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Implementing a Servant Evangelism Initiative in the Community Around Pioneer Memorial Church

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IMPLEMENTING A SERVANT EVANGELISM INITIATIVE IN THE
COMMUNITY AROUND PIONEER MEMORIAL CHURCH

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IMPLEMENTING A SERVANT EVANGELISM INITIATIVE IN THE COMMUNITY AROUND PIONEER MEMORIAL CHURCH

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
RODLIE ORTIZ
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Implementing a Servant Evangelism Initiative in the Community Around Pioneer Memorial Church

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Pioneer Memorial Church is a Seventh-day Adventist congregation on the campus of Andrews University. Andrews holds the distinction of being the second most diverse university in America. This is significant because Andrews University sits in the heart of Berrien Springs, Michigan. Berrien Springs is a primarily White, agriculturally based, two-traffic-light town. Because the local community and Andrews are so different in nature and ethnicity, there has been division between both contexts.

The purpose of this project is to build a bridge into the community by implementing a servant evangelism initiative. The word evangelism is often associated with the act of proclaiming a message or bringing “good news” to people. Servant evangelism is defined as ministering in “word and deed” based upon the theological framework in Colossians 3:17. It is showing the love of God through acts of mercy and kindness. Through a process of listening to the community and ascertaining needs, a series of projects are planned. The goal is to do one project a month, which will mainly be facilitated and led by Andrews University students.

Part one of this paper examines some of the history and primary theological models of the Seventh-day Adventist church. How these models have manifested themselves through evangelism is explored, along with the history of Pioneer Memorial church and its role on campus. The way this church lives out and exhibits the theologies of the Seventh-day Adventist church as a whole is also analyzed. The paper also considers the history and relevant demographic information of Berrien Springs and examines how the divisions in the community first began to form.

Part two explores the biblical and theological foundations for a missional framework. This section begins with an overview of key literature about missional thought, including the works of an Adventist author, Ellen White. As part of this missional framework, a theology of servant evangelism is defined.

Part three describes the ministry strategy and process of implementation. In the first section of part three, goals are listed and the blueprint for the process is delineated. The timeline section explores timetables for when certain goals are to be accomplished. This section also examines what is necessary to accomplish the strategy including financial budgets and constraints, human resources, and a marking plan. Finally, an assessment of the strategy is completed through personal interviews in the community and implications for further work in the community are defined.

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To Jesenie Ortiz. You are no longer with us, but more than anyone, I finished this because of you. Your name was on the monitor the whole time as I wrote. It was through the pain of your passing that God transformed and refocused me. One day, my sweet and innocent sister, you will see all the people that were brought to Jesus as a result of your memory. I love you.
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PART ONE

MINISTRY AND LITERATURE CONTEXT
INTRODUCTION

Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC) is a Seventh-day Adventist congregation on the campus of Andrews University with a membership of 3,870. Andrews University is the first Adventist University, as well as the headquarters for the Adventist theological seminary. It has over 3,300 students, representing most US states and nearly one hundred countries. Another 2,500 students study at affiliate campuses around the world. The university offers approximately 130 undergraduate programs and seventy graduate programs.¹ Because of that, it is considered the denomination’s flagship educational institution.²

Andrews also holds the distinction of being the most ethnically diverse university in America.³ This is significant because it sits in the heart of Berrien Springs, Michigan, a two-traffic light, agriculturally-based town. A lot of the land in Southwest Michigan is used to grow grapes, corn, and a variety of produce. It is also primarily White. Because the local community and Andrews are so different in nature and ethnicity, there has been a division between the two.

Pioneer Memorial Church ministers to the global Church through the preaching ministry of the senior pastor, Dwight Nelson. His sermons are streamed live on the internet, indexed on the church website, and broadcast on the official denominational

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satellite channel called Hope TV. The campus church is the spiritual home of many students and professors.

I arrived to this campus in the summer of 2011 as the evangelism pastor, tasked with connecting with and doing evangelism in the community. Through a missional framework that was being developed, I began to go through a process to understand the community and its needs. I was surprised to see three distinct themes arise.

**Statement of the Problem**

First, there was an issue of division between Adventists and those of other faith backgrounds. Many Adventist churches want to minister to lost people, but they fear being overly influenced by them. They feel the need to evangelize and preach, but then retreat to their safe havens. Furthermore, Adventist churches are suspicious of ecumenism, the working and partnering with Christian churches of other denominations. Because PMC is a large church and because Andrews University is the largest employer in town, Seventh-day Adventists represent a larger than normal share of the population. This has created some problems and division in the community.

The second major theme noted through engaging in the community is that of racism. Berrien Springs has traditionally been a town of rural White farmers. As noted above, it currently houses the most diverse university in America. The influx of international students has created a clash of cultures and has caused this town to wrestle with issues of self-identity.

The third major issue is that of generational poverty. Seventy-five percent of the children that attend local public schools in Berrien Springs come from homes that are
below the national poverty level.\(^4\) It should be noted that this percentage is representative of the local community—not counting the children of Andrews University students.

**Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to build a bridge into the community by implementing a servant evangelism initiative. The word evangelism is often associated with the act of proclaiming a message or of bringing good news to people. The definition of evangelism as preaching is one that has been heavily accepted in the Adventist church. Most churches will hold a yearly evangelistic series or seminar on prophecy. To a large part, this is the way Adventist churches typically connect with the community.

Servant evangelism is defined as ministering in word and deed based upon the theological framework in Colossians 3:17. It is showing the love of God through acts of mercy and kindness. Through a process of listening to the community and ascertaining needs, a series of servant evangelism projects were planned. The goal was to do one project a month, mainly carried out by Andrews University students.

This became a topic of interest for me upon starting pastoral ministry because I mainly sensed an emphasis on producing baptismal numbers through public evangelism and other initiatives. It seems like not much time in seminary was spent on servant evangelism and exploring the relationship between the two. In addition, I was not equipped on how to engage missionally in a community to do servant evangelism in a contextual way. Because of this, my first several years in ministry involved

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\(^4\) Mike Shembarger, interview by Rodlie Ortiz, 2014.
experimenting with concepts I would hear about in conferences. I would try new initiatives, but then not know what to do concerning next steps.

This issue is present among other ministry colleagues. They implement initiatives in their community that they have heard have been successful in other communities, but are not actually relevant to their local context. Unfortunately, many pastors do not know how to listen to and ascertain the needs in their neighborhoods.

I recall a conversation I had when I first arrived at this church. A seminary student wanted to know what my vision was for my new context. He also assumed I was a young adult expert. When I told him that I did not yet have a vision because I did not know the place, he seemed disappointed. A missionary does not instill his or her methodology when they move into a new place. Instead, they take time to learn the local language and customs. They become part of the community and slowly begin to get a sense of needs.

As such, the purpose of this doctoral project is to design, launch, and assess a series of servant evangelism projects in the community. Part one of this paper examines some of the history and primary theological models of the Seventh-day Adventist church, along with how they have influenced evangelism. A history of Pioneer Memorial Church and its role on the campus is considered, juxtaposing the local theology of PMC with those of the denomination. The paper then explores the history and relevant demographic information of Berrien Springs and examines how the divisions in this community first began to form.

Part two of this paper explores the biblical and theological foundations for a missional framework. This section begins with an overview of key literature in the world of missional thought, examining some contemporary works as well as those of an
Adventist author, Ellen White. As part of this missional framework, a theology of servant evangelism is explored.

Part three describes the ministry strategy and process of implementation. The goals and blueprint for the process are delineated in the first section. The timeline section explores when certain goals are to be accomplished. It also defines what is necessary to accomplish the strategy including financial budgets and constraints, human resources, and a marking plan. Finally, the strategy is evaluated through personal interviews in the community, while assessing the potential for further work to take place.

**Delimitations of Project and Intended Audience**

There are several delimitations to this project that must be acknowledged. First, the initial goal of the project was to identify some first steps in reengaging with the community concerning the discovered problems of poverty, misunderstandings, and prejudices between Adventists and those of other faith backgrounds, as well as conflicts that have risen as a result of the diversity of Andrews University being in a White, Lutheran community. The selected projects came as a result of conversations and requests from community leaders. Robert D. Lupton, author of *Toxic Charity*, would define these kinds of projects as “betterment.” He writes, “When a neighborhood has suffered from years of neglect, when trash has piled up on vacant lots, when the city no longer replaces shot-out street lights or fixes potholes, almost any outside help is welcome.”

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Because this project exemplifies that beginning stage of engagement, it is limited in its scope and is not intended to illustrate a more mature stage of missional development. However, a missional process was employed to select projects.

Second, the intended audience for this project are Seventh-day Adventist pastors and leaders. Adventist churches have often struggled with engaging in a missional way with their communities. They have prioritized word, but not deed. As a result, the questions in the research portion of chapter five are purposely limited in scope and seek to understand how engaging with the community helps change the perception of the community towards Adventists. This is intended to motivate Adventist leaders to engage more in the community in two ways: first, by helping churches see that many Adventist churches are not viewed in a positive light in their communities as a result of this lack of engagement, and second, by helping Adventist churches see engagement in the community does change the perception of the community towards the church.

Third, the theological chapter reflects my background as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. The purpose of this chapter is to challenge Adventist pastors and leaders by offering a new definition for evangelism. For too long, Adventists, as well as other evangelical pastors, have defined evangelism narrowly in terms of proclamation of truth. In the proposed definition, I challenge pastors to think in terms of mission, specifically the mission of God, and I offer a new definition: revealing the love of God by being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness. This definition places proclamation and preaching within a broader and more theologically faithful context of the mission of God. This framework was derived as a result of my study and engagement with authors such as Christopher J.H. Wright, Michael Goheen, Lesslie Newbigin, Alan Roxburgh,
Darrell L. Guder, and others, but also gleaning quotes and frameworks from Ellen G. White, the seminal Adventist author. While recognizing there are other theologies not discussed in this paper, because I am writing to an Adventist audience, I have chosen to limit the theological scope to theologies that are most relevant to such an audience.
CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Functional Ecclesiology

This section addresses the ecclesiology of PMC and assesses how it affects its missional readiness. Ecclesiology is defined as the study of the nature, role, and purpose of the Church.\(^1\) Some of the issues involved in ecclesiology include understanding the role of a member in the church, the relationship of corporate worship to the believer, organizational structure, the role of the church in salvation, and the mission of the Church.\(^2\) It helps explain why churches may take vastly different approaches to how they operate and fulfill their mission. This section also distinguishes between formal and functional ecclesiology. A church’s formal ecclesiology involves what they say they believe. This may include formal definitions within a denominational guidebook or even how they choose to present themselves to the public. Mark Branson and Alan Roxburgh use the metaphor of being on stage during worship to help communicate that a formal

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\(^2\) Ibid., 14.
ecclesiology is one that a church wants to project and that is public.\textsuperscript{3} If a church’s formal ecclesiology is what it says it believes, then the functional ecclesiology is what it actually believes. Branson and Roxburgh refer to this aspect as the off-stage ecclesiology, or, what people talk about in the parking lot.\textsuperscript{4} It is important that a church have a level of self-awareness regarding its formal and functional ecclesiologies because that will often determine how it might attempt to engage missionally.

**Formal Ecclesiology #1: Church as a Herald**

The first formal ecclesiology that PMC exhibits is that of a herald. Avery Dulles writes that the mission of a herald is to “proclaim that which it has heard, believed, and been commissioned to proclaim.”\textsuperscript{5} This is a church that sees the proclamation of truth as its primary focus. A church that is based upon this model does not see mission and evangelism as a task for the church, but the central reason for its existence. This is a common ecclesiology in Adventist churches. Historically, the denomination was heavily shaped and influenced by the preaching ministry of William Miller who concluded Christ would return in 1844.\textsuperscript{6} Theologically, “Millerism was essentially a one-doctrine movement—the visual, literal, premillennial return of Jesus in the clouds of heaven.”\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{3} Alan Roxburgh and Mark Branson, *Missional Leadership Cohort: Year Two* (Vancouver, BC: 2011).

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{5} Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 68.


\textsuperscript{7} George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 42.
After 1844, the Millerite movement began to splinter into various groups. One of those groups, which ended up becoming the Seventh-day Adventist church, believed that in 1844 Christ entered the most holy place in heaven, and that humankind is therefore living in the last days. This theological component of living in the last days and that Christ is coming soon, has done more to shape the Adventist understanding of ecclesiology than anything else. For many local Adventist churches, this helps to explain why they focus on a yearly evangelistic series. An evangelistic series is an event where the community is invited to come to a series of preaching lectures, often based on the books of Daniel and Revelation, teaching the basics on prophecy and having a relationship with Jesus.

Through appreciative inquiry interviews done in 2013, I was able to see just how much this is part of our self-identity. For example, when I interviewed three of the longest-serving pastors on our staff, they each confessed that the times in which they felt most “alive and engaged” was when PMC hosted an international satellite campaign called The Next Millennium Seminar. This was a nightly series of biblical presentations that was broadcast to over 7,600 locations with over two million viewers watching nightly. At the time, it was one of the largest outreach events in history. The Adventist church actually developed brand new technology to make simultaneous translation in over forty languages possible. This technology was later adopted by ESPN for their sports coverage. This event is seared into the narrative of PMC. Other church members who were interviewed also mentioned The Next Millennium Seminar, or a similar preaching event, as being a highlight of their experience.

8 For a full summary see Appreciative Inquiry interviews located in Appendix A.
Sherrie Davis, referencing when she felt most “engaged, alive, and motivated” mentioned a similar evangelistic event: “We were all working together as a team. We were affecting Berrien Springs, but also the world and the college students. It was reaching out.”9 One of the oldest members in the church also referenced an evangelistic event, “Net 98 [The Next Millennium Seminar] stood out to me. That was a very memorable occasion. I was associate head deaconess.”10 Interestingly enough, there is a banner on the side of the main sanctuary that says Net 98. It hangs as a memorial to this important event. So, the metaphor of PMC as a herald is alive and well in the history and narrative of our church.

The self-identity of PMC as herald has also manifested itself through the development of New Perceptions, the television-preaching ministry of our senior pastor, Dwight K. Nelson. New Perceptions started about fifteen years ago because of the desire to reach the community. Every week PMC’s second service is recorded, edited, and then broadcast about two weeks later on the local cable channel. Several of those interviewed refer to the impact of New Perceptions in their lives. Again, Sherrie Davis, when asked what makes PMC unique answered, “Our TV ministry; this is seen around the world. We get emails from Australia, Africa, and all over.”11 Nick Wolfer said, “A few years ago, as we were getting all the media stuff going on. We were seeing results from the TV

9 Sherrie Davis, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, May 2012.
10 Charlotte Groff, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, May 2012.
11 Sherrie Davis, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, May 2012.
ministry.” This congregation has a sense that we are fulfilling our biblical mandate because of the television ministry and local evangelism.12

Another characteristic of the herald model which is reflected in PMC is that the Word of God is centrally important. For example, Kärkkäinen notes that in Eastern Orthodox churches, the ekklesia represents “God’s people gathered for Eucharist.”13 Dulles contrasts this with the herald model that sees the ekklesia as gathering for the purpose of “worshipping God” and evangelism with the Bible being central.14 This is reflected in what some of the people shared in the AI interviews. When asked about the most important element of worship, Betty Martin responded by saying, “Preaching is the most important. That's where I get the most direct message from God. I feel like God is speaking to me then.”15 Our preaching is largely considered to be the main event of what happens during the weekend worship service. Every week a new poster is made with the sermon title for the next week. Copies are then placed all around campus.

The effects of our formal ecclesiology are also seen through our letterhead, mission statements, and stained glass throughout the church. On the corner of our letterhead is the mission statement that we have held for the last fifteen years: “Forward on our knees, readying our lives, reflecting His love, reaching our world, for the imminent return of Jesus.” This mission statement reflects our identity as a church and a

12 Nick Wolfer, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, May 2012.
14 Dulles, Models of the Church, 71.
15 Betty Martin, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, May 2012.
denomination whose purpose is to prepare people for the second coming of Christ. Our identity as a herald can also be prominently seen through the stories depicted in stained glass in church. The most prominent of these is a large depiction of Jesus at the second coming on the wall behind the pulpit. It is a weekly reminder as the pastor preaches that Jesus is coming soon and that we are to help others be ready.

One strength of the herald model is that it provides a great amount of clarity as to what the church should be focusing on. Ellen White, an Adventist pioneer, summed it up in the following way:

The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory.\(^\text{16}\)

Most Adventist churches believe this overarching mission. It is seen as the duty of every baptized believer to participate in this purpose and goal of carrying the gospel to the world. Frank Hasel writes that the prophetic task of the church is “To preach the eternal gospel to all people and to prepare the whole world for the soon coming of Jesus Christ.”\(^\text{17}\) At PMC people have a sense that believers are to tell the good news about Jesus and become part of this worldwide movement through baptism. The centrality of being Bible-based and proclaiming the gospel to all is reflected in the members’ actions

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and behaviors. Nick Wolfer said, “I wish that we can continue to convert people. Make new disciples. Make new members. The goal is not necessarily church growth, because we have students. The goal is salvation.”

This model has various limitations. The most prominent being that this type of ecclesiology focuses too much “on witness to the neglect of action.” The church is seemingly content to proclaim, but not to transform. Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmat, in Colossians Remixed, identify the troubling intersection that herald-based churches can find: “Postmodernity insists that all moral codes, all normative frameworks, are particular inventions of people in history.” A challenge for the Adventist Church is that it sees proclaiming biblical truth as central to its mission, but the postmodern culture it is trying to reach sees truth as an invention. Because it functionally makes the acceptance of objective truths the arbiter for membership, it is going to find its effectiveness wane as the culture around it becomes more postmodern. David Fitch warns that these strategies “depend upon the hearer believing in the authority and objectivity of modern science.” In a postmodern context in which people do not believe that truth can be found through the work of science, this method becomes moot.

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18 Dulles, Models of the Church, 76.

19 Nick Wolfer, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, May 2012.

20 Ibid.


PMC has seen the ramifications of this ecclesiology in that we largely ignore our local context. Learning to become missional in our communities involved going through the five-step process outlined in the *Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide*. It involves listening to God through our church members, listening to the Spirit to discern how God might be at work in the community, beginning missional experiments in the community, reflection on the experiments, and deciding new steps based on the reflections.\(^\text{23}\) This process is described in detail in chapter four.

**Formal Ecclesiology #2: The Church as a Remnant**

The second formal ecclesiology that PMC exhibits is the church as a remnant. Theologically, Adventists have identified themselves as the remnant that “keep[s] the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17).\(^{24}\) They have also identified with the three angels’ messages as found in Revelation 14, which call people to worship the creator God and to turn away from Babylon, which represents a false religious system. This is a message that goes to the entire world and we see ourselves as a movement designed to fulfill that role. This identity as a remnant has been foundational for our understanding of who we are and what the role of the church is. Angel M. Rodriguez writes, “Adventist ecclesiology is fundamentally a remnant ecclesiology.”\(^\text{25}\)


\(^{24}\) All Scripture quoted is from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Adventists recognize in Scripture the existence of the visible and invisible church. The visible church includes those that keep the commandments of God and are seeking to fulfill the commission of Christ to carry the gospel message to the world. Ellen White writes, “God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments.” In this sense, the visible church is defined by parameters that can be recognized—keeping commandments and following Jesus. This differs from the Lutheran approach that regards the church as “the assembly of all believers, among who the gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered.”

We do not, however, believe that only Seventh-day Adventists will be saved. We also recognize in the Scriptures the existence of an invisible church. This is composed of “all God’s people throughout the world. It includes the believers within the visible church, and many who, though they do not belong to a church organization, have followed all the light Christ has given them.”

Our ecclesiology that drives us to recognize ourselves as being unique and different is balanced by the perspective offered by Jesus—”And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (Jn 10:16).


28 Hasel, Toward a Theology of the Remnant, 176.

Our sense of being the remnant affects evangelism in two ways. First, we see it as our mission to reach those that do not know Jesus at all. That is why we are huge proponents of overseas mission work. Because of our sense of being the remnant, we also see it as our role to bring this message to other denominations that do not have the truth. George Knight references this delicate relationship within evangelicalism: “From its very beginning Seventh-day Adventism has viewed itself as a called-out people with a prophetic mission. Adventism has never seen itself as just another denomination. It is that understanding that has given the Advent movement power. While the denomination is evangelical, it has never been merely evangelical.”30

Because Adventism has always seen itself as having a prophetic mission, and because it recognizes its own uniqueness within Protestantism, Adventists are huge proponents of the separation of church and state. Like churches that follow a free-church ecclesiology, we believe in protecting people’s ability to worship freely.31 The reason lies in being able to protect our own ability to continue proclaiming a message as a theological minority. Because of that we advocate for religious freedom and liberty for all religions and denominations.

This remnant ecclesiology that typically inhabits all Adventist churches is fairly prominent in our local context as well. Our literature rack has a magazine with three angels announcing: “Jesus Is Coming Again!” One of the stained-glass windows in the


sanctuary is of the ten commandments. In a booklet that describes that window it says that the “fourth commandment is set apart to remind us that the Sabbath is a holy day and to help us remember God’s Creation.”

For Seventh-day Adventists, being part of the remnant community involves worshiping on the Sabbath day. All around the sanctuary are visual reminders that Jesus is coming soon and that we are a set apart people with a special mission. Up until 2015, this was listed on our church website:

> The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to proclaim to all people the everlasting Gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12. Leading others to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and to unite with His Church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return is the heart of this mission. This is accomplished through preaching, teaching, and healing ministries.

This self-identity is also heard through official announcements and conversations. For example, to announce a special offering that is taken before the children’s offering in the first service, a leader states, “And now the children will be going forward to receive a special offering that goes toward Seventh-day Adventist education.” There has been some criticism from the staff from people that have announced that time as merely being for “Christian education.” The reason for this is because a change in language from Adventist to Christian is interpreted as an attempt to minimize what we believe. This identification as a remnant provides some missional challenges. Because we sense that we are the visible church and exemplify the “remnant” of Revelation 12:7, we

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tend to have a distrust of other Christian denominations. We are not part of the World Council of Churches, however we do send an observer. We generally do not partner with other non-Adventist churches for citywide evangelistic initiatives, and rarely help the community with social justice issues. Like most denominations that follow free-church ecclesiology, we do not see visible unity through the process of ecumenism as any kind of positive goal.\textsuperscript{34} Ecumenism is generally viewed with a lot of suspicion that even affects the kinds of authors that Adventists expose themselves to. For example, I severely damaged my credibility in my previous church when I tried introducing \textit{The Purpose Driven Church} by Rick Warren to our church board. I instead had to look elsewhere to authors from our own tradition that basically say the same thing. Our self-identity as a remnant is visible in our advertising, magazines, website, and even through the stories that we tell each other visually and through conversation.

