

10-2018

# The Missional Metamorphosis of Whittier Area Community Church

John Riley  
dmin-fpcoord@fuller.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin>

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Riley, John, "The Missional Metamorphosis of Whittier Area Community Church" (2018). *Doctor of Ministry Projects*. 340.  
<https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin/340>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Theology at Digital Commons @ Fuller. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Fuller. For more information, please contact [archives@fuller.edu](mailto:archives@fuller.edu).

10-2018

# The Missional Metamorphosis of Whittier Area Community Church

John Riley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin>

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

---

# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

THE MISSIONAL METAMORPHOSIS OF  
WHITTIER AREA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Written by

JOHN RILEY

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

  
Kurt Fredrickson

  
Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: September 28, 2018

THE MISSIONAL METAMORPHOSIS OF  
WHITTIER AREA COMMUNITY CHURCH

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

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

BY

JOHN RILEY  
OCTOBER 2018



## ABSTRACT

### **The Missional Metamorphosis of Whittier Area Community Church**

John Riley

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2018

The purpose of this ministry focus paper is to develop a preaching strategy that introduces congregants from Whittier Area Community Church to the Church's true missional identity in order that they might develop missional practices in their everyday lives. This preaching strategy will be rooted in the mission of God, as seen most clearly in Jesus, and it will be evaluated by the pastors who will be assigned to preach these messages.

Whittier Area Community Church is a suburban megachurch whose program-driven approach to ministry has limited their reach with the gospel to only those individuals who come to their church campus. Part One of the paper will examine the community surrounding Whittier Area Community Church, the unique character of the church's ministry, and its current shot-gun approach to discipleship. This section will then explore the climate at the church which seems open for a missional shift.

Part Two of the paper will engage the critical, biblical and theological foundations for the missional transformation in a local church. First, an examination of Christian mission and key concepts of incarnation will be highlighted. Part Two will then analyze the reasons for the loss of incarnation in the Baptist tradition and the negative impact it has had on discipleship. Lastly, attention will be given to the transformational role of preaching in Jesus' mission.

Part Three will focus on creating a preaching strategy, undergirded by the theological data, which sparks the missional imagination of the church. The creation of an ecclesiology built on the mission of God and illustrated through the stories of ordinary Christ followers will allow congregants to recognize that a missional lifestyle is possible. An evaluation by the pastors who will communicate the sermons will allow the preaching strategy to be evaluated before presenting it to the congregation at large.

Content Reader: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Word Count: 300

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### PART ONE: COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION	2
Chapter 1. UNDERSTANDING WHERE THE MISSION BEGINS	6

### PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	18
Chapter 3. A THEOLOGY OF MISSION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH	39

### PART THREE: MINISTRY STRATEGY

Chapter 4. A MISSIONAL METAMORPHOSIS PLAN	63
Chapter 5. IMPLEMENTING THE MISSIONAL PREACHING STRATEGY	99

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	108
------------------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY	114
--------------	-----

PART ONE

COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

## INTRODUCTION

In 2012, I was part of a group of leaders at Whittier Area Community Church who began to wrestle with a troubling suspicion. The suspicion was that if our church campus closed its doors the following week, the community would likely not miss us. This troubling suspicion was a wakeup call that ultimately changed the trajectory of Whittier Area Community Church, and it is the genesis of this project.

Whittier Area Community Church is a suburban megachurch located in Whittier, California, just outside of Los Angeles. The attractive suburban environment, excellent schools, and close proximity to Los Angeles have made Whittier a popular gateway city for both busy young families and active retirees. Whittier Area Community Church and its many programs have a legacy of being a haven for people of all ages and backgrounds to come and grow in biblical values. Unfortunately though, the program-driven approach to ministry at the church has contributed to fatigue, spiritual compartmentalization, and ultimately a limited impact on only those individuals who will come onto the church campus.

As the leaders of Whittier Area Community Church began reflecting on these outcomes, we recognized that the time, energy, and resources being invested were not producing true transformation outside of the walls of the church campus. We acknowledged that the church was doing little more than providing religious services that refreshed people, reminded them of Jesus' sacrifice, and encouraged them to bring more people to the church campus to experience the same. Whittier Area Community Church was not equipping followers of Jesus with a faith that would make a difference in their everyday lives. Although a growing number of families were coming to the church on

Sundays, they did not have a vision that God was just as active in his mission outside of the church walls, as he was on the inside. They did not truly understand that when Jesus said in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,” they were given a new purpose for their lives.<sup>1</sup>

After sixteen years of serving as a pastor at Whittier Area Community Church, I recently stepped into the senior pastor role. Since that transition, these questions about the identity and mission of the church have become increasingly important. It has become apparent that the leaders of the church need to rethink how spiritual formation is intended to take place and how the church leaves a lasting impact on their community.

Gabe Lyons points out that “the church of tomorrow can’t be identified by the architecture of their buildings or the styles of worship music they practice...their most significant attribute can be found in the type of people they produce.”<sup>2</sup> In order to create a lasting impact in the Whittier community, the leaders of Whittier Area Community Church must learn how to produce followers of Jesus who have a vision for God’s work outside of the church walls. This requires a transition from operating as a religious service provider to becoming a missional outpost that equips and sends out disciples who join God in his mission in their everyday lives.

This transition for Whittier Area Community Church requires a reorientation regarding the identity and purpose of the church. Through my role as the primary weekend preacher, my intent is to guide the congregation to reshape their understanding of the church’s nature and purpose as defined by the mission of God. I will then assist in

---

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: How a New Generation is Restoring the Faith* (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2010), 163.

helping congregants apply that missional nature to their everyday lives so they can join with what God is already doing.

The purpose of this doctoral project is to create a preaching strategy to introduce the parishioners at Whittier Area Community Church to key concepts of the church's missional identity so as to develop missional hearts and practices amongst the congregation. This preaching strategy will be rooted in the mission of God as seen most clearly in Jesus. The strategy will then be evaluated by the pastors who will communicate the sermons. This will allow the preaching strategy to be assessed before it is presented to the congregation at large.

There are three distinct parts to this project. Part One of the paper will examine the local community surrounding Whittier Area Community Church as well as the unique character of the church's ministry. Specific attention will be given to the church's unique attraction of Roman Catholic worshippers and the transitional season that the church is in. An examination of the shotgun approach to discipleship will also reveal some of the unspoken values and beliefs at Whittier Area Community Church. Part One will then explore the need for gaining a biblical vision of a mission-driven church and the perceived current openness of the church toward such a vision.

Part Two of the paper will engage the critical biblical and theological foundations for the missional transformation in a local church. Beginning with a literature review of seven relevant books, the concepts of a biblical theology of mission, the missional identity of the Church, and the transformational process of congregations will all be explored. This section will continue with an examination of Christian mission and key concepts of incarnation will be highlighted as seen in the pattern of Jesus. Part Two will

then analyze the reasons for the loss of incarnation in the Baptist tradition and the negative effect it is having on discipleship. Lastly, Part Two will examine the transformational role of preaching in Jesus' mission and the theology of preaching as it relates to this missional transformation.

Finally, Part Three will focus on crafting a preaching strategy, undergirded by the theological data, intended to spark the missional imagination of the church. The creation of an ecclesiology built on the mission of God as reflected in Jesus and illustrated through the stories of ordinary Christ followers will allow congregants to begin to recognize how a missional lifestyle is possible for them in their everyday lives. An evaluation of the preaching strategy by the pastors assigned to preach the sermons will allow for it to be tested and evaluated before presenting it to the congregation at large. Specific details will be outlined regarding the timeline, participant identification, resources, and assessment plan that were used as well.

## CHAPTER 1

### UNDERSTANDING WHERE THE MISSION BEGINS

Twelve miles southeast of the city of Los Angeles is the growing city of Whittier, California. The close proximity of this 14.8 square mile city to Los Angeles designates it as a gateway city, a city with ease of access to the bustling commerce of Los Angeles and also the comforts of a suburban haven. The abundance of parks, tree-lined streets, shopping centers, and strong schools has made Whittier an attractive place for families in search of a quieter and more comfortable lifestyle.

#### **The City in Need of a Church**

As a gateway city of Los Angeles, Whittier is growing with diversity. An increased number of young families of Hispanic and Latino heritage have moved into the city in the recent decades looking for a more pleasing suburban environment. This has led some to call Whittier the “Beverly Hills of East Los Angeles.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles Times, “Upscale Latinos at Home in Whittier,” (accessed June 12, 2015), <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/mar/22/local/me-whittier22/2>.

The city of Whittier has its origins in a much earlier migration dating back to a group of Quakers who traveled from the east coast around 1887.<sup>2</sup> These Friends came with the desire to create a peaceable colony built around farming and their common faith. Their shared faith was so central to these early settlers that it was suggested they name the area Quaker Town, but because that was the name of a town in Indiana, they named the colony Whittier after John Greenleaf Whittier, the great Quaker poet from Massachusetts.

Naming the township after a poet foreshadowed the emphasis that the city of Whittier would have on education. During the same year that the town was established, the Whittier Academy, renamed Whittier College, was also established. In fact, “the educational system in the Whittier Area is older than Whittier itself.”<sup>3</sup> Some of its earliest settlers established a school for the children around the region 1883 region.<sup>4</sup> From its humblest beginnings up until today, Whittier has sought to build a strong school system that brings high great value to its residents.

Although the residents of Whittier strongly value their convenient proximity to Los Angeles, their diversity, and their emphasis on education, one of the most unique characteristics of the city is its quiet and tranquil recreation. With twenty different parks, wilderness trails, and natural preserves, Whittier is a desirable place for the young to get away from the hurried commotion of life and for the elderly to retire in peace.

---

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Mathony, *Whittier Revisited* (Whittier, CA: Whittier Historical Society, 1995), 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Whittier College, “Whittier College History,” (accessed June 14, 2015) <http://www.whittier.edu/about/history>.

This value on tranquility and retirement in this region has roots dating back to 1784 when Manuel Nieto, the area's first settler, arrived. Virginia Mathony explains that "Nieto, a retired captain who served in the Portola Expedition, was granted 300,000 plus acres of land by the King of Spain," which included the beautiful land on which Whittier now stands.<sup>5</sup> Residents today continue to search for their own rest and solace in this area just as Nieto first did.

### **The Church in Need of a Mission**

Within this city where education, diversity and recreation are so valued, Whittier Area Community Church has established deep roots of ministry. Whittier Area Community Church is a forty-seven year old suburban megachurch with a legacy as a haven for people of all ages and backgrounds to come and grow in biblical values. Unfortunately, part of the church's popularity has flowed out of its the program-driven approach to ministry, which fosters a consumer mentality that is contrary to the missional identity of Jesus' Church.

Whittier Area Community Church was first founded as Whittier Area Baptist Fellowship in 1971 with its roots in the Baptist General Conference, a movement of Swedish Baptist churches birthed out of America's Second Great Awakening in the nineteenth century. Like many other Baptist denominations, this movement of approximately twelve hundred autonomous churches partners together to maximize their

---

<sup>5</sup> City of Whittier, "A Short History," (accessed June 14, 2015), <http://www.cityofwhittier.org/about/default.asp>.

impact in the world. The primary missional method they employ is to pool resources together to partner in sending out missionaries to bring God's mission into the world.

This narrow view of missiology with which Whittier Area Community Church has historically operated with has led to the majority of church's resources being invested in the production of religious services to the already churched in their community. With over thirty chartered ministries, the church has sought to provide programs for everyone and has prided itself on the excellent execution of programs, especially for children and youth. This has caused the church to become a desirable place to attend. The congregation is diverse in age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background, reflective of the community it finds itself in. This allows all types of families to feel safe in the church and to establish long-term relationships as their faith is nurtured over the years.

The church also provides a number of diverse educational opportunities for those exploring and growing in the Christian faith. There are an assortment of bible studies, Sunday School classes, small groups, elective classes, and support groups where various topics are studied. Many people seeking to sharpen their studies in the Bible, theology, and in practical life issues have found the classes and groups at the church to be very helpful.

Finally, Whittier's value of recreation is very much reflected in the programming of Whittier Area Community Church. Whether it is basketball leagues for young adults, camping trips for families, art classes for retirees, or walking groups for senior adults, the church has a wide variety of recreational opportunities. The church even hosts some of the largest youth sports leagues in the community, providing soccer leagues and basketball leagues to over seven hundred families each year.

Although the values of these ministry programs seem to be aligned with the values of the city, these programs have unfortunately operated without holistic thought for how they either encourage spiritual formation or develop the missional identity of the church. Sadly, the church leaders have now recognized that this expansive collection of programs has failed at both. As Hirsh and Ferguson aptly state, “The promise that church programming alone will make your life better has been exposed. It doesn’t work. Everyday living is where spiritual development is worked out. Loving God and loving our neighbors cannot be fulfilled in a church building.”<sup>6</sup>

The spiritual formation plan at Whittier Area Community Church could be characterized as a shotgun, program-driven approach in a church building, without clear objectives of strategic discipleship or missional mobilization. Whittier Area Community Church’s ministry philosophy unknowingly has been built on the idea that spiritual growth and maturity is a natural outcome of well executed programs. It has now become apparent to the church leaders that this philosophy has accomplished neither. Instead, this haphazard programmatic approach to ministry has reinforced several harmful attitudes in the congregants who attend the church.

The first harmful attitude reinforced is that congregants are primarily consumers who attend to enjoy an all-you-can-eat buffet of programs. Congregants have been unintentionally influenced to believe that the purpose of programs is to cater to each of their social and spiritual desires. Since the consumer mentality is the underpinning of much of southern California’s culture, it becomes very natural for congregants to transfer

---

<sup>6</sup> Dave Ferguson and Alan Hirsch, *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 280.

it to their church experience. Sadly, this spirit of consumption robs many congregants from discovering the truth that healthy spirituality involves a giving of oneself for the sake of the gospel.

The apostle Paul reflected on this truth in Acts 2:35, when he quoted Jesus saying, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Jesus’ mission was to give up his life as a ransom that would save the world and ultimately bring God the Father glory. This value of self-sacrifice conflicts with consumer mentality of Whittier’s culture.

Unfortunately, the spiritual growth of many at Whittier Area Community Church has become stunted by a consumeristic mindset and the program heavy philosophy. Some congregants have become fatigued by filling their schedules with too many ministry programs. Others have become paralyzed by all of the program choices and have given up on pursuing the next step in their spiritual development. For the majority in the church, the haphazard, program-driven approach has caused them see their relationship with God as relegated to church activities, instead of out in the community where they can live missional lives that represent the heart of Jesus.

The second harmful attitude reinforced in the haphazard, program-driven ministry approach is that leadership is reserved for the hired clergy in the church, not for lay leaders. When Whittier Area Baptist Church was first planted in 1971, it did not have any paid leaders. On the Sunday that the church held its first worship service at McNally Junior High School, they invited a guest speaker to give the message because they did not have a pastor yet. Throughout its early years, the reliance on lay leadership was a high

value and was celebrated in the church's motto, "The church where every member is a minister."<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, as Whittier Area Community Church grew in numbers and more paid church employees were hired, this value was lost. The hired clergy began to be viewed as the church's sole ministry practitioners, reinforcing the sentiment that the church's congregants were consumers who were responsible for paying the ministers. There was a clear shift away from the concept of the priesthood of all believers that Peter wrote about in 1 Peter 2:9.

This shift in leadership responsibility away from the priesthood of all believers caused some disappointing consequences for Whittier Area Community Church. Many congregants no longer saw the need to discover their spiritual gifts, nor were they given many opportunities to do so. The church has since experienced a shortage of leaders who feel qualified to step forward to serve. Both of these consequences have led to a high level of ministry burnout for church employees who are trying to discharge the church's ministry themselves, as opposed to "preparing God's people for works of service," as Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:12.

Perhaps the most harmful attitude of all that has been born out of Whittier Area Community Church's haphazard, program-driven approach to discipleship is the unclear and inconsequential role that missional living plays in the life of the church. One of the most detrimental beliefs that has unintentionally been communicated to congregants is that role of the church is to create a wide selection of ministry options. Accompanying

---

<sup>7</sup> Jeenie Gordon, *Following God + Loving People: Forty Years at Whittier Area Community Church* (Whittier, CA: Compographics, 1995), 13.

this destructive belief is the idea that paid church staff members are the people responsible for doing the work of the ministry. Since many congregants at Whittier Area Community Church see their community of faith through the lens of these beliefs, the conviction that God has a mission outside of the church walls that enlists the gifts and talents of congregants of all backgrounds is completely lacking. Congregants in the church are clear that the church send missionaries out, but there is not a common understanding that this includes them.

