

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

REIMAGINING THE MISSIONAL CULTURE OF CROSSWALK COMMUNITY

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE: THROUGH PREACHING, TEACHING,

EXPERIENCE AND TELLING OUR STORIES

A Project
Submitted to the Seminary Faculty
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By
Garry Edwards

Kansas City, Missouri
April 15, 2015

Copyright © 2015 by Garry W. Edwards

All rights reserved. Nazarene Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and distribute this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

REIMAGINING THE MISSIONAL CULTURE OF CROSSWALK COMMUNITY
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE: THROUGH PREACHING, TEACHING,
EXPERIENCE AND TELLING OUR STORIES

Approved by:

John W. Nielson, First Reader

Judith A. Schwanz, Research Consultant

Douglas Hardy, Director, Doctor of Ministry Program

Date

ABSTRACT

This project sought a reimagining of the missional culture of CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene (CCN), located in Westland Michigan. It was believed that through this reimagining, a discernable shift from internally focused ministry to an outward incarnational expression of ministry would take place. This reimagining was pursued through preaching, teaching, experiential opportunity and telling our stories. It was believed that by offering missional concepts in these ways, there would be sufficient exposure necessary to begin this reimagining.

CCN from a historical perspective has operated throughout its entire history from internally focused lenses, which ultimately bred an atmosphere of consumerism. This has been a hindrance which in turn produced a negative impact on disciple making and healthy community. It is believed that by shifting to an incarnational, outside of the building model of ministry both disciple making and community would be positively shifted.

Scriptural mandate was seen as necessary, to produce not only mental assent to missional lifestyle connected to the sending nature of God, but would also reach deep into the heart of those who make up CCN, by authentic transformation in discipleship response, from the heart not just the head. Ultimately for CCN it became a partnership with God's mission in the world, by accepting our place as the sent ones, who today fulfill the *missio Dei* not as an option, but as the mandate of God for His church at CCN.

Table of Contents

• Chapter One: Overview of the Study	1
○ Key Definitions	4
○ Methodologies and Instrumentations	6
○ The Key Elements of the Project	7
○ Supporting Data	8
○ The Problem Identified and Addressed	10
○ The Purpose of this Project	10
○ The Specific Context of this Study	11
○ Limitations	15
○ Outcomes	16
• Chapter Two Review of Literature	18
○ Theological Reflections	19
○ Worship as Missional Practice	31
○ Evaluating Ecclesial Practices	35
○ Telling God's Continuing Story: From the People	43
○ Summary	47
• Chapter Three: Research Design	49
○ Querying CrossWalk's Missional Understanding	50
○ The Specific Timeline	52
○ Sermon Overviews	52
○ Individual Involvement: Bible Studies	55

○ Group Dynamic	63
○ Qualitative Query Expanded	67
• Chapter Four: Research Data and Result	72
○ Quantitative / Qualitative Connection	74
○ Logic For The Scripture Choices	74
○ Key Themes Emerging From The Stories	78
• Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions	84
○ Does Missional Make Sense and Any Difference?	84
○ Conclusions Drawn From the Missional Stories	85
○ Consumeristic / Missional Tensions	90
○ Final Conclusions	93
○ What I Have Learned	95
○ Next Steps For CrossWalk	97
○ Recommendations For Those Who Would Follow	99
○ Personal Assertion	101
• Appendix A (Manuscripts and Sermon Notes)	102
○ The Great Commandment	102
○ Responsibly Sent Through Prayer	110
○ The Great Commission	117
○ A Good Samaritan Heart	125
○ Greatest Co-Mission	133
○ Who Then Is My Neighbor	139
○ The Least of These	146

○ Pre-Pentecost Mission	153
● Appendix B (Pre/Post Surveys)	161
● Appendix C (Statistical Data)	163
● Appendix D (Statistical Data)	169
● Appendix E (Statistical Data)	171
● Appendix F (Telling The Stories)	172
○ Narcotics Anonymous Group Experience	172
○ Haiti Water Well Project (Partnership)	174
○ Laundromat Story	175
○ Laundromat Experience	176
○ Laundromat Experiential Opportunity	178
○ Laundromat Opportunity	178
○ Independent Missional Connect	179
○ Helping A Neighbor	179
○ My Experience at Saint Mary's	181
○ Missional Response	181
○ Spontaneous Missional Opportunity	184
○ Hands and Feet of Christ	186
○ Continuing Missional Expressions	188
○ Coming Missional Opportunity: Sign Language Class	188
● Bibliography	192

*All Scripture unless otherwise noted are taken from the New International Version.

CHAPTER ONE OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The shifting of the culture from that of Christendom to post-Christendom, and modernity to postmodernity has, in some respect, left the church scrambling to find an adequate voice and authentic influence in the world around it. Values and views of God, including church and the need for biblical living, have radically shifted the influential voice of the church over many years.

It is fairly obvious that change is taking place in the world and that this change is impacting the universal Church, the local church and denominations as well. If the church fails to recognize that these shifts are taking place in the culture around it, and even influencing it from within, then the church will find itself obsolete. These cultural shifts do not require a new gospel or new form of grace, instead the church has to find a more biblical way of connecting with and entering into lives of those who surround and form the cultural context for each localized expression of the church. At one time the world looked into the church, but now the church is no longer the attractional center piece. Instead, it often finds itself seemingly abrasive to those who remain on the outside. Therefore, if we are to touch their lives, it is imperative to exegete our world through missional eyes and with a missional heartbeat, while attempting to understand the shifts that are occurring and remaining biblically sound in our approach.

This project seeks to understand these shifts, particularly the impact on the local culture at CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene, and purposes to reimagine the missional culture of CrossWalk, through preaching, teaching, experiential expressions and telling the story. This reimagining seeks, and we shall see if it has accomplished its

task, to move CrossWalk from an internally focused church to an externally focused expression of God's mission in the world.

I have been in pastoral ministry for the last thirty-four years, all of those years have been influenced by the Church Growth model of ministry. I have increasingly grown dissatisfied at the level of Christlike disciples being produced as disciples who live out their faith through incarnational expressions in the public market. The church I have served for the last seventeen years has gone through several transitions, yet still finds itself bound by an entrenched internal focus. This inward focus coupled with shifts in cultural and political values leaves the church ill equipped to embrace the future challenges and opportunities for incarnational living that lie ahead. While CrossWalk has maintained an emphasis on missions over the years, its approach has been a very Western one in that it focused on sending people out across the globe at the expense of localized personal involvement outside of the essentials of financial giving and prayer. My assessment of CrossWalk Community Church recognized that this local church was in need of a shift from a purely global emphasis to one that includes the localized responsible living of the Christian life by individuals, who accomplish missions by taking the church outside the building and into the world. This project was designed as the first step in shifting CrossWalk Community's ecclesiology from being internally focused to one that is focused externally by connecting to the nature of the sending God.

During the course of studies I recognized that this local congregation had great need of a larger, more focused vision of what it means to participate in the *mission Dei*. Specifically, the church leadership's need to more effectively emphasize the raising up and development of disciples who can influence the world outside of the church. In his

study on church leadership Neal Cole states, “The Church was once a catalyst for artistic expression, social change, and the founding of hospitals, schools, and missionary enterprise, but today she has settled for providing a one-hour-a-week worship concert, an offering plate, and a sermon.”¹ Cole paints a clear picture of early Methodism compared to the way it functions today. He also adds a unique perspective on an each-one-reach-one view of sharing Christ. He continues, “If any one Christian alive today were to lead just one person to Christ every year and disciple that person so that he or she would, in turn, do the same the next year it would take only about thirty-five years to reach the entire world for Christ!...If every Christian alive today were to reproduce in the same way, the world would be won to Christ in the next two to four years.”²

This project suggests that it is essential for CrossWalk Community Church to seek to clearly understand how it functions within and connects to the *missio Dei* in its local context. Only then can it attempt to move, with this newfound vision, towards a shift from internally focused ministry to an externally-focused expression of Christ. This understanding and shift becomes a fulfilling of the sending nature of God as reflected in Christ while also reflecting what was modeled by the early church. For CrossWalk, this is primarily a reimagining of its missional culture. In order to pursue this line of thinking, we will first need to acquire a better understanding of key terms or definitions that will help move the church in that direction.

¹ Neal Cole. *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009) 116.

² *Ibid.*, 278.

Key Definitions

Attractional Church

“The Attractional Church is an ecclesial model that seeks to bring people to church first, in order to bring them to Jesus. This model became popular during Christendom when the church functioned as a central institution of society.”³ This manifests itself in more programing and “flash and dazzle” attempts to catch the eye and interest of people in order to attract them into the building with the hopes of growing the church. Over the years the term “attractional church,” also referred to as the Church Growth Model, has been used in a variety way, occasionally even taking on the meaning “the best show in town.”

Ekklesia

According to Leslie Newbigin, “It is, I think, very significant that in the consistent usage of the New Testament, the word ekklesia is qualified in only two ways; it is ‘the Church of God,’ or ‘Christ,’ and it is the church of a place.”⁴ For our purpose in this project, we will view the church in both lights especially as it connects to the local setting.

Evangelism

Evangelism is the action of sharing one’s faith with another who is outside of the faith. Darrell Guder notes, “Evangelism is GOD’S PEOPLE joyfully sharing the good news of the sovereign love of God and GOD’S SPIRIT calling all people to repentance,

³ Alan Hirsch and Darryn Altclass, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009) 203.

⁴ Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 229.

to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to active membership in the church, and to obedient service AND WITNESS to the world.”⁵

Missio Dei

“The doctrine of the *missio Dei* is the belief that God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit send the church into the world.”⁶ In his footnote referencing David J. Bosch’s definition, Darrell L. Guder notes, “This formulation reflects the Western tradition, of course; our Orthodox colleagues uphold the missionary nature of God while emphasizing that the Father sends both the Son and the Spirit.”⁷

Missional Church

“Missional Church is a church that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose; as an agent of God’s mission to the world...The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus.”⁸ Embedded within this understanding is the idea of moving beyond the building to life-to-life investment in people as the hands and feet of Jesus in ways that involve the embracing of the sending nature of God. Missional churches by their very nature builds around the premise of a sending God who chooses the church to be that continuance in the world today.

⁵ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of The Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 205.

⁶ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 390.

⁷ Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998), 5.

Consumerism

The idea of consumerism presents itself as an inculturation of self-seeking within the church. This way of thinking promotes a what-is-in-it-for-me mindset. Unfortunately, this type of thinking and living gets in the way of what the Bible teaches about the mission of God in the world. As Miroslav Volf says,

The church lives from something and towards something that is greater than itself. That something is God and His eternal purpose. The Church, then, is not only called to proclaim the gospel, but to embody it by its communitarian life. Unfortunately, the church in the West is dominated by individualistic, anticomunal forces. Its obsession with consumerism, individualism, and materialism has kept it from fulfilling God's ultimate intention.⁹

Consumerism, then, becomes all about the individual and their desires, wants and perceived needs, and not so much about pursuit of the mission of God.

Methodologies and Instrumentation

Since the purpose of this project is to attempt to reimagine the missional culture of the church (specifically CrossWalk Community), the whole church was offered an opportunity to participate in the reimagining. This participation occurred through various forms of voluntary input and participation, including taking the theology and applications drawn from sermons and Bible studies and using them during four specific missional projects that were designed to encourage people to move outward by discerning opportunities for mission in their everyday lives.

⁸ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches*, 212.

⁹ Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, Kindle Edition, 2008), Location 1862.

The Key Elements of the Project

The project was comprised of four components covering an eight week period of time:

Component 1: Eight sermons, that were developed from scriptural mandates to move the church deeper along missional lines of understanding. Each of these sermons also embraced the concept of personal mandate of responsibility rather than optional responsibility. The sermons also expressed concepts of the *missio Dei* in one form or another while progressing towards specific experiential opportunities to embrace what was being taught.

Component 2: Eight Bible studies: individual studies that complement the sermon along with pastor-led small group interaction on Wednesday evenings. The Bible studies were developed from the same passages used in that week's sermon and provided a daily journey that reinforced the biblical teachings regarding the *missio Dei* as well as missional understandings. The midweek small group discussions provided opportunity for dialogue to explore and express the missional questions and understanding that were being shaped through this journey.

Component 3: Specific missional projects connected by corporate prayer: The church, through prayer, sent out its members to participate in four missional projects. These missional projects were strategically placed in the timeline to correspond with foundational concepts of missional understanding that had been laid in sermons and Bible studies. Further, these expressions were designed to foster missional seeds for expression. In this fostering, people were encouraged to seek out through prayer, their own missional expressions. It is important to note that this eventually became a learning point about not trying to exert control over the journey and allowing room for adjustments and delays.

The bottom line lesson was that our plans must always submit to God's plan. When the opportunity to go into two people's homes and lives fell through, God used the imaginations of the people to engage in personal expressions.

Component 4: Telling of the story by those who participated in the missional projects along with other impromptu telling of the stories of missional awareness and participation. What this exercise allowed was greater exposure and influence, because the witness came from the people in the pews with whom they were familiar and had learned and grown spiritually alongside. The stories, especially the experiential ones, gave hope, and potential ideas for future missional engagement, to the others who were listening that missional living was available to and possible for everyone. Finally, the spontaneous stories expanded the idea and reality that God could use each and every one who was willing to be used in the *missio Dei*.

Supporting Data

Bryon K. McLaughlin states in an article from *Grace and Peace Magazine* the following:

The larger issue now is what does mission mean in a particular context, and what methods, approaches, and ways of thinking enable faithful and fruitful ministry? The truth is that, though there are theological, biblical, and historical markers that can help, no single way works with all people, at all times, in all places. Churches must be adaptable and open to change as conditions change. As churches move away from maintenance, the following five things have proven to be game-changers for Nazarene congregations seeking to be more missional:

- 1. Mission is an attitude, not a program.** (*This aids in the Reimagining*).
- 2. Mission is being for the community.** (*This becomes outside the building investments in lives*).
- 3. Mission is being adaptive and innovative in reaching people.** (*This is finding new experiential opportunities*).
- 4. Mission is fueled by identity.** (*This is understanding our biblical heritage and mandate*).

5. Mission is intentionally developing new leaders and followers. (*This manifest as Discipleship / Disciple making*).¹⁰

Collecting Data

The project utilized a pre- and post-survey to ascertain the current attitude towards missional understanding along with any shifts that occurred as the project was completed. Written reports from the experiences of participants who went out of the building to do ministry helped measure any shifts in understanding and incarnational actions that did or did not occur. The reports also offered exposure to the listeners regarding what had occurred in the life and experience of others. This also included some testimonies of individuals who have been impacted by active participation in the *missio Dei* through missional opportunities, even if no dramatic impact or change occurred which included non-planned missional expressions.

The Scope of the Project

This project focused on understanding and developing attitudes of missional expressions as a culture for the community at CrossWalk. This was done by intentional missional exposures through the components of sermons, Bible studies, and small group experiences, including opportunities to practice incarnational living through participatory actions, both individual and corporate, with expression of those same missional attitudes outward to the larger body of CrossWalk. This developing of attitudes may simply have been shifts in thinking and actions as the congregation was immersed in biblical mandates from Scripture that demonstrate the attitude and commands of the Father, as the

¹⁰ Bryon K. McLaughlin, “Five Things We Have Learned from Missional Nazarenes,” *Grace and Peace* Winter 2015, issue 11, 2. Please note: The statements that are bracketed and italicized were added by Garry Edwards to show the connections between McLaughlin’s thoughts and the premise and components of this project.

sending God, who sends His Church through Christ into the world as his hands and feet for the fulfillment of the *missio Dei*.

The Problem Identified and Addressed

CrossWalk Community Church stood in need of gaining a clearer understanding of its ecclesiology along with its place and role within the *missio Dei*. However, consumerism had come to, quite problematically, characterize this local church. Individuals had, at various times and to varying degrees, adopted a consumer mindset in relation to their understanding of the purpose as their attendance of church. This need, which stands in juxtaposition to the problem, represents a change in understanding regarding the nature and purpose of the church. The proposed solution to this problem was a corporate journey to discover what a church looks and acts like as it seeks to live incarnationally within the mission of God.

The Purpose of this Project

As stated above, this local church remained impacted too much by consumerism and the residual effects of the attractional model of church growth. This produced an attitude which perceived that worship is connected solely to Sunday mornings inside the church building. The need remained at CrossWalk Community to understand the missional (sending nature of God) mandate from the Scriptures. This project proposed a way forward through specific sermons, Bible studies and small group participation, which including missional opportunities of expressions and public sharing of the stories that surfaced from these opportunities. The hope was that the attitudes would change from consumerism to an incarnationally based attitude and practice. Understanding the mandate of Scripture as it relates to the sending nature of God and shifting the church's

heartbeat in that direction was intended as a beginning, not a destination. The ultimate purpose this project identified and addressed was to significantly begin that shift, with full expectation of building on the foundation that was laid from any shift that occurred.

Specific Context of this Study

I came to CrossWalk Community (Westland Church of the Nazarene), September 1, 1997. The church had just gone through a very difficult split where the previous pastor would have been voted out had he not chosen to leave on his own. Even in leaving it was very brutal, ugly and destructive. As I see it now, it was a mutual breakdown between the pastor and the people. This was a continued historical pattern of self-destruction for what was then Westland Church of the Nazarene. The church, which was founded in 1933, was born out of a revival along with five other churches, of which Westland (CrossWalk Community) is the only one that still exists and functions as a church today.

I began pastoring this church, which remains my current assignment, over seventeen years ago. By God's grace, during the first two years of my tenure, church attendance increased from 36 people on average to around 118 average attendance. At the same time, our income increased from just a few hundred dollars in the bank, to an annual budget of \$175,000. Despite the numeric growth during those two years, nearly half of the church board wanted to remove me as the pastor at the two year review. It was only later revealed that one of the board members had a family member whom they hoped would become the pastor. Ultimately, I was given a four year renewal and it seemed that the church was moving forward again. After another two years, however the same group began to cause dissention among the rest of the church. I spoke with the District Superintendent and found out that this was a cyclical pattern that had existed

throughout the history of the church with these families. He asked me if I was willing to stick it out in order to break the cycle that was destroying the church. Believing that this was what God was calling me to, I agreed to do a modified restart, where we stayed in the building. We knew we would lose several families and accepted that as a necessary loss. What we did not expect was a three-year attack both internally and externally by those who had left out of a desire to shut us down and take back the building.

The church, by God's good grace, outlasted this onslaught and was seeing a good renewal of growth in the church spiritually and numerically. Then, however, came the recession that devastated the greater Detroit/Michigan area. Our congregation lost several of our young families due to out of state moves to find gainful employment. This left us with a great void and, once again, we felt the strain of a new start/restart ministry. It has taken several years to work through this, and I am glad to report that we are moving forward and in the right direction.

As of September 1, 2014, I have begun my eighteenth year of ministry at CrossWalk Community. I am more convinced than ever that our future has to build around missional lifestyle concepts and principles. This differs from the Church Growth Movement in that it is principle-centered and focuses on disciple making rather than attraction and numbers. Missional lifestyle practices are much more intentional in relationship building. These practices bring with them the understanding that fostering these deeper relationships will take longer because people are building a stronger foundation from which a future can grow.

It is important to note that the previous leadership was rooted in the old, entrenched attitudes no longer part of the vision of CrossWalk Community. In fact, the

current leadership and church board were active throughout the journey of this project and three members of the board participated in the in-parish committee meetings that met to evaluate my progress and handling of the DMin journey. As the time for the PRP drew near, I spent a few moments in several board meetings prior to beginning the project to make sure we were all in agreement about this line of pursuit. Doing this made it easier to present the changes to the church, because it would be a church-wide pursuit that was initiated and approved by the church board and not just my project.

Like many churches, CrossWalk's entire history had been founded on the attractional/church growth model including attitudes from members ranging from hands-off to control-oriented. These attitudes predated the church growth movement but seemingly gained strength and entrenchment as the movement grew. They were also too often perceived as a means of protecting the holiness standard of the Church. From the 1970s, in evangelicalism, and 1980s, in the Church of the Nazarene, until recent years, the church growth movement helped to place a major focus on how the church could attract people. However, this attraction, it seems, did not often result in Christians taking Christ out and into their daily lives through personal investments. These internally focused attitudes bred a consumerism that hides behind religious devotion and works in opposition to healthy missional expressions.

I have to take ownership for some of the self-ingrained and consumeristic attitudes that have lingered. I fostered, for at least 13 of the 17 years, what I refer to as the "old church growth model of attraction." This was the only model of church that I had known throughout my entire span of ministry. CrossWalk remained greatly influenced during these years by consumerism and the residual effects of the attractional model of

church growth. The impact on the body was that worship was perceived as only being something done on Sunday mornings inside of the church building. I understand now that the need that permeated CrossWalk Community was for an understanding of the missional (sending nature of God) mandate from the Scriptures. Eventually, God began to awaken me to this important emphasis in Scripture and to the idea that there were more biblical ways of helping the church move outside the building in both intentional and incarnational ways. This was further confirmed as I began my doctoral journey a little over 3 years ago. I did not understand completely, but I had already begun to subconsciously shift in my own thoughts and actions. The required and optional readings, that were part of my doctoral program, became like salt in my mouth for more missional practice and understanding. The more I was exposed, the more I wanted. This has not decreased as this project has concluded. This project became the first step of reimagining not just for CrossWalk Community, but for me as well.

The purpose of this project as stated above is an intentional attempt to reimagine the ecclesiology of CrossWalk Community. This repurposing of mission included a retooling of the missional culture of the church that moves from attraction to incarnational investment and living. The culture shift was designed to move the church from an inside-of-the-building existence towards a Christ-like lifestyle that manifests as expressions outside the building and into the world.

Throughout the process there were times where, even with the best of intentions, we came up short. This was seen as a part of the learning process and not as failure. Just like the church growth model of ministry, what works today will have to be adjusted and adapted in order to speak effectively into an ever changing culture that is fluid at best and

disconnected from most churches in practice. With the changing nature of culture in mind, it should be noted that, though some of the applications that did not work during this attempt, these applications may still be viable with modifications in the future.

There are plenty of examples of missional practice, but what seems to be lacking are specific models or programs. Authentic incarnational practices are difficult to package and present as a program. Incarnational/missional lifestyle only takes shape as the church invests into the life of the individual and the needs of each person will vary from case-to-case, so the church must be prepared to adapt. It must also be stated that incarnational living and investing is not simply adapting the Bible to fit a changing world, rather it is, bodily living the principles presented by Christ, who being sent into the world, taught His disciples to live those same practices within their culture and world. The Holy Spirit is the continuation of God's sending of himself on our behalf as he compels the church today to embody the same incarnational practices in their cultural contexts.

Some might contend that churches must compromise their mission or theology in order to accommodate missional practices. However, this claim is unfounded as missional practices are rooted in both the life and theology of Jesus and the early church. Missional living has as its goal to reach people with the gospel through transformed lives that reflect the heart and love of Christ in a way that is relevant for life today.

Limitations

The limitations of the project were in the areas of gaining a true picture of this local church's understanding of the terms: *missio Dei*, missional, incarnational, ecclesiology, worship as practice and how these terms related to a mindset of consumerism in the church. The thought is that an understanding of how these,

consumeristic, what-is-in-it-for-me mindsets, should change must be cultivated before any shift towards better missional understandings and practices in the church could occur. It is worth noting that a pre-understanding was in place, that little if any shift would occur unless experiential opportunities were provided which also included the opportunity to share and celebrate publically how those expression were pursued. Certainly there is no way that this project could completely reshape a culture in the church, but its purpose was to serve as the first step in reimagining our missional context within the *missio Dei*. Since this project is completed, definite steps will now have to be taken to continue to nurture the shifting missional environment.

Outcomes

Expected outcomes:

1. The congregation understands more fully the nature and purpose of the church.
2. The congregation's attitudes begin to shift towards an "other" focus and away from a "self" focus.
3. The congregation would increase its incarnational presence in its local community by missional practice.

There were four key components in this Pastoral Research Project:

- Eight sermons (pastor).
- Eight weekly Bible studies (individual study, also pastor-led small group interactions on Wednesday evenings).
- Experiential opportunities combined with commissioning prayers (the church sending its members).
- The opportunity to share the stories from the specific experiential opportunity's as well as individual explorations into the world of missional/incarnational living.

The effect of the above interventions were measured in several ways:

- Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 were a part of the pre- and post-surveys (quantitative assessments).
- Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 were assessed through qualitative means including:
 - Observations, reflections and one on one reports, of impact through sermons, Bible studies and small group experiences.
 - Testimonies in both corporate and casual settings (Telling of the stories).
 - Formal and informal conversations after people had engaged in incarnational service opportunities.
 - Reflection on the experiential opportunities including commissioning prayers: Looking and listening for changes in attitudes and expectations that may have changed.

In my estimation, this project has the potential of not only impacting CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene, but has the potential of having impact, with individual/contextual modifications, on other churches as well. The concepts are not isolated to CrossWalk alone, because they are biblically based and can find expression in many different local contexts. It is not designed to be a program that requires following an A, B, C approach with guaranteed success, or your money back. It is a biblically based approach that shifts the local church's mindset towards God the Father's heartbeat of restoration and reconciliation of the world to Himself, found squarely within the *missio Dei* and expressed within the sending nature of God. Many of the ideas expressed in this project are a combination of personal experience and extensive readings of missional writings. What follows in Chapter Two is the precedence found in literature for a missional approach to understanding the church as it relates to the *missio Dei*, or God's mission in the world.

Chapter Two Review of Literature in the Field of Missional Studies

Introduction

This review of literature provides a simple road map in order to help the reader to better understand the direction that has been pursued in the arena of missional understanding. The range of writings considered for this review of literature covers a wide range of subject matter including: *missio Dei*, missional ecclesiology, discovering the church, pluralism and its impact on the mission of the church, worship, and proclamation that theologically centers on the sending nature of God. This review will also explore connections of worship along with the understanding of preaching as they relate to the evolving understanding of missional thinking. Finally consideration of tools and methods for assessing and measuring both understandings in and shift towards missional practice within the local church were explored.

Readings in literature and terminology pertaining to missional and *missio Dei* have found wide spread and varied usage. When speaking about the term missional, John Addison Dally states: “there is no doubt that it came into widespread usage in mainline North American (and global English-speaking) Christianity with the publication of *Missional Church*, by the theologians of the Gospel and Our Culture Network in 1998. Interestingly, this book defines the word ‘ecclesial’ for its readers but never does the same for the word missional though it provides a thick description of what it means.”¹¹ The term “missional” currently has a broad definition that can vary writer to writer. To borrow from Al Tizon, the fact that the use of the term is “murky” is the result of the

¹¹ John Addison Dally, *Choosing the Kingdom: Missional Preaching for the Household of God* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 6.

widespread popularity and even overuse of the word missional.¹² Even in the midst of cloudy water, there still remains some common ideas that link the terms together. The scope of literature covered in this review will relate to the terms listed above. These terms will be explored by examining theological reflections of God's nature of mission in the world. They will be probed further through a discussion of worship within missional practices and methodologies that will help to shape a missional culture within CrossWalk Community Church.