\textbf{Functional Ecclesiology #1: Church Growth Ecclesiology}

Most Adventist churches will uphold and reflect most of the same values and ecclesiologies. If a formal ecclesiology is what a church says it believes, then a functional ecclesiology is what it actually believes. As was mentioned in the introduction, the functional ecclesiology represents the reality of the church. It represents the deep-seated values and stories that are shared within a group—often much more difficult to change. To use a medical metaphor, the formal may be seen as being cosmetic, whereas the functional may be within the bones and may require major surgery to address.

\textsuperscript{34} Kärkkäinen, \textit{An Introduction to Ecclesiology}, 84.
Some of our formal and functional ecclesiologies contradict each other. For example, because this church is filled with university professors and a more educated constituency, church members are less afraid to interact with authors and resources outside of our denomination. For example, we have changed our mission statement a few times in the last years. The one that has been in effect for the last fifteen years is the one that is still on our letterhead: “Forward on our knees, readying our lives, reflecting His love, reaching our world, for the imminent return of Jesus.” When I arrived the mission statement was “Transforming this generation to serve the local Seventh-day Adventist church and the world.” After discussing and reading through the book Simple Church, though, it was changed to “Transforming this generation to connect, grow, serve, and go.” The first functional difference is that we reflect a remnant mentality with some things, but with other things we reflect a modernistic church growth mentality that is willing to do whatever it takes to grow the church.

Another example of this was revealed during one of the AI interviews with our staff. Esther Knott revealed that the accomplishment she is proudest of is a repackaging of Bill Hybel’s Becoming a Contagious Christian to Becoming a Contagious Adventist. By doing this repackaging, we are reflecting a functional church growth model. This is seen in other areas as well. After reading some books from Nelson Searcy, we changed our small group structure to a semester-based affinity group model. We have also adapted and begun to use his response card system that. There is a little bit of tension, then,

35 Esther Knott, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, August 2012.
between what we formally advocate through our remnant ecclesiology and what we actually do by borrowing and repacking other resources for the purpose of church growth.

**Functional Ecclesiology #2: The Church as a Herald and Institutional Hybrid**

The second functional ecclesiology that PMC exhibits is a hybrid of the herald and institutional model. Dulles describes a characteristic of the institutional model in this way: “The beneficiaries of the Church, in the institutional model, are its own members. The Church is the school that instructs them regarding the truths they need to know for the sake of their eternal salvation.”36 In this sense, PMC is a provider of goods and services, such as resources, education, and exhortation, to its own members, locally and worldwide. That is not to say that evangelism does not happen. Every year our church partners with a local church to help them in their local evangelistic efforts. The evangelism that does happen, though, still passes through an institutional filter whereby we are the ones to help others. As a result, the church has had little impact on the community, and it does not have this herald impetus to preach and evangelize and connect with the community because it feels like it already reaches the world by preaching well, having good worship services, and providing resources, but it largely ignores its local context.

**History of Pioneer Memorial Church**

The origins of PMC began when Battle Creek College moved to Berrien Springs in 1901 and the first students and professors began conducting church services in the old

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county courthouse.\textsuperscript{37} It was originally known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Berrien Springs. It was renamed the Berrien Springs College Church in 1914. For a time, this congregation met in the dining room of Birch Hall on the campus. It then moved to the study hall chapel until 1924 when a new chapel was built.\textsuperscript{38} Meredith Jones-Gray notes concerning the deepening need for space: “As the campus community grew, the old auditorium could no longer contain the large congregations that came to worship. Special church services had to be held in the gymnasium to accommodate the crowd.”\textsuperscript{39} In 1954 a building fund was set up and groundbreaking began on April 28, 1957. The congregation had its first worship service on February 14, 1959, but it was not officially dedicated until May 21, 1960, after the debt for the church was paid off.\textsuperscript{40} It was named Pioneer Memorial Church because each stained-glass window of the church was dedicated to an Adventist pioneer or family in education. The church has a capacity of two thousand.

It has had four pastors since its dedication. In 1983 Dwight K. Nelson, the current pastor, arrived to become its fourth pastor. The year 2018 will commemorate his thirty-fifth year at PMC.

\textbf{Role on the Campus of Andrews University}

PMC is physically on the campus of Andrews University. As such, it is

\textsuperscript{37} Robert C. Myers and Leo Goodsell, \textit{Greetings from Berrien Springs} (Berrien Springs, MI: Berrien County Historical Society, 2003), 66.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Meredith Jones-Gray, \textit{As We Set Forth: Battle Creek College & Emmanuel Missionary College}, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2002), 330.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 334.
designated as the university church, and it holds a central role in the life of the campus. Since it is the largest gathering space on the campus, various events are held there. Weekly chapel services are held on Thursday mornings, and there is a vespers service on Friday evenings.

On Saturday mornings PMC hosts two different worship services. The first is a traditional service at nine led by organ playing and hymn singing. Around six hundred people attend. The second university student-led service is seventy-five minutes long and begins at 11:45. There are around 1,300 people who attend this service. PMC is also the place where commencement services are held twice a year, a consecration service at the beginning of the year for all students, as well as other special events.

In the last twenty-five years, though, its role on the campus has shifted. In the fall of 1991, New Life Fellowship was launched with Jim North serving as the senior pastor and Ken Mulzac as the associate pastor. It is a gospel-style worship service created to meet the needs of African American students on campus. Over 400 students gathered at its inaugural worship service. In 2014, Michael Polite became the newest associate chaplain when Timothy Nixon left and assumed leadership of New Life. Through his leadership, attendance is currently around 350 per week. There has also been a shift in the kinds of students who are attending. Currently, 25 percent are Hispanic, Asian, or White. New Life has also reached maximum capacity and has been turning students away.

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In 2012 another worship experience launched on campus called One Place. They meet in an auditorium on campus and feature a contemporary worship service with a rotation of four preaching pastors. It first launched to much excitement from the student body. Between two services, they average around three hundred people in attendance.

When I was a student in the seminary on campus, I noticed that there was standing room only at PMC. If one did not arrive fifteen minutes early, it became difficult to find a seat and ushers were needed to help. That is no longer the case. More than ever before, students who had no other option but to attend PMC are now distributed between two other worship experiences on campus.

**PMC’s Role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Pioneer Memorial Church ministers to the world Church through the preaching ministry of the senior pastor, Dwight K. Nelson. His sermons are streamed live on the internet, are archived on the church website, and are broadcast on the official denominational satellite channel called Hope TV. Since it is the campus church, it is filled with many students and professors that call it their spiritual home. Dwight Nelson has been the senior pastor at PMC for thirty-five years. Charles Bradford, a noted Adventist leader and evangelist, remarks about Dwight Nelson, “The church pastor has been the most influential person in the past 25 years in shaping the beliefs, attitudes,
lifestyles, and sense of mission of church members. Of all church leaders, the church pastor is the closest to the millions of church members, every week, worldwide.\textsuperscript{42}

Most Adventist churches are relatively small. In 1913 the average congregation was thirty-six members, while in 2005 it was approaching two hundred members.\textsuperscript{43} For added perspective, before pastoring at Pioneer Memorial, I pastored two churches in Florida. One was called the Riverview Seventh-day Adventist Church and had about seventy people in attendance with 102 members. The second was the Carrollwood Seventh-day Adventist Church which had about 100 people in attendance with 184 members on the membership rolls. The largest Adventist church is the Loma Linda University Church with 6,395 members. Pioneer Memorial is in third place in North America with 3,788 members.\textsuperscript{44} Because of its location on the campus of Andrews University, many Adventist symposiums and theological meetings are held here. Because Dwight Nelson has held such a well-respected tenure as the senior pastor of PMC, he is one of the most well-known Adventist pastors in the denomination.

\textbf{Berrien Springs' History}

John Pike and his family came to Wolf's Prairie in the summer of 1829 as the first

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\footnote{44 Eadventist, North American Division of Seventh-Day Adventists, accessed September 19, 2018, http://eadventist.com.}
\end{footnotes}
White settlers to the area.\textsuperscript{45} By 1831 the village of Berrien Springs was formally founded by Francis B. Murdock, Pitt Brown, and Horace Godfrey.\textsuperscript{46} The town was named to honor John MacPherson Berrien, the attorney general in President Andrew Jackson's cabinet. The latter part of the name, Springs, was used because sulfur springs were found and were thought to provide medicinal benefits.\textsuperscript{47} With close access to the St. Joseph River, the founders hoped the area would become a tourist and resort destination.

In 1837 Berrien Springs became the county seat, at which point development increased, and hotels and other businesses came.\textsuperscript{48} The next several decades saw relatively little growth for this community. For perspective, by 1884 Berrien Springs only had 732 residents, while neighboring Buchanan, founded eleven years after Berrien Springs, had a population of 2,070 people in 1884.\textsuperscript{49} Robert Myers and Leo Goodsell attribute the lack of a railroad going into town as being a significant contributor to its lagging growth during this era.\textsuperscript{50}

Myers notes that the most ferocious political battle in the history of Berrien County dealt with the county seat being moved from Berrien Springs to St. Joseph, Michigan in 1894. The population of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor grew at a much faster

\begin{footnotes}
\item[46] Goodsell and Myers, \textit{Greetings from Berrien Springs}, 7.
\item[47] Ellis, \textit{History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers}, 280.
\item[50] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
pace, and with Berrien Springs lacking adequate railroad services, the political tide turned. A significant change to Berrien Springs came with the arrival of an Adventist college. The first Adventist college was founded in 1874, and its original name was Battle Creek College, located in Battle Creek, Michigan. Goodloe Harper Bell had come to Battle Creek for some health treatments at what would later become Battle Creek Sanitarium. After recovering and beginning to teach grammar at the Battle Creek church, plans were eventually made to found Battle Creek College as a denominational college in 1874.\textsuperscript{51} He functioned as the first teacher.

The college struggled with attendance and adequate leadership for several years but reached a higher standard of administration when W.W. Prescott joined as president. With a degree from Dartmouth college, and known as a “scholar to his fingertips,” Prescott gave the school a much-needed administrative and credibility lift.\textsuperscript{52} He served as its president from 1885 to 1894 and the school thrived under his leadership. As the name would suggest, Emmanuel Missionary College was originally started as a “training school for Christian workers.”\textsuperscript{53}

On April 12, 1901, the decision was made to move the location of the college and a location committee was formed later that month.\textsuperscript{54} Locations were examined from South Haven to Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, but Berrien Springs was chosen for its central location in the Midwest, the abundance of good land in the heart of the fruit belt,

\textsuperscript{51} Jones-Gray, \textit{As We Set Forth}, 3.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 88.
proximity to railroads facilities, and vacant buildings that could hold classes while new buildings were built.\textsuperscript{55} In June 16, 1901, 272 acres of land were purchased for $18,000.\textsuperscript{56} Goodsell notes that the “arrival of Emmanuel Missionary College in 1901 eventually produced a fundamental change in Berrien Springs’ cultural and ethnic makeup.”\textsuperscript{57} This diversity was later compounded when the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary moved from Washington, D.C. to Berrien Springs in 1960.\textsuperscript{58}

Demographics Data

According to 2016 census data, the current population of Berrien Springs is 11,082.\textsuperscript{59} The median household income is $32,450, which is lower than average for the state of Michigan,\textsuperscript{60} as well as for the county.\textsuperscript{61} Presently, most jobs are related to education in some way.\textsuperscript{62} The first reason for this is Andrews University, which is the largest employer in town, and third-largest employer in the county.\textsuperscript{63} 254 faculty are

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 90.

\textsuperscript{56} Robert C. Myers, \textit{Historical Sketches of Berrien County} (Berrien Springs, MI: Berrien County Historical Association, 2009), 92.

\textsuperscript{57} Goodsell and Myers, \textit{Greetings from Berrien Springs}, 9.


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. The median household income for the state of Michigan is $49,576.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid. The median household income for the county is $44,993.


\textsuperscript{63} The Whirlpool Corporation employs 4,000 people in Berrien County, while Lakeland Regional Health System employs 3,826 people, and Andrews University employs 2,104 people. For more information see Jennifer Arent, "2016 Berrien County Profile," Berrien County Community Development Department, accessed 2017. http://www.berriencounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/630.
employed with about five hundred staff in total. Berrien Springs is also the educational headquarters for Berrien County, serving 26,663 students. From here, educational services are provided to sixteen public school districts, twenty-four parochial and private schools, and four charter school academies.

Berrien County is also known for being part of the fruit belt, an area known for its “natural adaptiveness for fruit culture.” Geographically, the fruit belt is a strip along the coast of Lake Michigan, in which ideal temperatures for growing certain fruit exist. The lake mitigates the effects of the first frost in the fall and allows for a cooler spring; ideal conditions for growing fruit. Out of the entire state of Michigan, Berrien County leads with 24,300 acres of orchards. It leads in the production of peaches, grapes, and pears, and is second in apples, plums, and prunes.

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64 The administrative headquarters is called Berrien RESA. "Welcome to Berrien Resa," accessed 2017. http://www.berrienresa.org/about_us/what_is_a_resa.


69 Arent, "2016 Berrien County Profile."
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines six sources that give context to the topic of servant evangelism. The first three books are *The Mission of God* by Christopher Wright, *The Open Secret* by Lesslie Newbigin, and *A Light to the Nations* by Michael Goheen. These three books help give a theological context to the topic. Next, *Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt and *Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren are missional sources which examine modern practices. The last book, *Welfare Ministry* by Ellen G. White, is by a Seventh-day Adventist author and deals with missional themes.

*The Mission of God* by Christopher Wright

Christopher Wright’s book, *The Mission of God*, is about hermeneutics. His primary thesis is that a missiological framework is the best hermeneutical approach for reading and understanding the Bible. He begins by redefining what mission is. He upends
the familiar paradigm from being something humans are involved in and do, to something initiated by God in which humans participate.

In the first section he invites the reader to move beyond theologies of mission as commonly taught. For example, on one end of the spectrum are theologies which focus mostly on the New Testament and the Great Commission of Matthew 28 specifically, while avoiding the Old Testament. The other spectrum is one that encompasses the whole Bible, but attempts to find “something relevant to evangelism in every verse.” Both of these approaches miss their mark, he notes. Instead, he urges a narrative approach that regards the greater story across the Bible of what God is doing.

Wright offers his thesis several times in the book: “A missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders us the story of God’s mission through God’s people in their engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation.” He also often refers to the mission of God as being to “bless the nations.” He repeats and refers back to this phrase over a dozen times, in each instance carefully showing how God is seeking to do that.

He bases his refrain out of the covenant with Abraham and uses it as a theological fulcrum. He sees it as the “single most important biblical tradition within a biblical theology of mission and a missional hermeneutic of the Bible.” He notes that Genesis 1-

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2 Ibid., 51.

3 Ibid., 251.

4 Ibid., 189.
2 sets up God’s ideal, Genesis 3 introduces the problem of sin, and Genesis 4-11 gives a picture of what life is like in a world of sin. The rest of the Bible, beginning with the call of Abraham until Revelation 22, is God’s answer to sin.”

He then delineates how this mission of God to bless the nations is being carried out and fulfilled through various stories and epochs in the Bible, including the Exodus, the Psalms, the prophets, and the New Testament.

In the second half of the book he delves into ethical implications of mission. For example, he first elucidates a theology of humanity, of being created in God’s image, and describes how evil has affected this. After showing how AIDS is an example of evil that has affected humanity, he explains the ethical implications for involvement. For Wright, mission is expansive in that it must cover the “wholeness” of the earth, but also the “wholeness of human existence and need.”

Wright provides balance and context to his missiology. On the one hand are movements of social action without evangelism. On the other hand, there are movements of evangelism without social action. He carefully uses motifs like the Exodus and the Year of Jubilee to show both as being incomplete. He notes, “To change people’s social or economic status without leading them to saving faith and obedience to God in Christ leads no further than the wilderness or the exile, both places of death.” While this book does not directly address the topic of servant evangelism, it certainly gives it perspective.

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5 Ibid., 195.
6 Ibid., 439.
7 Ibid., 441.
8 Ibid., 287.
There are broad theological issues at play, and it is vital to place them in a proper setting. Besides, theology must always precede methodology.

Though this is a very thorough book regarding missions, there are two weaknesses. Missions can be used as a hermeneutical framework, however one can disagree with his insistence that the primary mission of God is to bless the nations. In some cases, his thesis seems forced and begins to take on a universalist tone, as if everyone will ultimately be saved because God must be true to His mission. What is missing in this idea is that God wants to bless the nations for a higher purpose, other than just because he promised Abraham. He needs a framework that deals with the larger story of good and evil and the character of God. That is the “key that unlocks the whole narrative.” If Genesis 12 through Revelation 22 is an answer to the question set up in Genesis 3, and more broadly, in Genesis 1-11, as Wright notes, it is important to be clear about the issue at play. He focuses on Genesis 3 and the words “You will be like God, knowing good and evil.” He posits the temptation as being one of moral autonomy.

Whereas this was a temptation, the major focus of Genesis 3 should be the first words spoken by the serpent: “Has God indeed said...” The purpose of the serpent was to question the goodness of God and His character. The serpent wanted to insert an element of doubt concerning whether God should be followed. This question weaves in and out the entire Bible. When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan claimed ownership of the world and

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9 Ibid., 533.
10 Ibid., 195.
11 Ibid., 164.
its inhabitants. The answer which flows, then, is a revelation of the goodness of God as
revealed through patriarchs, Israel, Jesus, and the Church, culminating with a climactic
battle in Revelation, but ending with the restoration of all things. The question of the
character of God begins in the garden in Genesis 3 and ends with the final answer in
Revelation 22.

*The Open Secret by Lesslie Newbigin*

In *The Open Secret*, Lesslie Newbigin delineates his theology of mission. He
begins by first charting the path of mission within Christendom and the modern Church.
His critique is that for most of that time, mission has been something that the Church
does, rather than something the Church is.\(^\text{12}\) It is a project or a department, but it is not
fundamental in nature to its essence. He notes how the Church got to where it was,
because during Christendom, “Church and people were one society.”\(^\text{13}\) Mission has been
intertwined with Western culture and political movements. It coincided with the “stream
of expanding Western power,”\(^\text{14}\) new lands to convert blended with new kingdoms to
conquer. The primary thesis of the book is that mission is at the very center and nature of
what the church is because it is at the center of who God is. Because of that, it is not the
responsibility of the church to devise methods and strategies on its own, but to “find out
‘what God is doing in the world,’ and join” Him.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{12}\) Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids,

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 5.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 18.
His theology of mission is built upon a Trinitarian framework of mission that uses John 20:21 as a heuristic center: “As the Father is sending me, even so I send you.”\textsuperscript{16} Each member of the Godhead represents a different aspect of mission. First, there is “proclaiming the Kingdom of the Father.”\textsuperscript{17} This involves having an understanding of God’s story and purpose, which does not merely concern itself with human history, but “cosmic history.”\textsuperscript{18} As this story unfolds, it becomes clear that God is concerned with redeeming and blessing all the nations, but he uses a people to be the conduit of the blessing, being “bearers—not exclusive beneficiaries”\textsuperscript{19} of the same. The title of the book comes from the idea that God’s reign must be proclaimed to all the nations by those to whom its secret has been entrusted.\textsuperscript{20} According to Newbigin, in the life of the Father and in the reality that His kingdom has drawn near, the church is called to live and act out its mission which, “seen from this angle, is faith in action.”\textsuperscript{21}

The second aspect of Newbigin’s model of mission is seen in the life of the Son. Through the Father it is exemplified as “faith in action,” but through the Son, it is “love in action.” This can be seen in several ways. First, it is the practical manifestation of the kingdom of God. For example, whereas the disciples were called to announce the presence of the kingdom, they were also called to do works and miracles, which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 47.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 29.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 31.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 32.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 36.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 39.
\end{itemize}
authenticate its presence.\textsuperscript{22} It is also expressed through the life of Jesus as a visible manifestation of forgiveness. However, it goes beyond that in the sense that the disciples, through “word and act” are to bring peace, the shalom of God, which he defines as the “all embracing blessing of God.”\textsuperscript{23} The Church not only proclaims this but bears this reality in the world around it.

The third aspect of Newbigin’s mission model is seen through the witness of the Spirit. He notes that mission is not something that comes from within the Church. Instead, there is an “active agent,” a power that “rules, guides, and goes before the church,” which is the Spirit.\textsuperscript{24} The Church is launched into its mission because of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{25}

He summarizes his Trinitarian model by saying that mission is the proclamation, presence, and provenience of the Kingdom, each of those referring to the different members of the Godhead.\textsuperscript{26} Newbigin also has a trademark saying that the Church “lives in the midst of history as a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the reign of God.”\textsuperscript{27} By first saying the Church is a sign, he is communicating that it finds its mission and identity by pointing to something else, namely the reign of God. As a sign, the it is not an end in itself, but points to the reality of God’s reign. In being a foretaste, the Church is to be a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 42.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 48.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 56.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 58.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 64.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 110-13.
\end{itemize}
taste to society around it by demonstrating what it looks like to live under the reign of God. This is like Michael Goheen’s definition of the Church living “publicly before the eyes of the nation.” The Church, living out the ideals of God, is a witness to society. Finally, the Church is an instrument in God’s hand to carry out His mission.

This book holds several unique contributions to the topic at hand. First, it delineates the true definition of mission for churches. As explained above, instead of a church having a mission, his Trinitarian framework calls believers to acknowledge that God has a mission. Second, he delivers a very relevant critique of the church growth movement. The work of Donald McGavran, one of the earliest proponents of this missiological school of thought, asks why churches do not grow, and challenges them “to plan deliberately for church growth and expect it as the normal experience.” Theologically, Newbigin notes that outside of the book of Acts, there does not seem to be much of an emphasis on numbers. He concludes: “The emphasis falls upon the faithfulness of the disciples rather than upon their numbers.”

The practical manifestation of this missiology of church growth is that strategies must be devised to fill the pews. Servant evangelism, then, becomes separated from its theological framework of being a sign and instrument. Instead, it is narrowed as a method to attract people to come to church. Robert Schuller, using this methodology, used an

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30 Ibid., 125.
often-repeated slogan: “Find a need and fill it.”

