The Making of Men: Nurturing Boys at Kirk in the Hills to Become Men in Christ

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

BY
WILLIAM ADAMS
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ABSTRACT

The Making of Men: Nurturing Boys at Kirk in the Hills to Become Men in Christ
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2017

Living into an identity in Christ and serving others is in many ways counter to upper-class American culture. Raising boys in an affluent area to be Christ-like men presents a challenge. As adolescent boys seek their own identities in Christ, the men in these boys’ lives must coach them by exemplifying their own identities in Christ and call to be true men of God—to be servants of God with Christ.

While the American Mainline Church dwindles, the traditional PC(USA) church of Kirk in the Hills—located in an affluent suburb of Detroit, Michigan—is reversing trends. A recent self-study revealed that this is a large Millennial congregation and offers the ideal setting to train men in Christ to coach boys to be Christian men.

This doctoral project begins to respond to the challenges of raising boys living amidst affluence to have identities in Christ. The response rests in the men of Kirk in the Hills and its faith community. They must be positive mentors and role models who help guide boys to be men of God. However, if the men are going to take on this role, they will need to be fed and spiritually disciplined. They will have to be taught to serve as Jesus served and deeply learn that being a true man in Christ means being a servant to all.

This three-part discussion explores Kirk in the Hills as well as its community context. It biblically defines the process and practice of teaching men of the local church to be the servants of God that Christ calls them to be. Through a focused ministry strategy, the hope is that their “manly” example will inspire the younger generations of boys to serve God and others.

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PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
INTRODUCTION

Through faith in Jesus the Christ, humanity is given the power to become children of God (Jn 1:12). One of the Church’s most important roles is raising and nurturing the next generation to know and love God and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Whether these individuals of the next generation are the infants of believing parents or new adult converts to the faith, it is the local church’s responsibility to nurture these “little ones” (Mt 18:14) to recognize that they are part of the family of God. It is the church’s responsibility to encourage each member to be active in the life and mission of the faith community.

This project focuses exclusively on a specific portion of God’s family: men. This discussion defines what it means to be a Christian man in the twenty-first century. Since the local church is charged with nurturing and encouraging the next generation to know and love Jesus Christ, it is imperative that those who are nurturing and encouraging have a solid foundation in their relationship with Christ as well. The overall thesis for this project seeks to address and build the necessary bridge between older and younger brothers in Christ. As adolescent boys seek their own identities in Christ, the men in these boys’ lives must coach and nurture them by exemplifying their own identities in Christ and embracing the call to be true men of God—to be servants of God with Christ.

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1 All Scripture is quoted from the *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), unless otherwise noted.

Who a man is in Christ affects his roles in society, in his family, in his workplace, and in his faith community. The local church has the responsibility to shape men to be men in Christ. Men in Christ look upon their fellow members of the faith community as brothers and sisters in Jesus and recognize that all are part of the family of God. Men in Christ follow the example of their Lord Jesus Christ and are joy-filled servants in their respective roles and communities.

This project will offer suggestions to the local church seeking to fulfill its responsibility to guide and nurture men of faith. Through Bible study, fellowship events, service opportunities, and prayer, Christian men can deepen their faith and be living examples for the adolescent boys of the faith community. In their confidence through faith in Christ, the men of the church can take the necessary steps to reach out to their younger brothers in Christ and bridge the chasm that seems to be apparent between them and younger generations.

In addition to the challenge of nurturing men of Christ to be living examples for adolescent boys of the church, the context of this project invites another set of obstacles. The context in which this project is set is a larger, affluent American mainline church in the Midwest. The church is called Kirk in the Hills.

Kirk in the Hills affiliates with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—also known as PC(USA)—and is located in an affluent suburb of Detroit, Michigan. The church is traditional in its culture and setting. This is evidenced by the multiple “high church” Sunday morning worship services. Each service includes a processional led by youth acolytes, speaking from multiple clergy, and complicated anthems sung by a professional
choir with accompaniment by a massive pipe organ. The traditional setting also includes the Usher Corps, comprised exclusively of men.

Kirk in the Hills is changing demographically. A recent self-study revealed that its nearly two thousand members comprise a “Millennial Church,” noticeably growing in the area of young families. While these new families are attracted to the robust children, youth, and family programming at the church, as well as the traditional worship and setting it offers, some of the traditions struggle to be maintained. The glaring long-standing tradition in need of new life is the aforementioned Usher Corps.

Many of the men who currently serve as ushers have served faithfully for decades. A number of them can (and often do) recite the story of when the senior pastor of the church called them personally and asked them to serve as an usher. To serve as an usher of the church always has been considered an honor. The ushers of the church even have a specific uniform: a navy blue suit, white dress shirt, black shoes, and the signature navy blue and red-striped usher tie.

The Usher Corps, however, is declining in numbers. The group is a microcosm of one of the most challenging issues facing traditional mainline churches in the present day. As faithful men are called to the Church Triumphant, retire to other communities away from the church, or are no longer physically able to perform their usher duties, younger generations of men simply are not being added swiftly enough to compensate the significant attrition in the usher ranks. The Usher Corps has been the primary avenue of male involvement in the church for the past decade.

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The men of Kirk in the Hills are in need of nurture and encouragement from their church. As the long-standing tradition of a male-member-only Usher Corps is abolished with the invitation of women to serve as ushers, the men of the faith community are in need of fellowship and service as well as faith-growing opportunities designed particularly for them. This project will address these needs.

This project also will begin to respond to the challenges of raising boys living amidst Midwestern American affluence to live into their identities in Christ. The response rests in the men of the church and the community in the lives of these boys. The men of the faith community must be a living example for the boys to follow. The men also need to be positive mentors and role models who help guide boys to be men of God. However, if the men are going to take on this role, they will need to be fed and spiritually disciplined. They will have to be taught to serve as Christ served. Each man of the church will need to learn that to be a true man in Christ is to be a servant of all. This project will define the process and practice of teaching men to be the servants of God Christ calls them to be. It is their “manly” example that can inspire the younger generations of boys to serve God and others.

This project is divided into three parts. Part One discusses the Kirk’s specific ministry context and includes the first two chapters. Chapter 1 focuses exclusively on the context of Kirk in the Hills, the church where I serve as a pastor. Kirk in the Hills is a congregation with a rich and interesting history. This chapter provides an opportunity to briefly describe this history and the “founding fathers” who built the church and its reputation. The chapter also looks at the church in the present. Kirk in the Hills has undergone some significant and trend-breaking changes in the past few years, namely the
significant growth in its youth programs and the increase in younger families joining the church. The chapter will review these changes as well as a recent self-study that the congregation completed in preparation for its recent search for a senior pastor.

Part Two of the project focuses on theology. Chapter 2 reviews significant literature and resources used in addressing the project’s thesis. In the beginning, the general research concentrated on masculinity, manhood, and what it means to be a man. Interestingly, women have written the majority of academic literature over the past couple of decades on these topics. Unfortunately, much of the literature also seems to portray that being manly or masculine is not necessarily a positive attribute. With the end result of the thesis being that of adolescent boys and their learning how to take part in God’s family, this chapter also reviews resources dealing with adolescence and the theology of identity. It also studies those resources pertaining to adoptive youth ministry and mentoring youth.

Chapter 3 delves into the understanding that Jesus Christ is the example for all men. With that understanding, the chapter develops a practical theology of men being servants of God within the context of Kirk in the Hills and following Christ’s example. This practical theology lays the foundation for building a framework for the bridging and mentoring relationship between the older men of Kirk in the Hills and their younger brothers in Christ.

Part Three of this project addresses ministry practice. It explains how the mentoring relationship can be implemented at Kirk in the Hills. Chapter 4 discusses masculine spirituality. It outlines the plan to initiate, implement, and educate the men of the church about being servants of God. This chapter also discusses how the men of Kirk
in the Hills will come to better understand and live into their identities as men in Christ through the spiritual disciplines.

Chapter 5 outlines how the men of Kirk in the Hills can reach the adolescent boys in their midst. The men need to be open, understanding, and accepting of the adolescent underworld where they are not readily welcomed, let alone ever invited. For these men in Christ to serve their younger brothers requires courage and humility—and above all, faith. With the understanding that they are men in Christ, the chapter offers a practical way for the men of Kirk in the Hills to form lasting relationships with the boys, who are indeed their brothers in Christ.

In *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church*, Mark Cannister offers this insight: “To become a disciple is to enter into a journey of lifelong discipleship at the moment of conversion. Discipleship is not a second, optional step in Christian life; discipleship is the Christian life.” Being a disciple, as the root of the word implies, requires discipline. Jesus told his disciples and potential followers that it would be and is a daily struggle to be a disciple. Luke 9:23 records Jesus saying, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Recognizing that they are indeed disciples of Jesus Christ is something that the men of Kirk in the Hills have to realize and, more importantly, embrace as a lifestyle. Their recognition, or re-recognition in most cases, of their calling to be Jesus’ disciples is crucial to fulfilling their baptismal vows and ultimate purpose as men in Christ: teaching

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4 Mark Cannister, *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), Kindle: location 1060.
and nurturing new generations of Christ’s followers to understand their place in the adoptive family of God. Ray S. Anderson and Dennis B. Guersney explain in On Being Family: A Social Theology of Family:

Having been baptized into the new family of God, we are adopted into the filial relation that exists between God the Son and God the Father. We are brother and sister to God in Christ. And when we call each other brother and sister, this is more than an affected characteristic of a certain Christian lifestyle—it is a new criteria of our worth, and one that will survive.\(^5\)

The future for the men of Kirk in the Hills is tied directly to the future of the church as a whole. Unfortunately, there is at present no connection between the younger and older generations. At the same time, the Men of the Kirk, as a group, have lost their vision and purpose. As a group, Men of the Kirk must reach out to the younger generations of the faith community and become involved in these young lives, thereby sharing the love of God in Christ with those who desperately need it. The men of Kirk in the Hills must realize that the younger generations of the church truly are adopted members of the Body of Christ; yet, in order to do this, the men of Kirk in the Hills must recognize their own adoption into God’s family through the truest example and image of a man, Jesus the Christ. Jesus is the perfect example for men to follow. As Patrick M. Arnold writes: “In Jesus we glimpse the ultimate archetype of what a man can be, the deepest expression of what living a human life means.”\(^6\)


CHAPTER 1
KIRK IN THE HILLS AND ITS MEN

Kirk in the Hills is a large PC(USA) congregation located in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, a northwestern suburb of Detroit. Many people think that Kirk in the Hills is one of the more beautiful Presbyterian churches in the United States.1 “The Kirk,” as it is known affectionately by its members and the Detroit Presbytery alike, is the largest PC(USA) church in the state of Michigan. It is an imposing and majestic edifice, measuring almost 80,000 square feet and includes the world’s largest carillon.2 The Kirk’s renowned carillon has seventy-seven bells, ranging in size from a few pounds to seven tons.3 The grand gothic architecture of Kirk in the Hills is modeled after Melrose

1 While I was in the midst of the interview process with Kirk in the Hills, several seminary professors and mentors raved about the beauty of the church and grounds, calling it “the most beautiful Presbyterian church in the country.” Andrew Purves, interview by author, Pittsburgh, PA, 2010; Craig Barnes, interview by author, Pittsburgh, PA, 2010.


Abbey, a thirteenth-century Catholic church ruin in Scotland. The stonework, the intricacy of the design, and its sheer size draw photographers and tourists year round. The church building is located amidst forty-one acres of sprawling, well-manicured grounds consisting of rolling grass hills and strategically placed trees and shrubs. The vast acreage includes a portion of Island Lake located immediately behind the church building. While there is ample parking surrounding the building, none of the parking lots, except one that is very small, are visible from the road. This gives the church a pristine, unspoiled presentation to passersby.

The original building—a sprawling mansion—and the grounds were the generous gifts of Colonel Edwin George. His estate was called Cedarholm and served as George’s summer home. George fought in World War I. He entered the Army as a captain and was honorably discharged with the rank of colonel. George was also a successful businessman, who made his fortune as a furrier and eventually as a real estate developer. Additionally, he was a world traveler. It is written that “Colonel George seldom passed a church of any kind, if time permitted without stopping to kneel for a few minutes in prayer.” While he did not particularly care for the denominational separation of the Christian Church, George was a long-time member of the Fort Street Presbyterian Church in Detroit.

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6 Ibid., 8-9.

7 Ibid., 15.
In spite of the gothic appearance of its church building, Kirk in the Hills is relatively new. The congregation was formed in 1947. The first services were held in George’s sitting room, which had been converted into a chapel. As church membership grew in number, space became a premium. While the sanctuary was being constructed, the congregation held worship services across the street in the local high school. The towering carillon and sanctuary were completed in 1958. An education wing and the refectory were completed in 1965.8

The Founding Men of the Kirk

When considering the history of the men of Kirk in the Hills, Charles H. Lippy’s *Do Real Men Pray?* is a valuable resource. Lippy writes about particular images that fit the historical leaders of the Kirk, and his focus on Protestant White men is appropriate to the context of analyzing the Kirk’s historical men. According to the 2015 *Self Study*, Kirk in the Hills is a predominantly White congregation, with almost 97 percent categorized as “Anglos.”9 For this reason, it is statistically logical and prudent to focus on White, American, Protestant males when discussing the men of Kirk in the Hills.10 As Lippy writes: “[White Protestant men in the United States] are, for the most part, men of social

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10 There are several men in the Kirk’s faith community who racially and ethnically identify as something other than White. There is also a small percentage of males at Kirk in the Hills who hail from other countries and cultures and do not fit neatly into Lippy’s relatively closed spectrum. Truthfully, in terms of race and ethnicity, the Men of the Kirk are probably the most diverse group of Kirk in the Hills. However, with consideration of the very small percentage of the aforementioned males, Lippy’s “White American Protestant” spectrum fits well into the understanding of the male population and even the culture of Kirk in the Hills.
and economic privilege. Thus while they may not represent all American men, they are indicative of those whose influence has long penetrated every niche of American life.”

Based in the Kirk in the Hills, this faith community is comprised of members who are of social and economic privilege. Therefore, Lippy’s conclusions, as well as his assumptions, are helpful in painting a historically accurate portrait of the men of Kirk in the Hills.

Lippy outlines six “images” or image clusters that can be used to depict the history of White American Protestant men. The six image clusters to which Lippy refers are the dutiful patriarch, the gentlemen entrepreneur, the courageous adventurer, the efficient businessman, the positive thinker, and the faithful leader. Lippy, however, does offer a disclaimer with his six image clusters and admits, “These six clusters are there more representative than exhaustive.”

While each of these images fits into the historical picture that Lippy paints, the leaders of Kirk in the Hills most readily can be seen in the latter three. Lippy asserts, “Close examination of the history of White American Protestantism reveals a host of images oriented toward men that illuminate what it means to be religious, of how to be spiritual, of what a life of Christian devotion is all about.”

As the United States rebounded from World War I, and moved away from Muscular Christianity, Lippy’s fourth image emerged for White American Protestant


12 Ibid., 212.

13 Ibid., 13.

14 Todd Ladd and James Mathisen, Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 13-14; see also Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 209 and 219, for his comments on Muscular Christianity.
men: the efficient businessman.\textsuperscript{15} With regards to this particular image, Lippy writes: “In the opening decades of the twentieth century, down at least to the time of the Great Depression, the \textit{efficient businessman} became the model for the White American Protestant male and man of privilege who endeavored to nurture spiritual life.”\textsuperscript{16} He also credits the efficient businessman as “one catalyst in transforming the United States from an agrarian to an industrial nation.”\textsuperscript{17}

In the image of the efficient businessman, the convergence of Lippy’s images and the history of Kirk in the Hills can be seen. George, the chief philanthropist and dreamer of Kirk in the Hills, fits uniformly into Lippy’s efficient businessman image. Lippy comments:

\begin{quote}
In industrializing America, Protestant Christian men could assure their success and thus position themselves to carry out their responsibilities as dutiful patriarch if they were dynamic leaders. Moving to the top ranks of leadership in business would bring wealth and power that could be used not just for the benefits of a man’s family, but the improvement of the whole society.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

George certainly attained top ranks of leadership and saw wealth and success as belonging to God. He is quoted as saying, “To give unto God material wealth that belonged to him in the first place is minor to the giving of one’s life in the unselfish devotion, ministering in God’s name and expounding Christ’s Gospel of love and righteous living.”\textsuperscript{19} The ideals of George became the building blocks of Kirk in the Hills.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 16.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 210.
\item Ibid.
\item Kirk in the Hills, \textit{Dreams and Visions}, 17.
\end{enumerate}
These ideals, therefore, attracted a certain kind of White American Christian man to join the Kirk in its founding. The efficient businessmen made the Kirk and set forth the path on which it would follow for decades to come. As Lippy points out, “In American Protestantism, the White Christian man might still reflect the models of the dutiful patriarch, the gentlemen entrepreneur, and the courageous adventurer, but he was also an efficient businessman.” The male members of the Kirk as a collective group certainly would agree that this image still describes the majority of their ranks.

