Missionaries for America: A Strategy for Nurturing Bridge Leaders Serving in Greater Los Angeles

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This doctoral project entitled

MISSIONARIES FOR AMERICA: A STRATEGY FOR NURTURING BRIDGE LEADERS SERVING IN GREATER LOS ANGELES

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
JAMES A. MILLEY
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Missionaries for America: A Strategy for Nurturing Bridge Leaders
Serving in Greater Los Angeles

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Doctor of Ministry
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This project addresses the need, theological foundations, and strategy for nurturing bi-vocational missionaries (Bridge Leaders) to serve with unchurched people in the Greater Los Angeles area. The first section describes the need for bi-vocational missionaries (Bridge Leaders) in Greater Los Angeles. This need is particularly strong because of the diversity and number of people groups outside of existing churches. New missionary sending structures are needed that enable cross-cultural missionaries to start new forms of church in unchurched communities. The economic realities of America and life in Los Angeles require that the predominant pattern of missionary service be bi-vocational. The section also describes four bi-vocational missionaries who will serve as case studies for the remaining chapters.

The second section describes the theological foundations that inform the strategy of nurturing missionary Bridge Leaders to serve among the unchurched. A review of relevant literature identifies five missiological and theological foundations that inform the Bridges strategy. Next, a presentation of the theology of the Church results in a description of the intended outcome for Bridges—Christ-following communities. These Christ-following communities are what Bridge Leaders seek to form through their missionary service. Lastly, this section explores questions about each person of the Trinity as foundational for the overall vision and strategy for missionary ministry outside of existing churches.

The third section presents a strategy for nurturing missionary Bridge Leaders among the unchurched in Greater Los Angeles. This strategy is designed to help Bridges facilitate a multiplying movement that results in one hundred new Christ-following communities in Greater Los Angeles by 2021. The strategy is elucidated through describing the mechanisms designed to identify leaders as well as the structures and a grouping of services designed to cultivate key missionary skills within Bridge Leaders. This section lastly presents a new ministry initiative designed to implement the strategy.

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PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
INTRODUCTION

This introduction defines the target audience, location, and the specific ministry need addressed throughout this final project. This introduction also describes my own sense of call. Generally, this final project establishes a clear understanding of the need, a well-developed theology, and a strategy for nurturing multi-vocational missionaries to serve among unchurched people in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Target Audience and Location

The target audience for this doctoral project is the leadership of La Canada Presbyterian Church, the leadership of the Presbytery of San Fernando, and the leadership, supporters, and potential supporters of Bridges, also legally known as The Network of Community Entrepreneurs, within the Greater Los Angeles area. Bridges is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation formed on March 10, 2010 in the State of California. La Canada Presbyterian Church in La Canada, California is the organizational parent congregation of Bridges, providing support for the staffing and funding for its initial launch. The organization maintains a post office box in La Canada, and the first Bridges Support Group for leaders began at the nearby Crescenta-Canada YMCA. The business office hired by Bridges to manage the finances is located in Pasadena, California. Glendale Presbyterian Church donates an administrative office for Bridges in Glendale, California. Bridge Leaders mostly work from home. Truly, Bridges operates in the cloud, using Internet-based software to coordinate people and programs. At the same time, most of the Bridge Leaders, their ministries, and the supporting denominational sources fall within Greater Los Angeles.
Other important audiences in the Greater Los Angeles area for Bridges are the leaders of the various Presbyterian denominations and congregations and the members of the Presbytery of San Fernando of the Presbyterian Church USA (hereafter, PCUSA). Approximately half of the leaders supported through Bridges come from Presbyterian congregations of the PCUSA. Bridges is seeking funding from a number of these PCUSA congregations in the Greater Los Angeles area as well as new Bridge Leaders from these congregations. The Presbytery of San Fernando is investing between $90,000 and $120,000 per year in training Bridge Leaders. Another Presbyterian denomination of import is The Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians, which is a new denomination to which some PCUSA congregations are migrating as they leave the PCUSA. Other leaders supported by Bridges come from the American Baptists, the Nazarenes, Assembly of God, and other various independent congregations. Still, this final project primarily addresses the leaders of the PCUSA within the Greater Los Angeles area and specifically the Presbytery of San Fernando and La Canada Presbyterian Church.

The Greater Los Angeles area encompasses five counties including Ventura County in the west, San Bernardino County and Riverside County in the east, and Los Angeles County and Orange County in the center. Los Angeles County is the cultural center of this area. Los Angeles County extends from Lancaster in the north to Long Beach in the south and from Malibu in the west to Diamond Bar in the east. Los Angeles County, as of the July 1, 2013 census, had an estimated population of 10,017,068 people.
living within its boundaries.¹ A 2014 estimate of the total population of Greater Los Angeles was over 18 million people.²

**Specific Ministry Need**

The need is for a new type of leader to be recognized, valued, and nurtured within the PCUSA in the Greater Los Angeles area. This final project focuses on this type of leader, which is exemplified by Linda Pearson, a lay leader from La Canada Presbyterian Church. Her pattern and experience in ministry carries a number of characteristics found in the life of Hugh Halter as described in his book, *Bivo.*³ Linda and her husband Dave own a local restaurant, with one of them physically at the restaurant from about 5:00 am to 9:00 pm each day. Despite Linda working six to eight hours per day, she managed to organize and implement several initiatives to people outside the existing church culture. For example, she handed out water bottles at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California where people regularly exercise. She used the water bottles as a conversation starter. She also organized a Christmas gift-wrapping ministry in the parking lot outside a CVS pharmacy. She and her volunteers accepted no payment, saying only that the gift wrapping was free because God’s love is free and cannot be bought. Again, it was a conversation starter. Most effectively, she began an “In His Grip” group at the local country club, offering golf tips that related to scriptural themes and truths about God. As

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the club golf champion, she attracted many people, and her group developed into a regular Sunday morning worship group at the country club.4

Linda managed to lead this growing ministry despite having no formal theological or ministry training. While the pastoral staff praised her efforts and encouraged her to continue, the pastoral staff did not provide practical helps for her as a leader. This may have been because her ministry did not directly advance the congregational goals of increasing worship attendance and increasing funding for the congregational budget. For example, at the country club, the pastoral staff did not seek to help her expand her reach to more unchurched people. The pastoral staff also did not help her strategizing how her ministry might be multiplied to other country clubs throughout the Greater Los Angeles area to reach even more unchurched people. Rather than having funding for her ministry in the congregational budget like other ministry areas, Linda was given only a designated line item number to track her income and expenses. Only one congregational member would give money to her designated line item. Linda had to carry out her ministries without church staff support, without budgeted funds, and without any form of coaching, training, nor support group. After a few years, all these outreach ministries ended when her husband became ill and needed her attention and care.5 Linda is an example of an ordinary Christian seeking to fulfill both her call to provide for her family and her call to reveal the Kingdom of God to the world, a pattern that Halter calls "the Bivo life."6

5 Ibid., 1.
6 Halter, Bivo, 34.
Importance of This Ministry

This section establishes the fact that the Bridges ministry is critically important because the existing churches in Greater Los Angeles are in decline, becoming less effective each year for fewer people. In *The American Church in Crisis*, David Olson argues, “Only when Christians know the true state of the American church and why foundational changes are transpiring can they then understand how to rebuild and restore the church.” Statistics for geographical areas of which Greater Los Angeles is a part indicate a decline in church attendance, number of churches, and average age of members. Greater Los Angeles is part of the West, a region for which Olson provides information. Olson shows that the Church in the West declined in church attendance by 9.7% from 1990-2005. The national statistics published annually by the PCUSA also show declines. For example, in 2013, the PCUSA closed 224 congregations. Another 38 congregations joined other denominations. Exactly zero congregations opted to join the PCUSA. Active PCUSA members declined by over 89,000 people. While active PCUSA membership remains above 1.7 million, the PCUSA is clearly not moving in the right direction. And the pattern of decline in the PCUSA shows an increasing rate of decline

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7 David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 227. The definition of “existing churches” refers to Olson’s definition of “‘orthodox’ Christian churches. It does not consider non-Christian religions or nonorthodox Christian churches, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Jehovah’s Witnesses; Unitarian Universalist churches; Church of Christ, Scientist; and a few other small groups.” For more details, see “Research Methodology,” The American Church, accessed August 18, 2018, www.theamericanchurch.org/ResearchMethodology.

8 Ibid., 20.

9 Ibid., 21.
year to year. The median age in the PCUSA increased from 58 in 2001 to 61 in 2011. The average age was 83 in 2006.\textsuperscript{10}

According to a 2008 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey, the second largest (and fastest growing) group in California is the religiously unaffiliated, with 21 percent of the population in this category. One third of Californians attend church on a weekly basis, another third occasionally, and another third never attend church at all. In Los Angeles, there are more Muslims than Southern Baptists, and more than 40 percent of all Buddhists in the United States reside in the Los Angeles Metro Area.\textsuperscript{11}

This section also demonstrates that ethnic diversity in the Greater Los Angeles area makes a missionary, cross-cultural methodology necessary. The 12.8 million people living in the Los Angeles/Long Beach/Santa Ana area are incredibly diverse, both ethnically and religiously. Research done by Professor Vyacheslav Ivanov of UCLA estimates there are at least 224 identified languages in Los Angeles County. There are approximately 180 language publications, and ninety-two languages are spoken by students in the Los Angeles Unified School District.\textsuperscript{12} By presenting more information to substantiate the cultural diversity of the Greater Los Angeles area alongside more information to substantiate the declining effectiveness of existing churches in the Greater


Los Angeles area, this section argues that the multi-vocational ministry pattern is contextually necessary for the target audience of this final project.

**My Interest in This Ministry**

The reasons for my interest in this ministry relate to my personal sense of call, my gifting and skill mix, and the prior examples of Roland Allen and Lesslie Newbigin. I was a missionary serving in Ethiopia from 1995 to 2000. I expected to spend the rest of my life in Ethiopia. But in April of 2000, my two-month old daughter contracted double pneumonia and was evacuated to Nairobi, Kenya. Within a few months, I found myself back in America wondering what God had planned for me in America. I began serving at La Canada Presbyterian Church in La Canada, California. It was then that our executive presbyter, Jerry North, asked me to lead our church planting efforts for the Presbytery of San Fernando.

My first step was to study the past efforts of the presbytery. Like Roland Allen, I found the existing churches in the presbytery functioned by different methods than the methods of missionaries on the mission field. First and foremost, as Allen describes it, “We have treated unity as a question of organization.”\(^\text{13}\) Past efforts of the presbytery had aimed at incorporating each new congregation into the organizational whole under one tax ID number. Much effort was put into ensuring that a new church, regardless of ethnic background or cultural context, followed the same rules for church government, financial accounting, and building utilization. The result was a series of relational conflicts and

\[^{13}\text{Roland Allen, Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours? (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 136.}\]
disappointments on the part of both denomination leaders and church planters. I was responsible to lead our future efforts, and I was without a vision, strategy, and theology to proceed effectively.

**Thesis and Overview**

This project presents the need, theological foundations, and strategy for nurturing multi-vocational missionaries (Bridge Leaders) to serve with unchurched people in the Greater Los Angeles area. This final project has three parts. Part One describes the need for multi-vocational missionaries (Bridge Leaders) in Greater Los Angeles. The need emerges not only from demographic changes but also from economic necessity. Part Two describes the theological foundations that inform the strategy for sending and nurturing Bridge Leaders. The theological reflections will lead to strategic actions that are different from those typically advocated by existing Presbyterian churches in America. Part Three describes the resulting strategy for sending and nurturing Bridge Leaders. This section ends with a description of a new ministry initiative for testing the strategy.

Part One describes the need for multi-vocational missionaries (Bridge Leaders) in Greater Los Angeles. The need for missionaries in Greater Los Angeles is particularly strong because of the diversity and number of people groups outside of existing Presbyterian churches. Since the existing Presbyterian churches are mostly unsuccessful at reaching these many diverse people groups, new missionary sending structures are needed that enable cross-cultural missionaries to start new forms of church in unchurched communities. The economic realities of America and life in Los Angeles require that the predominant pattern of missionary service be multi-vocational. The section also describes
a new missionary sending structure in Los Angeles for multi-vocational missionaries called Bridges and four multi-vocational missionaries who will serve as case studies for the remaining chapters.

Part Two describes the theological foundations that inform the strategy of nurturing missionary Bridge Leaders to serve among the unchurched. A review of relevant literature identifies five missiological and theological foundations that inform the Bridges strategy. Next, a presentation of the theology of the Church results in a description of the intended outcome for Bridges—Christ-following communities, which are the aim of Bridge Leaders. Lastly, this section explores questions about each person of the Trinity as foundational for the overall vision and strategy for missionary ministry outside of existing Presbyterian churches.

Part Three presents a strategy for nurturing missionary Bridge Leaders among the unchurched in Greater Los Angeles. This strategy is designed to help Bridges facilitate a multiplying movement that results in one hundred new Christ-following communities in Greater Los Angeles by 2021. The strategy is elucidated through describing the mechanisms designed to identify leaders as well as the structures and a grouping of services designed to cultivate key missionary skills within Bridge Leaders. This section lastly presents a new ministry initiative designed to implement the strategy. The results of the new ministry initiative are presented in the conclusion along with recommendations for future ministry.
CHAPTER 1

OPPORTUNITIES IN GREATER LOS ANGELES

Most people within Presbyterian congregations understand the need for cross-cultural missionaries in other countries. Currently, the need for cross-cultural missionaries within the networks and neighborhoods of Presbyterians in the Greater Los Angeles area is less accepted. For engaging the many peoples outside the existing Presbyterian congregations in the Greater Los Angeles area, this chapter establishes the need for leaders to embrace a pattern of life with multiple income sources as well as the need for the leader to use cross-cultural skills and strategies. ¹ The need for cross-cultural skills and strategies is established through presenting supporting data showing the great diversity of languages, culture, wealth, and demographical shifts within the Greater Los Angeles area. This chapter establishes the need for a multi-vocational income strategy by showing the high cost of living for the Christian leader and the high cost of salaries and buildings for congregations.

¹ The “existing church” again refers to the church as defined by Olson in his book, The American Church in Crisis.
Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity of Greater Los Angeles

The ethnic and cultural diversity of Greater Los Angeles is documented and demonstrated through numerous sources and realities. The American Association of Geographers in 2013 reports:

The largest ethnic group in the county is Hispanics, or Latinos, who make up 48 percent of the total. About 80 percent of Latinos are of Mexican origin, followed by Salvadorans and Guatemalans. The next largest groups are Asians (13 percent) and Blacks (8 percent). Black numbers have decreased since 1990, although the four outlying counties have shown gains as many Blacks sought lower-priced housing in more distant locales. Asian immigration has led to rapid growth over several decades so that now there are over 300,000 each of Filipinos and Chinese, with Koreans and Japanese each numbering over 100,000.2

The Los Angeles Times publishes an Ethnic Diversity Ranking Map using what is called a “diversity index.” The diversity index is the “probability that any two residents, chosen at random, would be of different ethnicities.”3 In this index, if all the residents are of the same ethnic group, the index would return a value of zero. If the residents were of just two ethnic groups of equal numbers, the index would return a value of 0.50. Among the 265 neighborhoods of Los Angeles reported, the diversity index ranges from 0.065 in East Los Angeles to 0.755 in Mid-Wilshire. More than half of the mapped area of Los Angeles is in the “medium” to “high” range of the diversity index. Significant neighborhoods for current Bridge Leaders include Pasadena, Silverlake, North Hills, Los Feliz, Atwater, Granada Hills, Burbank, and Glendale. Pasadena has a diversity index score of 0.706. Silverlake has a diversity index score of 0.676. Atwater Village has a

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diversity index score of 0.645. Glendale has a diversity index score of 0.635. Granada Hills has a diversity index score of 0.620. Los Feliz has a diversity index score of 0.610. North Hills has a diversity index score of 0.604. Burbank has a diversity index score of 0.581. Interestingly, only three communities served by current Bridge Leaders fall below 0.5 in the index: La Canada, Sierra Madre, and Tujunga Canyons.

The linguistic diversity of Greater Los Angeles is documented and demonstrated through numerous sources and realities. A study by WalletHub in 2016 ranked Los Angeles seventh in language diversity for all the large cities in America.5 LA Curbed published an article in 2013 that reports that more than half of Los Angeles speaks a language other than English at home:

Any trip to a public place is a reminder that Los Angeles is a linguistically diverse town, but new data from the US Census reveals just how diverse: in the LA metro area, at least 185 languages are spoken at home, according to the Census's just-released language data from the American Community Survey 2009-2013. That's narrowly second only to New York, which has at least 192 (but a far larger population). Non-English languages are so common, actually, that 54 percent of people in the LA metro area who are over five years old don't speak English at home. (That doesn't necessarily mean that they don't also speak English.) That's compared to only 38 percent in New York.6

This linguistic diversity is not simply a matter of major languages like Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, and Armenian. LA Curbed states, “Welsh, Yiddish, Navajo, and Icelandic were far less commonly spoken at home, but were also represented. The Census also calls out Indonesian as one of the least common languages, with 12,750 speakers, although that's

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4 American Association of Geographers, “Ethnic Change and Enclaves in Los Angeles.”


not the tiniest by far. There are 35 Kazakh speakers in LA, 120 Catalonian speakers, and 20 people who speak Apache.”

Another factor contributing to the need for cross-cultural skills in the Greater Los Angeles area is the lack of English proficiency among some groups. Some would argue that English is spoken by most everyone, making cross-cultural linguistic translation and specific language approaches unnecessary. In fact, L. A. Speaks reports,

Over 2.5 million Los Angeles County residents are limited English proficient. Latino and Asian American communities faced the greatest challenges, with 48% and 43% respectively experiencing some difficulty communicating in English. SPA 3 in the San Gabriel Valley is home to the largest number of LEP persons, while SPA 4 in metro Los Angeles has the highest rate of limited-English proficiency among SPAs.

*L. A. Speaks* also found, “Nearly one in three residents, or nearly 3.5 million persons, were born outside the United States and a majority of Los Angeles County residents speak a language other than English at home.” The great diversity of languages spoken within Greater Los Angeles makes a cross-cultural, missiological approach necessary for Christian leaders seeking to help unchurched people follow Jesus.

**Demographic Change and Immigration**

This section demonstrates that multi-vocational missionaries are also needed in Greater Los Angeles because the various groups of ethnic and linguistically diverse

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7 Ibid.

people are constantly moving between neighborhoods, while at the same time new groups arrive. For example, the following information provides one example showing that the suburbs of Greater Los Angeles that were once majority white have become “decidedly nonwhite.” In *The Changs Next Door to The Diazes: Remapping Race in Suburban California*, Wendy Cheng examines the West San Gabriel Valley, which mostly consists of the cities of San Gabriel, Alhambra, Monterey Park, and Rosemead. She states, “This subregion’s distinct features have been shaped by processes including differentially racialized suburbanization and global economic restructuring—forces that have restructured the landscape and created a unique Asian American and Latina/o characterized by shared residential spaces and relative class parity.” In this particular suburban area, about 60 percent of residents are Asian American and more than 30 percent are Latino. Of the Asian group, Chinese and Taiwanese make up about two thirds of the group. Mexican Americans make up four fifths of the Latina/o group. This is just one example of a suburban area of Los Angeles that has grown much more non-white and racially diverse.

Immigration has also changed the demographics of Greater Los Angeles. Census data from 1990, 2000, and 2010 shows changing and increasing diversity of ethnic backgrounds in Los Angeles. The *Los Angeles Almanac* presents three census data reports on race over two decades in Los Angeles. The “White” population has decreased

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10 Ibid., 4.

11 Ibid., 5.
from 56.1% in 1990 to 50.28% in 2010. “Hispanic or Latino” ethnicities increased from 37.81% in 1990 to 47.74% in 2010. “Asian” ethnicities increased from 10.44% in 1990 to 13.72% in 2010. One needs to remember that each major category of race actually represents dozens if not hundreds of peoples who consider their ethnic identity to be different. For example, a “Hispanic” from El Salvador does not necessarily identify him or herself as the same ethnicity as a Hispanic from Mexico. Census categories are defined by the government rather than the people themselves. After listing the data for the major race categories usually measured, the census has the category “Some Other Race.” For Los Angeles, this percentage of the population has remained relatively steady from 20.7% in 1990 to 21.8% in 2010. During these two decades, the population increased from 8.8 million people to 9.8 million people, so percentage differences are amplified by the actual number of people the percentages represent. Diversity is increasing.

Cultural Influence of Greater Los Angeles

This section provides supportive evidence to demonstrate that Los Angeles has a great deal of influence across the United States and around the world, which adds further support to the argument that Los Angeles is a strategic place to begin a movement of nurturing multi-vocational missionaries.

The USC Dornsife Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) provides an abundance of articles, charts, and research results to display the great diversity and activity of religious groups from around the world. The CRCC actively seeks to serve

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these many religious groups through the CRCCC website and programs. Their website welcome page for Southern California celebrates that

Southern California is one of the most diverse regions in the United States. Immigrants from almost every country in the world bring their cultural traditions with them. From strip-mall mosques to megachurches, the religious communities of Greater Los Angeles are strikingly vibrant and varied. Yet, California also leads the trend away from religion. By population, the state has the largest number of religious “nones,” those unaffiliated with a religious institution, in the United States.  

Los Angeles is the gathering place for people from most of the nations of the world. They bring with them their customs, languages, and religions. And they often maintain their networks of influence and business connections in their relatives and friends both in their home country and in other states across America.

The World Cultural Forum says, “Los Angeles is known as the global capital of the entertainment industry but also has developed systems of hyper-local arts production that reflect the diversity of the region.” The Forum concludes,

Los Angeles is a vibrant, diverse and decentralized city whose cultural reputation has expanded beyond the film industry to embrace a range of new cultural institutions. Its cultural policy focuses on collaborations and partnerships that draw strength from government, philanthropists, business and nonprofit organizations, using culture to create new ties across the area. While LA still faces major challenges—from gentrification to the impact of climate change—its cultural life has never been so healthy.

Los Angeles influences many cultures across America and around the world, making it a strategic location for movements like Bridges.

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15 Ibid.
This section establishes that the existing Presbyterian Church in the Greater Los Angeles area is inwardly focused and thus, unprepared to engage cross-culturally the many diverse peoples outside of church culture. The following case study of La Canada Presbyterian Church (hereafter, LCPC) was chosen for several reasons: first, I worked there for ten years; second, LCPC is the parent church of Bridges; and third, LCPC is recognized by the Presbytery of San Fernando as having the largest membership and most economic capacity of the twenty-nine congregations in the presbytery. At LCPC, at the end of meetings, it is customary to “circle up,” hold hands, and pray. This custom was common after each meeting of session. When Bridge Leader Sam Theophylus noticed this custom, he remarked, “It’s the challenge of inward circles.” Sam and his wife Priya came to America from India with a clear sense of call to start a church in America that became a community and movement of “culture shapers.” Sam and Priya wanted to influence all of American culture and peoples. The typical prayer posture of the church, for Sam, typified and symbolized the inward focus of the Church in America. Namely, Christians commonly prayed facing each other rather than facing outward with an eye to the world. Choirs sang weekly for the same faithful few. Pastors sat in offices preparing sermons. Church members volunteered to help at the church, on the church campus. One of the early training conferences of Bridges featured a picture of the group standing outside in a circle holding hands, but facing outward.

This inward focus of LCPC was also reflected in the budget decisions of the session. Most of the annual church operating budget funds are spent within the LCPC community, with a declining percentage being spent to improve the lives of people
outside the LCPC community. In 2009, the congregational operating budget was just over 2.2 million, with 62% for personnel, 23% for administration and property, 4.6% for programs, and 9.7% for mission.\footnote{Gary Dennis, \textit{Annual Report of La Canada Presbyterian Church} (La Canada, CA: 2009). Some members argue that these percentages are misleading because the church gives another 10% away in special offerings and designated giving. However, there are designated giving amounts in all areas of the church budget, with total funds handled by the church each year in excess of 7 million, which further reduces the percentage of actual funds spent on people outside of the church attenders.} Prior to 2012, the church had a tradition of giving away 10% of the budget for local and global missions. Following the 2008 financial crisis in the United States and the increasing pressure from a 22 million-dollar building campaign, the church elders reluctantly began reducing the 10% budget, first by taking 50% of the mission pastor’s salary from the mission budget, and then by simply reducing the mission budget with a promise to restore it “as soon as the way was clear.” To this date, the 10% budget for missions has not been restored. Moreover, the overall pattern of expenditures of the church remains the same, with approximately 70% of the budget used for salaries, 20% used for building maintenance, 6% used for youth, children’s, and adult programs, and just 4% being used for mission outside of the local church.\footnote{Ibid.} Halter takes a prophetic stance: “Jesus, of course, not only removed the need for the Temple, Temple priests, and Temple worship, he warned spiritual leaders to ‘watch out for the leaven of the Pharisee.’ In other words, Jesus would have challenged this consumeristic system that costs a ton but delivers very little of the kingdom.”\footnote{Halter, \textit{Bivo}, 550.}

The inward focus of the majority of the congregations in the Presbytery of San Fernando is illustrated by the disappointing results of two separate attempts by the
presbytery to equip them to engage their surrounding communities in ministry.” New Beginnings” was one such program. This program sent denominational consultants to a congregation to help them go through a reflection and planning process that would end with the congregation having a clear vision for how to minister in their surrounding communities. Only two congregations of the presbytery actually made it through the New Beginnings program. Located in a majority Hispanic neighborhood, the session of Panorama Presbyterian Church rejected the findings of the New Beginnings team. The pastor resigned and the congregation hired a young, Anglo-European pastor. The leadership at Shadow Hills Presbyterian Church did accept the conclusions of the report. However, the congregation was not able to find leadership to implement the ideas of the report. A report on New Beginnings concludes, “We have learned from New Beginnings that there needs to be more follow up between the report that is given with the recommendations. Congregations needs more help knowing how to process and implement the recommendations. There is a shortage of leadership in the congregation.”19

Another effort by the Presbytery of San Fernando involved spending over $100,000 for congregations to go through the “Jeremiah Initiative” sponsored by Parish Associates between 2007 and 2009. Pastor Steve Smith writes,

My recollection is that, in spite of much promo work on the part of the Executive Presbyter Jerry North. . . and other informational/recruiting opportunities at various presbytery functions. . . we were very disappointed in how few churches elected to take part. A big obstacle may have been the anticipated three-year time frame for the process - but I also suspect the thought of re-evaluating ministry at a deep level was perceived as threatening to pastors and congregations.”20

19 James Milley, An Oral History of the Presbytery of San Fernando (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2015), 17.

20 Ibid., 16.
From the above examples, it is evident that the Presbyterian congregations within the Greater Los Angeles area are not effectively engaging in cross-cultural ministry to the changing communities surrounding their church campuses. The largest congregation in the presbytery is reducing the amount of funds spent on cross-cultural ministry. Efforts by the presbytery to help congregations learn how to engage their communities have mostly failed. Very few of the over twenty-nine congregations in the Presbytery of San Fernando chose to participate in the two heavily subsidized programs designed to help them re-discover their calling in their community. Those that did participate either did not finish the process, did not accept the results, or were not able to implement the recommendations.

Unchurched Communities: Communities outside the Church

In order to further justify the need for a multi-vocational service pattern, this section demonstrates the multiplication of communities\textsuperscript{21} outside the Presbyterian church communities in the Greater Los Angeles area. For example, just in the city of La Canada, when LCPC was founded in 1948, the church was one of the few volunteer associations in town and had a building for large gatherings when few others existed. In just a few years, attendance was about one thousand and membership about 1500, which has continued until the present with some fluctuation. Since the founding of the church, however, the YMCA was built and has expanded to three campuses. There are now four

\textsuperscript{21} The third definition of “community” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary refers to “joint ownership or participation.” In this section, the definition of “community” specifically refers to a group of people joined together in economically maintaining a specific property and set of buildings that includes at least one large gathering room where the whole community may gather for special events. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s. v. "community," accessed March 29, 2017. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community.
private high schools that have programs that extend beyond the end of the school day. Students are often on campus until 5 pm and until 9 pm for sporting events. There is a La Canada Community Center with daily programs for all ages. The La Canada Country Club provides large group facilities for community gatherings and private parties. Having many more community centers may not have had an impact on LCPC if the population was growing concurrently. However, being between the foothills on the edge of the Angeles National Forest and the densely populated city of Los Angeles, the foothill towns including La Canada are not building more housing nor expanding in population. Population has hovered around 20,000 since at least 1992, with 19,165 residents in 1992, 20,781 residents in 2004 and 20,662 residents in 2014.\textsuperscript{22} Whereas the church campus served as a community center for most of the town when it was first built, the multiplication of community centers now means that fewer people in town see the need for the church campus, and fewer people in town feel an obligation to contribute financially to the maintenance of the church campus and facilities. Attendance has only remained relatively stable because more people are driving into La Canada from surrounding towns where other Presbyterian churches have dwindled in size or closed. This increase in competition from other community centers has an economic impact on LCPC, despite being in one of the wealthiest communities in America. The church finished a 22 million dollar building campaign in 2011 and currently has debt in the amount of approximately 4 million. Operational budgets have been relatively flat.

since 2004. The staff of six pastors has been reduced to a staff of three pastors. Each year, an increasing amount of money is needed in the last few weeks of the year to cover expenses. In 2015, the amount needed in the last push of the year exceeded $800,000, preserved in a letter by Interim Pastor Gareth Icenogle on the congregation’s website.\textsuperscript{23}

The multiplicity of community centers like those in La Canada can be found throughout Greater Los Angeles. For example, the City of Los Angeles Public Library (CLAPL) is not simply a place to find a book but a place of gathering and community activity. The CLAPL provides over 7,000 programs for adults and over 14,000 programs for children. The network of library buildings throughout Los Angeles is utilized to provide 47 homework centers for children and 81 family place sites. Over 1000 staff coordinate over 1300 volunteers who serve over 77,000 hours per year.\textsuperscript{24} Community Centers established for particular language groups are also abundant, such as the Croatian Community Center the Armenian Cultural Center.\textsuperscript{25} There are also community centers organized by recreation type, as illustrated in the Yelp listing of the “Best 10 Recreation Centers in Los Angeles.” A Google search for “directory of golf courses in Los Angeles Country” displays 40 golf courses, and Golflink’s “comprehensive list” for Los Angeles


displays 19 country courses.26 A person can get married at any one of these cultural centers or country clubs rather than their local church.

In summary, in order to reach peoples who do not attend church, Presbyterians need a new type of leader that will enter into the very many other community centers that now exist near congregational campuses. On the one hand, through their low participation and implementation of programs designed to help them engage their neighborhoods, the congregations within the Presbytery of San Fernando within Greater Los Angeles have shown themselves resistant or unable to embrace the challenge on building relationships and ministries with the many peoples outside their congregations. On the other hand, the number of competitive options to local congregations for people to choose has multiplied. For example, people moving to town can choose from children’s programs at a local congregation or at the local library. Hence, the Presbytery and congregations would benefit by identifying leaders whom are willing to engage the people in the many local community centers outside their congregation.