Using these ideas, churches have come into communities to serve them in some capacity, yet while remaining completely unattached to them. Numbers are measured, results are evaluated, and if a link cannot be found between serving a community and rising attendance, the initiative is shelved.

Another significant contribution Newbigin makes concerns the nature of believers’ interactions with truth. Too often in missions, the Church has engaged in a Christendom model to conquer. But as a result, it misses the way God continues converting and guiding it. In this regard, the conversion of Cornelius becomes the converting of Peter, who learns something new about God. This is interesting specifically to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who sees itself as having the truth which must be shared with the nations. In the process of sharing it with others, the actual needs of the recipient might be ignored, or as the gospel of Jesus is presented, the Spirit may slowly be bringing conviction on issues that are different than previously perceived.

As a result, since our church is hesitant to learn from others, it could result in missing something God is trying to communicate as we interact with them. Newbigin notes that part of God’s will in interacting with others is that the church be corrected and its understanding be enlarged. This is a revolutionary principle in missions; that it involves “learning as well as teaching, receiving as well as giving.”

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33 Ibid., 137.

34 Ibid., 139.
The book has two primary weaknesses. First, whereas the purpose of the book is to develop and introduce a Trinitarian model for missions, it expands and gets into issues of church growth and ecumenism. Ironically, though the book develops narrative frameworks for mission, it does not seem to have a cohesive framework for itself. Second, the principles have very little practical application. He remains in theology and philosophy. Other books, such as *A Light to the Nations*, use much of Newbigin’s work filled in the gaps, but because he does not get into these issues, the reader is left to interpret and wonder.

*Saturate by Jeff Vanderstelt*

Jeff Vanderstelt, in his book *Saturate*, expresses a practical application of a missional theology. The central question he poses is about how disciples of Jesus can saturate their communities with Christ’s gospel and presence. He addresses this in several ways. In the first few chapters, he defines what the gospel is and what it looks like. His premise is that it is not just something that saves humans from sin, but from the power of sin. Through the Holy Spirit, believers can receive strength and power not to sin.

Similarly to Goheen and Wright, and though not using the same phrase of contrast society, he describes concerning Israel: “God wanted the nations to know what he was like by looking at Israel’s celebrations and feasts.” Hinting at Newbigin he notes, “They

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37 Ibid., 32.
were to be a foretaste of the future reality so that all nations would want to join them in it one day.”\textsuperscript{38} Through these, he begins to develop a theology of living outwardly through missional communities. He spends the first two parts of the book defining the gospel and telling his story.

In part three he describes what discipleship within this framework looks like. To begin with, it is something which happens everywhere, but primarily outside of the church.\textsuperscript{39} His model of discipleship is highly relational and incarnational. It involves being close to people, for instance sometimes living with mature Christian families to see what it looks and lives like. In this model, training towards discipleship should be as intentional as training a physician for surgery. It should happen while being involved in mission. He notes: “Jesus taught them the basics of making disciples while they were on the mission of making disciples.”\textsuperscript{40} In other words, believers are formed for the mission while being on mission.

One of the major critiques of doing evangelism or discipling other people is that it takes too much time that people do not have. In response, Vanderstelt introduces a framework which seeks to engage people in already-established everyday routines.\textsuperscript{41} It is not about adding more events into a schedule, but about engaging in events one is already doing. The first part involves sharing meals with others. He asks, “What if you regularly shared meals with people who love Jesus, as well as with those who don’t yet know and

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 89.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 171.
love him?”

It is about finding space in the things one is already doing. The second step entails listening to God and others. While listening to both, God provides opportunities to minister to people. The third step involves listening to people’s stories to help them frame theirs within the larger story of the Bible. The fourth step is to seek to bless others to demonstrate how God has changed Christian lives. For them, it involves writing down a list of the group’s needs and being open to needs around them. He challenges readers to find three tangible ways to bless people per week in the form of “word, deed, or gift.” Doing this would create many opportunities to share the gospel. The fifth step is to engage in the “rhythm of celebration” around you. Learning to celebrate together through birthday parties and other gatherings allows for opportunities to mingle with non-Christians and to present a positive picture of Jesus and community. The final step involves taking time to rest and play. Resting and playing expresses a belief that God is in control and is taking care of things. In summary, this method is not about a program, but about engaging in the rhythms of life with “gospel intentionality.”

The most significant contribution this book makes to the topic is that it shows what a missional theology looks like in real life. Christopher Wright makes no pretense for not writing a theology book. Michael Goheen allows a chapter at the end of his book

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42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 180.
44 Ibid., 182.
45 Ibid., 186.
46 Ibid., 189.
to show some practical examples of a missional theology. This book shows what it looks like throughout. He begins by telling his story and the beginnings of what a missional community looks like. Based on how they treat each other and live intentionally in the community, they show the practical ramifications of the gospel. He even gives examples of conversations and questions to help the reader identify a missional focus.

Daniel Im notes that this book and process for discipleship can be broken down into three central themes: environments, identities, and rhythms. He writes, “Environments are where discipleship happens, identities are who we are and who we’re growing into, and rhythms are how we live out everyday life with gospel intentionality.” This is a clear extrapolation of *Saturate*. One of the weaknesses of the book is that the author himself does not present his method in such an organized manner. For example, in chapter two he seems to present a theology of home as a central space for God’s activity and ministry. However, instead of making a case, he alludes to a passage or two from Scripture and continues telling stories. In essence, his presentations seem superficial. Though their model of discipleship is very hands-on and people intensive, his view of doctrine and the pastor’s role in teaching it are superficial. His definition of doctrine involves defining the gospel and discipleship, but not much else.

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47 Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 201.

Conspiracy of Kindness by Steve Sjogren

Steve Sjogren, in his book *Conspiracy of Kindness*, presents a critique of forms of evangelism in which the gospel is only “spoken.”⁴⁹ His central premise is that the gospel must be “spoken and shown to the watching world.”⁵⁰ To accomplish this he presents a “new vision and a simple strategy.”⁵¹

He begins by explaining how he was converted and then started confrontationally sharing his faith. Using this approach, he was functioning “more as a soul alienator, than a soul winner.”⁵² If his efforts at reaching people did not seem to work, he resorted to increasing the pressure. He also details a practice used by cults called “love bombing” in which much attention is given to a prospective convert for several weeks leading up to the conversion. After the conversion takes place, or if the person shows little interest, they are “dropped like a hot potato.”⁵³ He uses the metaphor of a shark to illustrate this method. Within this same framework, he also critiques door-to-door evangelism, which he deems is hurting the church in America.⁵⁴

Still, within this framework, he develops a formula to describe this form of evangelism: “Telling the message + a call to respond = traditional evangelism.”⁵⁵ This

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⁵⁰ Ibid.
⁵¹ Ibid., 13.
⁵² Ibid., 40.
⁵³ Ibid., 26.
⁵⁴ Ibid., 67.
⁵⁵ Ibid., 126.
assumes that if one tells the gospel with greater clarity, greater effectiveness will be achieved. The major critique he makes is that “telling is not welcomed until hearts are hungry.”\(^{56}\) On the other end of the spectrum, he uses the metaphor of a carp to illustrate Christians who would rather avoid doing evangelism. They are the opposite of sharks. In the middle, he uses the metaphor of a dolphin, because they combine the “strengths of shark and carp.”\(^{57}\) In this approach, the gospel is spoken and shown.

One of the reasons why the gospel must be “shown” is because there is a “credibility gap” in society concerning the Christian church.\(^{58}\) The church has alienated itself. Because of this, the gospel and love must be demonstrated, and the primary method Sjogren proposes for this is “servant evangelism.” He makes the point that doing service, the act of demonstrating God’s love, is the modern equivalent of Jesus or the disciples doing a miracle, because it produces in the heart of the recipients an openness to hearing the message.\(^{59}\) He notes:

> People on the receiving end of these simple acts of kindness come away with a more positive impression of Christianity than they previously had. With regular frequency, these deeds of love also open a door to deeper communication about the gospel . . . Our experience in Cincinnati showed us that evangelism must contain the right words, but that those words must follow the demonstration of the love of God . . . Following this sequence of deeds of love before words of love practically communicates that the experience of God’s love precedes the understanding of that love.\(^{60}\)

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 127.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 19.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 23.
In the first two-thirds of the book, he establishes the theology of this framework. In the last third of the book, he describes the methodology behind it. Before jumping into a project randomly, he recommends trying to identify the pain in your local city. This is done by prayerfully “looking around you.” It could involve spending time at the mall, in the neighborhood, or even in the parking lot of one’s church.

The most significant contribution Sjogren makes to the topic at hand is his emphasis on theology. So many churches and denominations follow the “shark” model. It is difficult for them to get past this. However, his emphasis that telling will not work until hearts are hungry is refreshing and is what churches need to hear.

He is one of the most experienced practitioners of servant evangelism in the country. He shares an abundance of insights on how to launch these initiatives in any area. Vitally important as well is his emphasis that servant evangelism is something that anyone can do with very little planning. This is the crutch of many churches: they think they need to spend a lot of time planning and training before executing. His example is inspiring because he sometimes goes out by himself and washes windows.

This book does not pretend to be about discipleship or the whole process of evangelism. Instead, it focuses on one of the best methods for the first encounter with a Christian—being on the receiving end of kindness. After that, it is up to the recipient if they are given a card to respond back to the church.

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61 Ibid., 141.
Welfare Ministry by Ellen White

Welfare Ministry covers topics ranging from a theology of wealth and poverty to ministering to the blind and how to best serve in one’s community. It is important to note that this is a compilation based on writings that span seven decades of her life. She begins with the idea that God gives talents and abilities. Therefore, if someone acquires riches through the exercising of their abilities, they are responsible to God to use them correctly. She notes that God has given some people wealth to relieve those who are in poverty.62 Wealth is also a test God places upon some to grow their character.63 What they can acquire are “lent treasures” to help the needy.64 In other words, we are called to be faithful stewards to help others.

After addressing wealth, she transitions to the difference serving can make in believers. Believers’ souls expand when ministering and doing good, as it is spiritually regenerating.65 Serving deepens one’s connection with Christ.66

There is also an association between service and people understanding God. She says, “It is only by an unselfish interest in those in need of help that we can give a practical demonstration of the truths of the gospel.”67 In other words, people naturally have trouble understanding the message of the gospel. However, when demonstrated and

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., Chapter 3.
66 Ibid., Chapter 5.
67 Ibid., Chapter 3.
incarnated, people can understand. A similar quote reads: “He fed the hungry and healed the sick. Constantly He went about doing good. By the good He accomplished, by His loving words and kindly deeds, He interpreted the gospel to men.”68 Again, the gospel is not naturally understood, but requires interpretation. When experienced through acts of kindness, the gospel can be realized. She writes, “Many can be reached only through acts of disinterested kindness. Their physical wants must first be relieved. As they see evidence of our unselfish love, it will be easier for them to believe in the love of Christ.”69

After establishing the theological need of service, she next addresses who should be reached first: neighbors.70 Believers are to watch for opportunities to “do them good.”71 It is recommended to visit every family in a neighborhood and know their spiritual condition.72 Beyond those that live on the same street, anyone in need is considered a neighbor.73 She establishes that some people need financial help, but others must be taught to work.74 Providing homes for the homeless and teaching people how to eat healthy food is also part of the work that can be done for others.75

68 Ibid., Chapter 6.
69 Ibid., Chapter 10.
70 Ibid., Chapter 7.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., Chapter 9.
73 Ibid., Chapter 5.
74 Ibid., Chapter 21.
75 Ibid., Chapter 25.
Ellen White often uses the phrase “unselfish interest” to communicate the spirit with which service is done.\textsuperscript{76} It is a critique against blessing someone based on their ability to bless in return. It's also a critique against giving up on this kind of work because it is not producing results.\textsuperscript{77}

Another phrase that Ellen White often uses is that of “medical missionary” work.\textsuperscript{78} She uses it in a broad sense, in some cases detailing the work of professional medical doctors and nurses,\textsuperscript{79} and lay people who have learned healing health principles,\textsuperscript{80} but it is most often used to refer to works of mercy and kindness like feeding the hungry.\textsuperscript{81} In her writings, medical missionary work is a term often couched within the context of the end times. Referring to a future time in which liberties are diminished she writes, “For their own sake they should, while they have opportunity, become intelligent in regard to disease, its causes, prevention, and cure.”\textsuperscript{82}

The author makes several significant contributions to the area of servant evangelism. The first is the idea noted above that the gospel requires demonstration through acts of kindness and mercy. This act of demonstrating also becomes a work of interpreting the gospel to people. They can understand the love of God when they

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., Chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., Chapter 9.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., Chapter 14.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., Chapter 15.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., Chapter 13.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., Chapter 16.
become recipients of this love through action. For example, she says that if people were most kind, courteous, and tenderhearted, there would be “one hundred conversions where now there is only one.”

Second, the approach of the author is missional, focusing first on connecting with family, friends, and neighbors. Believers are instructed to know the spiritual condition of all neighbors. This involves a reframing from what the church in the modern era has promoted, which is mostly an “invest and invite” strategy where people are encouraged to come to an event at church. Instead, people are counseled to act in practical ways to bless those around them.

One of the weaknesses of this book is that it is a compilation. A narrative and a delineation of a method are evident, but it is void of commentary and stories that would give it context. It is merely a collection of quotations. Also, because they span seventy years of her life and ministry, the writing does not have a sense of reflection that comes over time, so it is difficult to get a sense of priority.

*A Light to the Nations* by Michael Goheen

Michael Goheen, in his book *A Light to the Nations*, presents the topic of ecclesiology, but couched within a missional framework in which he seeks to define and understand the missional role of the church by understanding its role within the biblical

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83 Ibid., Chapter 10.

84 Ibid., Chapter 9.

story.\textsuperscript{86} To do this he expands the conversation beyond merely the New Testament to fill in the gap with the Old.\textsuperscript{87} The concept of the Bible being a clear narrative is valuable. Instead of being a systematized presentation based around themes, it is an exploration of one theme: the church and its mission as seen across the entirety of Scripture.

He first goes about his task by explaining the importance of ecclesiology. He believes that issues of identity and self-understanding must first be established before the church looks to reach out and live out its calling.\textsuperscript{88} In other words, theology and ecclesiology should always precede missiology. He does this primarily in the first chapter by giving a historical overview of the change in identity of the church. For example, the early church saw itself as an “alternative community” that proved attractive to society around it.\textsuperscript{89} It was a subversive movement that lived publicly, in contrast to the culture around it.

A few centuries later came the establishment of Christendom with Constantine. Goheen notes: “Those who had once identified themselves as resident aliens in a pagan environment were now members of an established church in a professedly Christian state.”\textsuperscript{90} The ramifications of this is that the church lost its prophetic stance. Instead of speaking out against culture, it began to appropriate forms of the pagan culture around it.

\textsuperscript{86} Michael Goheen, \textit{A Light to the Nations}, 4.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., ix.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 9.
He observes that change is not the inevitable result of moving to the center of culture but was the church succumbing to temptations around it.\footnote{Ibid., 10.}

From the beginning of Christendom, he transitions to the rise of the Enlightenment. Through Descartes and the emphasis on science, the church moved from the sphere of public to private life. Only those things which could be proven via the scientific method were viewed as facts and were therefore given space in public life. Everything else was placed in the realm of opinion and values and was relegated to private life. The church accepted its emasculated role and took on the identity of purveyors of a private religious experience, because those were the things that could not be proven. The inevitable result of this transition, Goheen observes, is that the gospel narrows until “All that is left is a personal relationship between God and the individual human.”\footnote{Ibid., 13.}

In the next several chapters, Goheen sounds a lot like Wright in the sense that Abraham is a key turning point. He refers to this as the “creation-fall-restoration storyline.”\footnote{Ibid., 27.} The problem of sin and its effects are established between chapters 1-11, with the promise of God to Abraham being the solution.\footnote{Ibid.} He chooses one man. Through Abraham, he will begin again and bless the entire world. Genesis 12 was the promise. In
Exodus, God sets the plan He has been working on into motion to form a nation and a royal priesthood who will live out the purpose of reaching and blessing the nations.⁹⁵

He also affirms that God’s people in the Old Testament were missional in that they were called to live as a people on display.⁹⁶ He first quotes Wright: “God’s mission involves God’s people living in God’s way in the site of the nations.”⁹⁷ Evidently, for Goheen, this is a key idea that serves as a kind of summary for his entire missional framework. He repeats the phrase later in the book, but this time without quoting Wright. He explains, “Mission is God’s people living in God’s way publicly before the eyes of the nations.”⁹⁸ He continually comes back to this theme of Israel, and eventually the early Christian church, being a contrast society. They are a people who look and live differently—proving to be a witness and a light to the nations around them.⁹⁹ How they lived was to be an attractive sign and symbol in order to draw the outsider, a latent memory of what life must have been like in Eden with the Creator.⁹¹ He notes that the rest of the Old Testament is then a “narrative account” of how well Israel fulfilled its calling.⁹²

⁹⁵ Ibid., 37.
⁹⁶ Ibid., 25.
⁹⁷ Ibid., 25.
⁹⁸ Ibid., 53.
⁹⁹ Ibid., 81.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 122.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 176.
¹⁰² Ibid., 37.
Picking up where Wright is lacking, Goheen attempts to develop a missional theology of the cross and its implications. He proposes that the cross needs to be viewed as part of the story of building and gathering a community for the sake of mission—something that began with Abraham—not merely as the way an individual receives forgiveness from their sins.103 This diminishment of the role of the cross, he notes, has its roots in Enlightenment thinking.

He is right in insisting that at the cross “the kingdom of God conquers evil”104 and that is it the “mightiest of God’s acts.”105 In some ways, the act of the cross itself serves as a contrast moment for the world. It is a personification of what God has been trying to do through Israel to be a lived-out light to the nations and even the universe. He refers to this firstly as “cosmic salvation.” It is cosmic in the sense that, through rescuing humanity from the power of evil, it has become the center and “hinge” of history.106 It is the “climax of the biblical story.”107 Second, through the cross Jesus has created a redeemed and transformed community. As a kind of new Israel, this community can now serve as conduits of salvation to the nations. This expansive view of the theology of the cross is a needed contribution.

This is clearly a book on theology. Perhaps to emphasize this point, Goheen leaves only a small section in the back of the book to explore the practical application of

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103 Ibid., 103.
104 Ibid., 105.
105 Ibid., 107.
106 Ibid., 109.
107 Ibid., 106.
what this theology might look like today. His answer, just as he shows it present throughout the Scriptures, is that the contemporary Church should strive to live as a contrast society. It would do this by seeking a missionary engagement through living out biblical principles that stand in contrast to culture. For example, church should be a community that seeks out justice in a world of injustice. It should live out generosity and simplicity in a world of consumerism. It should be a humble, yet bold witness in a world of uncertainty. Concerning the topic of evangelism, he posits that word cannot be separated by deed. It is the outworking of deed that gives credibility to the word.

His major weakness is found in the one area in which he seeks to make a completely new contribution: the cross. Throughout the book he engages closely with themes from Christopher Wright’s *Mission of God* such as the centrality of the Abrahamic call and covenant. He also connects the primary outline to themes from Lesslie Newbigin’s *The Open Secret* related to the church being a “sign” and a “foretaste” to the kingdom of God by living as a distinct community. And with other themes, he engages theologically and academically, providing generous footnotes and references. All of this aside, he introduces the theme of the cross, but without the same level of engagement. For example, he assumes an understanding of terms like “cosmic salvation,” a term more commonly discussed in Reformed theology, but without much

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108 Ibid., 209.
109 Ibid., 26.
emphasis on the equally important personal aspect of individual forgiveness, a term
emphasized more in Evangelical theology.

Nonetheless, this proves to be a very valuable book, particularly because it comes
across as a condensed form of *The Mission of God* and offers practical implications of his
theological frameworks. As mentioned in the preface, this serves as a useful tool for
pastors and leaders who are wanting to examine their theological framework for
missional engagement.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND STRATEGY
CHAPTER 3

THE MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Evangelism Definitions in Scripture and in the Church

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal a theology of how servant evangelism fits within an overall framework and definition for mission. As such, a theological framework for mission is presented. It begins with defining words like evangelism that are often associated with this discussion. These words are often defined and used in a limited way, which affects the perception of the church concerning its role and mission. A new holistic approach for mission is presented, with an analysis on how servant evangelism fits into this broader definition.

Scriptural Uses of Words Related to Evangelism

The word evangelism is associated with three words in the Greek. The first is the word euaggelion, meaning good news. It is normally rendered as the word gospel and is used seventy-three times in the New Testament in a variety of different ways. It is something that is proclaimed (Mt 4:23). It is something that correlates with a response to repent and believe (Mk 1:15), and is to be brought to the entire world (Mk 13:10). The second is the word euaggelizo. This is the verb form of euaggelion and means to
The third form in the New Testament is the word *euaggelista* and is normally translated as the word *evangelist*. It is a title given to Philip (Acts 21:8), a role within the body of Christ (Eph 4:11), and Timothy is commanded by Paul to “do the work of an evangelist (2 Tm 4:5). The word evangelism, then, is associated with the process of proclaiming, revealing, or announcing the gospel, or the good news.

The apostle Paul gives insight into what it looks like to do evangelism. In Romans 15:16, he makes it clear that he is called to bring good news euaggelion to the gentiles. He then reveals how he is to bring the gospel to gentiles: through “word and deed” (Rm 15:18). He expands, “in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about the Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (Rm 15:19). According to Paul, preaching the gospel involves more than just spoken words. It also involves revealing “mighty signs and wonders.”

In Mark 1:38, Jesus also seemed to amplify the meaning of preaching the gospel. A few verses before, Scripture records that Jesus healed “all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed (Mk 1:32). After spending time in prayer the next morning and being told that others were waiting to be healed, he responded by saying, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also (Mk 1:38). Jesus was seemingly using the word preach to encapsulate more than just a message.

In Luke 4:18, Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 concerning the mission of the Messiah:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,

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Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.

Note that in this passage, preaching the gospel is defined by the following phrases: healing the broken hearted, proclaiming liberty to captives, giving sight, and setting free those who are oppressed. For Jesus, preaching the gospel was more than just bringing a message through words. He used it to describe ministering and healing as well as the spoken word, to reveal the gospel.