As the world recovered from World War II, Lippy suggests another image that became more readily seen in White American Protestant men: the positive thinker. Without question, the Kirk’s second pastor, Harold DeW Informt, epitomized Lippy’s “positive thinker” image. DeW Informt’s leadership encouraged others to fully utilize their gifts and talents. However, just as Lippy notes about the positive thinker image, DeW Informt also “represented an almost extreme form of individualism.” While this could be seen as a negative, his leadership did inspire members of the Kirk, including leaders of business and the community, to build a magnificent edifice for future generations of Christians to enjoy and use to God’s glory.

DeW Informt served as the Kirk’s second pastor from 1953 until his death in 1971. Under his leadership, vision, and fundraising, the Kirk as it is seen today was built. Much of the formality and tradition, for which the Kirk has a proud reputation, also was

20 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 16.


22 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 211.

23 Kirk in the Hills, “Senior Pastor Search: Our Beginnings,”
established during DeWindt’s tenure. He was known as a passionate preacher and is said to have spent on average thirty hours each week writing and preparing for Sunday’s sermon.

DeWindt worked closely with Roger Kyes. He was an executive vice president and director of General Motors and president of the Kirk’s board of trustees. Kyes also served as United States Deputy Secretary of Defense during Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency. DeWindt and Kyes’ relationship as faithful leaders of the Kirk is legendary. With regards to their partnership, Kirk historians recall, “Years later, some Kirk members would say that the young pastor had the administrative ability to hold a top position with an auto company and Mr. Kyes could have had an equally successful career as a preacher.”24 Truthfully, Kyes would have fallen more in line with Lippy’s image of the efficient businessman. However, both DeWindt and Kyes were men of action. Despite being examples of two different images, they complimented each other well. Lippy comments on the potential union of the efficient businessman and the positive thinker:

The emphasis on action that undergirds the dominant images of male spirituality and what it means to be a Christian man in White Protestant America helps explain the significance attached to what is practical in each of those images. The efficient businessman wanted results. His spirituality had to be practical, not theoretical, in order to guarantee those results. The positive thinker was not given just to arbitrary psychologizing. Thinking about possibilities in life and calling on an inner reservoir of strength to transform those possibilities into realities meant that religion—spirituality—had to be practical.25

The results of DeWindt’s leadership are not surprising when looking at them through Lippy’s image of the positive thinker. Lippy says, “The positive thinker

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24 Kirk in the Hills, Dreams and Visions, 42.

25 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 213.
cultivated the skill to envision the results he wanted, whether in terms of personal
happiness or achievement in the world of business, and to focus on that vision until it
became empirical reality.”

On November 23, 1958, DeWindt delivered the first sermon preached from the
pulpit in the Kirk’s newly completed sanctuary. It was titled “Now—To Build Men.”
True to the positive thinker image, DeWindt delivered the following words to inspire as
well as instruct the growing congregation of Kirk in the Hills:

So the Eternal allows men to build churches in order that He may build men. Our
foremost work is not to build large congregations but large men. It is our business
to remodel men, starting with ourselves. To meet man’s deepest need. His need
for deliverance from self-centeredness, from fear and vindictiveness and jealousy.
The church is doing what it is intended to do when it is out to seek stained men
and set them on their feet, with pasts pardoned and their futures glorified; when it
takes men [tired] and jaded by a week’s hard work, harassed by anxiety and
foreboding, and bewildered by the trend of events; and by communicating the
truth of the gospel, cheers their hearts, stiffens their wills, and incites them to
magnify their Creator, and to square all their conduct with His will, as it reveals
itself in living companionship with Christ.

Lippy’s sixth and final image for White American Protestant men is that of the
faithful leader. According to Lippy, the faithful leader as an image appeared in the
second half of the twentieth century. This image is quite recognizable in Christian
American men of the present day. The faithful leader is the man who leads through

26 Ibid., 210.
27 Harold DeWindt, “Now—To Build Men” (sermon, Kirk in the Hills, Bloomfield Hills, MI,
28 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 17.
29 Ibid.
service. This is the man whose power comes through serving others, particularly his wife and children, rather than through sheer exercise of authority.\(^{30}\)

Once again, an example of one of Lippy’s images can be found in the senior pastor of Kirk in the Hills. In terms of the faithful leader, the Kirk’s third pastor, James Anderson, is the prime example. Anderson served the Kirk from 1972 through 1994,\(^{31}\) which is the same time frame that Lippy depicts the faithful leader image coming into prominence. Like Lippy’s succeeding images, Anderson built his reputation as a faithful leader on DeWindt’s individualism and the positive-thinking authority that he established during his tenure as the Kirk’s senior pastor and head of staff.

Anderson served in a different time than his predecessor. The cultural landscape was changing, especially in the way of gender roles. Lippy highlights how this changed the exercise of leadership. He writes: “In the wake of changes that had altered gender roles in the larger culture, the faithful leader could not exert his authority as a dictator but as a servant.”\(^{32}\) During Anderson’s tenure, the processional acolyte group initiated by DeWindt, which had been comprised exclusively of teenage boys, now was integrated to include teenage girls. Anderson also oversaw the re-institution of several women’s organizations and small groups that DeWindt had forced into seclusion or had disbanded entirely.

**The Kirk of the Present**

Since its formal organization in 1947, the Kirk has grown in size and membership. As of 2016, Kirk in the Hills has approximately 2,000 members. By

\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) Kirk in the Hills, “Senior Pastor Search: Our Beginnings.”

\(^{32}\) Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?* 17.
comparison, the average PC(USA) church has 175 members. The Kirk is numerically one of the larger PC(USA) congregations. In addition to the nearly 2,000 members, there are approximately 500 children who are not included in the tally of members. Overall, there are 1,250 families on the membership rolls of the Kirk.

Kirk in the Hills is in the midst of another transition. The Kirk’s fourth pastor, Norman Pritchard, retired at the end of 2014 after nearly nineteen years of faithful ministry. After consulting with the Committee of Ministry of the Detroit Presbytery, the Kirk formed an interim Pastor Nominating Committee to find an interim senior pastor and head of staff. The interim pastor was contracted within two weeks of the outgoing senior pastor’s departure and has been leading the church for nearly two years. According to the interim pastor’s unique plan, the Kirk did not immediately form a Pastor Nominating Committee. Instead, the Session of the Kirk spent 1.5 years preparing the church for its next senior pastor. This preparation included a budget overhaul and a 30 percent reduction in staff, a number of whom were much beloved by the congregation and had served Kirk in the Hills with love and energy for a long period of time. The Pastor Nominating Committee finally was elected in May 2016, and the search for the fifth senior pastor of Kirk in the Hills began.


The Kirk’s mission statement reads: “A Christ-centered Community, called to deepen faith, serve others, and foster fellowship.”

The mission statement is printed on most Kirk publications including each worship bulletin, event posters, and various flyers. The vision to achieve this mission, in contrast, is not widely circulated. However, movements and changes in the leadership structure offer a potential vision as to how the Kirk will be guided to achieve its mission.

The Kirk also has several full-time associate pastors. Until relatively recently, three associate pastors oversaw various departments. These namely were Children, Youth, and Families Ministry; Outreach and Mission, which encompassed membership and the deacon board; and Adult Ministry, which included small groups, men’s and women’s ministries, and adult Christian education. During the interim, the associate pastor of Adult Ministry was called to another church, and the Session and members of Kirk in the Hills voted to dissolve the position.

Also, under the leadership of the interim senior pastor and head of staff, the description “associate” was dropped from the associate pastors’ titles. This effectively changes the titles to simply “pastor.” A leadership restructuring recently occurred in an effort to break down the silos, which were naturally created by having associate pastors in charge of departments, and to consolidate the responsibilities and human resources that fell under the dissolved associate pastor’s position.

Children, Youth, and Families Ministry has been renamed and repurposed. A part-time temporary supply pastor oversees the Christian education of the Kirk’s children and

36 The Kirk mission statement was approved by the Session of Kirk in the Hills at the regular meeting of the Session held at Kirk in the Hills in Bloomfield Hills, MI on May 19, 2003.
youth up to grade eight. A full-time director of discipleship is focused on the Christian education of high school students as well as the separate middle school and senior high school youth groups and their respective summer mission trips. A robust confirmation program, which is designed for ninth-grader high school youth, is now under membership. Adult Ministry is presently under the direction of a part-time director. The once associate pastor overseeing endeavors considered as outreach and mission is now the pastor for Mission Renewal and Evangelism. There is also a full-time business manager who oversees all operations as well as capital, financial, and human resources.

From 2010 to 2016, I served as the Kirk’s associate pastor for Children, Youth, and Families Ministry. During that time, through the Holy Spirit, and great teamwork with colleagues in Christ, Kirk in the Hills experienced growth in the number of families joining and a deepening of faith in the lives of its young people. In light of the growth and deepening of faith, my pastoral role has shifted from children, youth, and families to congregational care, membership, deacons, and Men of the Kirk.

The new staff leadership structure positively lends itself to the Kirk’s mission statement. Essentially, the pastors and directors head up three interconnected areas of “deepening faith,” “serving others,” and “fostering fellowship.” All of the staff leadership positions have responsibilities in each of the areas, and all areas are actively shaping disciples as part of a “Christ-centered Community.”

Theologically, the faith community of Kirk in the Hills spans the spectrum. Within the congregation, some are quite progressive, while others are ultra-conservative. As part of the PC(USA), the Kirk was affected by the controversial vote of the 221st General Assembly’s decision to change the definition of Christian marriage from a
covenant between one man and one woman to that of a couple.\textsuperscript{37} After a number of lengthy discussions within the Kirk’s Session, it was decided by an approximate 60/40 vote that Kirk in the Hills would not conduct weddings for same-gender couples despite the legality of such unions by the state of Michigan and the federal government. Much of the pressure to make such a decision came from older members who spend half of the year in Florida.\textsuperscript{38} Many of the churches that these members attend while in Florida are theologically conservative. While there were calls by some Kirk members to leave the PC(USA), the idea was never taken seriously. The sheer cost of buying the building and the property from the Detroit Presbytery, rumored to be upwards of $250 million, has summarily quieted all notions to leave the denomination.

When George initially envisioned what became Kirk in the Hills, the Detroit Presbytery was not excited. Some pastors in the Presbytery believed that while George had the resources to start building such a church, they warned that future generations would be burdened with maintaining such a grand structure and the surrounding property.\textsuperscript{39} Despite the warning, George and the Kirk’s first pastor, Leslie Bechtal, pressed forward with their dream.

The prediction of the Presbytery colleagues, however, proved to be accurate. The budget and maintenance of the enormous facility and grounds have proven to be


\textsuperscript{38} A number of the wealthier members of the church own second homes in southern Florida. This affords the opportunity to avoid the colder winters of Michigan by spending up to half of the year in Florida, where winters and springs are warmer.

\textsuperscript{39} Kirk in the Hills, \textit{Dreams and Visions}, 25.
burdensome to the current generation of Kirk in the Hills. The Kirk has an approximate annual budget of $3 million, of which the maintenance of the building and grounds exceeds $1 million. In stark contrast to the maintenance of the buildings and grounds, the program budget for 2016 was less than $90,000 (not including employment costs). Kirk in the Hills does benefit, however, from the generosity of its past members. At the end of 2015, the Kirk boasted a $24 million endowment fund. Most of the endowment is restricted to building maintenance, ensuring that the beauty of the Kirk will be preserved and enjoyed by another generation.

While the building and maintenance costs are covered by the large endowment fund, the program budget and a majority of employment costs are dependent on the generosity and stewardship of the Kirk’s present membership. There has been pressure on the membership and leadership to give more financially to aid the program budget. Despite the pressure to increase giving, the Kirk’s pledge budget has been steadily declining. The result has been stagnation in the program budget. As an example, the Children, Youth, and Families Ministry budget has remained unchanged for the past six years, despite a massive increase in the number of youth involved in the church and the increase in young families joining the Kirk.

As part of the interim process, and in preparation for the pastoral search, the Kirk employed the Percept Group to conduct a congregational self-study. The Percept Group is a “nationally recognized and respected research organization that specializes in gathering and distributing census and other religious-oriented research information for churches.”

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According to its research, the Kirk’s potential resistance to change is about average in comparison to other churches with similar demographics.\(^\text{41}\)

Kirk in the Hills is a mission-minded church. The City of Pontiac is in close proximity to the Kirk and is significantly disadvantaged economically, socially, and physically when compared to Bloomfield Hill. The Kirk’s “Ministry With Pontiac” provides members and others opportunities to serve the neighbors in Pontiac. The outreach and mission opportunities in Pontiac are almost exclusively geared to the Kirk’s adult members. Tutoring, home building and repair, and clothing and food drives make up much of the mission to Pontiac. A new opportunity for mission in Pontiac, funded by a 2014 capital campaign, is a music program aimed at inspiring low-income youth and supplementing underfunded public school arts programs. The music program is called Accent Pontiac.\(^\text{42}\)

In contrast to the Kirk’s local mission efforts, mission opportunities outside the region are geared almost exclusively to the youth of Kirk in the Hills. In 2014, a ministry relationship was initiated with Koinonia Ministries in Orange Walk, Belize.\(^\text{43}\) The Kirk youth have returned each summer since for week-long mission trips to conduct a Vacation Bible School for the children of Orange Walk. They also continue constructing a church building and training facility for Koinonia Ministries. Through social media

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\(^{41}\) Ibid., 51.


such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the Kirk youth maintain relationships with the community of Orange Walk.

Kirk in the Hills maintains two traditional worship services each Sunday morning. The worship services can be described as “high church” with music supplied almost exclusively by a pipe organ and a professional choir. In light of the formality of the worship service, Kirk in the Hills is a youth and family-oriented faith community.

According to Ministry Architects consultant Duane Smith, the Kirk is a hospitable church. In a recent assessment of the Kirk, Smith writes: “Despite a building that could appear intimidating at first glance Kirk in the Hills is a stable, inviting church that truly welcomes folks into their experience.”

In the recent self-study, and in the face of generally declining membership numbers in mainline churches, it was revealed that Kirk in the Hills is a “Millennial Church.” According to study organizers, “The most significant group in terms of numbers and comparison to national averages is Millennials (ages 11-30) accounting for an estimated 33.6 percent of the congregational respondents and their families compared to 27.3 percent of the US population as a whole.”

Over the past five years, Kirk in the Hills has experienced significant growth in families attending worship and participating in programs. During that same time, the high school youth program has enjoyed a 600 percent increase in attendance and active participation.

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While the Kirk may be a “Millennial Church,” the surrounding community has an older population. Boomers, defined as those who are fifty-two to sixty-nine years of age, make up 25.6 percent of the population.\(^47\) In comparison, Boomers make up 19.7 percent of the overall population in the United States.\(^48\) In terms of the Kirk’s membership, Boomers make up 35 percent; while the Survivors, also known as Generation X, people who range in age from thirty-one to fifty-one, comprise just 14 percent.\(^49\) Combining these percentages leads to the realization that 17 percent of the Kirk’s members are seventy years of age or older.

As retirees, a noticeable number of the older members reside for part of the year away from the Kirk, namely in southern Florida. This reality presents a challenge, since historically they are the more financially generous members. Many of the members who split their residence between Florida and Michigan are faithfully active in the Kirk’s mission when they are in Michigan. However, when they return to Florida these faithful members contribute their time, talents, and treasure to their respective Florida congregations.