Theological Reflections

Understanding the *missio Dei* begins with understanding God's nature as one of sending. Until we understand the depth and implications of God's sending nature, we cannot be fully equipped to fulfill His mission in the world. The goal of the church, then, is to connect herself and participate with God and his sending nature. Participation with God's sending nature is a key to embodying the *missio Dei*. The root of this thinking is found by looking within the Godhead, where Christ is the incarnate (God in the flesh) expression of God's sending nature. Thus, if the church is to embody its "sent" mission, it must discover the incarnational connections of this sending God. Discovery of these incarnational connections, then helps the church to position itself towards living into the sending nature of God.

One thing that is absolutely clear is that the church is not the original sending agent. The church becomes the sent ones who carry forward what God started in the people of Israel, and carried forward through Christ incarnate. This mission of sending

¹² Al Tizon, *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012), 3.

rests on God's character, who calls His church out of its walls and buildings to embrace and embody the continuance of His sending nature. The sending continued when Christ ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit was sent to empower the church for works of service and ministry.

Incarnational embodiment of God's sending of the church requires delving deeper into the nature of this God who sends. While expanding on the understanding of God by reaching back to Israel and moving forward to and beyond us Darrell Guder explains:

We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation. "Mission" means "sending," and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history. God's mission began with the call of Israel to receive God's blessings in order to be a blessing to the nations. God's mission unfolded in the history of God's people across centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God's work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected, God's mission continued then in the sending of the Spirit to call forth and empower the church as the witness to God's good news in Jesus Christ. It continues today in the worldwide witness of Churches in every culture to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it moves toward the promised consummation of God's salvation in the eschaton ('last' or 'final day').¹³

Alan and Eleanor Krieder hold similar sentiments, "In the *missio Dei*, the sender is not the church, as in Christendom; the sender is God."¹⁴ They recognize that the church does send out missionaries in partial pursuit of the *missio Dei*, however, the sending out does not constitute a total fulfillment of an ecclesiology of the mission of God for the church.

¹³ Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, 4.

¹⁴ Alan Krieder and Eleanor Krieder, *Worship and Mission After Christendom* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press Kindle Edition, 2011), 49n.

Unpacking the idea of a sending God, Christopher J. H. Wright offers several clarifying thoughts. “Missions from the point of view of our human endeavor, means the committed participation of God’s people in the purpose of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God’s. The marvel is that God invites us to join in.”¹⁵ Michael Goheen further delineates this mission as an ecclesial image of the connection between long history of a people of God moving outward and belonging to a new eschatological order moving towards a new age to come, through partnership and a connectedness to God through the centrality of Christ in His incarnation, life, sacrifice, and resurrection. This missional church lives outward by the empowering of the Holy Spirit and continues to seek its place in a world that is ever changing.¹⁶

Daron Brown removes the doubt about whose mission it is and who is called to embody that mission:

Thankfully, it is not up to us to conjure the mission of the church. The church does not belong to us. And neither does the mission. The mission to recover lost people and to make them into Christlike disciples is first and foremost God’s mission. And he commands us to participate in His mission. Jesus gave us our marching orders in the Great Commission.¹⁷

Lung-Kwon Lo in his essay, explores the church as the *ekklesia* as intrinsically and historically connected to missions with these words:

In fact, early Christianity was consciously and deliberately a missionary movement. Mission was essential for its establishment and maintenance. The context of mission as the prior context for our understanding of the doctrines of

¹⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, (Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2013), Kindle Edition, Location 756.

¹⁶ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011), 156-57.

¹⁷ Daron Brown, *Shift: How Nine Churches Experienced Vibrant Renewal* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), 67.

the church is essential not only to the early church but also to the contemporary church. Emil Brunner has rightly emphasized that ‘the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning; where there is no mission, there is no church.’¹⁸

He goes on to show that Paul’s used the word *ekklesia*, “to shape the concept of the church as the congregation of God (*ekklesia tou theou*) in 1Thess. 2:14.”¹⁹ Lo, expands the idea of the church as the assembly of God as it lives in Christ. The members of the body of Christ can never afford to take their eyes off of the church’s place in relationship to God. The local church must embrace not only this connection, but also the theological insight that it is God’s person and nature that guides and informs the church as it seeks to fulfill God’s mission with words and actions that delight God.

Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J Zscheile show how important the Christological perspective becomes within the *missio Dei* by quoting Michael Frost and Alan Hirsh:

They then proceed, however to formulate their understanding of God’s mission in relation to Christology and the biblical Jesus. “We believe it is not possible to be following the biblical Jesus and not end up being molded by *the missio Dei*, *participate Christi*, and *imago Dei* . . . His passions and concerns must become ours . . . Christology must determine missiology (our purpose and function in this world), which in turn must determine ecclesiology (the cultural forms and expression of the church) . . . We believe that Christology is the singularly most important factor in shaping our mission in the world and the forms of ecclesia and ministry that result from that engagement . . . There ought to be a thoroughgoing attempt to reconnect the church with Jesus; that is, to reJesus the church as the first order of business.”²⁰

The Church and Missional Ecclesiology

The church’s understanding of the connection of Christ to the sending nature of God places the responsibility on the church to connect with a missional ecclesiology that

¹⁸ Douglas M. Meeks, *Our Calling to Fulfill* (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingwood Books, 2009), 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2011), 79-94.

sees the embodying of Christ through incarnational living as a key concept and idea of the *missio Dei*. According to Craig Van Gelder, “Incarnation is God’s ultimate missional participation in human life. The Word was made flesh in Jesus, and the church as the body of Christ must continue to be enfleshed in every human culture and moment in mission. Yet the church’s incarnational ministry is not merely and imitation of what Jesus did; it is participation in a much larger movement in which God is the primary actor.”²¹

Michael Frost speaks of incarnational living as he talks about moving into the neighborhood and embracing partnerships and investments through mentoring and its related processes. He expounds upon this by quoting the Australian Missiologist, Ross Langmead who says that, “Mission can be labeled incarnational in the sense of (1) being patterned on the incarnation, (2) being enabled by the continuing power of the incarnation, and (3) joining the ongoing incarnating mission of God.”²²

Al Tizon describes this as the “Mission—hood of all believers; finally, because of the *missio Dei*, we preach that all God’s children have a part to play in accomplishing God’s purpose. I affirm the adage, ‘Everyone is a missionary’—but not in the sense that all should knock on doors and distribute tracts. Rather, I believe all Christians should view their respective spiritual gifts as both for the edification of the church and the transformation of the world.”²³ In other words, there is no room for “spiritual coasting” in the missional outlook of God for His children.

²¹ Ibid., 114.

²² Michael Frost, *The Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2011), 125.

²³ Tizon, *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform*. 9-10.

When exploring congregational missions, it becomes important to understand the balance between church responsibility and church ownership. Gary Nelson raises an important question, “Whose mission is it anyway?” He answers this question in part arguing that “ultimately, mission belongs to God and that the actors play their parts as servants whose passion and skills are offered first to God and then to the common task of mission. Unfortunately, mission relationships often fall short of the ideal.”²⁴

Nelson’s emphasis on the church as a group of actors playing their parts raises the important point that how a church sees itself will greatly determine how the church presents itself to the watching world. Meaning that the ways in which a church understands its connection to God and His mission will determine how that church plans, prepares to reach and even views their world and the people there within. This places a high value on the missional ecclesiology of the church which will inevitably filter down to the individuals that make it up. For many, the model of the North American Church has been a consumer model that asks: What can we offer to attract others?

Often times in today’s church less attention is given to the mission of God and more is given to the mechanics of church ministry. Buildings, programs, dollars, and attracting people into the building has for too long been the focus of the North American Church. The church then becomes “response driven,” due to all of the operational needs of buildings and programs, rather than missionally focused.

It may be that many churches lack a sense of God’s mission and find it easier to take existing Christians away from other churches in order to meet budgets, programs,

²⁴ Gary V. Nelson, Gordon W. King, and Terry G. Smith, *Going Global: A Congregation's Introduction to Missions beyond Our Borders* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press Kindle Edition, 2011), 40.

and denominational goals, rather than to build relationships that lead to evangelism and discipleship. Missional ecclesiology is rooted in relationships and disciple making. Any church that does not have these essential characteristics will lack a missional ecclesiology. Craig Van Gelder addresses missional ecclesiology and ties it to the *missio Dei*:

An awareness of the changed context for the church in the United States necessitates integrating both missiology and ecclesiology to form a missional ecclesiology. This draws attention to the church's intrinsic missionary nature. The authors of *Missional Church* put the issue for churches in North America this way: It has taken us decades to realize that mission is not just a program of the church. It defines the church as God's sent people. Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church. [31]²⁵

The continued sending nature of God must be lived out in the church today. For the church to have a reach and influence that will move it from: "Come into our building if you want to be like us" to Christ's example of moving out among those who are not already in the church building in order to show them the Father. For many years the North American Church understood its role as a sending agent that empowers select individuals to go into all the world with the gospel message as missionaries. Today more and more people are understanding the role of the church not as only sending, but rather as the sent ones. Every individual follower of God, carries the mandate to embrace an active role of a missionary being sent by God into the world through their lives and influence. This mandate belongs to every believer and not to a select few.

²⁵ Craig Van Gelder, *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Kindle Edition, 2008), Location 2611-2617.

By the very nature of the word incarnation, the church must recognize that before it can take Christ into the world, the church as the body of Christ has to move beyond the brick and mortar of a building, to flesh-and-body investment into the community, alongside families, and in relationships in which God affords it a role. This idea connects squarely with partnership with God through participation within the *missio Dei*.

Participation and partnership are descriptive terms that help in better understanding missional ecclesiology. David Bosch, a noted authority in missional understanding states, “Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world: the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission (Aagaard 1974:13). There is church because there is mission, not vice versa (Aagaard 1974:423). To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”²⁶ We work with God’s plan of love for the world, not our own designs, while embracing His sending nature in our life. We participate with God in the carrying out of the *missio Dei*. God can accomplish the *missio Dei* without us, but instead chooses to invite us to partner with the Holy Spirit in bringing it about. As the church recognizes its role in the mission of God, that same church should begin to shape what it does for the purpose of fulfilling its God-given mission within the *missio Dei*.

A missional ecclesiology rises above the emphasis prevalent within the church growth movement that focuses on drawing people towards the inside of the church building as an end, rather than a means to living amidst the world, loving them in Christ and investing in their lives. It is the participation of all God’s children in God’s work of reconciliation that has been ongoing since the fall of humankind. For the church today,

the word *missional* embodies an incarnational living in the world by following Christ's own example of practice and purpose. Discovering how to live this example outward in practice and purpose today, represents the missional journey and shapes how the church presents God to a waiting world.

A Pluralistic World

Understanding the church within the context of a pluralistic world cannot be limited solely to the context of the religious arena. Looking at the multitude of religions can provide a good start, but often limits the church from understanding the strong influence brought to bear by the scientific and sociological fields of study.

The world and culture in which we live has shifted and is no longer driven by the Christian worldview. Post-Christendom and postmodernity shapes the world in which we are called to minister. This cultural shift forces the issue of why clarity is critical for the church's understanding the *missio Dei* and the role of the church within that mission of God.

In presenting the thoughts of Leslie Newbigin, Paul Weston says, "If we look at Western culture from the perspective of other, older cultures, its most obvious feature is that it is split into two parts: there is a public world of what are called 'facts,' and a private world of what are called 'values.' 'Facts' are what everyone has to accept whether they like it or not, 'values' are a matter of personal choice."²⁷

²⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions*. 390.

²⁷ Paul Weston, *Leslie Newbigin: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 202.

Weston continues on to dissect Newbigin's thought by placing the base tension between the public world and the private world. This delineation between one's view of facts and values respectively begins a significant change in the era of the Enlightenment where science and philosophy had previously left room for God, but then began to separate God's significance and influence from the realm of facts. Effectively God was moved to the realm of values and the private world.

Darrell Guder speaks to the shift towards pluralism, "The struggle of early Enlightenment thinkers to establish an alternative method for discovering truth is clearly illustrated in the experience of Galileo (1564-1642). After Galileo's empirical observations confirmed Copernicus's (1473-1543) theory that the earth rotated around the sun, church and state authorities forced Galileo to recant his view because they believed that the Bible taught a different cosmology."²⁸ This caused great tensions in the arena of rationality and reason against the church and its freedom of religious thought. Thinkers like Francis Bacon and John Locke introduced logic and scientific method further eroding the religious realm of thought. Fueled with the increase of an autonomous selfhood, the slide continued into secular forms of pluralism.

This movement started out innocently enough, but the further science and philosophy pushed to know and understand, the less room there was in Enlightenment thinking for faith and belief as a discoverable scientific knowledge. As a result of this dichotomy of thought the realms of reason and faith were and remain dramatically impacted. The tensions seem to have only intensified in the twenty-first century and now spill over into the moral realm. In the mind of postmodern, post-Christendom persons

there is little if any room for absolutes, let alone absolutes about God, because any discussion about God has been firmly relegated to the world of private values.

Newbigin speaks to this impact on the voice of the church in a public and private world mindset:

The results we inherit in the twentieth century is a split within the Christian community which corresponds precisely to the split down the middle of our culture. On both sides of the dichotomy between facts and values is accepted. On the one side are fundamentalists who assert factual inerrancy of Scriptures and who regard statements of Christian doctrine as factually correct propositions of the same kind as the statements of physics, or astronomy (see the 'Creation Science' advocated in the USA). On the other side are the liberals who see theological statements as symbols of religious experience which is essentially inward and personal; for the latter, theology is not concerned with factual statements about the world and its history, and the Bible is simply a record of religious experience, a divine quarry of ideas.²⁹

The unfortunate slide of the church presented through this division opens a door for many voices and a reduction of biblical authority. In essence, the church becomes one voice among many. Benjamin Conner considers the idea of a multiple voiced world and the church's voice among it, by asking several questions:

In this disorienting social climate the church is faced with some difficult questions. How are the shared ways of life in our communities changing, and where does the church fit in? How do we, as a church engage a world that has been fragmented into disparate spheres, each sphere with its own interests, goals, and legitimating authority navigated by autonomous individuals? How does the church address the issue of pluralism in which the Christian religion becomes one system among other equal systems, including other religious systems? How does the Christian church sustain its identity in a culture that has disintegrated and when authority has become multivocal?³⁰

²⁸ Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, 21.

²⁹ Weston, *Leslie Newbigin: A Reader*, 204.

³⁰ Benjamin T. Conner, *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Kindle Edition, 2011), Location 447.

These are important questions that cannot be answered in a single statement. The answer begins with an understanding of the *missio Dei*, and progresses with the church finding its place within the mission of God in the world. If the church does not accept the reality of its responsibility to the *missio Dei*, it will struggle to find a strong voice among the many conflicting voices.

Too often the conflicting voices begin to infiltrate the church and influence it away from a focus on God's mission in the world. Goheen shows how this influence can take shape inside the church. "Western culture is a culture that revolves around the hub of itself. Politics is formed around individual rights, and economic life is given shape by economic self-interest. Today we are witnessing the rotten fruit of this cultural center: selfishness that is apathetic to human need, self-absorbed narcissism, a deep sense of entitlement, a victimization that refuses to accept personal responsibility, and an obsession with rights, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment."³¹ Unfortunately, the results of this perspective are disturbing in many churches today.

Newbigin's writings remind us that the presence of many voices is nothing new, "The world into which the first Christians carried the gospel was a religiously plural world and – as the letters of Paul show – in that world of many lords and many gods, Christians had to work out what it means that in fact Jesus alone is Lord. The first three centuries of church history were a time of intense life-and-death struggle against the seductive power of syncretism. But if the issue of religious pluralism is not entirely new, it certainly meets our generation in a new way."³² Newbigin argues that we have to

³¹ Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*, 209.

³² Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. 157.

address these pluralisms based on our times, not theirs. The better we understand the progression of stories over time, the better we are prepared to participate in God's story today.

Worship As Missional Practice

Worship as Participating in God's Story

Discovering the place of the missional church in the context of God's story becomes essential in fostering the commitment necessary to pursue and fulfill the *missio Dei*. God as a missional God is found throughout the whole of Scripture. According to Al Tizon, "First, we need to have a clear and firm grasp of the idea of *missio Dei*, a biblical reality that theologically grounds mission in the person of God. Second, we must read the Bible missionally; that is we need to see mission as the interpretive framework within which all of Scripture derives its meaning. And third, we need to commit to keeping the integral relationship between worship and mission liturgically intact."³³ Picking and choosing where the focus of Scripture will be embraced, becomes nothing more than proof texting. *Missio Dei*, therefore, is reflected as both an Old and New Testament understanding of the sending nature of God.

Christopher Wright uses descriptors that reflect a similar point. He calls it: "God with a mission," "humanity with a mission," "Israel with a mission," "Jesus with a mission," and "the church with a mission."³⁴ The narrative of God reaches towards completion as the church of today carries forward the mission that God began in Israel,

³³ Tizon, *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform*, 3.

³⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Location 680-740.

continued in Christ and is now charged to us. Carrying forward this missional responsibility becomes part of our worship as we participate in God's story.

God's love reflects a creative and redemptive story involving all people and all creation. The reality of our stories reflect a brokenness due to sin. The purpose and missional aim of His church is to link the stories of God's people to His story producing restoration and healing of our brokenness. When these two adequately combine, they form a transformational narrative within the individual. Our task becomes discovering honest and appropriate ways of telling these emerging narratives through credible expressions, which become identifiable in the lives of others, thus continuing the missional purpose of God towards His creation. More than telling the story, it is about seeking ways of effectively living the story. The church holds within her history the greatest narrative ever offered to humanity. This redemptive story of God manifests itself in and through the incarnation of Christ and continues as the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the missional church today. As the church emboldened by the Holy Spirit lives and tells its stories, we are connected in worship, at thus participate in God's story.

Ecclesial Practice Outward

Working with people for many years, I have often seen many who regularly attend church and seem to only have an elementary understanding of God's story. Unfortunately, in this understanding, their stories tend to exist as skewed, twisted, or perverted and hold little or no real transformative value. Many have seen and experienced a negatively impacted story of God through manipulative and self-serving people. The church needs to regularly engage in God's story through worship as practiced living that authentically comes alive in ways that shape and inform the life of the congregation and

compels it outward in living Christ in the world. Benjamin T. Conner in explaining Barth's view of ecclesial participation both for the corporate body as well as the individual, explains it well:

The task, or rather the commission, to which Christians are called and in which they exist consists in the fact that with their whole being, action, inaction and conduct, and by words and speech, they have to make a definite declaration to other men. The union with Christ that Barth expounds as the goal of vocation is a union of working with Christ and not a static union. It is a fellowship of apostolic action. Barth defines the Christian not as the possessor of the *beneficia Christi* but as witness. The church is not the institute of salvation that distributes *beneficia Christi* but the living community of the Lord Jesus Christ and his provisional representation in the world. We are thus given a fuller and sharper understanding still of the *nota ecclesiae* visible in this context, explains Barth. The true community of Jesus Christ does not rest in itself. It does not merely contemplate the striving of the world with its better knowledge. It does not refrain from active participation. It [the church] exists as it actively reaches beyond itself into the world.³⁵

Alan Hirsch and Darryn Altclass describe it as “the missional-incarnational impulse, which is in effect the practical outworking of the missionary God who sends the church outward into the world and deep into culture and context . . . it is the result of God's initiative, rooted in his desire to restore and heal creation.”³⁶ God's story continues to be written in the engagement of the church in the world. We become the extended embodiment of God's story to the eyes of the world, thus our credibility rests on the authentic expressions we model in “living ways” within our world of influence. This expression of God's story occurs as the church worships together in biblically sound and firmly guided ways through the embracing of the *missio Dei*.

³⁵ Conner, *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices*, Kindle Location 364

³⁶ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches*, 87.

Telling the story by living the story

The telling of God's narrative and personally connecting with the *missio Dei* forces those who make up the church to remember that they cannot effectively lead someone else to where they have not been. Nor can they pass on to others an authentic experience, they do not understand and have not experienced. Theoretical knowledge of God does not produce transformation. This transformative power resides in God; it always has and always will. Adequate room to allow for God to connect with individuals in meaningful ways produces transformation in the life of people who are committed to living God's story.

Alan J. Roxburgh speaks of the missional church that is Spirit-led saying, "The challenge is to allow the leading of the Spirit to give birth to forms that are informed by the historic Christian faith, while also reflecting the realities of the context in which congregations are located."³⁷ They take into account the historical, cultural, and current context of the missional arena and the local church. Churches connect directly to God's story and then proceed to communicate that story through actions that directly impact their world. This is authentic, participatory worship that is located within God's story in the world. Miroslav Volf shows that the antithesis of being Spirit-led shows the very heart of consumerism which directly contradicts the heart of worship. He notes that "Unfortunately, the church in the West is dominated by individualistic, anticomunal

³⁷ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led By the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2007), Kindle Location 953-1023.

forces. Its obsession with consumerism, individualism, and materialism has kept it from fulfilling God's ultimate intention."³⁸

The *missio Dei* at its core becomes a fulfilling eschatological voice where God's story finds expression within individual's stories in the life of the church. When people live like Christ outside the church, they reach together towards God's missional end. Worship reflects our response to the love and grace extended from God. Christopher J.H. Wright throughout his book, *The Mission of God*, presents worship as devotement, adoration, and allegiance to God, or to other lesser things/gods. For many in the church, worship exists as events on Sundays and Wednesdays that usually focus on how one is left feeling after the action of worship is over.

Worship extends beyond a corporate service. Worship functions in the sending nature of God as a furtherance of our connected action. Worship manifests itself in how we respond to the sending nature of God. "God designed a rhythm of worship. Out . . . in. Impelled by love, the 'peculiar people' (1 Pet 2:9, KJV) respond to God's call to embody God's mission of reconciliation to the world. On the Sabbath, the day of rest and renewal, God's people assemble in praise and confession. Sending . . . gathering. Both exhibit God's mission; both express worship."³⁹

Evaluating Ecclesial Practice

Culture has dramatically changed in the last decade, and the church must seriously examine what it means to authentically worship. At CrossWalk Community

³⁸ Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* Location 1862.

³⁹ Keith Schwanz and Joseph Coleson, eds., *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011), 133.

Church of the Nazarene, we are addressing areas that deal with worship realities. We have observed that those on the outside of our building are “not breaking down the doors,” to get in. This results in the outsider having no understanding of what our inside worship looks like. We are exploring ways to get our inside the building worship, outside and into their world. In this discovery comes the call to participatory discipleship that must manifest in disciple making, if we who call ourselves “CrossWalker’s” expect to fulfill the responsibility that belongs to every follower of Christ. The challenges we are discovering, as we embrace today’s culture are the legitimate boundaries of the Christian for making disciples. At CrossWalk we are trying to flesh out a better understanding of what authentic worship looks like and how we should pursue participating in it by living worship-filled lives outward into the world. Centering our efforts within the *missio Dei* continues to shape the story and journey of CrossWalk.

Going forward, this writer contends that the statements above that deal with worship as participating in God’s story, then there must be a direct connection with the *missio Dei*, not only in attendance but also in participation. For this to be accomplished, it must be embraced personally by each one, if CrossWalk Community church has any hope of embodying worship as a participation of God’s story.

Incarnational: Moving From Inside to Outside Living

For many in the established church these worship practices are expressed solely within the building. Ideally through experiencing these worship practices, we should be moved to express incarnational living that infiltrates others, as we faithfully live this out in our daily lives. Benjamin Conner in explaining Craig Dykstra’s work sees this as the

“ad extra orientation” of the church dynamically carrying on God’s work in the world.⁴⁰

Alan and Eleanor Kreider reference the Apostle Paul’s approach and make application for today’s church, through discerning where the missional God is already at work in our society, and partnering with Him in moving it forward.⁴¹ These are good reminders for any church today that has a desire to penetrate the world around them. The sending God goes before his disciples and works preparing the field for disciple making, which requires a committed intentionality, through becoming involved in the lives of people who may not act, talk, or think like us. It is an extended commitment of investing our lives missionally in the world where God is already working. The post-Christendom mind does not need us, and may not even want us in their life, thus our practices become critical for them to see the hope that is in us. (1 Peter 3:15).

Alan and Eleanor Kreider locate worship as participation by looking deeply at the Apostle Paul’s approach to word and table. Interestingly, they leave ample space to adapt their thoughts towards the growing arena of the organic church. In allowing for ritual practice in this form, a truer multi-voiced meal can be embraced and the idea of catechesis occurring through the long term investments of personal disciple making.

Conner’s work is helpful by the presentation of practices. A new openness can take place when baptism and Eucharist are publically celebrated and the people are invited to participate, especially through hearing the story of Christ’s redeeming and reaching love. This becomes effective when the transformational practices we express, translate outward into those we are investing in. “Christian practices are things Christian

⁴⁰ Conner, *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices*, Location 791.

⁴¹ Krieder and Krieder, *Worship and Mission After Christendom*, 227.

people do together over time in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world [in Jesus Christ]."⁴²

In leading CrossWalk Community Church toward a missional reimagining, congregants are pointed towards practices that embody the mission of God in the world through clear and reinforced exposures to what the Bible teaches. Sermons, personal Bibles studies and small group exposures are incorporated in ways that make sense as experiential opportunities are offered to begin replacing theoretical understanding with practical expressions (living incarnationallly into our world). These practical expressions become transformational by disciple making within their natural network of relationships. These practices function through inclusion that points relationships forward to Christ and shared ritual practices. The sermons, Bible studies and small group serve as the teaching points from God's word that prepare the people to express through participation in the experiential opportunities that are offered. They also point to a responsibility to participate in the story of God.

Preaching as a Part of Proclaiming God's Story

John Addison Dally shapes the task of missional preaching in terms of reimagining the reign and kingdom of God. This reimagining sees the kingdom of God on earth. Dally declares, "As we move on from the personal level to imagining the kingdom of God in our cities (affordable housing?), nation (true racial equity?), and world (a universally adequate food supply?)."⁴³ His thinking points the church towards incarnationall living, born out by Old and New Testament references to Jesus earthly

⁴² Conner, *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices*, Location 548.

⁴³ Daly, *Choosing The Kingdom*, 64.

ministry. Isaiah 61:1 says, “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” In a companion passage, Jesus declares His focus:

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21).

When one connects these passages with Dally’s thoughts on the kingdom of God, one can see that the world that Jesus died for, remains broken and undone from God. In some ways, the plight of brokenness appears as hopeless as ever. The task of proclamation still rests in a message of Good News to the needy and those bound physically and spiritually.

To understand this at a deeper level, the preacher as well as the church have to remember that preaching is not a means to attract people into the church as is seen in the model of the attractional church, rather it is to seek transformation that presses the listeners that are within the hearing of the message to go out and live Christ into the world. This is the ultimate attraction that fulfills the *missio Dei* and from these incarnational expression people are drawn to Christ and His Church. This is the Good News that transforms lives today.