There have only been two consistent challenges made to the congregants of Whittier Area Community Church as it relates to missional activity: the first is to serve their local community one weekend a year, and the second is to attempt a short-term mission trip. This service in the local community takes place on what is called Serve Weekend, when the church cancels their worship services to go out and bless its community. This opportunity has sparked the desire for a few congregants to find ways to serve in the community throughout the year, but for most it has been viewed as just another ministry option from which to choose.

The second consistent missional challenge has been to go on a short-term mission's trip. This opportunity has often been emphasized as a way to experience what life is like in other cultures. Unfortunately, this communication has encouraged some participants to attend trips with the attitude of a Christian tourist consuming another experience, not as sent out ones going to partner in the mission of God. This tourism mindset has naturally led some congregants to believe that mission is an activity that a person signs up for at a specific time, not part of the everyday life of a Christ follower.

The concepts that congregants are consumers, that hired clergy are the only qualified leaders, and that missional activity is a special event added to one's calendar are all dangerous propositions that the leaders of Whittier Area Community Church must confront. In order for the church to fully embrace its missional identity, some important shifts must take place. Providentially, the church is currently experiencing some hopeful conditions that make those shifts seem very possible.

### **The Conditions Agreeable to a Missional Shift**

There are four unique conditions that Whittier Area Community Church is currently experiencing that make a potential shift in missional identity promising. The first encouraging condition is that a fresh wave of former Roman Catholic families has started attending the church. Many of these families were drawn to the church to create a moral compass for their children, but as many parents have attended worship gatherings themselves, they have had spiritually transformative experiences that have launched them on new spiritual journeys.

The eagerness of these new Christ followers to put their faith into action has infused pockets of the church with new energy. Many are learning the foundations of the faith for the first time and have exemplified openness to new concepts. This group of passionate disciples has great potential for being enthusiastic participants in the mission of God all around them.

The second unique condition that makes a missional shift seem promising is the hunger for direction and challenge from long-time church members. The church's previous senior pastor served in church leadership for forty-four years was preparing to

retire. During his final years, he chose to not initiate any new direction or to deliver any significant challenges to the congregation. Some of the core members of the church have expressed that this lack of direction and challenge fostered stagnation in the church's development. They have stated that they now want clarity on the trajectory of the church's future and how they can play a role in it.

This request for clarity regarding the church's future and for direction on how they can be a part of it creates a favorable climate for creating a missional shift in the church. With a group of committed congregants already excited to begin a new chapter in Whittier Area Community Church's history, there is a potential pilot team who can learn the foundation of a missional philosophy first. Although they will still need to be led well in this reimagining of the identity of the church, their attitude toward change makes the prospect of a missional shift favorable.

The third condition at Whittier Area Community Church that may prove favorable in creating a missional shift is that a new senior pastor has recently been hired. I was hired as the senior pastor at Whittier Area Community Church three years ago and the church has been supportive of my leadership as they anticipate fresh vision for the future. During the past three years, the trust level between the church's leadership board and the congregation has also grown to a point that I believe a missional shift would be anticipated and embraced.

Finally, Whittier Area Community Church seems inspired to make an impact in their world. The reason the name of the church was changed from Whittier Area Baptist Fellowship to Whittier Area Community Church is the leaders of the church believe that the church exists to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their community. The leadership of

the church recently amended their vision statement to state, “We exist to bring Jesus to people, and people to Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps there is no greater way this congregation can do this than to partner with what God is already doing on his mission in this world.

---

<sup>8</sup> Whittier Area Community Church, “Mission/Core Values,” (accessed September 24, 2018), <https://www.wacc.net/mission-statement>.

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to craft a preaching strategy to introduce the congregants of Whittier Area Community Church to key concepts of the church's missional identity, a careful review of relevant literature on this topic is pertinent. The following seven books will serve as guides in the concepts of developing a biblical theology of mission, the missional identity of the Church, and the transformational process of a congregation through preaching. Vital conclusions will be unearthed from these writings that will be crucial to Whittier Area Community Church's missional transformation.

**Darrell Guder, Ed. *Missional Church:  
A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America***

*Missional Church* frames a very accurate portrait of the identity of the missional church and the necessity for developing a biblical theology of mission. Right from the beginning, Guder identifies that “while modern missions have led to an expansion of world Christianity, Christianity in North America has moved away from its position of

dominance as it has experienced the loss not only of numbers but of power and influence within society.”<sup>1</sup> Guder and his colleagues point out that the normal response to a situation like this in North America is to examine the problem and then search for a solution. Unfortunately, such an approach completely disregards both the spiritual and theological issues that the church in North America is experiencing.<sup>2</sup> The basic thesis of the book is that these issues can only be resolved as the church grapples with “who we are and what we are for.”<sup>3</sup> This biblical understanding of the nature and mission of the church is what Guder and his talented team of authors explore. He aptly explains, “Our challenge today is to move from church with a mission to missional church.”<sup>4</sup>

Guder and his colleagues help reframe that “mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation.”<sup>5</sup> God “sent his one and only Son, because his love is expressed toward the whole world. Mission, itself, thus flows out of the identity of God as a ‘missionary God’ who has formed for himself a missionary people.”<sup>6</sup> With this proper understanding and identity, “the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness.”<sup>7</sup> Embracing this identity will then begin a

---

<sup>1</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

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

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

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

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

theological revolution, moving the church from an ecclesiocentric view of mission found at Whittier Area Community Church, to becoming what Genesis 12 identifies as a chosen people who are blessed so that “all peoples on earth will be blessed” through them.

Throughout *Missional Church*, the church is defined as “God’s instrument for God’s mission.”<sup>8</sup> With this identity in view, the church must always be ready to reform itself toward effectiveness on the mission. The implication of this is that the church must expect “a life full of ambiguities because it is shaped by its context as the gospel reshapes the context. Such a calling never leaves the church in a finished settled or permanent incarnation.”<sup>9</sup> This makes a proper understanding of the church’s identity and the gospel being preaching so vital. Without it, the church becomes susceptible to becoming shaped culturally in ways that do not represent the gospel or the missional heart of God. This is where Whittier Area Community Church has found itself in its current context. It has been shaped by its consumeristic context as “a vendor of religious services and goods.”<sup>10</sup>

*Missional Church* contributes to the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church by highlighting that “the essence of what it means to be the church arises perpetually from the church’s origins in the gospel: it is in every moment being originated by the Holy Spirit as it hears the gospel and is oriented by present reign of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> The loss of an accurate understanding of Jesus’ gospel is a primary factor that leads to the church’s loss of its missional identity. The church “has tended to separate the

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 87.

news of the reign of God from God's provision for humanity's salvation. This separation has made salvation a private event by dividing 'my personal salvation' from the advent of God's healing reign over all the world."<sup>12</sup>

Jesus' gospel proclaims that these two are deeply connected and form the motivation behind the church's mission in the world. Guder explains, "The first mission is always the internal mission: the church evangelized by the Holy Spirit again and again in the echoing word of Jesus inviting us to receive the reign of God and to enter it."<sup>13</sup> The images that Jesus describes in Matthew 5:13-14 of the church being "the light of the world," a "city on a hill," and "the salt of the earth" all "suggest that mission is not just what the church *does*; it is what the church *is*."<sup>14</sup>

One of the limitations of *Missional Church* in respect to transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is that it does not identify a clear path guiding the change process. In spite of this, *Missional Church* points to the deeper reality that if Whittier Area Community Church does not rediscover its missional identity as outlined in the Scriptures, the development of missional hearts and practices in everyday life will be short-lived. This is an inexcusable prospect for Whittier Area Community Church. The church of Jesus is called "to be a source of radical hope, to witness to the new identity and vision, the new way of life that has become a social reality in Jesus Christ through

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 128.

the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> Rediscovering its missional identity and understanding the biblical theology of mission, as outlined in this book, are critical to this endeavor.

**Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People:  
A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission***

The second important work that contributes toward the development of a biblical theology of mission is *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* by Christopher J. H. Wright. In this volume, Wright answers the question, “What does the Bible...have to tell us about why the people of God exist and what it is they are supposed to be and do in the world.”<sup>16</sup> Wright explains that “the mission of God is what unifies the Bible from creation to new creation.”<sup>17</sup> The implication of this is that Jesus’ church, which is blessed and commissioned by him for his work in this world, is simply a continuation of the blessing of God’s people that has gone on throughout the millennia. As Wright explains, “If we are in Christ, we not only share in the blessing of Abraham, we are commissioned to spread the blessing of Abraham.”<sup>18</sup>

The main argument of *The Mission of God’s People* is that the church must “read the Bible comprehensively to discern and describe what the implications are for us.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, a broad understanding of the biblical foundation of mission is essential if God’s people desire to become the people God that has created us to be, and to carry out

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 17.

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

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 267.

God's great mission in this world. Wright explains, "If mission has to do with the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world, that means using the whole Bible. It simply will not do to quote a verse or two from favorite 'missionary' bits of the Bible and call that a 'biblical theology of mission.'"<sup>20</sup> In this way, *The Mission of God's People* drives home the truth that mission undergirds and drives the entire story of God.

The contribution of Wright's book is invaluable to the development of this project as it provides the understanding that "the idea of 'missional church' is far from a new idea."<sup>21</sup> The culture of ministry at Whittier Area Community Church is one that is predisposed to thinking in terms of just adding on new ministry programs and approaches to its existing philosophies. The implication of this is that there will be a propensity, from both the paid staff members and the congregants, to believe the missional activity of the church is simply one more strategic initiative to be added to others. Wright's work builds a strong biblical case that this is far from the truth. Wright elucidates, "The mission of God's people, then, is not some external structure built by the church itself- a program or a strategy devised by an institution. Sending in mission is a participation in the life of God."<sup>22</sup>

An accompanying contribution of *The Mission of God's People* is the connection identified between God's intention to restore the world and the human commitment to be surrendered to God's mission. Throughout the biblical narrative, human obedience has been essential to God's people becoming conduits of his blessing. As Wright explains,

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 211.

“there is no blessing, for ourselves or for others, without faith and obedience. Those whom God calls to participate in his redemptive mission for the nations are those who exercise saving faith like Abraham *and* demonstrate costly obedience like Abraham.”<sup>23</sup>

This truth is so important to this project because it points to the reality that the church’s effectiveness in the mission of God is not simply defined by the missional activity beyond the church’s walls. The effectiveness of the church in the mission of God is inextricably linked to its own inner formation and faithfulness to God. Wright explains, “The community God seeks for the sake of his mission is to be a community shaped by his own ethical character, with special attention to righteousness and justice in a world filled with oppression and injustice. Only such a community can be a blessing to the nations.”<sup>24</sup> This is portrayed throughout God’s story of redemption as he carefully guided Israel in how to live in light of his covenant. Jesus also exemplifies this in his intentionality to not only teach and train his disciples to do ministry, but also how to live righteous lives connected to the values of the Kingdom. As Wright explains, “There is not biblical mission without biblical ethics.”<sup>25</sup>

**Steve Addison, *Movements That Change the World:***

***Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel***

The third resource that provides a valuable contribution toward the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is *Movements That Change the*

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 94.

*World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel* by Steve Addison. In this book, Addison addresses the key “characteristics of missionary movements in their most dynamic expression.”<sup>26</sup> The characteristics outlined include a white-hot faith, a commitment to a cause, contagious relationships, rapid mobilization, and adaptive methods.<sup>27</sup> For Whittier Area Community Church to be the dynamic missionary movement it is called to be, its understanding of and dependence on these key elements will be central to its mission.

Addison’s main argument in *Movements that Change the World* is that the church must recognize itself as a missionary movement, not an institution. Addison writes, “Jesus did not come to found a religious organization. He came to found a missionary movement that would spread to the ends of the earth.”<sup>28</sup> With the church’s identity as a missionary movement, Addison asserts that having transformational influence in the world does not begin with the best facilities, strategies, or power, but “with men and women who encounter the living God and surrender in loving obedience to his call.”<sup>29</sup> Addison argues that there are, however, “key dynamics of missionary movements,” like “white-hot faith,” that the church can learn from through both historical and contemporary examples.

One of the key contributions of Addison’s work toward the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is the reality that missional

---

<sup>26</sup> Steve Addison, *Movements That Change the World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 22.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

effectiveness will not be achieved through hierarchal or institutional strategies. Addison explains that, “in the renewal and expansion of the church, the breakthroughs always occur on the fringe of ecclesiastical power- never at the center.”<sup>30</sup> This is a significant truth for Whittier Area Community Church because their programmatic approach to ministry has often been dependent on paid, trained clergy. In contrast to this, Addison explains that transformational movements spread “through the efforts of ordinary people who inspire and equip key leaders.”<sup>31</sup>

Another key contribution from *Movements That Change the World* is the emphasis Addison places on how Jesus trained his leaders for missional effectiveness. Addison explains, “Jesus reached the multitudes, but his purpose was to grow the leaders who would continue his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>32</sup> Addison identifies the discrepancy between how the modern church has pursued leadership development with the model that Jesus used. Addison writes, “Jesus’ teaching was obedience oriented. His model of training assumed that the disciples did not know something until they had learned to obey it.”<sup>33</sup>

This contribution will be significant to the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church in that it outlines the organic and deeply experiential nature of missional discipleship. The North American Church has a tendency to evaluate the growth and understanding of a disciple through his or her ability to retain information. In

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

contrast, Addison's research explains that the comprehension of missional concepts is not verified until it is lived out vibrantly in a person's everyday life. Addison identifies that "Jesus' training of the Twelve fused content and context."<sup>34</sup> The preaching strategy being developed in this project will need to highlight this key concept, explaining the manner in which Jesus trained his disciples for the dynamic kingdom movement in the first century.

The contribution of *Movements that Change the World* is very helpful in the way it expands on the missional practices of the church in everyday life. The primary limitation of this work, in regards to the contribution to this project, is the lack of content regarding the concept of missional preaching. Although the specific craft of preaching is not addressed, the story-telling and experiential nature of missional transformation will be included in the preaching strategy developed.

**Craig Van Gelder, Ed. *The Missional Church in Context:  
Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry***

*The Missional Church in Context* edited by Craig Van Gelder also informs the development of missional practices within local church. *The Missional Church in Context* seeks "to extend the conversation about the missional church," specifically in exploring the "interrelationship of congregations and their specific contexts."<sup>35</sup> Van Gelder and his team of authors present the nuances and challenges to the important work of contextualizing the gospel that Whittier Area Community Church must master if it is to become a missional outpost in its community.

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 6.

The main argument of Van Gelder's work is that the modern church must pay close attention to the "biblical, theological, and historical dimensions regarding how the church is to engage in ministry within and to a specific cultural context."<sup>36</sup> A deep, biblical understanding of the church's missional identity is incomplete if it is divorced from the context in which a church has been placed. This means that the missional engagement of any church will be much more of an art than a science as it contextualizes the gospel to its environment. Van Gelder and his team explain that "the church must keep in mind that its goal is not theological consensus; rather, its goal is Christians journeying together, grappling with what it means to live a life of discipleship in their day."<sup>37</sup>

One of the great contributions of Van Gelder's work toward the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is its explanation of how the church contextualizes in the environment of consumerism. Van Gelder writes that "congregations are responsible for translating the good news of the gospel along with their own organizational reality into every cultural context they encounter."<sup>38</sup> A successful missional approach to its community is not something that the church can replicate from another local church or add to its existing programs. Van Gelder elucidates, "There can be no common program that works the same in each congregation and context."<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 41.

This contribution to the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church will clarify that being missionally minded is not one more ministry option on the buffet of ministry preferences. It means there must be a paradigm shift in the church that includes a reshaping of discipleship, leadership development, and resource allocation. These paradigm shift decisions must be described in the preaching strategy as it defines the contextualization of the mission of God in the local church.