As more of these wealthier retirees make the transition to warmer climates, the Kirk’s human and financial resources are adversely affected. While the Kirk’s membership is beginning to trend younger, the younger adults with children, student loan debt, mortgages, car payments, and the looming cost of college for their children are not able to be as generous as the older generations who do not have such income pressures. These financial challenges are compounded by the over-scheduled lives of younger


\(^{48}\) Ibid.

families and Millennials who are making up the Kirk’s latest trends. With packed schedules and relatively fewer financial resources in comparison to previous generations of the Kirk, the new and younger members of the faith community have the challenge of moving the Kirk into the twenty-first century.

To compound the situation, the community where Kirk in the Hills is located is largely affluent with traditional families. According to the recent self-study, affluent families account for 80 percent of the households in the area.\(^50\) As a congregation, 71.3 percent of the families are considered to be affluent, meaning that they have an annual household income over $104,000.\(^51\) Traditional families, defined as families with married persons and two-parent families, account for 61.9 percent of all the households in the area.\(^52\) The self-study revealed that Kirk in the Hills as a congregation is very traditional in terms of family structures.\(^53\)

The affluence of the area where Kirk in the Hills is located fosters particular challenges. The top priority for families and their children is education. The goal generally for most families is for their children to attend a four-year college—and specifically, for their children to attend an institution with prestige. This priority puts both financial and scheduling pressure on families. With college tuition costs increasing annually, the searching and the competing for available scholarships funds is constant. Youth are pushed to excel in multiple activities, while maintaining the highest of grade

\(^{50}\) Percept Group, *Kirk in the Hills 2015 Self Study Appendix*, 43.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 50.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 49.
point averages. Worship and church fellowship usually are considered one of many activities, yet often they are relegated to a far lower priority in comparison to ever increasing scholastic requirements.

While the scholastic expectations continue to increase, most of the high school students from the area go to college. According to the self-study, 59 percent of the people in the area who are over twenty-five years of age are college graduates. In comparison, less than 28 percent of the United States population who are over twenty-five are college graduates.54 In contrast to the area, however, Kirk in the Hills boasts an 80.5 percent college graduation in its membership over twenty-five years old.55

Despite the fact that Anglos make up over 78 percent of the population, the racial and ethnic diversity in the area is considered “very high.”56 However, Kirk in the Hills significantly lacks racial and ethnic diversity. Other racial and ethnic groups only account for 3.5 percent of the Kirk’s membership, while Anglos represent the other 96.5 percent.57 According to denomination statistics, 91.3 percent of all PC(USA) members are White.58 In summation, Kirk in the Hills is a large, affluent, White, mature, but trending younger Presbyterian church located in an aging, upper-class, and diversifying suburban area of Detroit.

54 Ibid., 43.
55 Ibid., 49.
56 Ibid., 43.
57 Ibid., 48.
58 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “All Statistics.”
Along with being in the midst of significant transition with a unique interim process and an ongoing pastoral search, there are other issues affecting Kirk in the Hills. The most recent recession, which began in 2008, had a profound and damaging impact on Detroit and surrounding areas. Michigan had one of the highest unemployment rates during the recession, with over 10 percent claiming that they were jobless.\(^{59}\) As the region experienced job loss, a noticeable number of people with dependent families relocated to areas with more thriving job markets. The impact on the Kirk was seen and felt, as active families and faithful volunteers moved away from the faith community.

The label “2008” is used often to mark the beginning of an economically difficult time for the region. It is not uncommon to hear people refer to the destructive power of the recession by using such phrases: “And then 2008 hit” or “Back before 2008.” Here the term “2008” carries a relatively similar weight to “September 11\(^{th}\)” or “9-11.” The year remains monumental for both the region and for the faith community of Kirk in the Hills.

Other issues facing the Kirk were brought to the surface in the recent self-study, specifically in church programming. As part of the Percept Group’s research, a congregational survey was conducted. Among other questions, the Kirk was asked, “How do we as a congregation feel about our various programs and ministries?”\(^{60}\) The programs then were rated on a continuum from very positive to very negative.\(^{61}\) According to the Percept Group, “If the ideal condition is defined as all respondents rating a particular


\(^{60}\) Percept Group, Kirk in the Hills 2015 Self Study Appendix, 55.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
program very positive, then it is a simple exercise to rank each program by the extent to which it differs from the ideal. The more negative the overall rating of a program, the higher the divergence from the ideal.”

As the self-study team concluded, “The programs with the lowest divergence between the ideal and the current ratings are music ministry (worship and concerts), worship, children, youth and family [programming], and Mission. Those with the highest divergence include programs for the 20s and 30s age group, congregational care, Men of the Kirk, and communication.” The programming for the twenty to thirty age bracket, with respect to formed groups and organized events, ranked highest in terms of divergence from the ideal and the current ratings. There are no programs specifically geared to this age group. This is a glaring issue when taking into consideration the fact that Kirk in the Hills is a “Millennial Church.” This issue led the self-study team to ask the Session of Kirk in the Hills through the Self Study Report, “Do we need to be concerned that in the responses to the Kirk’s programs, the one with the most negative ranking is 20s-30s adult group and events?”

The programming with the second highest divergence was with the Men of the Kirk. In short, the Men of the Kirk are aging and struggling to attract younger men to participate in their events. The most prevalent event for the Men of the Kirk was the

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62 Ibid.
Friday Morning Breakfast. The men gathered weekly for food and fellowship at the church to hear a variety of guest speakers and presenters. With numbers dwindling and cost ever increasing, the Men of the Kirk opened the Men’s Breakfast to women and rebranded the weekly gathering with the “Friday Morning Breakfast.” Unfortunately, the numbers continued to drop, and it no longer became feasible to hold the weekly breakfast. The lamenting of the loss of this breakfast was recorded in the third highest divergence document in the Kirk’s *Self Study*.

**The Present Men of Kirk in the Hills**

The men of Kirk in the Hills who are presently active in the various ministries of the faith community are of all ages. Some are working within their chosen fields, while many are retired after fruitful careers. A few of the men are single or newly married. Some have younger children in school, while others are grandfathers and great-grandfathers. The men of the present Kirk in the Hills represent a conglomeration of Lippy’s historical images of White American Protestant males. To varying degrees, these men include dutiful patriarchs, gentle entrepreneurs, courageous adventurers, efficient businessmen, positive thinkers, and faithful leaders. While these men fit into the six images, many of them would claim, along with a host of authors and scholars, that there is a crisis in terms of men losing their masculinity in today’s society.

In *Does God Make the Man? Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity*, Steward M. Hoover and Curtis D. Coats address “how American Protestant Christianity and media influences White, middle-class, heterosexual men’s ideas about masculinity

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67 Ibid.
and their roles in their families and in public life.”\(^{68}\) Hoover and Coats refer to this as the “masculinity crisis,”\(^{69}\) alluding to the discussion and even confusion around the topic of what it means to be a man in twenty-first century America.

According to respondents in Hoover and Coats’ research, many men referenced their families when describing what it means to be a man. The authors write: “For the majority of the men [involved in the study], this projection of the self was inextricably connected to a larger and, in a way, more remarkable piece of the puzzle—its connection to family and to the domestic sphere. The church or the community was not the primary referent for identity—the family was.”\(^{70}\) The men who were a part of Hoover and Coats’ study wanted to be better fathers and husbands. For these men, this is what it meant to be “a man.” Hoover and Coats concluded, “The turn toward ‘better fathering’ in these interviews constitutes a concentration on the domestic sphere as the normative object, and one of the casualties of this turn is a broader involvement by these men as individuals or a broader engagement by their families with a sense of civic purpose.”\(^{71}\)

As Hoover and Coats point to various themes that emerge with regards to the masculinity crisis, “one [theme] is the particular challenge this ‘crisis’ poses for boys and their social and moral development.”\(^{72}\) Nearly twenty-five years prior to Hoover and Coats’ research, Arnold wrote about this theme in *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings*:


\(^{69}\) Ibid., 3.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 181.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 183.

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 4.
**Masculine Spirituality and the Bible.** He asserted, “Undoubtedly the males most vulnerable to such wounds of masculinity are young men and boys. Far and away the most serious problem in this regard is that our society is failing to initiate its male youth in manly adulthood, thus shifting the entire burden of achieving maturity onto the isolated individual boy.”

This theme is not new. The Muscular Christianity previously mentioned with regards to Lippy’s “courageous adventurer . . . emerged to reflect the spiritual and social needs of images of White American Christian men.”

While the theme of reaching the spiritual and social needs of boys is nothing new for the Church, it continues to be a struggle for many faith communities. However, according to Arnold, “The church can play only a limited part in the rediscovery of masculine spirituality for men: it is a latecomer to the movement.” The movement to which Arnold refers is the initiation of boys into manhood. Arnold claims that only the military has the ability to help boys become men. He writes: “In the last few centuries, Western religion has utterly abandoned its ancient role of initiating you men into manhood. Today, only one institution in our society still uses rituals in initiating large numbers of boys into masculine adulthood with any effectiveness: the military.”

Similarly, Hoover and Coats comment:

Men and women use media to talk about what it means to be a man. Less than 10 percent of our informants offered Kings David or Solomon, the Apostle Paul, Simon Peter, or any other Biblical character as a role model masculinity,

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74 Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?* 15.


76 Ibid., 66.
including Jesus himself. In fact, the only dialogue about Jesus was met with a sort of confused ambivalence about Jesus as a male role model, as if this were a new (and perhaps troubling) idea. Instead, men more easily and facilely pointed to and interpreted characters from the secular media—Jack Bauer from 24, Jack from Lost, William Wallace from Braveheart, Captain Miller from Saving Private Ryan, Andy Taylor, Mister Rogers, or Cliff Huxtable. 77

While media does play a significant role in forming society’s expectation of masculinity and what it means to a man, one can argue that the Church should play a role in shaping men and true Christian masculinity. Robert E. Webber in Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community holds that the Body of Christ has a role to play, especially in spiritual formation. He writes:

The true identity of the Christian is with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. True Christian spirituality is to live out our baptism by continually dying to sin rising to the new life in Christ. The work of the church in forming the spiritual life of the new disciple is to train the new Christian in the practice of the living in the pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 78

Webber further contends that Christianity should not look necessarily to a constantly changing society, which includes media, for help in shaping understandings. He cautions, “Careful reflection on today’s culture shows that Christianity must stop reinventing itself in cultural accommodation and instead return to a countercultural vision of the faith embodied in a community of committed people.” 79

The men of Kirk in the Hills seek their true identity and their true selves. They are continually defining what it means to be a man in today’s world and in their community.

The men of Kirk in the Hills, like the men studied and interviewed by Hoover and Coats,

77 Hoover and Coats, Does God Make the Man? 164.

78 Robert E. Webber, Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 89.

79 Ibid., 165.
have “a sense that there is just something about being a man.” Hoover and Coats go on to say, “That ‘something’ was not hard to describe. In fact, as we’ve noted, it can be described rather simply and firmly. Masculinity, most of these men agree, is about provision, protection, and purpose.”

For the men of Kirk in the Hills, and other men like them, that “something” may have more to do with a spiritual understanding than simply the physical “provision, protection, and purpose.” From a Christian perspective, that something is the Holy Spirit at work in male hearts. As the men of Kirk in the Hills, and those like them, come to recognize that the Holy Spirit is working in and through them, they will realize that their masculinity is tied to their love of God and their humble service for their neighbor.

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80 Hoover and Coats, *Does God Make the Man?* 154.

81 Ibid.
PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

As adolescent boys struggle to form their own identities in Christ, the men in these boys’ lives must coach and nurture them by letting their own identities in Christ shine as they embrace their call to be true men—servants of God through the power of Christ. Since this thesis covers and combines a range of topics and areas, the approach to reviewing the literature will be a high-level overview of the resources as they pertain to each topic and area. The areas of study include masculinity and manliness, Jesus as man’s example for servanthood, ecclesiology and spiritual disciplines, adolescent boys and abandonment, identity and self, and adoptive youth ministry and mentoring youth.

Masculinity and Manliness

The initial question asked to begin the research for this particular project was this: “What does it mean to be a man in the twenty-first century?” Understanding what makes a man in the twenty-first century is necessary in order to move toward mentoring and raising boys to meet such an understanding. It immediately became apparent that this was far too broad of a question, mainly because the definitions of manhood, masculinity,
manliness—the supposed markers used to measure a man—are relatively subjective and thus harder to concretely identify.

Narrowing the focus to contemporary American society and culture aided in bringing a more solid definition. Further narrowing of the focus occurred when taking into consideration the context of Kirk in the Hills. Given that the Kirk is a large, mostly White, PC(USA) congregation located in an affluent Midwestern suburb, only a small number of resources accommodated this specific combination of parameters in describing and defining what it has meant and currently means to be a Christian man in affluent America.

Lippy’s Do Real Men Pray? offers a historical description of men, specifically White Protestant men in America by using image groupings. The images are used to paint a picture of men in America throughout its history. As Lippy writes: “From the colonial period on, these images have sought to address the unique experiences and life situations of White American Protestant men as men, to provide guidelines for a spirituality that derives from and speaks to specifically White male experience.”

Another resource that focuses on the contextual demographic of the thesis is the research conducted by the aforementioned Hoover and Coats in Does God Make the Man? Published in 2015, they discuss their interviews with White evangelical and ecumenical Protestant American men. Among a number of other findings, Hoover and Coats have summarized that the Christian men they interviewed agreed that there was

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1 Lippy, Do Real Men Pray? 13.
“just something about being a man” and that masculinity was “about provision, protection, and purpose.”

Among other pertinent resources in the area of masculinity were *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* by Michael Kimmel and his book co-edited with Jeff Hearn and Raewyn Connell titled *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities.* Redeeming *Men: Religion and Masculinities*, edited by Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W. Muesse is another resource that contains informative articles. Additionally, the scholarship of Herbert Sussman in *Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness* offers another key contribution. All of these resources provide academic and even biological definitions for manliness and masculinity. They also give insight as to how these definitions came to be understood in the United States. However, as Sussman concludes, “Masculine identity now implies self-identification. The options have widened. Masculine identity is now, to a great degree, a matter of choice.”

In terms of limitations of the resources for the area of masculinity and manliness, it must be noted that a significant number of the contemporary resources are written by women. Equally surprising is that women are defining what it means to be a man. In contrast to the number of women academically writing about masculinity and manliness,

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2 Hoover and Coats, *Does God Make the Man?* 154.


6 Ibid., 158.
the number of men who are writing academically on the topic are relatively few. Among the men writing about masculinity, it seemed that even fewer defined masculinity as a positive thing or even something that men do naturally. For example, Sussman writes: “The definition of the masculine can only exist in its difference from its presumed opposite, the feminine. Men are men in that they are not women.”

However, outside academia, there is no shortage of men writing about what it means to be a man, especially in the Church. Unfortunately, too many of these resources place women in an inferior position to men in an effort to “prove” masculinity—or in some cases, no position when it comes to church authority. These resources are not included in this project as there is a clear misrepresentation of the potential of women in these resources, not to mention a very narrow and misguided reading, understanding, and usage of Scripture.

**Jesus as Man’s Example for Servanthood**

As the project thesis implies, a true man is a servant of God. This conclusion rests on the understanding that Jesus, a man—the perfect man (Heb 7:28)—was a servant of God and the people (Is 42:1-4). Therefore, a true man in the present age, or any age for that matter, is one who follows the example of Jesus Christ’s servanthood.

A number of resources aid in the discussion of Jesus and his masculinity and manhood. Colleen M. Conway has written many books and articles on the masculinity of Jesus, especially as it relates to the historical understanding of masculinity in Jesus’ time. In her article, “Was Jesus a Manly Man? On Reading Masculinity in the New

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7 Ibid., 154.
Testament,” Conway states, “The idea of ‘how to be a man’ was always culturally determined.” Using this thesis, Conway lays out the argument and description of the culture in which Jesus lived and discusses how his masculinity was defined by the cultural dynamic in which he ministered. However, as one of the oldest creeds of Christianity, the Nicene Creed, proclaims that Jesus Christ is “true God from true God” and “became truly human.” Since Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, Jesus defined (and continues to define) masculinity, rather than how Conway suggests that masculinity (being a man) is defined by culture.

