\(^{38}\) However, over two hundred years of history have shown that this approach can lead to fuzzy theology, an emphasis on right behavior over right beliefs, and an overemphasis on human effort in Christian discipleship. This section will explore these three key weaknesses of United Methodist theology and praxis.

**Imprecise Parameters for Consensual Christian Doctrine**

One of the key weaknesses of United Methodist theology is that it has a propensity toward theological sloppiness because its method of theological reflection begins with the human experience of God rather than God’s action with regard to humanity. There can be, at times, a lack of concern for theological precision and, subsequently, doctrinal precision. Taken to its extreme, the driving question in United Methodist theological reflection can become “Does it work?” instead of “Is it true?” Since the early 1900s fundamentalist controversies, the United Methodist Church has been susceptible to various winds of doctrine, with theology tending to reflect whatever was in vogue, whether liberation theology, feminist theology, or more recently,
According to Stephen Seamands, for many decades it has been difficult for the denomination to set doctrinal boundaries. “Think about a farmer who refuses to put a fence around the field. Anything can eat the crops. The farmer can go over and farm the neighbor’s property.”\(^{40}\) This is an accurate description of the struggles of modern United Methodism. Some within the denomination view the Wesleyan quadrilateral—Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason as sources and criteria for United Methodist theological reflection—as equilateral. Wesley never understood these four sources as equal. Neither does the United Methodist Church officially view them as equilateral. “United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine.”\(^{41}\) However, in practice, Scripture is often treated as equal to experience by some United Methodists, even subordinate to experience in some circles.

For example, the *Discipline* sets clear boundaries for permissible Christian sexual behavior\(^{42}\) and describes homosexual behavior as “incompatible with Christian teaching.”\(^{43}\) However, the denomination continues to wrestle with homosexuality and gay marriage in its publications and conferences. Though the church officially has spoken consistently and clearly regarding homosexuality and gay marriage, special interest groups continue to work toward changing official church doctrine and practice, arguing

\(^{39}\) Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 78.

\(^{42}\) “Sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.” United Methodist Church, *Discipline*, 103.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
not from Scripture but from human experience. Moreover, recent Judicial Council decisions regarding homosexuality and gay marriage have been made on the basis of existing church canon and not theology, doctrine, or Scripture. As a result of a method of theological reflection that begins with human experience of God instead of God’s actions in regard to humanity, there is a proclivity to put experience on a par with Scripture as source and criteria for theology and doctrine. Without the shared value of Scripture as the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine, doctrine can get imprecise. Ironically, for a denomination that values orthopraxy as much as orthodoxy, they often fail to see the link between the two. Precise orthopraxy requires precise orthodoxy, which leads to a second weakness of United Methodist theology and praxis.

Emphasizing Orthopraxy over Orthodoxy

The approach to theological reflection as practiced by United Methodists sometimes fails to see the connection between doctrine and life. There is a connection between the Apostle’s Creed and the United Methodist social creed. Human actions flow from God’s actions. In the contemporary United Methodist Church, however, the connection between doctrine and life is often unclear and undefined. As a result of this lack of clarity and the weakness described in the previous section, United Methodists have a propensity to emphasize orthopraxy over orthodoxy. As described earlier, there

44 The Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church is comparable to the Supreme Court of the United States, interpreting church law and doctrine.

45 United Methodist Church, Discipline, 97-131. The United Methodist social creed is officially called the Social Principles. Though it is not legally binding upon United Methodist members, it is the official doctrine of the denomination regarding social justice issues.

46 Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”
were two basic approaches to doing theological reflection among major Protestant reformers. The first approach began by considering God’s action with regard to man. The second approach began by considering humanity’s experience of God. One approach was not necessarily better than the other. They were both valuable and valid. Each sends to the other. Experience sends to the Word, and vice versa. If done correctly, it works. The United Methodist tendency, however, has been to let experience drive their theological reflection. Due to this experiential approach and a lack of clarity on the established standards of doctrines in the *Discipline*, there is disagreement as to what United Methodist doctrinal standards really are. Without consensual doctrinal standards, there is much room for interpretive license. With imprecise standards for orthodoxy in the United Methodist Church, the focus tends to turn to orthopraxy instead.

One manifestation of this weakness can be seen in United Methodist contributions in the academy. Not many Methodist theologians are known outside their denominational tradition. Over the past century, United Methodism has not been known for producing intellectual giants in systematic theology such as Adolf von Harnack, Rudolf Bultmann, or Karl Barth. Wesley was rightly concerned with pragmatic theology, but Reformed theology has the reputation of intellectual theology. There are exceptions. Thomas Oden and Ben Witherington are prominent Wesleyan theologians. Regardless of the exceptions, United Methodist emphasis of orthopraxy over orthodoxy and failing to value their connectedness has manifested itself in many ways, and the denomination is weaker as a result.

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47 Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”

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Valuing Human Agency over Divine Grace for Spiritual Growth

At its heart, Methodist theology is a pragmatic theology, which means it also leans towards anthropocentrism. There is a tendency to idolize human experience. In theory, the United Methodist understanding of spiritual growth as requiring the cooperative agency of divine grace and human action is a strength. In practice, however, United Methodists are prone to value human agency over divine grace for spiritual growth. Pragmatic theology too easily leads to an anthropocentric theology. Therefore, Reformed tradition has a valid critique. Contemporary United Methodist theology is not antinomian, but it can easily slide into works righteousness.

The synergy between God’s action and human action must be clearly and repeatedly explicated lest one fall into the easy errors of cheap grace or works righteousness. For example, Watson writes:

We [humans] do have two things to do—one relatively easy, the other more difficult. First, we must decide to accept our gift of salvation, our new relationship with God in Christ. … While this is a radical step for us to take, our part in it proves to be quite minimal. … By contrast, the difficult part of our discipleship begins once we are back home—for coming home means that we are once again under the rules of the house. … Being back home not only means that we belong—it also means that we have to behave as if we belong. … Accepting this new relationship with Christ means that we must now fulfill some obligations in order to sustain it. That is the part of our salvation that requires a lifetime of work—and our work starts right away.

Without a clear Wesleyan understanding of grace, it is easy to see how teachings like this would be considered blatantly works righteousness. The pathway for clearly explicating this synergistic relationship is Wesley’s doctrine of grace. United Methodism’s emphasis

48 Seamands, “United Methodist Theology.”

49 Watson, Covenant Discipleship, 35-36.
on God’s resistible grace plus its strong emphasis on the necessity of good works as evidence of salvation would naturally lead to a view of righteousness by human agency, if not for an accompanying understanding of Wesley’s doctrine of grace.

This doctrine is essential to holding Wesley’s sermons and teachings together. Many Protestants today, United Methodists included, have a notion of grace more Lutheran or Calvinist than Methodist, more continental than Anglican. While all agree that the grace of God is unearned, Wesley believed that the grace of God creates the ability to perform what is required, which must mean God expects us to perform what is required. Again, God is the primary agent, but humans are expected to cooperate with God’s agency. Wesley’s full doctrine of grace is coherent and logical; however, with the previously mentioned baptistification of American society and the resurgence of Reformed theology in Christian circles, many United Methodists do not know Wesley’s complete doctrine of grace, and thus are prone to value human agency over divine grace for spiritual growth.

The distinctives, strengths, and weaknesses of United Methodist theology and associated praxis inform the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James in the following ways. First, they affirm the necessity of strategic ministry systems development within a local congregation. Second, the vision casting for participation in this intentional discipleship pathway must include clear teaching about Wesley’s doctrine of grace and how God’s action and human action synergistically work together for spiritual growth in the life of a believer. Third, any

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intentional system of discipleship must consider the roles of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in spiritual formation.

Over the past thirty years, the Purpose Driven model from Saddleback Church has gained a substantial following within the evangelical Christian culture in the United States. Though Saddleback Church is a Southern Baptist church and Warren is a Southern Baptist pastor, the Purpose Driven ministry paradigm has crossed denominational boundaries, including into United Methodism. In fact, it can be argued that The Methodist Way model proposed by Schnase is a United Methodist response to the Purpose Driven model due to its considerable similarities to it. Therefore, a consideration of the theological context of St. James as it relates to discipleship pathways must consider the highly influential Purpose Driven ministry paradigm.

**The Purpose-Driven Paradigm as an Alternative or Instructional Model**

Under the leadership of Warren, Saddleback Church has become one of the largest churches in the United States with a corresponding influence in the evangelical church culture. The Purpose Driven model has dominated church thinking about discipleship pathways due to its clear, cogent, and comprehensive system for making disciples of Jesus Christ. This model advocates that churches structure their ministries in such a way that five basic human needs are met: a purpose to live for, a power to live on, people to live with, principles to live by, and a profession to live out. Warren derives his operating definition of Christian discipleship from two key Scriptures: Matthew

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51 Schnase’s The Methodist Way ministry paradigm will be examined in Chapter 5.

22:37-39 and Matthew 28:19-20. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Mt 22:37a) describes worship. “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 39b) illustrates ministry or service. “Go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19a) commands evangelism. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19b) symbolizes fellowship. “Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20a) illustrates discipleship. These five words—worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship—are known as the five purposes. Warren believes these purposes are both corporate and individual, thus the two different audiences for his two Purpose Driven books.

There is another important theological assumption underlying his work that, though less explicit than the two passages from Matthew, are just as integral to the Purpose Driven paradigm. Warren believes there is a necessary synergy between God’s Spirit and human effort in order for churches to develop ministry systems and for individual Christians to grow in their faith—a very Wesleyan way of depicting Christian discipleship. Warren believes that churches should develop their ministry systems to reflect the discipleship pattern of worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, and discipleship, enabling the efficient creation of disciples who practice these behaviors. He writes:

We must always be careful to avoid two extreme positions in ministry. One extreme is to assume all responsibility for the growth of the church. The other extreme is to abdicate all responsibility for it. … First, we must avoid the error that all it takes to grow a church is organization, management, and marketing. … All our plans, programs, and procedures are worthless without God’s anointing. … On the other hand, we must avoid the error that there is nothing we can do to
help a church grow. … The Bible clearly teaches that God has given us a critical role to play in accomplishing his will on earth.\textsuperscript{53}

The Purpose Driven ministry paradigm, Warren’s model for communal and individual Christian discipleship, assumes the Bible teaches the value of intentional design and strategic systems development for a church. It also bears the marks of a Wesleyan understanding of God’s grace, a via media between antinomianism and extreme anthropocentrism. In addition, it takes into account the importance of orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy. Warren may be a Southern Baptist, but his Purpose Driven ministry paradigm bears the marks of a Wesleyan theological influence.

Having examined the theological context of St. James as it relates to discipleship pathways in terms of United Methodist theology and an alternative model, the study now continues to four key Scripture passages related to Christian discipleship in order to develop a theological basis for Christian discipleship. The Wesleyan and United Methodist theological context will be integrated into the theological basis to form an overall theological foundation for developing a ministry strategy for intentional discipleship at St. James.

\textsuperscript{53} Warren, \textit{The Purpose Driven Church}, 59-60.
CHAPTER 5
THEOLOGY FOR DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAYS

This paper proposes “no” as the answer to Peace’s question, “Is selling Jesus without discipleship really salvation?”1 Selling Jesus without discipleship is not salvation, thus the purpose of this ministry focus paper to propose an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James. Salvation includes conversion and discipleship; therefore, it is necessary to reflect theologically on the meaning of discipleship. The biblical understanding of Christian discipleship and an understanding of what a disciple is will be investigated before the actual task of designing an effective model for intentional discipleship can be accomplished.

Matthew 10:37-39: Discipleship as Personal Allegiance to Jesus Christ

The Greek root word for disciple, μαθητής, appears 266 times in the Gospels and Acts.2 It is the chief word used to describe followers of Jesus in these five books. Though the modern words “pupil” or “apprentice” closely approximate the meaning of disciple,

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1 Peace, “Final Project Symposium.”