This incarnational proclamation moves way beyond the ethereal and becomes transformational by producing Christlikeness within the life of those who have been

impacted by it. As lives are impacted by the example of Christ, the hope is they in turn develop living practices that are incarnational and translate out into the world.

The task and responsibility of the preacher still resides in the integrity of hermeneutical and homiletical pursuits. John Wright, in *Telling God's Story*, sees a missional hermeneutic as always relevant to the whole of Scripture. He sees the missional theme, not as something that shows up every now and again, rather, God's story missionally exists as the hermeneutic of Scripture. Wright states:

Within the biblical narrative the church stands as the people of God gathered in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham through the faithfulness of Jesus in anticipation of the coming completion of God's rule through all creation. To live within the biblical narrative, then, demands that we understand ourselves as occupying the narrative space between Christ's resurrection and Christ's return, between the 'already' of the incarnation and the 'not yet' of Christ's return.[8] Christians stand within the biblical narrative between the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the restoration of all creation. Yet Christians do not occupy this space as autonomous individuals in the biblical narrative; humans only find their true individuality as part of the church.⁴⁴

The preaching task seeks to find ways to allow or show individuals within the larger body a path to the continuance of the biblical narrative found within the sending God who still sends us as His incarnational expressions today. "The sermon places the individual character within the unfolding narrative of God's story. The turn is now complete. The sermon frees the congregation to live as a peculiar people, who are witnesses to God's kingdom that has drawn near to us in Jesus Christ."⁴⁵

Preaching that witnesses to God's Kingdom maintains a dependence on the God who inspired the Scriptures once to inspire them once again. As David Buttrick points

⁴⁴ John W. Wright, *Telling God's Story: Narrative Preaching for Christian Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2007), 82.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

out, “We trudge through old ways of arranging ideas, looking for a cute story or a news flash to animate these old words that we deal with every week. Life has left our preaching because we no longer pay attention to the breath of God in Scripture. This is deadly, to the preacher and the congregation, because the same inspiration at work in the writing of Scripture is at work in the congregation positioned before the Scripture.”⁴⁶ Narrative preaching or preaching as story, becomes the framing of our story within God’s story which was addressed earlier in this paper. Buttrick says, “So, at a minimum, preaching alters identity by prefacing all our stories and setting them in a larger story that stretches back to the dawn of God’s creation.”⁴⁷

Thomas Long refers to Buttrick as one who “...has perhaps given the most sustained attention to the relationship between sermon form and the listening process...” Actually ‘the listening process’ is too tame a phrase to describe Buttrick’s main concern, which is the deeper issue of how sermons work to form faith in the consciousness of the hearers. ‘Sermon structures,’ he writes ‘ought to travel through congregational consciousness as a series of immediate thoughts, sequentially designed and imaged with technical skill so as to assemble in forming faith.’⁴⁸ Missional preaching seeks to frame the church within God’s story. That story stems from a sending God, purposing to shape

⁴⁶ Dan Boone, *Preaching the Story That Shapes Us* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2008), 49.

⁴⁷ David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structure* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press Kindle Edition, 1988), Location 128.

⁴⁸ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 132.

a congregational culture that, in turn, bodily embraces the same approach outward to its world that Christ modeled and challenged His disciples to carry forward.

Form or style are never seen as the purpose of the message, the preacher must always return to the integrity of the content. Any preacher who fails to exegete his or her listeners and offers to the hearers forms that have no connection, will find transformation limited at best and absent at worst. Missional preaching should be approached with a desire to understand communication techniques or forms, but never at the expense of truth in content. Content and style must merge to make a symphony for God just as the instrument, musician and music have to merge to create a master performance. Preachers learn their craft or trade, just as other professionals study and work to perfect theirs. If the preacher approaches the Scripture as easy stories to preach, they probably will not consistently help to shape a congregation missionally. If the preacher sees a consistent God who by nature sends, then they will shape the message with that narrative always on the horizon.

Understanding the congregation becomes a critical part of the preacher's job. "As preachers, we tend to create sermon forms that match our own ways of listening and learning, and therefore we must self-consciously move beyond our own preferred patterns. Although the reasons for this are not entirely clear, it is widely known that hearers possess many different styles of listening."⁴⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together*:

The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love of God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them . . . Christians, especially

⁴⁹ Ibid., 169.

ministers, often think that they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking. [7]⁵⁰

Missional preaching does not have to be clever or dependent only on the preacher actually preaching. For missional preaching to rise to the level of transformational, it has to find its truth from Scripture and life from the Spirit of God. A wise preacher will never stop studying and learning more effective ways to communicate the sending nature of God to the church as it seeks to embrace the *missio Dei*.

Telling God's Continuing Story: From the People

Sermons are only as good as the impact they make that transcends into action that communicates. A powerful aspect of communication moves beyond the hired professional (preacher) word, to that of a practitioner who takes the word upon hearing it and put it into practice. With this thought, after experiential opportunities are carried out, their testimonies or telling their personal experience moves beyond theory to real practice. Frank Viola speaks to real practice with implications to individual telling of the story in this way:

By contrast, the early Christians conducted their meetings in the home to express the unique character of church life. They met in houses to encourage the family dimension of their worship, their fellowship, and their ministry. Home meetings naturally made the people of God feel that the church's interests were their interests. It fostered a sense of closeness between themselves and the church, rather than distancing them from it. The situation today is very different. Most contemporary Christians attend 'church' as remote spectators, not as active participants.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Dietrich, Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), 97. Quoted in Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 144.

⁵¹ Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*, Location 1094.

Thinking through the thoughts of Viola above, one can safely draw the conclusion that experiential testimonies or telling of their individual stories played a significant role in the advancement of the church. These encounters allowed personal investment in each other that furthered disciple making in the early church. Exposure to the message and teachings of the church found voice, not only from the preacher, but also those who actively participated in the house-to-house message, through fellowship, food, encouragement and sharing their steps in the journey. Out of these sharing moments, it seems logical to conclude that others were inspired to follow similar steps in investing their lives in others as they were themselves influence to Christ.

Connecting Pulpit to Participants

From the readings for this study, and assessing my current context, I understand that much will depend on effective communication which stems from the biblical narrative. Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley offer an idea about the power of narrative:

Music can touch deep into our emotions; architecture can invoke the wonder of the divine; and ritual can provide revelations and comfort beyond our words. It is, however, the preaching event with all its narrative possibilities that is perhaps the most potent vehicle for interweaving the human and the divine. Unfortunately, the narrative potential of our preaching is often overlooked or underutilized. Thus, instead of a dynamic center in Sunday worship, preaching becomes the irrelevant—even oppressive.⁵²

Sermons, Bibles studies and small group encounters alone are not enough to reimagine a missional culture. The congregants need the opportunity to embrace worship through active participation in the *missio Dei* while sharing from their encounters as a means of exposing others to the same missional responsibility and possibilities. Each

⁵² Herbert Anderson and Edwards Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* (San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass, 2001), 164.

person who participates in the sending will return to share their story of God and how they are being shaped by their experience. I fully expect that other stories will emerge as the culture begins to change and stories are shared. When sermon and experience meet, transformation begins to take place. Each one who hears the story directly through their missional experience, has the opportunity to embody the narrative and reimagine their potential practices.

Missional Ownership

As a result of Al Tizon’s idea of the “mission-hood of all believers,” and the historical precedence of setting apart through prayer those who are being sent out to further God’s message, we will conduct a prayer of commissioning during our service for those going out. The purpose of this activity is to link both those who pray and those prayed for to the *missio Dei* in an incarnational way.

Assessment

In the project’s approach to methodology of study, Nancy Ammerman’s wise words have been realized. She says, “Gaining new perspectives on congregational life — both to understand its present reality and to envision its possible future — requires the disciplined study.”⁵³ Not only does the pastor need to understand the congregation, but the congregation’s internal understanding of itself becomes important. “How your congregation understands itself, and how it decides to move forward is informed by how it sees God at work.”⁵⁴ Where God is working is critical to the whole process, especially

⁵³ Nancy T. Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

in relationship to the congregations understanding and embracing of God's mission. Other authors, along with Ammerman, offer excellent methods of study in areas of observation protocols, interviewing methods, focus, helps in the interview process and much more.⁵⁵ Denzin and Lincoln say for example:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving and interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (1998, p.3) Qualitative research involves the utilization of a variety of methods and approaches which enable the researcher to explore the social world in an attempt to access and understand the unique ways that individual communities inhabit it.⁵⁶

Mary Moschella offers a healthy reminder and warning to care for relationship and equates it to ethics of pastoral research. Respect, listening, protecting the privacy and information gathered, analyzing the data, and maintaining a strict integrity as you write it are all integral steps in good research and reporting of data. In one sense it's offering pastoral care through the process.⁵⁷

Craig Van Gelder says notably, "that it is crucial to understand the *ministry of the Spirit* if we are to comprehend the *ministry of the church* in the world, or more aptly put, how the church is to participate in God's mission in the world."⁵⁸ This concept of participation has to be understood, not from what the church brings to God, but what God brings to and through the church in connection to the *missio Dei*. This ministry exists in

⁵⁵ Ibid., 204-14.

⁵⁶ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (St. Albans Place London: SCM Canterbury Press Kindle Edition, 2006), Location 632.

⁵⁷ Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 86-191.

⁵⁸ Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit*, location 258.

the larger biblical framework; “The Bible presents the story of God’s work in the world in three movements—one that begins with creation, followed by re-creation (redemption) after the fall, and then culminating in a final consummation that introduces a new heaven and a new earth. [4] It is helpful to keep this larger story of the work of God in view when we consider the ministry of the Spirit.”⁵⁹ This is a critical factor to consider when a congregational study is undertaken.

This study plans on using both pre- and post-surveys, in seeking to assess the current level of understanding of the missional mindset and attitude of the congregation of CrossWalk Community. Along with these surveys, the sharing of the stories will be transcribed and included in the project (to do this proper permissions will be secured before any informational inclusion will take place). The outcome from this will, hopefully, allow attitudes and shifts in understanding to surface.

Summary

Through this process of reading and discovery, I have developed a clearer understanding of *missio Dei* especially in relationship to CrossWalk Community. This study has also impacted my understanding of the missional perspective, particularly in relationship to this church becoming more incarnational outside of the building as expressions of worship. As an ongoing part of this project, CrossWalk Community’s leaders have come to a better understanding of the importance of clear preaching connected to study of the Scripture, experiential participation in missional opportunities and sharing in the narrative through testimonies. These testimonies arise from the actions of missional service beyond the Sunday experience within the building.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Location 286.

More specifically the missional interplay between the pastor, leadership and congregation in pursuing a journey of reimagining the missional culture of CrossWalk Community and recognizing how God is shaping the *missio Dei* within and through us. This has been and will continue to be a collaborative journey that encompasses corporate as well as individual participation.

This review of literature supports the recognition of and need for the reimagining of the missional culture of CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene, through preaching, teaching, experiential missional opportunities, and telling our stories for the express purpose of connecting with the *missio Dei*. All of the areas mentioned find expression in the various authors and literature included in this review. These views culminate in actual expressions by living intentionally outward into the world, beyond the walls of the building. It carries with it a holistic approach that through practice, will eventually become our normal culture at CrossWalk.

Chapter Three: Research Design Discovering a New Matrix of Missional Thinking

The premise of this project stemmed from the belief that through strategic biblically based sermons linked with reinforcement through Bible studies and small group discussions that a better understanding of a missional approach to ministry would occur. These alone can never suffice in what would be necessary for shifting a missional culture from consumerism to that of the *missio Dei*. There also must be an outlet for expression. Based on this understanding, provisions were offered to actualize a missional shift in thinking and practice through opportunities for practical incarnational expressions. Additionally, there would also be a need for expression of the experiences of those who chose to engage in incarnational living outside the church. The assumption was made that through the telling of the individual stories of participants, others would begin to see their potential in missional living and begin their own journey of expression through incarnational practices.

The sermons, daily devotionals and teachings served as components one and two of this project to measure and begin a shift in understanding and practice of missional ministry at CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene. Without the participation and prayer combined with telling the individual stories, the culture of this local church would remain the same. Key to this project was the participatory actions of the people and then strengthening that action with thinking through the stories that arose out of them. Exposing the larger body to stories from those who participated in the missional opportunities of expression offered a greater opportunity for the participation of others going forward. It was my belief that unless all four components worked together, none

would produce the hoped for outcome of reimagining the missional culture needed to position the church to move forward in an ever changing world in order to further God's name, the gospel of Christ and the mission of the church outside the walls of the building.

As stated in Chapter One, the eight sermons were strategically designed to explore and embrace the sending nature of God. This exploration worked from the premise that the *missio Dei* as it connects to a missional mandate to the church. Second, it also delved into both the command and essence of what that command begins to look like as the local church (more specifically CrossWalk Community). Lastly, this exploration works through some of the scriptural examples of the sending nature of God. This pursuit of embodying missional practice included eight sermons, companion daily Bible studies and small group discussions. Before the project began, there was a querying of the congregation to gain a beginning picture of where the congregation was at in relationship to missional understanding. (*Manuscripts of each sermon: can be found in Appendix A*).

Querying CrossWalk's Missional Understanding

In an attempt to ascertain a baseline of understanding for the climate and mindset of the people who make up the CrossWalk community, the congregation participated in a pre-survey and at the end of the project they were given a post-survey. The purpose of the surveys was not only to set a baseline, but also to measure any shift in missional thinking that may have occurred. The surveys were identical in the qualitative statements presented, with the only difference occurring in the post survey where three questions were asked to determine the level of weekly participation in the sermons, Bible studies and small groups. The baseline statements below from the surveys seek to acquire the range and scope of the individual's mindset as it relates to missional understandings and

expressions. Each statement was followed by five options to help measure the individual's opinion.

Survey Monkey was used as the primary method for the survey along with paper copies that were identical for those who did not, or could not use the online option.

Following are the statements that were offered to the individuals in the surveys. (*Actual copy of survey(s) are found in Appendix B*)

1. There is little difference between missions and missional.
2. "Missional" means sending people to another country to spread the gospel.
3. "Missional" means supporting missionaries already working in foreign countries.
4. "Missional" means living as missionaries wherever we may live.
5. We should not allow non-Christian groups to use our building.
6. As a church, we should not spend money on the homeless, but refer them to agencies designated to help them.
7. Giving to the needy only enables them to continue in poverty.
8. Compassion should only be extended to poor people who are trying to find a way out of poverty.
9. Providing good programs at church is the best way to serve the community.
10. Serving the "least of these" means only giving money to agencies that are trained to help.
11. Demonstrating Christlikeness includes helping people who can't help themselves.
12. Living like Jesus includes crossing cultural barriers.
13. We should be familiar with the different ethnic groups in and around our church.
14. Participation in God's mission in the world involves us being active Christians outside the church walls.
15. The church should partner with secular agencies that are meeting the needs of our community.
16. Christians should only associate with other Christians.
17. If we cannot include a gospel message we should not serve the poor because it's a waste of time.
18. To protect our witness we should not be involved with community agencies that are not specifically "Christian."
19. Serving people in our community is an act of worship.
20. If people really want to know God they should come inside the building.
21. Being "missional" means saving the lost not serving those in need.
22. Recently, in a typical week, how many hours have you spent investing in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church?

23. In the future, in a typical week, how many hours do you plan to invest in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church?

(Included in the post survey only)

24. How many of the sermons were you able to hear?
 25. How many of the Bible studies have you completed?
 26. How many Wednesday evenings were you able to attend?

The Specific Timeline

This research project is designed to impact and change the missional culture of CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene. The project began on June 8, 2014 with a seven-minute introduction to the church about this project. In this introduction all attendees were invited to become active participants of this study. Their participation began with a pre-survey that was made available June 29 through July 6. Participation was by online survey through Survey Monkey or via a paper copy of the same survey. The introduction of this project occurred again on Sunday, June 22 prior to the opening up of the survey on June 29. The pre-survey ran through July 6, 2014

The missional sermon series began on July 13, 2014 and ran through the next nine consecutive weeks, ending on September 7, 2014 (the extra week was the result of not being able to speak due to illness on my part). The post-survey was opened up online and via paper copy the following Sunday September 14, and remained open through September 28, 2014. Testimonials have been collected and were open to collection until this project's Chapter Four was completed.

Sermon Overviews

(My manuscripts of each sermon with accompanying congregational notes can be found in Appendix A)

July 13th. **Sermon 1** The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40). **Rationale:** We cannot truly embrace God's mission without fully loving him (heart, soul, and mind) and certainly cannot love our neighbor within the *missio Dei* if we do not authentically love God.

July 20th. **Sermon 2** Responsibly Sent, Through Prayer (Luke 10: 1-3). **Rationale:** Not asking God to send other workers, rather in the spirit of the sending nature of God, ask to be and embrace our own sentness in response to the *missio Dei*.

July 27th. **Sermon 3** The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). **Rationale:** This sermon evolves directly from the command to go and make disciples, which speaks specifically to incarnational living outside the walls of the church which becomes necessary for a church to express missional worship. It was during this sermon and the week that followed that the first experiential opportunity occurred. Some on their own went out during that week to participate in their own missional expressions.

Aug. 3rd. **Sermon 4**, A Good Samaritan Heart (Luke 10: 23-37). **Rationale:** As long as we stay on the far side of the road (more specifically within the walls of the church), we will never be able to embrace the sending nature of God. There comes a time where we have to actually rub shoulders with those outside the walls of the building and even risk getting dirty by embracing those who have been left wounded by this life. This week began component four with the public sharing of the stories and they continued weekly until the project's completion.

Aug. 10th. **Sermon 5**, Greatest Co-Mission (John 17:13-23). **Rationale:** Delving deeper into the sending nature of God, where the Father sent Christ, and specifically now Christ

is sending the church into the world. This moves beyond passive discipleship to active in the world of disciple making. This was by far the most scripted with two intentional and preplanned opportunities of which neither were able to occur due to circumstances out of our control. It is from this that we saw the greatest spontaneous missional adaptation.

These can be found in the stories included in the *appendix F* of this project.

Aug. 17th. **Sermon 6, Who Then Is My Neighbor?** (Luke 10:22-29). **Rationale:** Until we develop eyes that see like Christ we will find it difficult to be true disciple makers. This sermon will connect to the (survey) attitudes that shape how we look at our responsibility within the *missio Dei*. If my neighbor is nonexistent, or must filter through my preferences of look, act or behave by my standards, I probably will not get very far in embracing God's mission in the world.

Aug. 24th. **Sermon 7, The Least of These** (Matthew 25: 31-46). **Rationale:** Here we can begin to shape our reach in the arena of compassionate ministry, where we begin seeking a heartbeat for those who are less fortunate in and around us. This was the week we focused on our toenail ministry which is an outside in, free service to anyone who would have need of it. A retired registered nurse provided foot soaking and nail trimming for diabetics, disabled and elderly that chose to utilize this opportunity. The congregation was encouraged to volunteer to lend help.

Sept. 7th. **Sermon 8, Pre-Pentecost Mission** (Luke 24: 44-53). **Rationale:** We explore the presence of God in His sending of Christ, and promise of empowering through the Holy Spirit to the church that's willing to embody the *missio Dei*. The sending nature of God remains at work for us today as we are faithful in living incarnationally in fulfillment of God's mission in the world. It was during the week that followed was our focus on

partnerships. As noted in the story of S. B. by this time enthusiasm for missional living had begun and people were already involved in partnerships and individual expressions like J. R. S. without having to be prompted.

Individual Involvement: Bible Studies

A second prong of this project was a series of personal Bible studies focused on the *missio Dei*. The Bible studies were drawn specifically from the passages the eight sermons covered. They were made available to all attendees and strong encouragement was given to take it to a personal level of involvement by spending time each day in reinforcement of the biblical message from each week. These Bible studies were voluntary and strenuously encouraged.

Bible Study Week 1: The Great Commandment

Look at Matthew 22:37 What does this verse tell you about the level of love you should have towards God?

Day 1

When you read verse 38, where does love for God rate in importance to you?

Verse 39 leads into love of your neighbor. How does it rank in importance?

Day 2

Compare Deuteronomy 6:4 with Matthew 22:37

Day 3

Contemplations:

Began to ask yourself this question: Who then is my neighbor?

How can I love my neighbor without some kind of relationship with them?

Day 4

What can I intentionally do this week to further develop a love for my neighbor?

Day 5

Reality Question:

How far would I hope my neighbor would go to love me into the kingdom?

Day 6

Reread Matthew 27:34-40 (The Great Commandment)

Week 2 Bible Study: Responsibly Sent, Through Prayer

Spend time with Luke 10:2 and answer the following questions.

Day 1

Verse 2 He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

What is the harvest that is plentiful?

What is implied in the statement that the workers are few?

Day 2 (verse 2 continued)

Whose responsibility is it to pray to the Lord of the harvest?

What is the focus that the prayer to be prayed?

Day 3

Contemplation:

Is praying that only others will be sent into the harvest adequate?

What is your part as one sent into the harvest field?

Day 4

Consider the possibilities of influence through shoulder to shoulder living in the harvest.

Day 5

Reality:

After praying this week, what do you hear God saying to you about going into the harvest?

Day 6

Reflect on Luke 10:1-3, Matthew 22:34-40

Week 3 Bible Study: The Great Commission

Matthew 28: 16-20

Day 1

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

What does v.18 imply about Christ speaking for the Father?

Day 2

How does the authority of Christ on earth impact our response to following his commands?

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Day 3

How does going and making disciples apply to the church today, and you as an individual follower of Christ?

What does disciple making look like?

Day 4

Based on a premise that you cannot make disciples by proxy. What are the implications of personal involvement in disciple making?

How does disciple making involve personal investment?

Day 5

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

If your life is not seen as obedient to God’s word, how can you lead someone else into a life of obedience?

Day 6

Reflection on God’s faithfulness:

Identify ways that Christ keeps His word to be with us to the very end of the age.

Week 4 Bible Study: A Good Samaritan Heart

Luke 10:30-37

Day 1

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

Think of an instance where you or someone you know passed on the other side in order not to get involved:

In what ways do you not want to get involved in the messed up lives of others?

Day 2

³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Think of a situation where you or someone you know has been hurt by the church who ignored a need.

Day 3

³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

Think of a time when you saw someone respond out of compassion to a need rather than to a person because of race, status, or religion?

In what ways could we follow the example of the Samaritan described in verse 33?

Day 4

³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

What does v.34 say about getting hands and heart dirty to respond to need?

Day 5

³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

Pity alone does not model the example of Christ into someone who is hurting life. What can you learn from v.35 about sacrificing to be Christ to someone else?

Day 6

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

Which of the three characters do you most respond like?

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

To whom, does the command to “Go and do likewise” apply?

Week 5 Bible Study: The Great Co-mission.

John 17: 13-23

Day 1

Think about v.15 and the fact that Christ prayed that we would not be taken out of the world, but would be kept while in it. What is the purpose of our being kept while in the world?

Day 2

Link the prayer in v.15, with the prayer of v.20. What does this say about our purpose for remaining in the world?

Day 3

v.18 speaks of Christ's being sent by the Father. Christ in turn send us into the world. What do the words "As you sent me...I have sent them," say to you?

Day 4

Explore the possibilities of sent ness and what this might mean for the church in the world.

Day 5

v. 22, 23 When you read these verses, how do they speak to you about connectedness to Christ and the Father?

Day 6

Reflect on John 17: 13-23

Week 6 Bible Study: Who is my Neighbor?

Luke 10: 22-29

Day 1

Consider the special place that we have been given in our understanding of Christ and the Father and those who came before us based on verses 22 through 24.

Day 2

Does verse 25 through 29 imply that there is more than just a right answer? If yes, then consider why the teacher of the law felt compelled to justify himself after giving the right answer?

Day 3

In what ways do you identify with the teacher of the law?

Day 4

Considering verse 29 who do you see as your neighbor?

Day 5

What is your God-given responsibility to your neighbor?

Day 6

Reread Luke 10:22-29

Week 7 Bible Study: The Least of These

Matthew 25: 31-46

Day 1

Consider how verses 31-34 demonstrate that Christ will separate us by our relationship to Him.

Day 2

What do verses 34 through 37 imply about our response to Christ through others?

Day 3

How do verses 38 and 39 speak about a missional nature at work in those who have responded to Christ?

Day 4

Verse 40 shows the standard by which Christ will measure those who follow him. What is that standard?

How do you measure up to that standard?

Day 5

Verse 41 implies a judgment on those who are not in proper relationship to Christ. What are your thoughts on verse 41?

Day 6

List the contrast of actions between those who are blessed and those who are cursed. Now ask yourself the question, where do I fit in to these actions?

What are you doing for the least of these? What are you not doing that you need to start doing for the least of these?

Week 8 Bible Study: Pre-Pentecost Mission

Luke 25: 44-53

Day 1

How do verses 46 and 47 inform you of the mission and purpose of Christ?

Day 2

According to verses 48 and 49, who will preach the message of the cross?

What responsibility do you have to that proclamation?

Day 3

Verse 49 Consider how being clothed with power from on high becomes important in living out the *missio Dei*?

Day 4

What logically happens to those outside the church if we stay closed up within the church?

Day 5

In connecting to missional/incarnational living, how can the church “be the church,” in ways that fulfill the *missio Dei*?

Day 6

Reread and reflect on this week’s passage: Luke 24:44-53

A third element of the teaching method was design as a result of realizing the need for reinforcement in the learning and change process. This element includes a small group lesson designed around the text and material developed in the sermons and personal Bible studies. Again the small group participation is voluntary, but very strongly recommended and encouraged. The following are the questions used for discussion during the weekly small group studies.

Group Dynamic**Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 1**

Matthew 22: 34-40

What area of the Christians life is not included in the command to love God in Matthew 22:37?

Consider how the authenticity of our love for God gets called into question if we have no love for our neighbor?

What are the vertical and horizontal connections when it comes to our love for God and others?

In what ways can our love for God impact our love for our neighbor?

In what ways can our love for our neighbor impact our love for God?

What steps can we take to strengthen our connection with our neighbor?

Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 2

Luke 10: 1-3

What does the harvest (around you) that is plentiful look like?

How is my responsibility to pray for workers, impacted by my willingness to be sent into the harvest?

In what ways can being sent into the harvest look like incarnational practice?

How is waiting for the harvest to come into the church building inconsistent with being sent into the harvest?

According to Scripture, is it our responsibility to pray, to go, or to ignore the harvest?

Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 3

Matthew 28: 16-20

What does Go and make disciples imply?

Who does the go command apply to?

How important is my obedience in the making of disciples in others?

In what ways are you able to teach what you do not experience?

How does this impact your credibility?

How does incarnational living come into play with “go and make disciples?”

Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 4

Luke 10: 23-37

What is the responsibility of the Christian to respond beyond pity to action in another's life?

Which of the three demonstrated incarnational example?

What is incarnational living to you?

How can the church take its inside actions (worship), to outside living? What are ways this can happen?

Wednesday Small Group Study Guide: Week 5

John 17: 13-23

What are the implications to the church about being sent as Christ was sent by the Father?