How Evangelism is Often Defined in Protestantism

The thesis of this section is that the word evangelism has been defined too narrowly in practice. In the evangelical world, evangelism has often been defined as the act of proclaiming a truth concerning salvation and has been couched most within the framework of the great commission.² For example, K.P. Yohannan defines it as “proclaiming the love of God to a lost world.”³ The Lausanne Covenant, an agreement by 150 denominations, defines it this way: “To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts

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² Some variation of the Great Commission is found in all the Gospels and is seen in Matthew 28: 18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; and John 20:21.

³ K.P. Yohannan, Revolution in World Missions (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1996), 159.
of the Spirit to all who repent and believe.”

The ninety-fourth convention of the Episcopal church defines it as “the presentation of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in Him as Saviour and follow Him as Lord within the fellowship of His Church.” For many Protestants, evangelism is defined in terms of delivering a message of truth.

How Evangelism is Defined in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a unifying governance document called the Church Manual. This document is updated every five years based on decisions that are made at the General Conference Session, which is comprised of representatives from the world church. This gathering, because it is expressing the will of the corporate church body, is recognized as the “highest ecclesiastical authority in the administration of the church.”

The 2005 edition of the Adventist Church Manual says each local church board’s “chief concern is the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all its phases. The gospel commission of Jesus makes evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the gospel, the primary function of the church (Matt. 28:18-20). Two items should be noted. First, evangelism is seen as the highest

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mission and priority of the church. Second, in this edition, as has been true of the
previous one, evangelism is defined in terms of proclamation.

In the same section of the church manual in the 2016 edition, the language has
been updated to reflect a broader focus. Notice the wording concerning the role of the
church board: “Its chief concern is having an active discipleship plan in place, which
includes both the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering
evangelism . . . The gospel commission of Jesus tells us that making disciples, which
includes baptizing and teaching, is the primary function of the church (Matt. 28:18-20). 7
In this edition, the word discipleship has been added to frame evangelism within the
context of a discipleship process. This moves the discussion in the right direction, but the
thesis of this section is that in practice, evangelism is still mostly defined in terms of
proclamation.

For perspective, Revelation 14:6 has served often as a major catalyst for
evangelism. In this text, three flying angels are seen bringing the “everlasting gospel” to
the world. In practice, many Adventists have defined evangelism, as filtered through this
text, as the proclamation of truth. Patricia Jo Gustin, a Seventh-day Adventist
missiologist, notes the commitment to deliver this message has been seen primarily
through Adventist literature and preaching ministry. 8 Upon entering a new territory, early
Adventists would spread evangelistic literature in a new town “like the leaves of

7Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual, 129.
8 Patricia Jo Gustin, "Cross-Cultural Evangelism: The Challenge Facing Adventism Today," 
and an evangelist later would come and hold gatherings where he would speak to people that had shown interest. This method was shown to be particularly successful with Protestants but also later with Catholics. Gustin notes that after 150 years “The basic method and content and formulation of the message changed very little.”

In many areas of the world, these methods are still very successful. However, in many other areas, particularly the United States and Western Europe, growth has flattened and even decreased. In my own experience as a pastor, I have noticed that many Adventist leaders still place the greatest amount of funding and support towards public evangelistic presentations even though these have been shown to be the “least effective method in most of the unreached portions of the world today.”

Challenges to Limited Definitions of Evangelism

One of the challenges of evangelism being defined as a proclamation of truth is that it presupposes the acceptance of objective truth. It assumes the hearer is a Christian with some basic Bible literacy and ability; and if that person hears and understands the truth, it will be followed. Jonathan Thornton notes: “The modern agenda, both religious and secular, held the belief that correct thinking, founded on good solid information,

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10 Gustin, "Cross-Cultural Evangelism," 64.


12 Gustin, "Cross-Cultural Evangelism," 75.
would lead to correct actions in all circumstances.”  

The last one-hundred years of history—two world wars, Nazi Germany, numerous dictators, rising and falling economies—have dispelled this modern myth. After World War II, society began to sense that the utopian promise of growth, stability, and safety was not true.

It was out of this sense of cultural malaise that postmodern philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida began to distill and encapsulate how people were now thinking. Lyotard defined postmodernism as “incredulity toward metanarratives,” whereas Derrida stated that there is “nothing outside the text.”

Lyotard’s phrase of “incredulity toward metanarratives” encapsulated the thinking of a generation who realized that the promises of science and progress had failed. Essentially, the grand narrative had “lost its credibility.” Derrida was reflecting on the change in epistemology from objective truth to experience. What many evangelicals, Adventists being one of them, only recently have begun to wrestle with is the reality that Christianity and its claims represent this very meta-narrative of which people are now suspicious.

This is a very crucial issue because Adventists typically think of missions or evangelism in terms of an encounter with truth. Churches hold evangelistic presentations where doctrines are shared through seminars on prophecy. Often this will be the only encounter a city will have with a local Adventist church. Much of what Adventists do is


based upon an apologetic-objective style of presentation. David E. Fitch gives a stark warning against this kind of evangelism and writes: “The culture of postmoderns undermines two main assumptions of modernity, which are that scientific truth is objective and objective truth is available to the powers of an individual’s reasoning . . . Any attempt to evangelize postmoderns based upon these assumptions will likely fail.”

The Adventist Church as a whole has had a great inability to analyze its own culture and to see beyond its traditional methods. Instead of learning to adapt to a changing environment, the Adventist Church in the West mostly has failed to realize that its ministry context has changed. Instead, it tries to be more efficient and modern regarding what it has done for the last 150 years. Leaders try to update graphics on their sermons or use more modern words in their Bible studies to seem more relevant.

The second challenge of evangelism being defined as a proclamation of truth is that it only does well at reaching one part of a person—the intellectual side. Doctrine and beliefs are important but this minimizes the gospel encounter to a simple transference of information. People become objects that must be given a message.

A final challenge to this definition of evangelism is that it minimizes an understanding of God. When a missionary comes into a place with a predetermined method and plan, it means that he or she professes to know what is best. Since God worked with that method in a certain time and in a certain place the expectation is that God will work again using that same method. However, Scripture reveals a radically

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different thought. God rarely reveals Himself the same way twice. To Moses He revealed Himself in a burning bush (Ex 3:2). In Joshua 6:20, God commanded the Israelites to use a unique method to bring the walls down by shouting. He commanded Gideon’s army to hold torches and blow trumpets to scare and stun the Midianites, who ended up killing one another in their confusion (Jg 7:20).

It should be noted that many Christian denominations and groups do work with the poor,\textsuperscript{18} get involved in social justice,\textsuperscript{19} and seek to engage in other ways. The problem is that the word \textit{evangelism} has been defined in a way to primarily describe communicating the gospel with words. What this has caused in the Christian church is a lack of focus regarding its mission. Evangelism, the act of proclaiming the gospel using words, then, is seen as the primary focus of the church, with other aspects like serving the poor are good, but subsidiary.

The thesis of this chapter thus far is that, to its detriment, much of the Christian Church has mostly focused on the word but not deed concerning the gospel (Col 3:17). It has focused on proclamation, but not practice. In addition, a lack of focus regarding the mission of the church has developed. The next section examines why a broader definition for evangelism is necessary.


Reimagining Evangelism and Mission

The previous section establishes believers are called to do evangelism, yet much of the Christian church defines it in a very limited way. Because of that, the preaching event has often become synonymous with the word evangelism, with evangelism being seen as the primary mission of the church. From the Adventist perspective, discipleship is beginning to rise, with evangelism being a subset of a process. This has caused confusion regarding the meaning of the mission of the church.

Some missiologists are beginning to define mission and evangelism in different ways. Michael Goheen, in his book *A Light to the Nations*, writes, “Mission is God’s people living in God’s way publicly before the eyes of the nation.”20 This will be explored more in subsequent sections of this chapter, but according to Goheen, there is a way that God’s people are called to live, which serves to reach the nations for the purpose of a missionary encounter. As we will see later in this document, he lifts the discussion from being an issue of evangelism or discipleship, to issues of mission and ecclesiology.

Christopher Wright, in his book *The Mission of God*, also lifts the conversation from evangelism to mission. He upends the paradigm from being something humans are involved in and something they do, to individuals being invited into God’s initiative.21 The church’s mission and priority, then, must be based on the mission of God. This concept is explored later in the chapter.

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Lesslie Newbigin, in his book *The Open Secret*, makes a few propositions concerning evangelism and mission. First, he notes that evangelism has been defined and used differently throughout the years. The use of spreading Christian higher education in foreign countries has been seen as a method of evangelism.\(^\text{22}\) It has been defined through the lens of social service and development in developing countries.\(^\text{23}\) It has also been defined in terms of the church growth movement.\(^\text{24}\) Instead, he argues that evangelism and mission must be defined in terms of the missionary nature of God: “our business is not to promote the mission of the church, but to get out into the world, find out ‘what God is doing in the world,’ and join forces with Him.”\(^\text{25}\)

A New Definition for Evangelism

Some missiologists are expanding definitions of evangelism and mission, not just based on evangelism as proclamation or an outworking of the great commission, but on the mission of God as seen through a full spectrum reading of the Scriptures. This leads to two proposals. First, a linguistic shift must take place from evangelism to mission. Because a lack of clarity has developed with the word evangelism, and because some people have begun defining it in such a narrow way, the word is no longer as useful as it once was. Instead, the word mission should take its place. In using the word mission, it is not being proposed in the sense of work that is done overseas, as it has often been used in

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\(^{23}\) Ibid., 91.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 123.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 17.
the past. Instead, it is used in the sense of the objective or purpose of an organization—the reason for which it exists.

Second, there is something missing from previously mentioned definitions: the why. Many missional theologians refer to the nature of God—being missionary—as the impetus as to why He got involved in human history. Many make reference to “blessing the nations” as the ultimate agenda for God’s own mission.\(^{26}\) However, this is incomplete and limited in its scope. There is a need to encompass the why, the what, and the how of mission.

A new definition for the mission of the people of God is: revealing the love of God by being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness. The first part of this definition—revealing the love of God—refers to the what of mission. This must be the priority. The second part of the definition—being, doing, and saying—refers to the how of mission. This is what it should look like.\(^{27}\)

This definition presupposes that God’s character has been called into question. The next section of this chapter, using a narrative hermeneutical framework called the Great Controversy, examines how the character of God has been called into question and how humanity intersects with this drama. This explains why revealing the love of God is the Church’s primary mission. The second half of the chapter explores how God’s people are invited to reveal his character and how servant evangelism affects this.


The Why of Mission: The Great Controversy as the Impetus for Mission

The idea of the Bible as a story is not new. Several missiologists have made it the centerpiece of their missional theologies. Michael Goheen, for example, presents the idea of Scripture as a story in five primary acts: creation, the fall, Israel’s story, the story of Jesus Christ, and the church and a future redemption. He writes: “The Bible tells one unfolding story of redemption against a backdrop of creation and humanity’s fall into sin.” Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen delve deeply into this theme in their book *The Drama of Scripture.* Christopher Wright, in *The Mission of God,* also makes the case that the Bible is a coherent story, one that points forward to Christ in the Old Testament, and one that leads on from Christ in the New Testament—coming together as a “missional hermeneutic of the whole Bible.”

Ty Gibson notes, “The Bible is a grand narrative, rich with intersecting characters in an unfolding saga of infinite love, horrific loss, and glorious restoration at last.”

The Great Controversy Theme as a Narrative Framework

The sevenfold narrative framework in Scripture that is used for this project includes: creation, the battle in heaven, the fall, the covenant, the Messiah, the church,

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and re-creation. It is part of a theological theme called the Great Controversy, which, for Seventh-day Adventists, is the “core concept that brings coherence to all biblical subjects.” It is the governing hermeneutical filter for how Adventists interpret Scripture. Relating to this principle, Herbert Douglas writes, “How we understand this core theme directly affects how we grasp the intent of biblical writers when they used words such as righteousness, salvation, gospel, etc.” Ellen White referred to this theme as the “grand central thought of the Bible.” She writes,

“The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, [which is] the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise in the Revelation 'They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads,' [Rev.22:4] the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme of man's uplifting, the power of God 'who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' [1 Cor. 15.57]. He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field of study. He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure-house of God's Word.

This is a drama which every human on earth and every creature in the universe has to intersect with and deals with the justice and goodness of God.

The Story of the Bible

This section begins the sevenfold narrative framework described earlier.

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32 The unique framework proposed for this project is similar to that of ibid.


34 Ibid.


36 Ibid.
Scriptures relating to each theological theme are explored. The purpose of this section is to show how the Bible is a story, a narrative framework, that describes the Great Controversy and the cosmic battle between good and evil.

**Creation**

The biblical story begins with the reality of creation. Creation is here defined as the period from when God first began creating, to before Adam and Eve first sinned. Because God is love (1 Jn 4:8), He made all creatures with freedom of will, which is inherently risky. Frank B. Holbrook writes, “God created all intelligent beings as free moral agents with the ability to render loving allegiance to the Creator or to reject His authority.” During this time, all creation lived in perfect harmony with each other and towards their Creator.

Before creating humanity, God had created a race of beings called angels. According to Scripture, they predate the existence of humans (Job 38:4-7, Rv 1:20). One of them, the highest-ranking angel, was called Lucifer. Ezekiel 28 reveals that he was the epitome of perfection, “full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty” (Ez 28:12). No other angel is described as he was, covered in precious stones signifying rank, distinction, and uniqueness. D.E. Mansell makes the case that Lucifer and Gabriel were the two angels that stood in the presence of God, serving as covering cherubs. Whereas there were two


38 The name Lucifer is represented in Isaiah 14:12

covering cherubs, Lucifer is described as the anointed cherub, which suggests he was a “superior cherub among other cherubic beings.” During this era, all creatures in the universe coexisted in perfect harmony, including the human race.

**Battle in Heaven**

Scripture makes clear that God created Lucifer perfect, but that iniquity was found in him (Ez 28:15). The sin of pride began to develop in his heart as a result of his superior beauty, ability, and wisdom (Ez 28:18). Isaiah 14:12-15 gives a broader description of Lucifer and his sin:

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How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:
“I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.”
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According to this passage, it is not just that Lucifer wanted to be like the “Most High,” he wanted to surpass His authority. He was no longer content to be the highest-ranking creature in heaven. His pride drove him to yearn to replace the throne of God with his own.

On a fundamental level, when Lucifer proclaimed that he wanted his throne to be above God’s throne, he was questioning God’s character, wisdom, and justice. Herbert

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Douglas describes it this way: “The controversy between God and Satan is over whose plan is best for the universe—God's will (as expressed on earth in His commandments and yet more fully in Jesus) or Satan's notion of individual self-determination.”\textsuperscript{41} Satan seeks to attack whatever God has revealed. Frank Holbrook also makes the connection that the moral law is central to this controversy. He notes, “God’s authority, government, and the imposition of His will (the moral law) upon intelligent creation became the matter of contention, a polemic leading to a wrenching estrangement between God and a large portion of the angels as well as the newly created order of humanity.”\textsuperscript{42} The law of God is tied into the Great Controversy, but only in so much as it is something that God has revealed. Thus, Satan’s rejection of the law is ultimately and emphatically a rejection of the character and justice of God.

Satan’s antagonism towards God and His law led to a rebellion in heaven. Revelation 12:7 says there was war in heaven. Ranko Stefanovic suggests this was not merely a physical war, but a war of words.\textsuperscript{43} The war involved questioning the justice of God and convincing one-third of the angels of heaven to follow him in this rebellion (Rv 12:4), which led to Satan’s expulsion from his position and permanent place in heaven.\textsuperscript{44} For a time, it seems that Satan still had the ability to enter the courts of heaven. In Job 1:6-7, Satan is seen attending an assembly of the sons of God. However, his permanent

\textsuperscript{41} Douglas., “The Great Controversy Theme.”

\textsuperscript{42} Review and Herald Publishing Association., 973.

\textsuperscript{43} Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 386.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 387.
excommunication from heaven took place at the cross, a concept further delineated in this document (Jn 12:31).

The Fall

After this loss, Satan turned his attention to increasing the ranks of his rebellion. Genesis 3 tells the story of his tempting Adam and Eve. The purpose behind his words is to question the wisdom, character, and justice of God. He insinuates that God is withholding something good. He calls God a liar. Christopher Wright notes that the key to this Scripture is found in Genesis 3:5, in the promise that the pair would know “good and evil,” which he describes as having “moral autonomy.” He writes,

What was being offered by the serpent and then claimed by the human pair through their disobedient act was not just the ability to recognize the difference between good and evil (which is surely foundational to any genuine moral freedom or moral capacity, and that is commended in the Bible elsewhere) but the right to define for oneself good and evil. It is the prerogative of God in the supreme goodness of his own being to decide and define what constitutes goodness and therefore what constitutes evil. Humans, however in choosing to decide for ourselves what we will deem good or evil usurp the prerogative of God in rebellious moral autonomy.

Moral autonomy is what Satan has always been after. He wants to be the king of his own domain. Upon doubting God and falling to temptation, Adam and Eve seemingly proved the claims of Satan, that God was unjust and could not be followed. They believed the

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45 In John 8:44, John the Apostle refers to Satan as the “father of lies.”


47 Ibid.
“false portrayal of God’s character.”48 As such, Satan claimed earth as his own kingdom to rule.

Genesis 3:7 depicts Adam and Eve’s response to sin—”they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” This was the human attempt to deal with sin. God, however dealt with sin through the concept of covenant.

**Covenant**

The first step of God’s plan of salvation was initiated with the *protoevangelion*, the first gospel announcement, as recorded in Genesis 3:15.49 This text is known as the “fountainhead of all messianic prophecy,”50 the first in a long line of messianic allusions in the Old Testament. The passage reads: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, And you will strike his heel.”

There are three characters in this passage. The offspring of the woman is traditionally understood as being a “prediction of the coming Deliverer,” Jesus.51 William Varner, in his chapter in the book *What Happened in the Garden*, goes deeper into the identity of this male figure.52 He concludes that the Messiah will be a male from the

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human race, He will be supernatural, He will suffer while accomplishing His messianic role, and He will defeat Satan completely. The identity of the woman is given in the text, “the woman,” who is later named Eve (Gn 3:15, 21). The identity of the serpent itself is alluded to elsewhere in Scripture: “The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (Rv 12:9 NIV). The use of enmity in this text foreshadows the continued unveiling of the Great Controversy throughout the generations, and the victory of the Messiah by eventually crushing the head of the serpent. It should also be noted that the sacrificial system, and therefore the plan of salvation, was implicitly given to Adam and Even on that day, as exemplified through God’s provision of clothing for them.

Abrahamic Covenant

In Genesis 12:1-3, God institutes the second phase of His covenant, selecting someone through whom the nations would be saved. The text reads:

Now the LORD had said to Abram:
“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

53 Ibid.

A few observations can be gleaned from this text. First, God takes the initiative and chooses Abram, later to become Abraham. Second, God’s strategy is to bless him and make of him a great nation. The reason for God blessing him is so “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gn 12:3).

This selection and blessing of Abram and creating a remnant is “for the sake of mission.” Michael Goheen says, “Thus in the biblical story, privilege and responsibility, salvation and service, receiving and mediating blessing, belong together in election. God’s people are a so that people: they are chosen so that they might know God’s salvation and then invite all nations into it.”

To review, in Genesis 12:1-3, God promised that Abram would become a great nation. In the book of Exodus, the promise is fulfilled as God now redeems, calls, and forms this nation. The rest of the Old Testament, then, is an outworking of the Great Controversy narrative and God’s continued response. Ty Gibson writes,

In its various forms and phases of development, the covenant is God’s pledge to continue loving fallen humanity in the face of our rebellion. He will follow through with His plan to save us at any cost to Himself. To accomplish the covenant plan, God establishes in Israel the biological and theological lineage through which His heart will be enacted. The prophets of Israel become the channel through which a series of covenant promises and prophecies are proclaimed—all of it pointing to Jesus.

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55 Goheen, A Light to the Nations, 31.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 37.

58 Gibson, A Narrative Approach to Biblical Theology, 4.
Messiah

The fifth section in our narrative framework and story of the Bible is Messiah. It is typological in the sense that everything in the Old Testament points towards it. They are shadows pointing to what is real (Hb 10:1). This section delineates a few key principles related to the theological concept of the Messiah.

One of the original issues in the Great Controversy theme is Satan questioning the love and justice of God, and, by extension, the law of God. Satan wanted complete moral autonomy. When humankind sinned, it claimed earth as the kingdom through which it could exercise moral autonomy with humans being subject to one another. For a time, Satan sought to represent humankind in the councils of heaven (Job 1:6). Later, at the temptations of Jesus, he would make an offer to Jesus that could only be made by its ruler, to give away “all the kingdoms of the world” (Mt 4:9). Satan believed that he had become the rightful ruler of earth after humans fell to temptation, because it was seemingly proving that the law of God could not be kept. Jesus Himself referred to him as the “ruler of this world” (Jn 12:31). The plan that God implemented would need to fulfill the claims of the law to redeem lost humanity.

Incarnation and Great Controversy in his Life

There are three main characters in the first half of Revelation 12: a dragon, which is identified as the Devil (Rv 12:9), a woman, who represents “the people of God,” and a “man child,” which represents Jesus Christ (Rv 12:5). In this chapter, the devil is

59 Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 378.
standing in front of the woman, ready to destroy Jesus (Rv 12:4). This is a clear manifestation of the enmity between the serpent and the woman’s seed, referenced in Genesis 3:15.\textsuperscript{60} Stefanovic writes, “Satan’s primary effort to destroy Christ at the moment he was born continued until the end of Jesus’ ministry.”\textsuperscript{61} He lived His life under constant persecution from the enemy. Whether through the killing of all the male babies by Herod (Mt 2:16), or through the angry mob yelling, “‘Crucify him!’” (Lk 23:21), Satan sought to destroy Jesus to make naught the effects of the prophecy.

Death and Resurrection

Referring to the death of Jesus on the cross, Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen write, “In this brutal event we see the mightiest act of God. It is at the cross that God delivers the deathblow to human sin and accomplished the salvation of the world.”\textsuperscript{62} Christopher Wright, in his book \textit{Salvation Belongs to Our God}, however notes something else. Not only does the cross provide the central key “to the whole meaning of human history within the plan of God,”\textsuperscript{63} but he also notes the atonement stands as the “greatest truth in the universe.”\textsuperscript{64} In a sense, the cross offers a cosmic prelude to complete and final victory. Now, for the first time, all the creatures in the whole universe fully understand the plan of salvation. Now, the entire creation understood the unmitigated horrors of sin.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 382.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Bartholomew and Goheen, \textit{The Drama of Scripture}, 173.
\textsuperscript{63} Christopher J.H. Wright, \textit{Salvation Belongs to Our God: Celebrating the Bible's Central Story} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 181.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 182.
The death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross did at least four things. First, it validated His claim to be “God’s anointed Messiah. What appears to be humiliation is a revelation of the glory of God.”65 Second, it brought salvation to the entire world (Col 1:20, 1 Jn 2:2). Third, it communicated to Satan that he would finally have an end (Lk 10:18, Rm 16:10).66 John the disciple notes that the cross was an act of judgement that cast out the devil as the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31-32). Finally, the universe was able to witness and understand the horror of sin and the full plan of salvation (1 Cor 4:9).