2 Word count from Logos Bible Software version 4.
these words do not mirror its exact definition. The word disciple is used by biblical authors to imply “an intellectual process that always has external effects and involves a conscious or unconscious intellectual initiative. Hence other terms may elucidate it but cannot replace it.”

This meaning was consistent throughout the ancient Greek world, not just for Christians. A follower of Plato or Aristotle could be labeled as a μαθητής. Moreover, within religious circles, its usage was not restricted to Christianity. Before Jesus, μαθητής was used to label followers of Pythagoras and Epicurus, neither of whom was considered a god in its strictest sense, but religious figureheads, divine in some way.

It is logical, then, that μαθητής would be used to describe the followers of Jesus, who was undoubtedly a leading religious figure. However, a further step is taken when using μαθητής to describe Jesus’ followers. In the Bible, μαθητής is used to describe someone who is committed not just to Jesus’ teachings but to his person. Jesus demands allegiance to himself, not simply to his teachings.

He said, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:37-39). For Christians, this is the mark of discipleship: uncompromising obedience and commitment to the teachings and person of Jesus Christ, God the Son.

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
Ephesians 4:21-24: Discipleship as Adopting Jesus’ Way of Life

A disciple is more than a pupil or apprentice. The general understanding of a pupil is one who learns knowledge; for an apprentice, it is one who learns skills. A disciple, however, has a deeper commitment to his teacher or master. Jesus was not content with simply imparting information. He called people to a personal commitment to himself. A disciple of Jesus is one who fully commits to the ways of one’s master, learning knowledge and acquiring skills; however, it means more than that. It means adopting a way of life. A disciple of Jesus Christ is one who chooses to adopt Christ’s way of living as his or her way of living in this world. According to Ephesians 4:21-24,

You heard of him [Jesus] and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Thus, a disciple of Jesus is one who follows his way in every way.

Brian McLaren, in his book Finding Our Way Again, argues that people today are crying out for this Jesus way of life. It is radically different from the world’s ways of living. McLaren writes:

In this age of environmental unsustainability, the unconscionable juxtaposition between wasteful luxury and crushing poverty, and intensifying conflicts that can avalanche into potentially catastrophic war, nearly everyone, whether nonreligious or religious, seems to agree that we need to discover or rediscover a viable way of life.

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7 McLaren, Finding Our Way Again, 4.
Christians believe Jesus alone can fulfill this longing. This viable way of life is the Jesus way, living as his disciple. In Jesus, people find a master to whom they can apprentice themselves who will help them make sense of the world in which they live and who can provide a consistent, clear, and compelling ethic by which to live. In a world seeking something or someone to follow, there is no better model or master than Jesus. His way of life leads to abundant and eternal life. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10b), and “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand” (Jn 10:27-28). The Jesus way of life is the eternal life then and the abundant life now.

John 13:34-35: Loving One Another

There are two essential characteristics for a person who chooses to adopt Jesus’ way of life. First, that person must have an authentic love for other people, particularly those within the Church. Love is a primary defining attribute of God. In 1 John 4:8 the apostle writes: “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” This assertion has been constant throughout the history of God’s people. God has revealed himself and made covenant with his people as a result of his love: “Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands” (Dt 7:9). Moreover, God’s love is given as the chief reason why Jesus came: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).
It is therefore consistent with God’s character that when Jesus—God the Son—became incarnate, he would be known for his love and understood as the definitive sign of the Father’s love for his people. After three years of ministry with Jesus and after many years of reflection about his time spent with Jesus, the apostle John wrote: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 Jn 4:9-10). The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were understood by his followers to be the definitive sign of the Father’s love for his people.

Jesus was not only evidence of God’s love, however. He was the model for how persons within God’s community were to treat one another. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said to his disciples, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” To live the Jesus way of life—to adopt his ways—requires that a person love people as Jesus loved them, particularly those within the fellowship of believers. In these two verses, Jesus is speaking to his intimate circle of followers soon after he had washed their feet as a demonstration of love. F. F. Bruce writes: “If the Christian fellowship is marked by such love (‘love among one another’), then it will be recognized as the fellowship of Christ’s followers; it will bear the unmistakable stamp of his love.”

This was not a new command in the sense that God’s people had not previously been told to love one another. The Levitical law commanded love of

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neighbor. Jesus referred to this commandment earlier in his ministry. In response to a question from one of the teachers of the law, Jesus summed up all the law and the prophets by saying, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mk 12:30-31). The newness of the command to love one another in John 13:34-35 is based on the new reality of Christ among them. “The new thing appears to be the mutual affection that Christians have for one another on account of Christ’s great love for them. … It was ‘new,’ because the love of Christ’s friends for Christ’s sake was a new thing in the world.”

By his teaching and example, Jesus revealed a more profound understanding of the phrase “love one another.” This is the newness indicated by Jesus in verse 34.

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to adopt his way of life. His way of life includes loving one another, particularly those within the Christian fellowship. His first disciples would soon learn that this depth of love for one another Jesus modeled for them also included a willingness to die for one another. Cyril of Alexandria, in commenting on John 13:34-35, wrote:

Christ commands us to love as he did, putting neither reputation, wealth, or anything else before love of our brothers and sisters. If need be, we even need to be prepared to face death for our neighbor’s salvation as our Savior’s blessed

9 Leviticus 19:18 states: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”


11 Bruce, The Gospel of John, 294.

12 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).
disciples did, as well as those who followed in their footsteps. To them the salvation of others mattered more than their own lives, and they were ready to do anything or to suffer anything to save souls that were perishing.  

This is a concept of love that went further than any previous teaching went. So even though “loving one another” was not a new teaching to Jesus’ first disciples, it took on a new, profound, and deeper meaning when Jesus gave this command in John 13:34-35. When men and women demonstrate this kind of love for one another, it will be a sign to all who witness this love that they are disciples of Jesus Christ, adopting his way of life as their own.

John 15:1-8: Bearing Fruit

The second essential characteristic for a person who chooses to adopt Jesus’ way of life is fruitful living. Part of the challenge for churches in creating systems of discipleship is many people erroneously believe Christianity is just a set of beliefs instead of a way of life. Christianity has become merely one of many options at the smorgasbord of religious belief systems. Rob Bell contends this is the chief mistake most people make today. They think Christianity is about a set of beliefs, when actually it is a way of life: the Jesus way of life. “As a Christian, I am simply trying to orient myself around living a particular kind of way, the kind of way that Jesus taught was possible. And I think that the way of Jesus is the best possible way to live.” Adopting the Jesus way of life is not adopting beliefs only. It is also adopting motivations and behaviors. A disciple of Jesus Christ is one who fully adopts Jesus’ way of life and bears fruit as a result.


14 Rob Bell, Velvet Elvis (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 20.
Christians do not have the option of choosing one or another. It is not beliefs versus ways or behaviors. They are inextricably linked. Christians must have orthodoxy and orthopraxy to be disciples of Jesus. The mistake some people make is the opposite of the United Methodist tendency to value orthopraxy over orthodoxy. Many non-United Methodists value orthodoxy over orthopraxy. The result of favoring beliefs over behaviors is that, eventually, behaviors will alter beliefs. Orthodoxy can give way to pragmatism. When one is emphasized over the other, both orthodoxy and orthopraxy are eventually lost. McLaren writes: “Without a coherent and compelling way of life, formed in community and expressed in mission, some of us begin losing interest in the system of belief.”15 The result of ignoring the responsibility to bear fruit in adopting Jesus’ way of life is a weakening and eventual abandonment of beliefs, and eventually becoming no longer a Christian in behavior or belief. Again, salvation without discipleship is not really salvation.

Jesus explained the key to bearing fruit—orthopraxy—to his disciples in the parable of the vine and the branches. The apostle John records this parable in the middle of a substantial amount of teaching Jesus did on the night in which he was betrayed.

According to John 15:1-8, Jesus said,

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you,

15 McLaren, Finding Our Way Again, 3.
ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The key to bearing fruit is found in this parable. It is not by human effort alone that a disciple bears fruit, but by abiding in Christ. “The man who so abides in Christ and has Christ abide in him keeps on bearing fruit in quantity. … In isolation from him no spiritual achievement is possible.” 16 This synergistic concept was examined in Chapter 4. United Methodists believe that, though God is the primary agent, human will cooperates with God’s grace in salvation, a salvation that includes conversion and discipleship. Salvation is holistic and is evidenced by how one lives in the world today. The key to bearing fruit is abiding in Christ: “Only as [disciples] remain in union with him and derive their life from him can they produce the fruit of the Spirit.” 17

A disciple is a follower, a pupil, and an apprentice of Jesus, but more precisely, a disciple is a person who has adopted Jesus’ way of life as evidenced by loving one another and bearing fruit. A disciple is a person who is committed to Jesus as a person—the second person of the eternal Trinitarian God. This understanding of discipleship is general enough for an understanding of what a disciple is, but it is not specific enough to develop an effective model. The strategic development of an intentional discipleship pathway requires a more detailed picture.


17 Bruce, The Gospel of John, 309.
A Biblical and United Methodist Theology of Discipleship

Schnase, a bishop in the United Methodist Church, offers a Wesleyan portrait of discipleship in his book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. The United Methodist Church supports this model as a way to revitalize churches in the denomination. Schnase builds his efforts upon work done by Bishop Bruce Ough, who was seeking to define congregational health in the Ohio West Conference. In this book, Schnase expounds on Ough’s four practices and adds a fifth to develop a model of discipleship that can be understood individually and corporately. Together, these five practices are known as The Methodist Way:

Radical Hospitality. Passionate Worship. Intentional Faith Development. Risk-Taking Mission and Service. Extravagant Generosity. People are searching for a church shaped and sustained by these qualities. The presence and strength of these five practices demonstrate congregational health, vitality, and fruitfulness. By repeating and improving these practices, churches fulfill their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.¹⁸

These five practices are similar to what Saddleback and other churches offer in painting a detailed portrait of discipleship. The Schnase model includes the core behaviors of participation in worship services, discipleship groups, and service to others, and it adds the unselfish giving of resources and proactive outreach as two additional defining behaviors. These are collectively The Methodist Way, an expanded definition of discipleship for a United Methodist follower of Jesus Christ.

The value in considering this particular model for designing an intentional discipleship pathway is that it comes from within the Wesleyan tradition, of which St. James is part. It is linked to the universal Church’s growing understanding of discipleship.

in the postmodern era, yet it is congruent with our Wesleyan theological heritage. About these five practices, Schnase believes “these words capture the core processes by which God uses congregations to make disciples. … The words used to express these qualities are irresistible because they move us from abstract intentions to practical and personal directions for ministry.”

As with the Purpose Driven ministry paradigm, it is simple, clear, and user-friendly for church leadership and laity alike. The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church recently adopted this model as a way for churches to become revitalized through a common understanding of the discipleship process. While the terminology in Florida differs slightly from Schnase’s model, it remains an expanded definition of discipleship that is theologically sound and has the potential for wide acceptance: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipling, salty service, and extravagant generosity are The Methodist Way.

First, a disciple is one who extends radical hospitality to his or her community and to the next generation. A disciple of Jesus does as Jesus did: He or she proactively goes out to seek those who are outside the Church to offer them salvation.

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (Lk 15:3-7).

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A disciple does not wait for people to come near. A disciple is radical in extending love, compassion, and good news—radical hospitality—to all people. Jeff Stiggins writes: “As followers of one who easily and gladly welcomed children, tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, Samaritans, and indeed, sinners of all sorts into his fellowship—how can we not do likewise?”\textsuperscript{21} Doing likewise means a disciple develops a heart for all those outside the Kingdom of God. This is radical hospitality.