**Income and Wealth Distribution**

This section will seek to show that the majority of people groups27 in Greater Los Angeles cannot afford full-time, seminary-trained pastors, further demonstrating the need

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27 Joshua Project, "What Is a People Group," accessed March 30, 2017, https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/what_is_a_people_group. This section uses the Joshua Project definition of people group: “(a) all individuals in the group understand each other reasonably well and (b) cultural / relationship barriers aren't so high that the transmission of the Gospel is seriously impeded.”
for multi-vocational missionaries. This section presents the economic realities of poverty, high cost of living, and gang activity in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Examples of various levels of poverty are not hard to uncover in Greater Los Angeles. As an example of extreme poverty, in *L. A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U. S. Labor Movement*, Ruth Milkman recounts,

By the 1980s and 1990s, then subminimum pay levels had become standard practice in the L. A. Garment Industry . . . in some instances, workers simply were not paid at all: after weeks of work with wage payment deferred, their shop would unceremoniously close and the owner would disappear. . . . The most spectacular example of such abusive practices was the slave labor operation discovered in El Monte (just east of Los Angeles) in 1995, where seventy-two Thai garment workers were found sewing clothes for up to eighteen hours a day in a small apartment building enclosed by barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards.  

Because of these types of abuses, efforts to unionize workers and fight abuses have a long history in Los Angeles. However, the percentage of unionized workers in Los Angeles has declined from a high of 38% in May 1949 steadily to 15% in 2004, with just over 1 million unionized workers among nonagricultural wage and salary workers. 

A major component to cost of living in Greater Los Angeles is housing. According to Zillow in 2017, the median price of a home in Los Angeles is $610,100. Los Angeles home values have gone up 8. 8% over the past year and Zillow predicts they will rise 3. 0% within the next year. The median list price per square foot in Los Angeles is $450, which is higher than the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim Metro average of $390. The median price of homes currently listed in Los Angeles is $699,999. The median rent price in Los Angeles is $3,200, which is higher than the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim Metro median of $2,792.

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29 Ibid., 195-96.

30 Ibid.
The range of income and wealth distribution can be seen when comparing the median cost and cost per square foot of housing in different parts of Greater Los Angeles. In La Canada, Zillow reports: “The median home value in 91011 is $1,722,600. 91011 home values have gone up 13.6% over the past year and Zillow predicts they will rise 4.3% within the next year. The median list price per square foot in 91011 is $669, which is lower than the La Canada Flintridge average of $670. The median price of homes currently listed in 91011 is $2,095,000.” Watts, in comparison, has a median home value of $310,600. The median list price per square foot in Watts is just $274, and the median price of homes in Watts is $300,000, much less expensive than those in La Canada-Flintridge. The same three-bedroom, two-bath, 1500-square foot house costs $1,003,500 in La Canada but only 411,000 in Watts. Still, the cost of home ownership in Watts has actually increased more on a percentage basis than in La Canada over the past year. Of course, Watts is a neighborhood famous for the 1965 Watts Riots. Despite the negative reputation, walking the streets of Watts during the day, a person will see single residential homes with small, grass front yards and cars in the drive way.\textsuperscript{31}

Regardless of whether a minister lives in the least expensive or most expensive area of Greater Los Angeles, the cost is particularly high when compared to more average housing markets in the United States. For example, in Phoenix, Arizona, the median home value is $204,500. Home values have gone up 9.5% over the past year. The median list price per square foot in Phoenix is $148. The median list price of homes in

Phoenix is currently $249,900. The rent price in Phoenix is $1,195 per month.\textsuperscript{32} Trying to move from Phoenix to Los Angeles would currently involve moving from a home price of around $204,500 to a home price around $610,100. Rent would increase from around $1,195 to between $2000 and $3000 per month for a similar home. The result is that congregations in the Greater Los Angeles area experience higher fixed cost for salaries for all employees of the church or, alternatively, fail to pay a living wage.

Gangs in the Greater Los Angeles area also may demonstrate income and wealth distribution inequalities and the need for multi-vocational missionaries. Mikke Kendall, living in the city of Chicago, argues that gangs “are an outgrowth of poverty and discrimination.”\textsuperscript{33} She continues,

\begin{quote}
We know that kids who witness violence early in life are more likely to struggle with depression, anxiety, and yes, PTSD. We know that the kids who join gangs often come from unstable homes. . . . They’re happy to lambast poor people of color for living in the only places they can afford in a rapidly gentrifying city where rents have more than tripled in the last 15 years.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

At the same time, The Advancement Project, a public policy organization that published its recommendations in 2007 for reducing gang violence in Los Angeles, claims that the implementation of some of their policies has led to a decrease in gang violence by 2015. The new strategies decreased gang violence by 15 percent, and in 2010 the homicide rate was at its lowest since the 1960s.\textsuperscript{35} Los Angeles now has a Gang

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\textsuperscript{33} Mikke Kendall, as cited in Noah Berlatisky, \textit{Current Controversies: Gangs} (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2015), 36.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 114.
\end{flushright}
Reduction and Youth Development office (hereafter, GRYD) instituted by the mayor.36 This central entity manages gang violence prevention in areas where the violence is concentrated, specifically in twelve “hot zones.” The GRYD helps the local police deal with gangs from a relationship-based, problem-solving approach rather than a suppression approach. The GRYD trained 1,200 gang interventionists and more than four hundred police officers to work together.37 Yet Connie Rice still argues, “The conditions that spawn gang violence remain largely unchanged in L.A.’s most vulnerable communities. Los Angeles cannot rest until every family enjoys the first of all civil rights—safety—and the first of all freedoms—freedom from violence.”38

Manny Flores is a Bridge Leader who grew up in one of the many gangs and eventually joined the Mexican Mafia. He converted during his time in jail, studied theology by correspondence, and helped start a church within the jail. After finishing his twenty years in jail for attempted murder, he found it very difficult to get a paying job and also very difficult to find acceptance and ordination in an existing denomination. He found a non-profit that was willing to hire him despite his background, but he was not able to gain a position of any type in the Presbytery of San Fernando. The liability risk was too great for a Presbytery with 7 million dollars in cash and 100 million dollars or more in property. Manny needed another solution for ministering as a free citizen.39

38 Connie Rice, as cited in Berlatsky, *Current Controversies*, 114.
Economically, the way forward for Christian ministers in the Greater Los Angeles area seems to be multi-vocational, with income coming from a variety of sources rather than simply from the people who are willing to join a particular church and donate funds for the salaries of church employees.

The Failing Business Model of the Existing Church

This section seeks to show the repeated, failed attempts of existing Presbyterian congregations to “bring” or “include” people into their existing congregations. If existing Presbyterian congregations could transform themselves into growing congregations of a diversity of peoples, there would be less justification for multi-vocational missionaries in the Greater Los Angeles area. The Presbytery of San Fernando has a long history of seeking to turn around dying churches into thriving churches. The Presbytery has used a variety of strategies to attempt to “transform” declining congregations into revived and growing congregations. These strategies may be described in four types: 1) strategies that give or re-arrange resources for congregations, 2) denominational programs provided for leaders of congregations, 3) programs led by external consultants with leaders of congregations, and 4) the provision of coaching for pastors and sessions. None of these strategies has proven successful in the long term, even with hundreds of thousands of dollars invested. An excerpt from “An Oral History of The Presbytery of San Fernando” (see Appendix B) presents a sample of the efforts undertaken to transform existing congregations, the cost of each effort, and the results as well as lessons learned.40

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40 Milley, An Oral History.
The strategies that give or re-arrange resources for existing congregations include an effort to merge three declining congregations into one revitalized congregation and the presbytery backing denominationally sponsored loans to congregations. Glen Thorpe led a multi-year effort to merge three declining congregations into one revitalized congregation in a new location and the ability to balance the annual budget. The leaders of the congregation never agreed to merge. There was an earthquake in 1994 and a transition in pastoral leadership that effectively ended the pursuit of consensus. The presbytery also has backed over 3 million in loans to multiple congregations as of 2016. The result was a continuation of the congregation but not a transformation nor even an emergence of re-energized ministry in the community. The presbytery has suffered the loss of $200,000 when one congregation failed to repay their debt.

The denomination program New Beginnings was attempted at two different congregations through a rather minimal $1500 grants for each congregation, though the major portion of the cost was covered by the General Assembly. In this program, denominational consultants physically come to the congregation, gather congregational leaders into a central location, and lead the resulting committee through a three-year reflective program. The sequence of tasks is assessing the congregation in all areas of ministry and function, creating a vision for the future based on the assessment, developing a strategy to engage the future, and finally implementation. Neither congregation arrived at the implementation phase. A combination of transitioning pastors,

41 Ibid., 13.
42 Ibid., 17.
changing elders, and leaders dropping off the committee led to the failure to follow through with implementation.

The presbytery paid over $100,000 for a program led by The Center for Parish Development called The Jeremiah Initiative. Several congregations participated. In this program, a multi-year process similar to that of New Beginnings resulted in a set of recommendations that was presented to the session of each congregation. This was the point at which the process stalled, since the recommendations of the working committee were not adopted by the sessions of the congregations.43

Lastly, the presbytery hired both external and internal consultants to advise both pastors and sessions on discovering a new set of learnings, spiritual practices, lenses, missional postures, visions, and/or methodologies that would lead to transformation of their congregations. Bob Logan was the external consultant and Joanne Oemig was the internal consultant. While the external consultant was more costly than the internal consultant, both interacted with leaders regularly but those interactions did not lead to a change in direction for the congregation towards vibrancy and viability.44

One of the common threads through all these failed approaches is that the effort was initiated by the Presbytery leadership rather than the leadership of a congregation. The Presbytery committee responsible for all four types of strategies determined that future efforts would need to be initiated by congregational leadership. In subsequent

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43 Ibid., 15.

44 Ibid., 14.
grant policy guidelines, the committee required that the congregational leadership initiate any new ministry and carry it forward for one year before applying for grant funding.

The Presbytery of San Fernando has been declining in the measures required by the PCUSA in each annual report to the General Assembly. In 2013, the Presbytery of San Fernando reported 6,602 active members compared to 8,498 active members in 2005, a decline of 22.31%. Average attendance fell from 5,383 in 2005 to 3,585 in 2013, a decline of 33.4%. In 2016, active members declined further to 5237 and average attendance also declined further to 3063. The number of congregations in the Presbytery in 2005 was thirty-one congregations. In 2017, the number of congregations is reduced to twenty-eight congregations. The rate of decline has actually slowed in the last five years compared to the previous eight years, but remains firmly moving in a negative direction.

The failure of the existing model of the church in the Presbytery of San Fernando supports the need to try something different. If the Presbytery was in fact engaging in ministry in increasing numbers to the many diverse groups of people in Greater Los Angeles from a variety of economic backgrounds, a reconsideration of church organizational structure, income sources for church leaders, and cross-cultural approaches would not be necessary.

The Multi-Vocational Pattern

This multi-vocational pattern can take a variety of forms. Some leaders have both a secular job and a church job. Some leaders have a spouse who earns two thirds or more

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of the annual funds needed for their household. Some retired leaders partially rely on retirement income.\textsuperscript{46} Increasingly, leaders are learning to raise funds from friends, family, and committed Christians from a number of existing congregations. Of course, in order to raise funds on an individual basis, missionary leaders need an organization willing to provide accounting and business office services for them and their donors, who desire tax deductible receipts. While recommending the multi-vocational life pattern, one also has to acknowledge the warning from Halter, who himself had a “meltdown” after ten years of “bi-vocational” ministry:

Bi-vocational is workable, but tri-vocational is most likely going to be a train wreck. . . . So in this life, you have to be realistic about your abilities. . . . Incarnational ministry has a heavy relational cost, so in order to have space and relational bandwidth, you should try to protect the two spheres as much as you can. Saying NO is a skill you must learn if you are to survive.\textsuperscript{47}

From the preceding arguments, it becomes clear that any attempt to engage people outside of church culture will require leaders willing to embrace a multi-vocational pattern of life. On the whole, unchurched people who are not genuinely committed to following Jesus and are currently paying into one of the other multiple community organizations in town are probably not prepared to pay for the services of a missionary leader much less another building.\textsuperscript{48} Because church attendance in declining while at the same time both population and the cost of living is increasing, the argument for searching for a new way forward begins to take shape.

\textsuperscript{46} Halter, Bivo, 1080-83.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 1064.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 1075.
CHAPTER 2

OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH BRIDGES

Chapter 2 describes Bridges, the mission agency being used to implement the strategy and a new ministry initiative described in this doctoral project. This chapter recounts the founding story of Bridges and presents four Bridge Leaders who represent four different patterns of cross-cultural ministry. The description of current needs within Bridges provides the basis of the new ministry initiative of this doctoral project.

Bridges: Founding, Vision, and Present Status

One beginning point for the founding of Bridges was through the experience of founder Reverend Jim Milley in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, Rev. Milley observed a growing church planting movement. During his time of living in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (hereafter, EECMY) grew from approximately 1 million members nationwide in 1995 to approximately 2 million members nationwide in 2000.¹ Over those five years, Rev. Milley witnessed the patterns and practices that

accompanied such rapid growth.\(^2\) He also heard firsthand reports of the multiplication of congregations during the violent times of The Derg (1974-1987) and the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1987-1991). In 2007, EECMY claimed almost 2.3 million members and according to the 2016 statistics, it has 8.3 million members.\(^3\)

Rev. Milley observed patterns of congregational life in Ethiopia during rapid church multiplication that influenced the formation of Bridges. Several of these patterns are listed as occurring “in every church planting movement” by David Garrison.\(^4\) For example, in Ethiopia, many congregations functioned without a trained pastor. Elders of the church took turns teaching. Elders controlled the pulpit of a congregation, deciding who would preach on which dates. Pastors of congregations would preach at numerous other congregations over the course of a year. Congregations had “income-producing projects,” such as a field of eucalyptus trees that could be cut and sold every three to four years. People in the congregation also customarily prayed and expounded upon Scripture at numerous other occasions in the normal life pattern of the community, such as at birthday parties, funerals, Sunday afternoon visits, family gatherings, and any other occasion when more than a few people gathered. The time of spiritual engagement may have been only five to ten minutes, but it provided constant practice for lay leaders. Students and office workers often gathered early in the morning to pray out loud together all at the same time. Instituted during the time of communist rule, when threats of


\(^4\) Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 172.
imprisonment, death, or harassment necessitated meeting in small groups in homes, work, and elsewhere, these practices provided the context where lay leadership grew stronger. These are many of the same characteristics listed by Garrison as occurring in “most church planting movements.”

Forced to return to the United States in 2000 due to the illness and special needs of his second child, Rev. Milley incubated the idea and the actual formation of Bridges while serving at La Canada Presbyterian Church from 2002 to 2012 in the Presbytery of San Fernando. Because of Rev. Milley’s experience in Ethiopia, the Executive Presbyter of San Fernando Presbytery Jerry North requested that Rev. Milley lead the efforts of the presbytery to start new churches. Taking a missionary approach, Rev. Milley wanted to learn about past efforts before leading new efforts. He began by interviewing past church planters and oversight committee members. He wrote the following summary report on his findings:

Prior to 2002, a number of efforts were made at starting New Church Developments among immigrant communities. These efforts largely failed in the long run, though three groups actually chartered as Presbyterian Congregations.

The strategy from the Presbytery was to provide a large grant of $150,000 over three years, hire a pastor and begin a Sunday worship service in an immigrant language. Other Congregations were encouraged to add financial support to the New Church Development (NCD).

What emerged were a number of immigrant worship groups that did not end up chartering with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Often, these worship groups preferred to remain classified as “Fellowship Groups” rather than to become official congregations of the Presbytery. As Fellowship Groups, they often came back to the Presbytery and secured extended years of funding to maintain the financial stability of their group.

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5 Ibid., 221.
Occasionally, when the Evangelism and Church Growth Committee (ECG) would refuse to extend funding another year, the Fellowship Group would appeal directly to Presbytery and get a vote to extend funding. The ECG was disappointed with this outcome.

Immigrant-based Fellowship Groups that did not charter through these efforts include: Rock of Salvation Church in Friar Street in Van Nuys and Holgar Christiano in Glendale, and Holy Trinity in Glendale led by Rev. Henrick Shanazarian.

Current congregations that did charter include the Sinai Presbytery Church led by Angel Bacerra in Little Rock, Christian Community Church led by Roberto Colon in Glendale, and Holy Trinity in North Hollywood led by Ara Chakerian. Sinai currently exists but a crisis in leadership integrity disappointed us all. Christian Community Church transferred to San Gabriel Presbytery in an existing church building in Highland Park. Holy Trinity left the denomination.6

Between 2004 and 2008, Rev. Milley surveyed a number of leaders involved in these efforts. From these surveys, Rev. Milley prepared a report for the presbytery that includes the following significant points:

- All participants were genuinely committed to New Church Development (NCD) work and wanted to succeed.
- All participants were working hard with sincere hearts.
- Leaders on the Presbytery level felt frustrated with not having enough time to be properly involved in helping the NCD Leader on a regular basis. Members of the committee had enough time for monthly meetings, but could not spare time from their own ministries and congregations to get more involved.
- NCD Leaders were thankful for the funds but felt unsupported in others ways, such as in prayer, help with visitation, and help for the practical needs of immigrants in their community.
- Often, a problem would occur in the NCD effort in years 2 or 3. Various problems included lack of financial accountability, sexual misconduct, financial solvency, or simply not meeting targets for number of participants. Also common were relationship challenges that were difficult to overcome because of cultural and linguistic differences and cultural competency levels on both sides of the partnerships.

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The NCD Leader, in the end, reported feeling micro-managed by the Presbytery Committee.

These worshipping groups had the capacity to move locations between existing congregational buildings and even between Presbyteries.

Generally, planting churches in the immigrant stream does not result in financially self-sustaining churches. Immigrants who do make it financially move out of the city center and out of the New Church Development effort. The constantly moving immigrant stream does not lend itself to financially stable new churches.

Generally, immigrant congregations tend to be theologically and socially conservative.

Most of the immigrant congregations supported through our ECG committee have either stopped pursuing chartering.\(^7\)

In general, past efforts to start new churches had failed in the Presbytery of San Fernando. With this knowledge, Rev. Milley decided to look for best practices and alternatives from other presbyteries. Rev. Milley traveled to Houston and Atlanta in 2008 to interview NCD leaders, presbytery leaders, influential volunteers, and congregational leaders involved in NCD work. The goal was to learn best practices from others and bring back to the Presbytery of San Fernando a new strategy for New Church Development.

Rev. Milley found that each city had a successful, wealthy businessman who led the efforts of the presbytery to start new churches. In Atlanta, Tom Cousins worked in partnership with the pastor of Peachtree Presbyterian Church to start multiple congregations. Cousins’s donations were funneled through the Presbytery to Greater Atlanta to compensate the church planter, buy land, and construct buildings. However, just before Milley’s visit, Tom Cousins’s wife was in a car accident. Rather than

\(^7\) Ibid.
spending twenty hours per week pushing forward the church planting efforts of the
Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, Tom was spending his time caring for his injured wife.

In Houston, Robert Westheimer was volunteering approximately twenty hours a
week to help the Presbytery of New Covenant move forward in church planting.
Westheimer trained between forty to sixty lay people to support church planters.
Westheimer also provided the funds to the Presbytery of New Covenant to hire a church
planter. In the process of hiring a pastor to be the first church plant organizer, the pastor
nominating committee chose a candidate and then proceeded to have the candidate
complete a church planter’s assessment. The candidate failed this assessment.
Westheimer wanted to look for another candidate, but the Presbytery of New Covenant
hired the pastor despite his failing the assessment. The church plant became a house-
based church. Westheimer decided that he could spend his funds and time in better ways.
The series of events in Houston and Atlanta called into the question the effectiveness of
relying on a single large donor and a single volunteer leader.

Concluding his learnings, Rev. Milley wrote,

A mission structure coming alongside the presbyteries and congregations is part
of the answer to employing the experienced and skilled people that we need on a
more consistent basis. We cannot sustain our effort through only volunteers.
Finding funds for positions at the presbytery and congregational level proves
difficult because of the various needs of their donor bases. Hiring consultants can
help get around this limitation but only if the presbytery leaders trust the
consultants. Finding funds for NCD work (and consultants) through presbyteries
and congregations proves difficult because permission is required to make a
request for funds specifically for NCD work, and the various needs of the donor
base makes that permission-seeking process impractical for successful funds
development for NCD work alone.\footnote{Ibid.}
From this research, Rev. Milley began envisioning a structure that would help our presbytery and lay leaders do cross-cultural ministry that leads to new church development among the many cultures in Greater Los Angeles.

Rev. Milley shared the idea for a new mission structure with Head of Staff Rev. Gary Dennis at LCPC. The congregational leadership at the time was not ready for a conversation about needing to create a new way to do church in America. The existing congregation was doing well. With an annual budget of approximately 2.2 million and total income and expenditures from all sources over 7 million, congregational leadership believed that the church was functioning well and serving the needs of people well. In the midst of this confidence, the congregation embarked on an 8 million dollar building campaign that became, unintentionally, a 22 million dollar building campaign. Still, people gave more financially to the church than ever before and the building project moved forward. Unfortunately, the operating budget remained flat for the period of building from 2005 through 2012. In this time of intense pressure on finances, the conversation about starting a new mission structure would need to move slowly. It was in this context of expansion, initial confidence, and financial pressure that Rev. Milley and Rev. Dennis began conversations with elders about the declining state of the PCUSA on a nationwide basis and the need to find new models of church for the over 200 million people in America who do not attend church regularly.

With the blessing of Rev. Dennis, Rev. Milley coordinated the founding of The Network of Community Entrepreneurs, later to be called Bridges.⁹ Rob Robinson, Bob

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⁹ The name Bridges is officially a dba (“doing business as”) title.
Palermini, and Jim Milley met at the Harambee Family Center in Pasadena, California on March 10, 2010. They filled out the government paperwork to establish a new 501(c)3 Non-profit named The Network of Community Entrepreneurs.

During early 2010, Rev. Milley began gathering potential church planters. By simply publicizing a monthly meeting, between fifteen and thirty people gathered monthly to pray together and discuss the planting of churches. People began to drive longer distances to attend, coming from as far away as Long Beach. There was a pivotal moment at the end of the meeting in December 2010. Standing in a circle just before the closing prayer, Dave Cameron turned to Rev. Milley and asked, “So when are we going to discuss funding for church planters?” That comment began a time of reflection for Rev. Milley, and Rev. Milley discerned that there were two types of people in the room. There were those looking for a full-time salary, and there were those who either did not need a salary or only needed a part-time salary. There were those who had paying jobs and those that did not have paying jobs. The relative wealth of LCPC had been a factor in gathering the group. Some were not just there to pray and discuss. Some were there hoping to obtain a grant or a salary.

As a result of the experience of 2010, from the beginning of January 2011 Rev. Milley only invited people who had paying employment to the gatherings. The location was moved to a room at the local YMCA rather than in the rather large homes of La Canada. In April 2011, Rev. Milley introduced the list of missional skills that have become central to Bridges, though the names for the skills have changed through time: Plant Yourself, Dig for the Gospel, Water the Community, Tend the Growth, Gather the Harvest, and RePlant. These initial skills identified by the group that met together
monthly at the YMCA throughout 2011 has proved to be the founding DNA for Bridge Leaders.

The vision of Bridges has developed through the years since 2010. The original vision was “100 new worshipping communities by 2021.” Rev. Milley believed in the possibility of tens of thousands of new churches based on his observation of a church planting movement in Ethiopia. However, potential investors and the congregation in general did not have the perceptual set to understand such an outlandishly large goal. As it turned out, even “100” was too big a number. Since the congregation had just experienced a 22 million dollar building campaign for one church campus alone, they imagined 100 new congregations that each needed 22 million dollars, for a total cost of 2.2 billion.

Between 2010 and 2012, Bridges incubated under the protection and care of LCPC. Rev. Milley was allowed to spend 10-20% of his time on leading Bridges, which meant that Bridges did not have to absorb the cost of an executive director salary. The business office was outsourced to Missionwell, a for-profit company serving non-profits. A member of the congregation gave Bridges an angel investment gift of $60,000. This allowed Rev. Milley to hire contractors in the areas of philanthropy and operations. Rev. Milley continued to train Bridge Leaders monthly in a Bridges Support Group at the YMCA. In April 2012, Rev. Milley left the staff of LCPC and began serving full-time with Bridges as the executive director. LCPC provided $40,000 in funding per year, and Rev. Milley received permission to raise funds from church members even after leaving the congregational staff.
The present state of Bridges shows considerable growth from the early days of incubation at LCPC that ended in April 2012. Income has grown from an initial $60,924 for the 2011-2012 fiscal year to $286,744 for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Total income for all Bridge Leaders and Bridges grew from $121,525 in the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year to $690,876 in the 2015-2016 Fiscal Year. Bridge Leaders have increased from ten to seventy-eight. Bridge Leaders with financial accounts have increased from one to twenty-five. The number of donors has increased from 26 in 2013 to 314 in 2016. Most importantly for Bridges, the discipleship activity of Bridge Leaders has increased and reached more people outside of church culture. Fifteen Bridge Leaders were meeting regularly and mentoring fifteen people in June 2013. By June 2016, forty-one Bridge Leaders were meeting regularly and mentoring 518 people from outside of church culture. In 2013, fifteen Bridge Leaders had six groups meeting for leadership training. By June 2016, forty-one Bridge Leaders had forty-eight groups meeting for leadership training.

**Multi-Vocational Missionaries: Descriptions of Four Bridge Leaders**

Four examples are given here to provide insight into the definition and role of a Bridge Leader. These individuals or couples are highlighted because they represent a

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12 Ibid.

range of backgrounds and ministries. They reveal the diversity of the Greater Los Angeles area in their own uniqueness and calling.

**Raafat and Amal: Arabic-Speaking Muslims**

Raafat Elgawly and Amal Hannah, a married couple, with their son Rafi immigrated to the United States in 2011. There were two forces pushing them into this unexpected journey. The immediate force was the violence surrounding the overthrow of Mubarak in the Arab Spring. Both Raafat and Amal experienced bombings in their immediate neighborhoods. As Christian leaders, they witnessed the bodies, the blood, and the debris from the bombing of a church near their own home. When Amal and Rafi were making the journey to the United States, Amal had a medical emergency related to post-traumatic stress disorder. To make matters worse, they were detained as suspected terrorists by immigration officials, mistaking her behavior as something other than a health crisis. The other force propelling them to the United States was a sense of call from God. Early in their ministry, they believed that God was calling them to the United States to serve as missionaries. It seemed that circumstances had brought them to the United States, and now that early call helped them to believe that God’s hand was behind all these circumstances despite their suffering.

Raafat and Amal believed that their primary call was to serve Arabic-speaking Muslims in the Greater Los Angeles area. Many encouraged them to serve Arabic-speaking Christians, for which Raafat could receive a salary from a congregation due to the many recent Christian immigrants. But this was not their sense of call. Although Raafat is an ordained Presbyterian pastor, Raafat and Amal did not immediately receive...
assistance nor connect relationally with Presbyterians in the Los Angeles area. Faithful members of Lake Avenue Congregational Church helped them settle in Alhambra, finding housing for the family and a job for Amal at Atherton Retirement Homes. Still, they did not have an organization or church that was willing to provide the framework necessary for them to serve Arabic-speaking Muslims in the Greater Los Angeles area.¹⁴

Finding Bridges was an answer to prayer for Raafat and Amal. Bridges was willing to recognize them as missionaries to the United States. Bridges was able to provide them with tax-exempt status for their ministry. Bridges was able to provide a financial account, accounting services, and mentoring in fund development. Bridges introduced them to two different presbyteries and their leaders. Bridges was able to assist them in writing and obtaining grants from the Presbyterian Church. Because Amal had a full-time job with benefits, they were able to proceed with their ministry with the added funds from donations of financial supporters.

Jon and Beth Teran: Suburbanites

Living in Sierra Madre, California, Jon and Beth Teran realized that they needed to back away from their numerous church commitments and focus more on their relationships with unchurched friends from their children’s elementary school. Jon works as a financial advisor. Beth works as a physical therapist. At Hope Christian Fellowship, they led the women’s ministry, were involved in the children’s ministry, served on the board, led weekly cell groups that multiplied, coached leaders of cell groups, mentored young people, preached, and taught adults. At the same time, they realized that they had

¹⁴ Raafat Elgawly, interview by the author, February 28, 2017, Alhambra, CA.
five years of relationship building with friends in Sierra Madre centered on Sierra Madre Elementary School. Jon and Beth, along with their friends Barrett and Leandra, began spending more time with their unchurched friends. They began inviting their friends to attend church. The friends would attend once or twice but not continue at the church. The two communities were not coming together. As parents who both worked, Jon and Beth became stretched and stressed trying to maintain their commitments at the church while also spending time with friends from the elementary school. They sensed that something needed to change.\(^\text{15}\)

When a new pastor came to the church and after a time of discernment, Jon and Beth Teran were sent out by their congregation Hope Christian Fellowship in 2011 to start a new church through church planting. Hope Christian Fellowship was in San Gabriel, a Chinese cultural area fifteen to twenty minutes from the Teran’s neighborhood in Sierra Madre. Jon had served as an interim pastor. When the new pastor came, the parent congregation allowed them to gather twenty people from the congregation to join them in the endeavor. There was high energy, hope, and expressed commitment. They met five to six times together to define the strategy and mission of the group. Jon and Beth wanted the group to join them in building friendships at the elementary school and seeking to make disciples in Sierra Madre. Some wanted to focus on prayer. Others wanted to start a worship service. The group was not able to come to a consensus on their mission statement and purpose. Almost all the people on the team went back to Hope

\(^{15}\) Beth Teran, interview by the author, March 1, 2017, Sierra Madre, CA.
Christian Fellowship. One couple, Barrett and Leandra Soop, who lived closer to Sierra Madre, remained with Jon and Beth.\textsuperscript{16}

It was at this time that Jon and Beth met Jim Milley during the formative stages of Bridges. They were part of the first group of Bridge Leaders who met at the YMCA. Bridges provided a monthly Bridges Support Group and monthly, personal one-on-one coaching. Beth recalls,

\begin{quote}
To hear validation of what the Holy Spirit was leading us towards meant a lot to us. It was just the right time. We were given permission to think outside the box. We had started to doubt ourselves. A legitimate pastor was telling us to keep doing this. The organization of Bridges helped because it provided some structure and assured us we were not crazy. Bridges gave me support. Bridges gave us words and language for what we were doing. Coaching was awesome. I would have fallen off the wagon without coaching. It is so amazing like that. Bridges came at just an amazing time. Bridges gave us a clearer path.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Susan Fudge: Serving Teenage Mothers in Upland

Susan Fudge was an empty nester in 2008 when she first sensed that God was nudging her to help teenage girls in high school who had become pregnant. It began with just one young lady. Susan’s story was told through the Bridges’ constant contact email distribution to supporters:

Susan Fudge's heart broke. While helping at a food bank, she saw a teenager whom she knew well. Though Susan didn't know what to say, she decided to talk with her. The teen was pregnant, had dropped out of school, and was in need of food. Soon after this conversation, Susan discovered that most pregnant teens don't seek help from existing churches. Susan and a group of others prayed for 5 months for God to show her His next step. She was introduced to a Director of an Infant Center at a local High School. Together they led classes at the Infant Center. The principal of the high school embraced the program. The principal’s support led to the start of an after-school class for pregnant and parenting teens.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
This program provided these teens with life skills, parenting skills, and spiritual support – not to mention diapers and wipes. 18

With no experience in serving pregnant teenagers and no training in theology or nonprofit management, Susan found herself leading a ministry that was growing. The girls received class credit for participating in Susan’s after-school program. Susan brought in community leaders and service providers to help the girls learn skills and navigate the systems that could provide help. Susan got personally involved in their lives, responding to crisis calls involving everything from relationship challenges to abuse and eviction. After the first year resulted in the girls not only learning about caring for their babies but also staying in school and moving towards graduation, the principal referred Susan to a second high school and asked her to continue the program, called Growing Pains, at the first high school. During the second year, the group outgrew the school room and began using a local church facility on Thursday evenings. 19

When Susan met Jim Milley and discovered Bridges, she felt the need to learn missional skills, and she also needed help in managing the ministry. Susan shares,

I'm thankful because Bridges has helped me in administration needs, personal support, training, and coaching skills. Bridges helped Growing Pains in a healthy way to speak into the lives of teen moms and their children. For example, rather than pull out a Bible and start with a Scripture, we learned to start with the girl’s stories. That led to a discussion of “inner beauty.” Using a children’s book about Psalm 139, we talked about how God saw each of them. Together we heard God saying that they are beautifully made. In this way, Bridges helped give leaders and volunteers missional language to speak into the lives of the young women. God knew what we needed to take the next steps. 20

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18 Catheryn Hubisz, email to Bridges Constant Contact Group, September 1, 2015.