Church

A theology of the mission and practice of the people of God is presented in the second half of this chapter. The chapter seeks to answer the question of how the people of God will live out their mission. How the church lives out its mission answers the claims presented in the Great Controversy.

Re-creation

This section could have been the epilogue to this chapter. Chronologically it follows the response of the people of God to the Great Controversy. However, my aim is to present the story of the Bible with the Great Controversy in the midst of it all first—to give an overview—and then to hone in on what the true focus of this chapter is, that is, presenting a new definition for mission and evangelism in context.

65 Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 177.

It bears repeating that the cross offers a cosmic prelude to complete and final victory. What this means is that when Jesus declared “It is finished” (Jn 19:30), he declared redemption to be complete, even though its final revelation was to come in the future. Adam and Eve did not die on the day they sinned. Instead, the promise of a deliverer came and a substitutionary death took place. They were able to live for hundreds of years more and others were able to learn about the horrific effects of sin. In a similar fashion, Satan did not die on the day he was defeated on the cross. Instead, he would continue to live for a time so that the world and the universe would understand the true nature of sin.

The book of Revelation describes a final battle between good and evil, often known as Armageddon, which takes place right before the end of earth’s history (Rv 20:8-10). Between this and the last two chapters of the Bible, four theological ideas emerge. The first is the final removal of sin through the destruction of the wicked along with Satan and his angels (Rv 20:8).

Second, out of the ashes of destruction, God creates a “new earth” (Rv 21:1), which is now to be the center of the universe as God makes it the host for the “new Jerusalem” (Rv 21:2). Third, humans are restored to the garden and the full presence of God (Rv 22:1-2). This is an important theological concept. Human life began in the garden with face to face communion with God. The earthly tabernacle was filled with imagery of the garden denoting the presence of God (1 Kg 6:18, 29, 32, 35). Now,

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67 Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 227.

humans are restored once again to the garden, symbolizing the presence of God (Rv 22:1). That which was taken away, access to the tree of life, has now been returned (Rv 22:1).

There is a fourth theological issue, which is not dealt with by most theologians. Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen correctly note that some have wrongly limited the end of earth’s history with personal salvation and heaven. They also go as far as to claim that salvation and redemption is actually the restoration of all creation with cosmic implications. They write, “Just as nothing in creation remained untouched by sin after Eden, so nothing in creation can remain untouched by God’s redemption after Christ’s victory on the cross.” But there is an added theological issue, perhaps a more important one, that is not dealt with by most theologians: the end of all things as the vindication of the character of God.

In Revelation 15, John sees in vision a group of people who have been victorious against the beast, his image, mark, and the number of his name (Rv 15:2). They are shown singing the song of Moses (Rv 15:3), alluding to the song of praise the Israelites sang when God delivered them through the Red Sea (Ex 15:1-18). This is now the new Israelites who have gone through similar persecution and have found deliverance. Note the new song:

Great and marvelous are Your works,

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69 In the same way a river flowed from the original garden (Gn 2:10), a perfect river is described in Revelation 22:1.

70 Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 232.

71 Ibid., 232-33.

72 Ibid., 233.
Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways,
O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy.
For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested (Rv 15:3).

By this point the effects of sin and rebellion have become fully born, similarly to Egypt, and God is about to begin a process of sending plagues against the wicked (Ex 2:23; Rv 15:6). It is in this context they acknowledge God’s works are marvelous, and His ways are just and true (Rv 15:3). Later, before the final judgment upon the wicked, Scripture reveals they are judged “according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Rv 20:12). The wicked themselves, presented with their records, will bow and confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Rm 14:11, Phil 2:11).

Regarding this, Ellen White writes,

Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan’s rule in contrast with the government of God, has been presented to the whole universe. Satan’s own works have condemned him. God’s wisdom, his justice, and his goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all his dealings in the Great Controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of his people, and the good of all the worlds that he has created. “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.” [Psalm 145:10.] The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness that with the existence of God’s law is bound up the happiness of all the beings he has created. With all the facts of the Great Controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare, “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

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Here, Ellen White references that God’s goodness, His character, has been vindicated. In another passage, Ellen White observes that the plan of salvation has a “deeper purpose” than just the personal salvation of humanity, but to “vindicate the character of God before universe.” 74 She continues, “The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan.” 75 Through this, Satan’s claims are proven wrong. Christ lives a perfect life without sin, claiming the victory that Adam never could achieve. He dies a substitutionary death, meeting the requirement of the Law. He resurrects on the third day proving the claims that He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. He is then shown to be loving and just towards the sinner and the wicked by respecting their free will choices to reciprocate His own love, or to act against it.

To summarize, at the end of earth’s history, sin is completely removed through the destruction of the wicked, everything is recreated and made new, man is restored to the garden and the tree with full access to God, and Christ is fully vindicated against the public claims of Satan in the universe.

The How of Mission: Mission as a Response to the Claims of the Great Controversy

The purpose of this chapter thus far has been to note that evangelism has been defined too narrowly, both in the Adventist church and in the broader Christian community. Challenges to these definitions have been examined and a new definition for

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74 Ellen Gould Harmon White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 68.
75 Ibid.
evangelism and mission has been proposed: Revealing the love of God by being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness. The premise of the first half of this definition is that the character of God—his love and justice—has been questioned. That is why a narrative overview of the biblical story has been presented, as well as an analysis regarding how the Great Controversy theme serves as a hermeneutical filter for understanding that story. Revealing the love of God is the what of mission. It is what the people of God are called and invited to do. The second half of this chapter examines the how of mission.

In developing the aforementioned definition for mission, two sources have been particularly helpful. The first is *The Ministry of Healing*, written by Ellen White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She explains,

> The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished. Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”

White depicts a revelation of Christ is what is most needed today. This is pertinent to the topic at hand because the character of Jesus has been called into question. Ellen White also describes a for evangelism and mission:

> The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has

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done for them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.\textsuperscript{77}

In this quote, she describes the mission for the people of God before the second coming of Christ. Two things should be noted. First, the mission is to reveal His character of love; to reveal what God is actually like. Second, the how of mission, the people of God are to reveal the love of God through their life and practices, “in words of truth and deeds of holiness.”\textsuperscript{78} Finally, the second part of the definition was also influenced by Darrell Guder.\textsuperscript{79} A line in the book, which is later expanded into separate chapters, was particularly influential. He says, “We have defined the church’s task as ‘to be the witness,’ and we have further stated that this means that the church and the Christian are to be the witness, do the witness, and say the witness.” This was helpful because it expands witness beyond just proclamation.

**Being the Witness: Living as a Contrast Society**

The people of God are called to live differently, what Michael Goheen calls living as a “contrast society.”\textsuperscript{80} This difference serves a missiological purpose. Though a chronology of the story of the Bible has been examined, with part of the response of the people of God theoretically coming in the section on Church, there is a need to approach it broadly, including Scripture from both the Old and New Testament.


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 416.

\textsuperscript{79} Guder, *Be my Witnesses*.

\textsuperscript{80} Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 40.
The People of God as a Priesthood

God’s ideal was always for His people to live in perfect relationship with Him in the garden. When Adam and Even broke the terms of this relationship, they were no longer able to remain with access to the tree of life. Later, God called Abraham as a representative of a new remnant and promised that he would be blessed so all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gn 12:3). This blessing implies a reversal of the curse that was placed on the earth. All nations were going to be invited to come under that blessing to be redeemed and restored to the garden with Him. In Genesis 12 God promises Abraham that He will form a people, which is fulfilled in Exodus. Exodus 19:3-6 describes the terms of the covenant:

And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (NIV).

In his first epistle, Peter describes this verse in this way, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession . . . (1 Pet 2:9). John Yoder notes that the adjectives in this sentence denote distinctiveness they have not merited but are applied as a gift of grace. The rest of the verse expands on their purpose: “that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into

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81 Ibid., 31.

His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Similarly to Newbigin, Yoder says, “its purpose is not that its beneficiaries should enjoy it for themselves, but rather that, but by the very fact of being who they are, they should ‘declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you.’”

There are three implications for God’s people being called to live as priests. The first role of the priest is to receive revelation and instruction from God and bring it to the people. Moses serves as a theological model for a prophet and priest (Ex 4:15-16). Second, the priest brings the sacrifices of the people to God. Through this work of atonement, “The people could come to God.” The people were to be to the rest of the world what the priests were to them. They were to bring God to the world so they, too, could be saved. The third role of the priest was to exemplify, through their own holy life, what God was like. They were to live as “a model of consecration and devotion to God.” In other words, God’s people are to reveal what God is like by living as “display people,” who embody in their life God’s original intent from creation. By following the Torah and His revelation and by ordering their corporate lives in a unique way, they were to be an attractive sign for all the nations. Note Michael Goheen’s definition of mission:

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83 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 121.
86 Ibid.
87 Goheen, A Light to the Nations, 38.
88 Ibid., 25.
89 Ibid.
“God’s people living God’s way publicly before the eyes of the nation.”\textsuperscript{90} Christopher Wright, in his book \textit{The Mission of God’s People}, writes the mission of God’s people “has to start with justifying faith in God and practical obedience to God.”\textsuperscript{91} Part of the mission of the people of God, then, is to live in obedience to His revelation in the same way that a priest did. This principle is seen throughout Scripture—there is a missiological and evangelistic component to living as a contrast society on display. The nations around Israel would see the blessing that resulted from their lifestyle, and it would serve to “draw the nations into covenant with God.”\textsuperscript{92} In this vein, John Yoder correctly observes that “The medium and the message are inseparable.”\textsuperscript{93}

\textbf{Following the Revelation of God}

This is seen especially through God’s law that became part of the covenant in Exodus 20. Ellen White notes the Israelites were given a sacred trust of being made the depositories of His law.\textsuperscript{94} She says, “Thus the light of heaven was to shine out to a world enshrouded in darkness, and a voice was to be heard appealing to all peoples to turn from their idolatry to serve the living God.”\textsuperscript{95} The heart of God is revealed by keeping the Ten Commandments. For example, Ty Gibson describes the law as exhibiting “relational

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 53.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Christopher Wright here focuses specifically on Genesis 18:19, but the principle is seen across Scripture. For more see Wright, 83.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Goheen, \textit{A Light to the Nations}, 39.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Yoder, \textit{For the Nations}, 41.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
integrity” because “the first four of the Ten simply describe what love looks like in vertical action, toward God. The last six of the Ten describe what love looks like in horizontal action, toward our fellow human beings.”

It is also seen through the health laws of the Old Testament. After the flood, God gave Noah permission to eat meat (Gn 9:3) The Bible notes an observation of clean and unclean animals coming on the ark. In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 God delineates the specific clean and unclean animals. Through the Scriptures, unclean animals were not to be used as food and were considered an abomination. William Shea notes a variety of academic arguments related as to why a distinction was made between clean and unclean animals but concludes that the most likely explanation has to do with health. He writes, “The reason for the distinction of clean animals from unclean animals has to do with their fitness or unfitness for human food.”

There was also a blessing attached to following the Torah, of which the health laws were a part. The Israelites would become physically strong (Ps 105:37). Their families and livestock would grow and increase (Dt 7:14). They would be healthy (Dt 7:15). Their sandals and clothes did not wear out for forty years (Dt 29:5). This served as a witness to those around them. The Egyptian midwives noticed that the Hebrew women

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97 Noah was instructed to take seven of each clean animal and just a pair of each unclean animal onto the ark. After Noah sacrificed one of each of the clean animals after the flood, three pairs of clean animals were left. For more, see Genesis 7:2-3 and Genesis 8:20. See also William H. Shea, "Clean and Unclean Meats," Biblical Research Institute, accessed May 23, 2018. https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/CleanandUnclean%20Meats_0.pdf.

98 See Isaiah 65:4; 66:3, 17; and Hosea 9:3.

99 Shea, “Clean and Unclean Meats.”
“give birth easily” (Ex 1:19 GNT). Because the Israelites were careful to follow the commands of God, they were protected from sickness that afflicted Egyptians. For example, “while the Egyptians used human excreta in their medical concoctions, the Jews buried theirs outside the camp.”

**In the Early Christian Church**

In his book, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, Allan Kreider examines the historical roots of how people were converted, initiated, and baptized in the early church. To do this, he examines the writings of many who were converted and baptized, but he also examines what the enemies of the Christians had to say about them. Kreider writes about Cyprian, who eventually became the bishop of Carthage in the third century, “His struggle was not to believe what the Christians believed; rather, it was to live as they taught—and as many of them seem to have lived.” It was the Christian church living differently that seemed so daunting to him at first. The author goes on to describe the struggle of Cyprian who was addicted to wealth and luxury, and who was initially repulsed by the simple clothing of the Christians. It should be noted that believers living and behaving differently is something that was expected before baptism.

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100 Ronald Williams, "None of These Diseases," *Shabbat Shalom* 37, no. July-September (1990), accessed May 24, 2018.


102 Ibid.
In summary, Christians are called to live as contrast society by inhabiting God’s values. This has an evangelistic component. Christopher Wright even goes so far to say that to “obey God’s commands is to reflect God in human life. Obedience to the law of God and reflection of the character of God are not mutually exclusive categories: the one is an expression of the other.”

Doing the Witness: Loving as a Transformed People

God’s people are called to reveal the love of God by being the witness, but also by doing the witness. This is what Scripture refers to as “word and deed” (Col 3:17). It is also what modern writers refer to as servant evangelism. One of the pioneers of the servant evangelism movement, Steve Sjogren, defines it this way: “demonstrating the kindness of God by offering to do some act of humble service with no strings attached.” A term that has also become popular to define the responsibility for the people of God to do good is social justice. Roscoe J. Lilly points out that both definitions have problems when seeking to interface with the community. A local government or school will be confused or not respond favorably to a church saying it wants to do a servant evangelism project for them. Similarly, an organization often responds negatively to the term social justice because it often denotes issues of politics involving separation of church and state. The best term, the author recommends, is the term


104 Sjogren, Conspiracy of Kindness, 4.


106 Ibid.
community service because it is a term churches and organizations can understand and that does not have negative connotations.\textsuperscript{107} For the purposes of this document, the phrase I have already submitted, doing the witness, will be used to encompass terms like servant evangelism or social justice. Revealing the love of God by doing the witness encapsulates the different ways that God’s people are called to do love and serve those around them.

**The Ten Commandments as the Framework for Doing the Witness**

Doing the witness flows from the theological reality that God is love (1 Jn 4:8). It is central to His character (Ex 34:6-7). This is reflected through His action via creation (Ps 119:64). It is also seen through the hand-formed creation of man, which He called “very good” (Gn 1:31).

God gave humans a framework for living, the Ten Commandments. Trevor O’Reggio writes that the Ten Commandments “are the principals of God’s kingdom and the rule by which all His creatures govern their lives. The basic, fundamental principle of these commands is love—supreme love for Creator God and unselfish love for fellow humans.”\textsuperscript{108} In the fourth commandment, the words “Remember the Sabbath day,” is an implicit reminder that the law existed before it was given on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:8). It is an allusion to Genesis 2:1-3 and the reality that the Sabbath is an “inseparable part of creation week.”\textsuperscript{109} The law of God was in some form passed down to subsequent

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\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 8.
\end{flushright}
generations such that Abraham was referenced as keeping the commands of God (Gn 26:5).

Leo Michel Abrami notes concerning the Ten Commandments that “Behind every one of the prohibitions is an underlying sublime affirmation of a basic principle of religion and morality.”\(^{110}\) In other words, every commandment holds within it a positive affirmation. For example, when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was in the law, He responded by quoting two verses. The first is Deuteronomy 6:5, the great Jewish confession of faith known as the Shema.\(^{111}\) The second is Leviticus 19:18, which describes love towards your neighbor. By saying that on these two hangs “all the Law and the Prophets” Jesus was saying that the true intent of the Law is to show us how to love God and love others. The first four commandments deal with one’s love towards God, and the subsequent six deal with human relationships. In addition, He was saying that loving God and loving man is a way to summarize the entirety of Scriptures.

How the people of God engaged with others, as revealed in the Scriptures, was filtered through an understanding of God’s law of love. The next section analyzes some Scriptures in the Old Testament that serve as examples of the positive affirmations of the law and how it affected the Israelites’ witness to those around them.

**Doing the Witness in the Old Testament**

One of the central figures in the Old Testament is Abraham. God chose him to be

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\(^{111}\) Youngblood, Bruce, and Harrison, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.
the “father of many nations” (Gn 17:4). It was God’s intent that through him and his descendants, the world would learn about God and be saved. The way God would bring about this salvation was through the witness of him and his descendants practicing “righteousness and justice” towards others (Gn 18:9). A few of those practices follow.

By Practicing Hospitality

Genesis 18 reveals the story of Abraham showing hospitality to strangers. In this story, he is described as noticing strangers walking towards him. He takes four actions: he bows before them in a position of humility, he invites them to stay to be refreshed, he gives them food and water, and he gives them shelter. L.R. Martin observes that Abraham provided the “basic needs for a traveler in the ancient world.” However, whereas Abraham operated in a way that was normative to his culture, the author of Hebrews commends his actions and commands Christians to “not forget to show hospitality to strangers” (Hb 13:2). This seemingly becomes an injunction that all believers should practice despite their culture.

The word for hospitality in this verse is the Greek word philoxenia, which literally means love to strangers. The only other place in the New Testament that uses this word is in Romans 12, a chapter devoted to describing examples of love, where the apostle Paul says, “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Rm 12:13, NIV). Luke Timothy Johnson, in his commentary on Hebrews, summarizes that this word

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essentially means to treat a stranger as a brother, in “one’s own place.” Similarly, the story of Lot shows an example of hospitality toward travelers. In Genesis 19:1-3, Lot behaves in almost the exact same way as Abraham. He approached the strangers which he determined to be in need, showed them respect by bowing, invited them to his house to be refreshed, and offered them food.

Not only did they show welcoming hospitality to strangers, but each was blessed with a special revelation from heaven. In Abraham’s case, it was the promise of a son (Gn 18:10). In Lot’s case, it was the opportunity to escape the coming destruction (Gn 19:12-13). The implication in these verses, and also in Hebrews, is that God blesses hospitality. In addition, it is important to note how Abraham’s lifestyle of faithfulness to God and love to his neighbors was interpreted by those around him. The sons of Heth in Canaan addressed him as a “prince of God” (Gn 23:6, ESV). Abraham’s material blessings and how he treated others made them associate him with God.

By Practicing Love and Justice Towards an Enemy

Scripture is clear that love and justice manifested towards all people, even enemies, was to be an identifying characteristic of the people of God. Note Exodus 23:4, “If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it” (NIV). Or the very next verse in this chapter: “If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it”

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(Ex 23:5, NIV). The point is that one is not to gain an advantage from the mishap of even an enemy. Second, believers are to help restore the enemy.

By Practicing Love and Justice Towards a Foreigner

Scripture has much to say about how believers are to treat the foreigner or alien. “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him,” Moses writes in Exodus 22:21 (NIV), “for you were aliens in Egypt.” In a similar vein, Moses writes, “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God” (Lev 19:34).

By Seeking Justice and Correcting Oppression

God’s people are called to seek justice and correct oppression (Isa 1:17). This is done by defending the rights of the poor and needy (Pv 31:9). Believers are to protect the widow, the orphan, the sojourner, and the poor (Zec 7:9-10). God’s people are encouraged to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and have been mistreated (Pv 31:8-9).

The Church in Exile in the Old Testament

A central theme in God’s lexicon of mission is current exile or the memory of exile. It was true for Abraham in that he would need to leave his home country (Gn 12:1). It was also true for the Israelites (Gn 15:13). When the Israelites failed to live up to the terms of the covenant, God’s response was exile to Babylon (Jer 16:11). In this context they were to learn once again about being a “light to the nations” (Is 49:6). In Jeremiah
29:5-7, God instructs them about the kind of posture they were to take concerning the culture around them:

Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

A few things may be observed from this text. First, is the juxtaposition of their mission. Babylon was the enemy of God—the ones who come “from the north” (Jer 50:9). They were far. But now God places Israel in the heart of enemy territory, Babylon. God’s people were called to incarnate through building houses, planting gardens, and marrying (Jer 29:5-6). Second, they were called to “seek the peace,” the shalom, of the city (Jer 29:7). Eldin Villafañe defines shalom in this way: “Shalom speaks of wholeness, soundness, completeness, health, harmony, reconciliation, justice, welfare—both personal and social. The church is an instrument, a servant, of peace in the city. It preaches and lives out the Shalom of God.” In this context, Israel was to do everything in its power to bless and seek the peace and prosperity of Babylon. A the same time, they were to seek divine assistance in making it happen, “pray[ing] to the Lord for it” (Jer 29:7).

Later in the New Testament, Jesus would teach the same thing: “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Lk 6:27-28). What God was communicating

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to Israel is that the Abrahamic covenant was still their ongoing mission. As the Psalmist worded it, “That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations” (Ps 67:2). The way this would be accomplished in Babylon was through their positive interactions with culture. This is personified in the way Daniel and his friends, by seeking the “welfare of the city” by being model citizens and working hard, were placed in a position where they could bring witness to Nebuchadnezzar and influence the country.\textsuperscript{115}

Summary

A few things should be noted from the variety of Scriptures on these topics. First, Abraham and the Exodus event served as the central symbol for how the people of God were to live in the Old Testament. God redeemed them through the Exodus, and now they were called to respond. Christopher Wright calls the Exodus a “model of behavior.”\textsuperscript{116} This involved living with reciprocity. For example, when the Israelites were released, they were not to be released empty handed. Scripture says, “And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed . . . remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you (Dt 15:13-15 NIV). Second, the people of God were not just to reflect His actions, but by living with reciprocity they were reflecting God’s character. Wright adds, “Part of the mission of God’s redeemed people is to reflect the character of their redeemer in the way they behave to others.”\textsuperscript{117} This would serve to provide a missionary encounter with the nations around them. Third, as is true concerning

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., 106.
\textsuperscript{117}Ibid.
\end{flushright}
the Ten Commandments, every negative prohibition is by the same token a positive affirmation and injunction on how to live.