One of the important challenges that this book identifies for Whittier Area Community Church is that “there is a danger...of overcontextualizing the Christian faith so that it becomes wholly consumed within the culture.”<sup>40</sup> This will be a temptation to Whittier Area Community Church. Whittier Area Community Church must develop a strong biblical foundation for mission accompanied by an understanding of the context of its community. In other words, “being able to maintain its identity as a congregation that is called by the Triune God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit in the face of its particular context is the great challenge facing the missional congregation.”<sup>41</sup>

**Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian:  
What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church***

The fourth work that is essential to the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community church is *Almost Christian* by Kenda Creasy Dean. *Almost Christian* highlights the reality that “American young people are, theoretically, fine with religious faith- but it does not concern them very much, and it is not durable enough to survive

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 61.

long after they graduate from high school.”<sup>42</sup> Dean explains that the reason for this breakdown of the transmission of the historical, Christian faith stems directly from a problem of modeling. The faith that is being passed down to the emerging generations is not the orthodox Christian faith. Instead, it is what Christian Smith and Melinda Denton have called “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”<sup>43</sup>

Throughout her book, Dean argues that “we are the ones charged with ‘handing on’ the good news of Jesus Christ to the teenagers on our watch,” yet sadly many in the church have passed down a distorted version of the gospel.<sup>44</sup> Dean describes that this discovery is an important wake-up call for the church to respond to the crisis of faith and discipleship that it has unknowingly perpetuated. Dean writes, “We have received from teenagers exactly what we have asked them for: assent, not conviction; compliance, not faith.”<sup>45</sup>

One of the great contributions of *Almost Christian* to the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is the reality that at the crux of a church’s fruitfulness is the church’s explanation of the gospel. Dean juxtaposes the watered-down gospel of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and the gospel of Jesus, explaining that “the gospel is God’s invitation to young people- to all people- to participate in the divine plan of salvation in Jesus Christ and to rely on God’s goodness, not our own.”<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Dean identifies that this invitation to participate in God's mission becomes an antidote to the watered-down gospel. It invites people of all generations to join with God on a "boundary-crossing, outward-reaching, other-oriented impulse modeled by Jesus himself, formally taken up by the church when the disciples 'caught fire' with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost."<sup>47</sup> This proper understanding of the gospel and the nature of the church will grip the next generation to join in God's great redemptive story. "Christian formation invites young people into this motley band of pilgrims and prepares them to receive the Spirit who calls them, shapes them, and enlists them in God's plan to right a capsized world."<sup>48</sup>

This understanding of the gospel also helps Whittier Area Community Church comprehend that the church is an end in itself. Dean writes, "Every church is called to be a 'missional church.' The fact that we have turned the word 'mission' into an adjective testifies to the American church's frayed ecclesiology. A nonmissional church is not a church in the first place."<sup>49</sup> The parishioners of Whittier Area Community Church must face this startling truth. This leaders of the church must also paint a picture of the parishioners of what a missional church truly could look like.

One final, key contribution of Dean's work in *Almost Christian* is the way she describes the concept of "approaching mission as translation."<sup>50</sup> Dean writes,

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 105.

“Approaching mission as translation assumes Christ is already present in (people’s) lives, even those without noticeable faith, long before we arrive on the scene.”<sup>51</sup> The contribution of translation will help Whittier Area Community Church possess the right perspective that God continues to be the primary agent in his work in its community. The church is wholly dependent on God’s initiative and God’s activity in any missional endeavor.

Mission as translation will guide Whittier Area Community Church to remain humble and sensitive to where God is active in its community so it can join him. Deans describes that “the church’s job is to till the soil, prepare the heart, ready the mind, still the soul, and stay awake so we notice where God is on the move, and follow. It is in following Jesus that we learn to love him; it is in participating in the mission of God that God decisively changes us into disciples.”<sup>52</sup> *Almost Christian* is sobering resource that reminds the church that the loss of these essential, missional truths in one generation will have disastrous consequences for the generations to come.

**Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, *On the Verge:  
A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church***

In preparation for the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church, it is important to understand the process of change for a large, attractional church in North America. Hirsch and Ferguson’s work *On the Verge* provides valuable insight into this process as it argues that “mission does not simply involve attracting people ‘to church,’ but rather it is being sent into our world, in to every domain, and going deep into

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 15.

culture.”<sup>53</sup> This concept will be revolutionary for an attractional focused congregation like Whittier Area Community Church.

In *On the Verge*, Hirsch and Ferguson assert that “if the church fails to make the shift to apostolic movements again, Christian influence will continue to fade, and church attendance will remain in its current trajectory of decline.”<sup>54</sup> One of the basic reasons for this failure is that the current model of ecclesiology appeals only to approximately 40 percent of the population. This means that most churches in North America are struggling to attract less than half of the population, while the other 60 percent is unreached. In other words, Hirsch and Ferguson state that the church has placed “all our missional eggs in one ecclesiastical basket.”<sup>55</sup> Hirsch and Ferguson then argue that the only way for the institutional church to change this trajectory is rediscover its true DNA as a movement that is “fluid, adaptive, reproducible, and viral.”<sup>56</sup>

One of the key contributions from *On the Verge* is the description of a pathway for an attractional local church to transition toward becoming an apostolic movement. Hirsch and Ferguson call this pathway “an ongoing cycle of renewal.”<sup>57</sup> They argue that a church must “see (imagine) what Jesus wants you to see; to fully get (shift) and understand what he wants you to understand; and to obey (innovate) and do what he

---

<sup>53</sup> Dave Ferguson and Alan Hirsch, *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 69.

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

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

wants you to do (move).”<sup>58</sup> Each of these elements to the change process will be extremely valuable to Whittier Area Community Church’s progress in missional transformation.

One of these elements that will need special focus in the preaching strategy being developed is the imagine element. Hirsch and Ferguson write, “Alone, teaching on mission can be helpful, but it becomes a powerful tool for engaging the imagination when it is coupled with experiences.”<sup>59</sup> The reality that “people get mission when they see mission lived out” requires the preaching strategy to be rich with stories and examples of people living their everyday lives on mission.<sup>60</sup> Through these true stories of people living missionally, the core missional concepts communicated will have a greater likelihood of being grasped and put into practice.

Equally important to the imagine element of the transformational strategy will be the action piece of the strategy, called move. Hirsch and Ferguson point out that too often our desire for transformation in people’s lives is never realized because “all we ask is that people passively believe and not act.”<sup>61</sup> To overcome this, the authors suggest that core practices should always accompany core values in churches undergoing missional transformation. In other words, “when learning comes into life context, it changes

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 179.

everything.”<sup>62</sup> This contribution identifies the necessity of practical, every-day living applications at the end of each of the sermons prepared in the preaching strategy.

The final contribution from *On the Verge* is the caution to not allow the desire for missional transformation in the local church to become a new source of legalism that replaces Jesus. The authors explain that in an unhealthy church culture, being on mission can become an idol where people find their identity and worth. Hirsch and Ferguson issue an important warning: “Don’t let your infatuation with mission allow your love for Jesus to wander... Missional living is really about allowing Jesus to be the Lord of your life and then telling the good news of what Jesus is doing in your life. Mission only works when we make Jesus Lord and his mission flows out of that.”<sup>63</sup> This important warning will be a guardrail for the preaching strategy as it emphasizes that missional transformation in the city first relies on the internal transformation of human hearts in life-giving relationships with Jesus.

### **Al Tizon, *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform***

The final work that has contributed to the crafting of this project is *Missional Preaching* by Al Tizon. In this extremely valuable book, Tizon states that his goal is “to deepen and enliven the church’s preaching, not necessarily by offering a new homiletic, but by renewing our understanding of biblical mission.”<sup>64</sup> This combination of missional understanding and expositional preaching is of great importance in the work of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>64</sup> Al Tizon, *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012), xviii.

missional church. Tizon explains that “preaching is not everything, but it plays a central role in giving shape to the church in the world.”<sup>65</sup>

In his book Tizon defines a sermon as “an exposition of a biblical passage, a biblical story, and/or a biblical principle for the edification of the church, the transformation of the world, and the glory of God.”<sup>66</sup> In this framework, all biblical sermons should rightly become missional sermons that present “God’s missional heart and corresponding actions as the guiding theme from Genesis to Revelation.”<sup>67</sup> Rather than missional sermons being messages that occur on special missions Sundays, they should be the regular diet that a congregation receives from its preaching. Tizon argues, “Biblical preaching is kingdom preaching is missional preaching, and quite literally, the church’s life depends on it.”<sup>68</sup>

One of the major contributions that *Missional Preaching* brings to the preaching strategy designed for the transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is the description of the desired outcomes of missional sermons. Tizon points out that “when we lack clarity about where we want to lead God’s people in our preaching and teaching, our churches all too often take on the shape of the surrounding culture.”<sup>69</sup> With the necessity for clear objectives, *Missional Preaching* presents seven goals for the effective missional preacher to communicate: “inculturation amid an us-and-them mentality;

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 35.

alternative community amid cultural conformity; holistic transformation amid a false dichotomy of evangelism and social concern; justice and reconciliation amid gender, races, and class privilege; whole-life stewardship amid materialism, consumerism and environmental abuse; consistent life and peace amid violence and death; uniqueness and universality of Christ amid religious pluralism.”<sup>70</sup> Throughout his book, Tizon unpacks each of these objectives and suggests that preaching with them in mind will help shape a congregation toward missional transformation. On a practical level, these goals present a helpful starting place for the trajectory of missional preaching at Whittier Area Community Church that will be invaluable as a guide for the direction of this project’s preaching strategy.

Another valuable contribution from *Missional Preaching* is the description of the vital interrelationship between worship and mission in the local church. Too often worship and mission are seen as independent activities in which the body of Christ engages. Tizon points out that “worship depends on mission, and mission depends on worship.”<sup>71</sup> He writes that “at its root, the word *liturgy* means ‘the work of the people,’ and this world does not end when the Sunday service is over.”<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, the goal of mission is that all will know and worship the God who has redeemed and commissioned the church. Tizon does an excellent job laying out this inseparable connection which will be essential in the content of the preaching strategy. He writes, “We preach to cultivate a church of missional worshippers and worshipping missionaries, people who understand

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 29.

that their experience of worship directly affects their practice of faith in the world, and vice versa.”<sup>73</sup>

One of the limitations of *Missional Preaching* is that Tizon does not explore specifics of the crafting of a missional sermon or series. He explains that this was not his intention and writes that his “larger hope is that God and God’s mission will so flow through our bloodstream, and that we will fall so madly in love with the God who loved the world enough to send the only begotten Son, that our preaching cannot help but exude God’s redeeming love for the world and everyone in it.”<sup>74</sup> Tizon’s presentation of the *missio Dei*, the biblical foundations of mission, and the suggestions of ways to approach preaching toward missional transformation embodied this truth in a convincing way.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 159.

## CHAPTER 3

### A THEOLOGY OF MISSION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Within the theological analysis of missional transformation, “scripture is [the] primary tool” that will set the course for the change.<sup>1</sup> In the Scriptures, the mission of the church always begins with an understanding of Jesus and his mission. Hirsch explains that the church’s “identity as a movement, as well as its destiny as a people is inextricably linked to Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **The Incarnation of God’s Mission**

Any undertaking to help a local church discover its true identity and mission must first be rooted in a proper understanding of the person of Christ. It is in Christ that the church is given the clearest expression of the very character of God. Jesus explained to Philip in John 14:9, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” A. Michael Ramsey

---

<sup>1</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 94.

expressed this same truth stating, “God is Christlike, and in him is no unChristlikeness at all.”<sup>3</sup>

Not only is Christ the clearest expression of God for humanity, but he is also the founder of the kingdom movement in which the Church finds itself. In order to rediscover itself, any organization must go back to its founder. “Living organisms are constantly seeking self-renewal by referring back to their essential identity and adapting to their environment.”<sup>4</sup> For the Church, Jesus provides its essential identity. He provides the clearest direction as to what the nature and mission of the Church should be. As Frost and Hirsch explain, “Christology is the key to the renewal of the church in every age and in every possible situation it might find itself in.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is with Christ that the evaluation and solution of this crisis begins.

#### The Incarnation of God’s Mission in Jesus’ Earthly Ministry

One of the first significant truths about Jesus found in the gospels is his mode of coming to the world through incarnation. Incarnation was the chosen method by which to carry out the mission of God. The Apostle John writes in John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Through Jesus, God presented the world with a flesh and blood image of his love, redemption, and advancing kingdom

---

<sup>3</sup> A. Michael Ramsey, *God, Christ and the World: A Study in Contemporary Theology*, quoted in Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, 61.

<sup>5</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 42.

on earth. “The Christian God-story emphasizes a God so smitten with creation that God chooses to enter creation with us, and stops at nothing- not even death- to win us back.”<sup>6</sup>

The importance of incarnation remained central throughout all of Jesus’ life and mission. Jesus’ consistent message as found in Matthew 4:17 communicated, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Jesus did not simply teach about the kingdom. Instead, he provided the world with a picture of the kingdom in his life. As Frost and Hirsch explain, “the incarnation is an absolutely fundamental doctrine, not just as an irreducible part of the Christian confession, but also as a theological prism through which we view our entire missional task in the world.”<sup>7</sup>

Through the incarnation, the human race was able to see, hear, and experience the kingdom in a way it never had before. The incarnation gave humanity its greatest information to understand who God is.<sup>8</sup> People were able to see the God who is on a mission, reaching out, and going to any length to restore a broken world back into a thriving relationship with himself. As Dean explains, “The central divine act celebrated by Christianity is God’s movement toward us, not the other way around. In the Incarnation, God accommodates divine grandeur to our puny capacities to understand.”<sup>9</sup>

The incarnation shouted to the world just how much this holy God’s heart broke for the condition of the human race, and it was an open invitation to reenter into a

---

<sup>6</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 35.

<sup>8</sup> Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) 234.

<sup>9</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 124.

relationship with him. Jesus said in John 10:9, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” Again though, the incarnation communicated this in a way that no letter, discourse, or even angelic message could. Kenda Creasy Dean writes, “What communicates more clearly than information? The answer provided by the Incarnation is love.”<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, the incarnation of Jesus presents a picture of love that is unrivaled by any other. The incarnation models God’s self-giving, sacrificial love in a way that has changed the course of human history. As Philippians 2:7-8 explains, the incarnation displays the God who “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!”

#### The Incarnation of God’s Mission in the First Century Church

The incarnation is the fullest expression of God’s love and care for this world. It “is God’s ultimate missional participation in human life.”<sup>11</sup> Perhaps this is why Jesus’ call for his followers was that they would also incarnate the message of God’s love, both individually and in community. After his resurrection, when Jesus’ disciples asked him if his kingdom would soon be restored physically for the people of Israel, his response in Acts 1:8 was, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Jesus explained that the kingdom would continue to advance through his

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>11</sup> Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 114.

followers who were empowered by the Holy Spirit. “The church Jesus founded was a missionary church. Its existence and activities were an expression of its missionary calling.”<sup>12</sup>

Jesus’ call was for his disciples to go out on a mission to incarnate his love together, so that the world would know there is a God who is reaching out to them. “Missional God leads to missional church. Incarnational God leads to incarnational church.”<sup>13</sup> This is what Jesus lived, taught, and even prayed that his Church would embody.

Jesus’ prayer in John 17:23 was, “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” It was the disciples’ unity as the body of Christ which would authenticate Jesus as God’s messiah. It was also this unity that would also incarnate the love of God for humanity to see. Dean argues that “the church’s incarnate ministry is not merely an imitation of what Jesus did; it is a participation in a much larger movement in which God is the primary actor.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus came as flesh and blood into this world to introduce the kingdom reality to humanity. He then commanded his followers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to continue incarnating the presence of the kingdom. In John 20:21, Jesus commissioned his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Dean explains, “Jesus not only sends the church where he was sent; he sends us in the same way that he was sent, as

---

<sup>12</sup> Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Ferguson and Hirsch, *On the Verge*, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Van Gelder and Zcheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 114.

human translations of divine love, people whose words and actions do not grasp for God as much as they reveal a God who grasps for us.”<sup>15</sup>

Incarnation creates not just a missional posture in the world, but an approachable posture as well. Craig Van Gelder writes, “In becoming flesh, Jesus Christ, as the living Word, became understandable, knowable, and accessible. The Incarnation is foundational to an understanding of the inherent translatability of both the gospel and the church.”<sup>16</sup> It keeps the church relevant and in touch with the rest of the world as it continues to change.

Unfortunately, both the missional identity and incarnational identity of the Church have been largely lost from many churches throughout the United States. Roland Allen explains, “The maintenance of the organization has become a greater incentive to work than the purpose for which it was first created.”<sup>17</sup> This loss of identity has unfortunately been a large contributor to the lack of missional purpose in the local church. Churches exist as irrelevant organizations with no compelling purposes in the minds of many.

### Incarnation and Discipleship in Jesus’ Ministry

In *The Missional Church in Perspective*, Van Gelder and Zcheile clarify that “discipleship is following Christ into participation in God’s mission in the world in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>18</sup> In order to prepare his followers to incarnate God’s love and

---

<sup>15</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church in Context*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 98.

<sup>18</sup> Van Gelder and Zcheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 148.

mission in the world, Jesus spent significant time preparing and discipling them. This preparation was crucial if the mission of God was going to effectively be carried out. In order to train this eclectic group of men and women, Jesus again relied on incarnation.