Second, a disciple is one who worships God passionately. Worship has been defined in many ways, but wherever and whenever a person intentionally seeks to meet with the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit, it is worship. This transformative, heart-to-heart meeting with the Lord happens corporately in worship services, but it is not restricted to corporate times of worship. It is whenever and wherever a person seeks to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mt 22:37). The key adjective for a true disciple is passion: “Passionate Worship is alive, authentic, fresh, and engaging. In Passionate Worship, people are honest before God and one another, and open to God’s presence, truth, and will for their lives. People so eagerly desire such worship that they will reorder their lives to attend.”\textsuperscript{22} This reflects true passion, and it is a core behavior for a disciple living the Jesus way of life.

Third, a disciple is one formed in Christ through deep and intentional discipleship. The theological term for this process is sanctification. The praxis is living life in relationships with other disciples who individually and collectively practice spiritual

\textsuperscript{21} Stiggins, “The Methodist Way: A Summary.”

\textsuperscript{22} Schnase, \textit{Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations}, 37.
disciplines and hold each other accountable for doing those things necessary for spiritual
growth. This understanding of intentional discipleship arises from the story of the first
disciples of Jesus combining learning and community: “They devoted themselves to the
apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts
2:42). The Florida Conference pragmatically explains this as participating in an
intentional discipling small group, seeking to understand Jesus’ teaching through
studying Scriptures and the Christian tradition, seeking for one’s attitudes, values,
behaviors, and character to be formed in Christ, and helping others to take their next step
on their spiritual pathway.\textsuperscript{23} A disciple of Jesus knows discipleship is not automatic; it
requires intentionality on the part of the disciple.

Fourth, a disciple is one who goes out into the community in salty service.
Disciples must be willing to take risks, moving outside their comfort zones, to serve
people in the name of Jesus Christ. As Christ risked it all in service to people, so should
his disciples. Eugene Peterson’s \textit{The Message} captures the idea of saltiness succinctly. In
Matthew 5:13, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here
to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your
saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in
the garbage.”\textsuperscript{24} Salt preserves and flavors. Risk-taking mission and service involves
practical acts that help preserve and flavor the people for whom Jesus died and lives
again.

\textsuperscript{23} Jeff Stiggins, “What’s a Mature Disciple?” The CT Blog, entry posted March 20, 2009,

\textsuperscript{24} Eugene H. Peterson, \textit{The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language} (Colorado Springs,
“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:35-40).

The Jesus way of life includes taking risks to minister to people in need. Schnase writes:

“What have we done in the past six months to make a positive difference in the lives of others that we would not have done if it were not for our relationship to Christ?”25 The answer to this question determines whether our service was salty or risk-taking. It means moving outside church walls and outside comfort zones to serve the least and the lost in the name of Jesus. It is one of the five defining practices of a disciple living the Jesus way.

Fifth, a disciple is one who pours oneself out in extravagant generosity. This is the practice Schnase added to Ough’s initial work. Schnase believes along with Wesley that the way Christians handle money is a major obstacle to discipleship. Materialism and consumerism not only hinder spiritual growth, they can turn people away from following Christ.26 Paul’s charge to Timothy is relevant for people who live in the richest nation on earth, particularly for people living in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who

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richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Tm 6:17-18).

Again, the Florida Conference pragmatically expounds on this practice. Extravagant generosity means living within one’s financial means so debt does not enslave, giving proportionally and generously to God’s causes using the tithe as a biblical guide, and spending one hundred percent of one’s resources in ways that honor God and bless others. The antidote to the cultural diseases of materialism and consumerism is extravagant generosity, an essential practice for living the Jesus way. It is a core behavior of a disciple.

The Methodist Way has much in common with the Purpose-Driven Life and other models for discipleship. It is an effective expansion of the definition of a disciple, and it is a clear and compelling way to understand how one is to live the Jesus way. The five practices offer a biblical portrait of discipleship, and it can be lived individually and corporately—designed strategically to aid in the production of individual disciples of Jesus Christ. In sum, a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who chooses to adopt Christ’s way of living as his or her way of living in this world as demonstrated by loving one another and bearing fruit. It is a person who is committed not only to Jesus’ way of life but having a personal allegiance to Jesus himself. It is orthopraxy and orthodoxy. It is evidenced in living a life of radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipling, salty service, and extravagant generosity.

27 Jeff Stiggins, “What’s a Mature Disciple?”

28 Hereafter, “intentional discipling” will be referred to as “intentional discipleship,” and “salty service” will be rendered “risk-taking mission and service” in conformance with the terminology currently in use at St. James.
This chapter examined the theological basis for developing an effective pathway for intentional discipleship at St. James through the exegesis of four key passages in the Bible and an explication of the United Methodist theology as it relates to discipleship. With the ministry context investigated and theological reflection accomplished, a strategic plan can now be developed. In order for this plan to be theologically sound, this strategy must begin by summarizing the implications of the theological conclusions about Christian discipleship pathway development.
PART THREE

MINISTRY STRATEGY
CHAPTER 6

STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PATHWAY FOR INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

The first part of this ministry focus paper described the ministry context of St. James by examining the demographic, geographic, and psychographic characteristics of the people in the primary ministry area. The second part explored the theological understanding of discipleship by reviewing current and influential literature in discipleship, and by examining United Methodist theology and praxis in discipleship and biblical theology regarding Christian discipleship. Upon this foundation of context and theology, part three will propose a model for intentional discipleship at St. James and describe the implementation plan in detail.

Implications of Theological Conclusions for the Development of an Intentional Discipleship Pathway

In Chapter 5, a clear definition of disciple was gained through the examination of four key Scripture passages. A disciple is a follower, a pupil, and an apprentice of Jesus. He or she is a person who has adopted Jesus’ way of life as evidenced by loving one another—particularly those within the fellowship of believers—and by bearing fruit, not
only behaviors but also attitudes and motivations. Moreover, a disciple is committed to Jesus as a person, the second person of the eternal Trinitarian God. For Christians, the mark of discipleship is uncompromising obedience and commitment to the teachings and person of Jesus Christ, God the Son. This understanding is essential because this ministry focus paper focuses on one of the five practices in The Methodist Way from a systemic perspective: intentional discipleship. St. James needs to have an effective system in place to support this third of five core behaviors of Christians. While discipleship can be defined more broadly,\(^1\) the focus of this paper is more narrowly on the process of intentional discipleship proper as defined by Schnase and expanded by the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. The goal is to design a discipleship pathway that helps people to share their faith journey with a small group of spiritual companions; seek to understand Jesus’ teachings through prayerful study of the Bible and Christian tradition; conform their values, attitudes, behaviors, and character to Christ; and help others do the same thing.\(^2\)

The strategy will be methodical in helping persons grow from conversion into a life of Christian discipleship. It will help persons to continue working out their salvation “with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil 2:12-13) because in Methodist theology, discipleship necessarily follows conversion. This is the United Methodist understanding of salvation.

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\(^1\) “The discipleship system includes everything you do to help people connect with God and grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. Typical components of a discipleship system are worship, Christian education, community service, and outreach.” Miller, *Myths of the United Methodist Church*, 187.

The discipleship pathway also must ensure the role of God’s sanctifying grace is clearly recognized in discipleship. Though there are things one must do as a human to be intentional about Christian discipleship, it does not all depend on human efforts. United Methodists believe divine grace cooperates with human action for spiritual growth. Therefore, one must guard strongly against the United Methodist proclivity to value human agency over divine grace. Efforts will be made to guard against emphasizing orthopraxy over orthodoxy, honoring their equality of importance and interrelatedness. One of the core Wesleyan teachings is that personal holiness is inextricably linked to social holiness. The purpose of Christian discipleship is not just to prepare persons for eternal life but also to transform the world.³ That is why United Methodists believe people should become intentional about discipleship. It is so they can become more radical in their hospitality, more passionate in their worship, more risk-taking in their mission and service, and more extravagant in their generosity. Hospitality, mission and service, and generosity have as their beneficiaries other people.

**Overview of the Effective Pathway for Intentional Discipleship**

There are four design factors essential for an effective pathway for intentional discipleship at St. James that emerged from the research in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. First, an effective pathway needs to follow the American educational institution pattern instead of the multiplying small group pattern that has become popular among evangelical churches in the past few decades. Second, an effective pathway must be simple in approach and access considering the busy and complicated lives lived by

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persons and families at St. James. Third, an effective pathway must take into account different levels of spiritual maturity among the participants in order to engage persons effectively. Fourth, an effective pathway must be implemented across children, youth, and adult ministries for systemic efficiency and synergy.

Educational Institution Pattern versus Multiplying Small Groups Pattern

An effective pathway for intentional discipleship must consider the following factors. First, New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents are highly educated. Second, they are influenced by USF due to proximity and for some, vocation. Third, the high number of children and the corresponding child-centric lifestyles compel people to live according to school calendars. As a result, the people of St. James are heavily influenced by academic calendars. This is the strongest influence on how individuals and families organize their daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly schedules. Consequently, the typical churchwide system of on-going multiplying small groups is not ideal in this ministry context. The intentional discipleship pathway will be designed around a trimester plan as Table 3 shows, which conforms to the Hillsborough County School System and USF calendars.

Table 3. 2012 Trimester System for St. James

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trimester</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 18 through March 28, 2012</td>
<td>10 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Exception: Ash Wednesday</em></td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>14 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11 through August 15, 2012</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 12 through November 14, 2012</td>
<td>9 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Exception: Halloween</em></td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This trimester system provides for multiple entry and exit points each year, making it easier for people to participate in core discipleship opportunities. It fits well with the expectations and practices of highly educated, child-centric families. Though designed around the academic calendars prevalent in the primary ministry area, the breaks are longer to account for the busyness of particular seasons throughout the year for families. Moreover, it excludes those dates during the trimester on which persons are unlikely to attend due to other activities.

The 2013 trimester schedule will be structurally similar to 2012, with starting and ending dates adjusted accordingly. The seasons of life and calendar exceptions for the typical family require the summer trimester to be much shorter than the spring and fall trimesters. Due to the shortened trimester and frequent summer vacations, summer discipleship opportunities will be offered in non-sequential seminar formats to maximize participation potential from members of the congregation. In addition, the fall trimester is one week shorter than the spring trimester to align better with the typical family schedules around holidays. Accessibility, participation, and effectiveness are more important than calendrical symmetry for the discipleship pathway.

Simplicity in Approach and Access

Simplicity is critical for two reasons. First, like all churches, St. James has limited human and financial resources. The church cannot be all things to all people. Therefore, the church staff needs to invest its limited time strategically towards the fulfillment of the church’s mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Second and more importantly, simplicity is critical for the target demographic. Consider
the psychographic insights from Chapter 1: New Suburbia Families lead active, child-centric lives and are extremely busy. Young Cosmopolitans and Enterprising Couples are just as busy but for different reasons. They need opportunities for their families to grow in discipleship in the same place at the same time so they are not on the church campus four to five days each week. They need the church to help them practice the core behaviors that will help them grow in their faith. They do not need to be involved in numerous church activities that are not critical to the mission. Though relevance, excellence, and choices remain core expectations, they do not need or want an overwhelming number of choices complicating their lives. Simplicity is critical for New Tampa/Wesley Chapel people to be intentional about discipleship.

Therefore, what is needed is the implementation of an intentional discipleship pathway focused on offering spiritual growth opportunities on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.\textsuperscript{4} Discipleship opportunities for every age group during these two times will allow families to participate together, if not in the same classroom, then at least on campus at the same time. Since Sunday morning is already in progress and moving in this direction, Wednesday evenings will be the focal point for launching an intentional discipleship pathway. Wednesdays also will include dinner as a way for busy families to enjoy a meal and fellowship together. Sundays will be altered gradually to fit the pathway. As mentioned earlier, the trimester system will provide for multiple entry and exit points each year to make it easier for people to participate in core discipleship opportunities. Many persons have not been intentional about discipleship for a long time

\textsuperscript{4} People will be free to begin or continue in small groups and classes on campus and at home on other days of the week and at other times, as they are now. The narrow focus in this ministry focus paper is on staff-led, core intentional discipleship opportunities.
because salvation was sold as mere conversion to them. Therefore, they are often hesitant to join existing small groups and are wary of the commitment required in on-going small groups. Multiple entry and exit points will aid in simplicity of approach and access.