19 Susan Fudge, interview by the author, March 4, 2017, Upland, CA.

20 Ibid.
Currently, Growing Pains has three groups, one meeting at a church in Upland, California, one meeting at a high school in Ontario, California, and a third meeting in a high school in Montclair, California. Susan has raised up and trained leaders in all three groups. Growing Pains serves approximately thirty-five to fifty teenage girls with the help of twenty volunteers. They meet weekly for ten weeks twice a year. They also have a Christmas program for all groups together.

Manny Flores: Gang Banger Becomes a Missionary

Manny Flores grew up in Grandview Presbyterian Church in Glendale, California, in the Greater Los Angeles area. His home was in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles. He participated in the church’s youth ministry, mission trips, and a touring musical group. At about age fifteen, Manny entered a gang from Echo Park and began to change his lifestyle to match that of the gang members. At age twenty-four, he was arrested for attempted murder of an opposing gang member. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to twenty years in jail. In jail, he trafficked in drugs as a leader of the gang. After ten years in jail, the prison administration “validated” him as a prison gang member. Therefore, he was transferred to Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit (hereafter, the SHU). In the SHU there is sensory deprivation, single-cell status, and no fraternization.

After four years, during a time when there were numerous health problems in his family, he returned to the faith of his youth. He called out to God. Soon after that, God sent men to correspond with him. He did a personal inventory. Because he officially dropped out of the gang, he was transferred out of the SHU. Together with some other inmates in his new prison situation, Manny started a church in the prison that grew to two
hundred inmates out of the one thousand inmates in that particular yard. Manny studied by correspondence and obtained a certificate in theology from Whitefield Seminary in Florida and completed an Elder Studies program through Thornwell Presbyterian College. He also studied through the Tumi program of World Impact. Manny paroled in 2013 after twenty years in prison. He is looking forward to getting off parole on March 29, 2017.\footnote{Flores interview.}

Once released from prison, Manny tried to re-enter the congregation of his youth and tried to continue serving in ministry. He discovered that the pastor and the most influential family in the church were not comfortable with him in the church, even though they had ministered to Manny while he was in prison. The pastor asked Manny to find another church “where there were more single women.” Manny also had conversations with the executive presbyter of San Fernando Presbytery. The executive presbyter directed Manny to Bridges rather than to a role in one of the many congregations in the presbytery. Manny asked questions about ordination in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and offered to serve in existing congregations. He did want to participate in a congregation and help in some way. Although people provided encouraging words and non-verbals, no one actually gave him an opportunity to minister in a congregation nor invited him to take the first step in ordination. He assumed it was because his theological training was not acceptable and his gang past and prison experience was not acceptable. He says that he was not resentful. Accepting his situation, Manny obtained an employed
position with a non-profit that teaches English as a second language for Spanish-speaking immigrants.²²

Some three years after being released from prison and having accepted that the door was closed for him with existing congregations, Manny finally sought out Bridges as a possible platform for his ministry. After just a few months in Bridges, Manny shared, Bridges has allowed me to focus on ministry and not have to worry about creating an organization. It’s my experience that more ministries fail because leaders focus more on the structure than on people and serving. The coaching is exceptional. The comradery with other Bridge Leaders is great. We are all chipping away at things from the same perspective. Quite literally, a person like me and my background is not a problem in Bridges, though it is a problem in the traditional church. I have a rap sheet that fills a filing cabinet. But it hasn’t deterred what the Lord wanted to do through me. We have the biggest food pantry now in San Fernando Valley. We serve over 240 families—over 700 people. Our Oikos outreach teams build relationships with people in nearby homeless camps. And we are in the process of forming a worshipping group.²³

The above stories of Bridge Leaders demonstrate several dynamics about Bridges. First, leaders are choosing Bridges as an organizational platform for carrying out their ministries. Second, Bridges has been successful at attracting a diversity of leaders, from middle-class suburbanites (Jon and Beth Teran), to Egyptian immigrants (Raafat and Amal), to a Hispanic felon (Manny Flores). Third, all four stories display leaders who desire to stay connected with the congregational structures from which they emerged and at the same time found that they needed Bridges to be more effective in their ministries. Finally, all four stories include quotations in which the leaders express appreciation for Bridges and thus show that they perceive value in the services Bridges provides.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.
Current Needs within Bridges for Future Growth

For future growth to take place, several needs must be met. These include increasing the number of Bridge Leaders, development of services, expansion into new cultures/markets, tools for Bridge Leader development, better resources for support group leader development, tools for discipleship, development of tribe behaviors and norms, and measurable outcomes and measuring instruments. This project considers how to address each of these needs.

Increasing the Number of Bridge Leaders

Bridges needs solutions that enable easy on-boarding of Bridge Leaders if the number of leaders is going to grow exponentially by 2021. Once Rev. Milley began serving full-time with Bridges and no longer worked at La Canada Presbyterian Church, the vision for Bridges could be articulated in a bolder and bigger way without causing challenges for the leadership of the congregation. The vision became to facilitate one thousand Christ-following communities by 2021. Beginning with ten leaders in June 2011, the number of Bridge Leaders grew to sixty-eight leaders by June 2015. In October 2015, a cash crisis occurred and coaching had to be cancelled for some of the sixty-eight leaders who did not have a financial sponsor and could not afford to pay for their own coaching. The number of Bridge Leaders was reduced to sixty-two by June 2016. The number reached seventy-eight by December 2016. To the average person and board member, it did not seem that the organization was on track to have one thousand Bridge Leaders by 2021, having not yet reached one hundred simultaneously receiving services after five years of incorporation (although over one hundred were trained).
While the study of church-planting movements from the past shows that rapid expansion is possible when certain principles and contextual fit are maximized, Rev. Milley realized that there are a number of things that would prevent the rapid expansion of Bridge Leaders and Christ-following communities, even if the leaders were ready and willing. First, most leaders signed the contract to become a Bridge Leader only after several personal meetings with Rev. Milley. It simply is not possible for Rev. Milley to have the number of coffee and lunch appointments currently required to on-board 922 leaders by 2021. Secondly, the length and complicity of the contracts that leaders are asked to sign causes the leaders to have doubts and questions about signing. The paper contracts are too intimidating, especially for leaders with less education and experience with legal documents. Even for the leaders who did sign the contracts, the contracts became out of date after a year. The administrative work by phone and email to collect signed contracts, W9s, ministry summaries, pictures, and other information becomes more burdensome as the number of leaders increases. Furthermore, Bridge Leaders needed to use Dropbox, Google, Donor Perfect, Excel Forms, Zoom, and other software to function in Bridges, and the training process started taking more and more time. Bridges needs solutions that enable easy on-boarding of Bridge Leaders if the number of leaders is going to grow exponentially by 2021.

Development of Services

Working for LCPC, Jim Milley started the first Bridges Support Group in 2012. It was in this group that Rev. Milley was able to listen to the leaders about what type of services might be helpful. They requested one-on-one coaching and periodic training
conferences. They also wanted to understand their own strengths and skills better. This led to the description of Bridges’ services as “ACTS Services,” referring to Assessment, Coaching, Training, and Support, and at the same time referring to the book of Acts, the story of how God started a church planting movement.

Support groups, coaching, and training services were developed first. Coaching services were launched through a contract with Christian Associates International (hereafter, CAI). CAI already had a team of full-time coaches for all church planting leaders in North America. Each member of the team is responsible to raise his or her own financial support, and most of them were having difficulty doing so. By coaching for Bridges, they were able to add to their income and serve with the same skill set and mission that was central to their life passion. Jim Milley hired contractors to help plan and implement an annual training conference in November of each year. After a few years, the one support group at the YMCA became three support groups in three locations led by the leaders in the original support group. The chart in Appendix A displays the growth of ACTS Services from 2013 to 2016.  

Over the years, however, the number of services requested by Bridge Leaders has increased and a number of challenges have emerged. The business office hired to manage Bridge Leader accounts has suffered from the frequent turnover of employees. This has led to mistakes in financial reports. The business office also has not been able to provide online access to financial reports for Bridges and Bridge Leaders. The forms for reimbursement are too complicated and burdensome to fill out, scan, and submit to the

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office. Again, while the systems work, the systems are too difficult to learn to use and they are not accessible on the Bridge Leader’s timetable. The question arises of whether there is a different company that could provide the same services for less cost and with more consistency and professionalism.

Another challenge in providing services relates to the accounting services for communities. Community accounts, unlike an account for a Bridge Leader, requires a three-person advisory body. The community has to have volunteers who are willing to learn the skills and procedures for relating to the business office. The first community had such a hard time with the business office that they migrated to another organization. The second community decided to manage their own accounting, and a third community continues with Bridges. Bridges needs to provide much better training for volunteers from communities if the system is going to work for one thousand communities by 2021.

The third area of challenge involves the services required to help a community incorporate as a non-profit. The business office offered these services, but at too great a price for the communities that have emerged so far from Bridge Leader ministries. Bridges needs to find a less expensive way to provide assistance with creating by-laws, applying for non-profit status with the federal government, incorporating and obtaining a tax ID, approving policies, reserving a name, and board recruitment and training.

Other services that are being requested by Bridge Leaders but have not been developed by Bridges include assistance with marketing strategy, writing, videography, storytelling, HR consulting, live streaming, workers compensation insurance needs, liability insurance needs, medical insurance needs, and referrals to various types of lawyers, including non-profit, family, and immigration.
Expansion into New Cultures/Markets

Bridges has had some limited success with expansion into new cultures and markets. It took some three to five years to obtain a client-contractor relationship with the Presbytery of San Fernando. The presbytery has provided between $20,000 and $120,000 a year for training leaders through Bridges. In 2017, the presbytery has provided $90,000 for training thirty leaders. Two other funded Bridge Leaders come from two additional presbyteries on the West Coast. Of the seventy-eight Bridges leaders, approximately half come from denominations other than Presbyterian.

However, Bridges needs to diversify and expand into new markets. Bridges needs to obtain clients from other presbyteries and other denominations in order to create a stable income for training leaders. Having only one major client with a large contract makes Bridges too dependent on the one relationship.

Tools for Bridge Leader Development

Tools for Bridge Leader development are needed to facilitate growth in the six core skills of discipleship activity. Those skills include the following: 1) join an existing group; 2) learn to speak their language; 3) give and receive in the group; 4) create a safe and holy space/disciple; 5) gather into groups; and 6) send out more leaders to do the same. Tools that currently exist include a four- to six-week study curriculum, a survey assessing these skills, a one-page description of the skills, and a file consisting of two years of group meeting outlines arranged by skill. Leaders are asking for more of these types of tools.
Another challenge is to provide these tools to leaders in a way that they can easily access them and find the tool they need. Bridges’ current system for sharing these tools is a file sharing system called Dropbox. Many leaders have difficulty downloading Dropbox onto their computers. Then the leaders cannot find the tool that they need because the only description is the name of the file folder and the name of the file. A leader has to find the tool he or she needs from among all the tools that are provided. Bridges needs to provide a better user experience in which the leaders can easily find the tools they need.

Another set of tools that needs improvement is the surveys that measure discipleship activity and outcomes. Using a hard copy of the survey and an interviewer, the survey has proven difficult to administer in a way that gets consistently reliable results. Interviewees respond differently to different interviewers. One reason for this is that the questions can be understood and/or explained differently by whomever is conducting the interview. Bridges is pursuing a solution by creating an online portal that will administer the surveys to the Bridge Leaders. This will remove the human administrator from the process, as well as any variation that comes as a result.

Better Support Group Leader Development

Bridges needs better Support Group Leader Development. Currently, there are no one-day, weekend, or online trainings provided for Support Group Leaders. Jim Milley has led a monthly gathering of Support Group Leaders but attendance has not been regular. This means that the Support Group Leaders do not have a common understanding for the expected outcomes for the groups. The Support Group Leaders also do not share a normative group methodology nor a common understanding of the process.
of human change. While these topics have been addressed, the once-a-month format with irregular attendance has not brought about the desired results.

There are some inequities in structure that may contribute to the lack of success in training Support Group Leaders. Bridges currently has four Group Leaders: Jim Milley, Nick Warnes, Jon and Beth Teran, and Norm Gordon. Funding for coaching for Bridge Leaders is provided for the Bridge Leaders in the groups led by Jim Milley and Nick Warnes, but not for the groups led by Jon and Beth Teran and Norm Gordon. Nick Warnes receives payment for his services while the other group leaders do not. Next steps in this area include evaluating how these inequalities impact performance and determine a better approach to compensating and resourcing Support Group Leaders.

Tools for Discipleship

Bridges provides few tools for the initial, basic discipleship of people outside the existing congregations. Part of the reason for this is that Bridges wants each leader to develop his or her own tools that are adapted to the specific context. At the same time, Bridges has a basic and easily repeatable definition of discipleship. To disciple a person means to help him or her learn how to connect with God through talking, listening, Scripture, and community—all in the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, because disciples of Jesus are expected to make disciples, a person is not “discipled” until that person has successfully discipled another person from outside church culture. Of course, there is much more training of people that can occur to move them towards full maturity

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25 While the basic definition of discipleship articulated here does not specify the roles of Jesus the Christ in the foundation, genesis, process, means, aim, or outcomes of discipleship, the roles and importance of Jesus are explored more fully in the sub-section “Ministry” under “Jesus” in Chapter 5. See also sub-section “Human Community” under “Trinity” in Chapter 5.
in Christ, but this initial discipleship as described above enables the person to be connected with God in such a way that God can lead them through the numerous issues that confront Christians on the path of following Jesus.

**Development of Tribe Behaviors and Norms**

Development of “tribe behaviors and norms,”\(^{26}\) so to speak, has been difficult for Bridges. This is in part because there is no central office space, and most leaders are spread out over geographical areas some distance apart. Also, Rev. Milley hired Support Group Facilitators who did not choose to reinforce the same vocabulary and behaviors that he himself was modeling. For example, one leader focused more on helping leaders start ministries rather than on living out the six core discipleship activity skills. This led to a division within the movement that can be observed when Bridge Leaders from his Support Group do not attend the annual training conferences. Another Support Group Facilitator ran the group more like a spiritual and emotional support group, with group sharing and prayer rather than the methodology of case study. That group dissolved and had to be restarted and expanded by Rev. Milley.

**Measurable Outcomes and Measuring Instruments**

Bridges has successfully developed four original instruments for measuring outcomes. Bridges hired a psychologist to lead Bridges through creating the instruments. The measuring instruments have been created, but they are not yet available online where a Bridge Leader could take the survey, immediately get the results, and compare those

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\(^{26}\) Seth Godin, *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us* (New York: Portfolio, 2008), 25.
results across time from year to year. Obtaining an interpretation of the four survey results for one Bridge Leader currently costs $400. This cost is prohibitive.

The psychologist wrote the following summary that describes the development and current status of the instruments:

The areas that you asked me to measure were the following: the discipleship activities of Bridge leaders, the quality of those discipleship activities (including a list of skills you expected these leaders to develop), characteristics that a Christ-following community (including the Bridge leader) would exhibit, and competencies that a Bridge leader would be expected to develop over time. Thus, the following four measures were developed:

1. Discipleship Activity Survey
2. Quality of Discipleship Survey
3. Inventory of Bridge Leader Characteristics that Model Christ-Following Communities
4. Bridge Leader Competency Development Checklist

In my professional opinion this is a valuable series of measures. They are reliable and valid for the purposes for which they were constructed. I believe that these measures represent some of the very first efforts to empirically measure missional discipleship and leadership, and are therefore pioneers in this particular area of assessment. I have no doubt that there will be strong interest from other organizations for these and similar measures in the future.27

**Conclusion**

In the Greater Los Angeles area, especially among the PCUSA congregations in the Presbytery of San Fernando and particularly at LCPC, there is a need for a new type of leader to be recognized, valued, and nurtured. These leaders focus their efforts on engaging people in the many subcultures outside of the culture of their local congregations. These leaders need to be multi-vocational because of the high cost of

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housing and the generally high cost of living in this area. These leaders also need to have the skills related to multi-cultural and cross-cultural ministry because of the great diversity of languages, ethnicities, and the lack of English proficiency among a significant percentage of families in the Greater Los Angeles area.

The need for this new type of leader results from both a crisis and an opportunity in the PCUSA in the Greater Los Angeles area. This new type of leader is particularly needed because of the decline in the number of participants and congregations in The Presbytery of San Fernando. The above discussion reviewed a significant number of failed attempts to reverse the declining attendance numbers and to prevent the closure and selling of church properties. At the same time, seen from the reverse perspective, this is a great opportunity because of the many and diverse people groups and languages outside the culture of the existing congregations in the Presbytery of San Fernando. In light of both the past failed attempts and the recognition of a great opportunity, a new non-profit sending structure called The Network of Community Entrepreneurs (dba Bridges) was imagined and established. Bridges has begun to fulfill the need for recognizing, affirming, and supporting this new type of leader. Bridges has enabled cross-cultural leaders to start outreach ministries and relationships that have resulted in new forms of Christ-following communities in unchurched subcultures. While this ministry is exciting, Bridges needs to address a number of challenges, such as more efficiently measuring results annually and providing more tools for leaders, so that the movement may continue to expand and grow.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE
UNCHURCHED
CHAPTER 3

MISSIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Chapter 3 examines selected literature on five missiological issues that inform the theological foundations of a strategy for engaging unchurched peoples. Most of these selections describe contributions from the fields of sociology and psychology. Special attention is given to theological reflection related to current realities among Presbyterians and unchurched peoples in Greater Los Angeles.

Missiology as the Starting Place of Biblical Studies and Theology

This section discusses various ways of doing theology among the many diverse unchurched peoples outside the existing congregations in the Greater Los Angeles area. Most Bridge Leaders enter into an unchurched community with a Bible on their cell phone and whatever knowledge of Christian tradition percolates in their experience, and they begin learning and/or acting based on what they see and hear. Tradition, scripture, and experience in context are the ingredients for doing theology.¹ Bridge leaders need guidance in how to proceed to develop language for talking about God and the gospel.

They have to do what Hiebert calls “Missional Theology” and they hope to be what he calls a “transcultural mediator” of the gospel. Most helpful for Bridge Leaders, Bevans presents six contextual models of doing theology that have emerged from the many attempts at creating a contextual theology for a particular time, place, and people. While it is tempting to try to argue for one type of contextualization model as better than others, the experiences of Bridge Leaders show that different leaders have found different models helpful in their various contexts. In most cases, Bridges advocates for the use of the Synthetic Model of contextualization. This is a “both-and” approach, valuing both the theological formulations of the existing and past church (so valued and the starting point in the Translation Model) and the contributions of the new culture (so valued and the starting point in the Anthropological Model). The Synthetic Model assumes that every culture and language, though incomplete and ambiguous, is good and capable of revealing God and articulating truth. Therefore, the metaphors, similes, word pictures, jokes, and perspectives of every people group can help us understand God better, since God is present and active among all peoples in every culture.

Most Bridge Leaders come to Bridges with the understanding that they need to do the work of the Translation Model and only through training move to the Synthetical Model of Contextual Theology. For example, Sam and Priya Theophylus from India are moving into Los Feliz and want everyone there to know God through Jesus Christ and believe the gospel. John and Beth Teran and their team want fellow parents in their

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2 Ibid., 29. See also Carson, Christ and Culture, 101.

3 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 88ff.
suburban neighborhood to understand and believe that Jesus died for their sins. These Bridge Leaders, just as each human comes with an existing operational theology, come with an existing understanding of Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology. Assuming their own theology to be accurate and true, they want to look for ways to express these truths that ordinary people can understand. Therefore, while spending some time helping Bridge Leaders learn Scripture and tradition, Bridges spends the most energy, time, and funding helping them learn missionary skills that enable them to draw on the theological sources of present-day group culture, present experience, and present language, which constitute the third necessary ingredient for doing theology.

At the same time, some Bridge Leaders operate primarily in other models described by Bevans. Susan Fudge, for example, provides an example of the Praxis Model of Contextual Theology. When Susan tells her story of her call from God to serve pregnant teenage girls, she begins with God telling her to approach a pregnant teen in a shopping mall when she did not know what to say. Words were not her starting point. Rather, her theologizing began with action. Susan tells stories of physically rescuing teenage females from abusive home situations. The primary definition of love, faith, and hope is in Susan’s actions and relationships with these young women. Quoting Bevans, “We best know God by acting in partnership with God. As Sobrino puts it, ‘to know the truth is to do the truth, to know Jesus is to follow Jesus, to know sin is to take away sin, to know suffering is to free the world from suffering, to know God is to go to God in justice.’”4 Young women in the community articulate their faith by joining in the actions

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that Susan models. They begin to explain their actions through conversations as they act together. In reading Scripture, the community focuses on women in Scripture, particularly women who were abused, oppressed, or caught in sin. “Bad Girls of the Bible” was one study that they completed together, while other Christian literature has not been a good fit for their new community. Susan and her community are practicing the Praxis Model of Contextual Theology.

Following a one-to-one correspondence technique from the Translation Model, Bridge Leader Eleazar begins with orthodox theological statements from English language seminaries and translates them into the language of the prison, street and drug culture, still in English but obviously in a different form of English. For example, the formulation “We have all sinned” may be expressed by “We are all f*****d up.” Seeing the language and culture of drugs, crime, and sex as intrinsically opposed to God, Eleazar does not hesitate to tell recent parolees that they have a choice to make: their old life or a new life, old habits or new habits, their view of themselves or God’s view of them, their gang or God’s Church. Salvation will not come from within, but only from a rescue from the outside and after believing the truth in Scripture about ourselves and God. Eleazar quotes Scripture and provides Bibles as he challenges, confronts, and relentlessly tells them the truth about their situation, trying to convince them to turn their lives over to God. For Eleazar, the Word is not just language about God, but the power of God to change lives. Eleazar may appear insensitive and rude to some Christians, but he believes his friends are facing a life and death decision that requires urgency and repentance, especially from their own basic stories to God’s story.
The ministry of Rev. Bruce Calkins provides an example of the Transcendental Model of Contextual Theology. Bruce periodically and repeatedly visited a prison as a pastor over a multi-year period. One prisoner, after being paroled, sought out Bruce and asked if he and his gay friends could meet with Bruce regularly to explore spiritual questions. Thus began Bruce’s ministry with about eight men, all from the gay community. Bruce takes a pastoral approach. He does not seek to share a particular message or theological propositions with the men. Rather, he identifies and validates their experience, their questions, and their needs. He makes sure the group understands that their group was a place of confidentiality and non-judgment.

All participants are encouraged to share their spiritual journeys as an inspiration to one another rather than as the “right” way to approach God. This relates to the metaphor, “If I cultivate my Garden, another will be inspired to cultivate his or hers.” Thus, it is the telling of their experiences that is the starting point for doing their theology. Their first meetings involved sharing stories about their experience as gay men and their experiences of “coming out” to their family and friends. One man shared that he had grown up in judgment-oriented church where he was told that gay people go to hell. When he finally “came out” to his mother, he said to his mom, “I am gay and am going to hell.” His mom replied, “You are right. You are going to hell.” This experience of pain and rejection was powerful and the thing from which he needed to be saved.

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5 Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 143.

6 Bruce Calkins, interview with the author, Bridges Support Group Meeting, YMCA of the Foothills, October 2012.
After everyone had shared their spiritual journeys over many months, Bruce slowly introduced the practices of praying and reflecting on a passage of Scripture, primarily passages about Jesus and passages that they requested. He let them interpret the passages in their own ways without his input, just providing facilitation, conflict resolution, and an ending summary. Over time, the men began to believe that the good news for them is that God accepts them and loves them as gay men. This was what the first prisoner had experienced from Bruce’s many visits over the years. For this group, the good news is not a set of propositions as much as the individual, personal experience of being accepted by the group and especially by Bruce, who, as an ordained, older man, serves as a powerful representative for God in their personal experience.

This section presented various models of doing contextual theologies from which Bridge Leaders may choose as they seek to build a working theology for a new group of people outside the existing church culture in the Greater Los Angeles area. Because of the great diversity in language and culture, classical theologies may not prove helpful or intelligible to these new groups. Thus, Bridge Leaders need to develop the skills to do contextual theology and to facilitate contextual theologizing within the new communities as they seek to follow Jesus and faithfully engage Scripture and the wider Christian tradition.

**Human Change**

This section presents various models that describe how human change occurs, each one suggesting that various methods of intervention would be more or less effective at facilitating change among humans. Since Bridge Leaders seek to make disciples of
Jesus, Bridge Leaders are in the business of effecting human change. This section provides various models that will inform how Bridge Leaders can structure discipleship methodologies that would lead to desirable outcomes for human change.

**Sociological and Psychological Models of Human Change**

In their book, *Switch*, Chip and Dan Heath provide Bridges with an easily understandable and transferable model for influencing and leading change among people and communities. The main argument is that effective change occurs when a leader appeals to two different and independent systems in the brain, which they memorably name the Rider and the Elephant. A change leader needs to “direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant, and shape the Path.” For example, in helping a person learn how to pray, Bridge Leaders may shape the path by creating a quiet, comfortable room for prayer, making sure that distractions are minimized. They can direct the Rider by providing testimonies about experiences of prayer, a story about how Jesus prayed, or a word-picture of the impact of their prayers. Bridge Leaders could “motivate the Elephant” by appealing to more base motivations, like providing plenty of food at the prayer event and mentioning all the friends who are also coming. For Bridge Leaders, these types of approaches could be used for both discipling individuals and moving towards the twelve characteristics of Christ-following communities.

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8 Ibid., 19.

9 See the discussion the 12 characteristics of Christ-following communities in the subsection “Marks of the Church” under “Church” in Chapter 4.
Heath and Heath help Bridge Leaders understand how much words matter. Some messages stick. Some messages do not stick. The Heaths show how Bridge Leaders can create messages that stick with careful selection of word choice, metaphors, increased source credibility, powerful stories, heightened passion, unexpected timing, straightforward understandable messages, keeping it simple, and making our message tangible. For example, “Would you like to be a disciple?” is probably not understandable to many people, even Christians. “Would you like to meet with me once a week for an hour to practice connecting with God?” might be a clearer invitation. “Prayer Booth Available” may not attract many people, but “Talk to the Manager of All Things: Complaints Registered Here” might attract more people to your prayer booth. Bridge Leaders can use *Made to Stick* as a guide for how to communicate their ideas in ways that result in human change—rather than human inaction.

In the *Influencer*, Kerry Patterson presents a method of strategic planning to produce behavioral change. There are two insights that are particularly helpful for Bridges’ teaching and training methodology. The first is the concept of the “key behavior.” This behavior, if changed, will lead to multiple other changes in behavior that result in a desired outcome. For example, while it may be a difficult task for a seven-year-old child to remember to grab his backpack before getting on the school bus, simply helping him learn to place the backpack by the front door the night before may lead to immediate, significant improvement in behavioral outcomes. Secondly, Patterson explains the importance of the simultaneous application of multiple change strategies.

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Most change strategies fail because they are applied one after the other, each one failing without the simultaneous reinforcement of the others. Patterson provides a helpful chart that guides Bridge Leaders to create comprehensive, multi-pronged change programs that affect both motivation and ability using personal, community, and structural change strategies simultaneously.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Biblical Descriptions of Human Change}

In contrast to sociological and psychological approaches to human change, the biblical stories emphasize the need for God’s intervention into human experience for change to take place. God appears to Abraham multiple times as angelic visitors (Genesis 18:1-15; 22:15). God appears to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6). God passes by Elijah as a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11-13). God appears and speaks to Saul as a bright light (Acts 9:3-5). Childless Abram becomes Abraham, which means the “father of many sons” (Genesis 17:5). The slave Moses becomes the leader Moses (Exodus 4:31). Saul becomes the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:9). It is from the word of the Spirit, this encounter with the Living Christ, through which we are changed. The Apostle Paul writes, “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).\textsuperscript{12}

Dallas Willard, in \textit{Renovation of the Heart}, describes the primarily model of human change embraced by the Bridges methodology. Willard describes what he calls

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 20.

“VIM: Vision, Intention, and Means.” First, Christians must have a vision (V) of what spiritual maturity looks like. They must have a picture of the end result of successful human development. This is provided by God through the life of Jesus portrayed in Scripture and the Spirit leading us to the truth about the Kingdom, both present and future. Believers must intentionally (I) choose to journey towards that vision. Simply living our lives may bring some growth, but Christians need to intentionally choose to engage the “means” (M) of growth. Willard is careful to explain that believers are not able to control God nor their growth. Growing spiritually is not like body building or constructing a building: “There are no formulas—no definitive how-tos—for growth in the inner character of Jesus. . . . But there are many things we can do to place ourselves at the disposal of God.”

To “place ourselves at the disposal of God,” Bridges trains Bridge Leaders to create “safe and sacred” space outside of church campuses and church culture. This safe and sacred space is where we practice things that open our souls, minds, hearts, and bodies to God, inviting God to speak, to appear in visions, to reveal Godself in space and time in ways we can understand. Bridge Leaders create safe and sacred space to wait for an encounter with God. The things we do while waiting in that space—whether prayer, silence, observing nature, or meditation—are all ways of opening one’s inner being and waiting for God, for only God can truly change us in the ways that lead to lasting, Christ-like outcomes.