The primary challenge Jesus gives those he encounters in the gospels is the invitation: “Follow me” (Mt. 4:19). In John 12:26, Jesus explains, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.” Jesus needed his disciples to be with him so that they could see what it truly looked like for the mission of God’s redemption and restoration to be carried out in a human life. The training and discipleship necessary for what Jesus was calling these men and women to do would require modeling and reinforcement.

For this reason, incarnation was at the heart of Jesus’ strategy from the beginning of the discipleship process. As the gospel writer indicates in Mark 3:14, “He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.” It was their being with Jesus that would prepare these disciples to be sent out and to carry out the same mission of God. Rolland Alan writes, “Christ trained his leaders by taking them with Him as He went about teaching and healing, doing the work which they, as missionaries, would do; we trained in institutions. He trained a very few with whom He was in closest personal relation; we train many who simply pass through our schools with a view to an examination and an appointment.”<sup>19</sup>

As the history of the early movements of the gospel has shown, the incarnational discipleship strategy that Jesus employed was very successful. Jesus’ disciples

---

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 20.

internalized what it meant to give their lives for the sake of God and his mission. They lived lives centered on the reality of God’s kingdom breaking into the world. Ferguson and Hirsch suggest that “if we put similar effort into apprenticing people in the way of Jesus, we can expect significantly different results” than what churches are seeing today.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, the important truth of using incarnation as preparation for the mission has been lost amongst many churches today. There has been an emphasis on different approaches and programs that are touted to increase the development of disciples. The results of all of these continue to be discouraging. Dean writes, “At the end of the day, making disciples requires incarnation, not cultural adaptation.”<sup>21</sup> This is what Jesus taught us from the beginning of his ministry and it is what is desperately needed in American churches today. Harvey Cox writes, “What Christianity should be doing today and tomorrow must continue what Jesus and those who immediately followed him were doing; otherwise it has become something different.”<sup>22</sup>

### Incarnation and Discipleship in the People of Israel

Although God’s use of incarnation to pass on his mission of love to the world is found most clearly in the person of Jesus, this mode of passing on the mission to others was also very explicit in the history of the nation of Israel. In Exodus 19:6, God called for the people of Israel to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” This nation of priests

---

<sup>20</sup> Ferguson and Hirsch, *On the Verge*, 70.

<sup>21</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 105.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 56.

was given the task of blessing the world by introducing the nations to the one true God who had reached out to them. In Genesis 26:4, God promised Abraham: “Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.” The people of Israel, Abraham’s descendants, were then given this mission to incarnate God’s love and blessing to the world.

In order to effectively carry out this mission, the people of Israel needed to pass the mission on to the future generations. God directed the people how to do this in the *shema*, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. It is written: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

The *Shema* explains that the passing on of Israel’s mission to others was dependent on their own incarnating of it. The success of transmission would be reliant on their love and faithfulness to God in their own lives. In other words, “the law called upon Jewish parents to show their children godliness- to teach them, talk to them, and embody for them their own delight in the Lord, 24/7.”<sup>23</sup>

The breakdown of not embodying and incarnating faithfulness to the God who called them as a nation would have consequences for generations to come. God made it clear in Deuteronomy 5:9 the vital importance of making wise decisions in each generation and how those decisions would impact the next. He told them, “You shall not

---

<sup>23</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 119.

bow down to them or worship (false idols); for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me” (Dt 5:9).

Unfortunately, the people of Israel experienced these grave consequences a number of times. When they were not faithful to follow the God who had called them, many times new generations would arise after them who were not faithful to their calling either. The same pattern has also been seen in the Church throughout the centuries. Allen asserts, “We have seen again and again in the history of the Church that a Christianity which does not propagate itself languishes, if it does not perish.”<sup>24</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ has also been called to incarnate faithfulness to God. If we do not embody our faith in this way, Ferguson and Hirsch write that “not only is our witness distorted, but also we can never hope to develop Christlike leaders” who will continue to carry out the mission.<sup>25</sup> This sentiment echoes the warnings from the Mosaic Law. The effects of missional unfaithfulness can be disastrous.

### The Loss of Incarnational Mission in the Baptist Tradition

Whittier Area Community Church finds its roots in the Baptist General Conference, a movement of Baptist churches birthed out of America’s Second Great Awakening in the Nineteenth century. “Organized in 1879, the Swedish Baptist General Conference evolved into the Baptist General Conference in 1945 and into Converge in

---

<sup>24</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Ferguson and Hirsch, *On the Verge*, 70.

2008.”<sup>26</sup> The early years of this Baptist movement was marked by missional vibrancy. “In the U.S. as well as in Sweden, the early decades of Swedish Baptist churches were marked by almost perennial revival. The lives of pastors and lay people were characterized by persistent personal evangelism.”<sup>27</sup> This missional expansion only increased as Swedish immigrants came to the United States with a heart to share their faith with their new neighbors. Out of a single congregation in 1852, the Baptist movement multiplied to 331 churches with more than 22,000 members by 1902, and then to 40,224 by 1945.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately the missional vibrancy that marked the early years of the movement shifted toward consolidation and institutionalism in the years the followed. During this season, the establishment of a Baptist Academy and the expansion of gospel proclamation in other countries became the focus. Like many other denominations, the movement experience missional setbacks as it shifted its focus toward sending out global missionaries instead of being missionary churches in their communities. Over time, this grouping of autonomous churches fell into the trap of believing that mission was simply pooling resources together to send out vocational missionaries to further God’s mission in the world.

Although the sending of missionaries is something to be celebrated, the unfortunate byproduct of this activity is that many of these churches believe that this activity alone fulfills their missional obligation. Sadly, many churches in the Baptist

---

<sup>26</sup> Converge, “The Story of Converge,” (accessed June 15, 2018), <https://converge.org/about/history>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

General Conference shared this same belief. Van Gelder argues, “The theology undergirding these movements was largely shaped by an understanding of the necessity to obey Christ in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20).”<sup>29</sup>

For many Baptist and Protestant churches, the responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission became much simpler when they presumed they could outsource mission to evangelistic revivals and parachurch ministries. As Van Gelder explains, “It is important to understand that the Protestant version of the modern missions movement emerged largely outside the established, institutional church.”<sup>30</sup> Most of the institutional churches within the Baptist tradition simply committed resources to furthering the mission rather than recognizing that their identity was tied to being an apostolic, incarnational picture of Jesus.

Jesus’ call for his Church was not simply to be a financial supporter for spreading the gospel. As it is continually renewed by its connection to him, Jesus calls his Church be sent outward, incarnating the gospel for the world just as he did. Van Gelder writes, “The focus is on the sending work of God: God’s sending the Son into the world to accomplish redemption, and the Father and Son’s sending the Spirit into the world to create the church and lead it into participation in God’s mission.”<sup>31</sup>

For a long season, the Baptist General Conference had largely abdicated its responsibility to be led by the Spirit into the world. Many of these churches including Whittier Area Community Church outsourced their missional responsibility to

---

<sup>29</sup> Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church in Context*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

professionals who were thought to be more equipped. Dean writes, “At issue is our ability, and our willingness, to remember our identity as the Body of Christ, and to heed Christ’s call to love him and others as his representatives in the world.”<sup>32</sup> Such loss of incarnational mission not only has led some Baptist churches to seem irrelevant to their communities, but it has also stunted the imagination of many Christ followers who have settled to live for a lesser purpose.

#### The Implosion of the American Church without Incarnational Mission

The writer of Proverbs writes, “Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds” (Pr 27:23). Sadly in churches all across the United States, church leaders are in denial of the condition of their flocks. Roxburgh rightly identifies that “we are witnessing the implosion of the existing church because growing numbers of Christians of all ages find its structures and the forms of its narratives irrelevant.”<sup>33</sup> This implosion is sadly turning away entire generations from churches and to their own individualized forms of spirituality which they find more relevant. At the core of many churches irrelevance is the loss of their God-given mission.

People in the United States are not increasingly dissatisfied or uninterested in organized religion because they consider themselves less spiritual. Kendra Creasy Dean writes, “American young people are, theoretically, fine with religious faith- but it does not concern them very much, and it is not durable enough to survive long after they

---

<sup>32</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making*, 106.

graduate from high school. One more thing: we're responsible."<sup>34</sup> Like many the generations, young people departing church buildings are still hungry for purpose and spiritual meaning, but they are unfortunately not finding it with the walls of the church sanctuary.

People's disconnectedness from their communities of faith in the American church flows in part from the subtle shift from incarnating mission to outsourcing mission. Christian church leaders have unintentionally substituted their own embodying of the gospel with an outsourcing to church ministry professionals that can do it for them. Many churches believed the professionalization of ministries would help the transmission of faith become even more effective, and they invested great amounts of resource in this endeavor. Dean identifies the reality of this in the area of youth ministry. She writes, "Youth ministers today are better educated, better resourced, better paid, and 'longer lasting' in their positions than ever before."<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, this investment in professional youth ministry has not significantly improved the issue of students walking away from the church. Students are leaving even more rapidly after high school.

The large investment in this professional ministry model overlooks the historical pattern of how the gospel movement has spread. Addison writes, "Overwhelmingly, early Christianity was not spread by 'professionals' but by ordinary people whose names and deeds went unrecorded."<sup>36</sup> Also, if these ordinary people have significant relationships with the neighbors, the influence will be even greater. "The most reliable predictor of

---

<sup>34</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, 74.

conversion is relationships, especially preexisting, positive relationships.”<sup>37</sup> These relationships were a major factor in the explosive growth of Christianity in the first century. Addison states that “Christianity ultimately conquered the Roman world without an organizational structure, without access to significant resources, without academic institutions and without professionalized clergy. Ordinary people, on fire with the love of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, simply told their families, friends, and casual acquaintances what God had done for them.”<sup>38</sup>

Churches in America have failed to realize the most effective ministry that will influence begins with ordinary men and women on mission who demonstrate lives of faithfulness. When a person of any age encounters a Christ follower who embodies the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ,” a lasting impression is made. The abdication of incarnational living has sadly become the common practice of Christ followers in churches across the country. Many believe their role is to just come to church and to become educated by the professional clergy.

David Fitch writes that “we emphasize going to church, which is largely an informational gathering centered around the sermon. Underlying it all is the belief that if we give the right information to individuals, they will grow.”<sup>39</sup> The evident decline of churches across the United States has revealed that such thinking is faulty. “The belief

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>39</sup> David E. Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission*, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 80.

that the education model was the best way to pass the faith on to the next generation translated into camps, Vacation Bible School, curricula, and training conferences for Sunday school teachers.”<sup>40</sup> As much as the church might enjoy these methods, they are not producing lasting results. Guder explains that “the reduction of the gospel and the shaping of its leaders have created a church that does not act as a sign or foretaste of the reign of God or the mission Dei. The assumption has seemed to be that by training leadership professionally to meet the personal, spiritual needs of the individual, the church could reacquire relevance at the cultural center. This assumption has proved not to be the case.”<sup>41</sup>

Church leaders have assumed that this model of ecclesiology is working, but the latest research tells a different story. The United States Census Bureau Records paints a dismal picture of American ecclesiology. Research shows that “every year more than 4,000 churches close their doors,” in contrast to only 1,000 churches that are started annually.<sup>42</sup> With the increased aging and death of the Builder generation in recent years, and the lack of engagement in many of the other generations, churches are dying at an accelerated rate.

Many current church attendees often do not raise objections to the failing philosophy of ministry. Some are pleased as long as their preferred programming continues uninterrupted. Reggie Joiner incisively writes though, “But what if that

---

<sup>40</sup> Doug Pagitt, *The Church in the Inventive Age* (Minneapolis: Sparkhouse, 2010), 23.

<sup>41</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 197.

<sup>42</sup> Church Leadership, “Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline,” (accessed July 7, 2018), <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346&>.

programming serves the family as a placebo, falsely convincing them that everything is okay?”<sup>43</sup> The statistics of churches in the United States are clearly communicating that everything is not okay and that it has lost its vitality. At the center of the church’s loss of vitality is also a loss of its mission.

The false mission that has replaced the incarnation mission of God in many Americans churches is a mission to consume to religious services. The mission to consume religious services promises that if you simply attend a church service, you will be fulfilled. As Reggie Joiner explains though, “The promise that church programming alone will make your life better has been exposed. It doesn’t work. Everyday living is where spiritual development is worked out. Loving God and loving our neighbors cannot be fulfilled in a church building.”<sup>44</sup> In spite of the evident ineffectiveness of the false mission of consumerism, missional change does not easily appear at many churches in the United States. In order to bring about such change, a missional spark is need to activate the imaginations of Christ followers and lead them toward incarnational living.

### **The Role of Preaching in Missional Transformation**

Since the founding of the Church, preaching has played a vital role in the advancement of the gospel and the shaping of Jesus’ missional community. Al Tizon writes that preachers “have been given the task...of shaping the redeemed community by the Word to conform to them to the image of God.”<sup>45</sup> This is a God-given assignment that

---

<sup>43</sup> Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 229.

<sup>44</sup> Ferguson and Hirsch, *On the Verge*, 280.

<sup>45</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xvii.

must be carried out prayerfully and with a proper focus on God's missional identity and purpose in the world. In a culture where attendance is declining at an increasing rate though, preachers must communicate the gospel in a way that inspires listeners to embody the message between Sundays.

Haddon Robinson explains that "an idea begins in the mind when things ordinarily separated come together to form a unity that either did not exist before or was not recognize previously."<sup>46</sup> Throughout the whole of the Scriptures, the unity of God's story is that he is on a mission of sending to "renew the face of the earth" (Ps 104:3). In other words, "all the great sections of the canon of Scripture, all the great episodes of the Bible Story, all the great doctrines of the biblical faith, cohere around the Bible's central character- the living God and his grand plan and purpose the whole of creation."<sup>47</sup> It is the task of the preacher to communicate the person and mission of this missional God every time he or she stands to deliver. No one has modeled such faithful preaching for missional transformation better than Jesus.

### The Preaching Ministry of Jesus and His Disciples

For the missional preacher today, the focal point of God's mission of redemption is rightly identified in the person of Jesus in his life, in his teaching, in his death, and in his resurrection. Unfortunately though, it is entirely possible to preach about Jesus without paying close attention to the actual gospel that Jesus preached. As Guder and his

---

<sup>46</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Sermons*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 39.

<sup>47</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 17.

colleagues explain, “Proclaiming a gospel about Christ that is not shaped by the gospel Jesus preached distorts the gospel by proclaiming only part of its meaning.”<sup>48</sup> Such preaching is often anemic in its ability to communicate the missional identity of the church to its listeners.

The preaching of Jesus was centered on the good news that “the kingdom of God is near” (Mt. 3:2). In the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, Mark 1:14-15 states, “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” Jesus encourages his disciples to go out and preach this same message. In Matthew 10:7, Jesus told them: “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’” In Luke 4:43, Jesus told the crowd looking for him, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”

In episode after episode, Jesus preached about the kingdom of God that was now available in the broken world he came to save. The early followers of Jesus followed in this same example. In Acts 8:12, Philip “preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” In city after city, the Apostle Paul preached about the kingdom of God. When Paul arrived to Rome, Acts 28:23 describes, “From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.”

The importance of the kingdom of God to the preaching ministry of Jesus and the early church highlights the important trajectory of the mission of God to “restore

---

<sup>48</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 88.

everything” (Acts 3:21). “The reign of God most certainly arises as God’s mission to reconcile the creation accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus.”<sup>49</sup> As Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:19, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,” and now “he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” The proclamation of this message can take on many forms, and must always be contextualized to the environment where it is present. For the purpose of transforming an attractional church to embrace its missional roots, this proclamation cannot be divorced from the craft of preaching. As Tizon explains, “When the sense of God’s mission does not drive our proclamation, then the purpose of sermonizing becomes primarily to build up the fellowship of believers. This is not so much wrong as it is woefully incomplete.”<sup>50</sup>

The good news of the availability of the kingdom of God means that God reigns, that God redeems, and that one day God will return for the “renewal of all things” (Mt 19:27). This is the good news that Jesus preached, it is the message that the first disciples gave their lives for, and it should be the core message that is communicated in all Biblical preaching today. “The mission of God’s people is to bring good news to a world where bad news is depressingly endemic.”<sup>51</sup> This is the message of the gospel that begins in Genesis and carries through to the end of Revelation. Sadly, this gospel is often absent from popular preaching in the Church.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>50</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xvii.

<sup>51</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 179.