Finally, the results of not living lives of reciprocity and compassion were serious. God warned he would kill those who would take advantage of widows, orphans, or the oppressed (Ex 22:24). Disobedience in this area was a major contributing factor in God allowing Jerusalem to be destroyed (Jer 22:3-5). The implication is clear. If all God's children who are invited into God's house cannot be treated with love and respect, there will be no more house. God will allow it to be destroyed.

**Doing the Witness in the New Testament**

This section explores theological themes in the New Testament related to doing the witness. This section reflects on what it looks like for the church to live out its mission in a practical way. Special focus is given to the life of Jesus, the disciples, and what the church acted like in early Christian history.

**Incarnation and Presence**

Jesus came to be a witness of what the Father is like. He said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father” (John 14:9 CEV). Israel was called to be a “light to the nations (Is 49:6). Jesus, through His life, was the manifestation of that light. It was the testimony of John that He was the “true light” (Jn 1:9), and it was the confession of Jesus Himself that He was the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12). One of the ways that Jesus revealed the goodness of God was through the theological premise of incarnation and drawing close to people.
Ellen White describes her observation of how Jesus operated: “Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.” This is a process of incarnating, drawing close, ministering to needs, and then making an appeal.

Scriptures record this to be accurate. He took on flesh and forever enjoined Himself to humanity. The Scriptures record five main instances in which Jesus was accused of being close to sinners. The first is recorded in Mark 2:16. There were three groups of people present at this gathering: a) tax collectors and sinners, including Levi, b) Jesus and His disciples, and c) scribes and Pharisees. Such was the accusation: “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?” (Mk 2:16). In Luke 7:34 Jesus repeats the refrain that served as an accusation against him, “You say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” In Luke 7:39 Jesus was rebuked because he allowed a woman, a sinner, to wash His feet. The implication was that if Jesus was really a prophet, He would have known who she was and would not allow Himself to be touched by her. In Luke 15 many tax collectors and sinners drew close to Jesus. Again, the Pharisees and scribes rebuked Jesus, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them” (Lk 15:2).

In response to this, Jesus tells three stories: the lost sheep, the lost coins, and the lost son—all detailing how God responds to sinners by seeking after them and how He rejoices when they repent. Finally, the religious leaders complained because Jesus went

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to eat with Zaccheus. They said, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner” (Lk 19:7). Even though Jesus’ reputation was continually called into question, He still mingled and spent time with sinners. Parker Palmer observes how students become open to learning: “Real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subjects.”119 These are issues of proximity and presence and Jesus exemplified them in His life.

Gregory Boyle, in his book Tattoos on the Heart, reflects on his time as a priest in the gang capital of Los Angeles in the 1980’s. He writes,

If you read Scripture scholar Marcus Borg and go to the index in search of “sinner,” it’ll say, “see outcast.” This was a social grouping of people who felt wholly unacceptable. The world had deemed them disgraceful and shameful, and this toxic shame, as I have mentioned before, was brought inside and given a home in the outcast. Jesus’ strategy is a simple one: He eats with them. Precisely to those paralyzed in this toxic shame, Jesus says, “I will eat with you.” He goes where love has not yet arrived, and he “gets his grub on.” Eating with outcasts rendered them acceptable. Pizzas all around—Looney’s home. Recognizing that we are wholly acceptable is God’s own truth for us—waiting to be discovered.120

Boyle’s ministry was not based primarily on providing for the needs of those in his community but based on a ministry of presence. He wandered around their communities. He came uninvited to their gatherings. At first, he details, the reception was cold, but when he began to visit the gang members in jail and in the hospital, he broke through a barrier.121 They started opening up. He learned their names. It was a process of

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121 Ibid., 54.
identifying with his local community. Boyle writes concerning Jesus, “He didn’t champion the cause of the outcast. He was the outcast. He didn’t fight for improved conditions for the prisoner. He simply said, ‘I was in prison.’ The strategy of Jesus is not centered in taking the right stand on issues, but rather in standing in the right place—with the outcast and those relegated to the margins.”

Healing and Ministering

Healing and ministering to people’s needs was one of the primary ways Jesus sought to reach others, in addition to proving His identity. Addressing the unbelief of Philip that He was “in the Father,” Jesus challenged him to “at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves” (Jn 14:11, NIV). The works of Jesus were to be one of the primary methods of giving credibility to His mission. Jesus said, “the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me” (Jn 5:36, ESV).

Scripture records that Jesus went to every town and village, preached the gospel, and “healed every kind of disease and sickness” (Mt 9:35, CEV). He cured a woman who had been sick for twelve years (Mt 9:20-22). He healed a man who could not walk (Mk 2:9-12). He healed a blind man (Jn 9:6-7). In many of the instances, people reacted by “shouting praise to God,” like in the instance of healing the lepers (Lk 17:12-16), but in some cases, they did not. Sometimes the need involved feeding people (Mt 14:13-21), or sometimes it involved meeting the spiritual need of acceptance and forgiveness to

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122 Ibid., 72.
someone, like while dining with Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). What is important to note is that Jesus spent more time healing and ministering to people than He did preaching.\textsuperscript{123}

The greatest act of doing the witness for Jesus was the cross. This was how He fully revealed the love of God to lost humanity (Jn 3:16). He prophesied that this would be the culminating act that would “draw all peoples” to Himself (Jn 12:32). His death, and resurrection are what convinced many that He truly was “the Son of God” (Mt 27:54). Jesus also taught that death was the greatest way believers could communicate a witness—so much so that the term martyr is derived from witness (Jn 12:24).

In the Life of the Disciples

Jesus taught those who believe in Him would do the same works that He did (Jn 14:12). He modeled it and expected it of them. He taught that “good works” was one of the ways others would be drawn to God (Mt 5:16). After the resurrection, Jesus commissioned His disciples with the words: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (Jn 20:21). This verse holds a central place in missional theology. The Father sent Jesus and now Jesus was giving full authority to the disciples, the church, to carry on His work. Breathing on them was a symbol that they were now corporately recreated as a new humanity, propelling them to live in act in the same way Jesus did. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus claimed that all authority had been given to Him, and the church was to now go in with that same authority, with the same power (Jn 14:12), to fulfill the same mission—making disciples of all the nations.

\textsuperscript{123} White, Ministry of Healing, Chapter 1, Kindle.
The Great Commission gave them the authority, but now the special gift of the Holy Spirit would give them the power. They were instructed to remain in Jerusalem until the arrival of the gift of the Holy Spirit. With that gift, they would be empowered to witness, even “to the ends of the earth” (Ac 1:8). The word here translated witness comes from the Greek work *martus*. This same word is used in Acts 22:20 in the form of the word martyr, to describe Stephen who had died. The point is that the early martyrs were witnessing through their deaths.

Acts 2:40-47 offers a description of the life of the early Christian church. They lived differently (v. 44). They worshipped (v. 47). Central to the early church is that “many wonders and signs were done” (v. 43). Miracles were key to turning people to God (Ac 3:8).

Living in Diaspora

Previously mentioned, God used the reality of exile in the Old Testament so they could live their lives on display, engaging culture around them. In the New Testament, the early church soon began to experience the concept of diaspora. This term is used by the disciple Peter as he wrote to the scattered church: “To the pilgrims of the Dispersion” (1 Pt 1:1). The word here is the Greek word *diaspora*, referring to a citizen living or being scattered abroad. It is in this context that Peter repeats part of the methodology for the mission of God’s people, that they were still called to be “a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” for the purpose of “proclaiming the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pt 2:9). In other words, as priests, they were to bring God to the people, and the people to God, with themselves living examples of holy
lives. It is in this context, as he is counseling the believers spread around the world, that he tells them to live as “sojourners and pilgrims” doing good works (1 Pt 2:11-12). By living as a contrast society and doing good works, the believers would incite the Gentiles to “glorify God” (1 Pt 2:12). James used the same word, *diaspora*, to describe the twelve tribes that have now been scattered abroad (Jas 1:1). This posture, of the church living in exile or diaspora, is very important to address. The church behaves differently within Christendom. Dulles references Harvey Cox where he asserts that the task of the church in a secular city is to take the posture of a *diakonos*, a servant, “who bends himself to struggle for its wholeness and health.”

In the First Several Centuries

This was one of the secrets of growth in the early Christian church. “Loving deeds toward the needy,” Michael Goheen adds, is the reason the early church grew so explosively in the first three centuries.\(^\text{125}\) Alan Kreider records that at times, Christians were “silent in the open,” meaning that they would not always proselytize through preaching.\(^\text{126}\) But in spite of that, they grew because they were “intriguingly attractive” because of how they loved others.\(^\text{127}\) Tertullian, an eventual convert to Christianity in the early church, observed how opponents spoke about Christians: “Look how they love one


\(^{125}\) Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 218.


\(^{127}\) Ibid.
another.” They took care of each other, but also learned to take care of needs in society. They fed the poor. They brought food and drink to others in jail. Becoming aware of the needs of the poor and serving others even became part of the preparation for baptism. Barry Harvey notes that through its practices of hospitality, forgiveness, forbearance, and reconciliation, the early church moved from just proclaiming the good news that “Jesus is Lord,” to becoming the good news. He expands on this theme, “The church was therefore not merely the agency or the constituency of a mission program, the contents of which were essentially distinct from its practices and institutions. This community was the mission.”

Additional Theological Realities

In the following section, two additional theological realities are noted. These two ideas are based on what has been seen through the life of Christ, the disciples, and the early Christian church. They deal with how the gospel is defined and how ministering should be done.

The Gospel Requires Demonstration

One of the main ideas of this document is that the gospel must be demonstrated and communicated with more than just words. Ellen White notes,

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128 Morna Dorothy Hooker and Frances Young, *Holiness and Mission: Learning from the Early Church About Mission in the City* (Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd, 2010), 49.


130 Ibid., 31.

Christ’s work in behalf of man is not finished. It continues today. In like manner His ambassadors are to preach the gospel and to reveal His pitying love for lost and perishing souls. By an unselfish interest in those who need help they are to give a practical demonstration of the truth of the gospel. Much more than mere sermonizing is included in this work. The evangelization of the world is the work God has given to those who go forth in His name.\(^\text{132}\)

Ellen White broadens the definition of evangelism to include serving and ministering to those in need: “The Saviour gave the disciples practical lessons, teaching them how to work in such a way as to make souls glad in the truth. He sympathized with the weary, the heavy laden, the oppressed. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. Constantly He went about doing good. By the good He accomplished, by His loving words and kindly deeds, He interpreted the gospel to men.”\(^\text{133}\)

Again, she emphasizes the point in the two quotes above that the gospel is not something that is naturally understood without interpretation. It requires demonstration. Only after seeing the love of God in action can people begin to understand what it means. Steve Sjogren, one of the pioneers of the servant evangelism movement and author of the book *Conspiracy of Kindness*, has also noticed this same principle. There is a credibility gap with Christianity.\(^\text{134}\) As a result, we need to “love with our actions first, and then offer words of love to explain what God’s life is all about.”\(^\text{135}\) He noticed in his own ministry that “Telling does not necessarily bring understanding. And telling is not


\(^{133}\) Ibid.

\(^{134}\) Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, 32.

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 129.
welcomed until hearts are hungry.” It is after the gospel has been demonstrated that hearts become open.

Richard Stearns, in his book *The Hole in Our Gospel*, affirms the gospel is more than just a “private transaction between us and God.” Though many denominations would not admit it, this has unfortunately been the common practice, including in the Adventist church. Instead, Stearns continually asserts the gospel must be demonstrated through action. This is what he refers to as the “whole gospel.” This includes things like feeding the hungry, and “acts of kindness, compassion, and justice.” He makes the case that the best way to show our love for God is to demonstrate it in tangible ways towards the “most vulnerable of God’s children.”

**Ministering with No Strings Attached**

Ellen White also makes that point that ministering and serving people must be done with “unselfish interest.” This means that serving someone is done whether or not they will ultimately respond to the gospel. She also often uses the term “disinterested kindness.” She says, “Many can be reached only through acts of disinterested kindness. Their physical wants must first be relieved. As they see evidence of our unselfish love, it...

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136 Ibid., 127.
138 Ibid., XXII.
139 Ibid., 44.
140 Ibid., 57.
141 Ibid., 168.
will be easier for them to believe in the love of Christ.” This is vitally important because in this modern metric-based age, individuals often gauge the success of a ministry based on how many of those served end up attending church.

Possible Extremes in Evangelism and Social Action

Christopher Wright describes possible contradictions using the metaphor of the Exodus. First, there is social action without a message. Many of the Israelites experienced God as Redeemer, but they would not submit to “God as King and walk in his ways.” A modern example of this would be organizations like Salvation Army who spend a lot of time in social action, but not evangelism. Wright warns of this danger: “A change of political or economic or geographical landscape, a change of government, a change of social status may all be beneficial in themselves, but they will be of no eternal benefit unless the spiritual goals of the exodus are also met.” The other extreme is a message without social action. In this model, the gospel is limited, and its purpose becomes merely to serve as a conduit for forgiveness of sins and entrance to heaven. Wright explains, “If faith without works is dead, mission without social compassion and justice is biblically deficient.”

Michael Goheen describes the origin of this kind of biblically deficient definition for mission and evangelism. The first transition took place when Christianity became the

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142 White, *Ministry of Healing*, Location 902, Kindle.


144 Ibid.

145 Ibid., 288.
default religion of the land under Christendom. The church moved from being on the margins of society with Christians seeing themselves as resident aliens, to being at its very center and a tool of the state. In this phase, the church turned inward and lost its sense of missional identity. The second transition took place when the age of Enlightenment began to establish a new vision of life based on reason and the scientific method, not religion. Through Descartes and others, the influence of the church moved from the sphere of public life to private life. Only those things, which could be proven via the scientific method were viewed as facts, and were therefore given space in public life. Everything else was placed in the realm of opinion and values and was relegated to private opinion. Because of this, the church began to see itself as the purveyors of a private religious and salvation experience. The problem is that when the gospel is defined as a personal issue of relationship, the church stops being an influential figure in society.

In summary, we are called to reveal the love of God through being, but also doing. This was one of the distinguishing marks of the early Christian church and was their secret to their growth. But it would be insufficient to stop there. There is also a spoken witness. As the apostle Paul says, “how can they hear without a preacher?” (Rm 10:14). Goheen concludes that it is the working together of word and deed that makes the “gospel credible.” To that end, the following section explores the content that is to be delivered in voice.

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146 Goheen, A Light to the Nations, 9.
147 Ibid., 10.
148 Ibid., 12.
149 Ibid., 213.
Saying the Witness: The Message of the People of God

Thus far we have seen that the mission of God’s people is to reveal the love of God by being the witness, doing the witness, but also by saying the witness. Mark 16:15 makes clear that there is a message to be delivered: “Go into all the word and preach the gospel to every creature.” The aim of this section is to do a brief analysis of the word gospel in the Scriptures and to understand its implications for the people of God.

The word gospel comes from the Greek word euaggelion, meaning good news. It is used as “the gospel of the kingdom” (Mt 24:14), “the gospel of God” (2 Thes 2:2), “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13), “the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15), “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (1 Tm 1:11), “the gospel of Christ” (1 Thess 3:2), “the gospel of the grace of God” (Ac 20:24), “the gospel of His Son” (Rm 1:9), and more. In Romans 1:1-4, the apostle Paul gives “perhaps the fullest single statement concerning the gospel,”¹⁵⁰

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

A few things can be noted from the passage. First, the gospel is about God the Father and Jesus. It is not limited to the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Second, it is something that is written about “beforehand” through the Scriptures in the Old Testament. It is also a message that is preached before the end of earth’s history (Rv

14:6). Therefore, the gospel must somehow be a revelation “about what the biblical God has done, is doing, and will finally do within the history of the world.”

Revelation 14 provides a perspective on this message, but it must be understood in the context of the previous chapter. In Revelation 13, the fourth beast, who is animated by the power of Satan (Rv 13:4), draws almost the entire world into false worship (Rv 13:15). In Revelation 14:6-8, then, three angels are depicted as giving a special and final message before the closing of earth’s history: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give Him glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rv 14:6-7).

This vision is symbolic in nature and represents “God’s saints engaged in the task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel.” John Baldwin has noted that this Scripture is almost identical and is probably a biblical allusion to Exodus 20:4, where God issues the Sabbath command and calls His people to worship the “Lord who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them.” This is seen as a restorative call to worship the Creator God, which has been lost sight of in the midst of pagan worship and Babylon. Lester Merklin says the message of the second angel, that “Babylon has fallen,” is


important because it reveals that God’s character has been vindicated: “Only he deserves our worship.” 154 The third angel, in like manner, continues to emphasize the “true worship of God, by reminding people that false worship of the beast is doomed to destruction.” 155 In other words, the messages of the two later angels are in response to and in explanation of the first angel who shouted, “Fear God and give Him glory” (Rv 14:7).

This a clear reference and allusion to the fourth commandment of the Bible regarding keeping holy the “Sabbath of the Lord your God” (Ex 20:10). As if to remind the reader of that connection, the author of Revelation writes, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rv 14:12). Earlier in Revelation, a similar reference is made: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rv 12:17). As has been delineated earlier in this document, the plan of Satan all along has been to be completely autonomous (Gn 3:1,4), to receive his own worship (Is 14:13), and to destroy the law of God, which is a revelation of God’s character.

The people of God, then, are called to continue telling the whole story of God in seven parts: a) the story of God’s original intent to live with His creation in perfect harmony, b) how a battle for supremacy began in heaven and spilled out on earth, c) how man eventually succumbed to temptation and fell, d) how God gave His covenant—His


155 Ibid.
promise—that someone from the seed of the woman would eventually come and crush the head of the serpent, and how He promised Abraham that from him a people would rise who would bring a message of salvation to the nations; e) how the Messiah came in fulfillment of that promise and crushed the head of the serpent; f) how a community was formed with authority from Christ and empowered by the Spirit to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” and has made the victory (Rm 10:9), g) and how God finally and forever destroys sin and the wicked and once again restores humanity to its rightful place in the garden, in perfect relationship with God.
CHAPTER 4

SERVANT EVANGELISM STRATEGY AND PLAN

The goal of this chapter is to describe the development of a strategy for a servant evangelism initiative around the community of Pioneer Memorial Church. Principles from this framework were derived from three books by Alan Roxburgh: Mission-Shaped Leader Field Guide, 1 Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide, 2 and the Action Learning Team Field Guide. 3 This section describes the steps taken to develop a servant evangelism strategy.

The Mission-Shaped Leader Field Guide helps the leader identify the skills and capacities necessary to cultivate missional change. The premise of this document and of the missional change process I sought to implement, is that the pastor should not function as a CEO with predetermined plans and objectives. Instead, a leader is more like a gardener that helps release the missional imaginations of the people through a “bottom-up

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process.” Missional change refers to the process of helping a church adapt its posture, thinking, and behaviors to engage the culture around it. This is not a top-down approach based on strategic planning and trying to fix systems that are broken. Instead, it relies on a “diffusion of innovation” model, where ordinary church members seek to discover where and how God is at work in the community and then through a process of “trials and experimentation,” seek to live the mission to which God has called them.

There are five steps to the Missional Change model presented in this book. The five steps are awareness, understanding, evaluation, experimentation, and internalization. A survey tool becomes a focal point of the five-step process and helps the leader catch a vision for how he or she might need to grow to lead missional change.

**Evaluating My Leadership Capacity**

One of the goals of this first step is getting perspective on the reality that much of leadership does not deal with technical problems but with adaptive challenges. Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky identify adaptive challenges as those that require “experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization and community. Without learning new ways—changing attitudes, values, and behaviors—
people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment.”

Leaders who fail to distinguish between technical solutions and adaptive challenges, and treat both as if they were the same, inevitably fail. After taking and submitting the evaluation tool, recipients are given a report that shares how they did in each of the leadership factors and includes a section on understanding adaptive and technical challenges.

The next step involves debriefing with leaders of the church based on the results to facilitate an understanding of where the pastor is and what needs to be worked on as a leader. I undertook the assessment in January of 2011 while I was pastoring the Carrollwood Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tampa, Florida. Though I transitioned to Pioneer Memorial Church later that year, the process was still useful as I was able to get perspective on my leadership capacity.

Using some of the Appreciative Inquiry skills that Mark Branson writes about in Memories, Hopes, and Conversations, I was able to do eight debriefing interviews to select four primary leadership skills on which I did focused work. Appreciative Inquiry (known hereafter as AI) is defined as conversations that can stimulate the thinking and imagination of a congregation through a process that “focuses upon the honorable, the

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8 Ibid., 14.

9 Mark Lau Branson, Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), 54-55.
pure, the pleasing, the commendable.” These are conversations and questions that are focused on the positive history and attributes of a church, and that can help release the narratives and practices that have been life-giving to the congregation. Another invaluable element in the process of forming a framework for dialogue was *The World Café* by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs and *Making Spiritual Sense* by Scott Cormode. Based on the results, I chose four of the lowest competencies to work on: understanding my society, missional practices, personal courage, and conflict resolution.

**Evaluating Missional Readiness of Pioneer Memorial Church**

In my second year in the Missional Leadership cohort, I transitioned to my present location, Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where the second major stage of the missional change process took place: evaluating the missional readiness of Pioneer Memorial Church. Part of the process for this new context involved doing Appreciative Inquiry interviews. Through these AI interviews, I was able to gain access and perspective to some of the positive narratives that PMC shares and that help to inform our ecclesiologies. Secondly, I was able to gain access into our ecclesiologies and missional readiness using the Church 360 survey provided by The Missional Network. The purpose of this survey was to initiate dialogue and conversation regarding where the

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11 Ibid., 19.


church was and how that might affect its capacity to engage missionally.\textsuperscript{14} This survey tool helps churches see where they stand in sixteen different areas ranging from being reactive and being turned in upon itself in response, to being developmental and trying to improve what it already has, to being transitional and learning to listen and experiment with the community, to be being transformational and continually adapting as it listens to the community.

This survey was first initiated in the fall of 2011 with another survey done in the spring of 2012 to hear from more people. After closing the surveys with over four hundred results, I convened a debriefing group and began conversing with the church regarding the results and what it revealed about who we are and our priorities. Through reflecting with this group, we were able to focus on several challenges that the 360-survey highlighted.