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13 Ibid., 85.

14 Ibid., 94.
Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission

In thinking about the long-term plan for Bridges, a set of questions come to mind: Is Bridges something extraneous to the Church, perhaps needed now in a time of national decline but not necessary in the long run? Or is Bridges essential to the Church, and structures like it have in fact been needed and necessary since the beginning of the church in Jerusalem? Ralph Winter, in *Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission*, argues that the Church has normally consisted of both “modalities” and “sodalities,” two structures that can be traced throughout history that are interdependent but not one organization.

Bridges is a sodality. Despite Bridges being registered as a religious organization and having the authority to ordain, Bridges currently functions as a mission agency similar to Paul’s apostolic band, a Catholic monastery, a Protestant mission agency from the late twentieth century, or a missionary sending agency like YWAM, Frontier Mission, Campus Crusade for Christ, or Young Life. Sodalities have a high bar for membership. Not everyone is allowed to participate. Bridges has a Board of Directors who do not report to any other church structure nor need permission from any other church structure to exist or take action. Sodalities are mission focused. Sodalities receive funds from people who believe in their mission. Sodalities excel at sending messengers of the good news to new peoples, tribes, nations, and languages. Sodalities excel at trying new methodologies, serving people in need who are not within the structures of sodalities, and accomplishing specific tasks in the world outside the existing sodalities.

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In contrast, denominational headquarters, congregations, and mid-governing bodies are all part of modalities, organizations primarily designed to care for existing Christians. Modalities excel at maintaining traditions, carefully worded “essential” teachings, and caring for people in need within the Christian community. Modalities have a low bar for membership, accepting most anyone in the community who comes and professes faith in Christ. Modalities receive funds from the members of the modality, many of whom are not very advanced in Christian discipleship. After all, these members, at least in western Christendom in the Greater Los Angeles area, do not have to commit to a mission to become a member. They attend, give, and vote.

When missionaries in sodalities burn out or get hurt on the mission field, they go to modalities to recover and receive care. When modality members reach a point in their Christian growth that they respond to God’s call to serve those outside the modality, they often join a sodality. This sometimes happens after unsuccessfully trying to influence their modality to give more time, resources, and staff to their cause outside the modality membership.

While this section has presented the distinction between modalities and sodalities in a general sense, it is important to understand the importance and application of this distinction for the Greater Los Angeles area, especially for the La Canada Presbyterian Church and The Presbytery of San Fernando.

The Two Structures in Presbyterian History

In American Presbyterianism, the sodality structure flourished and accomplished much beginning in the late 1800s. During this historical period, in the modality of the
local congregation, only men could be elders. Only men could serve on the sessions of the local congregation. Thus, only men decided how to spend the funds collected by the local congregation. Without challenging the men’s leadership role in the modality, the women, in parallel, developed their own sodality structures for getting things done without needing the approving votes of the men. The women opened their own bank accounts and formed their own associations called Presbyterian Women’s Circles.

Through these all-female sodality structures, the women elected their own leaders and worked to implement the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. It was through these women’s circles that the modern missionary movement was implemented for Presbyterians. The women collected funds, hired missionaries, and sent them out without regard to authorization or non-authorization from the modality leaders. While the General Assembly minutes record affirmation for the women’s accomplishments, the General Assembly minutes also record an admonition for the women to route their funds and activities through the structures of the modality. The women would not comply nor desist...After more years and further success with exponentially increasing annual funds, the subsequent minutes of the following General Assemblies reflect only affirmation.¹⁶

The Two Structures in the San Fernando Presbytery

Another strong sodality movement in Greater Los Angeles was the Mariner Movement, which began at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. These groups gathered together couples in their twenties and thirties after the end of World War 2. The entire

culture of the group was built around the language of the Navy ships that had sailed the Pacific. Captains, bosons, chaplains, “chart the course,” ship’s log, duty roster, and other words all took on new meanings related to building community that appealed to young couples interested in friendship, community service, and a light input of biblical thought, all intended to draw them into a community that eventually drew them into the greater church community.

Like the women’s circles, these groups, eventually known as Voyagers, Seafarers, Clippers, and Anchors, each had their own bank account, dispersed their own benevolences, and appointed their own leaders. They operated alongside existing congregations belonging to the greater modality of the PCUSA. Both the women’s circles and the Mariner’s groups began to decline both as their members aged and as the groups lost control of their own financial accounts.

**Multiplying Movements**

The vision of Bridges is seeing the multiplication of Christ-following communities emerge across Greater Los Angeles with hundreds of thousands of Christ-following disciples who make disciples by 2021. With this goal in mind, it is helpful to determine whether there is any precedent for such a phenomenon in Greater Los Angeles, and whether there is any evidence that Christians can do anything to facilitate the occurrence of such a movement. Many Americans have a more pessimistic view of our current situation. In *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, Rod Dreher argues that Christians in America need to withdraw from society and
wait for a future, more opportune time rather than engage our culture today.\textsuperscript{17} This section seeks to demonstrate that there have been historical, multiplying movements in the Greater Los Angeles area and in other parts of America that led to exponential growth in the number of disciples of Jesus and/or the number of Christian congregations.

**Multiplying Movements in History and Today**

David Garrison wrote *Church Planting Movements* to provide stories and information that demonstrate that church planting movements are happening around the world and have precedence in the United States.\textsuperscript{18} In the section on North America, he describes the church planting movement that started with the Sandy Creek Church in rural North Carolina. Sandy Creek Church was a frontier church in America that multiplied from town to town after its founding in 1755. In 1881, William Cathcart wrote, “There are today probably thousands of churches that arose from the efforts of Shubal Stearns and the churches of Sandy Creek.”\textsuperscript{19} Baptist historian Walter Shurden wrote, “Passion, evangelism, biblicism, local church autonomy, uneducated lay leaders, missionary zeal, rapid multiplication of converts and new churches, fearless advance through persecution—all these were characteristics of the Sandy Creek Tradition.”\textsuperscript{20}

Randy Lovejoy in *God in La La Land* also documents the success of early entrepreneurial church planters in Los Angeles.


\textsuperscript{18} Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 157.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 159.
The Rev. James Fraser asked the Presbyterian Board of Home Mission for funding to support his efforts in Los Angeles. The Presbyterians had given up trying to establish a permanent Presbyterian congregation in the city after numerous failures. When Fraser asked for support, their skepticism remained. They replied to his request saying, "After all our failures we have no faith in Los Angeles. Work it out on your own faith, not ours." Fraser persevered. Eleven years later, First Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles had 2,600 members. The congregation would plant a half-dozen new Presbyterian Churches in Los Angeles, one of which was Immanuel [Presbyterian Church].

In 1888, the Pastor of 1st Presbyterian Church, William Chichester, felt called to reduce his salary and use the money to expand the congregations reach. He took 100 church members with him and started Immanuel Presbyterian Church at Tenth and Pearl Streets, an “a peach orchard” according to the Presbytery of Los Angeles. 35 years later Immanuel moved into a $1,000,000 French Gothic sanctuary on Wilshire Boulevard where it remains today.  

The Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles lasted nine years (1906-1915) and is considered the primarily catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism in the United States. Having begun on the porch of a home under the preaching of African-American William Seymour, the revival moved to a run-down, warehouse-like prior church building on Azusa Street that was just 2,400 square feet. Between 300 and 1500 people daily would crowd in to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through preaching, speaking in tongues, healings, singing, shouting, and altar calls happening through people of all stations of life: men, women, children, rich, poor, white, black, Native American, Asian, and others. This took place before women had the right to vote, and when Jim Crow laws were still strongly operating and lawful. People came from far and wide, skeptics and those full of faith as well as the simply curious, to see firsthand what God was doing at the Azusa Street Revival. Hallmarks of the movement included lay leadership, unpaid

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leadership, part-time leadership, low cost buildings, almost no paid marketing, reliance on prayer, no choirs, lay preaching, lay singing, and acceptance of multi-race, multi-status, multi-gender, multi-denominational peoples.\textsuperscript{23}

Facilitating Multiplying Movements in Greater Los Angeles

Garrison states, “Sandy Creek’s expansion was no accident. Historian William Lumpkin ‘judged that a definite missionary strategy was planned by the leadership.’”\textsuperscript{24}

After reviewing several church planting movements in various parts of the world, Garrison suggests that one such historical list from a movement in China provides a representative list for many church planting movements and could be used by others today. Garrison lists the following principles for facilitating church-planting movements from the leaders who were seeking to reach the Yanyin people in China:

1. Prayer was vital not only for unreached Yanyin people, but also among the new Yanyin believers.
2. Everything that we wanted the people to do, we had to model as well as teach.
3. We learned to emphasize application rather than knowledge, and found that the knowledge always followed.
4. We always tried to include feedback loops with our mass evangelism efforts to ensure follow up of new believers.
5. We tried to make sure that everything we did in the areas of evangelism, church planting, and training could be reproduced by the Yanyin people.
6. We encouraged locally produced hymns and praise songs to spread the faith.
7. We found that our expectations of the new converts were usually met, so we set the mark high for growth and new fruit!
8. We taught the new churches to quickly assimilate new believers into the life and work of the church.


\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 147.
9. We found that multiple leadership and unpaid leadership kept the movement growing while eliminating the gap between clergy and laity.
10. We learned to build accountability for both leaders and church members into the way they do church.
11. We learned that meeting in homes rather than dedicated buildings allowed the movement to stay below the radar of the government and spread rapidly without gaining notice.
12. We learned that the new Yanyin believers must take responsibility for fulfilling the Great Commission.\textsuperscript{25}

Garrison sums up the meaning of his book with this assertion: “You can join God in spreading Church Planting Movements to your community and around the world.”\textsuperscript{26} It does not matter whether someone is “a mission-minded layperson, a pastor, a missionary, or simply a Christian.”\textsuperscript{27} Thus, this section provides support for the conclusion that Bridges can have a legitimate role to play in nurturing leaders who facilitate a church-planting movement in Greater Los Angeles. God has initiated church planting movements and revivals in North America and particularly in Greater Los Angeles in the past. Bridge Leaders can help facilitate church planting movements in Greater Los Angeles today by focusing on implementing some of the principles utilized to facilitate past church planting movements.

**Ministry Roles and Gifts**

The new model of the multi-cultural missionary leader proposed in this doctoral project involves leaders who serve on a part-time basis and have multiple income

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 63-64.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 297.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
sources. This necessarily means that the other members of the local Christ-following community would need to participate in the leadership of the community. Lay leaders would need to exercise their own ministry roles and gifts for the health and effectiveness of the whole congregation. This expectation of lay leadership would need to become normative in Greater Los Angeles. This section considers whether there is a biblical basis for this expectation, as well as whether this expectation is practical in the everyday lives of people in Greater Los Angeles.

Valuing Diverse Ministry Roles in the Church: Ephesians 4

The biblical basis for diverse ministry roles among multiple leaders in the Church begins with the five leadership roles listed in Ephesians 4:1-16, especially verse 11. While North American denominations have emphasized pastors and teachers, the five-fold leadership roles are apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd (pastor), and teacher (these five form the acronym APEST).²⁸ In their book, *The Permanent Revolution*, Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim argue, “the apostle, the prophet, and the evangelist have been edited out of our organizational vocabulary.”²⁹ They assert that the recovery of all five roles operating simultaneously in the congregation is essential for the congregation to be healthy enough to accomplish God’s mission in the world.

In addition, Hirsch and Catchim argue that the five roles are for all believers and not just the select few who are called to train the rest of the saints. They point back to

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²⁹ Ibid., 12.
verse 7 where Paul writes, “To each one of us grace was given, according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” The Greek word *hekasto* literally means “to each and every person.”*30 Thus, they argue, it is the saints who equip the saints. It is not a task only for a few ordained pastors and teachers. All the saints equip all the saints.

Supporting the biblical conclusions of Hirsch and Catchim are a group of Brazilian church planters whom I interviewed as part of a church planting class at Fuller Theological Seminary. These individuals often emphasized the gifts of all the people of God as necessary for successful church planting. Anthony Jose Mosamino, philosophy professor at McKenzie University, gave the most comprehensive overview of the importance of lay leadership and ministry in church planting ministries. After tracing the roots of lay involvement in Brazil and providing ample examples from America, Mosamino shared his own experience of assigning lay people to preach, baptize, and fill other roles usually reserved for clergy:

In the Amazon, when I organized the church, the Indians were assigned leadership in the church and we assigned them to evangelize and disciple. The missionaries left and I was alone in the Amazon with twenty-two congregations that did not have pastors. We assigned leaders and asked them to preach, to baptize—we affirmed them as holy men. It spread so much. It was a wonderful experience. If I sinned, I will answer to the Lord. But it was so wonderful.31

Another Brazilian church planter, Gilvane Nunes Ludgero, shared his approach to lay involvement:

There are people in your congregation; they have that gift. I consider it a sin to have a gift of singing and not have that person involved in church planting. I believe the main thing to foster church growth is the discovery of spiritual gifts and equip people to be effective in using their own gifts. There is a theory of

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*30 Ibid., 21.

*31 Anthony Jose Mosamino, church planter in Brazil, interviewed by Professor Stan Wood, class notes by James Milley, Presbyterian Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 8-12, 2012.
church growth where we think everyone has to do the same thing. This contradicts biblical teaching by Paul of the body with many parts and functions. We are more effective together.\textsuperscript{32}

These two church planters have moved theologically from “God has called me” to “God has called us.” While Ludgero is primarily referencing 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12, Hirsch and Catchim prioritize Ephesians 4 as the most non-contextual and normative presentation of spiritual gifts by the Apostle Paul.\textsuperscript{33} While they argue that the Church “needs all five types of leaders for a vibrant, healthy church to represent the Kingdom of God in the world,”\textsuperscript{34} perhaps even these five categories are reductionistic, possibly excluding a role needed for a particular context at a particular time. Newbigin argues, “A congregation has to be a place where its members are trained, supported, and nourished in the exercise of their parts of the priestly ministry in the world. . . . A Christian congregation must recognize that God gives different gifts to different members of the body.”\textsuperscript{35} These different gifts may go well beyond the five listed in Ephesians 4 or the gifts listed in Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12.

Hiebert’s concept of the “Transcultural Person” may help us imagine these additional gifts beyond those already listed in Scripture.\textsuperscript{36} This “Transcultural Person” concept may also help us understand why lay people can be such effective ministers and

\textsuperscript{32} Gilvane Nunes Ludgero, church planter in Brazil, interviewed by the Professor Stan Wood, class notes by James Milley, Presbyterian Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 8-12, 2012.

\textsuperscript{33} Hirsch and Catchim, \textit{The Permanent Revolution}, 10-11.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 8.


\textsuperscript{36} Hiebert, \textit{The Gospel in Human Contexts}. 
leaders even when they may not fully understand Jesus, have an articulated sense of call, or fit one of the categories as defined by Hirsch and Catchim. Hiebert lists the characteristics that mark the effective intercultural person: “At a minimum, a transcultural person should be able ‘to communicate interpersonally; to adjust to various cultures; to develop interpersonal relationships; to deal with diverse societal systems; to understand another; and to manage psychological (intercultural stress).’”37

This may sound like a formidable list, but many new Christians have the basic pre-requisite of having one foot in an un-churched community and one foot in church community. Consider the skills of a poor slum dweller in Brazil. This slum dweller has learned how to live not only in the slum, but also in the home of a rich person where she serves as a maid. She has also had years of experience mediating conflicts in her neighborhood and in her family, sometimes with those outside the slum. She is likely familiar with stress and how to cope with it. Now she has learned how to understand and move among church people, but she crosses the boundaries of church, wealth, social class, gender, and race. According to Hiebert’s list, with just an elementary encounter with Jesus, it is possible that she is more qualified than most educated church leaders to serve as a transcultural communicator of the gospel of Jesus Christ. She may not seem like nor test as a “gifted” leader when in the context of the established church or the wealthy home, but she may prove to be a very influential leader of people in her slum community. If not discouraged by existing Christians, she may be able to use her cross-

37 Ibid.
cultural skills to articulate the gospel and her beginning theology to her new community using insider language, something an outsider missionary may work at for decades.

Perhaps it is often the new disciple from a non-churched community who is most qualified to be a minister to those outside the church, particularly because of contextual issues. When asked how he develops lay leaders, Brazilian church planter Wilson Guimaraes replied,

This is one of most difficult areas. Good leaders, experienced leaders do not want to leave their established churches. We need to use the resources that we have available. Once you see the potential in a person to be a leader, you start mentoring those people and offer them opportunity for personal development. Take them to trainings. Share personal materials. The most effective strategy is to motivate them through the transformation of lives of the people they are working with. When they see God use them, they are encouraged to lead. Then it is easier to get them more involved. They need to see the results of their efforts.\textsuperscript{38}

Supporting Apostles and Prophets among Presbyterians Since 1970

With PCUSA in Greater Los Angeles in sharp decline numerically, it would seem rational for denominational leaders to seek out members with the gifts as apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Apostles begin new churches in new cultures. Prophets call our attention to the truth about our situation and to our first love for Christ and others. Evangelists are passionate about sharing God’s love and message with others. However, the lack of support for leaders with apostolic, prophetic, and evangelistic gifting among Presbyterians began from the very beginning, with Calvin. He wrote, “These three functions were not established in the church as permanent ones, but only for that time

\textsuperscript{38} Wilson Guimaraes, church planter in Brazil, skype interview by Professor Stan Wood, October 12, 2012.
during which churches were to be erected where none existed before.”\textsuperscript{39} There were times when these roles were needed, Calvin explains, but those times were “extraordinary.” He continues, “Next comes pastors and teachers, whom the church can never go without.”\textsuperscript{40} Based on Calvin’s words, Presbyterians have spent excessive amounts of pages writing rules and an excessive amount of time deciding who can preach and teach and be ordained to do so within the denomination.\textsuperscript{41} There are no similar ordination committees, worship service outlines, recognition structures, pension benefits, medical benefits, manse allowances, decade-long conflicts, annual conferences, or endowments for sabbaticals for apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

With the closing of the Board of Church Erections in the 1970s, support for apostles, prophets and evangelists shifted to the role of each individual Presbytery. Presbyteries differed in their approaches and effectiveness, fund availability, and expertise. The major initiative in the last twenty years has been the 1001 Movement, which began with making small grants available to lay and ordained leaders who would seek to begin a “new worshipping community.”\textsuperscript{42} This movement has slowly gained momentum, overcoming leadership and resource power struggles, and emerging with a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item John Calvin, as quoted in Hirsch and Catchim, \textit{The Permanent Revolution}, 19.
\item Ibid.
\item Presbyterian Church (USA), \textit{The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Book of Order} (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (USA), 2017), selected sections on Ordination.
\item PCUSA focused on “New Church Development,” which gave way to a focus on “Church Planting,” which gave way to a focus on the current “New Worshipping Communities.” All three focus on initiating a worship service as a primary indicator of success. Bridges, with the assumption that most non-churched people are far from waking up on Sunday morning with the desire to give money and sing songs, focuses on making disciples and waiting patiently for disciples to form a worshipping service when they have grown to love God enough to worship. See https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-do/church-growth/.
\end{enumerate}
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slowly maturing approach that goes beyond funding and includes coaching, fund
development mentoring, and other support services for people trying to exercise apostolic
and evangelistic gifts.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined selected literature on five missiological issues. Bevin’s listing of six different forms of contextualization allows Bridge Leaders to identify both their own approach and also the approach of others in engaging people outside their congregational culture. From the Heaths and Patterson, Bridge Leaders can learn to create multiple, simultaneous behavioristic strategies to bring about new behaviors. Bridges holds to Dallas Willard’s teaching that God creates change while certain practices allow for the focused attention, time, space, and repetition in which God works. Ralph Winter’s description of the two structures of the Church throughout history helps Presbyterians and others understand the role of Bridges in a way that is non-threatening. Finally, the review of past multiplying movements in America and especially in the Greater Los Angeles area can be a source of inspiration that the vision of Bridges is not without precedent. These missiological learnings are intended to influence future chapters and sections, both in the doing of theology and in practice.
CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

Some Christian leaders have expressed concerns about the ecclesiology of Bridges. The critique is that the “Christ-following communities” emerging out of Bridges lack adequate connections with and respect for the historical and existing denominational theologies, policies, structures, and traditions, and thus they lack the proper oversight and theological integrity that comes with those connections.¹ The reflections in this chapter seek to demonstrate that Christ-following communities have adequate biblical and theological foundations. This chapter seeks to show that even though the connection to the historical Church may look different from the types of connections currently expected and practiced by existing congregations, Christ-following communities exhibit types of connections and submit to types of oversight that can serve the same end of fostering and supporting theological integrity.

¹ Rev. Matt Colwell, pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church in Pasadena, CA, interview by author, Pasadena, CA, August 2017.
Abram

The theological approach to ecclesiology for Bridges begins with the assumption that the founding of the Church (*ecclesia*)\(^2\) does not begin with Jesus in 30 AD nor with his disciples a few years later, but with the prior activity of God in creating a people for himself through the call of Abram. Even in Old Testament times and as used in the Septuagint, *ecclesia* meant, “those called out to a public place.”\(^3\) It is from the story of God’s calling and shaping of Israel as the people of God that the nature, purpose, and attributes of the *ecclesia* find the grounding of their definition. God began to create a people called by God’s name when he called Abram with his wife Sarai in Genesis 12:1-3:

Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

God’s promise to Abram was not immediately realized, and Abram began to worry that he would die childless and his heir would be Eliezer of Damascus:

But the word of the LORD came to him, ‘This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir. ’ He brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. ’ Then he said to him, So shall your descendants be. ’ And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:4-6).

This passage shows that the people of God were people who believed God’s promise. Abraham is faced with the moment of believing or not believing God’s promise.

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\(^2\) *Ecclesia* is a Greek word which can be studied in extra-canonical literature, Old Testament scriptures, in the Septuagint, and in the New Testament.

that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the nighttime sky of ancient Ur (not what we might see today in a light-polluted metropolis). The “word of the Lord” comes to Abram, and Abram responds with belief as Genesis 15 continues, “And he believed the Lord.” The definition of ecclesia must include a group of people who believe God’s word, God’s promise.

Another important feature of this first call is that the purpose of God from the beginning was that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” To understand this phrase, one must determine whether it means that: a) all the future descendants within Abraham’s bodily seed are blessed alone, or b) all the future spiritual descendants who believe as Abraham has believed in God’s promise are blessed. While scholars have explored a number of possible translations and interpretations of this phrase, the Apostle Paul gives his interpretation: “So, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’ For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed” (Galatians 3:7-9, NRSV, italics added).

Thus, from the beginning, God’s intention in calling Abram and Sarai was not to make just a Jewish “great nation” Israel but a “great nation” that included “all the families of the earth,” or as Paul writes, “all the Gentiles” who come to believe. The people of God are believing and following a promise that includes all the peoples of the earth. God’s intention and promise defines the mission of God. The people of God are a people on the mission of God. Thus, the definition of ecclesia must include a group of people who are on God’s mission.
Israel

The Scriptures depict the fact that God keeps his promise to Abraham, slowly perhaps, but nevertheless faithfully, until a great nation of his descendants (Israel) identifies itself as the people of God on earth, called by God’s name, and called on God’s mission. The Scriptures carefully and repeatedly extend God’s promise to Abraham to each successive generation. For example, here in Genesis 26 the covenant promise is reaffirmed as effective and active for his son Isaac:

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you. Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. So Isaac settled in Gerar.” (Genesis 26:1-6, NRSV)

This call and promise of God to Isaac is carefully tied to the call and promise of God to Abraham. First, explicit reference is made to Abraham and his call. Second, precise wording and imagery echoes the call of Abraham. The promise to Isaac is similarly depicted with the image of descendants “as numerous as the stars in the heavens.” Isaac is also promised land and blessing. Isaac is also promised that “all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring.” Here again, Isaac is promised a role in the larger scope of God’s mission to “all the nations of the earth.”
When the nation of Israel is sent into captivity away from Jerusalem, the reason the prophets give is that they have not been faithful to the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, indeed with all Israel. Isaiah writes,

Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, and whose law they would not obey? So he poured upon him the heat of his anger and the fury of war; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him, but he did not take it to heart (Isaiah 42:24-25).

Israel’s unfaithfulness to the covenant is referenced again in 2 Kings:

In his days King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. The LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Arameans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets. Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, for all that he had committed, and also for the innocent blood that he had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to pardon. (2 Kings 24:1-4)

The covenant ceremony is reenacted by all Israel when Nehemiah brings the returning Israelites back to Jerusalem from captivity. The Priest Ezra begins his prayer:

You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham; and you found his heart faithful before you, and made with him a covenant to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite; and you have fulfilled your promise, for you are righteous. And you saw the distress of our ancestors in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea. (Nehemiah 9:7-8)

Ezra’s prayer—which begins the covenant ceremony of the returning exiles—is addressed to the God “who chose Abram” and “made with him a covenant” to give him land and many descendants, whose cries from Egypt God heard and then took action to rescue. Ezra summarizes the pattern of covenant history between God and Israel:
Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their backs and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. Therefore you gave them into the hands of their enemies, who made them suffer. Then in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hands of their enemies. But after they had rest, they again did evil before you, and you abandoned them to the hands of their enemies. . . . Many years you were patient with them, and warned them by your spirit through your prophets; yet they would not listen. Therefore you handed them over to the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. (Nehemiah 9:26-31)

All the assembled peoples listened as the whole book of the law was read. And all the people along with their leaders entered “into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his ordinances and his statutes.” . . . [They said,] “We will not neglect the house of our God.” (Nehemiah 10:10, 39)

Church

The ecclesia of the New Testament is the continuing fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah and to all Israel. The New Testament Church is a continuation of God’s activity in the Old Testament—that of forming a people who are known by God’s name, believe God’s promise, and seek to bless all the peoples of the world with the knowledge of God. With this in mind, we expect to find these same characteristics in the story of the founding of the Church in the New Testament.

Founding

The biblical passage in which Jesus speaks about the founding of the Church is Matthew 16. This passage focuses on the identity of Jesus and the naming of Peter, which also involves the naming of the Church, the people of God. Jesus asked the question, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Peter is bold enough to give an answer and
gives the correct answer: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus immediately announces that this knowledge was given to Peter by “my Father in heaven,” and then he pronounces what for us is the most pertinent description of the founding of the Church: “You, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and I tell you the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-20).

We notice first that Jesus plans to build his Church on a person. This person is named “rock,” which is Greek for Peter, but Peter is not a literal rock. Neither is the Church a literal building. Rather, Jesus is building a community of people who will be called an ecclesia (church) by starting with one person who understands and correctly names the true identity of Jesus. Peter is the new Abraham, the one chosen to be the first of many brothers and many children. The word “ecclesia” was a common word in the Greek language that referred to a public gathering of people called out of their homes. The public gathering could be for purposes such as discussing philosophy, handling a problem in the village, socializing, or sharing the latest news.4

Peter reports to the leaders in Jerusalem about his experience with the Gentile Cornelius:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles

the repentance that leads to life.” And so the promise of God to Abraham is continuing to be fulfilled (Acts 11:15-18, italics added).

Purpose

In the book of Acts, Jesus’ parting words to the disciples include a promise that they will participate in the same mission of God promised to Abraham:

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight (Acts 1:6-9, NRSV, italics added).

The question of verse 6 carries the same tension as the Abrahamic call between a physical/mono-racial interpretation of the promise or a spiritual/multi-racial interpretation. The people with Jesus ask whether now is the time that the nation of Israel will be restored. In the terminology of Genesis 12, is now the time when the physical Jewish seed within Abraham will inherit the promise of God? Or alternatively, is this the time when all the Gentiles who believe will be blessed? Is this the time when the spiritual descendants of Abraham who believe the promises of God will be blessed through Abraham, the man of faith, as Paul argues in Hebrews? In his reply, Jesus does not deny that a time exists for the former, but he announces that those standing before him will participate in the mission of God to both the Jews and the Gentiles, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, which would also include the political and religious enemies of the Jews. The author of Acts is telling his audience that they too are in the position of those first disciples, sent out on God’s mission.
Many organizations mistakenly refer to Acts 1:8 as a command when in fact it is a promise similar to the promise to Abraham. The command of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28:19, however, provides the imperative of purpose for those who claim to follow Jesus. In the story of Matthew, these words function as the last recorded words of Jesus to his disciples, and they are also the last words of the Gospel of Matthew:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19).

The first part of Jesus’ Great Commission to his disciples is usually translated as “Go” in English and occurs in the participial grammatical form in Greek. Many have argued that “go” is a participle and therefore should not be translated as a command. They argue that the correct translation is, “As you go about your normal everyday life, make disciples.” However, there is a difference between a word’s grammatical part of speech and how that grammatical fact actually functions in language. For example, in the language of Amharic in Ethiopia, when a person is leaving a room for a few minutes and will come back shortly, it is customary and very common to say, “I came” as one leaves. To translate the phrase into English as “I came” would be misleading and incorrect. As noted by Hagner, the correct translation in our current passage, which has three parallel subordinate participles with the main command “make disciples,” is to translate the

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participles in English in the command form: “Go and make disciples.” The non-command translation, “As you are going,” is a convenient and safe translation for American Christians who would prefer not to cross racial, economic, and social barriers with the scandalous and dangerous good news of the gospel. Jesus is specifically commanding us to cross those boundaries and to move out of our everyday patterns of exclusion that, after all, belong to other kingdoms.

The purpose of the Church is further defined by Jesus with his command to “make disciples.” The disciples are invited into the mission of God that stretches back to the call of Abram and Sarai. Just “all the families of the earth” would be blessed through Abram and Sarai (Genesis 12:3), the disciples are commanded to make disciples of “all nations,” or as also translated “all peoples,” meaning all the cultural, linguistic, and social groupings of humans on planet earth. Wherever the Church of Jesus Christ is found, disciples of Jesus are being made. Both structures of the Church, working together, have the purpose of seeking to fulfill the command of Christ and the mission of God. The purpose of the Great Commission defines the purpose of Bridges as Bridges seeks to collaborate with the modality structures, which also have the same purpose, because together they are one Church.

Structure

For Bridges, it is important to note that Jesus himself began a sodality structure that operated alongside the modality structures that already existed. The temple and the synagogue were the modality structures. They welcomed everyone at every age and

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6 Ibid., 882.
every stage of faith: Jewish men and women, boys and girls, though to different degrees and in different roles at different ages. There was a court for the women at the temple. Jesus went to the temple with his parents at the age of 12. To be a follower of Jesus, however, required a higher level of commitment. Sodalities have a higher bar for membership. Being Jewish was not enough. Jesus chose just 12 apostles. Jesus spoke repeatedly about the high cost of being one of his disciples. The apostles were expected to leave their professions for a life dependent on the giving of others. Jesus and his followers became funded by some wealthy women (Luke 8:3), and so the freedom to risk, innovate, and speak truthfully that is found more often in a sodality was realized.