## The Preaching Ministry of John Wesley

The craft of preaching plays a crucial role in the missional transformation of any local congregation. “Preaching- whatever way we choose to do it- is indispensable in disciple-making- that is, in shaping God’s people to conform to the image of their missional God.”<sup>52</sup> One of the most influential preachers of the Great Awakening who embodied this truth was John Wesley. Wesley’s fervent preaching and commitment to the kingdom movement helped ignite great revivals in England and the British colonies, and ultimately launched a kingdom movement that totals over 33 million Methodists worldwide today.<sup>53</sup>

One of the most potent qualities of Wesley as a preacher was his deep belief that preaching should be evaluated by the missional life-change it cultivates. “For Wesley, the intelligibility of preaching is dependent upon the formation of a people who desire the goodness of truth that is proclaimed; the gospel becoming people.”<sup>54</sup> One of the primary influences for Wesley in this deep belief was his encounter with Moravian missionaries on Aldersgate Street in London. Douglas Strong writes, “This experience gave Wesley a renewed zeal for doing God’s work, and he found, by God’s grace, that his ministry began to bear fruit.”<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xx.

<sup>53</sup> Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, 60.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Pasquarello III, *John Wesley: A Preaching Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), xix.

<sup>55</sup> Douglas M. Strong et al., *Reclaiming the Wesleyan Tradition: John Wesley’s Sermons for Today*, (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007), 13.

Wesley's commitment to preaching that resulted in life change necessitated that he create a disciplined movement with methods of discipleship for any who would embrace the grace he discovered. "Wesley refused to preach Christian doctrine without discipline. He believed there could be no Christianity without both; it was in fact better to lose members than to lose discipline."<sup>56</sup> At the center of this pietistic discipline was the deep belief that every Methodist was considered a minister of the gospel. Addison explains, "Opponents among the Anglican clergy condemned this prostituting of the ministerial function," but Wesley's faithful followers showed that their movement could expand rapidly as it embodied the missional life change for people from all different backgrounds.<sup>57</sup>

Before such conviction to demonstrate the kingdom in everyday living and holiness was embodied in Wesley's followers, it was first embodied in Wesley's own life. "Wesley was able to inspire commitment to the Methodist cause because he embodied that commitment...He lived an austere lifestyle and shunned every distraction to his calling. He endured the strain of constant travel on horseback, preaching 40,000 sermons and saw over 100,000 conversions."<sup>58</sup> This type of commitment to the embodiment of the gospel will play a crucial role in this preaching strategy for missional transformation at Whittier Area Community Church.

As is evident in the preaching ministry of John Wesley, the embodiment of the gospel preaching strategy depends not merely on information retention from the sermons

---

<sup>56</sup> Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

proclaimed. The embodiment of any fruitful gospel movement also includes next step opportunities and small group accountability surrounding missional practices. Before a preaching strategy can accomplish true missional transformation in a community, the leaders and preachers in the congregation must first embody it. John Wesley's life illuminates that incarnation cannot be divorced from proclamation and true missional transformation.

PART THREE  
MINISTRY STRATGY

## CHAPTER 4

### A MISSIONAL METAMORPHOSIS PLAN

The problem that Whittier Area Community Church faces today is shared by many churches across the United States. There is an evident disconnect between the disciples the church is producing and the gospel they proclaim. Fitch states, “If we discover that the kind of people we have become is at odds with the gospel we proclaim, we then need to discern the source of this disconnect.”<sup>1</sup> This source of disconnect ultimately points to a systemic problem throughout the church- a lack of incarnational mission. “The church is in decline in almost every context in the First World.”<sup>2</sup> A shift must take place. The remainder of this paper will highlight how that shift might begin in Whittier Area Community Church.

The Church of Jesus has been founded to be a missionary movement that joins God in his redemptive story that has been unfolding since the garden of Eden. Just as

---

<sup>1</sup> Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism*, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 14.

Israel was chosen to be God's instrument of blessing to a broken world, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, so the Church of Jesus has been chosen and called to take its place in God's continuing restorative work. If a local church who proclaims to follow Jesus is not active with him on this mission in the world, that local church is not following the Jesus of the New Testament or fulfilling its identity.

Whittier Area Community Church has been assigned the important kingdom task of being a missional outpost in its community. It has been entrusted with incredible resources, favor in its city, and a long history of successful programs. Unfortunately, Whittier Area Community Church has lost much of its missional identity. It has unintentionally embraced a distorted identity as a great provider of religious programs, education, and recreation. As Christopher Wright explains, "part of our missional responsibility has to include facing up to the failing of the church itself."<sup>3</sup>

In order for a church to rediscover its true missional calling, it is the responsibility of the church's leaders to help identify the misdirection and to reorient the community toward greater faithfulness. Guder writes, "The purpose of leadership is to form and equip a people who demonstrate and announce the purpose and direction of God through Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> The rediscovery of Whittier Area Community Church's missionary identity is perhaps the most important responsibility that its leaders must discharge in the season ahead.

For years, Whittier Area Community Church's missional strategy has been to resource a small cadre of Christ-followers for mission in foreign countries. The church

---

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 282.

<sup>4</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 183.

has prided itself on having strong financial support for global missionaries who serve in foreign contexts. Unfortunately, in this faithful support of global missionaries, Whittier Area Community church has misunderstood that its purpose is not just to “send out missionaries to faraway lands; the church, as it is situated in a specific context, is sent by God to be good news in its surroundings.”<sup>5</sup>

Although, the clarity and conviction of the church’s missional identity have been lacking in previous years, the current leadership at Whittier Area Community Church now senses the urgency for missional recalibration. The first method we have identified to help reimagine the missional identity in the church is a preaching strategy that will be used across all ministries. This strategy would be crafted and shared with each of the pastors at the church, so they will be able to communicate it in each context that they lead. This preaching strategy would then lead into application experiences during the week that participants can discuss in small group settings.

Empowering each pastor to preach from the truth of Scriptures about God’s missional heart and the church’s identity will light the fuse of missional imagination for the congregants, but it congregants will need direction to practice and process these new concept. For this reason, each of the pastors in this strategy must prepare by immersing themselves in an understanding of God’s mission in the world, and in the practice of that in their lives. The pastors of Whittier Area Community Church share an excitement to engage in this assignment, and to proclaim a richer and fuller explanation of God’s purpose for his Church both in and out of the pulpit.

---

<sup>5</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xxii.

## The Goals of the Metamorphosis

The desired outcome of this project's preaching strategy is that a missional passion and missional practices will be developed in the lives of men, women, and students at Whittier Area Community Church and will be lived out in their everyday lives. "Missional describes a people who have been so gripped by the biblical vision of God's *shalom* for the world that it permeates all that they do, say, and think."<sup>6</sup>

Information retention is not the finish line for missional transformation. The goal is that the congregants of Whittier Area Community Church would live, as Paul wrote in Philippians 1:27, "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ," and that they would "translate the gospel in [their] specific setting so that the witness to Jesus Christ takes place."<sup>7</sup>

In order to achieve this goal, the preaching strategy must first clearly articulate the mission of God in the larger context of the biblical narrative. "God has been sending God-self into the world since the beginning of time."<sup>8</sup> Communicating a clear understanding of God's sending nature throughout the entire redemptive story will build the framework for Whittier Area Community Church to understand not only the full significance of Jesus' incarnation, but also the call embody the gospel in their context.

In addition to articulating the mission of God found in the biblical narrative, the preaching strategy must also clarify key concepts related to church's missional nature.

"The church...becomes an extension of the Trinity into the world as a participant in this

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., xix.

<sup>7</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 237.

<sup>8</sup> Al Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, 5.

sending, the *missio Dei*.”<sup>9</sup> Key concepts pertinent to the church’s identity such as the biblical meaning of gospel, incarnation, and the contextualization of the gospel will be explored in each message to encourage listeners toward action.

While communicating these important concepts concerning the mission of God and of the Church, an essential component to the preaching strategy will be the application of these concepts to the lives of the listeners. The goal of the application section of each sermon is to take a simple step to join God’s work throughout their week. For this reason, application will be driven by story-telling and the presentation of mission in the lives of others from the community. “When we allow our imaginations to be profoundly shaped by the doctrine of *missio Dei* and the incarnation of God in Jesus, we are inspired to find new ways to meaningfully live out the good news to people around us.”<sup>10</sup> At the end of each story presented in this section, attendees will be given one simple application step to enact during the week. During their small group time, parishioners will then have the opportunity to report on their missional experiences from the week and to encourage one another as they become missionaries in their communities. Each application section will also close with recommended content for further study on the defined missional concept.

Finally, the preaching strategy prepared must be easily adaptable for each pastor who will be teaching it. Each of the pastors will be presenting in their respective ministry settings which include audiences that are diverse in age and background. The content of each sermon must therefore be translatable to each respective audience, while also

---

<sup>9</sup> Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism?*, 141.

<sup>10</sup> Dave Ferguson and Alan Hirsch, *On the Verge*, 71.

creating space for the various preachers to infuse more defined application for their specific listeners.

### **The Missional Metamorphosis Preaching Strategy Content**

The content of the preaching strategy for Whittier Area Community Church includes four sermons that communicate a theological overview of the mission of God, challenging Whittier Area Community Church to engage in that mission. Each sermon section will include an overview for the pastor who will be preaching the message, a scripted introduction to the sermon, a summary description for the expositional outline of the message, a missional example in the life of an ordinary Christ follower, a scripted conclusion, and resources for listeners who would like to do further study.

#### Sermon 1: The God of the Mission

This first message of the preaching series intended to introduce the parishioners at Whittier Area Community Church to key concepts of the church's missional identity will have its focus on the nature of God. In order for missional hearts and practices to be developed within the congregation, the exploration of the mission of Jesus' Church is not in the church itself but in the very nature of God. Tizon argues that it is the nature of God that "fundamentally justifies mission in the world."<sup>11</sup> The goal of the first sermon in the preaching strategy will be to introduce the listeners to the concept of *missio Dei* in a comprehensive, biblical framework that finds its culmination in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>11</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, 3.

The introduction of the first message preached alludes to the introductory video at the Whittier Area Community Church's worship gathering that states the vision of the church: "We exist to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus."<sup>12</sup> For forty-seven years, Whittier Area Community Church has identified that it is called to send out messengers who bring the good news of Jesus to this world. It is for this reason that the church faithfully supports fifty different global partner families all over the world and sends out short-term missions teams every season of the year.

In worship gatherings involving a missionary commissioning, one of the most frequently cited passages of Scripture is Romans 10:13-15. The Apostle Paul writes, "for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" The clarity and progression of this passage is refreshing. Commenting on this passage, Christopher Wright notes "people do not get saved by accident or at random, but by a process that begins with the authorizing, commissioning, sending action of God."<sup>13</sup> Alight Romans 10:13-15 is familiar to the parishioners at Whittier Area Community Church, many are not yet familiar with the biblical identity of those being sent. Throughout the Scriptures, to be sent to share the gospel is not just a calling for those who relocate to live abroad in a foreign context. The mission of God is a

---

<sup>12</sup> Whittier Area Community Church, "Mission/Core Values," (accessed September 24, 2018), <https://www.wacc.net/mission-statement>.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 202.

calling for every person, who identifies as a Christ-follower, to be sent out in the context he or she is placed in. It is a calling for the entire church itself. “The church does not send out missionaries to faraway lands; the church, as it is situated in a specific context, is sent by God to *be* good news in its surroundings.”<sup>14</sup>

In the “Missional Metamorphosis” series, the truth that every person at Whittier Area Community Church is called to be messengers of good news will be explored and applied to the life of every listener. For the first sermon though, the core concept to be discovered is not just that the church is sent. Instead, it is the discovery that God believes in his mission so much that he is willing to be sent himself.

The remainder of this first message of the series will introduce the concept of *missio Dei* and will outline the broad biblical narrative of God’s sending activity. “The *missio Dei* literally means ‘the sending of God.’ Before the church was sent to engage in mission, God the Father sent God the Son (John 3:16-17).”<sup>15</sup> The key passages, examples, and resources provided are all pointing listeners toward that incredible truth.

The body of the “God of the Mission” sermon will open with key passages at the beginning of the Old Testament in Genesis 1-2, where humans first discover the story in which they have been placed in. Genesis 1:1 teaches that, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:27 declares that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” These

---

<sup>14</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xxii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

passages are crucial as a starting place for humanity to know the source of its home and its identity.

The next passage to be explored is one chapter later, in Genesis 3, where “human disobedience and rebellion against the Creator God brought disastrous results (Gen. 3-11).”<sup>16</sup> The consequences of sin in Genesis 3 brought a curse on the entire physical universe. Death and decay entered relationships between human beings on every social and familial level. In addition to this, sin ultimately polluted spiritual state of every human being who is now separated from God. Romans 1:18-25 is an additional passage that will aid in illuminating the devastation of human disobedience. A comprehension of sin’s entrance to the world beginning in Genesis 3 is crucial to having a right understanding of the mission of God. This comprehension will then set the stage for what the gospel is all about. Wright explains, “God’s mission is the final destruction of all that is evil from his whole creation,” and the recreation of everything made new (Rv 21:5).<sup>17</sup>

The trajectory of the redemptive story of God from this point forward is all leading to the climax of his mission in the person of Jesus Christ. The entire Old Testament is building to this point, so the next key passage to be explored in this message is the calling of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. As God explained to Abraham in his call, a nation would be born from him that would be a blessing to all the nations. “God’s plan...was to deal with the problem of humanity- sin and division- through Israel, the people of Abraham.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

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

God was the initiator of the great rescue mission for the entire universe through Abraham. God was also the great redeemer of this chosen people in the story of the exodus, as found in Exodus 3:1-10. God was the giver of the Hebrew law and sender of the Old Testament prophets (Jer 1:5) that would guide the people of Israel in their mission to be a “kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:5). In spite of the disobedience of the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament, “in the mystery of his sovereign purpose it would lead to salvation going to the ends of the earth as God always intended.”<sup>19</sup> Through every twist and turn of the Old Testament narrative in these key passages, God was the driver of this great mission to heal the world.

The final section of key passages to be explored is centered on the person of Jesus and his fulfillment of the mission of God. “Jesus did not just arrive; he was sent.”<sup>20</sup> The key passages to be explored in this final section include John 5:19, John 14:9, John 20:21, and John 3:16-17. Each of these passages places emphasis on Jesus’ acute awareness of being sent to carry on the mission of the Father to bring salvation to the world. This section will conclude with the truth that even Jesus’ calling to go to the cross to die was at the center of being sent by God the Father. He explains to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:17-35, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lk 24:27). “Luke does not present Jesus as quoting any specific verse from the Old Testament, but he claims that the mission of preaching repentance and forgiveness to the nations in his

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 210.

name is ‘what is written.’”<sup>21</sup> God’s mission throughout the entire Old Testament finds its climax in the incarnation of Jesus. It communicates the lengths that God will go to in the fulfillment of his great mission. “God’s being cannot be known apart from Immanuel- ‘God with us’ - the incarnation of God in the Son and then, after the ascension, in His continuing presence with us by the Holy Spirit in the proclaimed Word.”<sup>22</sup>

In the “God of the Mission” sermon, the story to be shared is about the lives of two educators who sensed God at work in their schools. Stacy and Karen are both followers of Jesus who serve in the education system in Whittier. They had always seen their work as a calling to invest in the lives of students, but a few years ago they were both struck by conversations that were taking place with their colleagues. Through a series of difficult circumstances, a number of their colleagues began to approach them for guidance and prayer. These colleagues knew that Stacy and Karen were spiritual people who prayed, but none of these colleagues considered themselves adherents of any religion.

Stacy and Karen worked at different schools, but they attended the same church. One Sunday, as they walked to their cars together after the worship gathering, they began to discuss what they sensed happening with their colleagues. Immediately, they both sensed that it was not accidental that they were being sought out by the co-workers about their faith in Jesus and they felt they needed to respond in an active way to join with what God was doing.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>22</sup> Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism?*, 132.

As the two prayed and talked, they decided that they would simply invite all of these colleagues to Karen's house for dinner one Sunday afternoon. They did not have great plans beyond eating together, but they felt compelled to share their own stories of how God had brought them strength in the midst of the challenges they had faced in their lives. Stacy and Karen made the invitations to their colleagues and every single one of them came that first Sunday. By the end of that gathering, one of the teachers who considered herself an agnostic asked if they could keep meeting and begin to study the Bible together. Stacy and Karen agreed and they continued having dinner with the group every Sunday. After two years, many of their co-workers in that group made professions of faith in Jesus and began to see their own jobs as a mission on their school campuses.