Does this sent-ness have any bearing on the church leaving the comfort of its building to penetrate into the world through incarnational actions?

In what ways are we part of the ones who Jesus prayed for in John 17:20?

As Jesus was set apart for the *missio Dei* (God's mission in the world), how did He intend for us to be set apart to continue that mission?

Consider how our oneness with Christ and the Father links us to the sending nature of God?

What does John 17: ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Say to us about following God's plan for the *missio Dei* and unity in Christ?

Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 6

Luke 10: 22-29

What is the difference between knowing the law and doing the law?

Why do we justify our lack of action even when we know the right answer?

Who is our neighbor?

What does the implications of our neighbors who are not in church have on our understanding of authentic worship that occurs outside the building with our neighbor?

How can action with our neighbors be messy or uncomfortable?

What are the dangers of waiting until our neighbors talk like us, act like us, or are spiritual like us before we respond to them?

Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 7

Matthew 25: 31-46

As Jesus fulfilled the sending nature of the father he gave us an example of ministering to those

How can we identify those who are the “Least of these?”

How do we minister to Christ as we minister to others?

What are the implications of the church being the church outside the walls of the building?

How feasible is it to think that incarnational living to those on the fringes is ministering to Christ?

What can the above look like?

Wednesday Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 8

Luke 24: 44-53

Can you express to others a message of repentance and forgiveness if you not are experiencing it yourself?

Whose responsibility is it to carry forward the *missio Dei*?

In what ways do we operate apart from the power from on High?

How can we actively fulfill the sending nature of God if we never leave the inside of the building?

What are some ways we can fulfill the sending nature of God?

How does missional thinking connect with Romans 10:14? How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Qualitative Query Expanded

As mentioned in Chapter One, the three areas of participation through sermons, Bible Studies and Small Groups comprise components one and two of this project. The third component was designed to offer specific opportunities to embody incarnational practices; through individual and group participation in actual missional expressions. These practices were designed to involve individuals in practices that occur primarily outside the building, or inside the building to the world outside, without any expectation on the part of the recipients, except to be ministered to. Note that there were specific opportunities for the congregation to pray over those who choose to participate in the

experiential opportunities by gathering around them at the altar each week before they embarked as our local missionaries to their world and sphere of influence.

These expressions were manifest in the following ways through the experiential opportunities provided by this third element. The first opportunity occurred on the third Sunday, July 27th as the volunteers, who choose to participate, gathered at the altars in the church and were prayed for by those in attendance and commissioned as our local missionaries for that day. They were sent out from the service to go to a local laundromat to pay for random people's laundry and also provide for them detergent if desired. The purpose was not to evangelize directly, but to get involved life to life with people who do not go to church or at least were unable to go to church that day.

One rationale for this recognizes that many are at the laundromat due to work and only have that specific time and place to do their laundry. Our goal was simply to meet and love people where they live. These people may never find their way inside our building for worship. [An unwritten hope is that through these encounters a relationship could develop and eventually a discussion of Scripture could follow and possibly the first organic church in a laundromat could be born].

The next week August 3rd, those who participated in the experiential opportunity provided the fourth component of this study. They shared their stories and experiences of authentic worship that occurred through service outside of the building. This was called "being the church." [For those who chose to volunteer as participants in the experiential opportunities, they were given access to recorded sermons from that day along with the appropriate Bible study for that week, so they did not miss being a part of the whole project].

Component four of this project included the telling of the stories of individual experiences, with the hope of fostering a deeper entrenching of missional lifestyle as well as sparking a missional flame within those who did not or were not able to participate in that particular experiential opportunity of missional/incarnational living out into the world. Telling the story was not limited to those who went out on a particular Sunday but also included, as the project progressed, other stories that naturally arose where missional activities occurred. This same sending procedure was scheduled to occur on August 10th, August 24th and sometime during the week of August 31st.

On August 10th, there was to be a group of volunteers that were go to a family's house that was connected through a family that currently attends the CrossWalk church. The wife has multiple sclerosis and the husband's health is severely diminished. This family does not have a church that is ministering to them. Our purpose with this was to just love them and meet their needs around the house and in the yard. The rationale for this experiential opportunity was to simply rub shoulders with a family that is lost to the church and through our incarnational touches hopefully Christ would be shown to them. (Unfortunately days before our scheduled arrival due to illness in the family to be ministered too, this particular sending had to be modified to more individual opportunities and practices). Another opportunity, this time at the home of a Vietnam Veteran who had PTSD and is confined to a wheelchair due to a diabetic condition, was cancelled as well. (Unfortunately, this gentleman during the week prior to that Sunday fell at the VA hospital and severely broke his leg and was confined to the hospital while awaiting surgery. Due to his PTSD struggles, he was unwilling for us to step in and help in areas around his trailer without him being there). Those participants who chose to find

outside incarnational expression different to what was planned were given opportunity like the first group to return the following week and share their story of ministering while being the church. (A note of importance is that I had initiated previous conversations with both of these recipients prior to their illnesses to set up the missional encounters).

On August 24th the third experiential opportunity was scheduled. These participants were given the opportunity to work with a retired registered nurse by helping seniors and those with diabetic issues to have their feet washed and nails trimmed. This is a free service to the community for those who need it. The rationale for this experience is that it offered the participants an opportunity to give humbly of themselves to others with physical needs. Those who received the expression of the hands of Christ in the washing of feet simply would simply experience the love of the church. These experiential participants were to return the following week to share their stories. (Unfortunately the nurse who was heading this experiential opportunity was diagnosed with cancer that week and due to her appointments and upcoming surgery that ministry had to be temporarily suspended). The nurse however had the opportunity to offer ministry to several prior to this late development. I am thankful to report that this ministry was soon up and running again and the leader is a walking miracle of God's grace and healing.

On August 31st the final experiential opportunity was made available for this project. It was comprised of volunteers that participated during the following week by either working with St. Mary's Catholic Church in their food pantry and clothing store or another local compassionate ministry in the area called "Christ Net," a ministry to the homeless. The rationale of this opportunity provided partnership concepts which allowed us at Crosswalk to support a ministry outside of our church that is already established and

needs help from the ecumenical community. They returned the following week on September 7 to share their story.

Based on the surveys, sermons, daily Bible studies, small group studies, sending (experiential opportunities), along with prayers and telling of the stories; this project now has the data and analysis necessary for Chapter Four, where the findings will be examined and presented in greater detail for consideration and understanding of this project.

Chapter Four: Research Data and Results *Discovering a Missional Matrix that Makes Sense*

The quantitative data gathered comes primarily from the pre- and post-surveys that were administered on a voluntary basis. The average attendance of the church at the time of the surveys was fifty-three. The make-up and out of town mobility of the congregation from week to week, is reflected in their answers to the post-survey in which they reported, the number of sermons, Bible studies and small group sessions they had experienced. It is important to note that on any given Sunday at CrossWalk twenty-five to thirty percent of the regular attenders would be gone due to properties they own in northern Michigan or work. Much of this is related to the auto industry and union work. Depending on the week, it really is like having two congregations combined into one.

(Pre- and Post-Survey) Seeking A Missional Understanding

The purpose of this project was to, reimagine the missional culture of CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene through preaching, teaching, experiences and telling of the stories. The questions in these two surveys were designed to assess the degree of change. With each of the twenty two statements, in the eight weeks between the pre- and post-surveys, there was a definite and distinguishable shift towards a fuller missional understanding. Appendix C includes a summary of all responses to both surveys.

The surveys used a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.” Between pre- and post-surveys, the ratings on every question changed, with the smallest change being .23 (4% change) and the largest 2.10 (62% change) in the direction of a greater missional understanding.

Three questions appeared only in the post-survey to help ascertain the level of exposure of those who made the choice to participate in the surveys: (*See Appendix C*). The number of survey responses received, compared with weekly attendance averages, suggest that approximately half of the attendees chose to participate in the survey. Personal reports to me of Bible studies used significantly surpassed the number of surveys responded to. The private conversations to me personally support the observation that a categorical shift towards a clearer and fuller missional understanding did in fact occur.

The two statements that sought to ascertain the current level of involvement in missional practice, along with future intentions of the same appear in Appendix E. Responses reveal a deeper investment in the lives of others who are not family members and do not attend our church, as seen in the positive move to invest over two hours per week from 11.54% to 20.69% pre-survey to the post-survey. This analysis demonstrated an intent shift as well. The respondents to the post-survey overall indicated a purposed decision to invest in more incarnational practices outside the building and into the life of others who were not family or current attenders. In the pre-survey, 49% intended to invest two hours or more; in the post-survey this had increased to 67%. This change in missional attitude and purpose suggests that the project not only brought a shift in understanding, but also a practical move to implement as practice the missional concepts they had learned in real ways going forward.

Upon further analysis, statements one and two at the beginning of the survey showed the least amount of shift, which makes logical sense, since they specifically received the least amount of direct attention through the sermons, Bible studies and small

group discussions. Even though these statements received less attention, they still demonstrated the consistency of a shift towards a fuller and clearer missional understanding.

Quantitative / Qualitative Connection

The next point of comparison is the telling of the stories as they connect to components one and two (sermons, Bible studies and small group lessons). They provide a connectable link to the shift that was clearly seen in the surveys. This comparison is better seen through a deeper understanding of the sermons/Scriptures used in the weekly messages, Bible studies and small group lessons that served as a catalyst for better linking the individual's responsibility to the *missio Dei*.

Logic For The Scripture Choices

In Chapter Three, this project gave a rationale for each sermon. Now it is appropriate to express a deeper logic for the Scriptures chosen which includes the clear connect that each sermon had with the questions used in the surveys. The following use of the term sermon includes the Bible studies and small group discussions that utilize the same Scriptures.

The first sermon pressed the congregation beyond the rationale of connecting with God's mission in the world, to considering and connecting to the very heartbeat of the love of God both vertically and horizontally. Vertically connecting God to humanity and horizontally human to human, then ultimately finding a full expression when these two meet and are expressed in connected ways. The assumption is that as we better connect to God, we are compelled to connect to others and that the better we connect to others, the

deeper our connection to God should be. The counter effect occurs as we drift in either relationship.

The second sermon becomes more than rationalizing the sending nature of God to a personal and corporate connection through understanding the *missio Dei*. This is accomplished by willfully embodying the *missio Dei* through expressing the mission of God through living incarnationally out into the world. This focus moves the individual, along with the congregation beyond mental assent to a fuller bodily expression of the *missio Dei*.

The third sermon clearly moves the action from simply going into the world and to the inclusion of purpose in disciple making. This moving into the world is voluntary, but also stands as our being commissioned and commanded as expressed through Christ and falls clearly within the *missio Dei*. The disciple maker must embody a lifestyle that reflects the God who is sending by nature and the Christ who was sent to embody that same nature. This speaks directly to the owning of a missional connect beyond the global mission field to the individual as well as corporate sphere of influence, through the embodying of the believer as the hands and feet of Christ.

The fourth sermon demands a willful choice and ultimate action that includes moving from the sideline of life to direct involvement in the lives of others. This involvement is best served when the individual/congregation begins to move out beyond the comfort of the walls of the physical structure and into a risk taking adventure by investing directly into the life of those who may think, act or respond differently than we do. This would also include those who may look, smell and talk in ways that may make the individual uncomfortable.

The fifth sermon did much more than connect the individual and congregation to the sending nature of God. This sermon provided a natural bridge between partnership with the God who sends the Church. The title, *The Great Co-Mission*, as well as the content, expressed and pressed upon those attending the need to recognize the ever present power of God in fulfilling the *missio Dei* through the individual/church by means of the Holy Spirit. As with any co-mission it requires a partnership between the parties involved. In this case, it was CrossWalk willfully choosing to partner with God in the fulfillment of His mission in the world. It was clearly presented that God did not need us to fulfill the *missio Dei*, instead He offers to us the opportunity to participate and share in the building and expanding of the kingdom of heaven here and now.

The sixth sermon challenged the people who were present to move beyond acknowledging that they have a neighbor living next door to an expansion of the sphere of influence which includes their present and future relationships that God will develop. This expansion included an ownership of responsibility in carrying out the *missio Dei*. This sermon focused the attention on those who, for whatever reason, do not connect with the church and for whom, unless the individual within the church recognizes them as their neighbor, will probably never find their life informed by Christ inside the building. This hope of seeing these individuals actually inside the building begins with the fostering of an outside connection that develops relationships and hopefully, disciple making begins.

The seventh sermon challenged a cynical worldview as it relates to those who struggle in this life. It pressed the listeners' boundaries of thinking by suggesting that even if an individual may choose to misuse or abuse the compassion offered, whether in

presence or in possession, there still remains a responsibility of the body of Christ, both corporately and individually, to embody the *missio Dei*. It is only as we see others as people created in the image of God who need Christ ministered to them, that we will have truly embraced the very passion and heartbeat of God in the *missio Dei*.

The eighth sermon tied everything covered in the previous sermons together as both present experience and future expansion of the mission of God in the world. This was accomplished by offering the opportunity to do more than listen and agree by actually following through by living incarnationally. They were offered the opportunity to individually and corporately respond by physically signing on the dotted line of commitment with their response. They did this by stepping forward to pray at the altar as a witness to the whole church attending that day that they accepted their place within the *missio Dei*. This included a pledge to pursue the mission of God fully, at God's discretion and His choosing.

At the conclusion of the eighth sermon, thirteen people responded, which represents twenty five percent of the average attendance during the sermon series. Along with the public response, there were many personal expressions to me after the different sermons. These were verbal expressions that occurred in the foyer of the church, along with comments and questions regarding the Bibles studies each week and discussions that occurred within the weekly small group gatherings. In order for these to show a true connection with change in attitude and understanding, an exploration of the stories becomes necessary.

Key Themes Emerging From the Stories
(For the full personal Stories: See Appendix F)

Key themes that rise to the surface from the stories told verbally and in written form are described by the words that follow: action through personal initiative, deeper missional understanding, and purposed missional actions. Further themes that were expressed were: commitment beyond discouragement, eyes opened to others, partnerships through others, and achieving more through combined efforts. These and more are expressed best in the words of those who shared their stories. The following sections include a few examples of these missional changes.

Seeds Planted Produce Desires for Action

There were several missional expressions that happened beyond the opportunities presented as a part of this project. These expressions stem from attitudes that were changed as the series went forward. Quotes from individuals telling their stories are used throughout as examples of the themes expressed.

As eyes and hearts were changing, so too was the need to express Christ into the lives of others. One of these can be seen in the statement from S. B. who stated, “I went to St. Mary’s on my own. I thought to myself why should I wait for the Pastor.” S. B. knew the opportunity was approaching, but did not want to wait until it arrived before she began to experience obedience in the *missio Dei*. Another example of independent expressions can be seen through J. R. S. response to his neighbors who were having serious electrical problems. J. R. S. decided to spend several days rewiring much of this couple’s house and barn, so they would not have to try and do it themselves. J. R. S. made this statement that reflects a significant missional change of heart. “I have told

pastor Garry that I feel like my eyes have been opened and my heart has been challenged since he led us through the missional series for his project.” S. B. in reflecting on her various experiences while helping in a partnership effort through a local food bank and clothing store states: “My eyes have been opened to some of the needs of people beyond my own life.” Each of these personal expressions show a change of heart and an intention to go forward in missional living.

Shaping a Missional Hope from the Past and Present

As related in E.W.’s story, what she believes God wants to use for missional purposes in the future, began many years ago. It has been reawakened as an opportunity to help others invest missionally as expressions of Christ in the life of those within their world of influence. This sentiment may be linked with the intentional statements of K. S. and M. S., “One thing is for sure, we are not discouraged in our desire to show people the love of Christ, and will certainly seek out other opportunities to offer Him into our world.” It is apparent that missional practice will go forward into the future in ways that it did not before.

Partnership Concepts Caught and Expressed

Three examples of partnership concepts can be seen in the response of the corporate body and individuals of CrossWalk. Example one is found in the story of B. B. who solicited help from personal connections and through Facebook to help with a computer project for a young lady who was in her senior year of high school and in need of help to prepare for college. Mr. B. expresses it in these words, “I didn't know how to go about it until a few hours later, when the idea came to me to post her story with names removed on Facebook and ask for help. My daughter was extremely happy I was doing

this and she and my entire family helped me with this endeavor.” This experience not only impacted B. B., but his daughter and those who were able to help in this missional opportunity.

A second example comes from our Haiti water well project where the corporate body of CrossWalk was offered the opportunity to provide part of a well for a church in Haiti. Due to people catching the vision of partnership, a complete well has been purchased and is awaiting installation. There was participation from a wide range of people within the church which seems to indicate that individuals involved in various levels of engagement at CrossWalk are buying into missional living, even if only at a very basic level.

Another example of a missional partnership with an outside group utilizing the physical space of the church building is the narcotics anonymous group mentioned earlier in the project. This partnership is reflected upon in the appendices. In this case, we were approached about the use of our building for a meeting place. The idea was presented and discussed at a board meeting and the connection was made. As a result, a new relationship has been fostered and at least one life is being changed through our influence.

Example three was expressed a month and a half after the project was completed where B. D. felt an urging to buy coats for adults and children while taking advantage of a Black Friday sale locally. She invited her friends and associates to join her in this project. The coats were purchased and given to the Salvation Army with the understanding that they would not be sold, but given to those who needed them. A lasting

impact can be seen in the words B. D. expresses. “I want to say ‘Thank you God for giving me a spirit to listen and obey.’ God not only blesses those we help, but we too receive a blessing from God when we listen and obey him.”

The stories referenced above serve as examples of the impact that occurred by participation in the missional projects. There were many other informal expressions shared one on one with me in the hallways and by phone. The data is only reflective of the deeper experiences and commitments of the people of CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene to embody a missional lifestyle that takes the church outside of the building and lives Christ in the world.

Benefits, Beyond the Plans

Although some of the experiential opportunities, did not come to fruition as planned because of unforeseeable circumstances (visiting the couple with MS and the veteran with PTSD), each fulfilled opportunity allowed the people to consider inspirational ways to connect and ultimately act on their own. Participants found ways to express their change in thinking in unscripted incarnational opportunities on their own. Some of these stories (resourcing the foster child system, winter coats and gloves drive, volunteering at a local food bank and clothing store, etc.), were told in the public worship settings as a part of the service, while others were reported directly in private conversation. These stories help to express a clear and distinguishable shift in understanding of the *missio Dei* that occurred in the time between the pre-survey to the post-survey.

On a personal note as it is germane to this study; I as the leader of this project, became ill during my presentation of the last small group study and discussion. Fortunately, I was able to complete the study before going to the emergency room. The result of this illness was the discovery and removal of a brain tumor. It required an extensive hospital stay along with a continuing recovery and long term treatment that will last years beyond this project. An interesting connection as a result of this experience is that this seeming interruption has helped provide a bridge for the people to the world, as they have acted quite literally as the hands and feet of Christ to me. This has proven to be a great reiteration of the missional journey we have been on, as well as an eye opener to the needs of others along with creative opportunities to respond. My unplanned journey along with the unexpected surgery of an Associate Pastor at CrossWalk, even furthered the realization of a hurting and needy world outside the door of the building while presenting more opportunities to connect the dots of missional thinking and expressions. More specifically in their response to my illness, I have received reports of people from CrossWalk looking differently at their neighbors, along with ways in which they can become invested in their lives. This investment took on many forms including: intentional checking-in on them, physically doing repairs at their homes, doing errands for them or driving them to appointments and the list goes on. The reports of these expressions were still coming in at the time of this writing. This represents unmeasurable qualitative shifts in understandings that leads towards deeper missional thinking and actions within the *missio Dei*.

The stories personally offered in this project belong to those participants who felt comfortable and volunteered their experiences. It should be noted that several of these

stories were also shared in the public venue of a service. They stand as their personal account and represent their own, unscripted sharing of their journey, specifically over the eight week sermon series. Each story is voluntary and have received few if any editorial changes. Those who contributed by sharing their story did so with full understanding that they would potentially end up as a written part of this project. To that point, nothing found within this project is hidden from any of the participants from their own point of participation.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Does Missional Make Sense and any Difference?

The purpose of this project was simple: to identify the missional culture of CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene and then to attempt to measure any shift that would occur after eight weeks of missionally focused sermons, Bible studies and small group discussions. These three activities comprised components one and two of this project and were inextricably linked with personal and corporate opportunities to participate through experiential expression in missionally framed service projects. Some of those who participated in missional projects also publicly shared their stories of expressional experience, as well as how their thoughts were or were not changing regarding incarnational practice as lifestyle. Participation and sharing of experiences provided components three and four of this project. The congregation was continually encouraged to explore personal ways to begin expressing incarnational lifestyle on their own and to give account of their journey by telling their story. Corporate prayer was offered repeatedly as a means of keeping the focus on our need for God's blessings and help for us in pursuit of His sending nature as our way of practice.

Two questions and their answers help to provide a better understanding for the summary and conclusion arrived at in this project. 1) Did this project as it relates to a missional study for CrossWalk Community make sense?; And, 2) did it make any difference? Not only did a missional study make sense by helping this congregation understand itself and how it views the *missio Dei*, but this study definitely made a difference in this local community by sparking incarnational expression outward. Thus, in the opinion of this author, it was worth the pursuit both corporately and individually.

This initial summary is verified from all the data gathered, and confirmed through the telling of the stories.

Long before this study occurred there were seeds of missional concepts planted within the local body of CrossWalk Community. Some of the stories find their beginning from those exposures, but have grown significantly and distinctly through the progression of this project. In order to arrive at a satisfactory analysis of all the data, it is critically important to understand that the survey data and the experiential data as they stand side by side, are not in competition, rather they are complementary. From the shortest telling of the story, to the longest presentation; from the least dramatic and simple presentation to the most dramatic and better spoken, each served a purpose for understanding that the shifts towards missional understanding have taken place.

The following observations can be gleaned from the various experiential opportunities, both planned and spontaneous, that occurred: These changes occurred in the lives of some who participated in the missional opportunities. This was most notably a change in understanding of the *missio Dei* and with individual's intentions to continue with missional expressions. This is evidenced by the fact that there were over 20 different participants who expressed in writing or by verbal communications that their understanding of missional not only changed, but as a result, they became involved in living missionally outside the walls of the building. We now turn our attention to six conclusions based on the missional stories.

Conclusions Drawn From the Missional Stories

First, it is important to attempt to show Christ to others, while also recognizing that the results belong to God. To better understand this, one has to look at willingness vs.

results. If it is all about results, the church will be chained to the consumeristic mindset, finding themselves paralyzed by inaction due to no guarantee of return. It must always be about showing Christ incarnationally and leaving the results to God. Or put another way, missional living shows that what is needed is investing Christ through your life into the life of another, without any guarantees of return. It becomes about obedience as opposed to “what I get” or “what the church gets out of it.” This is quite literally being the hands and feet of Christ in your world and leaving it to God’s discretion on how to use your missional willingness.

Second, the responsibility remains to live incarnationally, regardless of reception or outcome, into the lives of others. The strongest way to express this is through one word: *mandate*. It is non-optional if one is going to be obedient to Scripture. Taken a step further, there are no excuses for ignoring the biblical mandate to embrace being the sent ones. There are no exemptions to living missionally as the hands and feet of Christ into the world right where God has placed you. It reflects an availability and submission to God’s discretion with absolutely no guarantees of visible results. This is a point of faith in abandonment to God’s plan over our plan.

Third, our responsibility to connect, although seen corporately, may end up being expressed in different ways, yet still remains viable and marked by obedience. For this conclusion to be understood, the individual has to look in the mirror of their life and not at others. What this means is that it is best not to wait on others before you begin your own life of living missionally. A key to understanding and embracing this missional concept happens when we discover the *missio Dei* as being about obedience and not

obligation. This is clearly modeled to us through the example of Christ and the early church and needs to become the natural mantra of the church today.

Fourth, there is no single standard from which missional expression has to be made.

God does not build His kingdom from an assembly line. He does not build fear of failure into His disciples. He challenges us to watch and see what He can do with what we think cannot be done through us. Ultimately, we must trust that He can and will do missional expressions through us. Two key words to understanding and actualizing this are availability and obedience. Both are absolutely necessary for us to fulfill the *missio Dei*. Remembering that God is very creative with what He does and will not be put in a box, frees us to not allow our expectations to find expression in our abilities, but rather to allow God full discretion to use your life as He sees fit.

Fifth, hearts must be opened to look for other ways to engage in missional

expressions, not just the ones prescribed. From this conclusion the following steps reflect the lessons we have learned from this journey. To continue along the missional reimagining, we will have to seek often for new and creative ways to incarnationally live Christ out into our world and sphere of influence. We have to continually be willing to allow God to set the terms and boundaries in our continued missional journey. This project demonstrated clearly that God works best when we submit our plan to His discretion.

Sixth, partnerships may arise both inside and outside the walls of the church, even if

they do not profess any Christian connection. This conclusion from the stories has left me and the church with new thoughts about partnering with others, even if they are not expressly Christian. We now see that being missional is an inside-out proposition where

we no longer focus solely on attracting people in, so we can get credit for building the kingdom of heaven, but instead being missional is coming alongside others who are doing good work and encouraging them. One way this is expressed is by volunteering and collecting for St. Mary's Church which already has a food pantry and clothing store established. The opposite works as well with an outside-in approach to missional. For instance, we have an N/A (narcotics anonymous) group that we have opened our church up to for their Saturday evening meetings. The need arose because there were currently no groups meeting in our area on the weekends. They approached us about using our building for a meeting place. As a result, we now have another person attending the church whose life is being changed by the gospel. Finally, incarnational connection to the *missio Dei* works best. Incarnational connection is not just doing stuff, it is purposed living Christ out into the world.

There are more conclusions that can be drawn from the personal expressions that move beyond the sermons, Bible studies, and small group discussions. These are drawn from the personal stories and shape a good measuring model of certain changes in missional understandings and practices.

It is clear that the eight-week period was inadequate, specifically to the point where the scripted experiential opportunities actually held the people back who were passionate about serving. Fortunately, they chose to embrace the concepts of incarnational living and found ways to express experiential actions on their own. The inadequacy was exasperated due in part to my unforeseen illness which occurred immediately at the conclusion of this project and also the unexpected surgery and recovery of my unpaid associate who was orchestrating one of the experiential

opportunity of our toenail trimming ministry which serves our outside community inside the walls of the church.

As a result of the response to the whole project, the people of CrossWalk found ways to compensate for these lost opportunities. A very clear observation that arises out of the impromptu stories that were shared with me personally is that the people of CrossWalk continued in self-directed opportunities of experiential expressions on their own. Several of these stories have been referenced in previous chapters. These stories of connection to a missional focus are still surfacing and dreams of possible future expressions are brought forward almost weekly.

From the data presented in Chapter Four, the conclusions now being presented have indeed become fact. Additionally, continued missional expressions by individuals and congregation alike are being demonstrated as of this. As alluded to earlier, several people who reported to me individually and at various times about how their lives had been impacted, are on their own finding ways to express missional actions to family, friends and community, thus suggesting that understandings and shifts have occurred.