It is important to examine the nature of the structure of the Church that is specified in scripture. Jesus promises to build his Church on a person, the Apostle Peter (Matthew 16:18). Jesus does not command the building of certain buildings nor the wearing of certain clothes, as is the case with the Jewish temple (1 Chronicles 28:11-19) and the Aaronic priesthood (Exodus 28:4). On the contrary, Jesus predicts that the Jewish temple will be destroyed (Luke 21:5-6). The church meets outside in Solomon’s Colonnade by the temple courts and in homes (Acts 2:46). The structure of the new Church seems to be focused on communities of people rather than established places of worship. The method for making decisions in Jerusalem seems to have involved a council, the first higher governing body, rather than a bishop or pope coming forth from a room or a cave with a pronouncement (Acts 15:1-34). The council heard stories from Paul and Barnabas as well as from The Apostle Peter of the Holy Spirit working among the family of the Gentile Cornelius. The Council made their decision based on

While the scriptures describe worship practices in many of Paul’s new congregations and in Jerusalem, there are few things that are directly commanded related to worship. Paul commands that worship services are to be orderly, with people taking turns, and with the interpretation of speaking in tongues for the edification of the whole assembly (1 Corinthians 14:26-33). Paul’s commands assume a very participatory worship experience. With regard to finances, real estate, and contributions to the young Jerusalem church, lying to the Holy Spirit brought death to Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Honesty in financial dealings is part of God’s will for the church and part of worship.

Much more is written in scripture about the qualifications for choosing leaders in the Church. There are significant lists of character attributes, behaviors, and the requirement that leaders manage their family well (1 Timothy 3). Significantly, nowhere in Paul’s writings nor elsewhere in the New Testament are there requirements set out for educational degrees, certified trainings in hospitals, nor written examinations to become an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, or teacher. These roles seem to be gifts of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:5-6), recognized by the community of faith, and sometimes, as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, confirmed with the laying on of hands and prayer (Acts 13:3). Ordination in Antioch was the decision of a local congregation in response to a prophetic word during prayer and fasting (Acts 13:1-2). Ordination was not connected to a minimum salary, pension, medical coverage, or other benefits.
For Bridges, this brief biblical reflection on structure gives missionary leaders permission to proceed on the minimum of structural requirements. They can say “yes” to God’s call without meeting some of the extra-biblical demands erected by some institutions, but at the same time missionary leaders can also say “yes” to the continuing assessment, coaching, training, and support that Bridges wants to offer them concurrently with active ministry. Paul rarely was alone in ministry. The common practice was to take along people in training, with Barnabas taking Paul, then Paul taking Mark and Timothy, and then Paul urging Timothy to train others (2 Timothy 2:2).

Some leaders in scripture were highly educated. Paul was a highly educated rabbi, a Pharisee of Pharisees (Philippians 3:5-6). Paul spoke at minimum Koine Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Moses was raised in the house of the Pharaoh of Egypt as the son of one of Pharaoh’s daughters (Exodus 2:10). Luke was a doctor (Colossians 4:14). Bridges welcomes and encourages formal training, especially when done with an appreciation for the missionary skills that are so necessary to equip Christians from the many cultures and subcultures of Greater Los Angeles to move outside the cultures of our congregations and into the cultures of our neighborhoods and networks. The vision of Bridges is not limited only to Christ-following communities birthed through Bridges. Christ-following communities, being only ten to sixty people in number with a part-time bi-vocational facilitator, are in need of specific, occasional services that require large buildings and highly skilled, highly paid, full-time leaders. As stated above, the biblical narrative often provides descriptive norms rather than prescriptive commands. Bridges believes there is great freedom here for creativity and contextualization, and that the Holy Spirit usually finds ways to bring God’s people together in God’s mission.
Marks of the Church

This section seeks to identify the Marks of the Church that can be used by Bridges. The Marks of the Church are defined as those characteristics that separate an authentic congregation from an apostate congregation, a club, or a service organization. Bridges holds that defining the Marks of the Church is an essential practice because it allows for an evaluation of whether a congregation exists. Leaders need to understand if they have created another bible study in a home or whether they are pastoring a congregation that meets in a home. The Marks of the Church can be implemented to measure the health of one congregation compared to another congregation. Most usefully, the Marks of the Church allows leaders to measure across time the progress and growth of a group of disciples towards becoming a congregation that is a fully functioning and healthy representative of Christ’s body in the world.

The Marks of the Church have been defined in various ways at various times of history. John Calvin defined the marks of the church as “the preaching of the Word of God” and “the right administration of the sacraments.” At a later time, church discipline was added as a mark of the church by followers of Calvin. The Holy Roman Catholic Church identifies seven sacraments rather than the Protestant Church’s two sacraments of

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7 John Calvin, The Institutes of Christian Religion, ed. by Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 4.1.9.

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The Holy Roman Catholic Church, referencing the Nicene Creed, names the Marks of the Church as “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.”

In practice, through participant interviews, Bridges found that most people outside existing congregations identify a congregation by a building, a property, a pastor, a choir, Sunday worship services in buildings publically advertised and open to the public, youth groups, children’s programs, and the sacraments. All but the sacraments have no or little biblical foundation or precedent as a Mark of the Church.

Through group biblical study and dialogue with the elders and outreach teams of La Canada Presbyterian Church, the leaders at Monte Vista Grove Retirement Home, Bridge Leaders on retreat at The Oaks Camp and Conference Center, and others over a period of three years, Bridges identified the following Marks of the Church, replacing the word “Church” with “Christ-following community”:

1. Train to follow Jesus across generations
2. Pray and study scripture
3. Express love to one another in actions
4. Have an identified leader(s)
5. Give financially
6. Share the good news
7. Practice hospitality, justice, and reconciliation
8. Make a difference in your community
9. Gather for worship and ministry training
10. Practice Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
11. Self-identify yourselves as a Christ-following community
12. Send out Bridge Leaders to plant themselves

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10 Participant interviews conducted by James Milley, various locations in Southern California, 2010-2014.

Bridges commends this list for several reasons for general use across America in all congregations and denominations, for both existing and new congregations. First, this particular list of twelve activities cover the range of activities listed in the Bible as practiced by the early church. Second, these activities are low cost, meaning that almost all Christians in all neighborhoods can afford to carry out these activities. Some may object that preaching is essential. Calvin certainly asserted such. However, the current economy in America does not necessary allow for a compensated preacher for every congregation. At the same time, studying, explaining, and sharing Scripture is essential and can be done by most lay people on a volunteer basis without great anxiety. Third, the list allows for a group of Christ-followers to annually measure themselves by the list of activities, taking note of how many of the twelve activities they currently carry out to God’s glory. Wise leadership may use this list to gradually move a group of new Christ-followers towards the practice of all twelve activities as the Spirit leads in the Spirit’s time.

**Conclusion**

Chapter 4 describes the theology of the Church that informs both the formation of Bridges and the formation of new congregations (Christ-following Communities) by Bridge Leaders. This theology is rooted in God’s call to Abram and Israel and continues in the sending of the disciples by Jesus. While the Marks of the Church expressed during the Reformation helped in the renewal of congregational structures in that period of history, a different list of Marks emerged for use in Bridges by Bridge Leaders.
Chapter 5 seeks to show the missionary nature of the Trinitarian God that informs the missionary character of the life and witness of Bridge Leaders in Greater Los Angeles. The description of the activity of Holy Spirit, Jesus the Son, and God the Father seeks to present a cross-culturally skilled God who acts in the world among the unchurched, not just within or among the churched. This understanding of the presence and activity of God provides guidelines for Bridge Leaders relevant to their proper roles and various ministries.

Thus, this chapter discusses first the Holy Spirit, then Jesus the Son, and third God the Father. The discussion of the one and three and three in one nature of the Godhead follows the discussion of each of the three, just as it did in the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity.¹ Along these lines, this chapter demonstrates

¹ The word “trinity” is not mentioned in Scripture. The consensus statement at the Council of Nicaea in 325 that the Son is “of the same substance [homoousios] as the Father” laid the groundwork for Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers to establish the primacy of the orthodox form of the Doctrine of the Trinity by the end of the fourth century. Thus, the Church spoke of God as one and as three (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) for hundreds of years before having a way to articulate those beliefs as a coherent whole without falling into error. See William G. Rusch, The Trinitarian Controversy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 61.
that by beginning the discussion of God with the affirmation of the three and then showing the unity of God as one God, there is particular significance for contextual engagement with communities in Greater Los Angeles.

**Holy Spirit**

This section focuses on the Holy Spirit as the first Person of the Trinity. The following section seeks to show that the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus, leads mission, helps believers to interpret Scripture, and calls believers into the specific will of God. This section also explores the significance of these roles of the Holy Spirit for the Bridge Leader.

**Leads to the Truth/Reveals Jesus**

The Holy Spirit is present, abides with the Bridge Leader, and dwells within the Bridge Leader. Jesus says, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you” (John 14:15 *italics added*). The Holy Spirit is present to lead people to the truth, expose the truth, and advocate for the truth about Jesus. Jesus assures his disciples that “[This Advocate] will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned” (John 16:8-11).

The Holy Spirit reveals that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). This is essential for the strategy of Bridge Leaders. It is not the role of Bridge Leaders to manipulate a person to
believe the right things about Jesus. Bridge Leaders certainly cannot manipulate a spiritual meeting of other people with the person of Jesus. Thus, Bridge Leaders simply create a meeting space. Bridge Leaders create safe and sacred space for people outside the church where the Holy Spirit can come and meet with them, whether in a home, bar, work place, park, coffee shop, parking lot, or elsewhere. Just as God’s people wait for the Holy Spirit in the sanctuaries of established churches, both the believer and the unbeliever sit in this safe and sacred space together, both equally dependent on the grace and mercy of the Holy Spirit to come and minister to their hearts and souls, bodies and minds.²

The Holy Spirit also leads Christians to the truth that they are called to make disciples of people outside the culture of their existing congregation, a calling given by our Lord Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20. Whether spoken at the time of the historical Jesus to his disciples or by the risen Jesus to the early Church, the call was not to make disciples of people in one’s congregation but to “go” and make disciples of people outside of the community of faith. Bridges depends on the Holy Spirit to lead Christians and Christian leaders throughout Greater Los Angeles and throughout all of America to the truth of their calling.

Leading Mission

The Holy Spirit leads God’s people on God’s mission. The Apostle Paul was very logical in making plans for his missionary journeys. He prioritized major cities and

² George Vamos, interview with the author, Studio City, CA, June 2018. The image of both believer and unbeliever sitting together in the safe and sacred space was created in a moment of mutual conversation and reflection between the author and George Vamos.
synagogues with Gentile converts to Judaism.\textsuperscript{3} At the same time, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit through dreams and prophetic words. In Acts 16: 6-10 Paul had a dream in which a man from Macedonia was calling Paul to come. Paul interpreted this dream as a message from God. As a result, Paul led the first missionary journey on European soil.

Bridge Leader Donna started the Bridges training because she wanted to reach more people with her “body and brain” class. She was thinking of adding classes and dreaming of reaching hundreds. Were more classes and larger groups the right direction to proceed? Through the safe and sacred space created in the Bridges support group, she realized that she was overwhelmed with her existing groups. She discovered she needed time to grieve the death of her mother. A few “mind and body” groups are enough for the time she has in her life and enough to find her disciples. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in leading Donna into God’s mission of making disciples. Now she has invited a group of about seven unchurched people to gather with her next month to discuss meeting together regularly.

Interpreting Scripture

The Holy Spirit helps believers interpret Scriptures in ways that enable them to participate in God’s mission. For centuries, Jews had interpreted the cleanliness laws limiting approved edible animals as necessitating separation from Gentiles in the meat market, the kitchen, the dining room, and in most of life. In Acts 10, the Holy Spirit gave Peter a vision in which a blanket with all types of unclean animals was let down in front

\textsuperscript{3} Roland Allen, \textit{Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 110, 136.
of Peter while a voice from heaven declared, “Take and eat.” As he awoke from his vision, two Gentile men invited him to the Gentile Cornelius’s home. Through his whole experience with Cornelius’s household and the vision, Peter concluded that he should no longer interpret the Old Testament cleanliness laws to mean that he cannot visit Gentile families nor sit and eat at a table with a Gentile leader who wants to know more about Jesus. The Holy Spirit had led Peter to reinterpret Scripture in a way that advanced the mission of God.

Depending on this truth, Bridges trains Bridge Leaders to depend on the Holy Spirit to “bring to mind” the correct scripture while listening to the story of those outside of church culture. On one occasion, a Bridge Leader listened to the lament of an adult son taking care of his widowed mother. He quit his job to be with her because she was bedridden. While he cared for her, she repeatedly nagged him that he should confess his sins, pray to receive Christ, and start going to church or that he was going to hell. Many Christians may consider that the mother is in the right scripturally. The Bridge Leader shared the following Scripture that came to mind as an affirmation of the son: “True religion is this: to take care of widows and orphans in their distress.” The Bridge Leader had never thought of this sentence from James as an expression of the gospel, but it seems that the Holy Spirit interpreted this Scripture as the gospel for this particular person.

Calling

The Holy Spirit calls believers to specific ministries. For example, the Holy Spirit spoke to the church at Antioch to set apart Paul and Barnabas for God’s mission to the
Gentiles. Peter was called to serve the believers in Jerusalem. Other apostles were called to other peoples. Ephesians explains that some are called to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). Bridges believes that the Holy Spirit calls each Bridge Leader to a specific ministry, in addition to a general calling to make disciples. The Bridges community believes that certain Bridge Leaders have been called by the Holy Spirit to specific ministries among specific people groups in Greater Los Angeles. The list of these ministries and/or people groups as of June 2017 is found in Appendix G.

In summary, the Holy Spirit accompanies Bridge Leaders, indwells them, leads them on God’s mission, call them to God’s mission, calls them to specific ministries, and guides them in interpreting Scripture. As Jesus said to his disciples as he sent them out without any formal degrees or approved licenses, “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Bridge Leaders depend on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives and ministries, such as when one Bridge Leader was called to the bedside of a dying, 96-year-old Jewish survivor of the holocaust. She said she had a vision of a man with a good heart speaking to her through a glass darkly as she floated in mid-air. The Holy Spirit brought to mind John 14:1-2 and 1 Kings 17:7-24 with other short phrases. Her atheist, Jewish son translated through Hungarian. Some English was understood by all. She asked for prayer. She asked to go to church. Tears flowed. Hearts were open. God the Holy Spirit was there. All prayed together.
Jesus

This section focuses on Jesus, The Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. The following exploration of Jesus’s birth, ministry, death, resurrection, sending, and second coming will elucidate patterns of life, theological affirmations, and practical outcomes that clarify the meaning of following Jesus. For the claims of Bridges to be truthful, the pattern of Jesus’s birth, ministry, death, resurrection, sending, and coming again needs to undergird, inform, and shape the pattern of life of the Bridge Leader.

To declare Jesus as the Son of God is to affirm that Jesus reveals the God the Father to people. Bridge Leaders seek to introduce people to Jesus because meeting and encountering Jesus is to have also met and seen and encountered the Father. Jesus teaches this in his dialogue with Philip:

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. (John 14:8-9)

The relationship of God the Father and God the Son is a mutual, asymmetrical, reciprocal, non-dominating, non-authoritarian, relationship of love. This mutual indwelling allows Jesus to reveal the Father. All the affirmations about Jesus that follow are also revelations of the character of God the Father graciously revealed to humankind.

Incarnation

Jesus was born (Luke 2:11). This essential affirmation locates Jesus within the human family at a particular time and place, in a particular culture, hearing a particular
language on his mother’s lap, with relatives, a network of family friends, and a problematic government demanding a census (Luke 2:1-4). The first category of Bridge Leader skills is called, “Move In.” This nomenclature is directly reflective of the incarnation of Jesus, in which Jesus “moved in” with humanity, taking on human flesh (John 1:14) and the contingencies of space and time (Philippians 2:6-11).

Ministry

Jesus’ ministry could be summarized as consisting of four main activities: teaching, announcing the nearness of the Kingdom of God, healing the sick (Matthew 4:23), and completing a number of other prophetic acts and signs that confirmed his identity. Yet while Jesus was carrying out these four main activities of his ministry, he simultaneously focused on making disciples. He took his twelve chosen apostles with him almost everywhere and with them modeled the methodology of discipleship, which he would later command his disciples to replicate. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all peoples” (Matthew 28:19). In this text, Jesus did not command his disciples to make worship services, huge gatherings in stadiums, organs, steeple[s], cathedrals, seminaries, church buildings, hospitals, schools, clinics, or any other building, program, or service. Rather, Jesus placed his disciples firmly in the business of helping people be like Jesus. Christians are called by Jesus to make disciples of Jesus.

Jesus modeled a method of discipleship that focused on a smaller group of people rather than a larger group. While he did minister to crowds of people, he focused on his

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This identity includes being the Messiah, the Son of God, the Suffering Servant, the New and Greater Moses (John 6), the continuing fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bless all the peoples of the earth (Matthew 24), the Lamb of God who was slain (Revelations 5:6), and the one who will destroy the lawless one by the splendor of his coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).
12 apostles, whom he chose carefully after praying (Luke 6:12-16). He focused on using the experiences with the crowds to train his disciples, such as directing them to distribute loaves of bread (John 6:10-13). He did not trust the crowds because “he himself knew what was in everyone” (John 2:23-25). He sent his disciples out to do ministry two by two. Once he sent the 12 apostles (Matthew 10), and another time he sent 72 disciples (Luke 10) for short ministry assignments that required travel. Jesus often taught publicly and then also taught his apostles and disciples more privately with added explanations. Jesus took two or three disciples with him during key experiences, such as during the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13), a little further to pray in the garden (Matthew 26:36-39), and to an upper room to heal a young girl (Mark 5:37-43). All but the twelve deserted him after being asked to eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:66), and even the twelve apostles betrayed him at his trial (John 19:15, Matthew 27:20-25).

This short Biblical reflection on Jesus’ ministry of discipleship reveals several guidelines for Bridges and Bridge Leaders. When people say that they have discipled a hundred people in a year or a thousand people in three years, Bridges will assume that they are not referring to the same type of discipleship that Jesus practiced and commanded. Bridges expects Bridge Leaders to focus on 12 or fewer people in the way that Jesus focused on his apostles, with some time spent on a wider ring of relationships and with crowds seen as fields for ministry practice. Jesus modeled a discipleship that was relational and inclusive. The method of discipleship did not seem to rely on advanced technologies nor on leveraging powerful and influential people in society. In fact, some of the people from those in religious power and political power are named in
scripture as desiring the death of Jesus and involved in the political maneuvering to bring about his crucifixion (Matthew 12:14, Matthew 26:4, John 11:53).

Jesus began discipling his apostles before they understood his identity and message in a way that would meet the criteria for “saving faith” as defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith or of “the knowledge of the truth” defined in 1 Timothy 2:3-6. In his book, Conversion in the New Testament, Richard Peace argues that the reality depicted in Scripture is that the disciples did not grasp accurately either who Jesus is or the nature of their own situation (i.e., that they had not repented). . . . In fact up to the time of Jesus’ death they persist in crucial misunderstandings. That they did not possess faith in the full sense is also clear right from the beginning. In fact, by failure to see and understand who Jesus is, they could not have had a proper faith in him.5 Peace is writing about conversion, so he identifies the entire period of discipleship with Jesus as a process of conversion, “from insight to turning to transformation.”6 Oddly, in the Church today, any person hearing the word “discipleship” would assume that it refers to what Jesus practiced with his disciples, and yet the term is often reserved for what happens after conversion. Typical evangelical practice and thought assumes that evangelism leads to conversion, which provides the opportunity for discipleship. However, Peace’s argument indicates that discipleship begins as conversion begins and continues until conversion is complete. In the Gospel of John, people began the journey of following Jesus when they responded to the call to “come and see” (John 1:39-41).


6 Ibid., 13.
In summary, the method of discipleship embraced by Bridges seeks to be faithful to the method used by Jesus in his ministry while on earth and commanded by Jesus for use by his disciples. Discipleship begins precisely wherever someone begins to move towards or welcomes Jesus and/or his sent disciple (Matthew 10:40). Peace helpfully shows that discipleship begins before conversion even for the apostles. Wood notes that unlike other calls to discipleship in the ancient world, the Christian call is to follow Jesus even after his death and resurrection, to be a disciple of Jesus rather than a disciple of a living, earthly master.\(^7\)

**The Cross**

Most people are not naturally attracted to stories of crucifixion. In fact, when missionary leaders attempt to “contextualize” the gospel, the crucifixion is the part of the story most likely to be left out, at least until “a later time.” For Bridges, the death of Jesus on the cross is not an optional part of the narrative. Bridges leans on the writing of Martin Hengel on crucifixion for guidance in this important area of missionary practice.

Martin Hengel’s depiction of crucifixion and “the word of the cross” are attempts to guard missionary leaders from overly applying contextualization strategies and their resulting harmful theology. In *Crucifixion*, Hengel argues the death of Jesus was and remains a scandal. Jesus’ crucifixion was actual, bodily, humiliating, excruciatingly painful, a form of torture, a political statement, a military deterrent, a sign of being

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cursed, and especially practiced on slaves and criminals.\textsuperscript{8} Paul’s “word of the cross” seemed like folly to all other religious and philosophical groups of his day, and indeed continues to seem like folly when properly understood. Hengel writes, “A crucified messiah, son of God or God must have seemed a contradiction in terms to anyone, Jew, Greek, Roman or barbarian, asked to believe such a claim, and it will certainly have been thought offensive and foolish.”\textsuperscript{9} Hengel concludes, “The particular form of the death of Jesus, the man and the messiah, represents a scandal which people would like to blunt, remove or domesticate in any way possible.”\textsuperscript{10}

Indeed, in other areas of theology, when faced with a concept foreign or offensive to an unchurched community, Bridge Leaders are encouraged to avoid the concept temporarily and look for other truths from Scripture to begin with that resonate with the community’s existing worldview. When the proper time comes to approach the difficult concept, Bridge Leaders are encouraged to operate out of one of the contextualization models outlined in Models of Contextualization by Bevins.\textsuperscript{11}

Highlighting how Paul used a contrasting methodology, Hengel states, “The reason why in [Paul’s] letters he talks about the cross above all in a polemical context is that he deliberately wants to provoke his opponents, who are attempting to water down the offence caused by the cross. Thus in a way the ‘word of the cross’ is the spearhead of


\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 90.

\textsuperscript{11} See Bevins, \textit{Models of Contextualization} for further descriptions of these models of contextualization used by Bridge Leaders in different ministry contexts.
his message.” The *kenosis* of God is “the center of the gospel,” argues Hengel.\(^\text{12}\) The crucifixion is “the effective basis of our salvation,” in addition to the crucifixion being symbolic and a pattern for disciples to follow. Thus, the scandal of the gospel should not be reduced (through any form of docetism) because it is revelatory of the being of God and the power of the gospel. Hengel writes, “The gnostic ‘docetism’ which did away with the scandal of the death of Jesus on the cross in the interest of the impassibility of the God of the philosophers demonstrates gnostic systems are secondary attempts at an ‘acute Hellenization’ of the Christian creed.”\(^\text{13}\) In short, docetic teachings were more Hellenistic than what Paul preached and thus more contextualized. Of course, the historical development of theology determined that Paul was right and the more radical contextualizers were wrong. It is possible to go too far in practicing synthetic contextualization.

**Resurrection**

The belief in the resurrection of Jesus can be summarized in one statement: “Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead.” Each one of the words in this statement needs further explanation for clarity. First, Jesus died a human death. Jesus really was dead. He did not merely seem dead. He did not simply appear dead. He was dead.\(^\text{14}\) Second, he was raised with a new body that was in some way continuous with his body prior to death. He

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 89.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 16.

was recognized by his friend Mary by his appearance. His buried body was no longer in
the grave and could not be found elsewhere.\textsuperscript{15} Third, he was not simply alive again. He
was not going to die again. He was alive never to die again. His resurrected body was not
going to decay, wear out, or age. Fourth, theologically, Jesus in his resurrection defeated
death, the curse, and the shame of the cross.\textsuperscript{16} By his resurrection, Jesus proved that he
was not the cause of any evil from God besetting the community. Through his
resurrection appearances, Jesus exposed Israel (and all human communities) for
compulsively and repeatedly trying to escape their sin and shame through killing the
innocent other.\textsuperscript{17} The resurrection of Jesus was the ultimate sign of the Kingdom come
near, the breaking in of the future, the identification of the King, and the announcement
of the ultimate victory of the Kingdom of God over all other kingdoms and the kingdom
of this world.

For Bridge Leaders, the resurrection means that there is hope for change in human
life and society. We know that change is possible; the old can be made new; hurt things
can be made whole; broken things can be mended; the disabled can be made able; the
dead can be made alive; sin can be taken away; justice can be achieved; debts can be
forgiven; the political prisoners can be set free; and relationship with God—Father, Son
and Holy Spirit—can begin anew today, cleansed, restored, and empowered for ministry
and mission. Humans can stop hiding, lying, and killing. As outlined below, the Second

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 3.10, 4.045, 5.73, 5.226, 6.046, 7.28, 7.38, 7.161-.62, 7.98, 9.08, 9.52, 10.2.

\textsuperscript{16} Jean Calvin, \textit{The Institutes of Christian Religion}, ed. by Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand

\textsuperscript{17} René Girard, \textit{I See Satan Fall Like Lightning} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 25.
Coming makes clear that not all things will be made new until Jesus comes again, but humans now live in an age of hope and possibility in which the experience of the fully revealed Kingdom of the future may be revealed and experienced today.

Sending

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he sent his disciples on the same mission of God that began with the promise of God through Abraham to bless all peoples of the earth (Genesis 12:1-2). This sending was not only to the Jews who were the racial descendants of Abraham, but also to the spiritual descendants of Abraham who like him believed in the promise of God. Paul explicitly teaches the inclusion of Abraham’s spiritual descendants in the promise of Genesis 12:1-2 in Romans 4:12-17:

[Abraham] is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised….Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith off Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

Thus, the sending of Christians in Greater Los Angeles to make disciples cannot be confined to people within our existing congregations nor to people willing to join our existing congregations. Those who are disciples of Christ by definition obey Christ command to make disciples throughout the many cultures and subcultures of Greater Los Angeles as commanded in John 28:19 and believe Christ’s promise in Acts 1:8 that they will be Christ’s witnesses in all those many cultures and subcultures. Jesus has sent his

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18 See Chapter 4 on the purpose of the Church traced from Abraham and Sarah through the commissioning words of Jesus in John 28:16-20 and Acts 1:2-8.
disciples to make disciples. Jesus also states, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. . . . Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. . . . Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (John 14:21-24). When Jesus sought to reinstate Peter to the mission of God after Peter’s three denials, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” Those who love Jesus go across diverse cultural barriers because Jesus has sent them. Peter answered, “Yes Lord, you know that I love you,” and Peter went on to serve in God’s mission at the cost of his life (John 21).

Second Coming

While Jesus has commanded us to continue to participate in God’s mission to bless all the peoples of the earth, Jesus has also promised that he will come again. Jesus’ parable of the wheat and tares was meant to illustrate this time of waiting that we are currently experiencing. The farmer lets the wheat and tares grow together because he does not want to harm the wheat when digging out the tares (Matthew 13:24-30). God’s judgment has been delayed until the time of Christ’s coming a second time. This time of judgment will be very good news to some who are suffering under great injustice. This time of judgment will be a time of great suffering for some who are participating in great injustice (Matthew 13:40-43).

During this time of waiting, the faithful disciples of Jesus announce the good news of God’s Kingdom and continue to make disciples of Jesus, the King. In fact, Matthew 24 indicates that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Some readers of Scripture interpret this as stating that Jesus’ second coming will not occur until all
peoples have had a chance to hear the gospel. At the same time, Revelation 14:6 reads, “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.’” Thus, whether by human or angelic agency, God’s promise to Abraham will be fulfilled. Through Abraham and all his seed both spiritual and physical, all the peoples of the world will be blessed. The gospel will be proclaimed and heard. The disciples will bear witness. All peoples will have an opportunity to respond. When the seventh angel sounded the trumpet, many voices said, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). This “coming again” marks in time the end of the reign of the kingdoms of this world and the beginning of the fully revealed reign of God, as promised.

**Father**

God the Father is the first person of the Trinity. The section above on The Holy Spirit reviewed how the Holy Spirit leads people to Jesus. The section above on Jesus reviewed how Jesus reveals the Father. For the purpose of examining the relationship of mutual influence between the theology of the Father and the emerging practice of nurturing Bridge Leaders, this section explores the Father’s delight and plan for multiplication both for creation and for humans, particularly as expressed through God’s promises to humans such as Adam and Eve, Noah, Abram and Sarai, and others.
Creation and Multiplication

When God spoke creation into being, it was a Trinitarian event. God the Father was doing God’s work through Jesus, God the Son. As it says in the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1-3). God the Father spoke, “Let there be…” (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14). The Word was spoken. The Spirit of God hovered over the waters (Genesis 1:2). Starting with day four, God creates things with a specific comment about God’s intent for multiplication. God the Father creates plants and trees “with seed in it, according to their various kinds” (Genesis 1:12). God created the sea and all the living things in the sea “according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind” (Genesis 1:21). And God blesses these creatures and gives a command to these creatures: “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth” (Genesis 1:22). For the animals, God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind” (Genesis 1:24). In God’s creation of plants, animals, water creatures, and flying birds, he designed them to multiply, he announces his intent for them to fill the earth, he blesses them, and he commands them to multiply and fill the earth. Furthermore, the potential for multiplication is named as being in the “seed” (Genesis 1:11-12).
Israel and Multiplication

The Bible can be partially characterized as a very long story about a very difficult relationship between God and the Jewish people. Stories somehow related to Nazism remain in the news and racially motivated hate crimes and killings continue against the Jewish people. This section explores whether God delights and desires the multiplication of the Jewish people through comparing the language describing creation to the language of the Abrahamic covenant in the book of Genesis.

When God the Father makes a covenant with “Abraham and his descendants,” the word “descendants” is the same as the word for “seed” in the creation of plants and animals in Genesis 1.19 God gives, blesses, makes promises, and gives commands to “Abraham and his seed” about multiplication. God the Father uses the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16) and the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5) to help Abram and Sarai imagine the magnitude of the multiplication of children that will be theirs. Today, scientists can add a few calculations to our understanding of the images. Scientists calculate the number of stars that humans can see with the naked eye at three thousand in one hemisphere of the sky. Scientists know that there are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on all the beaches on the earth. They estimate the number of stars at ten with twenty-five zeros following. A person or our fastest computer could not finish counting the stars in our lifetime if the project was begun today.20 The calculations

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reinforce the biblical explanation which is that the stars, the dust, and the descendants will be “too many to count” (Genesis 13:16; 16:10).

Each time that the Abrahamic covenant is reaffirmed with Abraham and with succeeding generations (seed), the wording echoes back not just to Genesis 12 but also to creation in Genesis 1. In Genesis 17, God says to Abraham, “I will make you exceedingly fruitful” (Genesis 17:6) The phrase, “you and your offspring [seed] after you,” is repeated at least four times in the story. After Abraham offers up his son Isaac on the altar to God, only to be stopped by an angel and provided with a ram, God the Father says through the angel, “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore…. and through your offspring [seed] all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me” (Genesis 22:17-18). God gives the promise of blessing and the promise of multiplication to creation and to Abraham and his seed.