Stacy and Karen played a role in sharing the gospel with their school colleagues, but would unapologetically confess that it was not because they were incredible evangelists. They simply were attentive to how God was active in the lives of their colleagues and they made themselves available to be a support. Every single follower of Jesus can do the same this week, wherever God has them. Kenda Creasy Dean writes, "The goal of Christian formation is not church membership, but more perfect love of God and neighbor. Jesus did not call people to come to church; he called them to follow him."<sup>23</sup> Jesus is at work in lives of every individual in the Whittier community. The encouragement for Jesus' followers is to be attentive to see where he working and to join him.

---

<sup>23</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian*, 61.

As Stacy and Karen's story illustrates, a step in God's mission can be as simple as sitting down for a meal with a coworker. The application step for this sermon about the God of the mission is for parishioners to follow Stacy and Karen's example. Each attendee will be challenged to invite one of their coworkers who they don't well to a meal before the next Sunday. During their meal, the parishioners are encouraged to learn more about their colleague, listen to his or her story, and to pay special attention to how the God of the mission might be active in that person's life. During each parishioner's small group gathering, they will have an opportunity share about this application step and how it changed their perspective regarding the mission of God.

Some additional resources for deeper study into the topic of the *missio Dei* include Christopher Wright's books *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* and *The Mission of God's People*. Both of these books would provide helpful frameworks in preparation for preaching the "God of the Mission" sermon. They also would be very informative to provide parishioners with a wider perspective of the mission of God. On a more practical level, *Get Off Your Donkey* by Reggie McNeal provides stories of challenge to practically join with God on his mission in the world.

The story of God's mission in this world does not begin with the church sending missionaries out to other continents. It begins with a missionary God who, as 2 Peter 3:9 explains, is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." It is for this reason that God has been the initiator of all the sending and going from the very beginning. "God's mission involved a host of sent-ones, deliverers and messengers, but

ultimately the accomplishment of God's mission did not depend on such human agents, but on the sovereign power of God himself, through his Spirit and his Word."<sup>24</sup>

The truth that must be communicated with parishioners in this first message is that the missionary God of the Bible is still active in our community. He is committed to finishing the work of redemption that he began with the calling of Abraham. In his mission, God desires to use ordinary people, empowered by his Spirit, who will make themselves available to him. "For behind all our mission stands the unshakable determination of God to be known throughout his whole creation as the living God. God's will to be known is what makes our mission not only imperative but also possible."<sup>25</sup> The God of the mission invites everyone to join him in this great adventure.

### Sermon 2: The People of the Mission

The second sermon in the "Missional Metamorphosis" preaching strategy is centered on what it means for the church to be people of the mission. Christopher Wright elucidates that "the Old Testament tells the story that not only leads up to Jesus but one that also leads to mission to the nations."<sup>26</sup> Jesus commissioned his followers in Matthew 28:19 to "go and make disciples of all nations." Many followers of Jesus know that this calling exists, but they feel insecure about how they can engage. The goal of "People of the Mission" sermon in the preaching strategy is introduce the listeners to the truth that incarnation was not only the means by which Jesus brought the gospel to the world, but it is also the method that the church is called to practice as well.

---

<sup>24</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 209.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 38.

The introduction of the second message will begin with familiarizing parishioners with the work of American sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Denton. Between the years 2003-2005, Smith and Denton led the National Study of Youth and Religion to better understand the state of spirituality of teenagers in America. The results sent shockwaves through the American church. Kenda Kreasy Dean, one of the assisting researchers, explained that the research revealed “three out of four American teenagers claim to be Christians, and most are affiliated with a religious organization- but only about half consider it very important, and fewer than half actually practice their faith as a regular part of their lives.”<sup>27</sup> She went on to write that “in the view of American teenagers, God is more object than subject, an idea but not a companion.”<sup>28</sup> Although churches throughout the United States were employing educated youth ministers and were investing resources in church youth ministries at a higher rate than ever before, they had missed an important truth about how the gospel of Jesus is passed down from one generation to the next. People need to see the mission of God lived out if they are going to understand and embrace it for themselves. This is what Jesus came to the world and displayed. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The gospel writer explains that the means by which the glory of God could be seen was through the incarnation of Jesus.

Every person who belongs to the Church of Jesus has been assigned to God’s mission to be messengers of good news in this world. This assignment is not only to

---

<sup>27</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

share a message verbally, but also to live the message out. The core concept that this message will explore is that the followers of Jesus are not sent out just to share the good news. Instead every Christ-follower is sent out to embody the good news.

The remainder of the “People of the Mission” message will introduce the concept of incarnation as applied to the people of God throughout the Scriptures. The embodiment or translation of God’s good news is the movement that God has called his people to throughout the centuries. Dean writes, “At the end of the day making disciples requires incarnation, not cultural adaption.”<sup>29</sup> The key passages, examples, and resources provided will point listeners toward that incredible truth.

The selection of key passages to be explored in this sermon begins with John 20:19-22. Special focus will be given to Jesus’ statement in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Not only is Jesus sending the church on the same mission he is called to, but he is sending them in the same way, “as human translations of divine love, people whose words and actions do not grasp for God as much as they reveal a God who grasps for us.”<sup>30</sup>

A second key passage to be explored is 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8. Paul writes specifically in verse five that “our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.” This living out of the gospel in Thessalonica is what Paul says demonstrated an example that the church could imitate and ultimately helped them

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 64.

become “a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia” (1 Thes 4:7). The final key passage to be studied in this message is 1 Peter 2:9-12, with special emphasis given to what it means to be “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation.” This section of the sermon will also present an ideal time to revisit God’s commissioning of the people of Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 as his “kingdom of priests.”

Two terms to unpack in this section of the sermon are the terms priestly and holy. Wright explains, “Priests stood in the middle between God on the one hand and all the rest of the people on the other... Through priests God would be known to his people.”<sup>31</sup> This was the calling that God gave his people Israel in the Old Testament and it is the call upon the church today. What designated both Israel and the Church as priests in the world was the attribute of being holy. “Something or someone is holy when they get set apart for a distinct purpose in relation to God and then are kept separate for that purpose.”<sup>32</sup> God spoke to Israel in Leviticus 20:24 stating: “You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.” This is not just a descriptor of the God’s people in these passages, but it is also a calling. “The strong ethical demand of holiness in Old Testament Israel meant living lives of integrity, justice and compassion in every area.”<sup>33</sup> Peter highlights this same truth in 1 Peter 2:12 when he writes, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” In this

---

<sup>31</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 120.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

way, the discipleship of the Church and the mission of God's people are intricately united together.

In addition, a reflection on the early church in Acts 2:42-47 emphasizes that it was the practice of their faith, as the believers worshipped, sacrificed, and loved one another, that caused the church to flourish and “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). “Rather than preaching a sermon and hoping people ‘got it,’ Christians were working miracles and doing good deeds among the people.”<sup>34</sup> They incarnated the kingdom of God as sent out ones in their communities.

In the “People of the Mission” sermon, a missional example of a Christ-follower named Erica exemplifies what it looks like to embody faith in a local neighborhood. Erica and her family spent six months searching for the perfect home in her favorite part of Whittier. This part of Whittier enjoys tree-covered streets with sidewalks for jogging and it is close to one of the most popular shopping centers. Erica's husband found a charming fixer-upper there with a big back-yard and lots of potential they couldn't resist. Erica and her family moved in quickly and made the necessary improvements so it was exactly what she hoped it would be. She took special pride in the beautiful garden she had established in the backyard and it soon became her favorite place to sit and read.

One day, as Erica was driving out of the neighborhood that she loved so much, the thought struck her that she had not yet learned the names of any of her neighbors. As a follower of Jesus, Erica believed that God treasured people more than possessions and that she was called to do the same. Erica felt helpless though to discern how to love her

---

<sup>34</sup> Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians*, 94.

neighbors if she did not even know them. That day, Erica prayed and asked God for wisdom about how she could take a step to love her neighbors.

During the following week, two ideas surfaced for Erica to encounter her neighbors. Erica was on a jog in her neighborhood listening to music when she walked past one of her neighbors watering her lawn. Erica made it a point to turn her music off, to stop and greet the woman. Erica learned the name of her neighbor Kay and discovered that she had lived in that home for over fifty years.

As Erica jogged away from the encounter with Kay, she made the commitment she would seek to learn the names of the others neighbors on her street. Erica decided that at the end of every jog through her neighborhood, she would walk one additional loop without any music to exhibit a posture of attentiveness see what encounters God might orchestrate. In the first month alone, these walks allowed Erica to meet seven more of her neighbors.

A second idea surfaced for Erica one afternoon as she was reading in her beloved backyard garden. Although she treasured the backyard environment immensely, she realized that she would have a much better opportunity to encounter her neighbors if she would simply move her favorite chair to the front yard. Erica made this shift, and during the next month she met three more of her neighbors.

Since Erica was intentional to put herself in places where she could meet her neighbors, she has learned her neighbor's names, invited some to her church, and she has even been able to support one family in a desperate situation at the hospital. Erica has become the hands and feet of Jesus to her neighborhood, but it wasn't without intentionality. Erica made conscious decisions to be in places where she would encounter

those who God treasures. This is an example that all Christ followers can follow as they accept the assignment to embody the love of Jesus in their own neighborhoods.

The application step for this message about the people of the mission is for each parishioner to go and introduce himself or herself to an unfamiliar neighbor during the week, just like Erica did. In this action step, it may be important to acknowledge that knocking on a neighbor's door for an introduction can stretch a person's comfort zone. Despite the nervousness this may produce, familiarity with the name of a neighbor can often be the first link in a relationship that God wants to use in his mission. Any parishioners who already know all of their neighbors' names should be encouraged to shift their action step to inviting a neighbor over for dinner or dessert. This application step will be discussed with their small group members at their next small group gathering for debrief and mutual encouragement.

A next step resource for deeper study into the topic of being people of the mission is Kenda Creasy Dean's book *Almost Christian*, which describes the problems that arise when there is not incarnational living amongst Christ-followers. Another practical resource that encourages Christ followers to embody the gospel in their neighborhoods is *The Art of Neighboring*, by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon. This resource provides concrete first steps to join with what God's activity in any community.

The God of the mission founded his church to be a missional movement. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told his followers that they would be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Tizon writes, "Missional describes a people who have been so gripped by the biblical vision of God's *shalom* for the world

that it permeates all that they do, say, and think.”<sup>35</sup> In this way, the church of Jesus serves as his holy priesthood drawing people to the living God. “God longs to draw people to himself. God seeks the lost, invites the stranger to come on home. But a primary means that he does so is by living in the midst of his own people in such a way that they attract others.”<sup>36</sup> Jesus has placed his very Spirit inside of his followers so they can be the means that God uses in his mission.

Jesus and the New Testament writers all testify to the fact that the good works and right living of the church are transformation properties that can point people to the God who is on a mission to save the world. The challenge for followers of Jesus today, as sent out ones, is to embody the love of God in their everyday lives. “In short, you have to live under the reign of God if you want to go preach about the reign of God.”<sup>37</sup>

### Sermon 3: The Gospel of the Mission

The third sermon in the “Missional Metamorphosis” preaching strategy is centered on a right understanding of the gospel that drives the mission. The Greek word for good news is *εὐαγγελίου*, from which the word gospel is derived. The word gospel seems very familiar to people within churches, but it is unfortunately often misunderstood. Wright asserts that “the essence of what it means to be the church arises perpetually from the church’s origins in the gospel: it is in every moment being originated by the Holy Spirit as it hears the gospel and is oriented by present reign of

---

<sup>35</sup> Al Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xix.

<sup>36</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 129.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

Christ.”<sup>38</sup> This means the outcome of living out of a distorted gospel will be a distorted mission. The goal of the “Gospel of the Mission” sermon is reintroduce the gospel according to Jesus to the listeners, and to allow Jesus’ gospel to propel them into their mission as disciples.

The introduction to the third sermon opens with the intention to prompt listeners to grapple with a biblical definition of the familiar word gospel. Not every Christ follower can immediately articulate an eloquent definition, but every follower of Jesus has some concept of what they consider to be the essence of the good news. Unfortunately for many, the answer has deviated far away from what the gospel was according to Jesus. As Dallas Willard explains, “History has brought us to the point where the Christian message is thought to be essentially concerned only with how to deal with sin: with wrongdoing or wrong-being and its effects.”<sup>39</sup> Willard calls this the “gospel of sin management,” a gospel where “transformation of life and character is no part of the redemptive message.”<sup>40</sup> A message like the “gospel of sin management” is prevalent in churches today, but it is far from gospel Jesus preached. The prospect of a church proclaiming an incomplete gospel is deeply concerning on a number of levels. Even when that distorted gospel includes the person of Jesus in it, it can still be deeply destructive. “Proclaiming a gospel about Christ that is not shaped by the gospel Jesus

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>39</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 41.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

preached distorts the gospel by proclaiming only part of its meaning.”<sup>41</sup> The purpose of this sermon is to explore what the biblical record teaches that Jesus preached as the gospel. “The best hermeneutic of the gospel is a community of Christians living it out.”<sup>42</sup> For the church to live out the gospel, they first need to make sure that have a right understanding of it.

The remainder of the “Gospel of the Mission” message will introduce the concept of the gospel that Jesus preached as he invited people to enter into the kingdom of God that is restoring all things. “Following Jesus in the twenty-first century demands that his disciples relearn the full meaning of the Gospel story, recovering the culminating theme of restoration that runs throughout the whole of Scripture.”<sup>43</sup> The key passages, examples, and resources provided are all pointing listeners toward that rich gospel.

In the “Gospel of the Mission” message, the first text to exposit will be Mark 1:14-15. In the exposition of these verses, special attention should be made to the meaning of *εὐαγγελίου* and *μετανοέω* to help define the significance of the meaning of the word gospel, and also what the confusing word repentance means. The concept of repentance points to the reality that “radical change of life go along with faith in the good news.”<sup>44</sup> In addition to Mark 1:14-15, a brief exploration of Luke 8:1, Luke 9:1-2, Acts 1:3, and Acts 28:31 will help inform the truth that the gospel Jesus preached was about

---

<sup>41</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 27.

<sup>43</sup> Lyons, *The Next Christians*, 192.

<sup>44</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 194.

the availability of the kingdom of God, and the expansiveness of that understanding throughout his ministry and the ministry of the early church.

The second key passage to explore is 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 and verses 20-28. As McKnight points out, “First Corinthians 15 is nothing less than a lifting up of the curtains in the earliest days of the church; it tells us what everyone believe and what everyone preached. The passage is the apostolic gospel tradition (that existed) before there was New Testament, before the apostles were beginning to write letters, and before the Gospels were written.”<sup>45</sup> In the exposition of 1 Corinthians 15, special emphasis should be placed on the phrase “according to the Scriptures” as it connects the story of the gospel with the story of Israel, thus showing Jesus to be the ultimate fulfillment. “The ‘good news’ of this gospel is that Israel’s Story has now reached its resolution in Jesus Christ.”<sup>46</sup> Special focus should also be given to the exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:28 and the phrase “so that God may be all in all,” pointing to the restoration of the union with Jesus for all creation.

In the “Gospel of the Mission” sermon, the missional example to be shared is about a man named Bob who was transformed by a relationship with Jesus and then discovered that such transformation is not meant to end with him. Bob grew up in a broken family that did not share any religious convictions with him. In this environment, Bob learned from an early age that the world can be a harsh place, and that he could not depend on anyone other than himself. This philosophy on life unfortunately led Bob to

---

<sup>45</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 46.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

the place where he was struggling with a broken family of his own. He experienced a messy divorce and then faced estrangement from his children.

In the wake of this tumultuous season, Bob decided he would turn to a higher power began attending a local church. Bob was intrigued to hear about the good news that a fresh start was available, and that God had not given up on him. As Bob heard the Scriptures taught, he felt the conviction that the grace of God could be applied to his life and he committed his life to following Jesus publicly through baptism.

As Bob began to follow Jesus, he found healing in his relationship with his children, he met another woman who followed Jesus and began a healthy marriage, and he found a fulfilling job. It seemed that God truly had given Bob a fresh start. Yet, as time passed, Bob sensed that something was still missing. As Bob continued to grow in his own relationship with Jesus, and was a leader in his church, he sensed that the good news that changed him was meant for others in this harsh world.

One day, when Bob was reading the bulletin at his church, he learned that a local transitional living center needed volunteers to serve dinner. Bob volunteered to go and serve at this special dinner where he met the men and women trying to transition out of homelessness. As Bob listened to their stories, he experienced a stirring inside of his heart to become more engaged.

At the end of the dinner, Bob spoke with the director at of the center and learned that vocational training is one of the biggest needs for the residents, so they are prepared to reenter the workforce. Bob prayed about the need, and then asked a friend from church named Don to help him put together a small seminar about how to write a resume, prepare for a job interview, and learn basic computer skills. Bob and Don designed the

seminar to present to the residents at the transitional living shelter, and on the night of the presentation, every jobless resident attended.