Discoveries from the Church 360 Missional Readiness Assessment\textsuperscript{15}

The first discovery that we noticed from our results is that there was no clarity regarding what our mission and area of witness are. As evidenced by question seventy on the survey, there was a significant disparity between how the staff answered the question and how the leaders and members answered the question. For example, the staff did not agree that the “community that surrounds our buildings is our prime area of witness.” Officially, the staff understands that the university is our prime area of witness because

\textsuperscript{14} Fred Romanuk, Alan Roxburgh, \textit{The Missional Network's Church 360 Survey} (2012).

\textsuperscript{15} For a full summary of the Church 360 Report, please see Summary of Church 360 Data in Appendix B.
we commonly discuss issues of mission and vision among our staff. Amongst the leaders and the members, though, things were not as clear. Someone said in the meeting, “Is there something besides our community that we are focusing on?” Clearly, the staff and the church at large had different ideas of what constituted “our community.”

As I spoke with some of the people outside of the church debriefing time, I encountered an interesting backstory that shed light on what has been happening. Several members acknowledged a level of frustration with the leadership of the church because they felt that there was always some new thing that was being worked on. I tried to give words to what they were feeling by suggesting “mission fatigue,” and they felt that it encapsulated well what they had been feeling. Every year for the last fifteen years or so, they felt that there was some new initiative that was being developed and suggested. Another person said, “So this idea of reaching the students—will we focus on this for more than a year?” They had seen so many changes in the last years that they felt like this was just one more thing and they were not sure if they wanted to emotionally give it time. This is a significant issue that we are facing. Nick Wolfer said that he felt that the staff and elder teams are usually up to date with the vision, but that the church itself is far behind. He doubted whether they understood what our mission statement actually meant.

The second discovery arising from the 360 report is that there is no regular dialogue concerning the future of the church between the leaders and congregation. I have noticed since being here that there is often a top-down approach. The senior pastor will discuss something with the staff, a decision is made, and then it will filter through to

16 Ibid.
the different levels of the church. Because the senior pastor has been here for over thirty years, he has earned and built a level of respect. As a result, many will follow without giving much pushback. For example, our church board meetings are largely ceremonial gatherings where different staff members will offer reports on events. There is a limited amount of discussion from the members of the board on any topic. Much has already been planned and is in the execution phase, and the staff is there to give a report. The church business meetings, a time in which the whole church body is invited to come out for major decisions, are similar to the board meetings. The staff will give some updates and reports, and then we adjourn.

The third major issue that arose from the Church 360 report dealt with this question: “People in our community say that our church is an important part of their lives—engaged in transforming its people and their environments.”\(^{17}\) Across all groups, the church gave itself low scores on this question. From our debriefing, there was a sense that we feel we are not doing much for those in our community. Some of the hesitancy with this question dealt with the lack of clarity regarding what constitutes our community. Some wondered if it is where they live or the neighborhoods surrounding the church or if it is the students that are here on the campus.

One person from the report commented that we “try to attract Bible believing Christians and fix their theology. We do little or no first-level evangelism.”\(^{18}\) Another person mentioned that PMC comes across as a high-class church, where we could not

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{18}\) Anonymous, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, September 2012.
bring someone that is dealing with issue of poverty, substance abuse, and worldliness. As we continued debriefing, it became clear that there is no confidence that we have any impact with the local community apart from the television ministry of PMC. Don Wilson commented, “Our actual town seems not to be a priority at all. In fact, our members are not viewed very highly in our own community.” Russell Burrill reflected the same sentiment in that we “are more interested in the far away than the near at hand.” Betty Martin responded, saying she does not know a meaningful way the church connects with the community. I believe some of the issues with this question also dealt with our formal ecclesiology of seeing ourselves as a church that provides and equips those all over the world. Because of that, it seems that the local community that surrounds the church can sometimes be overlooked.

Listening to the Spirit and the Community

Now that the church had an opportunity to debrief and spend time understanding and gaining awareness concerning its missional readiness, it was ready for the next phase. The third step in the process involved gathering a listening group. The purpose of this group was to listen to where the Spirit invited us into the community and to ask what God was up to in these places. One of the theological premises of this step is John 5:17-20

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19 Don Wilson, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, August 2012.
20 Russell Burrill, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, August 2012.
21 Betty Martin, Personal Interview, Pioneer Memorial Church, August 2012.
22 Roxburgh, Mission-Shaped Church Field Guide.
and the reality that God is already at work in the community around us and He invites us to join Him.

For our purposes at PMC, we used an existing group that I oversee called the Evangelism Council, and that took on the function of this listening group. In October 2012, the Evangelism Council began a process of spending time and listening to people in the community. Through these conversations, we were able to gain perspective into some of the issues that Berrien Springs has been facing.23

**Generational Poverty**

The first is that this is a community that deals with, what Mike Shembarger, principal of the local elementary school, calls “generational poverty.” He said, “A father will live in a trailer. His son won’t often finish school, will begin working locally, and also live in a trailer. His son, then, will inevitably also end up living in a trailer.” Generational poverty is evidenced through other statistics that he shared as well. According to Shembarger, seventy-five percent of the students that go to Berrien Springs’ public schools come from homes that are below the national poverty level.24 I was surprised to hear that statistic and assumed that perhaps it was due to all the graduate students with children, but he clarified that this applied to the general community as well.

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23 Unless otherwise noted, all “community” quotes come from the AI interviews and can be found exclusively from that source. Appreciative Inquiry investigations were conducted from October 2012 to March 2013. A total of sixteen people were interviewed, and a full summary can be found in Appendix A.

24 Mike Shembarger, Personal Interview, Berrien Springs, MI, 2013.
Consequently, local public schools have the highest number of students in the free and reduced lunch program in the entire county.\textsuperscript{25}

This issue of poverty also becomes evident if one takes the time to examine and walk through Berrien Springs. Roxburgh and Mark Lau Branson refer to a relationship between what a town looks like and its architecture and the values of the people.\textsuperscript{26} In theology, this often is referred to as a theology of the “built environment.” Timothy Gorringe in his book, \textit{Theology of the Built Environment}, says that the built environment “reflects conscious decisions which in turn reflect ideologies and class positions.”\textsuperscript{27} “He even suggests that one can learn more from the style of buildings in a town than one can from the “smoothed out texts” that describe what the town is actually like.”\textsuperscript{28} A building, then, becomes an open book to better understand what people are like. Leong describes this process as “urban exegesis” and uses the metaphor of being able to read the city “as a text,” which carries a message and conveys meaning in a city.\textsuperscript{29}

As a result of discovering that association, I invited Andrew von Maur, professor of architecture for Andrews University, to take the Evangelism Council on a walking tour


\textsuperscript{26} Alan J. Roxburgh and Mark Lau Branson, “OD737: Missional Contexts and Local Churches” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, August 2012).


\textsuperscript{29} David P. Leong, \textit{Street Signs: Toward a Missional Theology of Urban Cultural Engagement}, \textit{American Society of Missiology Monograph Series} (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 15.
of Berrien Springs to help better understand our community. I have previously written about what we found here:

We learned that the “downtown” area of Berrien Springs is incorporated as a village and includes three restaurants, a gas station, a small grocery store, and eleven businesses. Standing outside a hardware store in downtown Berrien Springs, he directed our gaze to the sidewalk. “Look at it. They can barely keep it in shape,” he said. The taxes of those that live in the village of Berrien Springs, which is a small area near the downtown, is not enough to cover simple maintenance. As a result, they have to apply to the state for special grants to cover things like sidewalk repairs. This is important to note because most of the Adventists in the community live in the upper-middle-class township of Oronoko. Although it is still in Berrien Springs, it is part of a different township. After walking past the downtown, he began pointing out some features of the homes. Many were dilapidated and broken down. There was a house with a fallen tree still on top of it. Some of the homes had boarded windows. Von Maur said, “Poverty looks different in Berrien Springs than it does in Benton Harbor. In Benton Harbor, it has a black face. In Berrien Springs, it has a white face and has homes that look like this.” The state of the public infrastructure and homes in the village of Berrien Springs, and the number of children in the reduced lunch program have helped PMC’s Evangelism Council see that there is an issue of poverty in Berrien Springs.

**Distrust Between Adventists and Other Faith Backgrounds**

The second challenge noted was a division and distrust between Adventists and people of other faith backgrounds. Shembarger noted that “In the 70’s, only about ten percent of the kids in his school were Adventist. ‘Those were times,’ he said, ‘in which Adventists and community folk didn’t mix much.’” There was a general distrust of each other during those times. He said now the percentage is at about thirty to forty percent.

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30 Andrew Von Maur, walking tour with Pioneer Memorial Church Evangelism Council, Berrien Springs, MI, April 2013.

31 Ortiz, "What the Architecture of a Town Reveals About its People."

32 Ibid.
Adventist kids in the elementary school and that there’s a certain feeling of openness now. This issue has become compounded by the way Adventists in the community have built their lives.

The Evangelism Council began to reflect on three areas in the Berrien Springs community: schools, restaurants, and grocery stores. Berrien Springs has an elementary, middle, and high school that are Seventh-day Adventist, but these also are associated with Andrews University. Adventists hold it as a source of pride to send their children to denominational schools. This has affected the community because many in the church do not care what happens on the other side of the street, where the public schools are located. The sentiment that exists is that as long as “our kids” are in Christian schools, then their families are covered and safe—essentially, we have our schools, and they have theirs.

This separation also has become evident through the kinds of grocery stores that are in town. Adventists typically place a high value on health and wellness. Consequently, most hubs of Adventism have a health food store. The one in Berrien Springs is called Apple Valley, comparable to Whole Foods. The people who frequent Apple Valley are not necessarily just Adventists but are wealthy people from the community who are more health conscious. There is a different grocery store in town called Harding’s, where most of the people in the community shop. The separation came to light through one particular AI interview where one of the pastors on staff said, “I like to shop at Apple Valley because I want to support an Adventist business. Besides, have

33 Ibid.
you seen the kinds of people that go to Harding’s? Some of them don’t even have any teeth.”

This community also is divided by the kinds of restaurants in town. Directly across from the university are two Adventist-owned restaurants where many university employees eat and which the university uses for significant catering events. At the center of town, about one mile away, there are several other restaurants which are rarely frequented by Adventists. Commenting on this division in Berrien Springs’ society, Von Maur said, “A condition of modernity is that we’ve built our worlds so that we do not have to interact.” I believe this is especially true of towns like ours. Richard Sennett, in his seminal work, The Conscience of the Eye, notes that there is a relationship between urban space and culture. The design of a city, he says, “reflects a great, unreckoned fear of exposure.” 34 It was only after beginning to walk the streets of Berrien Springs that I started to see how this could be true.

As the Evangelism Council began to share stories of what it learned and heard from the community through this listening group process, it was discovered that a significant injury occurred in this community around ten years ago. At that time, the town proposed to add sewer lines to most of the homes in the area since many had septic tanks. Numerous homes that Adventists owned already had the sewer lines, so they opposed the proposal because it would end up raising their local taxes. The Adventists in the community wrote letters to the editor, and because of the influence and pressure, the

measure was voted down. To deepen the injury, after this vote took place, a group led by a university professor raised the issue of a recall election for the people that had made this proposal. The group that had proposed this were recalled and voted out, and a group of Adventists joined the leadership team of the town. This vote and its aftermath are something that locals still talk about today with a significant measure of hurt, injury, and division. Non-Adventists in the community are hurt because they feel as if the Adventists do not want to support the betterment of the community and instead only care about their financial interests.

**Racism and Cultural Confusion**

The third challenge deals with how quickly Berrien Springs has become ethnically diverse. Mike Shembarger notes that “the community used to be about ninety-five percent white, but that has now changed drastically. Now, about forty percent of the kids [in the local public schools] are minorities. In fact, Mars Elementary has the largest number of ESL (English as a Second Language) students in the entire county.”\(^{35}\) This is primarily due to the ethnic diversity of Andrews University, but is also influenced by migrant workers who are employed in the various orchards and farms.

As a result, the children of these international students end up being a part of Mars elementary and being a part of the ESL program. Specifically, twenty-five percent of the students are involved in the ESL program.

“So what difference does this diversity make,” I asked. “How does it affect your school?”

He said that, because of the diversity, the school ends up using more of the financial resources of the county. More of the kids are in ESL programs, which

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
costs money. More of the kids are in the free and reduced lunch program. It has also caused fights because the kids don’t understand each other.\footnote{Ibid.}

This relatively quick diversification has become a challenge.

Sharing these stories has helped PMC to see that there is significant, lingering hurt in this community. Before the listening group experience, the Evangelism Council was limiting its thinking as to how it could best “evangelize” the community; but all of a sudden members of the group were forced to wrestle with the enormity of the hurt that still exists. The Evangelism Council now understands that any attempt to “evangelize” or talk about Jesus in the community will be met by resistance and cynicism due to these unresolved issues. For the first time, the group began to see the value of sharing stories and reminding themselves about local history.

We jointly began to recognize that much of what we do as a church and university communicates that Adventists are not part of this community. We go to different stores, restaurants, schools, and the university does not even participate in the Fourth of July parade in any official way. There is little tangible evidence that we see ourselves as part of the life of this community. Adventists live in it, yet are apart from it.

**Doing Missional Experiments in the Community**

The fourth step involves doing missional experiments in the community. This process is built on an action learning cycle to engage adaptive challenges. There are three steps to this process. First, there is diagnosis, which involves identifying the adaptive
challenge to be addressed. Second, the design phase asks the question, “What are potential ways of addressing this?” Third, the act and test phase, which involves finalizing what experiments will be done. Finally, the reflect phase which asks, “What are we learning and what are the next steps to take?”

To address the needs we discovered in the community, the Evangelism Council proposed a pilot project in which one servant evangelism initiative was done per month over the course of a school year. What follows in this document is the second and third part of the process. The fourth stage is covered in chapter five.

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
PART THREE

REFLECTIONS AND ASSESSMENTS
CHAPTER 5
IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

In January of 2014, PMC organized a leadership implementation team to pilot a once a month servant evangelism initiative. Members of the team were comprised of some from the Evangelism Council, four seminary students doing an internship year at PMC, and select student leaders from Andrews University. The purpose was to have a spectrum of participants from PMC and the university.

In February of 2014, a brainstorming process was started to select a name for this new initiative. Given that the mission statement at PMC is: “Transforming this generation to connect, grow, serve, and go,” the team wanted the word “go” to be a part of the title. The church was invited to be involved in selecting a name. A contest to select a name was also put on our social media properties. After several weeks, the name GO: Projects was selected for this new initiative.

In June of 2014 we finalized a list of eight servant evangelism projects that we would start in the Fall to serve the community. We had a list that included projects such as painting the playground for an underserved elementary school, giving free haircuts for kids before picture day, serving in a community animal shelter, hosting a free medical
clinic, and doing repairs on four homes. The first project launched on August 30, 2014. The goal was to do projects for two years and do the last project in September 2016.

Concerning resources, we had budgeted $2,000 per year of projects, which averaged out to just 250 dollars per project. Several expenses would need to be taken into account for each endeavor. First, we had to reserve an Andrews University bus, which could accommodate at least fifty participants. Second, the goal was to design posters for every project, costing around fifty dollars per poster. The remaining amount would be needed for implementation expenses for the project itself.

The goal was to create and implement a survey to assess the impact of the servant evangelism initiative in the community. The plan was to give a survey to people that had participated in each project to get their feedback. Also, we envisioned doing qualitative interviews.

**Project Highlights**

A number of projects were implemented. One involved painting the playground of a local public elementary school in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Benton Harbor is a neighboring town of Berrien Springs. I reached out to the superintendent of education for Benton Harbor and asked her what needs she is aware of and how we can serve them. She connected me with Patricia Robinson, who, at the time was the principal of the Discovery Enrichment Center, a public elementary school in Benton Harbor. She communicated with us the playground was in a dangerous condition. There was no mulch on the ground and the paint on the equipment was cracking and peeling.
Concerning volunteers and project execution, Andrews University donated most of the equipment and materials. Martin Bradfield, from the transportation department, agreed to get mulch and brought a large dump trunk that belongs to the University. Randy Mack, from the Plant Services department, donated his expertise in painting along with materials. Thirty Andrews University students were involved. Half of them came a few days before to strip the paint, put primer on the equipment, and spread the mulch. The other half came a few days later to finish the painting process. This project was deemed a success and the principal and area schools were very appreciative.

Another project we did was called Haircuts for Kids. We visited with the local principle of the elementary school in Berrien Springs and he shared that poverty was a big issue for kids in the school. As a result, we determined to do this event which involved doing a Fall family day for kids as well as giving free haircuts on the week before picture day. The local high school let us use their gym for this event. We set up games for kids to play and did pumpkin and face painting. A local farm donated two hundred pumpkins for us to use for this event. Twelve hair stylists and barbers from the community donated their time and skills. We did this project for two years in a row during the same weekend.

The first year we did it, we were able to do forty-seven haircuts. Even though we were expecting more people, the event did get on the regional news station and served as a very positive influence in our community. The second year we held the event, we served thirty-four people. Because there did not seem to be much interest, we decided to discontinue this activity.
The last project to be mentioned in this section is a home renovation project. PMC has a church plant, Harbor of Hope, in Benton Harbor. Through the discernment process of evaluating needs in the community, it came to our attention that there were many homes in the community that were in distress. After an application process to filter the number of homes that requested help, we narrowed applications down to four homes that we would renovate in some way.

This project fell out of the scope of what we were originally intending to do and could financially support. Because it presented a clear present need, though, we decided to try. We applied for and received a grant in the amount of 10,000 dollars and with that were able to cover the cost of materials for the four homes.

In September of 2016 over one hundred volunteers came together. They had been assigned to work on the four different homes. The scope of the projects varied. In one of the homes, a completely new roofing job was done. Another home got fresh paint inside and out, new carpet, and a newly remodeled kitchen. The third home involved some light painting on the outside as well as landscaping. In the last home, the owner had an issue with pests and hoarding, and we helped them remove most of the contents of their home and do some repair work.

**Challenges and Assessments**

There are several key metrics that can be identified for assessment purposes. One of them is participation by Andrews University students and members of Pioneer Memorial Church. Overall, I did not achieve the level of participation and support I was expecting. We averaged twenty participants per servant evangelism project. I determined
there are two reasons for this. First, PMC is a unique congregation, being on the campus of Andrews University. PMC is the only official church on the campus, but there are four other worship communities on the campus, with each one creating a variety of their own programs and activities. In addition to this, Andrews University, via the Student Life department, plans many activities throughout each semester. As a result, it is very difficult to capture the attention of students and church members for any one thing.

Another metric is whether we were able to do one project every month as we originally intended. We originally intended to do nine servant evangelism projects over the course of a school year, but only did five out of the originally intended nine, on average. The reason for this is we did not anticipate how much work each project was going to entail. Some of them required months of work and preparation.

Participation and internal goals are two metrics I used to assess this project. However, a major goal of this project was to do surveys to gauge how the act of service was interpreted by the recipient. In other words, I wanted to know if the act of service changed the perception of the recipient towards the church in some way. As I discovered soon after commencing this project, it is not normally possible to get this kind of data, because it would not be ethical to ask people to register their information before you serve them. One of the premises of servant evangelism is that it is done with no strings attached. Someone knowing that you wanted to assess them after you served them would invalidate the sincerity of the service.

Nonetheless, I was able do six qualitative interviews. The first interview was of the principal of the school we helped paint. The second interview was the principal of the school we did the haircuts for kids event in. The third interview was the principal that
replaced the previous one and in which we did a second haircuts for kids event. The other three interviews were of homeowners that we helped with some home repairs and renovations.

To help in the analysis of the interviews, I used Dedoose, a software for qualitative research. The following are some basic descriptor sets that were applied. Four out of the six people were female. The youngest person I interviewed was forty-eight years old and the oldest was sixty-three years old. The average age was fifty-six years old. Four out of the six people were Black, and the other two were White. Four out of the six had a college education. Three out of the six would be considered a leader in the community. Five out of the six currently attend a church. The average amount of time this group has lived in the community is forty years.

There were also three basic qualitative questions that were asked: What was your perception of Seventh-day Adventists before these service projects? What was your perception of Seventh-day Adventists after these service projects? Do you believe most churches make a difference in their communities?

Concerning the first question on perceptions of Adventists before, several key words emerged from four of the respondents: “stay to themselves,” “weird people,” “private,” “standoffish,” “almost cult like,” “not as friendly and welcoming,” and “much like the fundamental type of religious sects.” I did notice that the only people who were willing to say something that might be interpreted as negative had a college education. The two with no college degrees gave very neutral answers: “I'm not one to try to set churches in this category that category that kind of stuff, because we all usually dealing with the same Bible,” “I don't have no (sic) problem with Seventh-day Adventists,” and
“Well, we all are peoples (sic) to me. We're striving for the basic thing which is some of us have different beliefs, but if you come together with it, they all are the same.” My sense for this discrepancy is that those with a college education also had professional jobs and were in positions where getting help was not vital. The two without a college education seemed to not want to offend in any way. Those with a college education seemed to have a slightly negative opinion of Seventh-day Adventists before they were served or ministered to in some way. Also, three of the participants all noted that Adventists are generally very well educated, which contributed to their “otherness.”

Concerning the second question, several key words and phrases were noted: “There were inaccurate perceptions on both sides that contributed to the divide,” “They're are an awful lot like us,” “Different but the same,” “They are a lot more like us and the rest of the community than I thought,” “I guess it made me more comfortable interacting with Seventh Day Adventists never having done anything with a Seventh-day Adventist,” “I was very felt very positive about you reaching out and saying that you'd like to do this to help the community, and it left a really nice feeling for me. This is a really wonderful thing,” “Having the evidence of that project was very important in making it more concrete,” and “I recognize that God is working in them just like he's working in us. They reach out to me who need some help at that time. What can I say? I mean that's the God that's in anybody that wants to reach out to somebody else to help them if they can. You know what I mean?” Every participant had a positive response and a more positive perception of Seventh-day Adventists after these service projects were done.

The last question asked was, “Do you believe that most churches make a difference in their communities?” The reason why this question was selected is because I
was trying to determine if they would interpret our service projects within the context of something all churches do or if it would stand out to them in some way. Some of the responses included: “I think the only chance of normalcy that communities have is their churches and churches represent support love and compassion,” “No, some churches don't. We have churches in our area they are striving just for their congregations,” “I do believe that most churches are there to help and they do impact the communities that they do serve in some way shape or form,” “I don't know. I would say in some ways they do,” “I believe that they make a difference,” and “I really feel that they do.” Four out of the six participants believe that most churches make a difference in their communities in some way.