From the initial proposal of this project, it was recognized that the attempt to measure and shift the missional culture within CrossWalk would be starting point. This understanding certainly remains true today. One clear observation is that the project did all of the above and much more. The shift that has occurred surpassed personal expectations and still continues today. Care must now be given to foster the continuation that is occurring by fanning this flame started among those whose lives were deeply moved by connection, through incarnational interaction, in the lives of people outside the building.

Consumeristic / Missional Tension

Some attendees were deeply entrenched in a consumerism mindset and though they gave intellectual assent to the validity of a Scriptural mandate to embody the sending nature of God, no significant transformation of heart has occurred. I now offer these two examples of entrenched consumerism that stands in juxtaposition to missional thinking and became clearer as this journey continued. These stories help to demonstrate that not everyone was moved by the messages, Bible studies, small groups, experiential opportunities and shared stories.

Example 1: There was a family that stopped attending the church approximately eight years ago due to a desire to attend a church that had a larger youth group. The irony was that our youth group that they worked with was averaging around fifteen at the time. They stated clearly at the time that I met with them that it was not the church itself, nor me, nor the direction we were going as a group, it was simply that they wanted their teen children to have the advantage of a larger youth group with more activities in which to participate. My understanding of their journey was that they never found a place that met their perceived desire, so they drifted for many years. They contacted me about two weeks prior to the beginning of this project to enquire if they would be welcome to visit and possibly begin attending again. I assured them that they would be more than welcomed. When they returned, it was with passion, but before the end of the series, they started to drift again. I enquired of them as to what was going on? They informed me that although they felt more than welcomed and truly enjoyed the missional focus, that musically the church did not meet their preference and desire. During the same conversation they said they liked the music and the songs we sang, but it was not the way

they wanted it. My assessment is that although they know in their head what they should be doing, they still are unable to get past the consumer mindset that pervades their hearts. (Ironically the wife forwarded an email from her married daughter who was a teen when they left the first time, that although they have attended many churches, she still missed the connection that she had with ours). I am afraid that the pattern of consumerism was passed on to their children as well.

Example 2: After the series was completed, a younger couple decided to leave our church to attend a larger church for the purpose of providing them more opportunity to fellowship with couples their own age. The husband and I have had extensive discussions about the direction of the church along missional lines, especially over the last year and those discussions always included full support and agreement. (A significant insight as to the depth of influence that a consumeristic mindset and control has on the individual can be seen in this fact: This person served on my in-parish accountability group that met several times throughout this project. He was fully affirming of the direction that it was taking and commented several times about his approval and excitement).

One observation is that during the five years that they have been a part of this church, they never availed themselves of the opportunity to get involved with couples who were close to their age. Instead, they always found excuse as to why they were too busy to connect. During their time at CrossWalk, they neither brought with them to church any couples their age, nor fostered the building up of couples their age who currently attended. Although I love them dearly and still have a good relationship with them, I have to conclude that they fit what I would consider a consumer mindset that plagues the church, especially the smaller church. Again, it becomes about what is in it

for me, even when their head tells them to foster a missional/incarnational lifestyle, their heart desire is for it to be given to them without investing in it first. The church they have chosen to attend, is almost twenty miles away, so the chances of them truly connecting personally, or connecting others to their new church are slim to none, as time is always an issue with them.

Within the scope of this project, I did not take into consideration a plan or method to deal specifically with those who chose the way of consumerism. It was the intent and purpose of this project to offer an opportunity towards a shift in missional thinking with a reliance upon the Holy Spirit to change the heart. An assumption was that anything short of Spirit-led transformation would ultimately lead to an unhealthy understanding of the sending nature of God and a deficiency of a missional heartbeat, patterned after the *missio Dei*.

As the author and originator of this project, I still hold to the assumption that a consumer mindset is the antithesis of the missional example that we see in Scripture and the example of Christ in fulfilling the *missio Dei*. Going forward, intentional steps have to be provided and fostered to aid CrossWalk Community in finding further identities and expressions of incarnational investments through intentional disciple making outside the building. This will not be accomplished simply by filling the pews on Sunday, or through a church growth strategy, but rather through the intentional building of relationships and through time and investment as an embodiment of the hands and feet of Jesus in our world of influence.

The assumptions that have been set forth are the result of this research endeavor and belong solely to the originator of this project. The conclusions that will be drawn in

the furtherance of this chapter are not seen as authoritative, but rather subjectively based on what can be seen by myself as logical conclusions represented by the process and data gathered from this project. These conclusions, although repeatable through similar projects, would be as unique to a different congregation as a finger-print is to the individual. There are many variables that certainly could impact the outcome of the same project applied to another church. The common statement; “everything rises and falls on leadership,” would certainly apply to this project due to the fact that most if not all of the weight has to fall on the level of commitment of the leader(s) to the implementation, expressions and personal belief in the foundational basis that elicits a pursuit of missional lifestyle in the first place. This is not a program to be enjoined, rather it is a deep belief in a scriptural way that understands the *missio Dei* as the mission of God in the world, where the sending God, now sends the church to carry on the mission started and revealed in Christ.

Final Conclusions

As stated earlier in this project, my recognition that deep disciples were not being produced through the methods of the prevalent Church Growth Movement as well as my dissatisfaction with the lack of and level of disciples being reproduced, helped to shape the desire to pursue a missional line of thinking. If asked after going through this process whether or not this project would be worth doing again? The answer would be a resounding “YES!” A conclusion of this researcher is that this was the right pursuit, and regardless of the long term outcome for CrossWalk, it was not only good and appropriate, but also consistent with the biblical pattern established by Christ as the sent One, which

has now been passed on to us as a Christian Community who shares a commitment to the scriptural mandate to continue on in the pursuit of the *missio Dei*.

A further conclusion that I am willing to make as a result of this project is that it is more difficult for a smaller church to pursue in a wholesale way a missional focus. For the smaller church, especially the ones that have buildings that were secured during better times, there remains the very difficult pressure of constant and immediate financial stress that too easily misdirects the attention. What is the old adage? “The squeaky wheel get the grease.” What this means for this project, and the possibility of its future expansion, is that when the immediate financial or attendance pressures are too great they often get in the way of a pure missional focus and expression. This leads me to conclude that when churches, whether large, intermediate or small reach this point of the journey must take great care to find a healthy balance in missional focus and attractional opportunities. In seeking this balance, intentionality must be in place to offer opportunities to explore and pursue a more missional way of life among the attendees and members, while at the same time providing ample “bringing” and “including” opportunities within the walls of the church.

For CrossWalk it has become apparent that it cannot practice an either/or approach to the Church Growth model or missional model; rather there needs to be a healthy blending and balancing of both. Intentional steps that help to move away from consumerism as the mode of operation of a church or individual, and toward an incarnational lifestyle, must remain the pursuit and focus. The progression from sermons about God’s purpose and sending nature to a continuing mandate for the church as a personal and corporate responsibility to live incarnationally into the world must

emphasize that the mandate belongs to the local church and the Church Universal alike. It is only with intentional pursuit that an ultimate shift and new way of life will take place. It is never a program that transforms the church, but the infilling again by the Holy Spirit.

Sharing the story of missional experiences and expressions are nothing new, but too often get lost in the busyness of ministry and worship service scheduling. With that being said, a further conclusion arises that should be considered in the planning of frequent and regular telling of the story, (much like the older testimony times), but with more intentionality and missional purpose. The assumption and conclusion drawn is that it would be very beneficial to any church that wishes to move from a consumer-based way of life to a missionally-driven one. In order to do so, there must be intentional inclusion of the telling of the missional stories while providing frequent biblical examples of the sending nature of God through incarnational practices as well. Adding to the biblical example there should also be ample opportunities for practice through individual and corporate expressions.

What I Have Learned / Including Personal Impact

One of the most significant things that I discovered is that eight weeks was not adequate in allowing for the unexpected bumps in the road. It left too little room for improvisation and adaptation. For this reason, I will be revisiting the missional series by adding four additional sermons that will occur following Easter Sunday. They will begin April 12 and run through May 3rd. Scripting is needed, but ample opportunity and room for the naturally arising missional expression was needed as well. Although God certainly covered for this deficiency, or to state another way, the over planning and control, it could have been avoided and, at least in my thought, would have better served the church.

If I were given the opportunity to do this again, I would plan a similar course, but allow more room for the Holy Spirit to move through the people off script. For CrossWalk these off script expressions are where I believe the reimagining was most effectively embraced.

It is my personal opinion that anyone who truly engages the Scriptures to seek an understanding of God's mission in the world, will be greatly impacted to respond, or move further away. My own experience is that of response. I cannot look passively at being a disciple and follow Christ on the sidelines. I have been challenged to own the *missio Dei* as a sent one, regardless of what anyone else would do with it. Part of this challenge is to come alongside some of the younger pastors and breathe missional thinking under their wings to encourage them in their youth to make this an integral part of their thinking and ministry.

I am thankful that God has used this journey to awaken in me a return to the example that Christ gave through his obedience to the mission of the Father as the sent one. Even though I wish this would have been opened to me years ago when I was younger, I see it as my opportunity now to help shape the lives of this congregation and others in missional action and not just thought. To me this is manifesting as a ministry renewal in my life that will directly impact the CrossWalk Community Church.

The best way I can describe the difference is as I mentioned earlier, for most of my thirty five plus years of pastoral ministry I have been shaped and influenced by the "attractional/church growth model of ministry." It is refreshing and reinvigorating to finally find expression for what I have felt was lacking in my ministry and honestly have experienced great frustration because of it for many years. I believe this new (renewed)

journey will help me personally in faithfully fulfilling God's ministry here at CrossWalk, by both living as a disciple and more effectively making disciples through the example of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The beauty of this is that I get to share and grow together with this local congregation because of their embracing the missional reimagining at CrossWalk.

Next Steps For CrossWalk

As CrossWalk continues the reimagining that has begun, we are exploring and utilizing several concepts learned through this journey to date. We have a new Children's church leader, who has been impacted by this process, and has reported back that she's using the missional and incarnational ideas with the children under her care. She is developing opportunities for the children to express Christ outward towards others through acts of compassion and sharing what they are learning.

This same worker, led a community clothes swap at our church. This is where you bring clothes in and then take whatever you want with the express intent that it not be resold. This opportunity was completely her idea and according to her came about as a result of this project. The clothes swap was met with such enthusiasm that we will have it again during the summer. If that goes as well as the first, it will probably become a regular part of our plans.

We are exploring the possibility of hosting an outdoor movie night, where we will offer family friendly and morally based movies in our parking lot. By the fall we hope to be able to move it indoors. (This expression can be seen as both attractational as well as missional). We will offer refreshments as a part of this community offering.

We are forming a committee that will function as a missional resource for the people and will serve to help us remember the journey that CrossWalk is on. They will be the go to people, who will receive and offer ideas for missional expressions. They will also help research new material and examples of others who are in the journey of the *missio Dei*. One of the immediate tasks of this committee will be to begin a dialogue with the Middle School across the street and with an Elementary School that is around the corner, about ways we can partner with them to help. This could include after school tutoring, emergency response to crisis within a family, and school supplies as well as other opportunities that arise from this continued dialogue. These are only a part of the exploration possibilities that will be given to this committee.

As mentioned, the American Sign Language (ASL) Class is going well and will probably be expanded to include a series one and two. Series one for beginners and series two (advanced) for those who wish to refresh and further what they have already learned. This class is currently being utilized by a student in one of our local colleges who is studying to be a Social Worker, a First Responder/Fireman, a Flight attendant and various other fields of endeavor. This class is averaging 12 people currently.

As we have moved towards Easter, I have been able to revisit CrossWalk's missional journey by reminding in prayer, and naturally sharing from the sermons that it is not a program, but rather a living understanding of responsibility. I also plan as mentioned previously, following Easter to expand the missional series by four more sermons that were not an original part of this project. This will be four missionally focused sermons shaped to help us revisit what God has started in this church. From there

I will make it an annual series that reconnects us to the missional journey of being the sent ones.

Intentionally telling the stories is and will continue to be a regular part of our worship service expression. This will also include spontaneous sharing of the stories that happen week to week. My intention with this is to be purposed in the sharing of the missional journey of the people in hopes of awakening the dreams and possibilities of those listening to actively engage in missional practice. These stories will be shared personally by the people, to the people. (This comes out of the direct experience that worked during the project).

There will be quarterly missional opportunities offered to the people to foster a remembrance of responsibility to the missio Dei, while encouraging the people to find individual opportunities to be involved in the missional expression of CrossWalk

Community. These will include:

1. RAK's (Random Acts of Kindness) week.
2. Season of Advent: sharing by caring.
3. Season of Lent: Incarnational giving of self through compassion, and investment (local partnerships).
4. Help a neighbor for no reason week.

These quarterly opportunities will begin this summer and become a significant part of our yearly planning.

Recommendations For Those Who Would Follow

Following are eleven recommendations I would give to any church or pastor who seeks to embrace a missional journey and reimagining for their life and church:

1. See missional as a scriptural mandate. I would encourage you to embrace and pursue it.

2. Do not pursue until you have thoroughly prayed about it and have concluded that this is the absolute direction you and your church are called to follow.
3. Begin using missional language long before you formally present it to others.
4. Seek and gain leadership agreement to this course of ministry. (It will challenge local traditions and “personal theologies”).
5. Read and expose yourself to as much current missional writings and examples as possible before beginning. (A new recommendations that I am currently reading is, Barrett et al. *Treasure in Clay Jars*). Along with these books, there is a relevant article/interview with Alan Hirsch (*Seeding A Missional Church Movement*) the Grace and Peace magazine pp.16-21, Winter 2015. Full information is provided in the bibliography.
6. Research the method that you are to take in pursuing the missional journey.
7. Only after gaining support from staff, leadership (Church Board) and assurance that this is where God is leading you; Jump in and abandon yourself to God and the journey.
8. Purpose from the beginning to remain flexible and adaptable.
9. Do not make it about you, instead let the power found in the stories that naturally form surface and become the thrust of the journey.
10. Allow a minimum of 12 weeks including: 12 missional sermons, Bible studies and small group discussions comprise the initial reimagining.
11. Commit to the life long journey of missional living and ministry.

As one who is convinced that this is a scriptural mandate, I would recommend this course of action for the individual even if it is not possible to lead the church in this direction. Always remember that through example a spark and eventual flame can occur. An important reminder is that the leader and leadership must take time to exegete the congregation to determine its trust level and readiness. In my case, I have been here for 17 years and I have built enough trust to risk spending the capital based on that trust and move this congregation forward in the missional journey. From my perspective this could

not have happened within the first five years, as I had to deal with all the rancor from those who were controlling the church and left no room for those outside the church unless they jumped through all the hoops to gain access to the inner circle. Once the controlling forces were out of the picture, it would have been very feasible and the trust was there. The problem was that I did not have the understanding burning in my own heart at that time, nor the resources and understanding that I have today. I have to trust that the perceived loss of those interim years were my years of preparation for today.

So my advice to anyone who would seek this path is found in the words “Carpe Diem,” Seize the Day. The time is now so don’t wait to prepare regardless of congregational readiness. Congregational readiness is God’s responsibility, you are only a vessel that God will use so make sure you are ready when that time comes.

Personal Assertion

It is the belief of this presenter, that after ample exegesis and study of a local congregation and with careful adaptation, this study could benefit local churches from a wide variety of backgrounds, social variations and contexts. Found within this project are foundational biblical principles of missional lifestyle and pursuits that can and should be followed. This being the case, the possibility of deeper discipleship and more effective disciple making can occur. Only after considerable prayer and following the directives of the Holy Spirit should this pursuit be followed, simply because it pushes against the boundaries of tradition but more profoundly strikes at the very soul in following Christ’s example, thus it is not a moment in time, but a movement in life and lifestyle for the kingdom and eternity and must therefore be embodied for the journey going forward.

Appendix A

The Great Commandment

(Matthew 22:34-40)

July 13, 2014

Rationale: We cannot truly embrace God’s mission without fully loving him (heart, soul, and mind) and certainly cannot love our neighbor within the *missio Dei* if we do not authentically love God.

Matthew 22: ³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

When searching to look for God and the way he expresses love through His sending nature one soon discovers there are two definite directions of love that connect us with God sending nature. These two directions have to be explored before we can embody the missional purpose for which Christ was sent. This sending nature of God points towards the reconciliation of a lost people into a love relationship with God. Let’s take a moment and explore, two directions of love that connect us to God’s sending nature. For this morning, we will journey in discovering the two directions of love that connect us to God sending nature.

Discovering the two directions of love that connect us to God's sending nature:

The first of these two directions deal with the up-and-down or vertical dimension of God's love. This **love vertically upward to God** and downward to us. In order for our human relationships to be healthy our God relationship has to be healthy. What this means is that our love to God is holistic which will include external relationships and even how we view them and how we respond to them.

Our love to God is holistic. What is a holistic love towards God? Jesus answers this himself in response to the Pharisee's question of which is the greatest commandment? In verse 37 and 38, "Jesus replies love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind this is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it love your neighbor as yourself."

Here we see the first direction very distinctly expressed through the words of Christ where we are to, **love the Lord your God with all.** For us to be successful in a spiritual journey; it requires a complete love towards God. This vertical dimension will impact every horizontal connection we have. This love was never intended to be a partial expression, as you can see it deals with all the heart, all the soul and all the mind. Christ sets this as the highest standard of love towards God. If one looks back at the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 6:⁴" Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your

strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress

them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” (known as the Shema), the children of Israel were given the same command and this became a part of their regular daily prayers. Not only do we see a monotheistic view of God, but we also see the vertical dimension of love. Going back to the Matthew chapter 22 verses 39 and 40 distinctly point out the second dimension of a holistic love for God. This dimension requires love for others and connects it as being like the first. It is fair to say that if we do not love others we do not truly love God. Likewise if we do not love God we cannot holistically love others.

The sending nature of God that we clearly see embodied in the incarnation of Christ gives a great example of what it means to love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength and your neighbor as yourself. Jesus points the way as the one sent by the father and all the while leaving us a great example to follow. Following Christ’s example leads us directly into the sending nature of God. Too many people see it as optional but in truth this becomes what we called in the title today the great commandment. Anyone can go, but unless we go with a rightly connected vertical dimension of love with God we cannot truly embody the purpose of his sending nature. Again it’s fair to say that our love to God is tied to our love for others. This leads us to the second dimension which is the love horizontally towards our neighbor.

Love horizontally toward our neighbor.

I am always amazed at how the thinking of people in this generation can get so twisted. There is a great disconnect with how one demonstrates their love towards God in actions and behaviors and how they love others. What I mean by this is that there is too often a great disconnect between what we say and what we do in regards to loving God through actions that are consistent and biblical thus prompting us to love our neighbor. This raises the question, if our love for God is twisted, how can we truly love our neighbor?

If our love for God is twisted, how can we truly love our neighbor?

If we claim to love God we have to leave our love for the world behind. If we claim to love God we have to be willing to love those around us. Even if they look different, act different, talk different, and smell different. We do not cherry pick our neighbors. Our vertical love for God teaches us to trust that he will bring us neighbors that will offer us the opportunity to live out His sending nature that we first see in Christ. This being said, there comes a responsibility on our part to live the love of God horizontally people to people. The only way this can happen we have to understand that, to love our neighbor, we have to connect with our neighbor.

To love our neighbor, we have to connect with our neighbor.

Too many people today want to live the love of God to others by proxy. What I mean by this is that they don't want to get dirty and messy themselves by living shoulder to shoulder and life to life with someone else. To love our neighbor authentically we have to be willing to invest our lives into theirs. We will call this living incarnation, where we

embody the practices and principles that we see in the life of Christ lived openly in front of the disciples. Christ routinely crossed boundary lines and rubbed shoulders in the lives of those that the church deemed out of bounds. Jesus shared meals with all things sinners, tax collectors and those outside the religious establishment. Jesus was even willing to have negative labels placed on his name and reputation in order to reach and minister to those that were lost. Jesus had a clear picture of the sending nature of the father that definitely included the vertical and horizontal connections to the sending nature of the father. How does this impact us today at CrossWalk Community? In order for us to become a missional community we have to connect that love with our responsibility to the example of Christ to the sending nature of the father. It is not enough to expect others to do it. We have to embrace as our own the great command that Jesus teaches about in our passage for today. Although it may be for others our responsibility to the Scripture tells us that it is absolutely for us today.

This connected love can be seen in the very name of our Church CrossWalk. When this name was chosen it identified the cross in its vertical dimension of love as well as its horizontal dimension of love. It is not simply making the sign of the cross but actually living the cross in our love relationships both to God and to others. We believe that this embodies the very sending nature of God that is seen all throughout Scripture as well as time. Now is the time to discover the connected love for CrossWalk.

Connected Love (CrossWalk)

Great value and responsibility has to be placed on our responsibility as Christ followers to live out our love connect with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit directly into the

world. We understand that there is no separating our lives in Christ from the cross He bore and there is certainly no power to effectively share that love with a hurt and lost people (world) without the power of the Holy Spirit. These understandings connect us directly with the sending nature of the Father, who now is sending us, His church to further the *missio Dei* or His mission in the world. To better understand this connect we need to grasp that the better connected our love for God, the better connected our love for our neighbors will be.

The better connected our love for God, the better connected our love for our neighbor.

This returns us to the rationale that was stated in the very beginning of this message. The health of our love for God will impact the health of our love for our neighbors. If your love for God is twisted and not grounded in God's word it will have impact on the effectiveness and durability to truly love others. The other side of that equation is also true, the better connected our love for our neighbor, the better connected our love for God will be.

Vice versa: the better connected our love for our neighbor, the better connected our love for God.

I am convinced that if we do not love our neighbors we force a contradiction when we try to love God. According to our Scripture for today they work in tandem with each other, this one could say by loving God, we can and must love others and by loving others, we can and must love God.

In Conclusion:

Reasonably it would seem incompatible to say I love God and not be compelled to love others. It would also seem incompatible to say I authentically love others and not love God. This love is holistic which includes all of our life physically, emotionally, spiritually, and eternally. My personal experience in dealing with church and people over 34+ years consistently sees people who want to say they love God but routinely hold ill will or contempt towards their neighbors. I routinely see people who claim to love God but live lives that look nothing like a biblically based and principle centered living that was modeled by Jesus Christ. To authentically love God we have to base our lives on God's Holy Word. In the same fashion to love others must be done through biblically based living.

Application Questions:

How is your vertical relationship with God?

Are you living in a way that demonstrates a right relationship based on the Scriptures?

How is your horizontal relationship people to people?

The Great Commandment

(Matthew 22:34-40)

July 13, 2014

Rationale: We cannot truly embrace God's mission without fully loving him (heart, soul, and mind) and certainly cannot love our neighbor within the *missio Dei* if we do not authentically love God.

Matthew 22: ³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Discovering the two directions of love that connect us to God's sending nature.

Love _____ upward to God.

Our love to God is _____.

Our love to God is _____ to our love for others.

Love _____ toward our neighbor.

If our love for God is _____, how can we truly love our neighbor?

To love our _____, we have to connect with our neighbor.

_____ **Love. (CrossWalk)**

The better _____ our love for God, the better connected our love for our neighbor.

Vice versa: the better connected our love for our _____, the better connected our love for God.

Application Questions:

How is your vertical _____ with God?

Are you _____ in a way that demonstrates a right relationship based on the Scriptures?

How is your horizontal relationship _____ to people?

Responsibly Sent Through Prayer

(Luke 10: 1-3)

July 20, 2014

Rationale: Not asking God to send other workers, rather in the spirit of the sending nature of God, ask to be and embrace our own sentness in response to the *missio Dei*.

Luke 10: ¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Two things need to be established in our hearts and minds before we can go forward. 1) The passage above is still relevant today. 2) It is our place to embody the sent out worker by God today as well. If we can get these two things settled as a reality for us in the understanding and fulfilling of the mission of God in the world, then we are positioned to learn together about the harvest and the sending nature of God.

Learning Together About The Harvest And The Sending Nature Of God:

Here is our approach to the harvest. The Father sent the Son, The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to fill the early church and send it out into the world to further carry on the mission of God in the world. This same Spirit sends us into the world today. This understanding can be drawn from Christ’s pray in John 17 verses 17 through 21.

“¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have

sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Not only is the sending nature of the Father expected to continue today, but we also have been prayed for by Christ Himself as the sent one now sending us. As we connect with this reality of sentness, we must understand that the harvest is plentiful.

The Harvest is plentiful

As summer moves forward we become more and more aware of the harvest. In our small postage stamp or victory Gardens we are beginning to harvest things like carrots tomatoes squash etc. just as in life there is a season of harvest so in the spiritual arena there is a harvest. Jesus Christ points out that there is no lack of harvest for the church what there is a lack of are those who are willing to participate in God’s spiritual harvest of the world. In fact in verse two Jesus told them “the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” The reality of scarcity of workers is still real today.

The Workers are scarce

As Jesus was dealing with his disciples he presents us with an interesting idea; as we are being invited to participate in the harvest Jesus is sending us out ahead in similar ways as John the Baptist was sent to be the forerunner of Christ. We need to open our eyes,

hearts, and minds to what it means to enter the harvest as a worker. Traditionally the church has presented this as going in a door-to-door fashion and telling people about salvation. Here Jesus begins to open our eyes and minds to understand that he brings the salvation we are to go and cultivate the harvest and make ready for his work in it. We see this in verse one where it says he sent them out two by two, ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. It is after this that he reminds them that there is plenty of harvest but few workers. Jesus then keeps it real by placing the full force of challenge on his followers not to just think about the harvest but to actually engage and get into the harvest. Remember this harvest that Jesus is talking about is a lost and undone world spiritually. Jesus then introduces the idea of praying for the harvest.

Pray regarding the harvest

Jesus invokes the ideal of asking in regards to the harvest, not just praying around and about the harvest. In my experience dealing with good and well-meaning people over these many years of pastoring I have seen repeatedly a great burden prayer for the harvest. But just as Jesus was challenging his disciples it's not enough to have a broken heart for the harvest, we must become personally engaged and involved in the harvest. We are not the harvesters that is Jesus's job we are simply workers under the auspices of the Holy Spirit within the harvest. This is where we begin to see the sending nature of God at work in his church today. Just as the father sent Christ and then sends the Holy Spirit to empower and embody the church to be active participants in the harvest after the fashion of Jesus. What we see from Jesus is not just walking by and saying all look there is a harvest he actually enters the harvest and rubs shoulder to shoulder with people who

at that time established religion would not associate with. Jesus example shows us that talk is cheap about the harvest, but it is when we actually roll up our sleeves and live incarnationally as his hands and feet in the middle of the world. This means we have to rub shoulder to shoulder with those around us who will say things that we don't like, who will also challenge our foundations of belief and possibly even mock what we stand for. It is our love and care for them in Christ that will win the day. Look at the examples we see in Christ hanging out with tax collectors who were despised people and considered sinners, talking with the woman at the well which was considered totally inappropriate both socially and culturally. He even shows people who are not leaders in their field and experts in the things of God. So as we pray for the harvest we must avoid the trap of praying thinking that God will not use us. It is at this point that Jesus brings it home when he instructs us in our prayer for the harvest.