Along this line of thinking, Brittany E. Wilson put forth in *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinities in Luke-Acts* in 2015 that Jesus actually changed the way people viewed masculinity, namely through his crucifixion. Likewise, Arnold in his 1991 book, *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings*, uses multiple archetypes to describe various men in Scripture and states that the ultimate display of masculinity and the male prime example is Jesus of Nazareth. Arnold emphasizes how Jesus is “the ultimate archetype” of manliness, manhood, and male identity; his servanthood is “the deepest expression of what living a human life means.”

When discussing the area of Jesus as man’s example for servanthood, Scripture must be used to resolve that Jesus is indeed the example for men to model. This line of

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thought utilizes a number of examples (e.g., Jn 13:15; Heb 12:2-3; 1 Pt 2:18-21), including the story of the mother of James and John requesting prestige for her sons. Here Jesus announces, “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.” This Gospel account reveals that Jesus the Christ came “not to be served but to serve” (Mt 20:20-28). Since Kirk in the Hills is a PC(USA) church, the Confessions and Reformed theological statements found in the Book of Confessions are valuable in further understanding Jesus as the quintessential human man.12

Ecclesiology and Spiritual Disciplines

As various areas are covered in developing the thesis, it is inevitable that overlap in the resources used will occur. Dallas Willard’s The Spirit of the Disciplines is just one example. Willard writes in reference to the immediately aforementioned story in Matthew 20:20-28: “To be ‘great’ and live as a servant is one of the most difficult of spiritual attainments.”13 However, as Christian men—and contextually, the men of Kirk in the Hills—seek to live into their identity in Christ, this “most difficult of spiritual attainments” must be achieved.

In discussing the men of Kirk in the Hills and how they can develop into men who serve, Part Three will utilize resources that speak to the importance of engaging in the spiritual disciplines. Along with Willard’s scholarship, James C. Wilhoit’s Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community touches...
upon the importance of community in the spiritual growth of Christians.\textsuperscript{14} Dietrich Bonhoeffer also makes this point in his classic work, \textit{Life Together}.\textsuperscript{15} Another resource utilized is the work of Henri Nouwen on spiritual discipline, namely \textit{Intimacy},\textsuperscript{16} to further explore the importance of Christian community for faith development.

These resources are vital to understanding how the men of Kirk in the Hills must work together and grow together spiritually prior to mentoring the boys of Kirk in the Hills. The men forming a Jesus-loving and Jesus-following community before beginning to mentor boys is paramount to the mentoring relationship. These resources, among others, will aid in offering a structure for the men to form a community and grow together spiritually. In terms of limitations of these resources, the most glaring is that these resources are focused on the entire church, as opposed to just men. With active avoidance of sources that degrade or demean women to being subservient and inferior to men, using these resources and others will provide a solid platform to build a spiritual formation community for the men of Kirk in the Hills.

\textbf{Adolescent Boys and Abandonment}

The end focus of the thesis is for adolescent boys to be nurtured in their faith to become spiritually mature men in Christ. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett’s 2013 \textit{Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach}\textsuperscript{17} and Frances E. Jensen and Amy Ellis Nutt’s

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\textsuperscript{14} James C. Wilhoit, \textit{Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 171-197.

\textsuperscript{15} Dietrich Bonhoeffer, \textit{Life Together} (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 17-71, 97-121.


\textsuperscript{17} Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, \textit{Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), Kindle.
\end{flushright}
The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist’s Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults, among a host of other resources on the topic of adolescence, allow for a broad stroke understanding of contemporary adolescent boys from a psycho-social perspective. These resources will help build the framework in which the men of Kirk in the Hills can work and mentor teens, all the while embracing and modeling servanthood.

Part Three of this project also briefly examines adolescents and their plight as abandoned teenagers. Chap Clark’s *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today’s Teenagers* points out the issues facing teenagers today. *Hurt 2.0* is utilized to support the men of Kirk in the Hills in reaching out and mentoring the teenage boys and young men of the church. Clark writes: “Adults must care for and reach the individuals who have suffered from abandonment throughout their lives.”

Kenda Creasy Dean’s *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* is utilized as well in discussing how the Church’s Moralistic Therapeutic Deism approach to the faith of its teenagers has left local churches reeling to recover a disappearing generation.

The majority of these resources do not focus exclusively on adolescent boys. However, Arnett focuses a chapter on gender and culture that contains valuable insight into the evident cultural differences in raising boys and girls. Likewise, Jensen and Nutt

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devote a short chapter to brain development as it relates to gender. Despite the lack of exclusive focus on adolescent boys in the resources, this main point can be made: the men of Kirk in the Hills have a responsibility to reach out to the adolescent boys of the church.

Identity and Self

Like the area of adolescence, there are a plethora of resources dealing with identity and self. The “self” is eternally in Christ through faith in God’s gift of grace (Gal 2:19b-20; 3:26-29). The various identities, including masculinity and servanthood and mentoring, come from the self in Christ. Theologically, this project will utilize the scholarship of several Reformed theologians, including Andrew Purves’ The Crucifixion of Ministry: Surrendering Our Ambitions to the Service of Christ, John P. Burgess’ After Baptism: Shaping the Christian Life, and Philip Graham Ryken’s chapter in John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion Doctrine and Doxology to establish an understanding of what it means to be “in Christ.”

While none of these resources focus on teenage boys, they do discuss how identity is formed. Identity formation is important in either gender. The resources used in this particular area need not specify male or female to offer an in-depth grasp of how human identity and the self are formed in adolescents.

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Adoptive Youth Ministry and Mentoring Youth

As the last area of exploration, adoptive youth ministry and mentoring youth tie the previous five areas together. Cannister’s *Teenagers Matter* shows how mentoring and making teenagers a priority in a church’s ministry benefits the whole congregation. Cannister, among others, also contributes to *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*. Edited by Clark, *Adoptive Youth Ministry* is critical to understanding how teenagers are part of God’s family, adopted through Christ to share in the inheritance of God’s kingdom.26

At Kirk in the Hills, the men are a powerful group. They are the “insiders.”27 The teenage boys of Kirk in the Hills are a less powerful group and sometimes can be seen as “outsiders.”28 Adoptive youth ministry means seeing these men, these insiders, fully embrace their teenage brothers and include them in the church.29 Clark’s work with Kara E. Powell in *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* further aids the development of the framework for a mentoring program that can help the men of Kirk in the Hills foster and develop “familial” relationships with their younger brothers in Christ.30


27 Ibid., location 311.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., location 316.

Summary

There are six psycho-social and theological areas covered in this project. These include masculinity and manliness, Jesus as man’s example for servanthood, ecclesiology and spiritual disciplines, adolescent boys and abandonment, identity and self, adoptive youth ministry and mentoring youth. The resources available are almost all limited in that they simply do not focus exclusively on the faith journeys of men and boys.

However, the resources mentioned here are crucial to understanding how adolescent boys come to form their own identities in Christ. They also help establish a framework for the men of Kirk in the Hills to coach and nurture adolescent boys and young men to be true men of God. This means all brothers in Christ, both young and old, can grow and learn to become servants together in Jesus’ name.
CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY OF THE MAN AS SERVANT

There was once a young man who strived to achieve greatness.1 When he came to various crossroads in his life, he would go to his father for counsel. His father would often say to him, “Dare to be great, son!” He repeatedly told the young man, “The world is full of people. Many are average. Some are below average. But a few are great! You can be any of these, son. Your mother and I did not raise you to be below average.” The young man would ponder the words of his father, who would go on to say, “You can be average if you want to be average. The world needs average people. And you can live a good life being average. But know there a few people who live great lives; those who have dared to be great! You have that choice, son. I dare you to be great!”

The father’s words continually rang in his son’s ears. They pushed the son to work hard, even when he was tired. The words were an inspiration for him when things or circumstances became difficult. It seemed that whenever the son reached an inevitable crossroads, his father’s words, “Dare to be great, son!” seemed to ring the loudest.

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1 This story is adapted from actual conversations that I have had with my father over the years. It is included here, because it juxtaposes my dad’s (e.g., the world’s) definition of greatness to Jesus’ definition of greatness. I often include it in sermons, Bible studies, and other teaching moments.
The son indeed had made the choice to be great. He accepted his father’s dare. However, for the son, daring to be great in his dad’s eyes was a bit different than being great in his heavenly Father’s eyes. The son was a man who claimed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and understood that being great in his Father’s eyes meant being a servant. While his earthly dad’s words still rang loudly in his ears, he recalled Jesus’ words as well: “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant” (Mt 20:26).

Like the son in the above story, the men of Kirk in the Hills want to be great. Many of them, at least by worldly standards, have achieved individual greatness. A number of them have retired as successful businessmen, having run some of the largest companies in the region and in the United States. Others were successful business owners. Those men of Kirk in the Hills who currently work are scaling their way up a corporate ladder. They compete and, in some cases, swiftly fill the shoes of the men who came before them. However, within the church, the Men of the Kirk long to reclaim an esteemed status that collectively they once held.

The Men of the Kirk is a long-standing organization of Kirk in the Hills. As its name suggests, the organization is comprised solely of men. In fact, all adult male members of Kirk in the Hills are de facto members of the Men of the Kirk. Since the early days of the Kirk in the early 1950s, the Men of the Kirk have enjoyed a reputation as a group of stalwart men who served the congregation and the community. However, as the church moves further into the twenty-first century, the Men of the Kirk have diminished severely as an actively participating group in the life of the church. In the recent church self-study, the Men of the Kirk received one of the highest divergences between its desired
ideal and its present state. In a more positive light, many of those who completed the congregational survey want to see the Men of the Kirk regain its reputation of upstanding men serving the church and engaging the community.

Like the son in the above story, the Men of the Kirk are at a crossroads and have a choice to make. They can choose to ignore their calling to serve the Lord as men in Christ and to grow deeper in faith or they can dare to be great. A halfway choice, or even settling to be average, is unacceptable. The Lord Jesus Christ is not a sufferer of halfway, average, or “lukewarm” exhibitions of faith (Rv 3:15-16). The Men of the Kirk can be great by the Lord’s definition (Mk 10:44). To be great, the Men of the Kirk must live into their identity as men in Christ and be servants of the community. To achieve this, the Men of the Kirk must look to Jesus, who has provided the perfect example for all men to follow in terms of true servanthood and fully embracing the spiritual discipline of service.

This chapter will discuss the theology of man as servant within the context of Kirk in the Hills. This theology will provide the basis for the men of Kirk in the Hills in understanding their roles to coach and nurture adolescent boys who are seeking their identities as men in Christ. The theology of man as servant can help men of Christ understand their call to be true men of God—to be servants of God with Christ.

What Is a Man?

Defining what it means to be “a man” depends on who is doing the defining. Whether it be his male peers, the women in his life, the subcultures in which he spends his time, the elements of media affecting all of these, his past experiences, his future

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2 Percept Group, Kirk in the Hills 2015 Self Study Appendix, 56.
trajectory, or his own understanding of who he is, a human male can fit any number of definitions of “a man.” Rather than pursue an endless (and often controversial) debate in an attempt to define what it means to be “a man,” those wishing to properly define “a man” should look first to the Creator of men for the perfect and timeless definition. Looking at the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—yields the perfect example of a man in the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus the Son. Jesus is the man against which all men, all humanity for that matter, can be measured.

Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of that which was created in the image of God (Gn 1:27; 1 Cor 15:22). The biblical truth of this matter is that there is no other man to whom men are to look to in terms of an example for living into the image of God, in whom they have been created. In the words of Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. in his classic *Christian Doctrine:*

If we want to see what it means to be human beings in God’s image, we cannot look first at the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis. Theirs is the story of people who from the very beginning, with the very first aft we hear about, refused to be what God created them to be. They are the prime example for all time of what human life in the image of God does not look like. To find what we are looking for, we must go to the New Testament. There we hear about a “Second Adam” who was what Adam and Eve (and every man and woman since) were unwilling and unable to be (Rom. 5:5-21; 1 Cor. 15:45-49). He is the human being who is “the image of the invisible God” (Phil. 2:6).³

Jesus is the perfect example for men to follow and emulate. As Arnold writes in *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings:* “Men can identify with Jesus archetypically and thus

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draw nearer to an experience of the greatest archetype of all: the Christ.”

Arnold puts forth that “following Jesus into Christhood does not diminish a man, it completes him.”

However, one might ask if the words and actions of Jesus that are recorded in Scripture fit the contemporary definitions of “masculinity” and “manliness.” According to a number of scholars, the concepts of masculinity and manliness are derived by culture. While Conway asks this question in her article, “Was Jesus a Manly Man?”

Boyd, Longwood, and Muesse tend to concur yet offer the following comment:

Men’s studies view masculinity—whatever else it might be—as a social construction that varies by culture and by historical periods. As cultural constructs rather than a biological inevitability, masculinities are inextricably connected with the economic, political, social, psychological, and religious dimensions of human life.

Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos sum up the same point in From Wild Man to Wise Man. They assert, “In almost all cultures men are not born: they are made.”

The understanding that masculinity, manliness, and what it means to be a man are derived by culture can add to the stress of maintaining “manliness.” This is especially difficult for adolescent boys, who can experience great stress in becoming “a man.”

While there is stress for adolescent girls in becoming women, Arnett makes an interesting point in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood:

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4 Arnold, Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings, 185.

5 Ibid., 199.

6 Conway, “Was Jesus a Manly Man?” 15.


It is true that girls are required to demonstrate various skills and character qualities before they can be said to have reached womanhood. However, in most traditional cultures womanhood is seen as something that girls attain naturally during adolescence, and their readiness for womanhood is viewed as indisputably marked when they reach menarche. Adolescent boys have no comparable biological marker of readiness for manhood. For them, the attainment of manhood is often fraught with peril and carries a definite and formidable possibility of failure.9

This “peril” that Arnett mentions is the reason for this project. It is why I push for the Men of the Kirk to recognize their calling as men of Christ to exemplify servanthood as what it means to be “manly.” As adolescent boys seek their own identities in Christ, the men in these boys’ lives, the Men of the Kirk, are those older males who are closest to them. They are fathers, uncles, grandfathers, coaches, and teachers. They must nurture these boys by exemplifying their own “manly” identities in Christ and living into the call to be true men of God—to be servants of God with Christ.

Masculinity and what it means to be a man indeed may be defined differently by a particular culture as Conway suggests. However, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world turns any and every culture on its head. This means pushing back against Conway and Boyd, Longwood, and Muesse’s collection of writers. It means taking into consideration Arnett’s statement concerning adolescent boys and offering a possible solution to the peril that faces them as they seek to understand what is involved in becoming men. It can be surmised that the culture of Jesus’ time did not so much tell Jesus how to be a man, since Jesus exemplified for every time and place how exactly to be “a man.” Jesus stands contrary to Conway, who says in Behold the Man, “Depictions of Jesus or understandings of Christ would have to relate in some way to the cultural

9 Arnett, Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood, location 125.
demands of ideal masculinity in order to have any credibility in the broader culture.”

Jesus stands counter to these words, because he is the one who defines masculinity. Any cultural definition of masculinity is forever upended when benchmarked against the perfect example of Jesus. Wilson in her book, *Unmanly Men*, mentions how Jesus upends culture. She states, “From his birth onward, Jesus’ life and ministry do not conform to the ideals of elite masculinity.”

Guthrie agrees and states, “Jesus Christ is the true human being, the one who in everything he said and did lived out a truly human life in God’s image, the one in whom we learn what it means for us to be true human beings in the image of God.” As for a more culturally Christian definition of manliness, Eric Metaxas writes about exceptional Christian men in *Seven Men* and posits, “The knight in shining armor who does all he can to protect others, the gentleman who lays down his cloak or opens a door for a lady—these are Christian ideals of manliness.”