Targeted Levels of Spiritual Maturity

One of the more significant insights of Willow Creek’s *Reveal: Where Are You?* study was “the church is most important in the early stages of spiritual growth. Its role then shifts from being the primary influence to a secondary influence.” Their research indicates that as people grow closer to Christ, the role of the church changes. Church-provided opportunities for Christian discipleship become less important as the disciple matures:

The church is extremely important in the early stages form the Exploring and Growing segments, but its main activities—like weekend services and small groups—decline in importance as people advance along the continuum. The church becomes less of a place to go for spiritual development and to find spiritual relationships, and more of a platform that provides serving opportunities. So its initial strong central role in spiritual growth seems to shift to something more secondary as people advance to the more Christ-focused spiritual segments.”

Therefore, with limitations on time, physical space, and resources both financial and human, St. James must be strategic in what it offers to members to help them move along the discipleship pathway. Since the church cannot be all things to all people, and since mature disciples are those who have learned to feed themselves without much assistance from the church, discipleship opportunities for adults will be focused on two levels of spiritual development: new believers and growing disciples. More classes may be offered

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6 Ibid., 42.
as space and leadership permits; however, the staff will focus on offering these two levels each trimester.

One class will be offered consistently for growing disciples: a study of Schnase’s book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. This will form the core class in which all members and attendees of St. James will be strongly encouraged to participate as the basis for their common understanding of discipleship. This class also will become part of the new members’ class at St. James, joining the discussions of salvation and church membership and the existing section using Network to help people discover their ministry fit. Thus, the new members’ class will help theology meet praxis: it will teach about and provide an entry point for risk-taking mission and service. The class itself is an intentionally discipling group, so attendees will be learning about and practicing intentional discipleship.

Implementation in Adult, Youth, and Children’s Ministries

In order to simplify staff-led discipleship offerings for families, there will be ministries for children, youth and adults on Wednesdays, as Table 4 indicates. This will be essential in simplifying approach and access. New Suburbia Families lead busy lives. They desire opportunities for their families to be involved in church activities together. The church should help them simplify their lives and focus on what is important, not add to their already overcommitted and overcomplicated lives. Discipleship opportunities for every age group during Wednesday evenings and the evolving of Sunday mornings to that end will allow families to participate in spiritual growth opportunities at the same time. Wednesdays will include dinner as a way for busy families to enjoy a meal and
fellowship together, followed by discipleship opportunities designed for each age group and, for adults, two primary levels of spiritual maturity.

Table 4. Intentional Discipleship on Wednesday Evenings at St. James

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Adult Ministries</th>
<th>Youth Ministries</th>
<th>Children’s Ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:45 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dinner and Fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition to Intentionally Discipling Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45</td>
<td>Adult Intentionally Discipling</td>
<td>Fusion Worship Service followed by Intentionally</td>
<td>Children’s Intentionally Discipling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Groups focused on new believers</td>
<td>Discipling Groups</td>
<td>Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This integrated approach, creating discipleship pathways for all age groups at the same time and in the same location, will create efficiencies that enable the appropriate staff persons at St. James to manage the discipleship pathways well. It should create synergy across the ministry areas, enabling shared thematic programming so families are learning and growing in the same areas of discipleship. It will also allow for occasional shared growth opportunities so families can learn and grow together, with curriculum designed for the entire family.
These four design factors are necessary for an effective pathway for intentional discipleship at St. James. They provide a system and structure that is familiar to most families in the congregation. It serves to simplify what the church offers for discipleship for persons of all ages, and it is designed to reach those levels of spiritual maturity in which persons seek help and guidance from the church. In addition, the implementation across children, youth, and adult ministries should create systemic efficiency and synergy, both necessary for sustainability and effectiveness.

**United Methodist Praxes and Metrics of Discipleship for Today**

There are no perfect ways to measure the effectiveness of what the church offers to enable the making of disciples for the transformation of the world. In dealing with people, there are too many variables that cannot be controlled. Moreover, when the Holy Spirit is involved, quantification of human efforts and prediction of future efforts can seem much too anthropocentric. However, though there are no perfect ways to measure spiritual growth, that does not excuse the church from doing the best it can to evaluate its ministries and adapt accordingly in order to maximize effectiveness. The mission of the Church is too important to allow individual church’s systems and ministries to be unconsidered and unevaluated. Though valuing human agency over divine grace is a potential hazard, so is a hyper-spiritualism that refuses to consider each human’s responsibility in discipleship.

The praxes of United Methodist discipleship offered by Schnase in his book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, known as The Methodist Way, are the praxes that will be used to define Christian discipleship at St. James: radical hospitality, passionate
worship, intentional discipleship, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. These practices are quantifiable, albeit imperfectly. If a person is becoming more radical in hospitality, more passionate in worship, more intentional about faith development and discipleship, more risk-taking in mission and service, and more extravagant in generosity, then that person is growing spiritually. Each of these five practices can be measured. According to Stiggins, churches tend to measure a lot of things, but they need to measure what really matters. Though numbers never tell the whole story of how effective a congregation is in fulfilling its mission, faithfulness does include fruitfulness. The five practices with corresponding measurable behaviors are what really matters.

Radical Hospitality

Radical hospitality is the behavior or practice of receiving and offering God’s warm welcome to people as participants in Christ’s body, the Church. It is what comes naturally when people, from love for Jesus Christ and other people, “take the initiative to invite, welcome, include, and support newcomers and help them grow in faith as they become part of the body of Christ.” This includes the concepts of evangelism and assimilation. The more a person grows in his or her faith, the more radical he or she becomes in extending love and acceptance to strangers. Radical in this sense means going

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8 Jeff Stiggins, “Missional Vital Signs” (lecture, First United Methodist Church, Plant City, FL, April 23, 2009).

above and beyond normal expectations in actively inviting and welcoming persons into congregational life.\textsuperscript{10}

This kind of behavior is very difficult to measure on an individual basis, because there are a variety of encounters necessary to help someone outside the life of a church to move into the life of a church. However, though it would be onerous and practically impossible for a congregation to measure this behavior individually, it can be measured corporately to get a sense of how the congregation is doing. Therefore, to measure radical hospitality, the appropriate metrics will be Professions of Faith and Reaffirmations of Faith.\textsuperscript{11} Profession of Faith is a category of church membership for a person who is becoming a church member on a profession of faith in Jesus Christ for the first time. Reaffirmation of Faith is a category of church membership for a person who is reaffirming his or her faith in Jesus Christ. These two metrics exclude church membership via transfer of membership because that is a less effective metric at measuring radical hospitality.\textsuperscript{12}

Tracking the number of people received into church membership by Profession of Faith and Reaffirmation of Faith are imperfect metrics for the practice of radical hospitality because they link salvation and discipleship to church membership. Not all


\textsuperscript{12} One of the imperfections of metrics used to gauge missional effectiveness is clear in the categories of membership in the United Methodist Church. Because Roman Catholic parishes usually refuse to transfer church membership for people who desire to transfer to a Protestant church, those persons go into the category of Reaffirmation of Faith, even though they may have remained faithful followers of Jesus Christ for a long time. Since new members have to fit into a category, they typically go into the Reaffirmation of Faith category, though in reality it is a membership transfer.
disciples choose to become official members of a local congregation. However, knowing that some metric is needed, these two measurements are acceptable ways to measure radical hospitality because they fit categories of measurement that already exist within the United Methodist Church, and the plan for developing an effective pathway for Christian discipleship at St. James includes positioning the new members’ class as part of the discipleship pathway. If the discipleship pathway is effective, it should be reflected in how many new members are received each year by Profession of Faith and Reaffirmation of Faith because our disciples will know the theology and praxis of radical hospitality, and membership will increase as a result.

Passionate Worship

Passionate worship is the behavior or practice of a disciple when he or she gathers with other disciples in a sacred time and pace to deliberately encounter God in Jesus Christ. It is wherever and whenever “people gather consciously as the Body of Christ with eagerness and expectancy; encounter Christ through singing, prayer, Scripture, preaching, and Holy Communion; and respond by allowing God’s Spirit to shape their lives.”13 As with the other practices, the adjective is the key. Growing disciples are disciples becoming more passionate about worship. They increasingly understand the necessity of meeting together regularly with other believers to encounter God’s presence and power through a variety of sign-acts of worship.

As with radical hospitality, measuring acts of worship on an individual level and in private settings would be exceedingly burdensome—if not practically impossible.

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Therefore, communal gatherings of worship are an appropriate metric to gauge how successful a church is in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Worship attendance in the congregation’s primary worship services each week is a logical metric to use in measuring the effectiveness of the discipleship pathway. Disciples of Jesus Christ understand how important communal worship is to the life of Christ’s people, and they practice this behavior regularly—weekly, as possible. If the discipleship pathway accomplishes what it is intended to accomplish, then it should be accompanied by increasing numbers of people in worship attendance each year. This is an imperfect metric. It is quite possible for persons to be regular in corporate worship attendance and not truly be worshiping. They may attend worship services as spectators or evaluators, not worshippers. This can be a particularly problematic issue for churches that have bought into the entertainment evangelism model. Churches must always ask the question, “Are people meeting God, or are they simply being entertained?”\textsuperscript{14} Nonetheless, if the discipleship pathway is effective, it will be reflected in how many persons are attending the primary worship services each week because disciples will know the theology and praxis of passionate worship, and worship attendance will increase as a result.

\textbf{Intentional Discipleship}

Intentional discipleship—Schnase’s “intentional faith development” and the Florida Conference’s “intentional discipling”—is the focus of this final ministry project. As indicated in Part Two, this behavior is demonstrable and measurable. A growing disciple of Jesus Christ is one who lives life in relationships with other disciples who

\footnote{14 Stiggins, “Missional Vital Signs.”}
individually and collectively practice spiritual disciplines and hold each other accountable for doing those things necessary for spiritual growth. Schnase writes: “followers of Jesus Christ mature in faith by learning together in community. Churches that practice Intentional Faith Development offer high quality learning experiences that help people understand Scripture, faith, and life in the supportive nurture of caring relationships.”\textsuperscript{15} Intentionality is the key. Salvation requires no human effort other than a grace-enabled acceptance of what God offers us. Discipleship, however, requires human effort as human spirits cooperate with God’s Spirit to form them into his people.

The metric for intentional discipleship is participation in face-to-face discipling groups that meet on a regular basis. The Florida Conference defines a group as intentionally discipling wherever and whenever a small group of people meet, seeking to understand Jesus’ teaching through studying Scriptures and the Christian tradition, seeking for one’s attitudes, values, behaviors, and character to be formed in Christ, and helping others to take their next step on their spiritual pathway.\textsuperscript{16} Stiggins provided a more detailed definition for tracking purposes: the number of persons in the group ranges from two to fifteen, they meet at least monthly, there is a common commitment to become more like Jesus, they read and reflect on Scripture, they discuss application of the Scripture under consideration, they share openly and honestly with one another, and they pray for one another.\textsuperscript{17} For the sake of measuring the effectiveness of a discipleship pathway, it is a crucial metric. Success will be measured by how many persons are in

\textsuperscript{15} Schnase, \textit{Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations}, 62.

\textsuperscript{16} Stiggins, “What’s a Mature Disciple?”