The Nations and Multiplication

The previous sections showed that God the Father delights in blessing, promising, and commanding multiplication for the trees, bushes, flowers, and displays the same delight for multiplication for Abraham and his descendants. This section explores whether God the Father has the same delight for multiplication of the great diversity of other peoples in the world.

First, God the Father does show the same delight for the first humans created in Genesis 1. The creation of humans is part of the creation story itself, so the same terminology is used for humanity as for the plants and animals: “God blessed them, and
God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” (Genesis 1:26). Second, after God destroyed with a flood everyone on earth except for Noah and his family, God the Father’s covenant with Noah reaffirmed his delight in multiplication. The Scriptures say, “God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in the number and fill the earth. . . . As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it” (Genesis 9:1, 7). God reaffirmed his blessing and command for multiplication on all humans after the Great Flood.

In addition to the affirmation of multiplication for Noah and his family after the Great Flood, the story in Genesis 17 of God’s interaction with Abraham and Hagar about their son Ishmael offers insight for understanding the passion of God the Father for people outside the descendants of the covenant line. When Sarai and Abram had tried and failed to have a child, Sarai gave her Egyptian servant Hagar to Abram hoping to “build a family through her” (Genesis 16:2). Abraham slept with the Egyptian woman, Hagar became pregnant, and Ishmael was born. A three-way family dispute ensued (Genesis 16:1-6). God speaks to both Hagar and Abraham about their son. The angel of the LORD tells Hagar, , “I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude. . . . Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the LORD has given heed to your affliction” (Genesis 16:7-11). After Isaac was born and Abraham could see that God’s promise would be fulfilled through Isaac, God spoke to Abraham,, “And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation” (Genesis 17:20). God does affirm that the covenant relationship will remain through Isaac only, but God promises to bless
and multiply Ishmael as well (Genesis 17) using terminology (see italicized words) that echoes God’s word spoken to creation and to Abraham and Sarah. Ishmael is half Egyptian and half Hebrew, related to the people of the promise and yet born because of a lack of faith on the part of Abram and Sarai. In this situation of shame and failure, our Father God still claims, still names, still pursues, still loves, still blesses, and still promises multiplication to Hagar. It is not only the children of the covenant line who are blessed and promised to multiply by God the Father.

If God the Father has promised blessing and multiplication to those outside what one believes to be the covenant community (perhaps a congregation or a denomination), this has great impact for our discipleship efforts. Disciples of Jesus must not expect to be the only community that is blessed and that multiplies. Disciples of Jesus in Greater Los Angeles should not expect for all the diverse peoples in Los Angeles to leave their cultures in order to join a majority culture of a certain congregation or denomination. Disciples should expect multiplication of and blessing upon peoples within all cultures represented in Los Angeles, whether simply outside the culture of the existing congregations (but still speaking their same language) or outside the culture of their own language group.

**Trinity**

The following exploration of the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit seek to show their oneness in relationships of loving mutual interdependence, asymmetrical reciprocity, and in terms that might make sense to the average person outside the culture of existing congregations. Bridges trains Bridge Leaders to listen to
the people in the Greater Los Angeles for stories related to two-in-oneness and one-in-
twoness, rather than begin explaining the Trinity from more abstract or cognitive
metaphors used in other current or historical communities.

This approach used in Bridges is dependent historically on the work of Jürgen
Moltmann as expressed in his book, The Trinity of the Kingdom. Moltmann contrasts his
approach to the approach of “the Trinity as absolute subject” and “the Trinity as supreme
substance,” which start from subjective thinking that separates and isolates its objects.21
Moltmann asserts that these previous approaches to the theology of the Trinity had
contributed to the rise and popular support of the dictatorships of WWI and WWII,
including Hitler in Nazi Germany and Stalin.22 The “abstract thinking” that tries to
imagine the all-powerful, immutable, unchangeable, almighty, everlasting, glorious, all-
knowing God is the type of thinking that moves humans away from the state of mind and
being that makes friends and plays with children.23 In contrast to these previous
approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity, Moltmann’s “Social Doctrine of the Trinity”
begins with the understanding that God is three and tries to explain how God is one. This
approach lends itself to beginning with metaphors from everyday life, such as
relationships of friendship, marriage, family, and community.

21 Jürgen Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper,

22 Ibid., 23.

23 Ibid, 19-23.
Humanity

The creation story in Genesis 1 describes how humans are made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26). While this reality has been interpreted in many ways, the theology of Bridges includes the interpretation that human beings are capable of experiencing two-in-oneness and three-in-oneness that are images of the asymmetrical, mutual indwelling relationships between Father, Son and Holy Spirit that constitute the unity of the Godhead. Therefore, Bridge Leaders can help people examine their own experiences for pointers to the reality of a Trinitarian God as revealed in Scripture. The Trinitarian God is at work within all of humanity, starting with the person, a relationship with another person, and a family. The story of Scripture itself begins with Adam, then Eve, and then their children (Genesis 2). This ability to experience “messed up math,” as one unchurched person described it, is rooted in our being in the image of God.

George, my unchurched friend who describes himself as both an ethnic Jew and an atheist, shared an experience that references what it means to be made in the image of God in terms of mutually indwelling with others. When he is meditating in a room alone, it takes him a certain amount of time to relax, center, focus, and enter into a meditative state. When he enters into a room of people who are already meditating, however, the time that it takes for him to relax, center, focus, and enter into a meditative state is much shorter. He wonders why this is this case—whether there is some type of spiritual connection among people that cannot be seen, whether there a mutual indwelling of some type, and how the mediation of these other people affects his ability to meditate. Some atheists say it is simply through what he hears and sees, but he does not think that sufficiently explains his experience.
The Bible teaches that two people become one flesh in marriage (Mark 10:8). The American Psychological Association estimates that 40 to 50 percent of marriages in America end in divorce.\(^{24}\) The pain of divorce or the pain of grief in having a spouse die is excruciating and life changing. People describe it as their souls being torn in two. They describe physical pain when there has been no physical injury. When a married couple has been together many years, they share the sensation of having the spouse within one’s own person. The spouse’s voice is within, even when the spouse is not physically present. There is a unity that emerges despite all their differences; despite being two, they experience a oneness. Whether these statements are true or false is judged by the unchurched person through the lens of his or her own interpreted experience and learning.\(^{25}\) If unchurched people can identify this type of “oneness” in their own experience, then a Bridge Leader can encourage them to talk about their “oneness” experiences.

To begin describing the unity of the three Persons in the Trinity is simply to begin describing the relationships of love between them. Moltmann roots this exploration of the unity of the three in the biblical affirmation “God is love” 1 John 4:16. It is the “theology of the divine passion.” Love is the “self-communication of the good.” Love is both the power of “self-differentiation” and “self-identification.” Out of the “eternal love affair”


\(^{25}\) Bridge Leaders make the types of statements in this paragraph to allow the other person to respond in agreement or disagreement. The purpose is to discover the perception and experience of the other. The author purposefully did not footnote the statements in this paragraph to allow the reader to begin making his or her own judgments in the experience of reading without the weight of a quoted authority supporting each statement’s veracity.
between the Father and the Son, the Trinitarian love creates the world which is not God but which corresponds to him, concedes to his creation the space in which it can exist, takes time for that creation, and allows it time, allows it freedom and keeps it free. The Trinitarian God chooses self-limitation, self-humiliation, and suffering as expressions springing forth from the asymmetrical, mutual love relationships that exist in the Godhead eternally.\textsuperscript{26} In this love, there is neither an obliteration of identity nor an obliteration of the relationship. In this love relationship, there is neither servitude nor domineering. Moltmann quotes and translates Augustine into German, which is translated into English: “Thou seest the Trinity/ When Thou seest love/ For the lover, the beloved and the love/ Are three.”\textsuperscript{27}

Another reference point for what it means to be made in the image of God in terms of mutual indwelling with others is the experience of family. When a married couple gives birth to a child, there is an opportunity for a family to be born. In the miracle of our humanity, there can be one family and yet three members. The task is to allow unity with diversity—one family without diminishing individuality. This is the task with which people in Greater Los Angeles are struggling the most. There are three relationships: me and my spouse, me and my child, and us (child, me, and spouse). One could also frame the situation as being composed of the marriage, the family, and one’s relationship with oneself. Both parents need the capacity to become one with both each other and one with the child at the same time, to allow a family to become a spiritual

\textsuperscript{26} Moltmann, \textit{Trinity and the Kingdom}, 58-60.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 58.
reality. This simultaneous, multiple, asymmetrical, mutual indwelling with both spouse and child creates the space, time, and group love of the family that enhances rather than diminishes individual identity.

The “safe and sacred” space that Bridge Leaders are taught to create for others is so important because it is in this space that the actuality and experience of asymmetrical, mutual indwelling occurs. This mutual indwelling, though reciprocal, is not symmetrical. It allows for difference and unity. It allows for individuality and group identity. There is neither domineering nor servitude. There is no more beautiful description of this than Jesus’ prayer in John 17, where Jesus specifically prays for the people who will believe in him through his disciples living at the time. Jesus prays, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20). The conclusion of Jesus’ prayer ties the unity of mutual, asymmetrical indwelling to the relationship of love: “Righteous Father . . . I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:25-26).

Human Community

As we move outside the nuclear family to the human community, Scriptures confirm that the Trinitarian Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is active among human community. Jesus knew that he was leaving his disciples in “the world” and sought to assure them that they were not being left alone as orphans, that he would be with them in the world, and not only with them, but in them. Jesus’ last words to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew are the promise, “And remember, I am with you
always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). In John 17, Jesus also promised to send his disciples the Counselor, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” Jesus promised his disciples that, even after his ascension, he would be at work among them as they gathered for prayer and discipling others to follow his commands. Jesus taught, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). This is why a gathering of disciples in Bridges is called a Christ-following community. By participating in the love relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, disciples begin eternal life in that they begin to experience human community that is a taste of the three-in-one and one-in-three that is the unity that enhances identity, and the identity that enhances unity.

While we long for this type of human community described by Jesus in John 17, our experiences of our congregations in Greater Los Angeles as we know them often seem to fall short of Jesus’ depiction. Moltmann acknowledges the painfully partial experience of this Trinitarian fellowship of love. According to Moltmann, God is also suffering. Following the understanding of creation as the overflow of the loving relationships in the eternal Godhead that involved self-limitation, self-humiliation, and self-identification, Moltmann argues that the salvation of the world is “bound up with God’s deliverance from the sufferings of his love.” In some real way, God will be suffering the suffering of suffering love until the world’s salvation is complete.

28 Ibid., 60.
Moltmann writes, “The suffering of God with the world, the suffering of God from the world, and the suffering of God for the world are the highest forms of his creative love, which desires free fellowship with the world and free response in the world.”

God’s suffering love “liberates, delivers, and redeems through suffering,” but that same love “wants to reach its fulfilment in the love that is bliss.” Because humans are made in the image of God, humans have this capacity to enter into suffering love with God regardless of whether they are in the line of the covenant people (Romans 11). Moltmann explains that God and humanity are “in compassionate suffering with one another, and in passionate love for one another.” Following Moltmann’s theological trajectory, Bridge Leaders participate with God in the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, and they participate in God’s creative love to the many different people in Greater Los Angeles. Because love and suffering are bound up together until the lover’s love is freely returned, Bridge Leaders participate in the suffering love of the Trinity until the promised Kingdom comes when members of every tribe, language, people, and nation worship together freely around the throne and the lamb that was slain (Revelation 7:9).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there is a biblical witness that undergirds and remains in dialogue with the missiological practice of Bridge Leaders as they are led by the Holy Spirit to disciple unchurched people to be like Jesus to the glory of God the

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
Father. The reflections on God the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Father show how each person of the Trinity is at work to move people out of existing congregational cultures, to call people into God’s mission, to train people in the way of disciple making, to change unchurched people into the likeness of Christ, and to call disciples into Christ-following communities. The Trinity is a relationship of creative, suffering love that seeks resolution in “blissful love” in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. As all disciples pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” Bridge Leaders seek to live out Christ’s command to make disciples of all peoples, tribes, languages, and nations (Revelations 7:9, 14:6).
PART THREE

STRATEGY
CHAPTER 6
GOALS AND PLAN

The previous two parts of this project have established the need and the theological foundations for a new type of Bridge Leader for the Greater Los Angeles area. Both parts presented arguments that contextual reality and theological imperatives require leaders who embrace multi-source income patterns, are cross-culturally skilled, unafraid to join groups outside Christian congregations, able to learn and use the insider language of local groups, and willing to allow new Christ-following communities to form in new subcultures throughout Greater Los Angeles. Part Three develops a strategy for developing this type of leader. It focuses on the methods that can be used to find, recruit, train, and send these leaders into the mission field of our own networks and neighborhoods throughout Greater Los Angeles.

Chapter 6 describes the plans and goals for training a group of Bridge Leaders. It is necessary to understand the difference between the skills needed to engage those outside church culture and the skills usually taught and used in existing congregations in order to specify the correct methodology for learning. Also, being specific about the outcomes of the training enables Bridges and others to measure ministry effectiveness.
with standardized measuring instruments developed with expertise from the field of psychology. Once the necessary skills, training methodology, outcomes, and measures of effectiveness have been identified adequately, Bridges will be in the position to measure with some validity and reliability whether the training Bridges provides actually makes a difference in helping people engage successfully in ministry with people outside of existing congregations. Thus, this chapter defines the skills needed, training methods, training goals, and ministry outcomes to make the data collection and measurement attempts feasible.

The Preferred Future

During the six-year period running concurrently with my doctoral program at Fuller Theological Seminary, the readings, theological reflection, and cohort discussions of the doctoral program have helped to shape the current strategic approach to training the Bridge Leaders utilized by Bridges needed for the future of the Church in Greater Los Angeles. The current strategy was also influenced by the feedback from Bridge Leaders and other supporters as well as the practical learnings of experimenting with different ways to train and support Bridge Leaders. From all these experiences and input, what follows is a description of the skills, activities, and the impact of Bridge Leaders.

The original goal at the founding of Bridges in 2010 was to be supporting one hundred missionary Bridge Leaders and Christ-following communities by 2021. Now in 2018, Bridges has trained over one hundred leaders and currently provides supportive services to approximately eighty-four Bridge Leaders. Bridge Leaders have formed
approximately ten Christ-following communities, and Bridges currently provides supportive services to three Christ-following communities.

The Skills and Activities of a Bridge Leader

Bridge Leaders need the skills to build relationships with people who are very different, who have different worldviews, and who are living in different cultures, whether or not they speak the same language. Wood comments, “Turning to the ‘unchurched’ in the American mission field, it is notable that we are not dealing with a homogeneous mass of pagans but a much more diverse mixture of attitudes, resistances, and opportunities for mission. . . . North America is itself profoundly multicultural.”¹

Those many cultures and subcultures require the whole set of missionary cross-cultural skills that have been developed over the past two hundred years of missionary experimentation around the world.²

Over the past six years, Bridges has collected a list of skills gleaned from the stories of Bridge Leaders as they shared stories in small groups each month. The list was also cultivated through the dialogue with Brazilian church planters, in conversation with Ethiopian leaders in Greater Los Angeles and in Addis Ababa, with the Outreach Team leaders at La Canada Presbyterian Church, with retired ministers at Monte Vista Grove Retirement Home, and with about six different groups from six different PCUSA

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congregations around Greater Los Angeles. These groups identified over 101 skills (see Appendix D).

These 101 skills are divided into seven categories to help the leaders embrace and learn the skills. They are: move in, join their group, learn their language, give to their community, help them to live like Jesus, gather them together, and send them out. These seven categories define the basic skills proposed for new Bridge Leaders in Greater Los Angeles and provide a description of the intended outcomes of the Bridges training methodology. Chapter 7 provides the results of measuring these seven categories of skills over a five-year period through an annual survey of each Bridge Leader.

Move In

Just as Jesus was born in human form, the Bridge Leader follows God’s call to move into a community of people outside of existing church culture. This can mean physically moving to an ethnic-based neighborhood in Greater Los Angeles. It could also mean changing one’s primary friendship group from a congregational-based group to a group centered upon one’s work place, exercise activity, family members, or interest group. This change involves where one spends time and with whom one spends time.

Many Christians want to engage non-Christians without taking this first step. The expectation is that the non-Christian would make the change and move into a Christian community. However, the Holy Spirit showed Peter, Paul, and all the apostles that Gentiles need not become Jewish to follow Jesus. It is hard work to change communities, and Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” makes clear whom is expected to make the change.
Join Their Group

Bridge Leaders are expected to take steps to identify as members of their new community. They are not to remain as “guests” or as “observers” but to seek to become recognized as permanent members as much as is allowed by their host community. Barbara\(^3\) shared how she had played tennis with two friends for twenty years but had never had the opportunity to share spiritual truth with them. I asked a few questions, and it became apparent that the other women spent time together off the tennis court for drinks and conversation. Barbara had never joined them. Barbara began to see the reason why they had not shared more of their personal stories with her nor opened more of their hearts to her. People can tell whether we are just visiting or whether we really want to be part of their group.

Learn Their Language

Bridge Leaders have to learn the language of their new community even when the community speaks English, or the same language as the missionary. Christians often use “God” as the subject of a sentence quite comfortably, but secular Americans often do not. Bridge Leaders have discovered some of this language used in the Greater Los Angeles area. When an unmarried member of an all-male group is sick and needs someone to stay with him in his apartment, cook, and manage medicine from the pharmacy, the phrase, “I’ve got you” means someone is willing to help out in this way. As an African-American man in a homeless shelter shared his new sense of dependence on God, many people in the shelter found his use of expletives deeply meaningful. Communities outside of

\(^3\) Barbara’s name has been changed for privacy.
existing congregations often have spiritual language that needs to be learned by the missionary moving into the community. Bridge Leaders need to look for this language and learn it.

Give to Their Community

Many people outside of the existing local church complain about the apparent focus on Christians asking for their money. Bridge Leaders focus on giving rather than asking. In contrast, many church planting organizations, perhaps inadvertently, place pressure on church planters to raise money from unchurched people by requiring financial self-sustainability within three years, the time at which all outside funding is scheduled to be withdrawn from the church planter and the new congregation. Bridge Leaders have found that time periods vary greatly for when people outside of existing church culture begin to give financially. In fact, the missionary skill is to first give to the community of the unchurched person, and it is very important what and how one gives.

Bridge Leaders often give—whether financially or with time, attention, and leadership—in ways that the people in the community would interpret as an affirmation of their own values. For example, a recycling club would probably appreciate help with recycling, and a biking club would probably appreciate help with planning a bike trip or fixing bikes. The best way to know that a contribution fits within the values of the community is to allow the idea for giving to come from someone within the community. Good guidance about giving cross culturally is as follows: one should give and expect nothing in return; one should give something the group already likes, not something the missionary wants them to like; and one should not show up and expect offerings.
Help Them to Live Like Jesus

Drawing from the model of spiritual formation advanced by Dallas Willard\(^4\) and spurred on personally through a conference led by Willard at La Canada Presbyterian Church in 2012, Bridges has consistently taught new Bridge Leaders that “safe and sacred space” is essential for growth in Christlike character.\(^5\) The Bridge Leader is responsible for creating a space where others feel safe, have an expectation that God may engage them, and feel free to actively open themselves to the Holy Spirit. In this type of space, all manner of spiritual practices, both ancient and completely new, can be cultivated in a person’s life to cooperate with the activity of the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit, the character of Christ, and the courage to answer God’s call to participate in God’s mission.\(^6\)

Willard argues that spiritual growth is the work of God. Spiritual formation for Christians is “the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself. . . . Christlikeness of the inner being is not a human attainment. It is finally, a gift of grace.”\(^7\) The Holy Spirit working in a person leads to change; growth in character is a miracle. At the same time, it does not follow that there is no role for individuals. Willard states, “Well informed human effort certainly is indispensable, for spiritual formation is no passive process.”\(^8\)


\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Ibid., 89-90.

\(^7\) Ibid., 22-23.

\(^8\) Ibid., 23.
Indeed, there is a very active role for the new, multi-vocational Bridge Leader in making disciples of Jesus in Greater Los Angeles. The human role in this work is to help create the conditions, the space, and the time in which others can notice, invite, experience, accept, encounter, reject, resist, or argue with the Holy Spirit.

At Bridges, based on Willard’s conceptualization of the role of the Holy Spirit and the role of a human guide in spiritual transformation, Bridges created the teaching tool called the “Adult Transformation Cycle” (see Appendix F). While Willard advocates the view that transformation moves in a single direction, from the inside out, Bridges conceptualizes human change occurring in a more circular, mutually determined process. Change, or human transformation, arises from engaging, in any order, God’s word, reflection, and action in a continuous rhythmic and circular movement, all empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. The human role of the Bridge Leader is to help a person repeatedly move through this cycle of engaging scripture and reflection in relationship to the actions that are emerging in the person’s networks and neighborhoods, work and marriage, parenting and elder care, vacationing, and friendships. Thus, the person’s actions become the basis of study of Scripture and of reflection, and the study of Scripture and reflection become the basis from which future actions can be chosen.

The Bridge Leader leads the person through this cyclical process, may orally bring in a story from Scripture, but does not pre-determine a particular meeting’s topic, a particular Scripture, specific next steps, or preferred outcomes. The person being discipled has to choose a topic for conversation from his or her actions in the recent past, listen to the Holy Spirit, choose and reflect on some Scriptures, reflect, ponder next steps, choose next steps, and set a new meeting time with the Bridge Leader. The Bridge Leader
may move between serving as a coach who only asks questions and serving as a mentor who suggests directions, switching as led by the Holy Spirit.

Gather Them Together

When Bridge Leaders are actively discipling several other people in safe and sacred space by meeting with them regularly outside of other group programs, they may choose to gather them together for the simplistic reasons of saving time, drinking less coffee, saving money on eating out, and allowing the new disciples to encourage one another. The decision to start a new group and thus move towards a new Christ-following community, indeed a new *ecclesia*, is thus not one of forceful desperation by a declining congregation but one of naturally occurring necessity from obedience to Christ’s command to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Send Them Out

Finally, basic discipleship that begins with connecting people to God through talking with God, listening to God, reading Scripture, and fellowshipping with other Christians will result in people who live in relationship with the living God. These people are able to hear God’s call into God’s mission. Thus, all members of the Christ-following community will in time identify their own calls to engage people in their networks and neighborhoods, or in some cases to travel to new places and engage new groups of people. The important habitual practice here is to listen continually to the Holy Spirit for identifying the distinctive gifting of each person and the distinctive call on each person to ministry.
Existing congregations, whether as a whole congregation or in smaller groups of eight to twenty people, often attempt to enroll the whole group into a single service project or focus of ministry that is not a natural extension of their everyday networks and neighborhoods. These “group ministry attempts” result in participants coming to the conclusion that they do not have adequate time for “ministry” when in fact their opportunities for ministry exist all week long in their daily rhythms and routines. Most often, Christians find their call to their ministry in the places they already spend time. One’s call is usually not initiating a project that demands being in a place and a time that is external to that person’s already existing networks and neighborhoods.

**The Impact of a Bridge Leader**

A Bridge Leader has at least three areas of impact: making disciples, improving lives, and forming Christ-following communities. Making a disciple is the first and primary impact of the ministry of a Bridge Leader that is considered primarily an outcome rather than a means. In order to create a process for training a new type of Bridge Leader for Greater Los Angeles, implement that process, and measure the effectiveness of that process, Bridges needs to define the outcome of “making a disciple” more precisely than the definitions given by Willard and Peace. Willard and Peace define the outcome of discipleship as becoming like the inner character of Christ. This definition indicates a lifelong process that is difficult to measure and in need of further specificity for practical use for any leader seeking to make disciples. Thus, Bridges needs to identify a more narrow set of criteria that still comprises putting on the “character of Christ.” The definition also has to be measurable and meaningful for the new Christ-followers within
the new subculture in Greater Los Angeles. It must be measurable so that Bridges can determine whether progress is being made in making disciples, and it must be meaningful so that the new disciples are firmly rooted in the new way of following Jesus and not simply part of a new religious sect.

There are several reasons why Bridges takes a minimalist view in defining the outcomes of discipleship for the efforts of Bridge Leaders. First, Bridges seeks to send Bridge Leaders into cultures without a current Christian community and therefore assumes that people are generally at the beginning stages of discipleship. While people may be very mature or immature as humans, people still need to be introduced to the basics of relating to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Furthermore, because the Bridge Leader is often not an insider to the host culture, there are many questions and steps of discipleship transformation that are better led by an insider. Missionaries prefer to empower insiders as leaders rather than themselves. Missionaries prefer to begin the discipleship process and leave the completion of the discipleship process to the new Christian leaders of the new indigenous congregation.

The one part of the character of Christ that Bridges chose to focus on for defining the outcome of “making a disciple” is the ability to stay connected and in relationship with God the Father. Jesus lived in connection and in conversation with the Father (John 5:15-17). Jesus spoke the words of the Father. Jesus did what the Father commanded (John 5:19-21). He lived in a reciprocal, asymmetrical relationship of love and communication with the Father. Thus, for the purpose of the implementation and measurability of the new strategy, discipleship is considered successful when the person
from outside the existing church culture learns how to do the following: 1) talk to God, 2) listen to God, 3) hear God through reading or listening to the Scriptures, 4) hear God through being with other followers of Jesus in various activities, and 5) help another person to become a disciple of Jesus. All of these take place in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The above definition of outcome for making disciples provides several advantages. While the above five skills are simple, they echo the modes of connecting with God that Ware describes: the action of mission, the fellowship and sociality of mission, the liturgical or contemplative means of mission, and the word-based means of mission. For new followers of Jesus without a congregation, without a tradition of Christian reflection on Scripture in their own language, the entire journey of becoming like Jesus must flow the connection with God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is in connection with the Father through which the Holy Spirit guides the interpretation of Scripture; forms the inner ability to love one another; discerns the path forward in ethical situations; forms, purifies, and grows communities and societies; and calls God’s people into God’s mission to others. Jesus said, “Upon this Rock I will build my Church” (Matthew 16:18). Jesus continues to do so through people who are connected to the Father through the Holy Spirit—not through buildings, organizations, property, denominations, or any other thing in all creation.

The second area of impact for a Bridge Leader is in the changed lives of those the Bridge Leaders serve. While every Bridge Leader commits to making disciples in the

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9 Ware, Discover Your Spiritual Type, 30.
standard position description for Bridge Leaders, Bridge Leaders have complete freedom to serve any group of people that God calls them to serve. Bridge Leaders serve pregnant teens, people without homes, middle-class women living on the same street, middle-aged parents with middle schoolers, Muslim women, immigrants who gather at a particular Home Depot, and many others. Bridges does not seek at the current time to measure the impact of the Bridge Leader ministry on these lives. Bridges does measure the number of human hours and amount of funds that are dedicated to each group of people (see Appendix G).

Third, Bridge Leaders start Christ-following communities. These communities, ideally, are formed of the people whom the Bridge Leader has discipled from outside existing church culture. In practice, some Bridge Leaders have formed these groups by starting with a group of Christians while others have followed the Bridges model more closely of allowing the indigenous culture to dominate the group from the beginning of the group’s life. Generally, the more a group has allowed the indigenous culture to dominate the group from the beginning of their life together, the stronger the resulting Christ-following community remains to this day.

In order to measure the existence and quality of a Christ-following community, Bridges developed a specific description of a Christ-following community. The description creates a thirteen-point scale for measuring whether a particular group of people is practicing the thirteen practices that constitute a church as defined by the twelve characteristics of a Christ-following community (one characteristic lists two criteria). These twelve characteristics represent the definition of an ecclesia as defined in the New Testament. Bridges also lists characteristics that are not useful in defining a Christ-
following community, such as land, preaching, singing, property, buildings, public worship, worship on a certain day of the week, choirs, educated clergy, fully compensated clergy, full-time clergy, or officially ordained leaders. The twelve characteristics of a Christ-following community are listed in Chapter 4 in the section titled, “Marks of the Church.”

The New Ministry Strategy for Training Bridge Leaders

The statistics on congregational decline in the Greater Los Angeles area indicate the existing congregations are not making enough disciples from people outside of existing congregations to keep up with population growth in general nor to keep up with even absolute, current attendance and membership levels. Even counting the new members of a new congregation does not necessarily indicate a new disciple from outside existing congregations, as the person may simply have come from an existing congregation or one that just closed.

Bridges seeks to find a model for equipping members of existing congregations to listen for God’s call on their life, discern whom God has called them to love, enter into the group of the other, enter into the culture of the other, learn eagerly, give generously, befriend authentically, disciple graciously, and finally gather disciples to train and send. In order to succeed, the next sections explore the method for recruiting Bridge Leaders, the structure of training, the skills needed for Bridge Leaders to make the journey, the methods for making disciples, and the instruments for measuring progress.
Identifying and Enlisting Leaders

For identifying leaders, the most common scenario is mutual observation and conversation over a cup of coffee. The leaders of Bridges experience two main approaches: self-identification and recruiting. Self-identified leaders come to the leaders of Bridges and ask to participate in the services of the organization. They often have a sense of calling by God to a particular group of people, such as pregnant teens or homeless youth. They are self-motivated and often have a sense of disappointment with the amount of support they are receiving from their Christian congregations. These leaders are often effective in their ministries, but it is difficult to find financial supporters who will cover the costs of Bridges’ services for these leaders at $300 per month or about $3600 per year.

When a presbytery or congregation is willing to cover the cost of ten to thirty Bridge Leaders, Bridges visits churches, conducts seminars, and facilitates six-week classes to identify and convince people to sign up for the year-long training being provided. A personal invitation to meeting over coffee follows. These sometimes reluctant leaders are often “discerning” a call from God to some group of people in their lives and are at least a year away from effective ministry among those outside of existing congregations. However, their costs are covered.

Both formal and informal observations may help identify Bridge Leaders. The self-identified leaders may be more likely to have the characteristics identified in Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times, such as catalytic innovator, vibrant faith in God, visionary, empowering leadership, passion for people, personal and relational
health, passion for faith-sharing, and inspiring preaching and worship. However, the more reluctant leaders who have to be recruited are often generally more embedded in non-churched cultures, have more years of learning non-churched languages, and have more pre-existing friends outside of the local church cultures. They may be more easily recognized through the frames offered by Richard Clinton in Selecting & Developing Emerging Leaders. Clinton focuses on how the leaders are responding to God’s processing in their lives. In addition to positive responses to word, faith, obedience, and integrity checks, Clinton lists a deep hunger for reading God’s word, hearing God’s voice, and taking action on God’s call as strong indicators of an emerging leader.