Pray the Lord to *SEND* out workers into the field.

Again as we consider the example of Christ, we discover that he was never content to just allow others to do the work in the harvest. He chose those he was sending out to go before him not go for him. As I look at this and then I read his words in the latter part of verse two where he says pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers, I have to ask the question is Jesus asking me to only pray about the harvest or is he asking me to get my hands in the harvest and to be one who goes before him and love the people where he wants to harvest? Understanding and perspective are critical at the point of prayer. If you are I see ourselves as only witnesses of the harvest and not called to participate in the harvest it will shape the way we pray to the Lord of the harvest asking him to send out

workers. It is easy for me to pray that others would go if I do not see myself as personally responsible. I must always remember it is God's harvest, but he has chosen you and I to be his hands and feet in that harvest field. This raises the issue of responsible living. If my life does not resemble that of Christ how might that impact how he is received when he goes to harvest the field. This could be seen as being Christ in the world where we consistently live Christlike and holy lives among the harvest. How we see Christ doing this is through love, compassion, and example. Rather than browbeating and condemning, He simply loved them with the love of the father and encouraged them to reach for their fullest potential in God. As we observe and model after Christ we begin to see and experience the sending nature of God personally.

Christ shows the sending nature of God and calls us to be the sent ones.

Deep observations of the life and ministry of Christ teaches us that it's not enough to simply think about the harvest. It is only when our heartbreaks for the mission of God in the world that we become personally involved and participate actively in God's sending nature. Rather than relegating it to others in our place we say as Samuel did speak Lord your servant is listening and as Isaiah did in chapter 6 verse eight here am I Lord send me. All throughout Scripture we see where God the father is calling his children to live incarnationally as his hands and feet and flesh and blood relatedness to those who were lost and undone from him. That is the harvest we are the workers. I know God is able to do it without us but in his great plan he chooses to do it through us so the next time you pray do not pray Lord send out workers into your harvest but rather pray here and I send me as a worker into your harvest and then go and invest your life into the life of someone

else through mercies compassion and the love of Christ for the sake of Christ. That truly is following the example that Jesus gave us.

Application Questions:

Are you willing to be used of God as a worker in the harvest?

Is God telling you that the time for praying for others to be sent is over you must now pray that he will send you?

Based on the actions of your living are you in a position to represent Christ in the harvest?

Responsibly Sent Through Prayer

(Luke 10:1-3)

July 20, 2014

Rationale: Not asking God to send other workers, rather in the spirit of the sending nature of God, ask to be and embrace our own sentness in response to the *missio Dei*.

Luke 10: ¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Learning Together About The Harvest And The Sending Nature Of God:

The harvest is _____.

The workers are _____.

We are commanded to _____ regarding the harvest.

When you pray ask the Lord to _____ out workers into the field.

_____ shows the sending nature of God and calls us to be the sent ones.

Application Questions:

Are you _____ to be used of God as a worker in the harvest?

Is God _____ you that the time for praying for others to be sent is over you must now pray that he will send you?

Based on the _____ of your living are you in a position to represent Christ in the harvest?

The Great Commission
(Matthew 28:16-20)
July 27, 2014

Rationale: This sermon evolves directly from the command to go and make disciples, which speaks specifically to incarnational living outside the walls of the church which becomes necessary for a church to express missional worship.

Follow along as we read the passage from Matthew 28:16-20. ¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

How are we to connect this passage to our living out of Christ today? By learning together about the harvest and the sending nature of God.

Learning Together About The Harvest And The Sending Nature Of God:

It is never enough for the farmer to think about a harvest and never work, plant and glean the field. Action on the concept of harvest is the only way to experience the harvest. As we connect the concept that our scripture passage this morning is offering to us, we must conclude that the harvest is the world needing to and even ready to received Christ. This connects to the sending nature of God at its very core. The Father sent Christ into the

world to become flesh and blood, eventually making the way via His sacrifice, death and resurrection, humanity's way back into relationship with the Father that was broken because of sin. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says this about Christ. "God made him who had no **sin** to be **sin** for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." If the Father out of love for us responded by sending Himself in the bodily form of Christ, then we must conclude that our following must be in bold fashion of, when Christ says go, He does not mean stay inside the building we call the church.

When Christ says go, He does not mean stay inside the building:

God's purpose for his children has never been to live only inside the walls of the church building. If you look thoroughly through the Old Testament, it is easy to see an inclusive aspect of God's purpose in the world where He makes room for those who would desire to come inside the fold of Israel. Moving forward into and throughout the New Testament it is clear that He always encourages his children to make room for those who want to come into the faith. In this we start to connect with the sending nature of God especially connected to worship, where Jesus forces his disciples outside the building. In this movement Jesus uses express language in verse 19, when he tells them to go and make disciples. He does not tell them to stand at the door of the church or even at the edge of the property and say, come in and let us make you disciples. His words are very explicit as he tells the disciples to go, which means they have to get out into the world and for us, it is this out into the world living of Christ.

This is what we call incarnational living where we become the hands and feet of Jesus Himself in our world, where we live and breathe every day. The only way to do this is to

move outside the walls of the structure and show people through consistent biblical lifestyle and practice what it means to know Christ and to love Christ. If simply going was enough Jesus would have stopped with the go instruction. Instead he follows it up with make disciples. Let's explore what that means. Making disciples does not mean wishing them into a discipleship connection with God.

Making disciples does not mean wishing them into a discipleship connection to God:

To understand what this means, we have to clarify what it does not mean first. Praying for and carrying great compassion for people who are lost and undone without Christ is a great thing, but if it stops there it does not rise to the level of missional and incarnational living. It does not reach to the *missio Dei*, which is the mission of God in the world. How can you make disciples by proxy? The answer is **You Cannot**. The only way to truly make disciples is as we go out and physically connect shoulder to shoulder with those who for whatever reason are disconnect from God, by investing our hearts and lives deeply into their lives. This investing cannot be done at a distance or through someone else, it has to be done through flesh and blood, in real time living.

Making disciples is a commitment to personal investment in the life of someone else that is not necessarily our own flesh and blood. The Holy Spirit may lead us to invest in people who believe differently than we do, have different values of God than we do and may not even want us in their life. If we are committed to go and make disciples we must submit to the leadership and direction of the Holy Spirit to be placed in the life of someone that Jesus wants to touch. In order to do this we have to take a hard look at the way we live our lives out in the public eye. We do this by understanding that, practicing

obedience and teaching obedience, shoulder to shoulder are necessary components that connect us to the command to go.

Practicing obedience and teaching obedience, shoulder to shoulder are necessary components that connect us to the command to GO:

The truth is the world can see hypocrisy and for too long that has been their benchmark of the church because that's what they have seen. This is no excuse for them to reject Christ because of hypocritical lifestyles within the church, nevertheless it is a real argument. This is where authentic discipleship comes into play, we have to look at our lives and the way we live out in public view and then ask this question; does my life reflect a genuine and clear picture of Christ as I live it in the world? When people observe the way I carry myself day-to-day, person-to-person and even when I think nobody is looking, is it consistently Christian based on the teachings and principles of God's word? I have to practice obedience as an integral part of my living before I can influence others to be obedient and follow God as taught in His word. The only way the church is going to outlast the negative connotation that it carries from the abuse and hypocrisy of the past, is when enough Christ follower's take their worship and live it honestly and authentically through investing it into someone else's life. That is what Christ means when he says Go and make disciples. It moves way beyond shouting turn or burn, to that of living the difference that God makes in a person's life through his ever abiding presence in the Holy Spirit. It is the transformation of a life that has been bound and scarred by sin, to one that is freed and washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ. (This works most effectively when they see this transformation in our lives, not crammed

or shouted into theirs, rather invested day to day). This task can seem daunting if we think we are alone in fulfilling God's missional call to go and make disciples. What we have to remember is that this command is filled with promise from Christ and this promise involves the Holy Spirit. We have to always remember what we are taught in the word of God. You are never alone when you respond to God's sending nature.

You are never alone when you respond to God's sending nature:

Listen to what Jesus says in the second part of verse 20, "and lo I am with you always even to the very end of the age." There is great comfort in knowing that as Christ sends me out into the world, He does not send me out to abandon me in my own inadequate strength. This very passage wraps around the fact that as Jesus is about to ascend into heaven, He then is going to send the Holy Spirit to empower the church and the disciples. This means as I go according to the command of Christ to make disciples, I do not have to go alone but rather I go with His spirit journeying and empowering me. In essence He is making disciples through me and it's not dependent on me. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul found in second Corinthians chapter 5 verses 18 through 20 "all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ not counting people's sins against them and he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us we implore you on Christ the half be reconciled to God."

Why God chose to do it this way, I cannot explain, I just know according to His word, He did. Verse 20 says "as though God were making his appeal through us," demonstrates His

sending nature that is expressed in Christ, the Holy Spirit, and now in us. We are to embody the sacrifice of Christ through our flesh and blood while living outward to our world, in God's promise to us that we will never be alone as we fulfill His purpose within the *missio Dei*, that includes reconciling a lost world to a gracious and forgiving God. The only way this is going to happen especially in our culture today is if the church finds creative ways to get that message embodied out into the world. It helps as we understand that incarnational practices help to get the church into the world, rather than waiting for the world to come into the building.

Incarnational practices help to get the church into the world rather than waiting for the world to come into the building:

This is more than attraction, it is investing them into the kingdom. There are several questions that can be asked about incarnational practices. Christ is the pattern of the incarnation. He is God in flesh and blood. And if God chooses to make his appeal through us then we have to find those practices that reflect Christ and the pattern he left us. What did Christ look like as he ministered to the people around him in flesh and blood practices? If we were to look through the eyes of Christ at people what would we see? How would we see? Where would we see?

As we wrestle through these questions we have to ask one more. Are we connected enough to Christ that we can see through his eyes at all? When we begin to see as Christ did then we become responsible to respond as Christ did. Christ did not find comfort in simply occupying a space within the temple. We routinely see Christ meandering right into the middle of where the people lived and breathed. We see him in the marketplace, at

a well, on a mountainside and in a garden. In each of these venues we see Christ distinctly investing himself in the lives of others. That is incarnational living and that is the pattern that we are called to follow. As we follow Christ example we will take him into the world rather than waiting on the world to come to us. In a couple of weeks we will have the opportunity to take our church and live it in compassion directly into the lives of others, understanding that this is authentic worship. This will be incarnational living.

Application questions:

Am I willing to live incarnational he for Christ in the world?

Am I willing to look through the eyes of Christ, if God will give me the eyes Christ?

Am I willing to be a part of Christ great commission to the church?

The Great Commission

(Matthew 28:16-20)

July 27, 2014

Rationale: This sermon evolves directly from the command to go and make disciples, which speaks specifically to incarnational living outside the walls of the church which becomes necessary for a church to express missional worship.

Follow along as we read the passage from Matthew 28: ¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Learning Together About The Harvest And The Sending Nature Of God:

_____ does not mean stay inside the building.

Making disciples does not mean _____ them into a discipleship connection to God.

Practicing obedience and teaching obedience, shoulder to shoulder are _____ components connected to the command to GO.

You are never _____ when you respond to God's sending nature.

_____ practices help to get the church into the world rather than waiting for the world to come into the building.

Application Questions:

Am I willing to _____ incarnationally for Christ in the world?

Am I willing to _____ through the eyes of Christ, if God will give me the eyes Christ?

Am I willing to be a _____ of Christ's great commission to the church?

A Good Samaritan Heart

(Luke 10: 23-37)

August 3, 2014

Rational: As long as we stay on the far side of the road (more specifically within the walls of the church) we will never be able to embrace the sending nature of God. There comes a time where we have to actually rub shoulders with those outside the walls of the building and even risk getting dirty by embracing those who have been left wounded by this life.

Luke 10: ²³ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw

him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ ³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

In considering this passage we see religious talk and Jesus boiling it down to its essence by quickly moving from religious talk to embodying action. This passage probes into motives and shows the deficiencies in simply being religious and using cheap talk about loving God. When we talk about embodying Christ in our world, we have to ask, how far do words go without action? Is it ever enough to play religion without embodying Christ’s example of principles in life and action? We begin today with the premise that incarnational living demands action, not religion.

Premise: Incarnational living demands action, not religion.

To claim to be the hands and feet of Jesus while only praising the Lord and sitting on the front porch runs consistent with religion today but does not follow the example and action of Christ. We read over and over in Scripture about discipleship being connected to action oriented living. It must be understood that we do not work our way to heaven nor receive our salvation through human actions, but the outflow of our salvation produces action that manifests itself in incarnational expressions. It is easy to be religious

without incarnational action. It is not consistent with the sending nature of God to have a non-action religion. Our passage for today clearly shows the difference between religion and incarnational living as it says the same of the man who was traveling and was set upon by thieves who beat and left him for dead in the ditch. There were two religious leaders for whatever reason that when they saw this man in distress literally moved across the road to avoid having to deal with it. Then we see the Samaritan who not only stayed on the path of intersecting this man in distress but also got involved incarnationally. He did not just pity the man he physically impacted his life. He took the resources that were in his possession and literally touch the life of this man in need. We need to intentionally cross over to the hurting and needy.

Intentionally crossing over to the hurting and needy.

Sometimes in our spiritual journey we have to make decision to intentionally cross the road and get involved in the life of someone who is in need. There may be socioeconomic issues that have to be bridged, there may be cultural issues that have to be crossed, there may be physical issues that have to be put aside in order to reach into the life of those who are hurting and in need in the world around us. It is not enough to say may your thirst be quenched, on occasion we will have to give a glass of water. That is one of the reasons why we pursued the Haiti water well project. It was not enough for us to pray that they would have water but through God's provision, we are helping them to have water. So in that sense we cross the road to a people in need and partnered with them to help them meet a need in the lives of others. We support our denominational Missions program as we pray for them and as we give to them, but that is not crossing the road to

meet their needs. This is why we are going to pursue our experiential investments locally in the lives of others where we will actually put our hands, feet and resources together to reach into their world and love them through Christ. Whether it's paying for laundry, mowing grass, washing windows or dishes, trimming toenails or distributing food, we will not be content to leave it to others. We are going to be intentional about loving people through incarnational practice not just good talk. Through these actions we want to open ourselves to begin seeing people as God sees them with all their baggage and hurts in life. We must always understand that pity without action is not enough.

Pity without action is not enough.

Is not enough to feel sorry for someone else even though it makes us feel involved. The only thing that will make a difference in their life is when we are moved to action. What is the example that we have from God? Where would we be if God only pitied us in our sin but did not provide a grace to move us out of that sin? Just like the man in the ditch who was beaten and robbed and left for dead and left hopeless to get out of that situation. We also who have been beaten by life robbed of our dignity and morality and left for dead because of sin, could not find remedy for broken relationship with God without him. Our situation was pitiful but needed action, an action we could not do for ourselves. It is through the sending nature of God that Christ was sent to be the sacrifice for sin. That action is God's example of moving beyond pity to action. The example of God is the missional example we have been called to embody. Just as the father sent Christ and the Holy Spirit, Christ now sends us and calls us to action rather than religious pity for a

world that is disconnected and hopelessly lost without God. We see in Christ that the example that makes a difference is personal investment.

The example that makes a difference is personal investment.

It is reasonable to think that personal investment can make a difference. One of the unique things about the historical church especially the Methodist Church is that it began by following the example of Christ and investing in the lives of people personally. The more the church grew and the more sophisticated it became the less involved it seemed to be. The more it has abdicated its role in personal investment in the lives of the hurting, the needy, the oppressed and the morally bankrupt, the less influence and relevance it seems to maintain. Christ gave us an example that literally made the difference in the lives of those with whom he touched. We see over and over where he literally crossed the road, also crossed over various barriers, difficulties and opinions to touch the lives of those who had been beaten up by life, scarred by sin, and shunned by the church. He did not do this by simply ordering others to cross the road and do it, he led the way and then said as you have seen me do go and do also. The earliest church seemed to have the best handle on this example and for a period of time followed it but somewhere along the way the church begin to “grow up” and no longer needed to follow Christ’s example of action. Jesus was never a do as I say only leader. He looked at those who he was calling and said (Matthew 4:19,20), “ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.²⁰ And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” (KJV). To be a true disciple of Christ is a call to follow the actions that He demonstrated for us. Jesus

modeled this action as he became vested in the lives of those around him and then led the way in touching others through personal action. Further our understanding is that incarnational living can sometimes be messy, unpopular and inconvenient.

Incarnational living can sometimes be messy, unpopular, and inconvenient.

As you begin to embody the image of Christ in your life and give yourself to others through action, it can take you out of your comfort areas and can put you in a position of dealing with messed up lives. It can take you out of the mainstream of approval and can get in the way of your personal schedule. If this is what God is calling you to then he will shape you, equip you and burden you, to carry it out. It is not enough to talk a good talk, but in following Christ's example, we must walk a good walk. Think for a moment in the daily routine of your life about the street corners that you pass, the shoulders you bump into in the market place, the desk you sit across from at work, now ask yourself this. Are there hurting lives that need the hands and feet of Jesus to touch them? Instead of looking for creative ways to not get involved how about looking for ways to get involved in their lives. This may mean having to put aside your agendas, personal approvals and may even require you to roll up your sleeves and be willing to get dirty. As we flesh these thoughts out further we recognize that the sending nature of God is offered to us by Christ's words, "God and do likewise."

The sending nature of God is offered to us by Christ's words, "Go and do likewise."

At the end of the day we see the sending nature of God in Christ through his actions not merely His words. To be clear He then gives the command based on his actions and

example for his disciples to go and do likewise. Does this have relevance for us today? I believe the answer is a resounding yes. We are to carry on as Christ's ambassadors as we referenced above as though God were making his appeal through us to the world be reconciled to God. This is best accomplished when the church moves outside of the walls of comfort and into the world through actions that reflect the pattern given by Jesus Christ. The old models of attraction although they may work to a degree are ineffective and may be losing relevance when it comes to producing deep disciples. Those who are hurting in our world need to see Christ not just hear about Christ. The responsibility falls to us to embody incarnation, the message and the life of Christ and requires us to live him clearly and cleanly out in the world. Bottom line you cannot carry Christ into the world, unless that Christ has impacted your life.

Application questions:

Are you willing for God to use you as a Good Samaritan in the life of someone else?

Are you following the example that Christ left us?

Are you willing to embrace the sending nature of God to fulfill the *missio Dei* as the mission of God?

A Good Samaritan Heart

(Luke 10: 23-37)

August 3, 2014

Rational: As long as we stay on the far side of the road (more specifically within the walls of the church) we will never be able to embrace the sending nature of God. There comes a time where we have to actually rub shoulders with those outside the walls of the building and even risk getting dirty by embracing those who have been left wounded by this life.

Luke 10: ²³ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.” ²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ ³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Premise: Incarnational Living Demands Action, Not Religion:

_____ crossing over to the hurting and needy.

_____ without action is not enough.

The example that makes a difference is _____ investment.

Incarnational _____ can sometimes be messy, unpopular, and inconvenient.

The sending nature of God is _____ to us by Christ’s words, “Go and do likewise.”

Application questions:

Are you willing for God to _____ you as a good Samaritan in the life of someone else?

Are you _____ the example Christ left us?

Are you willing to _____ the sending nature of God to fulfill the *missio Dei*, The mission of God?

Greatest Co-Mission
(John 17:13-23)
August 10, 2014

Rationale: Delving deeper into the sending nature of God, where the Father sent Christ, and specifically now Christ is sending the church into the world. This moves beyond passive discipleship to an active participation in the world in the disciple making process.

John 17: ¹³“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

This morning as we look deeper into the sending nature of God, we have to first establish our role in disciple making by recognizing and understanding that when Christ departed this earth in the Ascension, it by no means meant the work was finished. God's purpose and mission in the world also known to us as the *missio Dei* shifts not from Christ but rather through Christ into the church by the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. In our passage today Jesus is preparing his disciples to pick up the mantle of being the sent ones and continuing a fulfilling of the sending nature of God. This impacts us as we understand as God sent Christ into the world, now Christ sends us into the world to continue His work.

As God sent Christ into the world, now Christ sends us into the world to continue His work.

It becomes clear from the passage above that Christ understands the Father's purpose. It also becomes clear that the Father's purpose is the continued reconciling of the lost through the church. We see this beginning with the prayer of Jesus that the father would not remove the disciples but would instead keep them while they were still in the world from the evil one (v.15). Jesus sets the example of being set apart for the purpose of the father and then he continues his prayer by asking the father to set apart his disciples to continue that work. This means for us that we are called to share in the ministry began in the Father's sending of Christ.

We are called to share in the ministry began in the Father's Sending of Christ.

A key to understanding this passage is found in verse 20 where Jesus says “my prayer is not for them alone I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”

This verse shows the ongoing ministry of reconciliation that we talked about last week and gives us the window through which we see our inclusion in the ongoing sending nature of God.

That it is not us alone is the very spirit of Christ through the Holy Spirit who is at work sanctifying and setting us apart His children for the *missio Dei*. This is why we are calling it a co-mission it is a mission that we share with Christ through His empowering spirit. As we are called to share in this ministry it must be clearly understood that although called, it is not about us. It will always be wrapped up in and tied to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After all, this is at the very heart of the Father’s sending nature firmly demonstrated in Christ. The incarnational expression is simply extending Christ into the life of another through our personal investment in them. The practice of incarnational living is a life that reflects the pattern and example left to us by Christ, and affirmed through the Holy Spirit. How this works, is that we are set apart and prayed for in this great co-mission.

We are set apart and prayed for in this Great Co-mission.

Christ wanted to set the record straight in that he desired for us to be sanctified by the truth and He knew God’s word is truth. His desire is that we not only find ourselves firmly in relationship with Him through the forgiveness of our sins but also that our hearts would be surrendered in a complete way and sanctified or set apart for God’s holy purpose for the *missio Dei*. Jesus didn’t just talk about being set apart he backed it up in

his prayer for us today, not just the disciples in verse 20. It is only when we are committed and set apart for God's holy purpose that we are able to truly experience his joy in its fullness. This connects us missionally in that Christ desires for us to share in His unity with the Father.

Christ desires for us to share in His unity with the Father

Within this dynamic relationship filled with joy, we also have the potential of unity with the father just as Jesus was one with the father. That being said we are to be one with the father and also to experience all of the joy and fullness that is available by our being set apart by the Holy Spirit. This is a journey pointed out by Jesus in verse 22 where we would be experience a complete unity with Christ and the father. Too many people stop short of this unity with the father. This stopping short occurs for different reasons some of which are represented in selfishness and an unwillingness to be guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit. For others it is because sin still reigns in their mortal flesh. A warning against this is found in Romans chapter 6. As long as selfishness rules or sin reigns in us, we cannot have true unity with Christ and the father. With this unity at work in us, we are not alone in God's sending nature, rather He will be with us.

We are not alone in God's sending nature, rather He will be with us.

Where a lot of people get into trouble spiritually is they try to operate singularly without the Holy Spirit in their life. The Holy Spirit's presence is designed to be actively at work in our lives. This is why Jesus left the disciples shortly after the above scriptural conversation took place. According to Christ's own words, if He does not return to

heaven then His spirit will not be released on the church and earth. The promise of the Father is that He will not abandon us or orphan us as we fulfill His mission in the world and carry on His sending nature in the world. With the understanding we have gained today, we are now positioned to wrestle with the following application questions.

Application Questions:

Are you ready and willing to be Christ in the world today?

Do you experience oneness with Christ and the Father?

Do you need to stop operating alone and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you?

Greatest Co-Mission

(John 17:13-23)

August 10, 2014

Rationale: Delving deeper into the sending nature of God, where the Father sent Christ, and specifically now Christ is sending the church into the world. This moves beyond passive discipleship to an active in the world of disciple making.

John 17: ¹³“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

A Deeper Look Into The Sending Nature Of God:

As God _____ Christ into the world, now Christ sends us into the world to continue His work.

We are _____ to share in the ministry began in the Father’s Sending of Christ.

We are set _____ and prayed for in this Great Co-mission.

Christ desires for us to _____ in His unity with the Father

We are not _____ in God’s sending nature, rather He will be with us.

Application Questions:

Are you _____ and willing to be Christ in the world today?

Do you _____ oneness with Christ and the Father?

Do you need to stop _____ alone and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you?

Who Then Is My Neighbor?

(Luke 10:22-29)

August 24, 2014

Rationale: In this sermon we will connect to the (survey) attitudes that shape how we look at our responsibility within the *missio Dei*. If my neighbor is nonexistent, or must filter through my preferences of look, act or behave by my standards, I probably will not get very far in embracing God’s mission in the world. Until we develop eyes that see like Christ we will find it difficult to be true disciple makers.

Luke 10: ²²“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” ²³ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

The dynamic link between the Father, the Son, and the disciples:

Christ demonstrates the uniqueness that exists between Him and the Father as well as His disciples. ²²“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Our task is to discover who our neighbor is:

In order to make this discovery, it is helpful to probe into the understanding of God’s connection to the ones around us and our connection to God with the responsibility that is assigned to us as we claim to love God.

Probing question: how can I love God if I do not show love to my neighbor?

Probing question: how can I love my neighbor if I do not love God?

To declare an authentic love for God and be unwilling to show His love to those that have been placed in our life, poses a contradiction. The converse is true, when we claim to authentically love the people placed in our life and live in ways that do not communicate a true love for God, especially when our lifestyle does not reflect a change in allegiance, devotions and departure from self-will to that of God’s will. It is only when we begin to take on the attitude, actions and even look of Christ that we can begin to discover who our neighbor is.

Loving my neighbor as myself has a look to it.

My contention to you today is that if we are unwilling to allow our vision of the world around us to filter through the eyes and heart of the Father, we will never see who our

neighbor is, let alone discover how to love them as ourselves. The Father in sending Christ to the world gives a very good example of the scope and look of love. Let delve a little deeper into it as we move forward.

It looks like Mercy

Webster online dictionary describes it in two ways: “A kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly” and “kindness or help given to people who are in a very bad or desperate situation.” This is exactly how the father has treated us by offering mercy instead of the justice we deserved. His demonstration of kindness by bestowing forgiveness and even making it possible for us to recognize our need of His help in our desperate and lost situation is nothing short of mercy. How can we do any less in our response to those around us who are desperate and in need of God’s mercy? It is only when we come to grips with who we were before God’s mercy, can we truly understand why we need to see those around us as God sees them. Then respond through the embodiment of Christ as extension of His mercy to those He has placed in our life as neighbors.

It looks like Grace

Grace has been described by many as God’s unmerited favor. This unmerited favor is not simply a nod of approval or a wink that something will be overlooked. The truth is that because of sin all of humanity, (including you and I), have sinned and come up short of God’s standard. We deserve His condemnation, but instead are offered His loving grace. Often in this expression of grace God has used those who authentically follow Him. We

now become His expression of grace into the world around us. This world around us becomes our neighbor. They may look, talk and act differently than we do, but for whatever reason, God has placed us into the context of their life and we must responsibly live Christ to them.