\textsuperscript{17} Stiggins, “Missional Vital Signs.”
small groups, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and so forth, because disciples at St. James will know the theology and praxis of intentional discipleship. Increasing numbers of people in intentionally discipling groups is the key metric in measuring the effectiveness of this final ministry project.

Risk-Taking Mission and Service

Risk-taking mission and service—the Florida Conference’s “salty service”—means service offered in Christ’s name inside and outside the church. It “includes the projects, the efforts, and work people do to make a positive difference in the lives of others for the purposes of Christ, whether or not they will ever be part of the community of faith.” As with the other behaviors or practices, the adjective is important. The more intentional a person is in following Jesus Christ, the more willing he or she is to take risks in serving others. The more a person grows in faith, the more outward focused he or she is, even to the point of taking risks for the sake of ministry to others.

The discipleship metric related to this practice is the number of people in a worship service who say that they have been risk-taking in their mission and service to persons outside the congregation for at least one hour the previous week. More specifically, Schnase writes: “Scripture inextricably links love of God to love of neighbor and calls people to charity, justice, and mercy.” Of the five metrics used to gauge the effectiveness of the church in mission, this is the most imperfect metric. According to Florida Conference definition, if a member of St. James visits someone in the hospital

18 Schnase, Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations, 83.

19 The Center for Congregational Excellence, Monthly Missional Vital Signs.

20 Schnase, Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations, 86.
who does not participate in the life of St. James, it counts as a measure of risk-taking mission and service. However, if a member of St. James visits someone in the hospital who participates regularly in the life of St. James, then it does not count. If a team of people paints the home of an elderly member of the church, it does not count. If a team of people paints the home of an elderly non-member, it counts. Adding to the imperfection of this metric is the fact that it is self-reported. It cannot be objectively measured outside the individual. Worship attendance and participation in small groups can be gained by a head count. New members are accounted for by standing in front of the congregation on new member Sunday. The measurement for risk-taking mission and service is self-selected. So instead of an objective definition for the practice, the definition is filtered through each individual, with the potential for varying results. One woman’s act of risk-taking service may be another woman’s modus operandi.

Even though this is the most problematic of the five metrics, there must be some way to objectify or quantify this behavior in order to measure discipleship growth. If it is true that organizations get only what they measure, declining congregations are self-preoccupied congregations, and service facilitates spiritual growth,\textsuperscript{21} then it must be measured, even if there are significant flaws in the measurement tool. Knowing the difficulties in measuring this discipleship behavior yet knowing the importance of measure measuring its practice, Stiggins offered the following categories of risk-taking mission and service to the Florida Conference in order to clarify this necessary metric for measurement purposes: mercy ministries, relationship building, justice ministry, and

\textsuperscript{21} Stiggins, “Missional Vital Signs.”
Earth care. If the discipleship pathway is effective, it will be reflected in how many people are involved for one hour or more in these types of ministries to persons beyond the congregation each week. Success will be measured by increasing numbers of acts of service.

Extravagant Generosity

The fifth practice that will be measured to evaluate the effectiveness of the discipleship pathway is extravagant generosity. Followers of Jesus Christ are expected to go beyond ordinary generosity into extravagant generosity, because God has been extravagantly generous toward His people. Schnase writes: “Generosity enlarges the soul, realigns priorities, connects people to the Body of Christ, and strengthens congregations to fulfill Christ’s ministries.” Extravagant generosity begins with tithing and continues in offerings beyond the tithe. It also includes reorienting one’s perception of resources to ensure 100% of the resources entrusted to us by God are used in ways that honor God and bless others.

The discipleship metric the Florida Conference uses for extravagant generosity is the total amount given to the church’s general budget, capital projects, and missional concerns. This does not include fundraisers that offer products, because product purchases do not measure generosity. This metric is easier to define and quantify than the other four metrics. This type of giving can be easily measured individually and corporately, with the exception of cash offerings. What cannot be measured, however, is

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22 Stiggins, “Missional Vital Signs.”


24 Stiggins, “Missional Vital Signs.”
the attitude of the giver, which is as important as the amount given. Growing disciples offer their money and other possessions to God as an act of generosity of heart rather than under compulsion or sense of obligation. Regardless of the impossibility of measuring attitudes, extravagant generosity must be measured, because if the discipleship pathway is effective, it will show in how much persons give to the general budget, capital projects, and missional concerns. An effective discipleship pathway will help disciples know the theology and praxis of extravagant generosity, and they will act accordingly.

This section described the goals of this intentional discipleship pathway, answering the question, “What is this system designed to produce?” An effective model for intentional discipleship will produce disciples who reach out to persons outside the church with love and acceptance, measured by how many of these persons become church members by Profession of Faith or Reaffirmation of Faith. It will produce a disciple who worships God with passion as measured by consistent attendance in one of the primary worship services each week and who owns responsibility in the discipleship pathway, measured by their regular participation in intentionally discipling groups. It will produce disciples who reach out in love and service to people in the world around them, regardless of whether or not they become members of the church, measured by their regular self-reported participation in mercy ministries, relationship building, justice ministry, or Earth care. It will produce a disciple who practices generosity that begins with the tithe and extends beyond the tithe, measured by giving to the church’s general budget, capital projects, and missional concerns. If there is growth in each of these five practices each year, then one could reasonably conclude that the discipleship pathway is effective.
Strategic Development or Redevelopment of Pathway Components

There are four high-level areas needing development or redevelopment for the effective implementation of this model. First, the existing adult, youth, and children’s ministries councils must be redeveloped so they can gain ownership of the strategic plan and be trained for its implementation. Second, the existing Sunday School offerings must be gradually brought into the overall strategic plan. Third, the current Wednesday evening offerings must continue to be aligned toward the plan. Fourth, a system for the identification and training of leaders, shepherds, and other necessary volunteers must be developed.

Age-appropriate Councils Development and Training

There are three councils in existence at the church related to intentional discipleship: the children’s ministries council, youth ministries council, and adult ministries council. These councils have existed in one form or another for many years; but their composition, activity, and effectiveness have varied. In order for the discipleship pathway to be implemented, these three councils must be redeveloped into a group of persons who have gained ownership of the vision for intentional discipleship and who can assist the appropriate staff person in the development and implementation of the age-appropriate discipleship pathway.

According to the current administrative structure of the church, each council is led by their corresponding staff person: the director of children’s ministries (DCM), director

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25 In the current administrative structure at St. James, councils are differentiated from committees in that councils do not require the involvement of the Committee on Lay Leadership for the nominations of members and are led by the corresponding staff person.
of youth ministries (DYM), and the executive director of ministries (EDOM) who oversees all adult ministries. They are responsible for the selection, training, and support of their council members, with the Committee on Lay Leadership\textsuperscript{26} available to assist as requested. It is recommended that each council have five to nine members, with members serving staggered three-year terms. For the successful implementation of this plan, these three staff persons will recruit new persons to their councils who can assist them in the overall leadership and implementation of the discipleship pathway, because in the implementation there will be too many tasks for one person to perform. Once those persons have been recruited to the council and connected with other council members, they must be educated in the vision and plan for Christian discipleship so members can find their roles in ensuring the plan is implemented successfully and evaluated regularly.

Simplify and Increase Intentionality of Sunday School Offerings

Sunday School classes have existed for many years at St. James. Their launching and development of adult classes, however, have been haphazard and unsystematic. An adult Sunday School class began whenever someone wanted to teach it and a few people decided to attend. They received the encouragement of the staff, a classroom in which to meet, and publicity through the communication channels at the church. Curriculum assistance was offered as requested, but the Sunday School classes have been essentially left on their own. Some have been more successful than others, depending on the effectiveness of the teacher and the relationships developed within the class. The Sunday

\textsuperscript{26} The Committee on Lay Leadership is one of the four official subcommittees under the Leadership Board of the church. Its key functions are to recommend persons to serve on the Leadership Board, Finance Committee, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Trustees, and the Committee on Lay Leadership, and to assist the church staff in finding members for their ministry councils as requested.
School offerings for children and youth have been more strategic in their development and implementation. However, they have been developed and implemented according to the vision of the corresponding staff person without much consideration to the overall vision of the church or how they could interrelate with one another for effectiveness and synergy.

All Sunday School offerings gradually will be brought into the overall discipleship pathway and in alignment with one another. Simplicity in approach and access requires that discipleship opportunities for every age group be offered on Sunday mornings so families can be on campus at the same time. There will be intentional efforts to launch new Sunday School classes on a regular basis in order to provide multiple entry and exit points. Planning and development of curriculum will occur concomitantly so children, youth, and adult ministries are tracking together. Every discipleship offering must be age appropriate, and there is room for a variety of curriculum. However, the staff will work from the same definition of discipleship and towards the same measurable results across children, youth, and adult ministries. Moreover, each age-appropriate ministry area needs to ensure offerings are available for new believers and growing disciples and that the five practices of The Methodist Way are being taught. Existing Sunday School classes will be honored; however, staff and council efforts will be directed towards the simplification and increased intentionality of Sunday School offerings.
Increase Strategic Development of Wednesday Evening Oasis Offerings

Two years ago, a pilot program for Wednesday evening discipleship was launched with many of the same strategic developmental components explained in this chapter. However, its development did not include the depth of research and theological reflection found in Part One and Part Two of this ministry focus paper. Moreover, two of the key staff members responsible for its launch are no longer on the staff of the church. As a result, the discipleship offerings have drifted from their initial focus, and the synergy among adult, youth, and children’s ministries is not what it could be. The focus has been gradually moving from intentionality and adaptability to maintenance in just two short years. Therefore, the current Wednesday evening Oasis discipleship offerings will be evaluated and redeveloped to become more strategic in helping new believers and growing disciples become more radical in their hospitality, more passionate in their worship, more intentional about their discipleship, more risk-taking in their mission and service, and more extravagant in their generosity.

A study of Schnase’s book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* will continue to be offered on a regular basis on Wednesdays during the trimesters. This is the core class for new members at St. James, along with a discussion of salvation, church membership, and the Network class. However, work needs to be done in promoting this class among existing members as the core class for St. James in order to increase our common understanding of and language for discipleship.
Identifying and Training Leaders, Shepherds, and Other Necessary Volunteers

In order for an effective model for intentional discipleship to be implemented at St. James, a system for identifying and training leaders, shepherds, and other necessary volunteers must be developed by the age-appropriate staff persons and councils. Leaders, facilitators, and shepherds for each intentionally discipling group are critical for the success of the discipleship pathway. The vision for a system of identifying and training volunteer ministers has already been cast. It is the systemic development and implementation that needs to occur. Each staff person and their corresponding councils must embrace this development as a key responsibility in their respective ministry areas. Intentionally discipling groups require leaders or facilitators, and they require shepherds. Sometimes these roles reside in the same person; sometimes they reside in different persons. Regardless, for intentionally discipling groups to function effectively, someone must be responsible for its success and for ensuring relationships develop.

The vision for volunteerism comes from a message Bill Hybels gave at the Leadership Summit in 2002.27 In his discourse called “The Y Factor,” Hybels outlined a simple model for volunteerism using the acronym ACTS: Attracting, Connecting, Training, and Sustaining ministry volunteers. Attracting ministry volunteers begins with making a list of people already known to the staff person who might be interested in serving in a particular ministry area. The recruiting conversation includes sharing the blessings people receive from serving in that ministry and asking the individual to come see the blessings in person. The next step is connecting that individual to that ministry

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27 Bill Hybels, “The Y Factor” (lecture, 2002 Leadership Summit, Willow Creek Church, August 9, 2002).
team. For ministry volunteers, the primary rewards for serving are intrinsic, which is God’s responsibility, and relational, which is the staff person’s responsibility. Usually, the most effective ministries are done in teams because of the critical relational component. Third, the ministry volunteer must be trained so they can succeed in that ministry. Many times, failure or dissatisfaction in ministry could have been prevented by ensuring the volunteer had the appropriate resources and training to succeed. Fourth, the ministry volunteer must be sustained in that role through community, celebration, and commendation. Sustaining is an on-going responsibility that helps the volunteer to feel needed, loved, and appreciated.28

**Linear Developmental Staging**

In order for this discipleship pathway to be implemented, it must begin with staff training and development, continue to the training and development of the leaders and shepherds for each intentionally discipling group, and result in congregational invitations and the facilitation of their participation in the discipleship pathway. In other words, ownership of the model must begin first with those responsible for providing leadership and management for the model. Next, those primarily responsible for implementing the model must gain ownership. Finally, the model must be presented to its intended recipients in a way that facilitates their participation.