Chapter 4 will discuss how the Men of the Kirk, through spiritual disciplines and formation, can begin to understand their roles as servants and mentors to the faith community—and more specifically, to the adolescent boys of the Kirk. They will come to comprehend that Jesus’ manliness was not determined by culture. On the contrary, they will come to discover how Jesus’ manliness was counterculture. It is Jesus who defined for all time what manliness is and how a man should act in this fallen world. Jesus embodies the essential true man and manifests his bold masculinity by being a servant of God.

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10 Conway, *Behold the Man*, 7.


Jesus as Servant

When one reads about Jesus in Scripture, one essentially is reading how “a man” is supposed to speak and act. Jesus is not only the perfect example of a man; being fully human and fully God, he also shows all of humanity how to be a human being. In this way, Jesus is the model for all people. However, for the purposes of this project as they relate to the context of the men of Kirk in the Hills and the thesis regarding raising adolescent boys to be men in Christ, the focus will be on Jesus as the perfect example for all men.

Scripture tells the story of Jesus upending human understanding of cultural norms and protocols. Wilson, through her exegesis of Luke and Acts states, “Jesus does not conform to the protocols of elite masculinity.” An example of this nonconformity is found in the story from Luke 7:36-50, when Jesus dines at the home of Simon the Pharisee. Once in the home, a sinful woman washes Jesus’ feet with her tears and anoints them with ointment. A number of cultural protocols of the elite were ignored and possibly redefined at that dinner gathering.

Jesus instructs and displays how his followers should behave. He teaches that being a servant of God is how those who follow him should live. Culture may state that a man should strive to be a leader, focus on being first, or endeavor to be the greatest. However, these measures regarding greatness are from a worldly, non-eternal perspective. Jesus told his disciples when they pined for such worldly recognition, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (Mk 9:35). Like any good teacher, Jesus repeated the lesson to James and John when they sought to place
themselves first. Jesus said, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be slave of all” (Mk 10:43-44). Jesus gave himself as the prime example for his disciples: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45).

The same story is told in Matthew 20:25-28. While Conway holds that masculinity is defined by culture, she does point to the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus alludes to an “alternative masculinity.” She writes:

On the one hand, Jesus’ ideal masculine status is accentuated in Matthew’s Gospel, as Jesus becomes the bearer of royal honorific titles, a prolific public speaker, a righteous teacher, and a bold agitator in heightened conflict with his opponents. On the other hand, the Matthean Jesus also advocates an alternative masculinity, as seen in certain antifamily teachings (10:34-35) or in surprising reference to those who become “eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven” (19:12). Conway may see Jesus being an advocate of an “alternate masculinity,” yet Jesus offers more than simply an alternative. In Matthew, as in all the Gospels, Jesus revolutionizes the understanding of masculinity and the role faithful men should play. Matthew 23 shows Jesus confronting the religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, those who are supposed to be exemplifying faithful men. Addressing the crowds and his disciples, Jesus says, “The greatest among you all must be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Mt 23:11-12). In opposition to the way the elite men were living and behaving, Jesus points to the true way men should live. True men humble themselves and do not exalt themselves as the Pharisees had been doing.

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15 Conway, Behold the Man, 108.
Jesus is counter to the culture both in his time and today—particularly when he said that to be a leader or to be first, one must be a slave. The idea of being a slave is counter to being American, in spite of and in light of this country’s history. Americans have a tendency to move away from the term “slave” to the term “servant,” because choosing to be a servant is far more palpable. Richard J. Foster observes the following regarding the use of the terms “slave” and “servant”:

The imagery of slavery may be difficult for us, but it was not hard for the apostle Paul. He frequently boasted of his slavery to Christ, making lavish use of the first-century concept of the “love slave” (that is, the slave who, out of love, has freely chosen to remain a slave). We do our best to soften Paul’s language by translating the word “slave” as “servant.” But whatever word we decide to use, let us be certain that we understand that Paul meant he had freely given up his rights.16

Despite Paul’s frequent use of “slave” imagery, the term “servant” will be used exclusively. When it comes to be a man following Christ and his masculinity, Wilson explains, “Jesus even identifies himself as a servant and a slave (Lk 22:27), positioning himself with those who occupy the opposite pole from ‘manly men.’”17 In a similar vein, Metaxas offers this conclusion:

Jesus said that he who would lead must be servant of all. It’s the biblical idea of servant leadership. The true leader gives himself to the people he leads. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. Jesus died for those he loves. That is God’s idea of strength and leadership and blessing. It’s something to be used in the service of others. So God’s idea of masculine strength gives us the idea of chivalrous gentlemen toward women, not a bully or someone who sees no difference between himself and them.18

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17 Wilson, Unmanly Men, 195.

18 Metaxas, Seven Men, location 239.
Jesus’ Example of Footwashing

Although Jesus was countercultural, he eternally defines how men should act and live. Few stories in Scripture depict this fact better than the story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples during his last supper with them (Jn 13:1-20). This is the quintessential example of servanthood. Jesus, fully God yet fully human, despite being King, took on the role of the lowest servant. Richard Phillips writes in his commentary on the Gospel of John: “Jesus’ washing of the disciple’s feet has been an enduring symbol of humble, sacrificial servanthood.”¹⁹ As Jesus bends to wipe the grime from the disciples’ feet, his followers see the perfect man giving those who would faithfully follow him the perfect example of how to do so. Jesus said, “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13:15). Phillips affirms, “The washing of his disciples’ feet, then, was intended by Jesus as an example for his apostles and for all Christians.”²⁰

Jesus’ footwashing provides the ultimate example for how all Christians are to act, not just two millennia ago but even in the present day. Frederick Dale Bruner writes in *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*:

> Jesus’ Footwashing is not only a perfect depiction of what God has done for us in Jesus’ atoning work and of what God continues to do for us by applying his Son’s atoning work to us through Word, sacraments, Church, and prayer (Acts 2:42), it also shows disciples how they can live their lives in the most “blessed” possible way: in mutual service, submission, forgiveness, and patience.²¹

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²⁰ Ibid., 154.

This “most blessed possible way” is the way to be a man. Bruner adds other examples that come from Jesus’ perfect example of footwashing:

Good listening in conversation, good hospitality with visitors, guests, and callers, good attention to customers, clients, students, and colleagues in business and work, good presence with spouse and children, good “being there at your service” as a whole way of life—these and hundreds of other daily responsibilities and privileges are wonderfully pictured by Jesus’ Footwashing gift.  

In this act of washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus provided the example for all to follow. In Jesus’ time, it was customary for a servant to wash a guest’s feet upon arriving to someone’s home. Jesus himself takes on this role and washes the feet of his disciples. Phillips emphasizes, “Jesus made himself a servant.” Raymond E. Brown likewise concludes, “In the footwashing Jesus humiliates himself and takes on the form of a servant.”

As Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, he demonstrates that those who follow him are to serve even their enemies, even those who would betray them. The following words are taken from a Maundy Thursday sermon recently preached at Kirk in the Hills, reminding the congregation that Jesus served even those who would betray him:

In the midst of dinner, Jesus got up from the table and removed his outer garments, the same garments that would be removed and divided and lots cast for them by Roman soldiers in a few hours. Jesus tied a towel around his waist and he filled a basin with water and he washed the feet of the disciples. He then dried them with the towel. After he had done this, he returned to the table to continue dinner with the disciples. This intimate moment would soon be played out on a cosmic scale—Jesus was stripped, made low with sin, only to rise again in victory.

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22 Ibid., location 21052.

23 Phillips, John, 144.

24 Ibid., 160.

over sin and death. Sitting around the table were men who loved Jesus; men who had been there with him from the very beginning of His ministry in Galilee. These were his friends, his companions, his colleagues, his brothers. And among them was the one who would betray him and the one who would deny even knowing him, and those who would abandon him and run and hide while he suffered and died for all of them, and for all of us as well.26

Despite the fact that Jesus took on the role of the lowliest servants in washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus did not offer his paradigm as instruction to be downtrodden by serving in such a way. As Philips states, “In giving his example as the rule for our attitude and actions, Jesus was not imposing a lifestyle of drudgery, but instead he was offering a life of blessing.”27 In serving, no matter how menial the task, there is great blessing. Phillips concludes:

If Jesus, with his soul filled with the consciousness of deity, took up the place of the most menial servanthood to wash his disciples’ feet, then any authentic display of God must be characterized by humility, tenderness, and sacrificial love. And if this is the truth about the God that we are called to glorify in the world, how we ought to especially take up the towel of Jesus in our marriages, in our home life, and in our fellowship in the church!28

Men Following Jesus’ Example

As an example to follow, Christian men are not necessarily called to literally wash the feet of people to prove their faith in Christ, although the liturgy of footwashing can be quite meaningful. Rather, it is the act of humility and the example of willingness to serve, even if it goes against what society thinks. Phillips clarifies:

It is important to note that Jesus is calling his disciples not to do “what” he has done, that is, simply to wash each other’s feet, as if that exhausted his example.


27 Phillips, John, 159.

28 Ibid., 146.
Rather, we are to do “as” he has done (John 13:15), that is, to embrace a lifestyle of humble, sacrificial, and personal ministry. Christians are to live in a way that gladly stoops to perform even the menial tasks that will convey the love of Jesus to the world.\(^{29}\)

At the same time, Brown reminds his readers, “Jesus has acted out for his disciples an example which they must be prepared to imitate. The disciples must be willing to do similar acts of service for one another.”\(^{30}\) Men who follow Jesus must be willing to serve and take on the most menial tasks, in order to exemplify love for their neighbors and faithfully serve God. This is an understanding that is imperative for the Men of the Kirk, especially given the context of Kirk in the Hills and the men who will serve through Christ at the Kirk. The Men of the Kirk must understand what Phillips concludes, “Whenever we think our station in life makes it improper for us to humble ourselves in menial service, we should remember the example of King Jesus.”\(^{31}\) William Barclay in his classic commentary of John sums up this point:

> Here is the lesson and the proof that there is only one kind of greatness, and that is the greatness of service. The world is full of people who are standing on their dignity when they ought to be kneeling at the feet of their brethren. When we are tempted to think of our dignity, our prestige, our place, our right, let us see again the picture of the Son of God, girt with a towel, and kneeling at His disciples’ feet.\(^{32}\)

> Being a servant to and for his fellow human beings allows a man to faithfully obey Jesus’ commandments to love the Lord his God with all of his heart, with all of his soul, with all of his mind, and with all of his strength and to love his neighbor as he loves

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 157.


himself (Mk 12:30-31). Men who follow Jesus serve both God and people. Jesus said, “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor” (Jn 12:26). Following Jesus points faithful men to the honor of servanthood.

This challenge to be a servant is a choice for the Men of the Kirk to make. Foster writes about this challenge in his classic book, *Celebration of Discipline*. He explains, “But when we choose to be a servant, we give up the right to be in charge. There is great freedom in this. If we voluntarily choose to be taken advantage of, then we cannot be manipulated. When we choose to be a servant, we surrender the right to decide who and when we will serve. We become available and vulnerable.”

It is in the vulnerability of servanthood that followers of Christ deepen their faith. A true man lives by the example of Jesus Christ, the perfect example of being a man. However, in contemporary middle- and upper-class America, as in Jesus’ time, a servant is seen as a role of lower status. It is beyond difficult for a man living in a wealthy twenty-first-century community to take on the role of a servant. This truly will be a challenge for the Men of the Kirk. Willard addresses this challenge in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*:

But I believe the discipline of service is even more important for Christians who find themselves in positions of influence, power, and leadership. To live as a servant while fulfilling socially important roles is one of the greatest challenges any disciple ever faces. To be “great” and to live as a servant is one of the most difficult of spiritual attainments.

33 Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 132.

Stephen Seamands agrees and phrases it in this way: “In an age of dedication to self-fulfillment and enamored with success, who wants to hear about sacrifice and self-giving?” The example of Jesus, however, is to be sacrificial and self-giving. Phillips reminds followers of Christ, “Jesus also employs it as a model for our sacrificial service in his name. Jesus’ intent was to set forth a lifestyle that emulates the example he set by this humble act of service.”

The men of Kirk in the Hills have been and some still are leaders of industry and business. People have worked for them; subordinates answer to them. The Men of the Kirk, in turn, worked for and answered to a limited few in the world away from the Kirk. In their occupations and in society, these men are on the opposite end of the spectrum from a servant. Still, like the Christians who have come before them, the men of Kirk in the Hills follow the example of their Lord and must be willing to stoop to the level of a servant. Miroslav Volf writes in Public Faith: “In the midst of fierce opposition, early Christians celebrated and embodied a way of life—life that they experienced as God’s gift and that was modeled on Christ, a paragon of true humanity.”

As the men of Kirk in the Hills face the reality of being a servant in Christ’s name to the faith community, and especially to the adolescent boys they soon will mentor, they must remember that they are not greater than their Master. As Phillips writes:

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36 Phillips, John, 154.

We must realize that Christians are not greater than Christ. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master” (John 13:16). We therefore should not consider ourselves above servant roles that were not beneath Jesus. Whenever we place our own desires first, we are acting as if we were above the Lord Jesus Christ, who “came not to be served but to serve” (Matt. 20:28). submitting to the Master and taking on the role of a servant might initially be difficult for the Men of the Kirk. However, they soon will come to realize that their submission to Jesus’ call is the beginning of a faithful response to God’s love shown for them in Jesus Christ, their Savior. Many of the men of Kirk in the Hills will worry about how they may be perceived by others, both outside and inside the Kirk faith community.

The apostle Paul dealt with this same thing in the first century. This concern about what others might think when a man stoops to the level of a servant is denounced in his letter to the Galatians. Paul argues, “Am I now seeking human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10). A true servant of God is not about pleasing people so much as he is about pleasing God. Wilhoit explains, “True acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord leads to a lifestyle based on love and obedience, not on self-satisfaction. To acknowledge Jesus as Lord means to acknowledge oneself as a servant of Jesus and of others and to witness to the kingdom of God.”

Beyond the particularities and pleasantries of men as servants of God, at the essence of a man serving, it is important to recognize that to serve in a free society is ultimately a choice. A man must choose to serve. To force a man to become a servant is counter to basic human rights. Significant numbers of men and women have fought wars

38 Phillips, John, 161.

39 Wilhoit, Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered, 179.
to ensure freedom from being forced into servanthood, which in this compulsory framework is slavery. Arnold expounds, “Men do not like to be captured, told what to do, interfered with, bound, gagged, domesticated, tamed, or otherwise bridled by anybody.” Indeed many of the Men of the Kirk, especially the oldest generation, are veterans of wars and conflicts that protected such freedoms for Americans and others.

Therefore, the men of the church consciously and prayerfully must choose to be servants. They must opt with their free will to be true men of God. If the Men of the Kirk are willing to submit to the role of servant, they will find an incomparable joy that comes in the surrender and choice to give themselves to God’s ministry in this world through Jesus Christ. Regarding this joy in dedicating oneself to God’s ministry, Purves writes:

Ministry with joy is the fruit of abiding in Jesus. Ministry with joy, then, is ministry that is purposefully attentive to the giver and the gift, and humbly mindful of the responsibility. It is ministry that trusts the Spirit presence of Jesus at every turn and knows his ministry continues into the life of every person we encounter and every situation we confront.

There is tremendous delight in serving God and participating in his continuing ministry through Jesus Christ.

In submitting to Jesus the Master, these faithful men of Kirk in the Hills will find the direction they have been seeking. In their choosing to submit, the Men of the Kirk will rediscover—in some cases, possibly for the first time—their often hidden identity as men in Christ. An identity is the persona people take on depending on the environment in which they find themselves as well as the relationship they have with the people who are in their presence. Identity is what a person is when others are watching. Identities can

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change depending on the environment in which a man finds himself and the person and people with whom he is interacting.\textsuperscript{42}

Too often, a man’s identity as a Christian male only appears on Sunday mornings. The rest of the week, Christian men can get caught up in the cares of the world and battle within the management of multiple identities that they have to maintain, depending on their environment and with whom they interact. The Christian man needs to understand that his identity is what he is and what he does, wherever he is. However, his identity is not necessarily who he is at his core. As a Christian man, the various identities that he maintains—whether at work, with his family, hanging out with teenagers, or gathering for a semi-annual breakfast meeting—all emanate from who he is in Jesus Christ.