It looks like Patience

It is clear that not everyone trust in Christ alone as their Lord and Savior when they are children. I have known many who as a child placed their trust in God, but in looking around me I see many, many more who as children, teens or adults have no obvious faith at all and no seeming desire for God. Just as you and I have received God's unmerited favor through grace, we have been given the responsibility to show that grace by being the hands and feet of Christ to our neighbor, whether next door, down the street or wherever the Father sends us.

It looks like Forgiveness

You have to connect God's mercy and grace to have any hope of appreciating forgiveness. It is when the Father extends to us what we have no power to accomplish for ourselves. Because of sin, we are separated from experiential relationship with the Father. God offers mercy and grace, but it is only when we realize our sinful separation and through confession of our need for God's forgiveness can we actually experience authentic connectedness to God.

As we begin to realize where we were, and where God has brought us to in forgiveness, can we begin understand that what we have been given, we must also share. For many of us, it was someone who saw us as their neighbor and began to pour their life into us, that we came to faith in Christ. How can we do any less? Dr. Phineas F. Bresee, "We are debtors to every man to give him the Gospel in the same measure as we have received it."⁶⁰ We need to realize that what we have been given in mercy, grace and forgiveness, was never intended to stop there, but rather find expression as we live shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors.

It looks like Love

From my personal experience, love is easier experienced than it is explained. I have received from God what I did not deserve, could not earn and certainly could not merit, yet out of love for me, the Father sent the Son, the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit, and now I along with you are being sent to carry on this love right into the heart of our world. This world is where we live and breathe every day. Not just to the people who live next door, but all people whom God will cross our path with.

We need to patiently invest Christ into the life of those around us by faithfully living out the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit who filled the earliest church in Acts, and fills us today. As we talked about in the first sermon of this series regarding the vertical dimension of love between us and God and our horizontal dimension that is expressed in

⁶⁰ C. T. Corlett, *Our Pioneer Nazarenes*. n.p.: Herald Press Kindle Edition, 2011.
http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/wesleyctr/books/Other/Bresee%20Package/PHINEAS%20FRANKIN%20BRESEE%20%20MAN%20OF%20GOD'S%20GLORY.txt (accessed March 13, 2014).

our love people to people that truly connects us with our neighbors for the purpose of showing them the love that the Father has for them as shown in mercy, grace and forgiveness. John 3:16 demonstrates the scope of God's love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The action is on God's part to an unworthy and too often ungrateful people, yet He still loved us, and we must carry that love forward!

Application questions:

In what ways do I justify myself before God?

In what ways do I express Christ to my neighbor?

Who Then Is My Neighbor?

(Luke 10:22-29)

August 24, 2014

Rationale: In this sermon we will connect to the (survey) attitudes that shape how we look at our responsibility within the *missio Dei*. If my neighbor is nonexistent, or must filter through my preferences of look, act or behave by my standards, I probably will not get very far in embracing God's mission in the world. Until we develop eyes that see like Christ we will find it difficult to be true disciple makers.

Luke 10: ²²“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” ²³ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.” ²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[c]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” **The dynamic link between the Father, the Son, and the disciples.** Christ demonstrates the uniqueness that exists between Him and the Father as well as His disciples. ²²“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Our task is to discover who our neighbor is and how to love them:

Probing question: how can I _____ God if I do not show love to my neighbor?

Probing question: how can I love my _____ if I do not love God?

Loving my neighbor as _____ has a look to it.

It looks like _____.

It looks like _____.

It looks like _____.

It looks like _____.

It looks like _____.

Application questions:

In what ways do I _____ myself before God?

In what ways do I _____ Christ to my neighbor?

The Least of These
Matthew 25: 31-36
August 31, 2014

Rational: Here we can begin to shape our reach in the arena of compassionate ministry where we begin seeking a heartbeat for those who are less fortunate in and around us.

Matthew 25: ³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ ⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ ⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing

clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’⁴⁶ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

No program in the world replaces the disciple living as a disciple and investing Christ into the life of other regardless of their status in life. Our journey today leads us to seek discovery. In this discovery we gain a much clearer picture of the sending nature of the Father as expressed in the actions of Christ. We do this by...

Discovering That When We Are The Hands And Feet Of Jesus It Is Incarnational Living:

We understand from this study that incarnational living is living Christ straight into the world where we live and breathe. How we live reflects the way we understand Christ who was sent in flesh and blood (Incarnate) to reveal the Father to a lost and undone world. Let’s take a few moments to examine what this incarnational living looks like and to whom it is expressed.

As Jesus fulfilled the sending nature of the father he gave us an example of ministering to those who are on the fringes.

It is always easier to care in our safe zones. A mark of a fully devoted follower of Christ is one who is willing to care out on the fringes of life to those who may look, smell, or act differently than we do. It may and probably will require us to look intently to those who

see themselves as outcast from the church and even disenchanted with God and His church. Sometimes those feeling of disillusionment have been affected by the church people themselves through lack of attention, carelessness or inappropriate behavior/actions. This is where missional really comes into play, where the church locally and the people personally begin to invest directly in the heart and lives of others. For us here at CrossWalk Community, this means seeking out ways and places where we can simply be the hands and feet of Christ to those who are hurting or needy. This also includes partnerships with other groups who are actively helping others. Rather than recreating the wheel, we will look for ways to come along side of others to help spread the love of Christ. Sometimes we may never see or know the people that we are helping, just like our Haiti Water Well Project. Each of us must pray and ask the Father to send us as expressions of Christ where He desires. Jesus set the example by not focusing on those who found mainstream acceptance within the church, but often found himself outside the accepted circle of the church just loving people. Christ is our example to follow. To do this we have to allow God to help us with our vision.

In our attempt to identify the least of these we have to consider how Jesus saw others.

What do we see when we look at Jesus and the way he approached others? He spends the greatest amount of time in investing in those who were called His Disciples. Then as we look closer, we see Him not hanging out with the highly religious people. The truth is he often found those who were despised and considered to be outcast and unworthy of God. He spent time with the reviled tax collectors, the friends of sinners and offered healing

and forgiveness to many who were not considered a part of the inside of the religious establishment. His unconventional style of touching people was not necessarily accepted by those entrenched in the church, but certainly reflected the heartbeat of the Father. As we embrace the example given to us by Christ, it becomes much more than touching others.

As we live incarnationally, we fulfill (give) unto Christ through the least of these.

Verse 40 clarifies how we minister unto Christ by ministering Christ into the lives of those on the fringes. ⁴⁰ “The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” As we begin to recognize that Christ came for all, not just a select few who the establishment deems worthy, we hopefully will begin to expand our vision to the whole harvest field. We will also realize that as we touch others, it is as if we are touching Christ’s heart with our obedience. Not everyone has the impact that a John Wesley, Phineas Bresee or Billy Graham has had, but their ministry to Christ is no more or less important than ours when we do for the least of these. The key is obediently following the Fathers directives in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

Not seeing the least of these is no excuse for not ministering Christ into the world.

Throughout my Thirty Four plus years in ministry, I have known people in the church who year upon year, never see that they have any responsibility to share Christ outside the building we call the church. Their understanding revolves around showing up week after week, giving in the offering, saying an occasional amen from time to time. It is only

when we take ownership of living Christ into the life of someone else that we fulfill the desire of the Father that literally was the heartbeat of Christ. If we see the world as Christ saw the world and gave Himself for it, then we begin to reach outside the building and into the hearts and lives for whom Christ was sent and sacrificed himself for. At the end of the day not seeing the lost condition of the world does not excuse us from ministering Christ into His world.

When we fulfill the sending nature of the Father as Christ did, we will look for opportunities to minister Christ to those outside the mainstream of the church.

The development of eyes and hearts that do not wait to see, but go about our daily lives looking for opportunities to respond to the needs of the least of these and in so doing, ministering unto Christ. Part of this fulfilling of the sending nature of God begins by simply seeing the world around us. So often we move from point to point and never truly seeing what is going on around us. No one can fix the problems of everyone, but we at least need to be in tune with our world and available to respond if God would so choose to use us. If our lives are too cluttered, too busy, too noisy or just too out of touch, we will find it difficult to fulfill the sending nature of God. Many opportunities are missed, because we do not plan to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Jesus said it best in Matthew 9:12 “On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the **sick**.” We need to evaluate whether too much of our efforts are spent trying to heal the healthy and not enough time ministering to those who are still spiritually sick. The majority of spiritual illness lives outside the building. In living incarnation we must find

ourselves as we see Jesus rubbing shoulders with those outside the mainstream of the church week to week.

We need to guard against a sideline prayer that although very emotional asking God to send someone to reach the world, instead of begging the Father to put us in the game to help change the world for the sake of Christ. If we continually look for opportunities to offer Christ to those who are disenfranchised from the church, are down and out or just need an encouraging hand up, we will be amazed at how points of ministering Christ seem to supernaturally appear. We need to genuinely seek God for an awakening to the needs of those around us. Many of the opportunities to live incarnationally will begin as we simply take the time to invest Christ into the lives of those around us. Being Christ to the least of these does not have to be illustrious or extravagant just honest and willing. This all sounds good, but until we become willing to examine our own hearts, it will most likely remain as it is. Here are some questions to help us begin to engage the process of seeing the world as Christ saw the world.

Application Questions:

How do you view your place in incarnational living?

Are we responsible to be Christ to those around us?

Will you accept this responsibility?

The Least of These

Matthew 25: 31-36

August 31, 2014

Rational: Here we can begin to shape our reach in the arena of compassionate ministry where we begin seeking a heartbeat for those who are less fortunate in and around us.

Matthew 25: ³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ³⁷“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’ ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’ ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ ⁴¹“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ ⁴⁴“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ ⁴⁵“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ ⁴⁶“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Discovering That When We Are The Hands And Feet Of Jesus It Is Incarnational Living:

As Jesus _____ the sending nature of the father he gave us an example of ministering to those who are on the fringes.

In our attempt to identify the least of these we have to _____ how Jesus saw others.

As we _____ incarnationally, we fulfill (give) unto Christ through the least of these.

Not seeing the least of these is no _____ for not ministering Christ into the world.

When we fulfill the _____ nature of the Father, as Christ did we will look for opportunities to minister Christ to those outside the mainstream of the church.

Application Questions:

How do you view your _____ in incarnational living?

Are we _____ to be Christ to those around us?

Will you _____ this responsibility?

Pre-Pentecost Mission

Luke 24: 44-53

September 7, 2014

Rationale: Here we will explore the presence of God in His sending of Christ, and promise of empowering through the Holy Spirit to the church that's willing to embody the *missio Dei*. The sending nature of God remains at work for us today as we are faithful in living incarnationally in fulfillment of God's mission in the world.

Luke 24: ⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

We have been on a progressive discovery of what it means as a church and individuals to think in missional terms that revolve around the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is the mission of God in the world as seen throughout scriptural history manifest by Christ as the sent one from the Father. It is incumbent upon us today to attempt to discover how we fit into this picture today. Does the church have a responsibility to embody Christ through incarnationally living or are we exempt? To discover the answer to this question, we have to evaluate this from the standpoint of the having our minds opened just as the disciple's minds were opened to understand the Scriptures. Another angle that plays a significant role in our missional understanding and ability to embrace the sending nature of God hinges on how we see ourselves today in light of the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit. If the day of Pentecost was only an event in time with not prospect of

continuation for the church today, then we can look for a pass missionally. On the other hand if the unleashing of the Holy Spirit on the earliest church and disciples was both a point in time and also a continuation for the church today, we have no choice but to regard ourselves as responsible to carry on the continued sending nature of God today. To explore this out in real terms, we must look at ourselves as Christ disciple as well and what this potentially means as we seek to fulfill our role in the *missio Dei*.

As Christ's disciples today we need our hearts and minds opened to the Word of God:

Regardless of our education or longevity as a Christian, we find ourselves just like the early disciples, standing in need of having our minds and hearts opened to the Scriptures. A caution is warranted that it is not having an awakening and forming new Scriptures, but allowing the Father to expand our understanding of His word already given. The church has undergone many changes over its life. Some of those changes have honestly been man made, and consequently not biblical. What the church needs is a return to the heart of the Scriptures, having our minds opened to understand. If the church of today simply lived out the Scriptures in faithfulness as the hands and feet of Christ, it would have a tremendous impact on the world today. This living out of the Scriptures certainly has to be informed by the purpose of Christ's coming into the world. It is more than head knowledge, it is heart experience.

Understanding as well as experiencing the purpose of Christ in the following ways.

To understand the purpose of Christ we have to be willing to journey deeply into the Father's sending plan for Christ. It is only through the movement of the Holy Spirit on our hearts that we can have any hope of understanding. With that said, I invite you to a responsive encounter with the Holy Spirit as we delve into the purpose of Christ as the sent one of the Father.

His Suffering.

To understand Christ's suffering, we have to keep the end in mind, otherwise we will develop an unhealthy view of the Father. Christ was the fulfillment of mercy, grace, hope and ultimate love of God. The world's condition was bondage and slavery to sin, which eternally separates us from the Father, because a Holy God cannot fellowship with an unholy heart. The remedy to this dilemma is resolved in the love of the Father taking on flesh and blood and living among us. Ultimately through God's plan to redeem the world, He himself as Immanuel (God with us) in flesh became the suffering that provides atonement for the sins of a separated world to the heart of a Holy God. Through Christ suffering and death we are given access to eternal life. It is in our receiving of this atonement that we are granted the right to become children of God. As it reads in John 1:¹² "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." It is

offered to all, but is actualize by only those who receive the grace and forgiveness wrapped up in His suffering and sacrifice. This suffering and sacrifice find full completion in His resurrection.

His Resurrection.

You cannot separate His resurrection from His suffering. The two are critical to the master plan of redemption of a lost and undone world through reconciliation to a Holy God. It is only through the resurrection, that the victory over sin, death and the grave are won. The Father worked His plan of restoration that was needed due to the consequences of sin by bringing forth Christ from the grave in triumphant victory. Revelations 1:18 declares: “I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the **keys of death** and Hades.” What does this mean for us and for others who will be influenced to believe in Christ because of our faithful witness? Romans 4 expresses it this way, “²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” Without his resurrection, we cannot be justified or reconciled to a Holy God. As Christ did his part as the one who was sent by the Father, we also have a responsibility in God’s plan. It begins with our repentance.

Our Repentance.

Many from the protestant branch of the Church, see repentance as a sorrowful turning away from sin. It is not simply being sorry we are sinners, but it goes much deeper as we

understand that our personal sin separates us from the love and relationship of a Holy God. Further it was sin and its power over humanity that brought Christ to earth to ultimately become the sacrifice for the consequences of sin. The price for reconciliation is freely offered to all, but forces upon none. Our free will to choose or reject is left firmly in place and the full responsibility of choice rests on us. The beauty is that God makes it possible for us to recognize our need of reconciliation through Christ and also gives us the freedom to choose or reject. In our repentance, it is more than mentally assenting to a need for grace in our life, it is also turning away from the old life of sin to a renewed life lived in Christ. We read about this In Colossians 2: “⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.” It truly is a sorrowful change of direction that turns away from sinful living and moves towards a life lived in Him understanding that as we live in Him we live in all the fullness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is impossible without the forgiveness of sin in our life.

His Forgiveness of sins.

An important key to understanding forgiveness is recognizing that it is made possible through Christ alone. It is not produced by anything that we can do, it is truly God's unmerited favor extended to us. Listen to 2 Timothy 1 verses 9 and 10 ⁹ "He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Our responsibility is to receive the full benefits that have been provided through the sacrifice, death, forgiveness and resurrection of Jesus Christ who was sent by the Father to reconcile the world to Himself. How does the message go forward today? By us who have received grace from Christ becoming the proclamation of His grace in word and deed.

The Proclamation of His grace.

We are given the charge of spreading the message of redemption through Christ. God has chosen us to be His, "Life Speak" into the world. This can only be effective if we live as Christ hands and feet out into the world beyond the walls of the church building. If we wait until they come into the building on their own, we will never fulfill the sending nature of the Father as understood as the *missio Dei*. The only hope of truly accomplishing what the Father began in Christ is when we allow the Holy Spirit to fill our lives and ultimately our living out of Christ into the world. When we look at what the Father did when Christ returned to heaven by fulfilling His promise in sending the Holy Spirit into the church. He literally transformed them from the inside out. As they

followed a fully devoted life to God, they were empowered and full devotion was made possible. One of the most striking realities is that they went from powerless and fearful, to bold and effective as they lived and shared their faith in Christ. We cannot afford to follow any other example than that of the earliest church on the day of Pentecost. We must totally surrender our lives and wills to the infilling and control of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will empower us to effectively live the proclamation of His grace into the lives of those the Father gives us influence towards, just as He did the early church. All we have considered today allows certain conclusions to be drawn.

Conclusion: The sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ continues the sending nature of the Father, and equips the church to successfully carry out Christ's purpose in the world. This purpose for us becomes the pursuit and fulfillment of the *missio Dei*.

Further Conclusions: Our power for the fulfilling of the missional call of God in the world comes through being clothed with power from on high through the Holy Spirit.

Application Questions:

Are you willing to personally commit yourself to the *missio Dei*?

Is God calling you to fulfill His sending nature in the world today?

Are you being called to active participation through incarnational living?

Pre-Pentecost Mission

Luke 24: 44-53

September 7, 2014

Rationale: Here we will explore the presence of God in His sending of Christ, and promise of empowering through the Holy Spirit to the church that's willing to embody the *missio Dei*. The sending nature of God remains at work for us today as we are faithful in living incarnationally in fulfillment of God's mission in the world.

Luke 24: ⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." ⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

As Christ's disciples today we need our hearts and minds opened to the Word of God:

_____ as well as _____ the purpose of Christ in the following ways.

His _____.

His _____.

Our _____.

His _____ of sins.

The _____ of His grace.

Conclusion: The sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ continues the sending nature of the Father, and equips the church to successfully carry out Christ's purpose in the world. This purpose for us becomes the pursuit and fulfillment of the *missio Dei*.

Further Conclusions: Our power for the fulfilling of the missional call of God in the world comes through being clothed with power from on high through the Holy Spirit.

Application Questions:

Are you _____ to personally commit yourself to the *missio Dei*?

Is God _____ you to fulfill His sending nature in the world today?

Are _____ being called to active participation through incarnational living?

Appendix B

(Pre and Post-Survey) Seeking A Missional Understanding

[Pre-Survey does not include questions 24, 25 and 26]

Choose the number that best represents your reaction to the following statements

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5
1. There is little difference between missions and missional.				1 2 3 4 5
2. “ Missional” means sending people to another country to spread the gospel.				1 2 3 4 5
3. “Missional” means supporting missionaries already working in foreign countries.				1 2 3 4 5
4. “Missional” means living as missionaries wherever we may live.				1 2 3 4 5
5. We should not allow non-Christian groups to use our building.				1 2 3 4 5
6. As a church, we should not spend money on the homeless, but refer them to agencies designated to help them.				1 2 3 4 5
7. Giving to the needy only enables them to continue in poverty.				1 2 3 4 5
8. Compassion should only be extended to poor people who are trying to find a way out of poverty.				1 2 3 4 5
9. Providing good programs at church is the best way to serve the community.				1 2 3 4 5
10. Serving the “least of these” means only giving money to agencies that trained to help.				1 2 3 4 5
11. Demonstrating Christlikeness includes helping people who can’t help Themselves.				1 2 3 4 5

12. Living like Jesus includes crossing cultural barriers. 1 2 3 4 5
13. We should be familiar with the different ethnic groups in and around our church. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Participation in God's mission in the world involves us being active Christians outside the church walls. 1 2 3 4 5
15. The church should partner with secular agencies that are meeting the needs of our community. 1 2 3 4 5
16. Christians should only associate with other Christians. 1 2 3 4 5
17. If we cannot include a gospel message we should not serve the poor because it's a waste of time. 1 2 3 4 5
18. To protect our witness we should not be involved with community agencies that are not specifically "Christian." 1 2 3 4 5
19. Serving people in our community is an act of worship. 1 2 3 4 5
20. If people really want to know God they should come inside the building. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Being "missional" means saving the lost not serving those in need. 1 2 3 4 5

1 = Less than 1 hour 2 = 1 hour, less than 2 3 = 2 hours 4 = Over 2 hours

22. Recently, in a typical week, how many hours have you spent investing in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church? 1 2 3 4
23. In the future, in a typical week, how many hours do you plan to invest in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church? 1 2 3 4

(Included in the Post Survey only):

24. How many of the sermons were you able to hear? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
25. How many of the Bible studies have you completed? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
26. How many Wednesday evenings were you able to attend? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Appendix C

Pre Survey Data

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number of Responses	Average Rating
There is little difference between missions and missional.	29.03%	29.03%	19.35%	19.35%	3.23%	31	2.39
“Missional” means sending people to another country to spread the gospel.	18.75%	40.63%	6.25%	15.63%	18.75%	32	2.75
“Missional” means supporting missionaries already working in foreign countries.	28.13%	37.50%	9.38%	21.88%	3.13%	32	2.34
“Missional” means living as missionaries wherever we may live.	40.63%	15.63%	0.00%	18.75%	25.00%	32	2.72
We should not allow non-Christian groups to use our building.	21.88%	15.63%	12.50%	15.63%	34.38%	32	3.25
As a church, we should not spend money on the homeless, but refer them to agencies designated to help them.	34.38%	6.25%	3.13%	12.50%	43.75%	32	3.25

Giving to the needy only enables them to continue in poverty.	21.88%	21.88%	12.50%	6.25%	37.50%	32	3.16
Compassion should only be extended to poor people who are trying to find a way out of poverty.	25.00%	21.88%	6.25%	15.63%	31.25%	32	3.06
Providing good programs at church is the best way to serve the community.	25.00%	21.88%	31.25%	12.50%	9.38%	32	2.59
Demonstrating Christlikeness includes helping people who can't help themselves.	43.75%	12.50%	0.00%	18.75%	25.00%	32	2.69
Living like Jesus includes crossing cultural barriers.	50.00%	12.50%	0.00%	9.38%	28.13%	32	2.53
We should be familiar with the different ethnic groups in and around our church.	19.35%	12.90%	25.81%	19.35%	22.58%	31	3.13
Participation in God's mission in the world involves us being active Christians outside the church walls.	45.16%	12.90%	3.23%	9.68%	29.03%	31	2.65
The church should partner with secular agencies that are meeting the needs of our community.	16.67%	26.67%	10.00%	20.00%	26.67%	30	3.13

Christians should only associate with other Christians.	32.26%	9.68%	3.23%	9.68%	45.16%	31	3.26
If we cannot include a gospel message we should not serve the poor because it's a waste of time.	25.81%	12.90%	3.23%	12.90%	45.16%	31	3.39
To protect our witness we should not be involved with community agencies that are not specifically "Christian."	26.67%	13.33%	3.33%	30.00%	26.67%	30	3.17
Serving people in our community is an act of worship.	43.33%	13.33%	6.67%	3.33%	33.33%	30	2.70
If people really want to know God they should come inside the building to experience Him.	13.33%	33.33%	16.67%	20.00%	16.67%	30	2.93
Being "missional" means saving the lost not serving those in need.	30.00%	13.33%	13.33%	23.33%	20.00%	30	2.90

Post Survey Data

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Number of Responses	(Change from pre-Survey)
There is little difference between missions and missional.	17.24%	44.83%	6.90%	20.69%	10.34%	29	(+.23)
“Missional” means sending people to another country to spread the gospel.	41.38%	27.59%	6.90%	24.14%	0.00%	29	(-.61)
“Missional” means supporting missionaries already working in foreign countries.	17.24%	20.69%	6.90%	34.48%	20.69%	29	(+.87)
“Missional” means living as missionaries wherever we may live.	3.45%	0.00%	10.34%	34.48%	51.72%	29	(+1.59)
We should not allow non-Christian groups to use our building.	48.28%	51.72%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	29	(-1.73)
As a church, we should not spend money on the homeless, but refer them to agencies designated to help them.	58.62%	37.93%	3.45%	0.00%	0.00%	29	(-1.80)
Giving to the needy only enables them to continue in poverty.	44.83%	51.72%	3.45%	0.00%	0.00%	29	(-1.57)

Compassion should only be extended to poor people who are trying to find a way out of poverty.	48.28%	44.38%	3.45%	0.00%	3.45%	29	(-1.40)
Providing good programs at church is the best way to serve the community.	13.79%	20.69%	27.59%	20.69%	17.24%	29	(+0.48)
Demonstrating Christlikeness Includes helping people who can't help themselves.	3.45%	6.90%	0.00%	31.03%	58.62%	29	(+1.65)
Living like Jesus includes crossing cultural barriers.	3.45%	0.00%	3.45%	27.59%	65.52%	29	(+1.99)
We should be familiar with the different ethnic groups in and around our church.	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%	37.93%	58.62%	29	(+1.42)
Participation in God's mission in the world involves us being active Christians outside the church walls.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	75.00%	28	(+2.10)
The church should partner with secular agencies that are meeting the needs of our community.	0.00%	0.00%	10.71%	46.43%	42.86%	28	(+1.19)
Christians should only associate with other Christians.	58.62%	34.48%	3.45%	0.00%	3.45%	29	(-1.71)

If we cannot include a gospel message we not serve the poor because it's a waste of time.	55.17%	41.38%	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%	29	(-1.84)
To protect our witness we should not be involved with community agencies that are not specifically "Christian."	48.28%	48.28%	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%	29	(-1.55)
Serving people in our community is an act of worship.	0.00%	0.00%	3.57%	39.29%	57.14%	28	(+1.84)
If people really want to know God they should come inside the building to experience Him.	41.38%	31.03%	20.69%	6.90%	0.00%	29	(-1.00)
Being "missional" means saving the lost not serving those in need.	44.83%	41.38%	13.79%	0.00%	0.00%	29	(-1.21)

Appendix D

Q.24 How many of the sermons were you able to hear?

Answer Choices	Responses	
1	16.00%	4
2	4.00%	1
3	8.00%	2
4	8.00%	2
5	4.00%	1
6	20.00%	5
7	12.00%	3
8	28.00%	7
Total		25

Q.25 How many of the Bible studies have you completed?

Answer Choices	Responses	
1	29.41%	5
2	23.53%	4
3	5.88%	1
4	11.76%	2
5	5.88%	1
6	5.88%	1
7	0.00%	0
8	17.65%	3
Total		17

Q.26 How many Wednesday evenings were you able to attend?

Answer Choices	Responses
1	43.75% 7
2	12.50% 2
3	0.00% 0
4	0.00% 0
5	6.25% 1
6	6.25% 1
7	12.50% 2
8	18.75% 3
Total	16

Appendix E

Pre-Survey

	Less than 1 hour	Less than 2 hours	2 hours	Over 2 hours	Total
Q.22 Recently, in a typical week, how many hours have you spent investing in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church?	50.00%	7.69%	30.77%	11.54%	26
Q.23 In the future, in a typical week, how many hours do you plan to invest in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church?	7.41%	44.4%	18.52%	29.63%	27

Post Survey

	Less than 1 hour	Less than 2 hours	2 hours	Over 2 hours	Total
Q.22 Recently, in a typical week, how many hours have you spent investing in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church?	34.48%	37.93%	6.90%	20.69%	29
Q.23 In the future, in a typical week, how many hours do you plan to invest in the life of a non-family member who does not go to any church?	14.81%	18.52%	33.33%	33.33%	27

Appendix F

Narcotics Anonymous Group Experience

By: C. P.