Leaders are further identified formally through their score on a survey of their discipleship activities in their everyday lives. The survey has thirteen questions (see Appendix C). The questions address the number of non-church social groups in which they participate, the number of non-churched friends they have, the number of non-churched friends they meet with regularly, the number of non-churched friends they meet with regularly to discuss spiritual topics, and the number of groups they have started for non-churched friends to be discipled further in the faith. The more contact, friends, regular meetings, and discipling relationships a person has among people outside the church, the more potential he or she has for being a Bridge Leader in Greater Los Angeles. Practicing the skills is the greatest indicator of having the skills. Having

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12 Ibid.
relationships with people outside of church culture is the greatest indicator of the ability to build meaningful relationships with people outside of church culture. These skills indicate that a person fits some of the criteria of the “transcultural person” as described by Hiebert.

The Structure and Methods of Training

The Presbytery of San Fernando has already attempted a number of programs which attempted and failed to bring significant change to membership numbers, attendance numbers, and the ability of people from within congregations to engage people outside congregational culture in relationships that led to discipling activities. Therefore, the structure and methods of this new model of nurturing bi-vocational leaders needs to move beyond previous attempts as described in Part I above.

Following the strategies recommended in Influencer discussed in Part II, the Bridges model needs to implement several change strategies simultaneously. Therefore, the Bridges model seeks to simultaneously enlist the participant in annual assessments, monthly one-on-one coaching, a monthly support group, and occasional training experiences placed strategically throughout the year, both in person and via internet video conferencing. Having all four services leverage on the key behaviors that lead to disciple making are a strategic approach to the new model. While participants may begin the ACTS services through one particular service, the goal of the program is to have the participant engage in all four services simultaneously within the first year.

Following the Biblical example of Jesus in The Gospels and the philosophical psychology of Dallas Willard in Transformation of the Heart discussed in Part II, human
change and therefore discipleship seems to take about three years. Many congregational programs promise change in a weekend seminar or a seasonal program. Human change usually takes much more time, repetition, intentionality, and practice, and Willard believes that Christian leaders need to help believers recover this intentionality applied over time.\textsuperscript{13} With this assumption of the needed time for human transformation, this Final Project will not attempt to interpret or analyze the results from the Discipleship Activity Survey until after three years of results are collected from participants. For conclusions and interpretations to be made with regard to these types of results, there also needs to be a sufficient number of participants and allowing three years to pass will provide a greater likelihood of having a sufficient number of participant responses.

Developing the Leaders and Tools for Multiplication

As the number of participants in Bridges’ ACTS services grows, Bridges will need to develop tools for multiplying those services to more Bridge Leaders. The Plans for implementing the new model for nurturing Bridge Leaders will need to include plans for increasing staff members who can train support group leaders, train coaches, and train assessors. Event coordinators will be needed to plan and facilitate training events. The plan will also need to include developing the necessary funding to cover the costs of the implementation of the new model. Curriculum will need to be developed either to guide the training or by use in the Support Groups. These training leaders will need supervision and support for their work. All these leaders and their tools will be needed for the multiplication of the new model for nurturing Bridge Leaders.

\textsuperscript{13} Willard, \textit{Transformation of the Heart}, 21.
CHAPTER 7
IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

The goal of this doctoral project involves providing a new model of nurturing support for Bridge Leaders. This chapter discusses the implementation process as well as the evaluation process. While one measurement, the Discipleship Activity survey, has been used to guide evaluation thus far, other measurement tools are also being developed.

The Plan for Implementation

This section describes the plan for implementing a new model of nurturing bi-vocational Bridge Leaders for Greater Los Angeles. Bridges, dba for Network of Community Entrepreneurs, was founded on March 10, 2010. This organization was unstaffed and unfunded while Rev. James Milley continued to serve at LCPC until April 2012. From 2010 to 2012, the congregation allowed Rev. Milley to begin a Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Theological Seminary and begin developing the vision for Bridges as part of his official duties. Thus, the effort to create a new model for bi-vocational missionaries began with the volunteer and financial support of LCPC.

In 2012, prior to this doctoral project, Jim Milley called together a group of bi-vocational leaders at the local YMCA. The original group were not called Bridge Leaders
as the name did not yet exist. The year of meeting together monthly was spent discussing what a new training model might look like for others who wanted to live a bi-vocational lifestyle of both ministry and work.

The plan for implementation involves convincing Christians in the Greater Los Angeles area to sign up for four services simultaneously: assessment, coaching, training, and support groups (also known as ACTS services). The implementation requires the assembling of qualified people to serve as coaches, support group leaders, conference training facilitators, survey creators, and survey assessors. Each qualified person needs the right tools and administrative support to coordinate the people, locations, and audio/visual support as well as policies and procedures.

The Structure and Methods of Training

Based upon the reflections of Parts One and Two of this project, the ACTS services of Bridges provide the structure through which people are shaped into the Bridge Leaders needed for the future of the Church in Greater Los Angeles. Patterson’s book, *Influencer*, insists on the “simultaneous” nature of the ACTS model, which Bridges has adopted.¹ In planning trainings, understanding that leaders will be more comfortable with different methods based on their spiritual type, Bridges intentionally seeks to bring together all four types of engagement methods with God as described by Ware.²

¹ Patterson, *Influencer*, 20.
² Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type*, 7, 36-45. Ware postulates four ways people engage with God: through the head/rationalism (Type 1), the heart/pietism (Type 2), mysticism (Type 3), and visionary action of the Kingdom (Type 4).
Bridge Leaders begin with assessments. The “Well Conceived Plan” is an instrument that provides a series of reflective questions that assist Bridge Leaders in identifying how much is known and not known about their present call. Bridge Leaders can revisit these questions on a periodic basis to track the development and clarity of their call from God (see Appendix G). *Strengthfinders 2.0* provides clarity about a Bridge Leader’s strengths that can be developed into talents. Coaches help Bridge Leaders focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. The survey that measures discipleship activity provides a snapshot of the Bridge Leaders’ current activities that led up to and include discipling people who do not participate meaningfully in any existing congregation (see Appendix H). The first time this survey is taken serves simply as a baseline. The meaningfulness of the results come when taken after a few years when patterns emerge that show the progress, stagnation, or regression of the Bridge Leader’s ability to make disciples and form Christ-following communities.

Simultaneously during the assessment period, each Bridge Leader begins meeting with a coach on a monthly basis. The meeting is one on one for forty-five minutes to an hour. These first sessions begin with a focus on interpreting the assessments. Once the assessments are processed, the coach trains the Bridge Leader how to pick and prepare ministry topics for coaching, in order to maximize the use of coaching time. Coaches use the coaching method promoted by the International Coaching Federation, so coaches seek to provide insightful and meaningful questions while providing less direct advice. Because the coaches have been trained the Bridges approach, they are able to provide

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guidance if the Bridge Leader comes to conclusions that are in conflict with the Bridge Leader’s agreement with Bridges. \(^4\)

The Bridges training, in contrast with coaching, directly aims to foster the skills needed by a Bridges Leader to achieve the outcomes of discipling people and fostering Christ-following communities. Bridges provides an annual conference of three days during when Bridge Leaders focus on topics such as “Creating Safe and Sacred Space,” “Learning the Gospel,” “Moving in to Their Community,” and “Moving from Friendship to Discipleship.” In addition to the annual conference, Bridges provides one-day seminars on topics such as “Caring for the Caregiver” and “Partnership Development Ministry.” Since “Safe and Sacred Space” is essential to all discipleship activity, Bridges covers this topic often and thoroughly in trainings for Bridge Leaders and support group leaders.

Simultaneously with the assessments, the coaching, and the training, Bridge Leaders also participate in monthly support group meetings. The intention and recommendation is that the coaching appointment be scheduled two weeks after the support group meeting, so that input in regards to action, reflection, and Scripture are spaced out evenly in the Bridge Leader’s life experience. The support groups do not require any reading or book preparation. The only curriculum is the list of “101 Bridging Skills” and the “List of Outcomes That Describe the Characteristics of a Disciple” (see Appendix H), and periodic handouts created whenever someone in the group finds themselves “stuck” in a transition between one of the seven categories of bridging skills.

\(^4\) Coaches are trained using the “Adult Transformation Cycle” (see Appendix F) and the seven categories of 101 bridging skills (discussed earlier in this chapter). Conclusions in conflict with the Bridge Leader agreement would be handling money improperly, ignoring indigenous leadership, or forgoing self-care.
The structure of the support group meeting follows a concentric circle that spirals. The following description provides a typical picture of the process. The meeting begins with a Bridge Leader sharing a case study to which there is not yet an ending, a question without an answer, or a dilemma that is lacking a solution. Going around those seated in the circle, each person has a chance to identify a bridging skill either found in the story of the case study or needed in the story. Next, going around the circle a second time, each person may share a similar story from their experience when one of those same bridging skills was necessary. Next, going around the circle a third time, each person may share a Scripture that comes to mind that relates to the case study, the person sharing the case study, or for someone in the case study. Scriptures are repeated aloud from memory, looked up, and pondered. The person who shared the case study now has a time to reflect aloud about what he or she finds meaningful from all that was spoken into the group. Finally, going around the circle once again, each person is asked to share between one and three things that they want to do next in their ministry before the group meets again.

The methods of Bridges include the request of every Bridge Leader to participate in the cost of the ACTS services. Bridge Leaders are asked to set up a monthly payment to Bridges of at least $10 for every service they receive. This request has had mixed results. Many Bridge Leaders still do not send in payments, while others do. Payments are usually $10 or $20 per month. A few Bridge Leaders donate to Bridges regularly or send payments of $70 or more.

After twelve months of ACTS services, the Bridge Leader is not asked to leave the process but to begin anew. Now is the time for Assessments. Now is the time to evaluate how far one has come, how clear or unclear one’s call is, whether progress has
been achieved, or whether God is calling in a different direction altogether. Bridges does not propose ACTS services only for new Bridge Leaders and/or less experienced ministers. Rather, the goal is a model of support that enables Bridge Leaders to make disciples and form Christ-following communities that remain healthy throughout Greater Los Angeles year after year. Bridges also desires to see this proposed model of support prevent the problems of burnout, sacrificing their families, sacrificing their health, or of unintentionally harming the congregation they intended to love and serve.

Each year beginning in May, the Discipleship Activity survey will be administered to as many Bridge Leaders from the Greater Los Angeles area as possible who have participated in ACTS services during the prior twelve months or who are currently signing up to begin ACTS services (for their baseline measurement). The process for implementation of the Discipleship Activities survey is particular in its requirements. As much as possible, the survey should be conducted with the participants in the same way at the same time by the same person each year.

Timeline

Table 1 presents a timeline for the implementation of the project. Though the ministry was incorporated on March 10, 2010, activity began to become organized once Rev. Milley moved into a full-time role in April 2012.

Table 1. Timeline of Implementation of Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Critical Events and Tasks Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2012 | Milley goes full-time with Bridges in April 2012  
The Discipleship Activities survey was created  
Office space needed  
Needed major funding from Presbytery of San Fernando, individual donors, La Canada Presbyterian Church, and others to fund Bridges and Milley’s doctoral project |
| 2013 | Milley began challenging the existing Bridge Leaders to begin their own Support Groups with their disciples  
As new coaches were needed, Milley sought an outside coaching agency to supply coaching to a growing number of Bridge Leaders.  
Conducted Discipleship Activities survey in June  
Training to provide the Bridges vision and methods to outside coaches  
1st training conference at the Oaks Camp and Conference Center in the Angeles National Forest about 30 miles outside Los Angeles |
| 2014 | Hired one outside coach to coordinate outside coaches  
June assessment  
Nov conference  
Created “Bridges 7 Bridge Skills”  
Created tour of local Bridge Leaders to recruit more Bridge Leaders  
Developed 3 more surveys to measure success of the new model in the future |
| 2015 | June assessment  
Nov conference  
Developed curriculum related to transitioning from friendship to discipleship  
Create 6-week curriculum for local congregations to recruit more Leaders |
| 2016 | June assessment  
Nov conference  
Developed curriculum related to 101 Bridging Skills  
Create 4-week curriculum for local churches to recruit more Bridge Leaders |
| 2017 | June assessment  
Conducted statistical analysis for correlation of ACTS services and Discipleship Activities survey responses  
Nov conference  
Hired a staff member to oversee coaches  
Hired a staff member to oversee and train support group leaders  
Created curriculum to train support group leaders |
| 2018 | June assessment  
Submission of Milley’s doctoral project on Bridges to Fuller Seminary |
Identifying and Training Implementation Personnel

The process for identifying and training personnel varies by professional role. Coaches will have to have both a certificate in coaching recognized by the International Coaching Federation and experiences either in church planting or in missionary cross-cultural living, preferably both. Support Group Leaders need to be trained through being in a Bridges Support Group birthed through the first group of leaders trained by Jim Milley from 2010 to 2012. Jim Milley, who has a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, will train the person who administers the Discipleship Activities survey. The speakers for the training conference will be limited to those authors and speakers from the Fuller Seminary Doctor of Ministry cohort whose theological, missiological, and Christological beliefs align with the Bridges theology and approach as described in Part Two.

Evaluation

Bridges, dba Network of Community Entrepreneurs, provided the type of organization with the policies and procedures that were conducive for the implementation of this new model for nurturing Bridge Leaders in the Greater Los Angeles area. The evaluation of this new model may be evaluated by each Bridge Leader’s ability to make disciples with people outside existing congregations, the funding of the project, the success at attracting qualified leaders to deliver ACTS services, the successful delivery of ACTS services, the satisfaction of Bridge Leaders with the ACTS services, the overall results of the survey on Discipleship Activities over five years, and the usefulness of the results in helping Bridge Leaders grow in self-awareness and disciple-making skill.
Administration of the Survey

Bridges follows a fiscal year of July 1 through June 30. This means that Bridges needs to collect results for publishing an annual report approximately at the end of each July. Thus, surveys are administered annually between May 1 and June 30. Rick Ridgway and Rev. James A. Milley were the administrators of the survey. Milley administered the survey during the first two years, and Ridgway administered the survey during the last three years. Milley trained Ridgway in administering the survey to maintain as much consistency as possible. Attempts to train more survey administrators were abandoned. While protocols and consistency in methodology were valued and followed, this doctoral project does not claim that this process of evaluation rises to the level of a reliable scientific study.

The actual activity of administering the survey can be represented by the following compilation of the years into a single year’s narrative. In the first week of May of each year, either Jim Milley or Rick Ridgway called the Bridge Leaders on the phone to administer the survey over the phone personally. A few Bridge Leaders insisted on filling out the survey without the assistance of a survey administrator. After receiving two or three surveys with invalid answers, such as a leader reporting that he was discipling 250 people (which is simply too many for anyone), this optional practice was abandoned despite the protest of the requesting Bridge Leader. Jim and Rick call Bridge Leaders repeatedly, send emails, and send text messages. Finally, appointments are made and reminders are sent. Some Bridge Leaders miss their appointments. Sometimes more text messages, emails, and personal reminders on a Sunday morning are necessary to obtain the cooperation of as many Bridge Leaders as possible. A few Bridge Leaders have
simply refuse to participate. The effort to complete surveys generally extends into late June. When we finally resolve that no more surveys can be completed, it is time for Rick Ridgway to compile the results using Microsoft Excel.

Additional Surveys

While the evaluation results presented in this chapter derive from the survey on Discipleship Activity, Bridges has been working on developing three additional surveys with the help of Dr. Gaithri Fernando, a psychologist from Cal State Los Angeles. Dr. Gaithri is applying her professional experience in the development of Bridges’ measuring instruments through a standard process that leads to more useful, reliable, and valid survey results. The surveys have been copyrighted and registered. Another team is deploying the surveys in an on-line environment for easy access across America.

The first survey titled, “Bridge Leader Skills,” measures the competence of the missionary leader in the seven categories of bridging skills (see Appendix H). The results display a score for each of the seven categories of bridge skills. By observing the change in scores over the years, Bridge Leaders can watch their skill capability improve with practice, training, and study.

The second survey titled, “Characteristics of Disciples,” measures the maturity or outcomes of discipleship (see Appendix I). When a missionary leader discipless another person, that person should show progress in a number of skill areas over time. This survey allows both the disciple and the discipler to notice progress or lack of progress in four major areas: spiritual maturity, ministry maturity, emotional maturity, and mission maturity. Thus, for example, the instrument asks questions that discern whether a
respondent feels comfortable talking to God, helping another person learn how to talk to God, does so in an emotionally healthy way, and could also help a person of a different language group learn how to talk to God. The respondent receives a score for each of these four areas of maturity.

The third survey titled, “Discipleship Activities,” identifies and asks questions about behaviors that lead to discipling relationships with people outside existing churches (see Appendix C). The survey measures the skills needed by the new type of missionary leader to engage, befriend, and disciple people outside of church culture. This survey has the advantage of being short, with only thirteen questions. This survey also does not require sophisticated computations for scoring. Each question receives a numeric response that may be easily compared to the numeric score reported by the Bridge Leader the following year. This survey is particularly designed to answer the following questions: 1) Does the participation in ACTS services coincide with an increase in the number of unchurched friends? 2) Does the participation in ACTS services coincide with a person who has never made a disciple of Jesus actually changing everyday behaviors and beginning to make a disciple of Jesus? 3) Does the participation in ACTS services coincide with an increase in the number of unchurched discipleship groups formed by the Bridge Leader?

The fourth survey entitled, “Christ-Following Communities,” measures the 13 characteristics of a healthy congregation as defined by Bridges’ marks of a church in chapter 4. Some lists are entitled “12 Characteristics.” One bullet point on this list has two characteristics listed to make 13 for survey measurement. This survey measures the progress and quality of each Christ-following community over time. It is the most
complex of the four surveys, with seventy questions and another eight questions to measure the participant’s bias in some areas (see Appendix J). 

**Results**

This section presents the results in the order of the criteria listed in the evaluation section. The first measure of the results is the outcome of whether the Bridge Leaders who participated actually learned to make disciples. The most significant indicator of the success of the new model for training Bridge Leaders is that 72 percent of Bridge Leaders who had not previously discipled someone, after participating in the new model of ACTS services, did disciple another person who was not meaningfully engaged with an existing congregation. Also, Bridge Leaders from Greater Los Angeles are discipling on average four unchurched people in 2018, with 46 respondents discipling 201 unchurched people altogether. This is the outcome that shows God is working through God’s people. These results are explained in more detail below.

The second criterion of evaluation was funding. The funding for the project was obtained repeatedly over the past five years. From one initial angel investor, over 364 individual financial partners are now contributing to Bridges. From La Canada Presbyterian Church’s initial annual commitment, another twelve congregations have joined as financial partners. The general ministry fund of Bridges has grown from zero to $271,281 in fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

The third criterion of evaluation related to enlisting qualified professionals to deliver the ACTS services. Bridges was able to contract with the professionals to provide the ACTS services over the past five years. The coaching team from Christian Associates International led by Dr. Dan Steigerwald signed a contract with Bridges in 2013 to
provide coaching services for all Bridge Leaders. Christian Associates International has since changed its name to Communitas. Norm Gordon took the position as Support Group Catalyst in 2017. Joanna Raabsmith took the position of Coaching Catalyst in 2017. Both are long-term Bridge Leaders. Norm Gordon completed the curriculum and the first training for all the current and new Support Group Leaders in Greater Los Angeles in 2017. Psychologist Dr. Gaithri Fernando, now on the board of directors, helped develop the Discipleship Activities survey as well as the additional three surveys still waiting to be deployed in the field. Bridge Leaders have led support groups as volunteers when asked to lead an existing group. Other Bridge Leaders have been paid to lead a Bridges Support Group that they recruited themselves. Rev. Jim Milley has written the curriculum for “Transitioning from Friendship to Discipleship,” “Bridges 7 Skills,” “101 Bridging Skills,” and Bridges six-week and four-week curricula for local congregations for recruiting more Bridge Leaders.

The next criterion for evaluation is the reported satisfaction of the Bridge Leaders themselves with the ACTS services. The Bridge Leaders report their own sense of satisfaction with their experience of ACTS services as reflected in Table 2.
Table 2. Bridge Leaders’ Scores regarding ACTS Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Five Star Score</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Score</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Score</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Groups Score</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support Score</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDM Coach Score</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On line Tools Score</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from others Score</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall score</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above scores show that Bridge Leaders gave their highest satisfaction score to coaching (4.6). Training came in second with a score of 4.2, and Support Groups came in third with a score of 3.9. The survey did not collect their satisfaction score with surveys.

For the purposes of this doctoral project, only the results of the Discipleship Activities survey have been collected and analyzed. Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate the totals and the averages, respectively, of the results of the Discipleship Activities survey for the years 2013 through 2018. These numerical charts do not allow for comparison across years, but they do provide a snapshot of each year.

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The survey results were originally on a four-point scale. Simple mathematical proportional computations were used to calculate the comparable score on a 5-point scale. Our Bridge Leaders and board members preferred talking about aiming for “5-star service” as one of our values.
Table 3 provides the total responses. In the first year, only fifteen Bridge Leaders completed the survey (out of about twenty-five total). In 2018, forty-six Bridge Leaders from the Greater Los Angeles area completed the survey. The important numbers for this evaluation process is that 46 Bridge Leaders are discipling 201 people from outside existing congregations in 2018. These 46 leaders have formed 51 Discipleship Groups and 30 Leaders Groups. Discipleship Groups and Leader Groups are precursors to Christ-following communities, but they have not yet practiced a majority of the thirteen characteristics of Christ-following communities.

Table 3. Discipleship Activities Survey Results: Total Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of Survey:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridge Leaders Responding:</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People Influenced</strong></td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>1383</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>3821</td>
<td>2834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groups Joined</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intentional Friendships</strong></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>1180</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>1030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting with Regularly</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciples</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciple Groups</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>X*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader Groups</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>X*</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These numbers were not collected to meet protocol standards for this particular year
By calculating averages per Bridge Leader using the results in Table 3, the results show that each Bridge Leader in 2018 is on average discipling four unchurched people who are not participating meaningfully in an existing congregation. This means that these Bridge Leaders not only befriended these individuals and started meeting regularly with them, but also that these individuals trusted the Bridge Leaders enough to open up their spiritual lives to the Bridge Leader. There must have been some safe and sacred space that was created, and these individuals are discovering spiritual friendship and relationship with God.

Based on the above numerical results from all of the Bridge Leaders who responded, further computations were made that allow for year over year comparisons. Rather than compiling the results for each question for all Bridge Leaders, these more revealing computations compile the difference in scores from year to year of each Bridge Leader for each question.

Thus, the answers to the three basic questions for evaluation are as follows. For question one, 100 percent of Bridge Leaders who did not have a single unchurched friend when beginning ACTS services with Bridges were able to make an unchurched friend within the timespan of one year. For question two, just over 72 percent of Bridge Leaders who originally did not have any disciples when they began participating in Bridges began making at least one disciple in the timespan of about two years. For question three, of the leaders who joined Bridges who did not have any discipleship groups when they first started (thought they did have disciples), 73 percent were able to create groups in the timespan of one year.

Using the Results for the Benefit of the Bridge Leader
Over time, individuals can also use the results from the Discipleship Activity survey to see trends in their own progress or regression, perhaps noticing where they are stuck and then working to get unstuck. Our coaches and support group leaders work with participants to interpret their individual trends and to take appropriate actions based on their learnings about themselves. Tables 4 demonstrates an example of a report that can help Bridge Leaders see how God is at work through them over time.

Table 4. Example 1 of Individual Bridge Leader Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From Hanging Out to Making Disciples:</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of people Influenced</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of nonchurched groups</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of nonchurched friends</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of friends with whom meeting regularly</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of disciples meeting regularly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of disciple groups meeting regularly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Christ Following Communities meeting regularly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of members in Christ-Following Communities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

This Bridge Leader has learned how to make disciples. This person always had the ability to “hang out” with many people outside church culture but did not quite know how to transition into spiritual conversation, including introducing Scripture and learning how to talk and listen to God together with another person. This Bridge Leader had to
learn to spend less time with people who were not truly interested in discipleship. This created the time needed in his schedule to spend with people who really wanted to spend time learning how to connect with God. The jump from two to three disciples in the first two years to eight to ten disciples in the last two years shows significant progress in discipling people. At the same time, this Bridge Leader seems to be stuck on the transition between making disciples and gathering them into a group. The next step for this Bridge Leader is learning either how to gather disciples into a weekly Christ-following community or to help one of his or her disciples to do this gathering and leading.

The results from the various methods of evaluation of the model for nurturing Bridge Leaders for bi-vocational ministry among unchurched peoples in Greater Los Angeles are positive. Bridges secured the participants, funding, leaders, locations, and curriculums to successfully deliver the assessments, coaching, training, and support services concurrently to participants over the last 5 years. These participants actually changed their behaviors to begin discipling unchurched people, with 46 participants discipling 201 unchurched people in 2018. Bridge Leaders were generally satisfied with the services. However, the satisfaction score for Support Groups dipped just below a 4.0 on a 5 point scale. Bridges needs to examine how to increase satisfaction with Support Groups, such as introducing more shared leadership. The project has resulted in Bridges continuing to provide ACTS services to 46 Bridge Leaders across Greater Los Angeles and over 80 Bridge Leaders across America in 4 states.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This doctoral project explored the need, theological foundations, and strategy for nurturing bi-vocational missionaries (Bridge Leaders) to serve with unchurched people in the Greater Los Angeles area. Part One explored the need for bi-vocational missionaries. Part Two explored the theological and psychological reflections that inform the nature and integrity of the role of bi-vocational Bridge Leaders and the process of formation for these missionary leaders. Part Three described a structure and method of nurturing Bridge Leaders that emerged from the application of the contextual learning of trial and error over several years, as well as from the theological reflections and psychological insights of this doctoral project.

The process developed by Bridges for nurturing bi-vocational missionaries turned out to be low in cost and avoided relocating the leaders out of their ministry contexts. This method relied more on context than on books, prior experience than on expert professors, relational discipleship than on programs, and small communities rather than large groups. This chapter presents conclusions from each of the three parts, describes some key findings, and suggests some avenues for future reflection and exploration.

This doctoral project shows that there is a need for bi-vocational missionaries in Greater Los Angeles. Several years ago I researched the cost of housing in Greater Los Angeles and found that it would cost pastors moving from Phoenix, Arizona to Los Angeles at least twice the value of their homes to move to LA, even if they chose a home in Watts, famous for the Watts riots in 1965. More than ever, “congregations are
increasingly unable to afford to provide housing for pastors,”¹ says Ken Baker, Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of San Fernando.

Now in 2018, Mayor Garcetti, Andy Bales of Union Rescue Mission, and various City Council members have requested that the federal government provide emergency shelters in Los Angeles because the number of homeless people has grown to over 58,000. One council member said, “The city should take a FEMA-like approach to the city's homeless problem and react to the people sleeping on city streets in the same manner as if a natural disaster had hit by installing emergency shelters.”² In Bridges, we have stopped using the term “bi-vocational” and begun using the term “multi-sourced income,” which more accurately describes how many of our Bridge Leaders and pastors are constructing their lives in order to stay in formal ministry positions at least part-time. Because the cost of living in Los Angeles continues to climb relative to the rest of the country, congregations continue to find it increasingly difficult to manage the payments for housing and salary necessary for a full-time pastor.

This doctoral project also demonstrates the need for missionary, cross-cultural skills among the leaders of Greater Los Angeles. One interesting finding in this area is that while Los Angeles has increasingly more ethnic and linguistic diversity, the most ethnically non-diverse areas of the city are not primarily Anglo-European.³ There are

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¹ Ken Baker, interview by the author, August 22, 2018.


neighborhoods that are 95 to 100 percent Hispanic or 95 to 100 percent Korean. Some people grow up and live in these neighborhoods for much of their lives, not finding a reason to integrate with the more ethnically diverse parts of Los Angeles. Whether the ethnic and linguistic groups are spread out in networks across Greater Los Angeles or gathered together into “clumps” in a few neighborhoods, each group requires a missionary approach in Los Angeles as much as it does in a foreign country. At the same time, the cultural skills needed go beyond navigating language diversity and ethnicity. One on occasion, a Bridge Leader had developed a close relationship with her neighbor over the course of a year as they “fast walked” and attended yoga together. But when her neighbor found out that she voted for Donald Trump in the presidential election, the Bridge Leader reported that her neighbor stuck an entire pot of food in her mailbox, making sure the food was smeared on the inside of the mailbox, and did not speak to her for over a year. Even when everyone is speaking English, the differences in worldview that result from differences in class, age, gender, political persuasion, and even sports team affiliation sometimes require missionary skills.

Theologically, this doctoral project demonstrated that the theology, methodologies, and missiology of Bridges as explored and articulated in Part Three are founded in Scripture and supported by the theology of John Calvin, Jürgen Moltmann, and the Book of Confessions of the PCUSA. Jesus’ incarnation is the backbone for the first missionary skill category—moving into the lives and communities of those outside of existing church culture. This entry of God into our world, this movement of God

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4 Janet Boggs, phone interview with the author, December 2016.
towards us in the form of a baby, models to us how we may enter into the world of the people in our networks and neighborhoods. While we cannot become babies, we can be gentle, curious, questioning, learning, smiling, and giving of love, joy, grace, and mercy. Bridge Leaders need the capacity first to see the cultural gap between the congregational culture and the cultures surrounding a congregation, and then Bridge Leaders need to have the love, courage, and skills to move into the culture of the other.

Bridges puts a tremendous focus on “going” into the other’s culture not only because of the incarnation, but because of Jesus’ command to “go” in John 28:19. This “go” cannot be reduced by a grammatical misapplication to “as you are going,” as if Christians can remain in Christian culture, worship, and disobey God’s commands without consequence (Jeremiah 7:9,10). Israel suffered exile as a result of their delusion that the blessing of Abraham was simply for the racial descendants of Abraham who could chant “the temple of the LORD” (Jeremiah 7:4). After this same misunderstanding was reflected in a question to Jesus, Jesus sends out his disciples to all the ends of the earth and to all peoples in Acts 2:2. The Church of Jesus Christ continues on the same mission announced by God to Abraham to bless all people of the earth.

The theological reflection in Part Two on the nature of the Church (ecclesia) provides a method and criteria to move towards a corrective to the expensive, declining model of church that continues to be pursued by denominational leaders in the Greater Los Angeles area, especially in the PCUSA, which was documented in Part One. The increasing hardships of paying for a full-time pastor, his or her housing, and building maintenance are forcing the issue of defining a healthy, faithfully functioning congregation. Theologically, the Church since the time of Abraham and his family was
defined as a people of faith responding to the call of God, believing the promise of God, participating in the mission of God, and now following Jesus and waiting for the second coming and the fully revealed Kingdom of God. While disciples worship, the primary activity of the Church as we wait for the second coming is making disciples. Churches need to be formed around the purpose of making disciples rather than satisfying donors or creating “successful” programs that do things other than make disciples. Based on this theology, Bridges calls a biblical ecclesia a “Christ-following community” because this wording stresses disciples in community learning how to make disciples. Disciples who follow Christ necessarily make disciples. Congregations need help to redefine their purposes and may be able to use the survey developed by Bridges to evaluate their own health and vitality.