For a man to recognize himself in Christ means answering the call to deny himself and realize that he is fully and completely in Christ. As Guthrie puts it, “The Christian way is not the way of escape so that we can keep the way we are; it is the death of what we are.”\textsuperscript{43} Indeed, Jesus calls his followers to deny themselves and follow him. In Luke’s Gospel, the call of the Jesus is heard:

\begin{quote}
If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:23-26)
\end{quote}

For a man to deny himself and recognize that his true self is in Christ means opening his heart to experience God’s love. This involves denying who the world thinks

\textsuperscript{42} Arnett, \textit{Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood}, location 159-169.

\textsuperscript{43} Guthrie, \textit{Christian Doctrine}, 266.
he should be and living into the joy of obedience that comes from being a servant of God and fellow human beings. In essence, this is what it means to be a true man and servant. A true man is a servant, because he is “in Christ.” To paraphrase Guthrie’s words, Jesus is one who lived a truly human life and reveals to men what true humanity is.44

For the Christian man, being a true man in Christ changes everything about him. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 the apostle Paul explains, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see everything has become new.” Ryken writes: “Our true and ultimate identity is found in him (Christ). Christ is in us and we are in Christ.”45 The man in Christ serves, because Christ serves. Therefore, a true man is a servant of God, because Christ is a servant of God.

The men of Kirk in the Hills are called by Jesus Christ to be servants of God. Through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, these men have been led to this particular faith community. Their presence in this church comes from an individual understanding, on some level, that they are not perfect and are in need of grace. These men, with varied experiences and personal stories but one Lord, have gathered together in and with the faith community to seek God’s direction for their lives.

The direction the Men of the Kirk seek fulfills a promise that they have made repeatedly. All of these men have witnessed numerous baptisms during a Lord’s Day worship service. Most of these baptisms were of infants. A small number of the baptisms that they have witnessed have been of teenagers or younger adults. However, no matter who was baptized in the midst of a worship service, all of these men have promised “as

44 Ibid., 265.

members of the church of Jesus Christ to guide and nurture [these little ones] by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of his church.”

In baptism, Christians acknowledge that all who call on Jesus as Lord and Savior are united with him in death and resurrection (Rom 6:4) and are made heirs to the kingdom of God through him (Jas 2:5). They acknowledge that they are marked as one of God’s own and are thereby brothers and sisters with Christ in the family of God. In some faith traditions, when a “little one” is baptized, the point is made to introduce the new brother or sister to the gathered family members of God. Like the one being baptized, “all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (Jn 1:12).

The Men of the Kirk, in their baptism and in the baptism of their brothers and sisters, have been given their direction: they are to serve their God and help raise their family in God. Their identity as true men in Christ directs them to this. Their calling by Jesus channels them to it. Their faith in God through the Holy Spirit guides them in it.

Chapter 4 describes the path that the Men of the Kirk will walk to better understand their identity in Christ, their calling to serve, and their faith as brothers in the family God. This path will support the men’s choice to be a servant and will lead to reaching out to the adolescent boys of the Kirk. They will show their younger brothers, through their example and the relationships they foster how to be true men. In this way, all can come together as male servants of God.

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47 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Confessions, 51-116.
PART THREE

MINISTRY PRACTICE
CHAPTER 4

MASCULINE SPIRITUALITY OF MEN WHO SERVE

In Chapter 3, a practical theology for men as servants in Christ was introduced. Living this theology requires changes that must take place in the hearts and minds of the Men of the Kirk. In short, the men must recognize that they called to be servants of God just as Jesus is a servant of God. Jesus gave his disciples in the upper room, and gives his followers now in the twenty-first century, the perfect example of how to serve. He took on the role of the lowest of servants and with a basin of water and a towel washed the feet of his disciples in the midst of his last meal with them (Jn 13:4-12). Jesus is the perfect human and the One who lived fully into the image of God in which humanity was created (Gn 1:26-27). Jesus has shown the men of Kirk in the Hills how to be “a man.” He exemplified true masculinity, deep manliness, and what it means to live fully as a man. A true man is a servant.

For the men of Kirk in the Hills to become the true man that Jesus exemplifies, and thereby demonstrate their own identities in Christ and embrace the call to be true men of God, they must submit to Jesus as Master and Lord. As has been suggested, it will be difficult initially for the Men of the Kirk to submit to the Master and become a servant.
as he is. However, as Wilhoit points out, “The difficulty of following [Christ] is no argument against the wisdom of this path. With due humility, we can pattern our lives closely enough to his to receive transforming grace, grow in holiness, and be a witness to the transforming power of God’s grace.”

On the surface, the idea of submitting for these men of worldly success is hard to swallow and they will not easily wrap their minds and hearts around this call to first submit and then lead younger generations by their example. Willard offers an understanding of such “submission” to Christ in *The Spirit of the Disciples*:

Submission, though, is a call for help to those recognized as able to give it because of their depth of experience and Christlikeness—because they truly are “elder” in The Way. In submission we engage the experience of those in our fellowship who are qualified to direct our efforts in growth and who then add the weight of their wise authority on the side of our willing spirit to help us do the things we would like to do and refrain from the things we don’t want to do. They oversee the godly order in our souls as well as in our fellowship and in the surrounding body of Christ.

Before the Men of the Kirk can be the “elder in The Way” in the lives of adolescent boys and emerging men, they first must recognize their own identity as men in Christ and personally submit to him as Master.

While Chapter 5 outlines the mentoring program and the men’s outreach to adolescent boys seeking their identity in Christ, this chapter will focus on how men can be encouraged to recognize their own identity and their true manhood in Christ to be servants of God the Father. Through spiritual formation focused on masculine spirituality, as well as building and spiritually unifying the community of men in the

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1 Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 43.

broader congregation, the Men of the Kirk will be invited to submit joyfully to Christ and look toward serving God the Father. As “new men” (2 Cor 5:17), they will become more ready to embrace being “elders in The Way”\(^3\) in the lives of the adolescent boys seeking their own identities as men in Christ.

**Masculine Spiritual Formation**

The Men of the Kirk are in need of both spiritual direction and purpose. God has given these men an abundance of wonderful gifts with which to serve and glorify him. However, due to recent and growing disinterest, a lack of identified leadership, an adverse attitude toward change, and attrition from relocation and death, the Men of the Kirk are floundering and searching for their place and role in the Kirk faith community. The Men of the Kirk are in need of a spiritual formation path that invigorates them to respond to God’s grace and love with the desire to serve and grow deeper in faith.

As Wilhoit asserts, “Spiritual formation is the task of the church.”\(^4\) He explains that “Christian spiritual formation refers to the intentional communal process of growing our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”\(^5\) In this time of uncertainty for the Men of the Kirk, the church must live into this task. Kirk in the Hills does have a robust adult education program, with classes offered every Sunday morning during the traditional nine-month school year. Each fall, and during the holy reflective seasons of Advent and Lent, special educational series are offered on both Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings for adults to grow deeper in

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 15.

\(^5\) Ibid., 23.
understanding and faith. After all, this is part of the mission statement of Kirk in the Hills as a “Christ-centered Community called to deepen faith, serve others, and foster fellowship.”

Along with the Sunday and Wednesday education classes, the Kirk’s adult education program includes numerous and diverse small groups that mostly meet away from the Kirk’s campus. However, as Wilhoit points out, “Spiritual formation does not take place primarily in small groups and Sunday school classes; instead, it mostly takes place in the well-lived and everyday events of life.”\(^6\) Wilhoit further states that “we do not accomplish spiritual formation simply by setting programs and writing policies. There is nothing ‘once for all’ about formation.”\(^7\) The only limit to the possibilities in spiritual formation is the Holy Spirit, which is to say there are no limits. In contrast to the limitlessness of the Holy Spirit, human beings are quite limited in their own formation possibilities apart from the Holy Spirit. Wilhoit advises that “we must pattern our lives after Jesus and recognize that our perception of his example and our faithfulness in following it will be limited.”\(^8\)

The path of spiritual formation of the Men of the Kirk can help these men realize their identity as men in Christ and form a “masculine spirituality.” Arnold defines masculine spirituality as “the distinctive characteristics, gifts, and archetypes of the male spirit.”\(^9\) In *From Wild Man to Wise Man* Rohr and Martos describe masculine spirituality

\(^6\) Ibid., 38.

\(^7\) Ibid., 34.

\(^8\) Ibid., 43.

as something “that encourages men to take the radical gospel journey from their own unique beginning point, in their own unique style, with their own unique goals—which is what we end up doing anyway, but now with no doubt or apology or need to imitate our sisters or even our fathers, for that matter.” Masculine spirituality helps a man become the human being that God created him to be, one formed in the image of God. Lippy says spirituality in general is “a personal way of being religious reflected in human experience, frequently in conjunction with some sense of transcendent reality.” Masculine spirituality can be seen by others through the life a man in Christ leads. Internally, a man understands his masculine spirituality through who he is in Christ: marked (Eph 1:13), claimed (Eph 1:4), loved (Eph 1:19), and adopted as one of God’s own (Eph 1:5).

Masculine spirituality molds the spiritual man. Rohr and Martos describe the spiritual man. They write: “In mythology, in literature and in great world religions [he] has an excess of life, he knows he has it, makes no apology for, and finally recognizes that he does not even need to protect or guard it. It is not for him. It is for others. His life is not his own. His life is not about him. It is about God.” With respect to this project, the spiritual man knows his life is about God and provides himself as a servant through Jesus Christ.

**Community**

Being a member of a community is a significant part of the Christian faith. The Christian community is the Body of Christ gathered in worship, gathered in prayer,

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11 Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?* 4.

gathered in Christ to love and serve. As a German theologian, pastor, and spy during World War II, Bonhoeffer believed that Christian community differed absolutely from all other communities because it is found solely on Jesus Christ.\(^{13}\) Community was extremely important to Bonhoeffer. Indeed, as Andrew Root states in his book, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, “Community is a central theme of Bonhoeffer’s theology from the beginning.”\(^{14}\)

The Men of the Kirk must re-form their community that once thrived in the past. While these men are a part of the larger faith community of Kirk in the Hills, they need to re-form their community as a group and reclaim what it means to be men in Christ. It is within this community in Christ that their collective masculine spiritual formation will occur and grow through the Holy Spirit.

In this re-formed community, the Men of the Kirk will practice several spiritual disciplines actively. While there are a number of spiritual disciplines that can aid men in their spiritual formation, the path for the Men of the Kirk initially will include prayer, Bible study, and service. These three disciplines are accessible to all the men of Kirk in the Hills. Rather than force the men into following more complicated spiritual disciplines, it would be more palpable for those who are currently involved and interested to start with disciplines that they know and understand. It will be difficult to lead these men into submitting to servanthood. However, if one attempted to force the men into this submission, rather than paving the way to the wisdom of a choice made freely through

\(^{13}\) Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 31.

the Holy Spirit, the results would be painful and disastrous. Most of these men are not accustomed to taking orders or submitting.

The local church has more than a role to play in helping men realize who they are in Christ. It has an obligation. However, as Arnold says, “The church can play only a limited part in the rediscovery of masculine spirituality for men; it is a latecomer to the movement.”\textsuperscript{15} Hoover and Coats come to a similar conclusion through their 2015 research of Christian masculinity. They surmise that “the failure of the churches seem, for [the men that they interviewed], to be in the practical register, while the neo-traditionalist discourse is almost exclusively in the normative register.”\textsuperscript{16} Hoover and Coats further explain the interviewed men’s desire for a “practical” way to grow in faith in the twenty-first century church:

They were looking for practical models of how to be committed to work and home in an everyday struggle over limited time and resources. They were looking for guidance on how to navigate the financial realities of dual-income households within the frame of headship. They were looking for insights into emotional and spiritual headship, how to be nurturers and servants as well as “warriors.” Finally, they were looking for resources to help them express narratives of headship that can be “plausible accounts of the self” in the shared common culture. They were looking for help in the practical register, a way of experiencing and expressing what they could call Biblical masculinity in a way that incorporates elemental notions of masculinity yet does not at the same time diminish women.\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast to Arnold, and addressing Hoover and Coats’ conclusions, the local church, specifically and contextually Kirk in the Hills, does have the potential and can play a tremendously practical role in supporting the growth of masculine spirituality. The Kirk’s self-study revealed that the men of the church, those who at the very least care


\textsuperscript{16} Hoover and Coats, \textit{Does God Make the Man?} 158.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 158-159.
enough to complete a congregational survey, are longing to grow in their faith. The local church is where they are coming in their longing. The community of the Men of the Kirk is poised to provide a practical pathway for the spirituality of men like those Hoover and Coats interviewed, men who are demographically quite similar to the Men of the Kirk faith community.

Within this community in Christ, the Men of the Kirk can deepen their faith walk through study and accountability, take advantage of the opportunity to serve among brothers in Christ, and engage in fellowship with other men who love and are loved by God. This re-formed community of men at Kirk in the Hills offers a practical path to live into the overall mission of the Kirk: “A Christ-centered Community called to deepen faith, serve others and foster fellowship.” The three points of calling in the Kirk’s Mission Statement—deepen faith, serve others, foster fellowship—will be used strategically to help develop the masculine spirituality within the community of the Men of the Kirk.

The first point on the Men of the Kirk’s practical path to a lasting masculine spirituality involves offering occasions to grow in faith through study and accountability. This comes by way of encouraging and coaching the men in several spiritual disciplines. The first spiritual discipline for the men to engage is prayer. A life built on prayer is integral to the faith of a Christian man. Nouwen in Intimacy writes: “Prayer opens our eyes for ourselves and through clarification enables us to step forward in the direction of hope.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Nouwen, Intimacy, 47.
Prayer can be done in private or with others. For some men, prayer will come easily and the encouragement simply will support the prayer life that has sustained them and their faith for years. For other men, prayer might be intimidating, so a little more coaching may be in order. The immediate example for this situation is that of the disciples when they asked Jesus, “Lord teach us to pray,” and Jesus taught them the Lord’s Prayer (Lk 11:1-4). For the men to know that they are all praying the Lord’s Prayer either privately or among other men can help build community. The Holy Spirit unites the community through prayer (Rom 15:30).

Another primary spiritual discipline to include at this stage is study, specifically the study of Scripture. The men will be coached to meet in small groups with a minimum of two men gathered. Each group of men will encouraged to meet regularly, possibly weekly, for Bible study for about an hour. These small groups can meet virtually anywhere and anytime—at a coffee shop, in a home, or even during a lunch hour. At each meeting the men will first pray and then read and discuss the Word. A designated leader will coach the men to utilize Foster’s steps for studying; these include repetition, concentration, comprehension, and reflection.19 While there are a number of places to begin when reading Scripture, I would encourage the men to begin with the Letter of James. This epistle contains teachable lessons and practical applications for the life of a faithful Christian. Like praying the Lord’s Prayer, studying God’s Word as a community, albeit in small portions of the community, can unite the men further.

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19 Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 64-66.
The second point on the Men of the Kirk’s practical path to a deeper and more fruitful masculine spirituality is presenting the opportunity to serve among brothers in Christ. Wilhoit writes: “Christian service is a pathway of great joy and not one of self-annihilation.” Service to God and to others is itself a spiritual discipline; therefore, it melds seamlessly with the first station on the path. Foster agrees. He says, “Nothing disciplines the inordinate desires of the flesh like service, and nothing transforms the desires of the flesh like serving in hiddenness.”

Service can take on a number of forms and allow the men to live into their identity as true men of Christ and servants of God. Foster lists at least nine different kinds of service for faithful Christians to embrace as a lifestyle: “the service of small things,” “the service of guarding the reputation of others,” “the service of being served,” “the service of common courtesy,” “the service of hospitality,” “the service of listening,” “the service of bearing the burdens of each other,” and “the service of sharing the word of Life with one another.” Most of these acts of service are instructed in the Letter of

\[\text{\footnotesize 20 Wilhoit, \textit{Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered}, 178.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 21 Foster, \textit{Celebration of Discipline}, 130.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 22 Ibid., 135.}\]
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\[\text{\footnotesize 27 Ibid., 138.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 28 Ibid., 139.}\]
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James, thereby giving the Men of the Kirk a practical opportunity to “be doers of the world, not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (Jas 1:22). Foster writes: “It is one thing to act like a servant; it is quite another to be a servant.”