As Bob watched the residents attentively listen to the job training tips, he realized that he had an even greater message to communicate with the residents. With the permission of the director of the facility, Bob began a Bible study to share with the residents there, communicating about the God who gives fresh starts. This has led to a tremendous kingdom movement amongst the residents at the center, which today includes a recovery program, a monthly worship service, and a weekly Bible study.

A mission that is so much bigger than one man is taking place at this transitional living center. For Bob though, it simply began with the conviction that the good news of Jesus was not meant to be applied only to his life, but to his entire city. Bob understood that the gospel message proclaims that through Jesus, God is offering a fresh start to the whole world.

The application step from the gospel of the mission sermon is for parishioners to invest two hours of their week serving with one of the Whittier Area Community Church's local partners who minister to the vulnerable. Opportunities will be set up in advance for parishioners to serve at a local food pantry, at three local transitional living centers, and at two local convalescent homes. This application step will provide an introduction for many parishioners to experience the needs of their community that Jesus's gospel addresses. This application step may also serve as a springboard for some to commit to serving like on an ongoing basis like Bob did. Before parishioners leave their worship gatherings, they are invited to sign up for one of the pre-planned opportunities. During their small group gathering that week, they will then have the

opportunity to reflect on their serving experience and how it enhances their view of Jesus' gospel.

A next step resource for deeper study into the topic of the gospel of the mission is *The King Jesus Gospel* by Scot McKnight. McKnight writes in a succinct way that highlights the fullness of the biblical gospel and he explains why many churches have been persuaded to preach a lesser gospel. This resource will be helpful for research before preaching and for learners to dive into the material. Another great resource is the book *Next Christians* by Gabe Lyons, who describes the type of lifestyle that embodies the gospel in our world today.

A correct understanding of the gospel of Jesus is essential for any church that hopes to join God on his mission in their community. Sadly, many Christ followers have settled for a personalized, partial version of the gospel that does not take into account God's overarching story of redemption. Lois Barrett writes, "It is hard to communicate the missionary calling of the church to people who are persuaded that they already know what the gospel is about."<sup>47</sup> For this reason, it is especially important that a church consistently examines the truth of the gospel in its fullness. "In our attempts to make the gospel clear, we have often squeezed all the life out of it."<sup>48</sup> The gospel tells the cosmic love story of "a God so smitten with creation that God chooses to enter creation with us, and stops at nothing- not even death- to win us back."<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Lois Y. Barrett et al., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 92.

<sup>48</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 100.

<sup>49</sup> Dean, *Almost Christian*, 61.

News this great inspires Jesus' Church to join him in a story bigger and more wonderful than anything on this earth. The Church of Jesus cannot bring the gospel to their community without a right understanding of what it is. For this reason, one of the most important tasks for followers of Jesus today is "to recover the Gospel- to relearn and fall in love again with that historic, beautiful, redemptive, faithful, demanding, reconciling, all-powerful, restorative, atoning, grace-abounding, soul-quenching, spiritually fulfilling good news of God's love."<sup>50</sup>

#### Sermon 4: The Context of the Mission

The final sermon in the "Missional Metamorphosis" preaching strategy is centered on what it means for the church to bring the gospel to the context of the mission. Every local church must learn what it means to proclaim and embody the gospel in the context that God has placed it. "Located always in particular places, the church inevitably sits between the gospel and a specific cultural context. Therefore the church's leadership seeks to express the gospel in ways that speak to the realities of their sociocultural setting."<sup>51</sup>

In order to do this, a church must first have a right understanding of the cultural setting in which it finds itself. The gospel will be communicated in different ways in Jerusalem than it will in Judea or in the ends of the earth. The goal of the "Context of the Mission" sermon will be to introduce the listeners to the reality that the proclamation and

---

<sup>50</sup> Lyons, *The Next Christians*, 192.

<sup>51</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 189.

incarnation of the gospel is not a cookie cutter approach, but is deeply connected to the direct context that God has placed them.

Before a missionary ever boards an airplane in transit to a foreign context, an integral prerequisite for the mission ahead is to become a student of the culture he or she is entering. In order to share the truth of the gospel in a new context, he or she must have a firm grasp of the language, customs, etiquette, and values of the people he or she will live among. The sociocultural setting that a follower of Jesus enters will always inform the most effective methods of proclamation and incarnation of the gospel. This truth applies not only to global missionaries though; it also applies to every local church. “Located always in particular places, the church inevitably sits between the gospel and a specific cultural context. Therefore a church’s leadership (must) seek to express the gospel in ways that speak to the realities of their sociocultural setting.”<sup>52</sup>

Sadly, the American church in recent decades has demonstrated a proclivity to disregarding the culture around it, and it has instead created its own Christian subculture. This disregard of cultural understanding has caused many churches to appear irrelevant and obnoxious to their communities. Even more discouraging, the church’s lack of contextualization has created added barriers that prevent seekers in their community from experiencing the gospel. “The church is worse off precisely because of Christendom’s failure to evangelize its own context and establish gospel communities that transform the culture.”<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>53</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 14.

For a church to join God on his mission in its community, contextualization cannot be disregarded. The Apostle Paul expounded on this truth in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 when he wrote, “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.” Paul went on to write, “I do all this for the sake of the gospel.” The gospel story shares that God loved the broken world so much that he sent his only son to enter it, to become vulnerable, and then to sacrifice himself in the ultimate act of redemption and restoration. God displayed the ultimate contextualization in Jesus’ incarnation for the world. The sermon will emphasize the importance for Christ followers to understand culture and to contextualize the truth of the gospel to the unique place and time in which they live. “Contextualization attempts to communicate the gospel in word and deed and to establish churches in ways that make sense to people within the cultural context.”<sup>54</sup> The driving motivator behind such thoughtfulness and sensitivity is the love for God and for neighbor that Jesus preached.

The outline summary of the “Context of the Mission” message will introduce the concept of contextualization as it draws its example from the God who displayed the ultimate contextualization in the incarnation. Frost and Hirsch articulate that “God is a missionary- he sent his Son into our world, into our lives, into human history. Incarnation therefore implies some form of sending in order to be able to radically incarnate into the

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 81.

various contexts in which disciples live.”<sup>55</sup> The key passages, examples, and resources provided will help guide listeners to embrace and embody this reality in their lives.

The first key passage to be explored in this sermon is John 1:14. Jesus came to the world as “the word made flesh” in order to translate God’s love in a way humanity could understand it (Jn 1:14). This same model should guide the proclamation and incarnation of the gospel for the church in any culture.

A second passage to explore in this sermon is 1 Corinthians 9:19-27. In this passage, the Apostle Paul explains his discipline and focus on the mission God before him in the race of life. He described his intense contextualization in the reality that he “became like a Jew to win the Jews,” and he “became weak to win the weak” (1 Cor 9:22). Special emphasis in this passage should be given to Paul’s purpose in this contextualization. In verse 23, Paul states, “I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.” Paul makes it very clear that it is demanding and necessary work to contextualize the gospel in each unique setting, but it comes with incredible blessing.

The third key passage to unpack is Philippians 1:27-30, in which Paul urges the church in Philippi “conduct (themselves) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Special attention in this passage should be placed on living lives of integrity in the midst of contextualization. Being faithful to the truth of the gospel and the identity of Jesus should inform all forms of contextualization, so that methods do not wander from the core of the Christian faith. When a church commits to contextualizing the gospel in their

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 39.

culture, Guder argues “the persistent problem is not how to keep the church from withdrawing from the world, but how to keep the world from distracting the church from its purpose of cultivating the people of God.”<sup>56</sup>

The fourth key passage to explore is Acts 10:19-48 where Peter is confronted with the reality that “God does not show favoritism but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34-35). This encounter at Cornelius’ home was a catalyst for the early church to understand that the gospel was all-inclusive for every culture on the earth and that it was not necessary for Gentiles to become Jewish to enter God’s kingdom. Throughout the book of Acts, the church would continue to grapple with this reality and how the gospel was contextualized among the Gentile people.

The final key passage is Acts 17:22-34 which describes Paul’s sermon in Athens at the Areopagus. This passage displays a masterful example of the contextualization of the gospel in a culture that identified itself as pluralistic and polytheistic. In expositing this passage, a special encouragement should be made for listeners to imagine how the gospel of Jesus might be shared in a creative way in today’s pluralistic and pagan culture.

In the “Context of the Mission” sermon, the missional example to be shared describes the life of a Christ-follower named Sally who God used to bring the gospel to her gym. For decades, Sally had served as a paid administrative assistant in her church. She served in a number of diverse ministries, had worked for dozens of pastors, and was faithful to attend almost every function that her church provided. After doing this for almost thirty years, Sally felt unfulfilled and disillusioned with the lack of transformation

---

<sup>56</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 153.

she was experiencing. Ultimately Sally retired from her position at the church discouraged and uncertain about ever serving in ministry again.

In the wake of her departure, Sally's husband encouraged her to begin exercising again as a way to fight depression. Sally agreed and joined a local gym where she began to exercise faithfully five times a week. The physical vitality Sally experienced as her body grew stronger was revitalizing to her. Sally was surprised to also discover that her gym workouts also encouraged a deeper level of spiritual vitality and purpose.

Every day as Sally exercised at the gym, she met different people with whom she would begin conversations. Out of these conversations, relationships were born and trust was developed over time. Sally's workout partners began to confide in her about their relationship struggles, the grief they were experiencing, and the loneliness that many of them felt. In each of these conversations, Sally was able to see how the gospel was the answer for the wounds and longings being expressed. As she patiently listened in love, opportunities began to arise for Sally to share about how Jesus had transformed her in her own struggles and grief. Many of her workout partners began to attend church with Sally and to ask for prayer right on the floor of the gym.

One day, Sally was startled when one of the gym members approached her to ask if she would officiate at his wedding. Sally explained that she was not ordained and she asked why he would approach her for such a need. The man told Sally that she was the person closest to a priest that he had in his life and that she had been the one who pointed him toward God. Sally ended up getting ordained through a website in order to assist this couple by officiating at their wedding ceremony. Other patrons from the gym have approached Sally since to ask for her to officiate at their weddings.

Sally found it very ironic that she feels more alive spiritually and more useful to God's kingdom as a retiree at the gym than she ever felt working at her church. When one takes into consideration the mission of God active in her community, perhaps it is not so ironic after all. Sally was simply attentive to how she could bring the gospel to the cherished people, who Jesus died for, on the elliptical machines beside her.

The application step that accompanies this message is an encouragement for each participant to engage in a cultural immersion experience during the week. This is an intentional experience where each person will visit a communal setting that he or she is unfamiliar with. Examples of some suggested settings might include a health club, local pub, car show, concert, skate part, community center, or even a gathering of another religion. Parishioners should be encouraged to spend approximately an hour in this setting and to take mental or written notes on what they observe and how the gospel of Jesus might be contextualized to that unique. At their small group during the week, parishioners will have an opportunity to share about their experiences and how it enriches their understanding of contextualization when as it pertains to Jesus' gospel.

A next step resource for deeper study into the topic of the context of the mission is Steve Addison's *Movements That Change the World*, which describes the unique factors that have allowed Christianity to expand and flourish in a number of diverse settings. A second resource that describes patterns of behavior and practice in a missional church contextualizing the gospel is *Treasure in Clay Jars* edited by Lois Y. Barret. Finally, on a much more practical level, Brandon Hatmaker's book *Barefoot Church* shares a guide on how followers of Jesus can contextualize the gospel to the vulnerable around them.

The church's role in the proclamation and incarnation of the gospel must always be translated to the culture that the church finds itself. As Guder states, "The gospel is always conveyed through the medium of culture. It becomes good news to lost and broken humanity as it is incarnated in the world through God's sent people, the church."<sup>57</sup> For this reason, a church's understanding and sensitivity to its surrounding culture is crucial.

In the same way that Jesus embodied the truth of the gospel so humanity could comprehend and accept it, so the local church must embody the good news to its surrounding community in a way that is accessible. The ultimate driving motivator behind such contextualization is love. "We cannot serve and reach people whom we do not love. Love of place and its people is, in fact, the ultimate characteristic of genuine (contextualization)."<sup>58</sup> May each follower of Jesus love his community enough to listen, to study it, and to prayerfully translate the gospel to it.

### **The Target Population and Leadership for Metamorphosis**

The missional metamorphosis of Whittier Area Community Church through the developed preaching strategy is a God-sized undertaking that requires great forethought and evaluation. In order for this suburban congregation of three thousand people to be persuaded to live missionally, the implementation of the strategy and the preparation of the assigned preachers must be well-planned. To this end, the "Missional Metamorphosis" series will first be assessed through an initial preaching conference led

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>58</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, 43.

by me. The target population invited to this pilot preaching conference will be the seven pastors from Whittier Area Community Church who will ultimately be assigned to teach the sermons to the segment of the congregation that they lead.

After the completion of the preaching conference, the preaching strategy will be expanded as the assigned pastors customize the sermons for their respective ministry environments. These environments are comprised of both large and mid-size group gatherings and they range in age from elementary aged children to senior adults. The aim is that every worship gathering at Whittier Area Community Church would experience the preaching strategy developed. My role as the author of the preaching strategy is to coach and encourage each of the assigned pastors for successful implementation and also to step in to preach wherever needs may arise.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLEMENTING THE MISSIONAL PREACHING STRATEGY

The previous chapter describes a missional metamorphosis plan for Whittier Area Community Church using a preaching strategy. This chapter will outline the implementation of that plan at Whittier Area Community Church so its congregants might embrace their true missional identity and develop missional practices in their everyday lives. The implementation process will include a special focus on the timeline of execution, the leadership identification and development, the strategy resources involved, and an assessment plan with results integrated into the next stage of implementation.

Whittier Area Community Church has unsuccessfully endeavored to affect missional change amongst its congregants in recent years. One of the primary reasons those attempts were not fruitful is because a plan for implementation and assessment was not developed in advance. For this reason, the definition of a timeline, leaders, resources required, and an evaluation process are critical to the success of this strategy.

## **Implementation Timeline**

A first step in implementing the preaching strategy to transform Whittier Area Community Church is to develop a timeline for implementation. During the spring of 2018 I will conduct an opening meeting to introduce the recruited teaching pastors to the missional strategy prepared. The goal of the meeting will be to introduce the subject matter of the preaching strategy, the expectations for the roles of the preachers, and the resources that will help the preachers prepare to engage in their role. At this opening meeting, the primary resource given to these leaders will be the workbook titled *Missional Essentials* by Brad Brisco and Lance Ford that will help guide them through the second preparatory phase.

The second phase of preparation will be four weeks of gatherings in the spring of 2018, when I will lead the preachers through the first four lessons of *Missional Essentials*. This section of the material is intended to give the participants an introductory understanding of the mission of God and the Church's participation in it. During these gatherings, the preachers will become familiar with the language, concepts, and impetus behind the missional preaching strategy, and be prepared for the third phase.

The third phase of the preparation process will be a preaching conference in the late spring of 2018. During this phase, I will present the sermon materials to the preachers and preach the actual messages to them. After every sermon is presented, the attending preachers will have the opportunity to ask questions regarding content, to give feedback regarding clarity, and to inquire on how the material can be best customized for their specific audiences.

The fourth phase of the preparation process is the customization period. Throughout the summer of 2018, the assigned preachers of Whittier Area Community Church will have time to personalize the sermon content to fit their personalities, communication styles, and unique audiences. During this phase, I will be available as a resource for the assigned preachers if they become confused or are unclear on any certain aspect of the series. At the end of this phase, in late summer, I will sit down with each of the preachers to review their progress and bring encouragement.

The ultimate phase of the preaching strategy is the delivery of the sermons throughout the various ministries of Whittier Area Community Church. This phase will take place during October of 2018 when the entire church turns its attention toward the calling it has received as a missional outpost. Each preacher will present their messages during this four week period. Accompanying small group discussion guides will be crafted so listeners can discuss what they learned in a more intimate setting, share about their experience engaging in the application step that week, and to develop a personal strategy to live missionally in their everyday lives. At the end of the final phase, I will host a dinner with the participating preachers to evaluate their experience in the process, celebrate what worked well, and to prepare for the next step in Whittier Area Community Church's missional transformation through preaching.

### **Leadership Identification and Development**

Identifying and developing the right leaders to implement this preaching strategy is of the utmost importance. "The work of leaders is change. And all change requires that

leaders actively seek ways to make things better, to grow, innovate, and improve.”<sup>1</sup> Not only does this strategy need leaders who desire to affect missional change in their local church, but it also requires leaders who have gifts in the area of preaching and teaching.