**Staff Training and Deployment**

As asserted in Chapter 2, even though each disciple of Jesus Christ must own his or her responsibility to place themselves into a small community where spiritual growth

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28 Hybels, “The Y Factor.”
is facilitated, it is the responsibility of the church staff to develop an effective pathway for Christian discipleship in the church using a clear, systematic approach. Therefore, the implementation of an effective discipleship pathway begins with getting the church staff in front of the creation and support of a discipleship pathway that enable persons to grow spiritually “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). While the staff will support, resource, and publicize opportunities for mature Christians, their main focus will be on those who are still learning to feed themselves: new believers and growing disciples.

The timeline for this staff training and deployment and the identification of key staff positions will be presented in chapter seven. The content for this training comes from this ministry focus paper. In order to perform their ministries with effectiveness and excellence, staff members will need to understand more fully the ministry context of St. James as described in chapter one and gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the history of St. James, because the present ministry environment is a direct result of our historical development. Any necessary changes must honor what has worked well in the past and be managed with patience and grace. Staff members also need to understand the theological underpinnings of Christian discipleship within United Methodism. They also need to have a common definition of and expectations for Christian discipleship. Finally, they must gain ownership of this model for an intentional discipleship pathway and their individual roles in its development and implementation.
Councils and Lay Leaders: Training and Deployment

Once the staff receive the appropriate training and know their unique and specific roles in the plan for implementation, their attention must be turned to the training and deployment of the age level councils, followed by the intentionally discipling groups’ leaders, facilitators, and shepherds. Though the DCM, DYM, and DCOM are the primary facilitators of the discipleship pathways in their respective ministry areas, the training of their councils, volunteer leaders, facilitators, and shepherds should be accomplished in a group setting, with persons from children, youth, and adult ministries working together so a common language and understanding will be gained.

As with the staff members of St. James, these intentionally discipling group leaders, facilitators, and shepherds will benefit from gaining an overview of the ministry context of St. James, though condensed from the staff training. They do not need the same level of knowledge to enable them to perform their ministries effectively. The same is true for their familiarity with the history of St. James. However, the intentionally discipling group leaders, facilitators, and shepherds will benefit from the fuller knowledge of Christian discipleship within United Methodism and the operating definition of discipleship at St. James, as detailed in chapters four and five. It is also important for them to gain ownership of this model for an intentional discipleship pathway offered in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, because they are the key persons interacting with members of the congregation participating in these intentionally discipling groups. If members of the congregation are to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, it will be due in large part to the influence and guidance of the leaders, facilitators, and shepherds of the intentionally discipling groups.
Congregational Invitation and Facilitation of Participation

To ensure a successful launch of this intentional discipleship pathway, the Sunday morning and Wednesday evening discipleship opportunities will be promoted from the pulpit on Sunday mornings, on the church’s website, through existing small groups, and through printed resources available at kiosks around the campus. The printed resources will include brochures listing opportunities for adult, youth, and children’s discipleship pathways. These invitations to the discipling pathways at St. James must help people understand that Christians grow as disciples the most consistently when they place themselves in community to learn and practice the Christian faith with others and to hold each other accountable in holy living.

Disciples of Jesus Christ at St. James will be taught that United Methodists are saved from sin and saved for a life of Christian discipleship. If they call themselves Christians, then that means they are disciple of Jesus Christ, and a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who chooses to adopt Christ’s way of living as his or her way of living in this world as demonstrated by loving one another and bearing fruit. It is a person who is committed not only to Jesus’ way of life but having a personal allegiance to Jesus himself. It is orthopraxy and orthodoxy. It is evidenced by living The Methodist Way. In order to facilitate this, a kickoff Sunday will be planned for early January, 2012, that casts the vision for the discipleship pathway, builds enthusiasm, and creates a sense of need for participation in intentionally discipling groups in order to become a disciple of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This chapter presented an overview of the strategy for developing an effective pathway for intentional discipleship, beginning with a description of the implications of
the theological conclusions reached in the Chapter 5. It described the primary design factors for this intentional discipleship pathway and explained the goals of this intentional discipleship pathway, answering this question: “What is this system designed to produce?” It provided an overview of the high-level development needed for this pathway to be implemented and the linear staging or process for its implementation. The next chapter will provide the details of the implementation process for the effective pathway for intentional discipleship, beginning with a summary of this pathway.
CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVE PATHWAY FOR INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Strategies for ministry development and improving ministry effectiveness must ultimately include concrete plans for implementation. An unimplemented strategy has little value for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world except as an intellectual exercise. Therefore, this chapter is the most important chapter in this ministry focus paper: putting theory into practice. This chapter will provide an overview of the implementation process for the effective pathway for intentional discipleship, beginning with a summary of the pathway at the launch trimester in January 2012. Section two will describe the detailed timeline pre- and post-launch of the pilot trimester, beginning with staff training and deployment and ending with the analysis of data so lessons can be applied to the development of the second trimester. Section three will identify the primary leadership and describes responsibilities in the implementation of this pathway. Section four will identify the major resources necessary for implementation, and section five will provide an overview of the assessment process,
with the conclusions drawn to be implemented in the second trimester that will begin in summer 2012.

**Summary of the Discipleship Pathway at Launch Trimester**

The model for intentional discipleship will follow an educational institutional pattern instead of the on-going multiplying small group model prevalent in evangelical churches. It will be based on a trimester system to simplify approach and access, providing multiple entry and exit points throughout the year in alignment with the school calendars in the primary ministry area. The discipleship offerings will be focused on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, with Wednesday evenings including a meal, so families can participate at the same time on campus. Staff-facilitated discipleship offerings will target new believers and growing disciples, because mature disciples have learned how to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth. Each trimester will include a study of Schnase’s *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* since this book provides the operating definition of Christian discipleship at St. James. These streamlined and strategic discipleship offerings will be provided for children, youth, and adults to create systemic efficiency and synergy in the church.

Curriculum will be selected or created to facilitate spiritual growth using The Methodist Way as the paradigm for understanding the practices and goals of Christian discipleship. For children, youth, and adults, the discipleship pathway will help them understand what radical hospitality is and how it is practiced, with the measurable result of more Professions of Faith and Reaffirmations of Faith throughout the year. The discipleship pathway will help them understand and practice passionate worship, with a
resulting increase in worship attendance in the three primary Sunday worship services at St. James. The essentials of intentional discipleship will also be proffered so that members of the congregation understand the practices necessary to grow into spiritual maturity. Their responsibility and actions necessary to facilitate spiritual growth will be reinforced. This should result in an overall increase in participation in intentionally discipling groups of all types, from Sunday School classes to small groups to accountability meetings. This discipleship pathway will also affirm the role of risk-taking mission and service for one’s spiritual growth, resulting in more persons serving in ministry inside the church and in the world. Finally, the role of extravagant generosity will be taught and modeled so new believers and growing disciples across children, youth, and adult ministries make the connection between generosity and spiritual growth. This should result in increased giving to the general budget, capital projects, and missional opportunities.

In addition to the launch of Wednesday evening intentionally discipling groups in the first trimester, work will continue to align Sunday School offerings into this overall model for intentional discipleship to simplify management of and communication for the discipleship pathway. The church staff will be trained in the theology and praxis of the discipleship pathway and will then be tasked with its implementation across children, youth, and adult ministries. As part of this process, they will develop the children’s ministries council, youth ministries council, and adult ministries council to assist them in the management and implementation of the discipleship pathway. They will work with these councils to develop a system for identifying and training leaders, facilitators, and shepherds for these intentionally discipling groups so new groups can be offered on a
regular basis, both on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. These are the fundamentals of the model for intentional discipleship proposed for St. James to help the church become more effective at making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**Timeline for Launch Trimester**

Establishing dates for each primary step in this plan is essential for implementation to occur in an orderly and timely manner. If dates are not projected and fixed, the implementation plan is unlikely to happen as planned. Dates make the plan specific and measureable. They should allow enough time for each step to be implemented with excellence, yet they should happen quickly enough to leverage the energy and enthusiasm present in the plan’s development and to accord with the upcoming semester changes in the area school systems. If the dates in the implementation plan are too ambitious, persons will get overwhelmed and discouraged. If the dates in the implementation plan are too distant, commitment to the plan and the focus required for its implementation plan will wane. Either choice—too ambitious or too distant—would be demotivating. The key date in the implementation plan is the launch of the pilot trimester. Setting the launch date of the pilot trimester for January 18, 2012 should be neither too ambitious nor too distant.

**November 9, 2011: Staff Training and Deployment**

With a launch date of January 18, 2012 for the pilot trimester, an early November date for staff training and deployment is appropriate. It is early enough before the Thanksgiving through Christmas holiday season that the staff can focus on the
implementation plan without worries over holiday planning interference. As described in Chapter 6, the content for this training will include the ministry context of St. James, including both the demographics and the psychographics of the congregation; the history of St. James as it relates to discipleship; the theological foundation of Christian discipleship within United Methodism; and the model and implementation plan for intentional discipleship at St. James. This training is for the entire staff so they are working from a common understanding of Christian discipleship, using the same language, and having the same expectations. Following the training on November 9, 2011, the key staff members will be tasked with fulfilling their roles in the implementation plan.

November 23, 2011: Age-appropriate Systems Development and Integration

The next step is for the DCM, DYM, and EDOM to take the model for intentional discipleship and the implementation plan and adapt it to their individual ministry areas. This is a necessary step to prepare for the development and training of the age-level councils. This must be done in a way that keeps the overall vision for intentional discipleship integrated. The five practices of The Methodist Way are practices for children, youth, and adults. They will manifest themselves in age-appropriate ways, but they must remain integrated and unified in purpose. These staff persons will work individually and jointly to ensure they design age-appropriate discipleship pathways that are relevant for each age grouping yet are integrated in purpose and use a common language. This step will be executed and completed by November 23, 2011.
December 7, 2011: Age-level Councils Development and Training

Once the DCM, DYM, and EDOM receive the appropriate training, know their unique and specific roles in the plan for implementation, and envision how the plan will be implemented in their respective ministry areas, they will develop and train their age-level councils. The focus of the training is to assist them in attracting, connecting, training, and sustaining the intentionally discipling groups’ leaders, facilitators, and shepherds. This training event will take place on December 7, 2011 and will be for all three councils at the same time. It will include abridged content from the staff training. This is a vital step in the implementation plan because the councils’ understanding and ownership are imperative for the success of this model for intentional discipleship.

December 21, 2011: Finalizing Class Offerings and Curriculum Development

The DCM, DYM, and EDOM will work with their respective councils to finalize class offerings and secure or develop the necessary curriculum for the launch trimester in January 2012. This step will be completed in conjunction with the next step by December 21, 2011 so there is sufficient time to develop the marketing campaign. Though the curriculum may vary, each class offerings should fall into one of the five broad categories of The Methodist Way: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipleship, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. There may be other intentionally discipling groups offered at St. James, but the staff and councils will invest their energy into providing opportunities for new believers and growing disciples that support this operating definition of Christian discipleship.
December 21, 2011: Group Class Leaders and Shepherds Recruited and Trained

This step in the implementation plan will be completed in conjunction with the previous step, because class offerings and curriculum development are integrally related to the recruitment and training of class leaders, facilitators, and shepherds. As with the previous step, the DCM, DYM, and EDOM will work with their respective councils to recruit and train leaders, facilitators, and shepherds for the intentionally discipling groups offered on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. They will be trained in this model for intentional discipleship. Again, as with the previous step, this will be completed by December 21, 2011 to allow for sufficient time to develop the marketing campaign for this pilot trimester.