Foster in *Spiritual Disciplines* looks to Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*, and one finds it hard not to follow suit. After all, Root does refer to *Life Together* as “arguably, the most direct and important book written about Christian communal life in the twentieth century.” Bonhoeffer lists several rather self-explanatory ways for a community member to experience true brotherly service. He says the first service is listening and admits, “Listening can be a greater service than speaking.” The second true brotherly service is active helpfulness. The third service is bearing others, and Bonhoeffer specifies that “the Christian must bear the burden of a brother.” He also includes the service of forgiveness as part of the service of bearing others. The importance of forgiveness and bearing the burden of others in communal fellowship community, specifically through confession, will be addressed later in this section.

For the Men of the Kirk, and all males who follow Christ, service is the act of being a true man in Christ. It is following the example of Jesus stooping to wash the feet of his disciples. Foster concurs:

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30 Ibid., 134.

31 Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 191.


33 Ibid., 99.

34 Ibid., 100.

35 Ibid., 103.
The risen Christ beckons us to the ministry of the towel. Such a ministry, flowing out of the inner recesses of the heart, is life and joy and peace. Perhaps you would like to begin by experimenting with a prayer that several of us use. Begin the day by praying, “Lord Jesus, as it would please you bring me someone today whom I can serve.”

When the Men of the Kirk serve, they will find an abundance of joy in their service.

The third point on the Men of the Kirk’s practical path to a more positive masculine spirituality is finding fellowship with other men who love and are loved by God. Fellowship among the men of Kirk in the Hills is crucial to the community. Willard explains, “The members of the body must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other.” Likewise Bonhoeffer suggests, “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.”

Through fellowship, the Men of the Kirk can begin to recognize one another as brothers in Christ, each adopted into the family of God through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5). The two other stations of the practical path of masculine spirituality each contain major elements of fellowship and interaction with other brothers in Christ. Fellowship can be enjoyed when the men pray together, when they study the Bible together, and when they serve God by serving others and one another. Indeed, fellowship is itself considered part of a spiritual discipline. To this point, Willard writes: “The highest level of fellowship—involving humility, complete honesty, transparency, and at times confession and restitution—is sustained by the discipline of submission.”

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36 Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 140.


One way to experience fellowship on a larger, yet more intimate scale that includes a greater number of brothers is to hold a retreat. Retreats whisk men away from their “everyday” lives. It gives them an opportunity to relax and simply enjoy the fellowship of brothers in Christ. In the words of Bonhoeffer:

When physical and family relationships or ordinary associations, that is, those arising from everyday life with all its claims upon people who are working together, are not projected into the spiritual community, then we must be especially careful. That is why, as experience has shown, it is precisely in retreats of short duration that the human element develops most easily. Nothing is easier than to stimulate the glow of fellowship in a few days of life together, but nothing is more fatal to the sound, sober brotherly fellowship of everyday life.40

Rohr declares, “Retreats are a good thing. It’s good to get away from it all, to find some quiet time, to seek God, ourselves and the truth of things. We need that time away from the demands and distractions of our daily routine, so we can get into that space where we can just be, reflect and contemplate.”41

Retreats also offer opportunity to revisit the other stations of the practical path of masculine spirituality. During a retreat, the men will have new opportunities to pray together and study together. Incorporating service into a time of retreat is also a possibility. A retreat can and perhaps should be used as a Sabbath, a time to spend with God in joy and thanksgiving and to rest from the everyday “labors” of life. The time of retreat needs to be what Abraham Heschel refers to as sacred time, almost holy time.42 A retreat should be treated like the Sabbath that it is.


A Men’s Retreat for the Men of the Kirk is not a new idea. It is actually an old tradition that has gone dormant in recent years. The Men’s Retreat has been defunct for several years. The last retreat unfortunately was planned on the worst weekend possible, the weekend of the annual University of Michigan versus Michigan State University football game. As the self-study revealed, 80.5 percent of those over twenty-five years of age in the Kirk in the Hills faith community are college graduates, and a significant number of those people went to either Michigan or Michigan State. The lesson has been learned that the weekend these two rivals play each in mid-October is off limits when it comes to scheduling a retreat within the context of Kirk in the Hills.

Reviving the Men’s Retreat is crucial. It can be the catalyst to move the men of Kirk in the Hills in the right direction and even get them looking for opportunities to serve. However, the retreat must not be the end goal in the spiritual formation of the Men of the Kirk. Wilhoit provides the following caution:

Conferences and special spiritual assemblies can have a powerful effect on a spiritual life. However, mountaintop experiences at conferences or similar events might hide two potential problems. First, when they focus on the future, they might reinforce a perspective that what has been part of one’s past is not critical or does not need to be redeemed. Second, individuals may be motivated to make resolutions that are not mature enough to keep over the long term. Conferences are times of renewal or special training, but we must not see them as indispensable spiritual filling stations that become our primary source of nurture and guidance on the journey.

Therefore, the fellowship and other spiritual disciplines must be engaged both before and after the retreat. Rohr and Martos offer a balanced, reasonable view when considering retreats. They write:

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44 Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 54.
For every retreat in your life, there should also be at least one “confront.” There should be something you’ve come up against, something you’ve wrestled with, something you’ve tried to do in the world. If you’ve confronted some hardness in society, some evil in the world, some intransigence in the church, then you have a reason to retreat and gather your inner strength.45

Their point is that if a retreat is held with no “confronts,” then it is simply a “comfortable” retreat. Essentially, this kind of a retreat “is a set-up for spiritual mediocrity and even phoniness.”46 The Men of the Kirk are in the midst of dealing with a “confront,” as their numbers have dwindled and they have lost their focus and direction. They are in need of a retreat.

The time of retreat also offers the deeply spiritual opportunity to share in two important events integral to Christian community: the Lord’s Supper and confession. In the Lord’s Supper, believers join with the community and remember God’s love with thanksgiving. As Burgess says in After Baptism, “This giving thanks is itself a giving of the self, a way of confirming the identity that we have received in Jesus Christ. When we give thanks, we turn outward and away from ourselves. We acknowledge our dependence on God and on the world that God has given us.”47 In thanksgiving, the Men of the Kirk as a body of believers can acknowledge dependence on the fellowship and joy of brothers in Christ.

Bonhoeffer emphasizes the significance of the community partaking in the Lord’s Supper. He writes: “Not until the fellowship has been nourished and strengthened with the bread of eternal life does it come together to receive from God earthly bread for this

45 Ibid.

46 Rohr and Martos, From Wild Man to Wise Man, 113.

47 Burgess, After Baptism, 126.
temporal life.”

Incorporating communion into a retreat schedule is critical for the community of servants of God who have gathered. Bonhoeffer adds, “The day of the Lord’s Supper is an occasion of joy for the Christian community. The fellowship of the Lord’s Supper is the superlative fulfillment of Christian fellowship.”

Included with communion is confession, as suggested by Bonhoeffer and Burgess, among others. Willard stresses the importance of confession to the Christian community. He comments:

Confession is a discipline that functions within fellowship. In [confession] we let trusted others know our deepest weakness and failures. This will nourish our faith in God’s provision for our needs through his people, our sense of being loved, and our humility before our brothers and sisters. . . . Confession alone makes deep fellowship possible, and the lack of it explains much of the superficial quality so commonly found in our church associations. Where there is confession within a close community, restitution cannot be omitted and it too serves as a powerful discipline.

Confession adds to the station of the fellowship on the practical path to a deepening masculine spirituality. Wilhoit defines it as “a basic discipline in the spiritual life, not for us to dread but for us to accept as a good gift. There is no stronger sin than the sin that remains hidden.” This is because secrets can destroy a family, especially the family of God. If believers in Christ are to be the family of God, then they must get beyond their secrets. Confession is the discipline that can move individual Christ-followers to share their secrets and become the family that God has called them to be in and through Jesus.

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49 Ibid., 122.


51 Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 193.
Christ. Jesus addressed this with his disciples in Matthew 10:26, when he said, “For nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.”

The courage to engage in confession will aid in lowering the guards of the men of Kirk in the Hills on their way to submitting in servanthood to Jesus Christ. From a practical perspective, confession among the men will be hard to introduce. Foster explains, “Confession is a difficult Discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We cannot bear to reveal our failures and shortcomings to others.”  

Bonhoeffer ties confession with communion, and suggests that men cannot have communion without confession. Bonhoeffer writes: “Nobody who avoids this approach to his brother can go rightly prepared to the table of the Lord. All anger, strife, envy, evil gossips and unbrotherly conduct must have been settled and finished if the brethren wish to receive the grace of God together in the sacrament.” In short, confession leads to communion. Bonhoeffer concludes, “Reconciled to God and men, Christians desire to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ.”

As confession leads to communion, so does the recognition that one’s sins have been forgiven through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Believers come to the table with broken hearts, only for them to be healed by the love and passion of Jesus Christ.

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52 Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 145.
53 Bonhoeffer, Life Together, 121.
54 Ibid.
While coming to the table can be a deeply personal act, confession among brothers in Christ also offers healing. Foster elaborates:

In acts of mutual confession we release the power that heals. Our humanity is no longer denied, but transformed. . . . The followers of Jesus Christ have been given the authority to receive the confession of sin and to forgive it in his name. “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20:23).55

A retreat is the prime place for men of Christ to confess to one another and then share in the body and blood of Christ. Confession and communion should be part of a gathering of believers. It should be a part of fellowship. Willard brings the understanding that confession and communion are not something that one does by oneself. He writes: “Christian redemption is not devised to be a solitary thing, though each individual of course has a unique and direct relationship with God, and God alone is his or her Lord and Judge.”56 Burgess describes those gathered for communion as “a motley crew, and yet the Eucharistic promises assert that we have been given each other for the work of life together, beginning with our baptism.”57

Confession leading to communion is an expression of trust and love among followers of Christ. The trust becomes mutual as they inherently risk to be vulnerable when confessing. The love that is shared happens through Christ. Nouwen explains:

Love is not based on the willingness to listen, to understand the problems of others, or to tolerate the otherness. Love is based on the mutuality of the confession of our total self to each other. This makes us free to declare not only: “My strength is your strength” but also: “Your pain is my pain, your weakness is

55 Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 146.
my weakness, your sin is my sin.” It is in this intimate fellowship of the weak that love is born.  

Burgess agrees and concludes, “The people who gather for Eucharist are still flawed humans.”

The motley crew of flawed men of Kirk in the Hills are called collectively to be true men in Christ, servants of God. Through spiritual disciplines that include prayer and studying God’s Word, all in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Men of the Kirk can begin to remember and recognize their identities as true men in Christ. Through acts of service, the men will put their rediscovered identities as true men in Christ to joy-filled work. Through prayer, Bible study, acts of service, and gathering together for the Men’s Retreat, the Men of the Kirk will continue to grow in faith through fellowship and accountability. By following this path into masculine spirituality, the Men of the Kirk will be prepared for their next challenge: coaching and nurturing the adolescent boys of the Kirk who are seeking their own identities as young men in Christ.

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58 Nouwen, Intimacy, 29.

59 Burgess, After Baptism, 128.
CHAPTER 5
NURTURING BOYS TO BE MEN IN CHRIST

This chapter describes the anticipated answer to a faithful prayer (Mt 21:22). Chapter 4 established how the Men of the Kirk, through several spiritual disciplines and a retreat, could come to recognize their identities as true men in Christ. Fully trusting in the power of transformation by the Holy Spirit, and the growth in faith that only the Holy Spirit can give, the hope-filled prayer is that the Men of the Kirk will accept with joy their call to serve alongside Christ as servants to God the Father. Trusting in God, who is able to accomplish abundantly far more than any could ask or imagine (Eph 3:21), this chapter describes how these “new men” in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) will reach out to the adolescent boys and emerging men of Kirk in the Hills and how they can coach and nurture the younger generation of boys to recognize their own call to become true men of God, who are servants with Christ.

Mentoring young men and adolescent boys in their faith journeys gives the Men of the Kirk as an organization a purpose and a direction. Mentoring is a tremendous responsibility, yet it is a faithful way for these men to fulfill their baptismal promises. As part of the faith community, the Men of the Kirk have vowed in the midst of each
baptism they have witnessed to help raise each child held in his parent’s arms in the faith. They have promised to help nurture each adult kneeling to be baptized to follow the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ faithfully.

Mentoring these “little ones” (Mt 10:42) in the faith is fulfilling the promises that are made in the midst of baptism. Writing about male mentoring in *From Wild Man to Wise Man*, Rohr and Martos define the process in the following way:

A true mentor or initiator guides a young man into his problems and through them, which will always feel a bit muddy and messy, but also wet and wild and wise. The mentor will lead a man to The Center, and his own center, but by circuitous paths, using even his two steps backward to lead him three steps forward. It looks wild, but it is really the wisdom party of God.¹

Mentoring can have a wonderful impact on the life of a growing and blossoming Christian. Rohr and Martos offer a brief background on mentoring. They write:

Interestingly enough, our word “mentor” comes from Greek mythology. Mentor was the wise and trusted counselor of Odysseus. When Odysseus went on his long journey, he put Mentor in charge of son, Telemachus, as his teacher and the guardian of his soul. This illustrates that one’s biological father is seldom the initiator of the son. It is always another special man who must guide the boy into manhood, from wildness to wisdom.²

Paraphrasing and contextually adapting the words of Cannister, once the Men of the Kirk have re-formed their community, the assimilation of adolescent boys becomes the responsibility of the Men of the Kirk along with the leadership of the Kirk and the parents of the boys.³ After the Men of the Kirk have come to recognize their identities as servants of God and true men in Jesus Christ, through continued spiritual formation and

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² Ibid.

by the power the Holy Spirit, they will be in the position to be that “special man” in the life of an adolescent boy at Kirk in the Hills. The Men of the Kirk can play a significant role in the shaping of boys into faithful, God-loving men who know who they are as they learn to serve.

The Men of the Kirk will be poised to exemplify true masculinity for boys of the Kirk. The world and various cultures will attempt to define “masculinity” and “manhood” and what it means to be “a man” for these adolescent boys, but the Men of the Kirk must help them understand their baptismal identity in Christ. The Men of the Kirk can help them become men in Christ. As John Eldredge writes in *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*:

A boy learns who he is and what he’s got from a man, or the company of men. He cannot learn it any other place. He cannot learn from other boys, and he cannot learn it from the world of women. The plan from the beginning of time was that his father would lay the foundation for a young boy’s heart, and pass on to him that essential knowledge and confidence in his strength. Dad would be the first man in his life, and forever the most important man.4

Rohr and Martos build upon Eldredge’s sentiments. They emphasize that there is room for “another special man”5 or several special men in the lives of the boys of the faith community—especially in the absence of fathers who have passed away or are not involved in the everyday lives of their teenage boys, due to divorce or work travel schedules.

The fact of the matter is that boys need men in their lives who care about them and are willing to spend time to guide them and support them as they seek their own identity.

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as men. The consequences of boys seeking their identity without the positive guidance of true men is all too apparent in today’s society. Michael Gurian observes in *The Wonder of Boys*, “Without male role models, boy culture feels lost, and human culture in general is put in danger. Perhaps the biggest mistake our culture has made in its history has been its forgetfulness of the essentiality of both the father and the male role model. Without these, we risk the loss of a huge portion of our humanity.”⁶ In light of this challenge, the Men of the Kirk are poised to be the role models that God has called them to be.

**Adolescent Boys**

In *The Teenage Brain*, Jensen and Nutt write that “scientists and psychologists have long known that there are differences in development between girls and boys and that girls’ language development, specifically reading and writing, is generally about one to one and a half years ahead of boys.”⁷ Truthfully, regardless of earned degrees and credentials, anyone who has spent time working or hanging out with teenagers knows this fact. Boys and girls are different.

Understanding adolescent boys will not be easy for the men of Kirk in the Hills, all of whom are several decades removed from adolescence. Many things have changed in the world, and specifically with adolescence, since these men have been in that particular stage of life. Dean points out in *Almost Christian*, “Today, adolescence functions as a lifestyle as well as a life stage, a state of consciousness as well as a period

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of life that young people can and often do prolong, with the full cooperation of American culture.”