My current role in ministry service is the Senior Pastor of Whittier Area Community Church. In this position, my responsibilities include both the development of preaching direction for the church and the development of other supporting preachers on the pastoral team. The responsibilities of my role as key leader, developer, and evaluator of the preaching strategy toward missional transformation fit naturally into this role.

The identification of the supporting preachers in the strategy include seven pastors from Whittier Area Community Church who have gifts in preaching and whose leadership influence ranges across a diverse ministry spectrum. These leaders include the Pastor of Small Groups, the Pastor of Care and Recovery, the Pastor of High School, the Pastor of Junior High, the Family Pastor, and the Pastor of Local Engagement. As the author of the preaching strategy, I will be responsible to recruit and develop the supporting preachers through the study of *Missional Essentials* by Brad Brisco and Lance Ford, during the pre-conference gatherings in spring of 2018.

At the end of phase three’s preaching conference, there will be a number of additional development resources provided to each of the preachers. They will receive a package that includes all of the books included in the next step resources to be consulted section at the end of each sermon. In addition, each of the preachers will be given the book *Missional Preaching* by Al Tizon which will provide additional examples of

---

<sup>1</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 164.

missional sermons that have been prepared. Finally, I will develop each of the preachers individually through the end-of-summer meeting when their customized sermons will be reviewed, and I will encourage and pray for them.

### **Strategy Resources**

In order to successfully develop a preaching strategy that introduces congregants from Whittier Area Community Church to the Church's true missional identity, there are some significant strategy resources that are necessary. These essential resources include theological research literature, appropriate meeting space outfitted with audio-visual equipment, an accurate budget that outlines the financial needs of the strategy, and finally the sermon content for the message strategy. Although the acquiring of these resources is not anticipated to be a challenge, outlining each of the resources will help assure a successful implementation to the strategy.

The theological resource literature for the strategy includes the materials provided to the assigned preachers in preparation for the preaching strategy. The literary resource provided for the preliminary preparation process is *Missional Essentials* by Brad Brisco and Lance Ford. The literary resources included during the next phase of preparation include Christopher Wright's books *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*, Reggie McNeal's *Get Off Your Donkey, Almost Christian* by Kenda Creasy Dean, *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, *The King Jesus Gospel* by Scot McKnight, *Next Christians* by Gabe Lyons, *Movements That Change the World* by Steve Addison, *Treasure in Clay Jars* edited by Lois Y. Barret, and Brandon Hatmaker's *Barefoot Church*. In addition to these next step literary resources, the final

theological literature resource is *Missional Preaching* by Al Tizon, which will also be given to each of the assigned preachers for the customization phase of the strategy.

A very practical resource necessary for the success of the missional preaching strategy is the appropriate meeting space for the group training meetings and the preaching conference. Both types of gatherings will require a meeting space outfitted with audio-visual equipment, projection ability, and seats and tables where note-taking is manageable. Whittier Area Community has a number of rooms designed for such use, but it will be necessary for me to request facility reservations in advance to assure availability.

The financial resources required for the completion of this transformational preaching strategy also require thoughtful preparation. The approximate cost for the ten literary resources for each assigned preachers is \$155, adding up to a total of \$1,185 for the books purchased for this strategy. In addition to the cost of literary resources, additional financial resources are required to help pay for photocopies, refreshments at the preparatory meetings and preaching conference, and dinner at the final celebration meeting at the end of the implementation strategy. The approximate budget for all financial resources required is estimated to be \$1,500. O will request these funds to be paid by the Whittier Area Community Church's pastoral development budget.

The final resource important to the implementation of this missional preaching strategy is the sermon content I will prepare. This resource includes an overview of the message, a scripted introduction to the sermon, a description of the key passages for each message, an example of missional living in everyday life, a list of next-step resources to

be consulted, and a scripted conclusion to the sermon. The sermon content resources will be provided in both digital and photocopied forms to the assigned preachers.

### **Assessment Plan**

The purpose of this preaching strategy is to introduce congregants from Whittier Area Community Church to the Church's true missional identity in order to develop missional practices in their everyday lives. As key leaders who shepherd a wide array of parishioners in the congregation, the assigned preachers will serve as important evaluators of the preaching strategy. Each assigned preacher will complete an evaluation of the preaching strategy during the preaching conference in the spring of 2018 and at the conclusion of the strategy's execution in October of 2018.

An effective preaching strategy should be evaluated by the clarity of missional concepts, a comprehensive telling of God's overarching biblical story of God's mission, and the simplicity for listeners to apply missional living to their everyday lives. The first mechanism of evaluation will be a qualitative survey completed by the assigned preachers. Surveys can be valuable to glean important information, but "if not carefully focused and interpreted, it can also be a meaningless exercise and a waste of time and energy."<sup>2</sup> At the conclusion of the preaching conference, the assigned preachers will complete a survey answering the following questions:

1. How would you articulate the concept of *missio Dei* and its significance for the church today?
2. Describe your understanding of the concept of "incarnation" for Jesus' church and how that shapes a church's mode of mission.

---

<sup>2</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 217

3. Does the preaching strategy clarify the Biblical story of God’s mission in a clear and comprehensive way? Why or why not?
4. Are there any concepts that are unclear or intimidating for you as you visualize yourself communicating them within the church? If so, what are they?
5. Do you believe that the missional examples shared will be translatable to the specific audiences that you will be communicating to? Why or why not?
6. After studying through *Missional Essentials*, and being introduced to the sermons at the preaching conference, in what ways do you need support from the author during your summer preparation?
7. What next step can you take this week to practice missional living in your life?

After I have assessed the feedback from this initial survey, I will then integrate the feedback into the preaching strategy in order to improve missional clarity, biblical comprehensiveness, and simplicity in application. All shifts to the strategy will be communicated to the assigned preachers through the summer sermon customization period and will be reviewed during the individual meetings with the author at the end of the summer. Kouzes and Posner write, “To get extraordinary things done in organizations, leaders have to enable others to act,” and it is my role as a leader to enable each of the assigned preachers to be well prepared with the tools they need to be successful in this important preaching strategy.<sup>3</sup> This initial survey serves as an aid in that purpose.

At the conclusion of the preaching strategy’s execution in October of 2018, an additional qualitative survey will be completed by the parishioners who engaged in the “Missional Metamorphosis” series. During their final small group gathering of the series, the second survey will be distributed by the small group leaders to evaluate the clarity of missional concepts, an understanding of God’s mission in the overarching biblical story,

---

<sup>3</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 20.

and the simplicity for missional application for the listeners. This second survey will include the following questions:

1. How well do you comprehend the concept of *missio Dei* and its significance for the church today?
2. Do you understand the concept of “incarnation” for Jesus’ church, and how that shapes the church’s mode of mission? If so, share your understanding.
3. In this series, did you hear the Biblical story of God’s mission in a clear and comprehensive way? What passages were the most encouraging to you?
4. What missional concepts were the most challenging for you throughout this series?
5. Did the missional examples shared translate effectively to your life? Which story was most inspiring to you?
6. How did your application of the next steps enhance your understanding of the missional concepts you’ve learned? Have you formed in any new relationships or practices out of those applications? If so, please share.
7. How do you believe Whittier Area Community Church can grow in its faithfulness to the mission of God?
8. How would you measure missional faithfulness at Whittier Area Community Church.

The results from this second survey will again be analyzed and integrated into forthcoming missional preaching strategies in the future. This project is only the beginning of a transformational process that will continue for years to in the life of Whittier Area Community Church.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The genesis of this project was a troubling suspicion that the leaders at Whittier Area Community Church had the courage to face regarding the true value their congregation contributed to their community. In spite of the flurry of ministry activities and the families flocking to this this suburban mega-church, the leaders sensed that God had placed this church in its region to be more than a center of recreational and educational activities. These leaders had a growing awareness that the “the needs of the church and the unchurched are not the primary agenda of leadership. The reign of God in Christ, the social reality of the redeemed community, determines the church’s direction.”<sup>1</sup> As the leaders embraced this awareness, they opened the church to be reoriented in the true identity and purpose that God has for it in his mission.

A conviction that undergirds this project is that missional practices flow from a missional identity. “Organizational renewal is about the discovery of an organization’s true identity and mission. The authority to bring transformation to the church does not rest in the person of the leader or group but in God’s calling.”<sup>2</sup> In order for transformation to take place within the parishioners of Whittier Area Community Church, they first must discover the true nature of Jesus’ church and embrace God’s calling to embody that nature in their everyday life.

This project has sought to implement a strategy that helps facilitate that discovery for parishioners of all ages and stages in corporate worship. “The center of any missional

---

<sup>1</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 204.

<sup>2</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, 82.

community's organized life is its corporate worship. Virtually every theological and confessional tradition represented in North America agrees with this proposition."<sup>3</sup> For this reason, a preaching strategy has been employed to target the transformational process where parishioners are already gathered. Although the theological concepts may be foreign for the worshippers, the mode of delivery will be very familiar. In addition, the preachers and teachers within the church will be more faithfully discharging their roles as they communicate these truths. "God's people desperately need to reclaim their missional identity, and much of the responsibility to secure this identity lies on those who 'rightly divide the word of truth,' that is, those who preach and teach in and for the church."<sup>4</sup>

A second key conviction of this project is that missional transformation begins with God as the primary initiator. The mission of the church flows out of the mission of God himself. "The *missio Dei* carries with it the idea that God has chosen to work primarily through those whom God has redeemed in order to reestablish God's reign on earth."<sup>5</sup> This conviction allows the leaders of Whittier Area Community Church to approach missional transformation both humbly and confidently knowing that God is the primary architect and enabler of his mission in the world. As Guder explains, "The announcement of God's reign nowhere includes an invitation to go out and build it, nor to extend it. These are not New Testament ways of speaking about the reign of God. The words most often used evoke quite a different spirit and therefore, a very different

---

<sup>3</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 241.

<sup>4</sup> Tizon, *Missional Preaching*, xvii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

missional identity and engagement. The New Testament employs the words receive and enter.”<sup>6</sup> This proper biblical understanding of God’s kingdom and mission encourages the leaders of Whittier Area Community Church to develop a humble and dependent posture toward God.

A third conviction of this project is that the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church is not measured solely by the transmission of information, but by the transformation of life-style. A church that is faithful to follow Jesus on his mission will begin to reprioritize how they use their time, their resources, and their energy. Such a church will embrace its responsibility to incarnate the reign of God in their lives, just as Jesus did. As Guder explains, “missional communities are called to represent the compassion, justice, and peace of the reign of God. The distinctive characteristic of such communities is that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains them. Their identity (who they are), their character (how they are), their motivation (why they are), and their vocation (what they do) are theological, and thus missional.”<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the missional examples shared in the preaching strategy have aimed to be simple and applicable for Christ followers at every stage in their spiritual journey.

A fourth conviction of this project is that missional transformation in the assigned preachers of the strategy must precede missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church. The project timeline and strategy allows each of the preachers to experience a period of learning and renewal in a small group experience, personal

---

<sup>6</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 93.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

study time, a preaching conference, and one-on-one mentoring. This is all necessary to prepare them to communicate the preaching strategy. “Developing leaders is primarily a relational process, centered on the individual, not the system. The most effective starting point is the person, not the program.”<sup>8</sup> The preparatory path of this project has sought to develop each of the preachers relationally and to facilitate a renewal process in them.

In the preparation of this project, one of the fundamental insights I gleaned about a church’s missional transformation is that the transformation process is never complete. The project marks the beginning of a life-long process that will shape future development of the missional transformation of Whittier Area Community Church for decades to come. This process is much more expansive than pastors preaching from a pulpit. It is all of God’s people choosing to reorder their lives so they can translate the gospel right where they live. “The call to live an incarnational life, to serve as Christ did, and to lead others into the risky vocation of following *missio Dei*, is not a simple or easy task. It is a life-long calling to service sacrifice, selflessness, and effort.”<sup>9</sup> The ongoing challenge of Whittier Area Community Church’s leader is to set up structures that consistently cast this vision, create accountability in this endeavor, and celebrate the ways that lives are impacted by the gospel.

After the completion of this preaching strategy, one of the next steps in Whittier Area Community Church’s missional transformation will be to redefine its markers for success. “When the visible church is primarily concerned with its image, its growth, its

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert E. Logan and Tara Miller, *From Followers to Leaders* (St. Charles: Church Smart Resources, 2007), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Frost, *The Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 21.

success, and its security, then it is ripe for conversion to the reign of Christ, who lays bare and sets aside all these idols.”<sup>10</sup> Missional transformation changes the scorecard of a local church from merely measuring the attendance of parishioners gathered for worship, to evaluating the participation of who scattered to join God’s gospel movement in their communities. “Mission is not primarily concerned with church growth. It is primarily concerned with the reign and rule of the Triune God.”<sup>11</sup>

This redefining of measurements will be an important next step that the leaders of Whittier Area Community Church should invite parishioners to be a part of. At the conclusion of this project, the final surveys will provide initial feedback from many parishioners and they will also indicate who is passionate about this journey of missional transformation. Encouraging a wider representation of the congregation in the establishment of the church’s missional measurements will be beneficial, as it will likely produce a greater level of ownership in the adoption of these measurements and the changes still to come.

In John 20:21, Jesus told his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” As the leaders and parishioners of Whittier Community Church embrace this identity as a missional community, they will participate in God’s great mission, “which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world.”<sup>12</sup> This is what the community around Whittier Area

---

<sup>10</sup> Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 229.

<sup>11</sup> Frost, *The Road to Missional*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Barrett et al., *Treasure in Clay Jars*, x.

Community Church thirsts for and why God has planted this congregation in their region at this unique time.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Addison, Steve. *Movements That Change the World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, Nancy L. Eiesland, William McKinney, Robert L. Schreiter, Scott L. Thumma, and R. Stephen Warner. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Barrett, Lois Y., Darrell L. Guder, Walter C. Hobbs, George R. Hunsberger, Linford L. Stutzman, Jeff Van Kooten, and Dale A. Ziemer. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004.
- Church Leadership. "Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline." (accessed July 7, 2018). <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346&>.
- City of Whittier. "A Short History." (accessed June 14, 2015). <http://www.cityofwhittier.org/about/default.asp>.
- Converge. "The Story of Converge." (accessed June 15, 2018), <https://converge.org/about/history>.
- Cox, Harvey. *The Future of Faith*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Ferguson, Dave, and Alan Hirsch. *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Fitch, David E. *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011.
- Friedman, Edwin H. *A Failure of Nerve*. New York: Church Publishing Inc, 2007.
- Frost, Michael. *The Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.
- Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church*. Peabody, ME: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.

- Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church*. Peabody, ME: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Gordon, Jeenie. *Following God + Loving People: Forty Years at Whittier Area Community Church*. Whittier, CA: Compographics, 1995.
- Grenz, Stanley J., and Olson, Roger E. *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Guder, Darrell, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.
- Joiner, Reggie. *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009.
- Kouzes, James M., and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Logan Robert E., and Miller, Tara. *From Followers to Leaders*. St. Charles, MO: Church Smart Resources, 2007.
- Los Angeles Times. "Upscale Latinos at Home in Whittier." (accessed June 12, 2015). <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/mar/22/local/me-whittier22/2>.
- Lyons, Gabe. *The Next Christians: How a New Generation is Restoring the Faith*. New York: Doubleday Religion, 2010.
- Mathony, Virginia. *Whittier Revisited*. Whittier, CA: Whittier Historical Society, 1995.
- McKnight, Scot. *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Olson, Roger E. *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Pagitt, Doug. *The Church in the Inventive Age*. Minneapolis: Sparkhouse, 2010.
- Pasquarello, Michael. *John Wesley: A Preaching Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010.

- Ramsey, A. Michael. *God, Christ and the World: A Study in Contemporary Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1969. Quoted in *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church*, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.
- Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Roxburgh, Alan J. *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Strong, Douglas M, Sarah Babylon Dorrance, Robert P. McDonald-Walker, Ingrid Y. Wang, and Kevin M. Watson. *Reclaiming the Wesleyan Tradition: John Wesley's Sermons for Today*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007.
- Tizon, Al. *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012.
- Van Gelder, Craig, ed. *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007.
- Van Gelder, Craig, and Dwight J. Zcheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Whittier Area Community Church. "Mission/Core Values." (accessed September 24, 2018). <https://www.wacc.net/mission-statement>.
- Whittier College. "Whittier College History." (accessed June 14, 2015). <http://www.whittier.edu/about/history>.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovery Our Hidden Life in God*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998.
- Wright, Christopher. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.