January 1, 2012: Integrated Congregational Marketing Campaign

With the previous steps in the implementation plan completed, attention will be turned to developing an integrated congregational marketing campaign. The Director of Communications, working under the supervision of the Executive Director of Worship and Arts, will develop a marketing campaign to ensure a successful launch of this intentional discipleship pathway. This marketing campaign will include the promotion of Sunday morning and Wednesday evening discipleship opportunities through the variety of communication channels available: from the pulpit on Sunday mornings, on the church’s website, through existing small groups, and through printed resources available at kiosks around the campus. It will be an integrated campaign, including marketing for children, youth, and adults. It will highlight The Methodist Way as the discipleship pathway at St. James. The development of this integrated marketing campaign will be
completed by January 1, 2012, though its implementation will continue through the launch of the pilot trimester.

January 18, 2012: Pilot Trimester Launched

The key date in this implementation plan is the launch of the pilot trimester. There are five reasons why January 18, 2012 is the best date to launch this model for intentional discipleship. First, this date is neither too ambitious nor too distant for its successful implementation. Second, though the model includes the slow but deliberate integration of existing Sunday School classes into the overall model, the primary date for the launch trimester needs to be on a Wednesday evening. Third, setting the date for January 18, 2012 gives enough time for the integrated congregational marketing campaign to have its intended effect, facilitating enrollment and involvement in the discipleship pathways for children, youth, and adults. Fourth, this date closely aligns with the restart of school after the Christmas holiday break. Fifth, it allows for ten weeks of classes, ending on March 28, 2012. This allows the pilot trimester to end before the schools release for spring break.

February 15, 2012: Mid-trimester Evaluation and Adjustments

On February 15, 2012, the staff persons responsible for the plan’s oversight and execution will meet to evaluate how the pilot trimester is progressing. They will consider the following questions: Are the intentionally discipling groups aligned well with The Methodist Way in adult, youth, and children’s ministry areas? Are people learning more about radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipleship, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity in age-appropriate ways? Was there sufficient
training for the group leaders, facilitators, and shepherds? Are they being connected and supported effectively? Did the integrated marketing plan have its intended effect? What gaps are appearing in the discipleship pathway? Where did the implementation plan fall short? Does the schedule still seem to fit well with people’s other commitments, including the school calendars?

March 28, 2012: Launch Trimester Completed

The pilot trimester will end on Wednesday, March 28, allowing for ten weeks of classes excluding Ash Wednesday. The ending date of March 28 aligns with spring break on school calendars and it comes before Holy Week on the church calendar. This is important because many families leave town for spring break, and the calendar at the church becomes busy with Holy Week activities before Easter Sunday. Ten weeks will be enough time for new believers and growing disciples to build relationships with one another and to explore topics of discipleship with some depth. It will also be short enough to help persons newly involved in intentionally discipling groups to not feel overcommitted. They will be free to continue in groups in the second trimester, but they will also have the freedom to try something new.

May 16, 2012: Evaluation Process Completed and Ministry Refined

The purpose of the pilot trimester is to test the model for intentional discipleship proposed by this ministry focus paper. It will need to be evaluated to determine its effectiveness and to determine what changes, if any, need to be made for the second trimester. The staff persons responsible for the plan’s oversight and execution will have met on February 15, 2012 to evaluate how the pilot trimester was progressing. Soon after
the launch trimester is completed on March 28, 2012, a lengthier, more formal evaluation process will commence. This process will include questionnaires for intentionally discipling group participants; exit interviews with selected participants performed by the DCM, DYM, and EDOM; observations from adult ministries council, youth ministries council, and children’s ministries council members; and analysis of the hard and soft data by the executive and directing staff members of St. James. These four steps will be explained in more detail later in this chapter. This evaluation process will be completed and the ministry refined by May 16, 2012 in preparation for the second trimester.

July 11, 2012: Second Trimester Launched

There will be a lengthy break of fourteen weeks between the end of the first trimester and the beginning of the second trimester. This will allow for sufficient time to evaluate the pilot trimester and make necessary adjustments. The more important reason, however, is scheduling. For the people of St. James, May is usually filled with family and school obligations, from Mother’s Day to the end of the school year. It is hard for persons to participate in church activities on a regular basis due to their other commitments. In addition, because family vacations typically follow the end of the school year, June participation in church activities is sporadic. Therefore, May and June will be an extended break for intentionally discipling groups on Wednesdays and for some Sunday School classes to account for these other activities. The second trimester will be launched on July 11, 2012, which is after the Fourth of July holiday weekend.
Leadership Responsibilities and Development

Though the entire church staff will be involved in the initial training for the launch of this model for intentional discipleship, there are a few staff persons critical to its successful launch and certain staff functions necessary for its proper development. The senior pastor will be primarily responsible for effectively casting the vision for an effective discipleship pathway at the church. The DCM, DYM, and EDOM will be the key staff persons responsible for this ministry’s implementation and development, ensuring that the lay leadership necessary for the successful execution of the plan are spiritually mature, have the right passions, skills, and spiritual gifts to aid in its implementation. In addition, an overview of the leadership tasks and review of the training sessions will help clarify this important aspect of the implementation plan.

Senior Pastor

I will be responsible for the visioning for the intentional discipleship pathway and the initial training for staff members. As examined in Chapter 2, St. James has a long history of underselling discipleship as a result of the memories of a new church start and the affluence, power, and expectations in the congregation. Adult discipleship in particular has suffered from systemic and strategic neglect at the church. This makes the development of an effective model for intentional discipleship challenging, because many years of cultural inattention must be overcome. Therefore, the task of clearly and consistently casting a vision for discipleship by the senior pastor is essential for the success of this model. The vision will have to be cast frequently from the pulpit, in groups, and in one-on-one conversations. Discipleship will have to be defined with
consistency, clarity, and specificity as radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipleship, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. These in turn must be linked to their shortened forms—Connecting, Worshipping, Growing, Serving, and Giving—used for marketing purposes.

Executive Director of Ministries (EDOM) and Age-level Directors

The DCM, DYM, and EDOM will be responsible for coordinating, developing, and managing the intentional discipleship pathway in their respective ministry areas. They have important responsibilities for most of the steps in the implementation plan. First, they will take the model and implementation plan and adapt them to their individual ministry areas. Second, they will develop and train the three councils related to intentional discipleship: the adult ministries council, youth ministries council, and children’s ministries council. Third, they will work with their respective councils to finalize class offerings and secure or develop the necessary curriculum for the launch trimester. In conjunction with this step, they will work with their respective councils to recruit and train leaders, facilitators, and shepherds for the intentionally discipling groups offered on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, training them in this model for intentional discipleship. Fourth, they will work with the Director of Communications to ensure the integrated marketing plan for the congregation is accurate. Fifth, they will oversee the launch of the pilot trimester, ensuring the details necessary for a successful launch are addressed. Sixth, they will evaluate the pilot trimester midterm and post-term using the previously defined criteria for success, making adjustments to the plan as
necessary. Finally, they will repeat the steps as necessary for each trimester to help this new ministry initiative takes root in the life of the congregation.

Lay Leadership

Lay leadership, or non-staff leadership, will be essential for the success of this model for intentional discipleship at St. James. These volunteers will form the majority of leaders, facilitators, and shepherds for the intentionally discipling groups taking place on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. Moreover, these volunteers will comprise the age level councils working with the staff persons to implement the plan, provide oversight, and guide the discipleship pathways into the future. Due to the critical functions these volunteers will perform, care and diligence in the attraction or recruitment process will be very important. The selection criteria will include spiritual maturity, passion for Christian discipleship, relational skills, spiritual gifts, and reputation in the church and community. These persons must be growing disciples, committed to Jesus Christ and His Church. They should have a passion to see Christians grow in their faith because that is the core of intentional discipleship. They should have strong relational skills because the success of this ministry depends greatly on interpersonal relationships. They should have spiritual gifts that support their ministry roles, whether as a council member or as an intentionally discipling group leader, facilitator, or shepherd. They also must have a good reputation in the church and community, for much of their credibility as leaders will arise from their reputation.
Lay Leadership Tasks

There are five primary lay leadership tasks required to implement this new ministry. The first is leadership. The primary purpose of the age level councils is to assist the appropriate staff person with the overall leadership of his or her ministry area. The leadership task includes clarifying the vision of their particular ministry area as it fits underneath the overall vision of the church regarding intentional discipleship, then leading the ministry area into fulfillment of that discipleship pathway. This requires the second primary lay leadership task: administration. Managing and administering a growing discipleship pathway will require the involvement of the entire council, not just the staff person. The third leadership task will be teaching. Some lay leaders will be called upon to teach intentionally discipling groups, whether they are small groups, Sunday School classes, or other classes. The third lay leadership task will be facilitation. Some intentionally discipling groups will not require a person with strong teaching gifts. They will instead require a person with strong facilitation gifts, which differs from teaching. Loosely defined, a teacher imparts information, while a facilitator enables healthy group discussion. The fourth lay leadership task that will be needed will be shepherding. This task may be fulfilled by the teacher or facilitator of the intentionally discipling group, or it may be fulfilled by another group member. Regardless, someone will need to take responsibility for ensuring relationships are being developed within the intentionally discipling group, both with God and with one another. The fifth primary leadership task will be assisting, which correlates to the spiritual gift of helps. The implementation of this strategic ministry plan will require persons willing to assist wherever and whenever needed.
Training Sessions

As outlined earlier in this chapter, I will lead the initial training session for the church staff. If discipleship is to be defined with consistency, clarity, and specificity, and if the discipleship pathway is to move from haphazard to strategic planning, then the senior pastor must be visibly leading the way. His involvement in teaching the discipleship pathway is indispensable because he is its developer and chief proponent. In addition, if the shift from lay-led and empowered to staff-led and lay-empowered is to continue, the senior pastor must direct the efforts. The training session for the newly recruited councils will be led by the DCM, DYM, and EDOM, with the senior pastor involved in a secondary role. Finally, the training for the intentionally discipling group leaders, facilitators, and shepherds will be led by the DCM, DYM, and EDOM, and their respective council members. This will be important for conveying ownership of these discipleship pathways beyond a few key individuals on the church staff.

Resources

There are three broad categories of resources necessary for the implementation of this model for intentional discipleship at St. James. Though they are straightforward, identification of appropriate resources to support this new ministry initiative is important for its success. First, the appropriate facilities must be reserved and space assigned for Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Second, the curriculum must be procured or developed, and the resources necessary for lay leadership training must be prepared. Third, the integrated congregational marketing campaign must be developed and implemented, along with the accompanying promotional items.
Appropriate Facilities Secured and Space Assigned

St. James is a 1,200 member congregation with limited facilities available for ministry utilization. From previous experience, the church discovered that the three buildings and one portable building can support approximately two hundred people for discipleship opportunities offered for children, youth, and adults on campus at the same time. This assumes that two of those discipleship opportunities use the large sanctuary in Building One and the smaller auditorium in Building Three. Otherwise, the number is much lower. Therefore, ensuring the appropriate facilities and classrooms are secured and space is assigned will be critical tasks in the implementation plan. The building supervisor and executive assistant will be responsible for these two tasks, as they are for other ministry scheduling. They have the most knowledge and experience in maximizing space for ministry offerings among the three permanent buildings and one portable building. Their work will happen in cooperation with the administrative assistant responsible for registration of the intentionally discipling groups in order for space to be assigned according to group size. Some groups will require restricted enrollment per trimester due to space limitations.