Society’s understanding of adolescence also has changed. Clark surmises in *Hurt 2.0*, “Society’s view of teenagers has subtly been shifting over the last several decades to where many adults view teenagers in general as insolent, difficult, and arrogant.” Clark conclusions are based on his research of adolescents. He discloses that “the vast majority of adults simply do not comprehend the complex and different world in which nearly all midadolescents dwell and most adults fear and in many cases are basically repulsed by what they see in the adolescent world.” Clark’s ideas are the present understanding of many of the men of Kirk in the Hills.

In spite of the present understanding (or misunderstanding) that too many men of Kirk in the Hills have, true men in Christ who are servants of God are open and willing to discern things that are foreign to them. The teenage boys of the Kirk need the Men of the Kirk to “man up.” Clark writes: “The fact is that adolescents need adults to become adults, and when adults are not present and involved in their lives, they are forced to figure out how to survive life on their own.” Through the Kirk’s youth program, a number of adults already have been involved in the lives of the Kirk’s adolescents.

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9 Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, location 441.

10 Ibid., location 1183.

11 Ibid., location 832.
However, the Kirk is a long way from the “5:1” reality, the adult-to-youth ratio that Powell and Clark set as the optimal standard in *Sticky Faith*.¹²

Still, the Kirk is moving in a positive direction. In the past few years, the Kirk has gone from a church that, in the words of Clark, has “offered teenagers a kind of ‘diner theology’: a bargain religion, cheap but satisfying, whose gods require little in the way of fidelity or sacrifice,”¹³ to a church that is wholly bucking the trend of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism plaguing so many similar traditional mainline churches in the United States. As the faith community has discovered, surprising to some yet confirming to many, Kirk in the Hills is a “Millennial Church” in that we have effectively attracted and retained young people who are actively involved in the faith community.

At the same time, the Kirk has nothing in the away of small groups, special events, or Bible studies for young people once they graduate from the high school youth program. Truthfully, the Kirk’s youth program is in danger of creating what Clark refers to as “spiritual orphans.”¹⁴ Involving Men of the Kirk as a group in the lives of individual adolescent boys on their way to manhood will get the Kirk closer to the 5:1 adult-to-youth ratio. The hope is that the relationships formed between these boys and these special men will not cease as the young men leave for college or wherever life takes them. The hope is that the relationships forged by the Men of the Kirk will last long into the future.

As the Men of the Kirk reach out to the teen boys of the church, they will have to overcome a virtual wall of skepticism that exists between adolescents and adults. As

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Cannister points out, “Teenagers no longer grow up with an innate feeling that they can trust adults. Young people in our culture grow up with an implicit distrust of adults.”\(^\text{15}\)

That wall of skepticism and distrust is the result of adults projecting their own needs, desires, and expectations on children. Adolescents naturally push back on these projections, so the wall grows higher and thicker. Regarding this division between adults and youth, Clark writes: “The young have not arrogantly turned their backs to the adult world. Rather, they have been forced by a personal sense of abandonment to band together and create their own world—separate, semisecret, and vastly different from the world around them.”\(^\text{16}\)

For this reason, the Men of the Kirk cannot expect the youth to break down this wall. The current project under discussion cannot be yet one more agenda pushed upon the children. Clark explains the important reasons:

> By the time children, even the successful ones, reach high school and middle adolescents, they are aware of the fact that most of their lives they have been pushed, prodded, and molded to become a person whose value rests in his or her ability to serve someone else’s agenda. Whether they experience it from a coach, a school teacher, a parent, a music teacher, or a Sunday school counselor, midadolescents intuitively believe that nearly every adult they have encountered has been subtly out to get something from them.\(^\text{17}\)

With respect to such adult plans, Cannister stresses an approach to young people’s faith that is free of agendas. He says, “When we approach teenagers with an agenda, we become—at best—marketing representatives for God rather than partners on a journey of

\(^{15}\) Cannister, *Teenagers Matter*, location 1174.

\(^{16}\) Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, location 874.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., location 1141.
faith.” It is incumbent upon adults to tear down this wall. Cannister writes: “In order to address this adolescent skepticism, we must create a culture within student ministries and the church at large that welcomes and honors teenagers for who they are, rather than simply using them for our own agendas.” Clark concurs, “Because the root of the issues related to contemporary adolescence has to do with leaving this group to flounder on its own, the answer is relationships with adults who sincerely care. That is the most fundamental need of this abandoned generation.” The Men of the Kirk must make the first move toward a Christ-like relationship with the adolescent boys of the Kirk.

The ultimate challenge for the Men of the Kirk will be to kneel as servants before the adolescent boys of the Kirk, with no agenda but to serve them. This is exactly what Jesus showed his disciples when he took a basin and a towel, kneeled before them, assumed the role of the lowliest household servant, and washed the feet of those he loved. This faithful action of submission by the men of Kirk in the Hills is exactly what Jesus exemplified and commanded when he told his disciples, “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13:15).

**Men to Boys**

God is generational. When God spoke to Moses through the burning bush, He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:6; Acts 7:32). If God places priority on the generations, then those who comprise the Church should make generational ministry a priority as well. Intergenerational ministry,

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19 Ibid., location 1201.

20 Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, location 4339.
such as the passing on of the faith from men to boys at the Kirk, must be intentional. Cannister writes: “The concept of being intergenerational is often viewed as simply gathering more than one generation of people together for a program. Intergenerational ministry, however, requires an intentional interaction among generations that promotes faith formation of all ages.”

The Men of the Kirk will need to be intentional about bridging the generation gaps between them and the adolescent boys of the Kirk faith community. In his chapter in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, Cannister says, “Adults make connections with teenagers by demonstrating a curiosity about the interests of teenagers.” He also suggests in *Teenagers Matter* that “senior pastors, associate pastors, elders, deacons, small group leaders, Sunday school teachers, and other key leaders must all be dedicated to the vision from the start. They must champion the value of becoming intergenerational until it becomes an irreplaceable mark of the congregation’s identity.” With the exception of the senior pastor position, which has yet to be filled at this point, there are faithful men serving at the Kirk in all of the leadership roles on Cannister’s list.

Since the men of Kirk in the Hills are older and arguably have more life experience than the adolescent boys of the Kirk, a mentoring relationship would seem to be the logical course for the Men of the Kirk to take as they reach out to guide and nurture the teenage boys toward becoming true men of God. As Clark says in *Youth Ministry in the 21st Century*, “When we offer our young people real, mutually

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22 Cannister, “Thinking Theologically,” location 3772.

participatory familial relationships that go beyond the single mentor, in line with the
family and body metaphors especially found in the New Testament, the church becomes
more a natural and wide-ranging environment best described as a mentoring
community.”

The term “mentoring” may be a misnomer. Mentoring relationships are
invaluable and countless people have benefitted from mentors in their lives and
vocations. Most cherish a mentor’s advice and counsel and are forever grateful for the
mentor-mentee relationships they share. However, for the men of Kirk in the Hills, being
a mentor, or even being “another special man” in the life of an adolescent does not
necessarily reach the level of relationship that they can have with the boys of the Kirk.
Instead, the men and boys of the Kirk need to share a brotherly relationship by coming to
recognize that they are indeed brothers in Christ. They are family.

The recognition by the Men of the Kirk that the adolescent boys of the church are
their brothers in Christ embodies adoptive ministry. Adoptive ministry is an
understanding that within the faith community all are part of the family of God, made
children of God, brothers and sisters in and through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26).
Adoptive ministry moves beyond the Sunday morning pleasantries and the stagnant
practices of the local church to members of the faith community treating and embracing
one another as the family that they are. As Clark puts it, “Just as in a family, adoption is
far more than just knowing and being around each other. Family cuts much deeper than

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building networks of mutual acquaintances.  

In other words, the faith community goes from focusing on programming to being a family.  

As brothers, albeit older and younger brothers, the males of the Kirk share in the inheritance of God through our brother Jesus the Christ. Bonhoeffer wrote of this brotherly relationship that men have in Christ. He put forth that “Christ opened the way to God and to our brother. . . God Himself has undertaken to teach brotherly love; all that men can add to it is to remember this divine instruction and the admonition to excel in it more and more.”  

However, before any men think that they can add more in some way to what Christ already has done in establishing brotherly love, Bonhoeffer is quick to point out, “Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”  

Beyond Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*, the concept that the Men of the Kirk and the adolescent boys of the church can and should be in a brotherly relationship fits within adoptive youth ministry. According to Jay Sedwick, “Adolescents benefit greatly by being around the influence of other, more mature, believers—their older brothers and sisters—in the church.”  

Spring-boarding from Walt Mueller’s words in his chapter, “Youth Ministry, Adoption, and Culture” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, this really “necessitates” the “willingness as older and more mature brothers in Christ,” specifically

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25 Ibid., 88.


28 Ibid., 30.

the Men of the Kirk, “to see themselves as cross-cultural missionaries who must assume a cross-cultural posture if” they “are to effectively communicate the message of the gospel” and “nurture” them in their walk with Christ.\textsuperscript{30} Incorporating the concept of adoptive youth ministry into this project’s thesis statement actually might better capture the direction in which the Kirk hopefully is heading. As younger brothers seek their own identities in Christ, their older brothers in Christ must coach and nurture them by exemplifying their own adopted identities in Christ and call to be true men of God—to be servants of God with Christ.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I was motivated into writing this project out of righteous indignation with how a small portion of the men of Kirk in the Hills disparagingly refused to allow women to serve alongside them as ushers in the Kirk’s all-male Usher Corps. When the topic was broached, their reaction was both chauvinistic and embarrassing. Men who proclaim to have a relationship with Jesus Christ do not act in such a manner.

As the dad of two young daughters, not to mention being the older brother of two younger sisters and a former girls’ track coach, I want my girls to grow up knowing that they can do whatever they want to do. When it comes to serving God, I never want limitations placed on their service based solely on their gender. In the PC(USA) my daughters can serve as a volunteer, an ordained elder, a deacon, or a pastoral minister of word and sacrament. However, in the PC(USA) congregation where I serve, my daughters cannot walk members and guests to their pews for a worship service, collect the offering, or point people where to park their car in the parking lot. This is maddening to me. When the Usher Corp got excited at the prospect of bringing adolescent boys into their ranks as “Junior Ushers,” I bristled at the thought of the boys of Kirk in the Hills learning anything from these men who had not acted as men in Christ.

At the same time, the Men of the Kirk, which includes the Usher Corps, is an important and respected group within the faith community of Kirk in the Hills. They have a history of men of faith and service. In recent years, however, they have suffered from dwindling numbers due to natural attrition and a lack of direction. They desperately need to attract and involve younger men and adolescent boys in the organization. Kirk in the
Hills, as a “Millennial Church,” is perfectly positioned to add to the numbers of the Men of the Kirk. The only thing preventing change seems to be the men themselves. The Men of the Kirk must be open to any transformation the Holy Spirit might want to bring.

While the men must change, the love God has for them will never change. The men have to recognize and reconcile these two facts. Through faith in the Holy Spirit, transformation will come. Through spiritual disciplines, serving God by serving others, and reviving the annual Men’s Retreat, the Men of the Kirk once again can remember their identities as men in Christ.

By remembering their identities as men in Christ, they will live more deeply into the call of being true men, which means being servants of God. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, the perfect man, showed all of humanity how to live and love. Through many examples, especially the example of washing his disciples’ feet during his last meal with them (Jn 13:2-17), Jesus shows those who want to follow him that no act of service is beneath them. In service to God and service to others, a man is made great (Mt 20:26).

In serving God, no matter how low he must stoop, a man willingly submits to Christ his Lord. In submitting to God, a man also finds an incomparable joy. It is the joy in serving that I hope the Men of the Kirk will come to embrace and experience. As these men become great in the eyes of the Father, they will inspire younger men, adolescent boys, and even the apathetic men of the faith community to become involved in the life of the congregation through the Men of the Kirk.

Furthermore, as serving men, they will reach out to the abandoned generation of young men seeking their own identities as men in Christ. Through adoptive ministry, the men can look upon the younger men and adolescent boys of the faith community as their
younger brothers in Christ. As older brothers, mature in their faith and in life, they can help nurture their younger brothers and fulfill their baptismal promises. As these men exemplify servanthood, they will coach their younger brothers to discover their own joy in serving God with Christ.

Men’s groups, when comprised of men seeking to serve God, are integral to the whole faith community. The Men of the Kirk, regardless of any changes to the Usher Corps, will continue to be the men’s organization of Kirk in the Hills. They will continue to hold men’s Bible studies, men’s retreats, and do various service projects in the name of Christ as the Men of the Kirk. The bond between brothers in Christ is special and important for the nurturing of faith and closeness of community. Within the manly community of the Men of the Kirk, brothers can hold one another accountable, bear one another’s burdens, share in the reading of God’s Word, and pray together.

Finally, the Usher Corps, which is comprised of the men of Kirk in the Hills, will be transformed from the inside by true men. When men in Christ, through adoptive ministry, recognize that they are brothers in Christ, and that they are part of God’s family in and through Christ, they willingly submit to serving with joy alongside any of their family members—brothers and sisters alike. The Men of the Kirk can lead the Usher Corps to understand and graciously live into Paul’s reminder to the Galatians: “For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-28).
True men in Christ recognize their manliness and masculinity in Christ. They are not threatened by serving with others who are different from them, especially serving with women. Recognizing their sisters in Christ, and that they, too, have been called to serve God, is also following Christ’s example. When Jesus said, “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother,” he was stating that all, regardless of gender, are called to serve God. Women in Christ also are called to submit to the Master and serve God and serve others. Even if this means they are called to direct traffic in the parking lot, welcome and walk brothers and sisters to their pew to worship God, or collect the offering of brothers and sisters who respond to God’s gift of grace in the midst of worship. True men in Christ joyfully welcome their sisters who want to serve.

It has been a longstanding tradition for the Usher Corps to be exclusively comprised of men. A few men and a number of women actually like the tradition of all-male ushers. Amidst significant changes the Kirk has experienced in the past few years, and the changes anticipated with a new senior pastor and head of staff, altering the Usher Corps from the outside to include faithful women likely would not be welcomed by most. Only true men will be able to change the Usher Corps, for such transformation requires an internal change in the mind and heart.

Such growth for the Usher Corps is necessary. Without it, they will die. Their physical numbers are dwindling far faster than they are being replaced. Incorporating younger men and adolescent boys into their ranks is desperately needed. The men in Christ of the Usher Corps must reach out and invite the adolescent boys to serve as ushers and remain open to whatever plans God has for them.
Each year, the Kirk welcomes a new Confirmation class of young people who are usually finishing their freshman year of high school. As we counsel the congregation and the confirmands, upon Confirmation they are full members of the Kirk, which means that they have all the rights and responsibilities that come with being a member. Once confirmed, the adolescent boys could be and should be encouraged to serve as an usher.

However, there is one other solution to consider: incorporate all of the adolescents of the Kirk, not just the boys, into the Usher Corps. The Kirk’s youth are a service-oriented group. Every one of the youth has participated on mission trips or served in some aspect of the Kirk’s ministry. The youth of the Kirk serve as acolytes, teacher’s assistants, Vacation Bible School volunteers, lay readers during worship, and as elders and deacons. In fact, during the Kirk’s annual Youth Sunday, boys and girls serve as ushers. In other words, the precedent already has been set.

The Men of the Kirk are embarking on an exciting season of change. As the Kirk moves forward in its mission with a new senior pastor, the men of Kirk in the Hills have an opportunity to reach out to the young Millennials of the faith community and show them through nurture and example, how they, too, can love and serve God through Jesus Christ. The Men of the Kirk can do this because they have come to know that they are men in Christ. They are more than Sunday ushers. They are lifetime mentors.

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1 I understand and even agree with the argument to not hold a specific Youth Sunday but rather move to incorporating youth into all worship services. However, at the Kirk, both are implemented—a very well attended annual Youth Sunday and young people participating in weekly worship services. I even have had youth standing with me, assisting at the Communion Table.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