In June of 2012, in an attempt to have a more visible role in the Wayne Westland community of Michigan, Crosswalk Community Church opened the doors to a Saturday evening Narcotics Anonymous support group. While we do not endorse some aspects of that particular approach to recovery, we felt that by providing a much needed Saturday group we would create opportunities for a more missional approach to the churches overall ministry. We wanted to change the culture of the local congregational away from an internal focus to becoming more directly involved with the needs of the unchurched around us.

After several weeks one of our members, a retired pastor and certified counselor, became very well connected with several group members and this led to a real interest in learning more about Crosswalk Community and how to have true and lasting recovery through the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. While there are many stories to be told, the following is the journey of one individual who we will refer to as Robert, not his true name. Even though he has given permission to use his story...there are enough turns and twists that this author has chosen not to reveal his true identity.

Robert first attended the church at the invitation of Don on the first Sunday of Advent 2012. This date began a series of weekly meetings between the two and resulted in Roberts genuine repentance and instantaneous deliverance from cocaine addiction and

occasional other substance abuse. This sobriety lasted for one year and two months. During that time Robert was faithful in attending church, witnessing to family and friends and family, and studying the word as well as other recovery resources. During this time Roberts influenced his brother and wife to begin attending Crosswalk as well. This family was well respected in the community and very moral in character. However, they soon discovered that there was a void in their successful lifestyles that only God could fill. Soon they were very active contributing members of the Crosswalk Church of the Nazarene.

About this time Robert began to get involved with some of the more troubled and hardened members of Narcotics Anonymous and began attending different groups throughout the community on an almost daily basis. He felt he could be effective in helping others but like a kid when told he cannot have that cookie, as he heard people week after week and day after day speak about how bad they wanted to do cocaine, he slipped once then twice and then descended into what seemed like a trip to Hell for those of us who loved and cared for him. This gave both Pastor Garry and Don some real opportunities to show the local congregation what it means to be missional.

The story here will be recorded briefly and will end on a positive note. It involves stolen cars, broken family ties, lies, more lies, Pastor and Don rescuing a prostitute who was running for her life from two men at a drug house where we had gone to look for Robert, more stolen cars, more lies, more promises, more prayers, more repentance, more trips into darkness, physical problems, weekly trips with Robert to the doctor, heart failure, and eventual renewal and restoration.

Robert now realizes that God has spared him for a reason and is now truly walking with Jesus to the best of his understanding and with the Mercy and through the Grace of a loving Savior. He has admitted that his journey is the journey of faith and not the journey of self- confidence or mere willful determination. At this time the Story ends at a good place. Only the future and eternity will reveal the results of the effort that has been put forth by Robert and a couple individuals at the Crosswalk Church. In any case, the Story of Robert serves as an example of a couple individuals attempt to demonstrate the missional approach to ministry and did serve as a catalyst that created others to try different avenues of ministry outside the four walls of the church building. It enabled others to see that ministry in the twenty-first century must take place in a variety of settings by persons of faith who are not afraid to boldly go where the church in too many instances has refused to journey.

Haiti Water Well Project (Partnership)

Sponsored by CrossWalk Community Church of the Nazarene.

By: Garry Edwards

This story is about a missional project in the arena of partnerships. This area of experiential opportunity helps to connect the church with both a global and local understanding of how mission and missional meet. The church was offered an opportunity to share in ministry with another local church that potentially we will never see. With this partnership, the church was also offered the opportunity to connect with the mission thrust of the Church of the Nazarene.

The water well options were researched and it was decided to pursue a full well at a church site where they would in turn be able to offer much needed compassion to their immediate world around them. The cost of the project was \$5000.00 which would be a significant stretch for our congregation. It was presented to the church as an opportunity to partner with another church and people that we may never know. Our hope is that this endeavor result in a true partnership where communication can be established and mutual sharing of testimony and blessing can take place.

In the process of presenting this opportunity to the full church one couple was moved to match the giving of the church for this challenge. Because of their generosity and the vision of the rest of the church, we were able to provide a full onsite well for a church in Haiti.

As of this writing, we are still waiting to hear of the exact location and timing of the well being drilled and in use. Nazarene Compassionate Ministries and Nazarene Missions International said that it could take up to eighteen months to choose the site, secure all permissions and drill the well. This partnership project was approached in part for its long term investment and missional scope globally.

It is important to note that there was a broad spectrum of participation in support of this project. The financial connect part from the matching funds ranged from \$10.00 to \$300.00, which included ninety to ninety five percent participation church wide. It was refreshing to watch the church embody and own this project. It will be very interesting to see the long term impact of a (missional) partnership that this project will bring about.

Laundromat Story

By: K. M. and M. S.

K. S. and I knelt at the altar along with some others to be prayed over and sent out to go to a local Laundromat. We chose one that was in Wayne instead of Westland since we live in Wayne. The place we chose, was out of the way in a poorer part of town. We took with us enough money and detergent to help three different people with their laundry. To be honest our experience was not very good. The people that we offered to help were very skeptical and suspicious of our motives. Even after explaining who we were and where we were from, they still seem suspicious thinking that we wanted something from them.

Of the three that we approached only one would allow us to pay for their laundry. We thanked them for allowing us to help them and left confused at the response we received. After reflecting on our experience we have evaluated our approach and wondered if the way we approached them and presented to them what we were doing, caught them off guard and they were never able to get past their initial suspicion. One thing is for sure, we are not discouraged in our desire to show people the love of Christ, and will certainly seek out other opportunities to offer Him into our world.

Laundromat Experience

By: Garry Edwards

I was unable to go to the Laundromat on the day assigned due to my presence being necessary to preach the missional message for the day. I assured the congregation that I would be going during the following week to the Laundromat in Westland that was closest to the church. My plan was to offer help to three people. I prayed all the way

there, and as much as was possible while I was there. The first opportunity came as a lady and her young daughter came in to do their laundry.

I carefully approached the lady and introduced myself and explained what I wanted to do. She was so taken back that as a person from the church who did not know her would do such a thing. She could not thank me enough for helping her and her daughter. She was so moved that she stepped outside to call her mother and tell her what had just taken place. When she returned, she was in tears and filled with thanks.

She shared with me that the reason she was there was because her washing machine was broken and she needed to do her laundry. She insisted on her and her daughter hugging me with thanks upon thanks.

The next person I approached was an older gentleman who had every appearance of being down and out (possibly homeless). When I approached him, I could immediately sense the tension and suspicion. He flat out refused my offer to help him. (It seemed to me that his response was much the same as what K. S. and M. S. reported as their experience). After meeting this resistance, I sat in a chair facing the front of the Laundromat, and prayed all the more that God would allow me to minister what I see as a cup of cold water in Jesus name. The next to come up was a young man. He checked to make sure there were machines available. I was unable to speak to him before he walked back to his car to get his laundry.

I carefully approached at the back of his car and explained to him what I was doing. Immediately I could tell it surprised him and after a few moments, he understood what I was attempting to do and he whole heartedly accepted and thanked me over and over. He literally could not get over that someone who did not know him would care

enough to touch his life for God. He understood that I was from the church but did not want or expect anything in return.

From these experiences, I did learn some valuable lessons. Just because you are trying to help, does not mean it will be received with open arms. People are very suspicious and have a hard time accepting that someone would do something nice without some kind of angle to get something in return. Another thing I learned is that it all belongs to God. We are called to be His expression in the world, not produce the result. Finally, prayer is an absolute necessity in all ministering for God to the world.

As a final note, one other person went that same week to another Laundromat, and had a very positive experience, unfortunately they were unable to get a report of their experience to me in time for the project.

Laundromat Experiential Opportunity

By: D. S. and L. S.

D. and I went to the Laundromat wanting to bless someone by paying for their laundry. We were well received by two different people. The first Person was taken back and wanted to know how long we have been doing this, thank us very much. The second couple, they were a young couple. Were also very grateful and gave us both a hug. This experience has caused my husband and I to look for other ways to bless people.

D. S. and L. S.

Laundromat Opportunity

By: J. R. S.

The Sunday when it was mentioned about the Laundromat opportunity, I knew I was to be a part of this area of connecting to others. That same Sunday it was mentioned that a family whose children attend our church, needed a washing machine. One was donated by another family, and I was asked if I could help pick it up and deliver it. I immediately knew this was my opportunity to be involved. Later I understood why. When the date was announced for the Laundromat service, I had to be out of town that particular Sunday and was very disappointed. By being able to participate like this helped me feel that I was able to help in the same way, although different expression. God really spoke to my heart about serving as the hands and feet of Jesus to this family. I will add that God is speaking to me about finding other ways to show his love to others during this project that pastor Garry is teaching us about.

Independent Missional Connect

By: L. S.

On Thursdays I work with a down river group called Christ net. We fix and serve lunch for them. All of the people seem to be very grateful. I have been doing this for about five years. It is my way to reach out to the people.

L. S.

(Authors note: L. S. shared with me that she has since the beginning of this project, invited other from the church to join her at Christ Net, and they also have been impacted by serving others.)

Helping A Neighbor

By: J. R. S.

A few weeks after pastor Garry's project series on missional living as the hands and feet of Christ, my neighbors across the street began having serious issues with their electricity at their house. They are in their 80's and are not in the best of health. I have been trying to get the husband to visit our church for a long time. (He and his wife were hurt deeply by their church many years ago and have completely stopped attending). God laid it on my heart to help them with their electrical problems. I spent the next three days working with home to retire almost the entire house and barn. Through this time I was able to talk with him about God and how he wants us to help each other.

A few days later he came over while I was loading a trailer with clothes and household items to be donated as a part of a clothing swap being sponsored by our church. He asked if I he could help me? (Normally I give help but am not very good at receiving it), but on this day I felt the Lord nudge my heart to let him help.

After we loaded the trailer, he insisted on going with me to the church to unload the items. All during this time he began to drop his guard and shared some of his past hurt. He even teased about me finally getting him in church. I took the opportunity to invite him and his wife to our upcoming Christmas Eve service. He did not give me a finite no, which I see as progress.

I definitely see where God gave me this opportunity to connect with what we have been taught at church about incarnational living by being the hands and feet of Jesus in our world.

I have told pastor Garry, that I feel like my eyes have been opened and my heart has been challenged since he led us through the missional series for his project.

My wife and I used the weekly Bible studies for our nightly devotional each day. It helped us connect in a deeper way with the messages we heard on Sunday mornings. We would like to have attended the weekly small groups by we're not able to due to caring for my mother in law at our house.

My Experience at Saint Mary's

By: S. B.

Well about two weeks into your project, I went to St. Mary's on my own. I thought to myself, why should I wait for the Pastor. So I went to drop off some things and ask them if they needed some help. Of course they said yes. It is about 3 ½ hours. So I went the following week. I stood on my feet the whole 3 ½ hours. I had not stood on my feet that long since I retired. I didn't eat enough breakfast that day and still tried to go to the mall.

I now have a new respect for the people who work at the mall. One day while at Saint Mary's I had just taken something out of the bag to hang it up and someone literally grabbed it out of my hand. She didn't even know what size it was. Another day a man came in and he needed a pair of shoes real bad. On another day a man came in with a baby and said he needed everything I had for a baby. I remember having my daughters room ready a month before she was born, my husband thought I was crazy. My eyes have been opened to some of the needs of people beyond my own life.

Missional Response

B. B.

This project started out at Belleville High School marching band camp in the middle August and was completed in the middle of September. I was a chaperone at marching band camp because I like to volunteer my time, and my daughter is a

sophomore in the band. One of the things they do is let the Seniors have a final speeches and there are times there's not a dry eye as they are taking place, because it's an end to one way of life and a beginning to a new one outside of high school.

One of the Senior's speeches stood out to me the most and really put an impact on my soul. This girl's name is Janet. Her speech was about how she is a foster child and had problems in the past, but she got her life together. Later that week she told me that she's gotten a scholarship to a local college. I was moved by her circumstances and what she had accomplished. I was most impressed with this young lady and her story stuck with me throughout the rest of band camp.

Fast forward to the Monday after camp. It was band student schedule pickup at Belleville High School and there was a problem with my daughter's schedule. We went down to the guidance office to get the problem resolved. While waiting our turn, Janet walked up because she too, had to change her schedule. All of us were on our phones to kill time and my daughter Beth made a quick remark about Janet's phone, which was an old model phone. Beth doesn't have an iPhone or anything, so it was pretty much them joking about whose phone was the most pathetic. Janet took the joke in stride and said it was all she had. I asked her if she had a computer and she said no, so it got me thinking.

So what put me over the edge to help was the Sunday after that and Pastor Garry Edwards sermon. It was during this sermon that God hit me in the face with a brick and it was like whammo, ok God, I got the message. So I thought about it and came up with what I wanted to do and that was get her a laptop. I didn't know how to go about it until a few hours later, when the idea came to me to post her story with names removed on

Facebook and ask for help. My daughter was extremely happy I was doing this and she and my entire family helped me with this endeavor.

I started the post the same as I worded this letter but I did the following changes:

1. I wouldn't say her name so it wouldn't get back to her or her friends and spoil the surprise or make her feel bad. The other chaperones at camp who were my Facebook friends would know whom I was talking about and one of them even donated to the cause.
2. I asked for donations no matter how big or small to get her a decent laptop, wireless mouse and a carrying case/backpack so she wouldn't be forced to sit in a computer lab to do her homework for her senior year.

I ended it with “If you feel moved to help me in this please PM me. I'd like to keep this a surprise for her. She's been through so much.” I went ahead with the task of setting up a budget for the project and waited to see what unfolded.

The day after I posted that the offers and accolades came in to help. Five dollars here, twenty there, a little here and a little there and the fund started to grow. Several community leaders were proud that I was doing this, but I kept saying this wasn't about me, but helping others. As it came up on the end of the time frame to get the items, I found we had overachieved in collecting and had enough to get not only the items I requested, but a student copy of the 2013 Microsoft Office suite, a flash drive and a set of nice headphones. After purchasing all the items we had \$0.13 left over in the fund so it was a miracle we had exactly what we needed!

My daughter and I decided to surprise Janet after band practice in the middle of September. I had all the items in the back of my vehicle and my daughter got her to come over to me because she told her I wanted to have a chat with her. She came over with a few of her other friends and we sprung the gift. She was completely surprised and cried for 10 minutes straight. Other band students and chaperones who were in the area as we gave it to her were also emotionally moved. She kept saying "Why me?" and "What did I do to deserve this?" I kept telling her it was her senior speech at band camp and that everything she's been through. I asked her when she's older to pay it forward to someone else. She said she would. I asked if I could take her picture and she said yes. (I attached the photo below.) I emailed the picture, my spreadsheet with donation amounts and costs (via bcc:) to the donors to show them how grateful she was and how the amount was perfect for the project.

This concludes my story and I hope it brought a smile to your face as it did for me and my family.

(The Picture referred to above has been removed along with the recipient's name changed for privacy purposes).

Spontaneous Missional Opportunity

By: C. L.

On Sunday morning, during Pastor Garry's absence due to health issues, a family entered the church and asked to speak with "the father". I was approached and asked to speak with them. The young man told me that they had lived in Canton for the past three months, as he had been hired on a job there, but because he did not have his green card or

appropriate papers for working in the U.S., he had been let go. The family was living in their van and were asking if there was any possibilities that they could get a gas card to help them in their goal of returning to California which was their home. The family consisted of a Dad, Mom and three young boys, ages 4, 2, and six months old. I agreed to present the need to the congregation. The man then asked if it would be permissible to stay for the service. I told them they were very welcome to stay.

At the end of the service I presented their case to the congregation, and said that if anyone wished to donate any funds to help purchase a gas card to set the money on the altar. Then we concluded the service. After the service I approached the family and asked if they would like to go to a restaurant for a meal. They immediately responded yes, so we went to a local restaurant. The Mom spoke Spanish and a very few words of English. She could not read the menu, but I read the children's menu to her and she chose what she wanted the children to eat and drink. Her husband ordered his meal and she asked for the same items. She indicated to me that the children were hungry. When the meal came she gave each of the older boys some of her food, which they immediately ate, then they proceeded to clean up their own food. All of them ate a large amount of food, which reinforced the fact that they were very hungry. The Dad indicated that they had been living off of McDonald's dollar menu. They had a car top carrier on the top of their van, with all of their possessions in it.

After the meal we all drove to the Shell station where I purchased a great amount of gas cards for them. Mom was so happy she kissed my hand. Dad just said thank you, over and over, and was also a little tearful with gratefulness.

I do not know if they made it back to California or not. I have to trust God that they did. I am just so thrilled with the outpouring of generosity provided by the congregation in giving cash for the gas cards. They very clearly indicated that they were being the hands and feet of Jesus.

Hands and Feet of Christ

By: C. L.

When I preached the sermon on a Sunday that Pastor was unable to participate in the service, I spoke on the story of David and Goliath. My emphasis was on the fact that God uses our skills and talents where they are at. He doesn't expect us to do things we are not capable of doing; but if we are capable of a certain task, it is possible that He will ask us to use that task in the realm of being the hands and feet of Jesus.

For an example I told the story of a young lady who had lost her mother at age eight, and at age fifteen found herself in love with a young eighteen year old lad. The young man had heard a rumor that he would be called to active duty in the service, so wanted to get married prior to that happening. As a result the couple eloped. After their marriage they both returned to their respective homes and lived as dependents there. Six months later they decided it was time to inform their parents of their marriage. The young lady's father was extremely upset and wanted to have the marriage annulled. By this time, however, the young lady was three months pregnant. When her father found out, he allowed the couple to begin housekeeping together.

By the time the woman was twenty-two years old she had five young children. Her husband walked out of her life on Christmas Day and left the woman struggling to raise

her children all alone. She had had minimal training in housekeeping matters in her childhood and this was visible to anyone who witnessed her lifestyle.

A neighbor noticed the woman's difficulty hanging clothing on the outdoor line to dry, so went over and showed the woman the correct and easy way to hang the clothing. Over time she got more and more involved with the young woman, teaching her various household tasks, how to make them easier to do. When spring came, the neighbor showed the young woman how to plant a garden, and later how to harvest and preserve some of the produce. This lady was acting out the premise of being the hands and feet of Jesus.

One day the neighbor and the young woman were both on their hands and knees, scrubbing and planning to later wax the kitchen floor. The young woman asked the neighbor "how do I get to know this Jesus you keep talking about?" The neighbor led the woman to Christ. Not long after this the woman and her five children moved out of the neighborhood.

Many, many years later a gentleman walked into the nursing home to visit his forty-one year old sister who had multiple sclerosis. Walking down the hallway to her room, he noticed the name outside of one of the doors and recognized it as the same name of the woman that had been a neighbor during his early childhood. He entered the room and spoke to the woman. He asked her if she recognized him, and after a moment she said to him "aren't you one of the Donley children?" He admitted that he was. The woman went on to say "whatever happened to your mother? Did she continue to live as a Christian?" The gentleman replied: "Yes, she not only lived out her life as a Christian,

all five of us children are children of God. Three of us are in full-time Christian service. I, myself, am the district superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene in Wisconsin”.

If this neighbor had not actively attempted to allow herself to be the hands and feet of Jesus with a young married lady that had lost her husband, the Word of God may not have manifested itself into the lives of this entire family.

Continuing Missional Expressions

By: B. D.

God laid it on my heart to buy winter clothing for those who are homeless and in need this winter season. A store in my area, Meijer, was having a Friday after Thanksgiving sale. Winter coats for children were \$15 and adult coats were \$24. I contacted friends to see if anyone would like to join me in helping those less fortunate. With the total contributions, I was able to buy 8 children coats, 8 adult coats, 10 pair of gloves, and 6 hats. God blessed my heart when I gave the winter clothing to the Salvation Army. I want to say "Thank you God for giving me a spirit to listen and obey". God not only blesses those we help, but we too receive a blessing from God when we listen and obey him.

Coming Missional Opportunity: Sign Language Class

By: E. W.

My interest in Sign Language began back in 1990. I had been wanting to learn a "second language" if you will, but knew that I'd have trouble with memory, writing and translations.

I found out that there was a local Catholic Church that was offering a free classes and that one of them was ASL (American Sign Language).

I was so excited, I called the number and found out the information. Class began with the introduction of the class coordinators, a priest, a nun, and a huge Rottweiler named Toby. And yes! Toby could understand MANY commands in Sign Language! Class was very exciting, learning about the deaf culture, expectations, and that I would have homework!

As I continued through the class I knew that I wanted to continue with this education and my ultimate goal and hope was going to be to sign the word of the Lord. This was a beautiful language!

I moved to Texas in 1996 and continued with my Sign Language education. It was much more challenging as the teachers were deaf and the classes were more intense, I felt I was being led in the best way.

In 1999 I returned back to Michigan and found that the Lord was leading me through a journey that would take me away from my love of Sign Language for a while. I tended to two ailing parents, family obligations as well as working a full time job. Before my mom had started her journey Home to the Lord, she was my study partner and guide with my signing homework. After both of my parents had crossed over, I went in to a major depression and needed to focus on something that would assist me in coming out. I traveled to Florida and visited my brother and went to his church. As I looked around I watched as a woman was signing to one girl in the pew, I knew right then and there I needed to find a church here and that I needed to continue my learning of the language I so missed.

I visited Cross Walk and knew on my first visit that this was going to be my church! Although they didn't offer a Sign Language Class, they offered me acceptance and love. My continued education would fall on my shoulders.

As the music lifted my soul, I found myself signing the songs. That was "my worship". I never felt closer to the Lord then - nor as I do now. I was asked if I would like to join the Praise Team and let my signing translate a way to worship, as everyone does it differently. This was back in 2002.

I have been on the Praise Team loving what I do and loving "my way" of my worship. Through the years, I have had a lot of comments of thanks, praise for my signing and once I even had a visitor take my picture to take back to her church to show what we at Cross Walk were doing. I have on a couple of occasions translated Pastors message for visitors that were hard of hearing. That was a challenge I accepted, although I thought that they were kind and said I did a good job. That brought a new sense of personal satisfaction I had never felt before. I signed the word of the Lord!

For a while I have been wondering what is next? What would the Lord ask of me with my Sign Language knowledge? What was I qualified to do? Would people be interested? Would people want to learn? Would they love this language like I do? So many questions, and such inner doubt, what to do? I prayed and the Lord was faithful, He answered with "ask, you have shown your love and excitement of Sign Language maybe it will be contagious " So ask I did.

I was so surprised to find that through email, I had a response of 6 with a possibility of maybe 8 people wanted to participate in a Sign Language class! Then at

church I asked again, there were an additional 5 more! I knew the Lord spoke and I will listen.

I have been looking online for "just the right book" to teach from, with no avail to the price range I wanted to spend on a book for the class students to use. I went to Barnes and Nobel and found the Language department where I found numerous books on Sign Language. As I sat on the floor (of course the books I needed to check were on the bottom shelf!) people walking around me, reaching over me, etc... I continued to look through my choices. I found what I thought to be the perfect choice and the price was only one dollar over what my goal was! I went to the checkout and to my excitement they offered me free shipment AND a twenty percent discount on top of that! The Lord had His hand right there where I needed Him. I then left there and went to a store that had ran a discount but had ended yesterday. The cashier tried but the register rejected the coupon. The cashier then tried another way and it worked! ANOTHER twenty percent discount! So, today I bought the book, a notebook for the student to take notes in so they don't have to write in their book and a pen for each and every student and the price came in right where it needed to be!

Now, my next journey is the teaching side of sign language. I will continue to pray for the Lords guidance and wisdom and the courage for following my heart. For He is with me always. This opportunity is scheduled to begin on January 4, 2015. I cannot wait to see how God will use this to open doors of ministry to those who need a stronger voice beyond sound.

(Authors note: The ASL class is currently taking place as of 1-15-2015).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Anderson, Herbert and Edwards Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*. San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass, 2001.
- Barret, Lois Y., et al., *Treasures in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Kindle Edition, 2004.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Life Together*, trans. John Doberstein San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954, 97. Quoted in Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*, Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008.
- Boone, Dan. *Preaching the Story That Shapes Us*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2008.
- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions*. NY: Orbis books, 2011.
- Brown, Daron. *Shift: How Nine Churches Experienced Vibrant Renewal*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2012.
- Buttrick, David. *Homiletic: Moves and Structure*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press Kindle Edition, 1988.
- Cole, Neal. *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009.
- Conner, Benjamin T. *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Kindle Edition, 2011.
- Corlett, C. T. *Our Pioneer Nazarenes*. n.p.: Herald Press Kindle Edition, 2011.
http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/wesleyctr/books/Other/Bresee%20Package/PHINEAS%20FRANKLIN%20BRESEE%20%20MAN%20OF%20GOD'S%20GLORY.txt (accessed March 13, 2014).
- Dally, John Addison. *Choosing the Kingdom: Missional Preaching for the Household of God*, Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2008.
- Frost, Michael. *The Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2011.
- Goheen, Michael W. *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011.

- Guder, Darrell L. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- Guder, Darrell L. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.
- Hirsch, Alan. "Seeding A Missional Church Movement," *Grace and Peace* Winter 2015, issue 11.
- Hirsch, Alan, and Darryn Altclass. *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009.
- Krieder, Alan, and Eleanor Krieder. *Worship and Mission After Christendom*. Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press Kindle Edition, 2011.
- Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.
- McLaughlin, Bryon K. "Five Things We Have Learned from Missional Nazarenes," *Grace and Peace* Winter 2015, issue 11.
- Meeks, Douglas M. *Our Calling to Fulfill*. Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 2009.
- Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008.
- Nelson, Gary V., Gordon W. King, and Terry G. Smith, *Going Global: A Congregation's Introduction to Missions beyond Our Borders*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press Kindle Edition, 2011.
- Newbigin, Leslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Kindle Edition, 1989.
- Schwanz, Keith, and Joseph Coleson, eds. *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011.
- Swinton, John, and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. St. Albans Place London: SCM Canterbury Press, Kindle Edition, 2006.
- Tizon, Al. *Missional Preaching: Engage, Embrace, Transform*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012.
- Van Gelder, Craig. *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Kindle Edition, 2008.

- Van Gelder, Craig. *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led By the Spirit*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, Kindle Edition, 2007.
- Van Gelder, Craig, and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2011.
- Viola, Frank. *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*, Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, Kindle Edition, 2008.
- Webster, Merriam. Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worship> (accessed March, 2014).
- Weston, Paul. *Leslie Newbigin: A Reader*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Grove, Illinois: Intersity Press Academic, (Kindle Edition), 2013.
- Wright, John W. *Telling God's Story: Narrative Preaching for Christian Formation*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intersity Press Academic, 2007.