An unspoken question I had is whether servant evangelism projects like the ones listed above make someone more likely to go to your church. For example, Steve Sjogren describes a principle of handing out a church informational card to those who have been served. He writes, “It is important that those being touched with these acts of kindness have some means of getting back in touch with you if they so desire.”¹ Though I did not ask the question, I did notice a theme from the responses, which may help address the matter. In our local context, servant evangelism did not seem to make someone more likely to go to our church. None of the people we served asked any specific questions about the church at all. What it did do is give them a more positive perception of the church and of Adventists in general. I believe it places someone in a place of openness.

towards the church and Adventists, and if someone were in need, and if they received a personal invitation, it could be that they would go.

Several things can be ascertained in conclusion. First, most of the participants had a slightly negative view of Seventh-day Adventists. They were seen as being standoffish, elitist, and sectarian in nature. Second, the service projects helped the participants have a more positive perception of Seventh-day Adventists and the church. They seemed to have a more positive posture. Finally, most of the participants believe churches do make an overall difference in their communities.

Several subsidiary lessons are also drawn from the data. There was a positive correlation between the educational level of the participant and their willingness to share negative information. Additionally, servant evangelism did not seem to make it more likely that someone would attend our church. Everyone was grateful, but no one asked for more information about the church. Because the participants all had a church background, further research is recommended.

**Area for Further Research**

The results of this project must be interpreted within our local context and should not be universalized. Because of the small sample, more research is recommended to be more conclusive. For purposes of a future study, it would be more helpful to include perceptions from those of a non-Christian background. That was missing from this study.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This document represents a journey that began with my first intensive in 2010. At that point, I was interested in studying methods of church growth. Since then, I have become a completely different person theologically and I can see how superficial my initial interest actually was. I have come to see two theological principles as being central to understanding Scripture and the role of the church. The first, which is the central theme, is that God is love. Second, God has a mission to redeem and restore humanity. This mission is set in the context of a cosmic conflict between God and Satan.

In this document, I have summarized this mission and the corresponding response of the people of God in this way: revealing the love of God by being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness. Revealing the love of God is the what of mission. It is what the people of God are called to do above all else. The second half is the how. God’s people are to be the witness. This is what Goheen refers to when he says the church is an “alternative community, a contrast society in the midst of the nations.”2 This is what Wright refers to as God’s people “publicly before the eyes of the nation.”3 Newbigin pictures it as the church facing in the direction of the world as a sign.4 The idea is the people of God are called to be and live differently, and by living out God’s ideals, they serve as an attractive witness to the nations. Second, the love of God is revealed by

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doing the witness. It is not just about being different, but also about demonstrating the love of God by doing good, seeking justice, standing against oppression (Isa 1:17), and defending the rights of the poor and needy (Pv 31:9). Third, God’s love is revealed by being and doing, but also by saying the witness. There is and has always been a task of proclaiming the good news that, fundamentally, God is love (1 Jn 4:16). This is manifested as the good news of salvation, as the Apostle Paul references it in Romans 1:16. But, it is also manifested in the reality that Jesus came when “time was fulfilled” (Mk 1:15) and the “fullness of time had come” (Gal 4:4) in fulfillment of the first gospel announcement in Genesis 3:15, proclaiming to the entire universe through His death the contested truth that God is love and just. That is why the “everlasting gospel” in Revelation 14:6 is so significant. It is an end-time proclamation by God’s people who have now internalized the reality the Creator God has always been and will always be love.

This is the framework upon which my theological chapter is based. The question is: how should a church live out these ideals? What does it look like in a practical sense to be the witness and do the witness? In this document, I have not addressed the practices of being the witness, or saying the witness, but of doing the witness—the idea the gospel must be demonstrated in such a way. These are some of the questions I have wrestled with in the last eight years since I came into this community. I did my best to “listen and
respect indigenous leadership” in my community. As a result, some initiatives were selected that the local leaders felt would contribute and be a blessing to the community.

After implementing some of these projects for several years, I would recommend a change. As part of the proposal, one project was done per month through a servant evangelism initiative called GO: Projects. This model was premised on having a central leader work with a team to research and design service project opportunities. Furthermore, it was premised on having enough advertising in the church and on the campus to then get enough volunteers to execute on the project. For a variety of reasons, this model created a bottleneck and the projects were only met with moderate success.

I have come to realize that some of what we did in the community, initiatives that were not reported in detail in this document, are what Lupton would refer to as “ultimately harmful and noxious . . . religiously motivated charity.” In addition, I have realized it is much easier to do service projects than to think in terms of community development or even the mission of God. Such is the temptation for many churches. It should be noted that PMC partners with an organization in the community called Neighbor to Neighbor. It is a professionally-staffed organization with social workers that offers counseling, emergency financial assistance, and programs to promote self-sufficiency. There is much that could be addressed as a response to books like Toxic Charity, but for the sake of this document, I only focus and limit my response to the very next step.

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6 Ibid., 3.
The mission statement of PMC is “Transforming this generation to connect, grow, serve, and go.” Each of the steps in the process represents a system. Our small group system, grow groups, is a central part of our discipleship process. These groups are based on a semester and affinity model. For example, we have three semesters per year: Fall, Spring, and Summer. They are affinity-based in the sense that they represent varied interests from Frisbee golf to in-depth Revelation Bible study groups. At the beginning of every semester, time is taken in several worship services to encourage people to be a part of a grow group. One of the agreed-upon standards for our grow groups is each one of them has to do a servant evangelism project at some point in the semester. Here is where a change would be placed: Instead of emphasizing quick service projects to do in the community every semester, I will mentor group leaders to think in terms of the mission of God; the reality that God is already at work in the community and that He invites them to be a part (Jn 5:19). It should look different for every group, but as they are listening to God and seeing evidence of His work, they would be empowered to engage in a decentralized way—as neighbors. This kind of theological, and subsequently methodological, reframing, is the next step that our groups need to take. As an associate pastor with a specific portfolio of ministries and initiatives that I oversee, it will be difficult for a proper theological reframing to take place across the church. This would need to start at the senior pastor level. Nonetheless, this is a way, within the options that are available, to begin to contribute towards the reality of connecting with the mission of God in Berrien Springs, Michigan.
APPENDIX A

Appreciative Inquiry Interviews of Pioneer Memorial Church Pastors

I did three Appreciative Inquiry-type interviews within the church in the summer of 2011. The first person I interviewed was Skip MacCarty, who is the pastor I replaced. He pastored in this church for twenty-five years before retiring, and I wanted to get his sense of where the church has been, and what have been the highpoints and moments of difficulty. The first highlight moment was called Net ’98. This was a thirty-night series of biblical presentations that were broadcast to over 7,600 satellite downlinked sites, with about two-million viewers watching nightly. There was simultaneous interpretation in over forty languages, and was considered, up to that time, to be one of the largest outreach events in history. He was very proud of having coordinated this large event. Certainly, from an administrative standpoint, it was a monumental undertaking. He also mentioned two other events including an ABC Christmas Eve special that was hosted here, and helping to build a television ministry in this church.

The next person I interviewed was Esther Knott. She is the pastor for small groups and has been in the church for over fourteen years. One of the highlights of her time here was developing a seminar based upon Bill Hybel’s *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. She developed one called *Becoming a Contagious Adventist*, which became a follow up to the other seminar. There were three other people that contributed to parts of the seminar, but she was one of the main contributors as well as organizer. One of the other highlights of her experience has been becoming involved in the community. She is a member of the Rotary Club as well as involved in other civic organizations and activities.
Finally, I interviewed the senior pastor, Dwight Nelson. The first “defining moment” (his words) he mentioned was a spiritual encounter he had the year after he finished his D.Min. There was an event taking place on campus, and a visiting professor was teaching about the cross. He said it was an experience that helped to re-convert him, in a sense. The second defining moment was the developing of the church’s television media ministry. Through this he is able to minister, not just locally in this church and in the community, but to the world at large as the sermons are broadcast in various virtual venues worldwide. Lastly, he shared about ‘Net ’98, which was extremely satisfying to him because it was a two years project in development that represented breaking new ground for the Adventist church. He was able to be the main speaker, and was happy to know it ministered to a worldwide audience.

What became increasingly clear from these interviews is this is a church that is used to doing big things and takes pride in that. It particularly sees its television ministry and capacity to being quite central to its ministry and identity. The leaders also see this church as a vehicle for equipping the worldwide movement of Seventh-day Adventists. Because of the talented staff, access to experts in their field through the university and seminary, and the far-reach of the television ministry, this church sees itself as well fit to be able to handle most challenges. It will be a challenge for the church to transition to a more missional mindset. Right now, it sees itself as an equipping and worldwide church, and does not provide much resources to engaging its local context. The church does have a church plant that helps to serve a highly under-privileged town called Benton Harbor, but it does not see that as a focus point.
APPENDIX B

Summary of Church 360 Data

This first section begins with a summary of the Demographic Questions from the Church 360 report. We had a total of 268 responses. I was hoping to have at least 400, so I was disappointed by the results. We do have many older members in the church, and I think the fact that we did not make physical copies of the survey available hindered more people from taking the survey. The roles were interestingly divided. We had all the pastors take the survey along with about three of the secretaries and support staff. By far the largest group that participated was the leaders. They came out with 154 of the responses, followed by 76 of the members that took part. We had a low number of new members, 13, and 16 people that registered as “none of the above.”

In the age groups category our largest block again were the leaders of the church, which are represented in the 56-70 age group, followed by 68 people in the 36-55 age group, and 60 in the 70+ age group. The first time we ran the survey we noticed there were very few young people that actually took it. This is because there was confusion regarding if they could take the survey. The directions for the survey specify “members” of the church. Because most of the students keep their memberships in their home churches, we had very few students take part. When we came back to the survey the second time, we clarified that attendees can also take the survey. This helped increase our numbers in the younger age groups. The church attendance category makes it clear that those who attend PMC have attended for quite a long time. The majority (36 percent) have attended for 11-25 years, while 28 percent have attended for over 25 years. There is a significant drop off after that. Most that have been here just a few years are students.
In frequency of attendance, 81 percent are weekly attenders. Although this is not the only Adventist church in the community, it has the largest draw because of its resources and ability to produce large-scale programs and worship services. The next-largest group (10 percent) is those that attend two to three times per month. There are options for different worship services on campus, which would reflect the rest of the results. 89 percent registered as having a prior church affiliation. This should not be interpreted as denoting a different faith background, but that they were members of a different Adventist church before coming here.

The gender split was fairly close with ladies registering 59 percent of participants. Regarding marital status, 71 percent are married, while 14 percent are single, followed by divorced and widowed. What I found to be quite interesting is that 70 percent noted they do not have children at home. Even though this is a university town, many retirees attend the church. I am learning that this is quite common in Adventist communities.

The second section gives a summary of the Global View, which includes a visual representation of the Reactive, Developmental, Transitional, and Transformational results. Our church was satisfied that it was not in the reactive view. Being a university church with a seminary, they see themselves as being on the cutting edge for a lot of things. We did end up being quite reactive in terms of how communication flows (#30) and how people relate to the weekly worship service (#86). We had an overall mean score of 41 in this section. The developmental view is where there are a high number of spikes.

The third section includes an analysis of each of the sixteen factors, beginning with structure. There was wide agreement this is a well-structured church. Being a fairly large church, it is necessary to have organized teams of volunteers that know what they
are doing. There does seem to be a sense from the staff that things are structured to the point of sometimes impeding flexibility and getting things done. From the comments, there was a clear sense that people do not know who is doing what, though. Someone said, “It’s difficult to know who the leaders are.” Another person commented: “Our church is the second most organized church in the world next to the Roman Catholic church. We need more room for change.” There seems to be a competing tension between the staff making most of the decisions and everything else being too structured. People also do not know who the other leaders are. Overall, most of the church rated our structure as being transitional in nature. I was surprised to note that it was also close to being developmental and transformational. This section had a mean score of 53.

Regarding Planning, most of the energy is focused towards the transitional section. One thing I have noticed is this church is not afraid to take bold and different steps. The leaders are aware of this, though this is not always evident to new people. One person said, “I do not think we are changing things. We say we want to but there is much status quo.” This seems to follow a theme of putting out a new vision, but not following through with it. Someone said that we are “good at vision discussion, but poor at follow through-process.” This section had a mean score of 49.

Leadership was on the border between the developmental and transitional section. There is the suggestion that some of the leaders are trying to preserve the status quo whereas other leaders on staff are more innovative. Someone made an interesting comment where they feel things started to change for the positive in the last two years. This would coincide with the discussions surrounding the new focus of mission towards the students. One of the people said we “need more ethnic diversity in leadership as
Whites may outnumber the ratio in the church population.” There is truth to this assertion. The staff of the church itself is quite diverse. There is one White woman, and one woman of Indian descent. Out of the four other associates, two, including myself, are Hispanic. On our leadership teams of elders and deacons, though, there is a disproportionately large amount of Whites. In our congregation, we are extremely diverse because we have students and professors from all over the world, so our leadership teams do not accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of the church. The mean score was 59.

The Staff scored highly on the transitional scale and was very close to the transformational scale. There is a sense the staff works as a team and is open to growth, innovation, change, and has a level of openness. It was noted in the comments that there are a few on staff that seem to want to keep the status quo. Also, someone else noted they do not really know what the pastors do except for our senior pastor. There is clearly a communication issue that needs to be addressed. Someone commented: “I think the church leadership wants to engage the community, and as a result seeks to change things because it perceives the community has changed.” Another person said, “Church wants to keep traditional things that have worked in past and continue to work, while still looking for ways to improve service to congregation and community. Many members just want to be served, but some are engaged in reaching out to community.” There was a mean of 53 in this section.

We scored highly reactive in the area of Communication with a high of 89. It is true we primarily communicate using “worship services, bulletins, and emails.” There is a top-down approach to information. The staff decides events and initiatives and from there it is passed down through emails to the leaders and later announced on the weekend.
There are no regular times in which the church or its leaders gather to brainstorm and discuss the vision of the church. Someone noted that “external communication is poor, internal communication is very unorganized.” This would coincide with people not knowing the function of the pastors. There were various comments mentioning communication is torn down. We scored a mean of sixty-three in this area.

In terms of organization, our highest score was in the transformational section. The church senses we are trying to follow a new paradigm for mission and ministry and we have made structural changes to help foster that. For example, I was hired because they wanted to help foster more focus on the students. Several of the comments followed the theme of a small group of people doing a lot of the work. One person said, “It is usually a core group that works hard.” Someone else said, “When I’m on a committee, it seems like I always see the same faces.” Ministry needs to be expanded so it is not the same people being involved all the time. Our mean score was forty-five.

There is the sense in the church that we are trying to be relevant in regard to our programs. The church scored higher in the transformational chart with a score of sixty-nine. I can attest that the leaders and staff do want to be relevant to our society. The desire is there, we just do not know what to do. This is an adaptive challenge we are facing as a congregation. Several people pushed back against some of the programs we do have, questioning whether they are relevant or not, including how we do evangelism and the amount of money we put into the television ministry. One person said, “I do not recall a lot of requests for help except for when an evangelistic series is coming up / happening. Other things I remember hearing about are the fair tent. I am sure there are a few more, but I don't recall hearing a lot about them. The things that stick in my mind are

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those that are important enough to mention up front during church.” Another interesting comment: “Most members have little or no opportunity to be much more than people that pick up offerings or teach children's Sunday School. There is very little opportunity for members to be a part of church service and those that are are expected to be world class musicians, orators, or clergy.” We had a mean score of forty-nine in this area.

The Financial section proved to be quite interesting. We were largely reactive (seventy-seven) with developmental being close behind (seventy-four). We want to be relevant and many are excited about the new vision, but we have not yet changed our structures to coincide with the new direction. We are still funding the current structures in the same ways. The comments reflect some pushback against the amount of money that the church spends on things like bulletins and technology. Notice the comment: “It would be good if the church was more involved in providing scholarships and other assistance for struggling families and community members and spent less money on multi-page color programs and technology.” Another person commented: “I prefer setting a budget goal which we can attain and then work hard to exceed it, so we can feel good about it rather than setting a goal higher than we can reach and always failing to achieve it, so we can never feel good about our giving.” There was a mean of sixty-seven for this section.

For the category of energy, the church reflected a transformational metric. New people get the impression we are just making “small and incremental improvements to what we have done in the past.” They scored a sixty-seven on the developmental side where everywhere else got a low score in that area. This reflects some of the communication issues that have been mentioned before. If someone has been here a long time, or if they are leaders, they are abreast of new initiatives and what is happening.
New people definitely stay out of the loop, though, and do not know what is happening. One person commented: “Our health ministry team tries to reach out and evangelistic series try to reach into the community but not sure what else. Seems that if we had the member support there might be more we could do to really serve the community.” In regard to where we should expend more energy one person said, “While AU Outreach ministries are supported fairly well by the University and its students, we have a very bad reputation with a lot of Berrien Springs residents and in the other Berrien County communities that I work in. Doing more community building, community integrating, and service programs would be a plus.” We had a mean of thirty-seven in this area.

Concerning involvement, we are mostly developmental with a high of sixty-seven in this area. There is no alignment at the moment between our vision and resources. We have made some changes in staffing regarding our new vision, but our finances and other structures have yet to catch up. The church does respond well for involvement when a call is made from the senior pastor. If he announces it, the people come out. A few interesting comments: “Can we really afford a media ministry? Is it benefiting the Church? Why do we broadcast only when DKN preaches? Can we use the media ministry funds to build other ministries?” and “Sometimes I feel like the church is acting like the Federal government. Control of spending is as much, if not more important than asking for and raising more money. We cannot be ‘big daddy’ to every project that someone wants to do. We must determine what is most important to finish the work, and support and do that.” We reflected a mean of fifty-seven in this area.

We reflected a highly reactive metric in the area of practices with a high of seventy-three. Several people mentioned it seems to be the same people who are involved
and go to the meetings. The mean for this area was fifty-one. A few interesting
comments: “It is very easy in our church not to do anything at all. And, no one will notice
it.” Also, “The church could be more intentional about transformative mission and
ministry on and off the campus.”

In the area of Ministry, we exhibited highly developmental numbers. One person
noted we are missing out on ministry opportunities that are right before us. He said, “Our
primary focus as a church is not meeting church member’s needs. We portray ourselves
as an intellectual community. Many acute life stories are occurring within a mile of the
church, especially in the graduate student population.” A common theme is that we are
not doing enough to equip the people to be involved in ministry. At the moment, I know
that this is a weak area. There is no intentional discipleship process doing on. Another
insightful interviewee stated, “The primary focus seems to be inward and not outward.
Many members seem to feel that ‘everyone’ is already an Adventist in the area.” We had
a mean score of sixty-two in this area.

In the area of integration, we are developmental. I know this section created a lot
of difficulty and confusion for our people, because there was no clarity regarding who
our community actually is. Does it represent the people that live around the church
members? Does it represent the mission field we are trying to reach—the students? Our
numbers reflected that confusion. For example, in regard to number seventy, the staff
answered with little agreement because they know our prime area of witness is to be the
student population on campus. They know this because these are discussions that take
place fairly often on the staff level, but that has yet to fully trickle out to the church. One
person said, “Our church views a community down the road as its primary area of witness
and the university campus as its secondary focus.” The truth is actually the reverse. This reflects the confusion that the church has. We had a mean score of fifty.

In the area of growth, we are technically transitional, but functionally reactive. A transitional church engages the people in the places where they live and work and spends time discerning how to best reach them. We have not been doing that. Right now, it is up to the individual pastors to spend time doing the discerning work and then come to the staff meetings to recommend things. Right now, we are largely following an attractional model, though, and it has caused some tension because there is a new worship service on campus that is getting a larger number of students at their worship services. It has caused us to reflect on our purpose. A few interesting quotes read: “The church serves the ever-changing body of students, neither attracting or repelling them. Whoever comes is who the church serves.” “It is stale. Too much emphasis is given to getting baptisms and not enough attention to maintaining members who are already baptized. So, it is an ‘in the front door and quietly out the back door.’” Another person stated, “PMC seems like a ‘high class’ church and not the place you would bring someone who is dealing with things like poverty, substance abuse, and complete worldliness” We have an average mean of forty-four.

In the area of connection, we are a church that is largely focused on its members. We scored a high of eighty-one on the reactive scale. There is no connection right now with the community. One person said we “do nothing much to touch the lives of people in our community to let them know we care.” Another person said, “All the ministry cannot and must not be done in the church through church programs overseen by a pastor.” Still another said that “The church seems to be disconnected from the
community.” A few other comments of note: “While we espouse this mission, I believe the majority of members are not actively involved. We are limited, in comparison, to other churches in the community in having programs that appeal to the broader community (unless it is specifically evangelistic).” Also, “The university needs a sign at the entrance keeping the community updated on special events, weekly sermon titles, etc. There are lots of great things happening, but we don't appear to make them available to the community or invite them in. (This is probably more of a need for the University, but it could benefit the church also).” We scored a mean of sixty-one in this area.

Concerning impact, we are technically transitional, but I believe we are functionally reactive. We scored a sixty-two on the transitional side. One person said, “People in our community have poor concept that we even care from what we hear.” Another person said, “The church is seen by the community as impotent, able to support with funds or resources, but of no real power in their lives. Most look on the church with suspicion. Adventists are seen as judgmental, isolationist Bible-thumpers who pontificate more than help.” I think those comments do a good job of summarizing the state of our church in this community. A few months ago, I interviewed the principal of the local elementary school to learn more about the community. He revealed to me a fascinating history of this town and its relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist community. It used to be much worse in the seventies. Things are a little better, but many in the community are still wary of Adventists. A few other comments read: “There are many people in my life that are influenced by people in our congregation, but unfortunately it isn't for the good. There are people that are part of our congregation that own businesses and tend to
treat their employees bad, some of which are not Adventist. They seem to be interested in money more than people. This brings negative feelings toward our congregation”

“We appear to sometimes be disinterested in big community events—Relay for Life that is brought right to our doorstep annually, but only a handful of SDAs get involved, even though Berrien County was #1 in the nation for two years. Makes us look very arrogant and exclusive. Is it wrong to fight cancer on the Sabbath? Relay for Life committee was very disappointed in PMC's attitude in particular.” We had a mean of forty-five for this section.
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