Curriculum and Lay Leadership Training Resources

The DCM, DYM, and EDOM will be responsible for ensuring that the intentionally discipling groups have appropriate curriculum and resources in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Curriculum for intentionally discipling groups offered during the trimesters should cover at least one of the five practices of The Methodist Way. While each class may not cover all the five
practices and subject matter may address them tangentially at times, these persons will ensure curriculum is aligned with our operating definition of discipleship and the goals of the discipleship pathway. The DCM, DYM, and EDOM will also be responsible for working with the senior pastor to develop the necessary training resources for the councils and lay leadership, providing an overview of the ministry context of St. James; the history of St. James as it relates to Christian discipleship; the theological foundation of Christian discipleship within United Methodism; and the model and implementation plan for intentional discipleship at St. James.

Marketing Materials and Promotional Plan

All marketing materials and the promotional plan will be developed by the Director of Communications under the supervision of the Executive Director of Worship and Arts. The promotional plan will include the marketing of Sunday morning and Wednesday evening discipleship opportunities through the variety of communication channels available: from the pulpit on Sunday mornings, on the church’s website, through existing small groups, and through printed resources available at kiosks around the campus. It will be an integrated campaign, including marketing for children, youth, and adults. The marketing campaign will highlight The Methodist Way as the discipleship pathway at St. James and help members of the congregation understand the importance of intentionally discipling groups to their spiritual growth. The marketing materials will continue to use the designs previously developed for the first efforts at systematizing the ministry areas at St. James: Connecting, Worshiping, Growing, Serving, and Giving.
Assessing the Pilot Trimester

The trimester beginning January 18, 2012 is a pilot trimester. Although much research has gone into the model for intentional discipleship proposed by this ministry focus paper, it is an experimental ministry project that will require testing and evaluation. Adjustments will need to be made to the model in order to increase its effectiveness, with the conclusions drawn to be immediately implemented in the second trimester beginning July 11, 2012. In order for the assessment process to be comprehensive and effective, it will include written questionnaires to be distributed at the end of classes; observations during the trimester from the age level councils; exit interviews with select class participants performed by directing staff members; and comprehensive analysis of the data by the executive and directing staff of the church.

Written Questionnaires

Regular entry and exit points will allow for an assessment tool to be administered methodically by the leaders and facilitators of the intentionally discipling groups. These self-assessments will be offered to participants at the end of every trimester to measure their growth as disciples of Jesus Christ. The assessment tool, found in the Appendix, will measure participants’ self-assessed growth in the five practices of The Methodist Way: Connecting, Worshiping, Growing, Serving, and Giving. Using a numeric scale, participants will indicate where they believe they were at the beginning of the trimester and where they believe they are at the end of the trimester. The assessment tool will also have a section for participants to evaluate the class facilitation and content so improvements can be made as necessary. These assessment tools will be collected from
every class at the end of the trimester and used by the executive and directing staff as data points in the assessment process.

Observations to Assess Simplicity and Effectiveness

Members of the adult ministries council, youth ministries council, and children’s ministries council will gather soft data on the effectiveness of the discipleship pathway by periodically visiting the intentionally discipling groups during the trimester. They will observe the class setting to gauge its functionality for the intentionally discipling group. They will note the format of the class as well, discerning its effectiveness in helping people build relationships with Jesus Christ and with one another. They also will take notice of the participants’ conversations to discern whether or not the class seems to be facilitating growth along the discipleship pathway. Finally, they will ascertain if the classes seem to be appropriate for new believers and growing Christians, or if they seem to be targeted more for mature followers of Jesus Christ. Upon completing their observations, they will write a one page summary for the executive and directing staff performing the formal assessments after the trimester is completed.

Exit Interviews with Select Participants

At the end of the trimester, the DCM, DYM, and EDOM will each randomly select three participants from intentionally discipling groups within their respective ministry areas. They will perform exit interviews with these persons. These directing staff members will invite the participants to meet with them one-on-one in a relaxing environment to have a discussion of the participant’s experiences in the intentionally discipling group using that person’s questionnaire as a basis for discussion. Their goal
will be to explore more deeply how that person evaluates the intentionally discipling group. Did they make new friends in the group? Did they deepen existing relationships? Were they challenged to grow in their faith? In what practices in The Methodist Way did they feel they grew the most and the least? An informal conversation in a relaxing environment should reveal more soft data points to support the hard data the questionnaires measure. After each exit interview is completed, the staff member will write a one-page summary of the exit interview to be used by the executive and directing staff performing the formal assessment process by May 16, 2012.

Analysis of Hard Data and Soft Data

The church’s Senior Management Team—the managing executive director, executive director of worship and arts, EDOM, and me—will work with the DCM and DYM to formally assess the pilot trimester by May 16, 2012. The goals of the discipleship pathway are to help persons become more radical in their hospitality, more passionate in their worship, more intentional in their discipleship, more risk-taking in their mission and service, and more extravagant in their generosity. All hard and soft data will be compiled and analyzed to determine how successful the pilot trimester was in helping persons move towards these goals. If they are moving towards the goals, then it offers evidence that they are becoming disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, and the model can be judged as successful. The executive and directing staff performing this analysis will summarize and document their conclusions, making adjustments to the model as necessary.
Report on Results

The results of the assessment will be reported to the church staff, ministry councils, volunteer leaders of the intentionally discipling groups, and the Leadership Board of the church. Each group will be informed about the assessment process and presented with the results of the process, including changes made to the model for the second trimester starting July 11, 2012. The senior pastor, EDOM, DYM, and DCM will be the presenters and make themselves available for discussion regarding the discipleship pathway at St. James.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this ministry focus paper was to develop an effective model for intentional discipleship at St. James United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida because the church’s mission, in harmony with the United Methodist denomination, is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The impetus behind this purpose is that St. James has not been as strategic about fulfilling this mission as it should have been. While church systems are not solely responsible for the spiritual growth of each person, systems produce what they were designed to produce. It is the author’s contention that one of the leadership tasks in this church is to create systems and environments where the shaping of Christian disciples can take place in compelling and sustainable ways.

Throughout most of its history, St. James has emphasized worship and service over Christian discipleship. Worshiping God with passion and engaging in act of risk-taking mission and service are certainly part of Christian discipleship. However, the church has not intentionally and strategically designed pathways for Christians to move from being new believers to growing disciples, and from growing disciples to mature disciples. The church has suffered from a lack of strategic thinking about discipleship, both individually and congregationally. The church staff and lay leadership have not done a good job of intentionally creating and sustaining pathways for spiritual growth. In other words, they have not been intentional about discipleship. As a result, many persons in the congregation have setting for being converts instead of disciples. Therefore, St. James
must get serious about developing and sustaining a pathway for discipleship that enables individuals to grow.

In order to achieve this purpose of this ministry focus paper, the ministry context of St. James was studied. Using demographic, geographic, and psychographic data, it was discovered that most persons in the church’s primary ministry area, the New Tampa/Wesley Chapel area of Florida, area are highly educated. They work in white-collar occupations—mostly executive, managerial, or other professional roles. Using the MOSAIC typology and descriptions, approximately half can be described as New Suburbia Families. They are strongly family-oriented and child-centric, which leads to structuring their lives around school calendars and expectations. They are affluent, which affords them the opportunity to live in restricted and gated communities, which subsequently leads to economic segregation and a proclivity to community service. These factors contributed to a model of intentional discipleship that follows school calendars, has defined starting and ending points, and is implemented across children, youth, and adult ministries so families can participate together.

In order to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, it was necessary to develop a clear definition of discipleship. Therefore, the second section of this ministry focus paper explored the theological understanding of discipleship by reviewing current and influential literature in discipleship, examining United Methodist theology and praxis in discipleship and biblical theology regarding Christian discipleship. As a result of this research, a disciple of Jesus Christ was defined as one who chooses to adopt Christ’s way of living as his or her way of living in this world as demonstrated by loving one another and bearing fruit. It is a person who is committed not only to Jesus’
way of life but having a personal allegiance to Jesus himself. It is orthopraxy and orthodoxy. It is evidenced in living a life of radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipling, salty service, and extravagant generosity. This definition of Christian discipleship led to a model for intentional discipling that targets new believers and growing disciples in the intentionally discipling groups that are offered. It uses The Methodist Way as a paradigm for Christian discipleship because this paradigm is faithful to the Bible and to United Methodist distinctives. The Methodist Way clarifies and develops theology and praxis. It also offers metrics by which the effectiveness of the model can be measured.

Upon the foundation of context and theology, section three proposed a model for intentional discipleship and described the implementation plan in detail. The goal was to develop clear, systematic pathways for children, youth, and adults to produce disciples of Jesus Christ in alignment with the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The model uses an educational institution pattern instead of a multiplying small group pattern. It is simple in approach and access, with targeted levels of spiritual maturity. It uses United Methodist praxes and metrics of discipling for the twenty-first century: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional discipling, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. The pathway components were developed or redeveloped strategically with those metrics in mind; age-level councils development and training; the simplification and increased intentionality of Sunday School offerings and current Wednesday evening Oasis offerings; and the development of a system to identify and train leaders, shepherds, and other necessary
volunteers. The implementation plan was designed with a sufficient level of detail in order for the implementation to be successful.

The conclusions of sections one and two have implications for every area of ministry at St. James. Whether the ministry area is worship, service, or discipleship, the leadership of the church must take into consideration who it is God has positioned them to reach. People who live in New Tampa/Wesley Chapel bring attributes, preferences, and experiences that should influence the design of worship services and serving opportunities. This research should also influence the content of biblical teaching and the ways persons are motivated to practice hospitality and generosity. A deeper understanding of the biblical and United Methodist ways of defining Christian discipleship can bring clarity and focus to all church ministry systems, from administration to the nursery. The church cannot be all things to all people, nor can it compete with the culture in providing opportunities for entertainment. Therefore, the church should focus on its mission and fulfill it in clear, compelling ways.

St. James is well positioned to offer an effective model for intentional discipleship with excellence, relevance, and the right number of choices for people. The church is an evangelical mainline in an established location, but not too old to change as necessary. The available resources and prominence in the community position St. James to reach hundreds, if not thousands, of new people for Jesus Christ, helping New Tampa/Wesley Chapel residents to become disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The development of an intentional discipleship pathway is one of the keys to realizing this goal.
APPENDIX

CLASS EVALUATION / SPIRITUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Facilitation</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The class session was well organized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The instructor(s) provided valuable insight to the discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The instructor(s) encouraged questions/discussion.</td>
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</table>

B) Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B) Content</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content provided biblical insight.</td>
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<td>The pace of the class was appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The class content was at the right level of depth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(If not, was it too deep or too basic?)</td>
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C) Spiritual Impact

Please indicate for each spiritual impact area (i.e. Connect, Worship, Grow…) on the continuum a starting point of where you were at the beginning of the study (with a dot) and draw a line to where you are now (ending with an arrow). See example.

**EXAMPLE:**

I take my dog on a walk every day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

**Spiritual Impact areas:**

**Connect:** I look for opportunities to share the love of Jesus and invite/welcome people to church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

**Worship:** I seek to worship God in all that I do, including having regular devotions and prayer time, and also make worship with my church family a priority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<tbody>
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**Grow:** I make a deliberate, purposeful effort toward developing my faith through regular participation in a small group where I learn and am held accountable.

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<tr>
<th>Never</th>
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<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</table>

**Serve:** I regularly share the love of Christ through serving others both inside and outside the church.

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<tr>
<th>Never</th>
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<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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**Give:** I am a faithful steward of all the resources God has entrusted to me as evidenced by my sacrificial giving to God's church and giving generously to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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We welcome any additional comments/suggestions on the back.

**Comments/Suggestions:** (Please continue on the back if needed)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