At the same time, perhaps for the congregations in Greater Los Angeles, things have come full circle in the last one hundred years. Looking back at the Azusa Street Revival, it began at a private home after the previously invited, visiting, one-eyed black pastor was locked out of the local church building. They met on the porch of a near by home. When the porch collapsed under the weight of the people, they rented an abandoned warehouse-shaped “church” that had been used for horse stalls. The revival went on for nine years—with no marketing.

Part Three describes in detail the strategy used by Bridges to make disciples. The structure and methodology brings together the insights from psychological issues in

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5 Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival*.

human change theory, theological reflection, and the context of the Greater Los Angeles. The methodologies, to be contextual, start with the stories from the participants that come from their everyday lives and from their intentional efforts to take a next step from the seven categories of missionary skills. This pattern is true for the coaching, the support groups, and even in the training conferences that Bridges offers. Bridge Leaders often need help learning how to participate in this method of learning, which is more demanding than simply listening to a lecture. This style of learning involves the sharing of a story, after which the facilitator offers input briefly (just a few minutes), and others from the group are invited to also contribute with stories and scriptures that elucidate, reinforce, or perhaps contrast or contradict. The goal is to take next steps in one or more of the seven categories of missionary skills as described in Chapter 6.

Some of the more salient conclusions from this doctoral project involve some overarching thoughts. First, there is a role for disciples and organizations to help facilitate movements of disciple making and church planting based on the patterns of historical church planting movements. While God the Holy Spirit is the primary changer of humans, disciples have a role in facilitating the introduction and meeting of people with the living God. Creating safe and sacred spaces is a primary skill for making disciples. In human change theory, when people do not feel safe, they enter an adrenaline-induced state of “fight or flight.” This state is not conducive to the intimacy with God in the Holy Spirit where the meeting of God and humans takes place, wherein God changes the human heart and the capacity of the human will. Second, using multiple strategies at

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once works better than using one strategy at a time in helping Christians to move from being congregational attenders to being disciple makers. Third, it takes a much longer time than most would like it to take for people to change their behavior from being congregational attenders to being disciple makers. It took between one and two years for participants in Bridges ACTS services to begin making disciples. These results suggest that congregations should not expect results from short programs. Congregations need to conceive and implement training programs that have clearly defined outcomes, with multiple strategies engaged simultaneously designed to achieve the outcomes. Human change involves every part of being human as enumerated and treated in Willard’s Renovation of the Heart and simply does not happen quickly. Like the training of human muscles, human change requires repeated repetition in the same direction over a significant period in a safe and sacred environment of loving community.

This doctoral project suggests three areas for future study. These include the use of the surveys developed by Bridges, the development of more services to help Bridge Leaders gather a financial support team, and scalable systems within Bridges that allow for exponential growth in the number of Bridge Leaders and Christ-following communities that Bridges is able to support in the next five years. Moving forward in these three areas would take Bridges to the next level.

While the survey on Discipleship Activity was used consistently over the past five years, Bridges has yet to implement the other three surveys. These would measure the quality of disciples made, the quality of skills used by Bridge Leaders, and the quality of Christ-following communities emerging from the movement. The four surveys together,
if shaped into an easy-to-engage format on an easy-to-use platform, could be of meaningful use to Bridges as well as to many congregations and denominations.

Another area for future study relates to services that would better empower Bridge Leaders to build teams of people who financially support their ministries. ACTS services were not originally designed with services for training leaders in fund development. Ordained Bridge Leaders who have previously served as pastors have been much more successful at raising funds from individuals as a source of income than our non-ordained Bridge Leaders who are in non-pastoral fields of work. Two of our foreign-born Bridge Leader couples have had significant financial difficulties that have crippled their ministries. More study and development is needed to help lay people and immigrants develop the capacity to raise funds from individuals to help support their ministries.

More study is needed regarding what is necessary for Bridges to grow in scale. Bridge Leader numbers doubled or almost doubled each year between 2012 and 2017 until the number reached about seventy Bridge Leaders. This past year, the growth of Bridges slowed. Only fourteen Bridge Leaders were added to reach eighty-four Bridge Leaders. Of course, while some Bridge Leaders are joining, others are leaving. They give a variety of reasons. Underneath all the reasons is the reality that the systems in place began to reach the limits of their functionality for the present volume of Bridge Leaders. As the Bridge Leaders multiply, systems such as accounting, reporting, development of coaches, development of support group leaders, caring services for Bridge Leaders, and training services for Bridge Leaders also need to grow and multiply. Bridges has recently succeeded in training the first support group leaders who have been Bridge Leaders. Bridges is in the middle of the process of implementing a new accounting system.
Bridges has yet to train Bridge Leaders to be coaches for other Bridge Leaders. While this doctoral project has helped shape and evaluate a model of nurturing bi-vocational missionaries for the Greater Los Angeles area, the ability to extend this model to more and more leaders will require a wider examination of the question of how to make this model scalable.

Greater Los Angeles is a place where a diversity of peoples and cultures have come together to create a tremendous opportunity for those who consider themselves followers of Jesus Christ. While the Presbytery of San Fernando continues to decline by the measures of Sunday worship attendance and membership, there is another, more biblical and theological framework for measuring the health and success of congregations—their ability to go and make disciples.

There is vast opportunity in Greater Los Angeles to befriend and disciple multiple peoples in multiple subcultures, many of whom speak English and many of whom speak languages from around the world. Many Christians are already working alongside these unchurched peoples, golfing at the same country clubs, exercising at the same 24-Hour Fitness clubs, standing alongside them in the checkout lines, and drinking coffee at the tables next to them. Many Christians discover that they only spend time with other Christians, and they have to learn how to join groups outside of Christian circles in order to befriend and disciple unchurched people. Statistics from the “Discipleship Activity Survey” reviewed in Chapter 7 show that 72 percent of participants who had previously not made a disciple began to make a disciple while receiving ACTS services. Wherever Christians are in the learning process, this doctoral project demonstrates that this transformation to a lifestyle of making disciples is possible.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


_______. “Word Study on Discipleship.” Class notes, Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctoral of Ministry Cohort Seminar, October 13, 2010.
## APPENDIX A

### ACTS SERVICES FROM 2013 THROUGH 2016

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APPENDIX B
SAMPLE FROM “AN ORAL HISTORY”

1.1  Our Experiments with merging congregations in need of Redevelopment

According to Glen Thorp, three pastors made an attempt to combine three different congregations with fewer members into one congregation with a large enough membership for worship and fellowship. The idea was to choose a new location and bring the three congregations together. The congregations were Trinity Presbyterian Church North Hollywood, First Presbyterian Church North Hollywood, and Van Nuys Presbyterian Church. All three sessions and all three pastors agreed to the plan.

This plan was interrupted when the Northridge Earthquake occurred in January 1994. There was damage on all three properties. The Pastor of First Presbyterian left for another call. The next pastor did not agree to the plan.

We learned:

- It takes unanimous agreement among pastors, sessions, and presbytery for a merger to occur.
- It is difficult to sustain the unanimous agreement that is necessary to succeed.
- When calling a new pastor into this type of situation, the PNC needs to communicate the plan to the candidates in the call process. It would have helped for Presbytery to assist in this communication.

1.2  Our Experiments with Parish Associates and the Jeremiah Initiative

We spent well over $100,000 working with Parish Associates and The Jeremiah Initiative from approximately 2007-2009.

Steve Smith writes:

“My recollection is that, in spite of much promo work on the part of then-E. P. Jerry North. . . and other informational/recruiting opportunities at various presbytery functions. . . we were very disappointed in how few churches elected to take part. A big obstacle may have been the anticipated three-year time frame for the process - but I also suspect the thought of re-evaluating ministry at a deep level was perceived as threatening to pastors and congregations.

My hunch is that established churches are always looking for a "quick-fix program" that can simply be plugged in to their current approaches to ministry and that will not significantly alter long-cherished patterns of church life.
APPENDIX C

SURVEY: DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

An “Unchurched group” refers to any group that has not officially been sanctioned by a church, or is not explicitly together for faith-based activities. Examples of unchurched groups include: city council, hiking clubs, reading clubs (not those organized by churches or small groups), ‘foodie’ groups, parenting groups (not organized by the church), stamp collecting groups, scouting, etc.

An “Unchurched person” refers to any person who doesn’t meaningfully participate in an existing Christian church. Going to church twice a year is not meaningful participation. We use the word “unchurched” because the word makes no judgment on a person’s spiritual life or relationship with God. What we can know is that they do not experience value in participating in an existing Christian church.

1. How many “unchurched groups” have you joined and currently participate in?
   Please list and name each unchurched group for which the group counts you an active member. It doesn’t matter how long ago you joined the unchurched group. What matters is that you still actively participate.

2. How many unchurched people are at least passively observing your life and actions in the group?
   First, give the name of the unchurched group. Then write down the number of people in that group you believe are observing you.

3. How many unchurched people are influenced by your membership in their group?
   “Influence” refers to whether the person observing you has changed their thoughts, attitudes, preferences, perceptions, and/or behaviors in any way because of your presence in his/her life.
   First, give the name (from the list above) of the unchurched group. Then write down the number of people in that group you believe you are influencing.

4. Other than people in the unchurched groups mentioned above, how many other unchurched people do you influence? Such people may include individuals you are befriending who are not yet part of a church nor part of one of the unchurched groups you have joined.

5. How many unchurched people count you as their friend?
   While many people may passively observe your life and actions, you only have time for a smaller group of friends. How many such unchurched friends do you have?

6. How many unchurched friends are you currently meeting with regularly outside of the larger, official group meetings? This includes meeting for casual conversation, sports, drinking, exercise, walking, or any other purpose.
We call this casual discipleship. It starts as soon as we begin meeting regularly with an unchurched person, even though they may not be at a place where they desire to grow spiritually. Count the number of people like this with whom you meet regularly.

7. How many unchurched friends know that you are meeting with them in order to grow as disciples?
   
   Meeting for a coffee/tea and having a casual conversation isn’t enough to count for this question. There comes a time when discipleship becomes overt. When your friend wants to learn more about following Jesus and knowingly accepts your help in this area, and when you begin to help them, then you have an overt discipling relationship. You begin to meet regularly in order to engage in reading scripture, prayer, confession, service and/or story telling with the purpose of growing in our ability to follow Jesus. How many such friends do you have with who you have a discipling relationship?

8. How many groups do you facilitate for the purpose of discipleship?
   
   After you have begun discipling more than one unchurched person, the possibility exists for you to meet as a group. This isn’t about taking your unchurched friends to church. This is about meeting together for mutual encouragement, discipleship, service and worship. List a name for each group.

9. How many people are in each of the discipleship groups that you facilitate?
   
   Please list the name of the group and the number of people in each group.

10. How many groups are you facilitating that are training disciples to serve as missionaries in their everyday lives among the unchurched (thus on their way to becoming a Bridge Leader)?

   By facilitating we mean that you are the primary, or one of the primary people helping these groups to train. In this group, everyone is a follower of Jesus and is willing to help others follow Jesus. These people may have come from a church or an unchurched group. Wherever they came from, you all are meeting not just to grow in discipleship but to equip yourselves to help unchurched people begin to follow Jesus.

11. How many people (in each group that you are facilitating) are you training as missionaries in their everyday lives among the unchurched (thus on their way to becoming a Bridge Leader)?

   Give the name of the group, the number of people in each group, then add up all the people in each group and give the total.

12. What else would you like to share about your efforts to disciple unchurched people?

   Please list and/or discuss briefly here:

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1. **Move in**
   - Immediate interaction with locals
   - Avoiding other outsiders especially ones from your own previous home
   - Asking locals for help
   - Choosing a local to trust for basic and everyday decisions
   - Identifying the person of peace
   - Identifying gate keepers
   - Using local solutions
   - Leaving your luggage behind
   - Avoiding comparison statements
   - Finding the good and affirming
   - Adopting local patterns of behavior
   - Allow their needs to become your needs.

2. **Join** Their Group
   - Discerning Groups
   - Discerning Networks
   - Accepting invitations
   - Discerning Group Responsiveness
   - Volunteer in overlooked or unwanted areas of serving.
   - Say "yes."
   - Discovering and Going Through Entrance Customs
   - Submitting to local leadership
   - Resist sharing ideas or leading change for a period of time

3. **Learn** their language
   - Curiosity Driven
   - Asking Questions
   - Living in Ambiguity
   - Using L. A. M. P. method for language learning
   - Keeping a Learning Posture
   - Adopting local behaviors
   - Choosing Informants Carefully
   - Reflection on Daily Results of Actions
   - Observation
   - Failing Publicly without shame
   - Accepting End of Guest Status
   - Read books they are interested in and are already discussing--don't give them books to read that you like or that are Christian classics.
   - Learn what questions are avoided
   - Learn what causes fear, sadness, jealousy, joy, and trust
   - What gives hope?
   - What takes a way hope?
   - Where is God working?
• Where are spiritual things experienced and named?

4. Add Value to Their Community

• Give and receive personally
• Accept first task offered regardless of fit or desire
• Follow local leaders
• Wait for invitation to add value
• Listening for felt needs
• Adopt idea of local leader
• Submit to local leaders

5. Help People to Live Like Jesus

• Creating Safe and Sacred Space
• Affirming existing spiritual practices
• Naming existing spiritual practices
• Creating new spiritual practices that fit with existing patterns of behavior
• Keep it simple: Keep to the Fist Analogy
• Model Spiritual Practices
• Practice Shared Leadership
• Scout method of allowing diversity
• Pray
• Listen
• Read scripture
• Community
• Holy spirit
• Modeling service in the community
• Mentoring

6. Gather Groups

• What is their gift giving etiquette?

• Serve as a volunteer
• Be available to people
• Humble yourself and climb the ranks of leadership of local organizations, beginning at the bottom even though you feel overqualified

• Knowing when to refer
• Using real life images to explain spiritual truth
• Connecting life happenings to relevant scriptures
• Verbally sharing biblical stories without a Bible
• Affirming people with scriptural sayings and stories
• Model receiving input from friends. Ask for their perspective and follow through with action based on the advice of the locals.
• Convening relationships
• Introducing like-minded folks to each other
• Setting up meeting times
• Facilitate people who host get-togethers
• Naming and encouraging 12 Group activities of Christ-following communities
• Helping groups define and live an outward vision for their community
• Modeling best group practices
• Developing format & content
• Involving many in group in leadership of 12 practices
• Encouraging annual assessments
• Help the group listen for the Holy Spirit
• Set up a 3-person Advisory body
• Facilitate training of Advisory body
• Have by-laws written
• Arrange for accounting services
• Facilitate and encourage financial giving
• Ensure monthly advisory meetings and minutes are saved digitally with Bridges
• Host gatherings people actually want to attend and include the favorite beverages of your community.

7. Send Out More Leaders

• Help people recognize, name, accept and affirm their call
• Recognizing new leaders who are ready to be sent
• Slow down leaders who are not ready to be sent
• Evaluate, monitor, and publicly praise good practice
• Advising
• Connecting people with resources
• Help new Bridge Leaders connect with Assessment, Coaching, Training and Support Groups and Support Accounting
• Functioning as a “supervisor” within Bridges for the new leader
• When people leave your community due to job changes etc., use the situation as an opportunity to bless and send the person as a missionary leader to the new destination.

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# APPENDIX E

## EXAMPLES OF QUALITY OF DISCIPLESHIP CONSTRUCTS FOR SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

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<tr>
<th>SPIRITUAL Outcomes</th>
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<td>Giving time, talents, and financial resources</td>
<td>my resources with others</td>
<td>can experience joy despite difficult circumstances, can play and rejoice</td>
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1. loving enemies
2. moving forward without a plan
3. being able to train others in something we just learned
4. staying in relationships with people who harm you
5. looking for God’s plan when our plans fail
6. ministers from capacity/fullness
7. strong sense of call related to God’s missions to all peoples
8. ministers in power of Holy Spirit
9. suffering with others as effective ministry

For a full listing of constructs, contact Bridges at www.bridgesus.org
APPENDIX F

ADULT TRANSFORMATION CYCLE

The Goal of Adult Formation is to help people be more like Christ. Utilizing the adult transformation cycle enables change to occur in each person and group’s life, character, and relationship with God by facilitating interaction with The Holy Spirit.

When we ACT without REFLECTION, we may miss the meaning of events.

When we REFLECT without ACTION, our reflection has no purpose.

When we REFLECT and ACT without SCRIPTURE, we may miss God in both.

When we DO ALL THREE, we are giving God the maximum opportunity to SHAPE US through both scripture and experience. We are giving time, space, and attention to what the HOLY SPIRIT may be doing in our midst.

REPETITION IS REQUIRED: The cycle must go around repeatedly. One day of exercise doesn’t change a person.

SAFE and SACRED SPACE is REQUIRED: people cannot engage this cycle on a transformative level without safe and holy space.
APPENDIX G

AMOUNT OF FUNDS AND NUMBER OF BRIDGE LEADERS SERVING

AMONG 15 PEOPLE GROUPS

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<td>Counseling Ministry</td>
<td>$18,705</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Industry/Media</td>
<td>$38,356</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Immigrant Families</td>
<td>$44,756</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless People</td>
<td>$5,813</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Friends</td>
<td>$44,745</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Housing Ministries</td>
<td>$71,264</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at Local Schools</td>
<td>$8,216</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Ministry</td>
<td>$70,590</td>
<td>6.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant Teens</td>
<td>$22,272</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Interest Clubs</td>
<td>$2,793</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Families</td>
<td>$67,552</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and Children</td>
<td>$36,749</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga/Fitness</td>
<td>$17,420</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated People Ministry</td>
<td>$1,944</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interfaith Friendship (Atheist, Muslim and Jewish)</td>
<td>$133,499</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2016-2017 Total Dollars Spent: $626,189.52/Total Leaders: 73.32
APPENDIX H
SURVEY: BRIDGE LEADER SKILLS

Bridges seeks to equip you in the best of missionary skills for cross-cultural ministry among groups or networks of people who do not participate in existing churches. This survey gives you a chance to rate yourself on those skills. Please rate your current level of skill in each of the areas described. We hope you use the results of this survey to celebrate your progress as you develop these skills through the years.

Please answer the questions below as honestly as you can.

JOINING an existing social group

1. I have joined a group or network of people who don’t participate in existing churches.
   True                                    False

2. Name for The Group: ____________________________

3. I have joined a group or network of people who don’t participate in existing churches.
   True                                    False

4. How many hours a week do you spend with this group or network?
   a) 0-10  b) 11-20  c) 21-30  d) 31-40  e) 41 or more

5. I have arranged my schedule in such a way as to maximize time with people in my group so I can become a part of their lives.
   a) Not at all  b) A little  c) some  d) a lot

6. When invited to engage in a deeper way with people in my group, I take that opportunity.
   a) Rarely  b) sometimes  c) often  d) almost all the time  e) all the time

7. People from my group or network come to me for advice and guidance.
   a) Rarely  b) sometimes  c) often  d) almost all the time  e) all the time

8. When I go to church or spend time with Christians from existing churches, I feel like I don’t belong like I used to.
   a) Not at all true  b) Not very true  c) Somewhat true  d) quite true  e) Very true

9. From my group, there are people who want to spend time with me regularly outside of group meetings.
   a) None at all  b) One or two  c) Some (fewer than half)  d) Very many (more than half)
10. I know that I have been more deeply accepted into my group because...

**SPEAKING their language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. I know the language and idioms used in my group(s).</th>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. When I speak, people in my group feel like I’m speaking just like one of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Or Alternately...

12. I can confidently use the language of my group to speak like one of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. I help people talk about their spiritual experiences in their own words and idioms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. I know which stories from the Bible relate really well to the lives of the people in my group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. I am able to share stories from the Bible in ways that are welcomed in my group(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. I can effectively share with members of my group the good news in ways that sound like good news to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Not at all</th>
<th>b) A little</th>
<th>c) Some</th>
<th>d) A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**ADDING value**

17. When asked to help or serve in my group, I have done so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Rarely</th>
<th>b) Sometimes</th>
<th>c) Often</th>
<th>d) Almost all the time</th>
<th>e) All the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

18. When asked to fulfill a leadership role in my group, I have done so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Rarely</th>
<th>b) Sometimes</th>
<th>c) Often</th>
<th>d) Almost all the time</th>
<th>e) All the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

19. I help members of my group to achieve the goals and fulfill the vision they have for themselves in life.
20. I have provided (or facilitated the provision of) needed resources/services to help my group.
   a) Rarely      b) Sometimes      c) Often      d) Almost all the time      e) All the time

21. I help people in my group to notice the ways in which God works in their lives, sometimes in ways that they previously didn’t notice.
   a) Rarely      b) Sometimes      c) Often      d) Almost all the time      e) All the time

**FACILITATING others to live the “Jesus way”**

22. There are people from my group who want to meet with me regularly to learn more about spiritual things, God, or following Jesus.
   a) Not at all      b) A little      c) Some      d) A lot

23. I become impatient if I perceive that members of my group(s) are not growing and changing in ways that demonstrate that spiritual change is happening within them.
   a) Rarely      b) Sometimes      c) Often      d) Almost all the time      e) All the time

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SURVEY: CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE

Name: ______________________  Date: ______________________

Please read these instructions! They will help you answer the survey.

This survey was designed to help you keep track of your journey and development as a Bridge Leader over time. The answers to these questions will only be for YOU. You may share them with your accountability partner or with Bridges if you wish, but they are primarily intended to help you understand your strengths and weaknesses, and to celebrate your development as you mature in your faith and leadership over time. When you take this survey again in a year or more, you may see yourself developing in areas of your life that you may not otherwise have noticed.

Please respond to all questions as honestly as possible. No one is expected to answer all the questions in the “perceived right direction.” At the end of the questionnaire there are some questions where you can provide more qualitative information about your journey. There is also space to provide your feedback about the survey itself. These responses should be shared with Bridges if you believe they will help to make the survey more effective.

1. I have a spiritual accountability partner.  
   ___ Y  ___ N

2. I am being spiritual mentored by someone who has agreed to mentor me.  
   ___ Y  ___ N

3. I am open to feedback from my accountability partner/spiritual mentor.  
   ___ Y  ___ N

4. I regularly listen for the direction of the Holy Spirit in my life  
   ___ Y  ___ N

5. I listen to and rely on the Holy Spirit to empower my ministry  
   ___ Y  ___ N

6. I can live in a geographical area where people are very different from me  
   ___ Y  ___ N

7. I support missionary activities.  
   ___ Y  ___ N
   a. If yes, please indicate how you support the activities (e.g. prayer, volunteering, financial support, etc.)

__________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___
8. a. Circle the number of places you have lived in for a significant portion of time (6 months or more), where the people from that area are from a culture very different from yours:

\[ 0 \quad 1 – 3 \quad 4 \text{ or more} \]

b. Please list these places:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

9. a. I volunteer my time at church: ______ yes ______ no

b. Please specify the kind of activity, frequency (per day, week or month), and the TOTAL amount of time spent (minutes or hours). Use a separate page if necessary.

Activity: ______________________ Frequency ______________________ Time:


Activity: ______________________ Frequency ______________________ Time:


10. a. I volunteer my time in the community (use a separate page if necessary): ______ yes ______ no

b. Please specify the kind of activity:

Activity: ______________________ Frequency ______________________ Time:


Activity: ______________________ Frequency ______________________ Time:


11. I engage in activities that are expressly Christian in focus and/or nature (e.g. small group meetings, prayer groups, book clubs) (please circle appropriate response):

\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
\_ & \text{Once a week} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{twice a week} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{three or more times a week} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{Once a month} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{2 - 3 a month} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{four or more times a month} & \_ \\
\end{array} \]

12. I engage in activities that include mostly or all Christians, but are not focused on expressly Christian activities (e.g. Christian Couples groups that meet for lunch/dinner; Christian singles events) (please circle appropriate response):

\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
\_ & \text{Once a week} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{twice a week} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{three or more times a week} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{Once a month} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{2 - 3 a month} & \_ \\
\_ & \text{four or more times a month} & \_ \\
\end{array} \]
13. I engage in activities that that include a mix of Christian and non-Christian friends and acquaintances (e.g. hobby groups). (please circle appropriate response):
   ___ Once a week      _____ twice a week      _____ three or more times a week
   ___ Once a month    _____ 2 - 3 a month    _____ four or more times a month

14. How many close friends do you have who acknowledge Christ as their savior and embody Christian values?
   0 – 3          4 – 7          8 – 10         11 or more

15. How many close friends do you have who are active in a Christian church?
   0 – 3          4 – 7          8 – 10         11 or more

16. I serve people in need in practical and concrete ways
   _____ Y    _____ N

   Please list some practical and concrete ways you serve the communities around you:

17. Giving money regularly      _____ Y    _____ N
18. Giving money as needed      _____ Y    _____ N
19. Acts of service regularly (e.g., visiting a sick person regularly)      _____ Y    _____ N
20. Acts of service as needed (e.g., giving a ride to someone once in a while) _____ Y    _____ N

   Other (Please list): ____________________________________________________________

21. There is something in my life that takes up a lot of time and energy that I wish I have already overcome (e.g., addiction) _____ Y    _____ N

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APPENDIX J
SURVEY: CHRIST-FOLLOWING COMMUNITIES

These questions are designed to assess different characteristics of Christ-following communities.

Some of these questions pertain to your spiritual life while others are more general. Please answer every question as honestly as you can. Choose the answer that fits you best. Don’t spend too much time thinking about any single question. And please try not to skip any question.

1. A “Christ-following community” is a community of people that seeks to follow Jesus together. Do you belong to such a Christ-following community that is part of the Bridges movement?
   - Y      N

2. Is there an identified leader in your Christ-following community?
   - Y      N

For the rest of these questions, please answer “yes” or “no”. The time frame is the past 12 months. Try not to spend too much time thinking about any one particular question. If the item is true for you, circle “Y”. If it is not true for you, circle “N”.

3. I am regularly and consistently mentoring at least one young person (child/adolescent) to follow Jesus in a variety of settings and activities.
   - Y      N

4. I am regularly and consistently mentoring at least one young person to train others to follow Jesus in different settings and in different activities.
   - Y      N

5. I am regularly and consistently mentoring at least one older person (adult) to follow Jesus in a variety of settings and activities.
   - Y      N

6. I am regularly and consistently mentoring at least one older person to train others to follow Jesus in different settings and in different activities.
   - Y      N

7. I pray for others in my group (talking to and/or listening to God) at least 15 minutes a day.
   - Y      N
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I pray with others at least four times in a week.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I spend a total of at least one hour a week praying with others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I have a specific time set aside for prayer.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>My prayer life is dry (without much spirit, unfulfilling) at this time in my life.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I have consistently responded positively after hearing God’s voice in prayer.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I spend a total of at least one hour every week studying scripture.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I spend at least one hour a day studying scripture.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>My current life circumstances make it difficult to set aside time for studying scripture.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I consistently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Do things to make the person I’m talking to feel “safe” and allow them to be vulnerable.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Spend time helping to meet someone’s practical needs.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Do things to help someone feel special and loved.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Receive love from others.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Do things to have fun and be lighthearted.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Set healthy boundaries with people.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I often visit someone whom I know is sick even though he/she may not be a close friend.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I provide food for hungry people.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I visit prisoners.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I contribute money to the common purse of one or more groups to which I belong.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I donate at least 10% of my gross income.</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I donate my time regularly (e.g. donating professional skills, helping people out in practical ways).</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I share the things I own (like my house or car) with people in need.</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I actively seek to learn the felt needs of the people in the communities to which I belong.</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I attempt to learn and use the language that people in my communities use [to discuss their needs].</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I provide effective ways for people in my community to understand how the events such as the birth, life, death, resurrection and second coming of Christ are relevant to their daily lives.</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I effectively identify and share specific scripture from the Bible that explains good news from God to people in my communities.</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I often use opportunities in daily settings (e.g. in a grocery store, at a doctor’s office) to share good news from God with someone.</td>
<td>Y N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX K
OPINIONS OF BRIDGES SERVICES

Please take a few minutes to tell us how we are doing, and what you would suggest to help Bridges attain its goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Never/Not at all</th>
<th>Sometimes/A little</th>
<th>Often/Somewhat</th>
<th>All the time/A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Did you utilize a Bridges coach in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How helpful was your Bridges coach?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Did you attend a Bridges training conference in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How helpful was the conference?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Did you participate in a Bridges Support Group in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How helpful was the support group?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did you utilize the Financial Support Service in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>How helpful was the Financial Support Service?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Did you utilize a Mentor/Coach for Partnership Development Ministry (PDM; Support Raising) in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How helpful was your mentor/coach for PDM?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Did you use one of the on-line tools (Donor Perfect or training videos) for PDM in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>How helpful were/are these on-line tools?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Did you receive any encouragement and help from others in the Bridges community in the past 12 months?  

14. How helpful was this encouragement to your work at Bridges?  

15. Overall, how satisfied are you with Bridges?  

16. Overall, how effective do you think the Bridges model is, for achieving its goals?  

17. Do you recommend Bridges to others?  

Narrative:

What do you appreciate a lot about Bridges? Why?

How could we improve Bridges services?

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APPENDIX L

EXPLANATION OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

FROM BRIDGES' DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY SURVEY AS OF JUNE 2017

Bridging Skills in Action: Explaining the Stats
Since 2013, Bridges has asked all the Bridge Leaders to take a survey once a year—the same survey year after year—so that we can measure accurately whether all of our efforts and giving is making a difference. After five years of collecting data, we are crunching the numbers for the first time and want to share some exciting results.

Together, we have significantly helped Bridge Leaders move outside the walls of the church to befriend, serve, disciple and gather people into Christ-following Communities.

Join a Group.
Based on our data analysis, 100% of Bridges leaders who were not originally in an unchurched group joined unchurched groups about two years of starting our ACTS training experience. Wow! That took some time. An “unchurched group” is defined as a group that has not been officially sanctioned by a church or is explicitly together for faith-based activities. This shows that Bridges leaders are able to branch out by joining these groups, and are thus able to reach out to those who would not normally be exposed to the teachings of Christ.

Make Friends.
Next, our data shows that 100% of the Bridges leaders that did not have any unchurched friends when they began our ACTS training were able to start making unchurched friends over the span of one year. An unchurched person refers to any person who does not meaningfully participate in an existing church. By doing so, Bridge leaders are able to connect with people that might not otherwise have a Christian friend. This opens the door to sharing the unconditional love of Jesus with them.

Make Disciples.
Additionally, just over 72% of Bridge Leaders who originally did not have any disciples when they began participating in Bridges began making at least one disciple in the timespan of about two years. Making a disciple means helping someone connect with God through learning how to listen to God, talk to God, hear God through Scripture, and experience God in community in the power of the Holy Spirit. Wow. Moving from stranger to friend to meeting regularly to sharing in spiritual practices together takes a lot of change in the way the Bridge Leader spends time and responds to unchurched people.

Start New Groups.
Continuing on, Bridges leaders also gather disciples together into groups for the purpose of further discipleship. According to our data, of the leaders who joined Bridges that did not have any groups when they first started, 73% were able to create groups in the timespan of one year. These groups are comprised of people that the Bridges leader has connected with and brings these people together for the purpose of mutual encouragement, discipleship, service, and worship.